

Mussel Ridge News

A Free Publication of the Mussel Ridge Historical Society
Owls Head, Maine
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Bradford Alden Emery

Bradford Alden Emery (1840-1919) wore many hats: Sea Captain, Mason, Justice of the Peace, farmed 100 acres, master carpenter who built the Owls Head Baptist Church and Deacon. He was a "Teddy Roosevelt" Republican and wrote sea and farm true anecdotes for the Courier Gazette.

Boyhood Recollections of Down-East Life on Penobscot Bay

"Boys get your hoes and dig the weeds between the rows in the potato patch!"

And dig it was, for father said we must stir the ground thoroughly. We had no horse cultivator in those days - and those were long days, twice as long as the days are now. We knew when it was noon by the shadow on the chimneys on the roof of the house and our eyes would often wander that way, for dinner was more interesting than digging weeds. Occasionally we would drop our hoes and peek at the bird nests that we had found a few days before, or hunt in the grass of ripe strawberries.

When haying time came - hurrah boys! Grind the hand scythes and get a good stock of hand rakes. There were no mowing machines or horse rakes. Father said they never could get anything that could cut grass like the old fashioned hand scythes: but before he died he saw men riding about the fields, the grass falling as if by magic and the raking done in the same style. In those early days the hay had to be raked and bunched and trimmed up every night. We carted our hay to the barn with oxen attached to a two wheeled rack.

We kept a horse, but his part was only to go occasionally to the Shore Village (Rockland) with the wagon or the two wheeled thorough-brace chaise, for our mail, etc. which included the Limerock Gazette and Zion's Advocate.

The above home of B. A. Emery was burned in 1963 by the Owls Head Fire Dept when it was owned by Alma & Lorimer Walker. A new home was built on this sight in 1971 and is now owned by the Walker family.



One of Maine's attractions is our lovely deep forests. It's true the first settlers were awed by the abundance of timber, but did you know that during the 1880s our New England forests had been so depleted of large trees that shipping companies specialized in transporting lumber from the southern and west coast states to New England's ship yards. In many of Maine's historic shipbuilding towns, today's harbor mud is really saw dust, decomposed over the years— sometimes as much as eight feet deep.

A Maine Teenagers Trip to the California Gold Rush
by Gene Baron

Alonzo Emory Raynes, born in Brewer, Maine on September 27, 1830, has the unique distinction of being among the first group of Mainers to leave for the California Gold Rush. In January of 1849, Alonzo being then 18 years of age, boarded the bark "SULIOT" at Belfast along with 47 other passengers. This ship was the first vessel to leave Maine bound for California and the Gold Rush. While out in the Gulf Stream, it was discovered that the water in some of the casks had gone bad and they were forced to ration the remaining supply until they reached the Cae Verde Islands where a new supply was acquired. Their next stop Rio de Janeiro where they took on provisions. Raynes was one of a quartet of young men with vocal talents and these young men entertained the passengers during the voyage. They were so good that during a stop at Valparaiso they were engaged, for fifty dollars, to sing four selections at the theatre and after singing they were invited into the manager's box followed by an invitation to the American consul's home. After a voyage of 169 days the "SULIOT" arrived at San Francisco on July 18th.

While rounding Cape Horn young Raynes wrote the following hasty letter to a Mr. John Martin, of Bangor.

"My hands are so cold that I cannot write a bit. My health is good, we have had a gale of wind for the last two or three days but is fair weather now, we are obliged to lay to twenty four hours. On the 16th the captain's son was lost overboard, the wind was blowing a gale and the seas running mountain high. It was impossible to save him. We are in hopes to get round the cape in one or two days. Our bark is a fine vessel and stands the storm well. I cannot write mores as the vessel which I send this is close to us."

His letter as well other passenger's mail was evidently passed over to a vessel heading for the East Coast. The letter was later postmarked at Boston. Letters written aboard a ship bound for the Gold Rush are extremely rare, especially one written by a teenager.

He reached the Gold diggings of Mokelumne Hill by ox team. He sang and played his guitar in exchange for food and lodging at the mining camps. Later, the young adventurer sailed for Trinidad (northern California) on a brig that was wrecked but he survived and started an express business to deliver mail to miners in remote locations. On more that on occasion, he had to fight off hostile Indians. Alonzo eventually settled in Yreka, California, married and became a successful businessman, where among other achievements, he served as postmaster, County Treasurer, Fire Chief, and school trustee. He died in 1915 at the age of 85.

Owl's Head Village Library now offers free internet access to Ancestry.com to aid genealogist or historians in finding their roots. They also have a really great selection of Maine Books to compliment your research or for simply relaxing with a cup of tea. Don't like to read? They have DVDs galore! Their winter hours are Saturday 9am to 5pm or by pre-arranged appointment.



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A NOD TO OUR NEIGHBORS

Since Owl's Head was once part of the town of South Thomaston, Maine, we thought it was time we recognized their contribution to our history. We stole these from the sources indicated in ().

South Thomaston had originally petitioned to become an incorporated town named "Independence". However, the General Court that grants such favors apparently disliked the name and issued a charter to form the town of "South Thomaston". (*The Length & Breadth of Maine*, by Stanley B. Atwood, 1929, pp.29)

"1805- Ship building continued to be carried on to some extent at South Thomaston; and a schooner of 100 tons commanded by Captain James Spaulding was this season built here, probably by the Snows and named the Wesaweskeag. This vessel was once lying at anchor in one of the West India ports, when the officers of a barge passing under her stern ordered the crew to slacken their oars in order to read her name. They commenced. "W-ee-sa-sow-we-w-i-s-k-e-a-g," when Jack, who had become very uneasy lying on his oar and listening to him who was reading her name, turned over his quid and exclaimed, with an old tar's usual oath, "She's the 'whiskey-keg! Let's go aboard and get a horn." (*The History of Thomaston, Rockland, and South Thomaston*-pp.258)

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Old Houses

I love old houses. I don't know if it's because I think people had better sense of design in the "olden" days, or they've developed character over the years which hooks me, or what. But I have always loved them. I especially love to wonder about all the people who have lived in them—what were their lives like? What of their lives is left in the walls of this house? Did disasters happen here? Was anyone mistreated or hurt here? Did children laugh and learn the tasks of caring for the house? Did the woman of the house notice the way the maple tree dapples the shade as it comes in the front window? Did she have an herb or vegetable garden? And if so, where was it? Was the man of the house able to provide for his family? Was his farming or fishing as successful as he wanted it to be? Did he feel any pride in this house that warmed his family? Those are kinds of questions I ask myself when I'm in an old house.

I grew up in a house that was built just before I was born and lived there until I was about sixteen. At that point my family moved to an old farm out in the country, which I loved. I'd probably have been happy to stay there forever, but life has a way of interfering with our plans! It was twenty years later before I lived in another old house. This one had been sadly abused and neglected over the years and it gave me great pleasure to restore its beauty and function once again. It was a huge, big ark of a house that I would give most anything to have again. It was a bear to heat, but it was a wonderful, comfortable home and I never stopped appreciating it. Recently I have listened to conversations by people who live in the house they have always lived in—maybe even were born in. Maybe it was the house their grandmother was born in, or built with her husband when they were married so many years ago. I am wicked envious of those people. I hope they don't ever take for granted the way the light comes in the pantry window, or how warm the sun makes the front room on a sunny day. I hope they can laugh, instead of get frustrated, at the spot where the shed roof leaks—where the shed roof has always leaked no matter what anyone did to try and fix it. I hope they can think of their old house as a blessing and not a problem that is hard to take care of, even though it probably is. I think there is a life that exists in old houses—the spirit, if you will, of the lives that have been lived there. To me, it would be a gift to be able to live in such a house and know that my life is adding to the spirit of the life of those who have gone before, who also loved this home.

Marty Shaw

WE'RE LOOKING FOR

Someone with basic genealogy experience to write an occasional column for this newsletter. The articles could discuss subjects such as: where to find free genealogy information, how to verify your information, common pitfalls, starting and maintaining a family tree, preservation of photos or any other subjects the writer would be comfortable sharing with novice geneologists.

The Mussel Ridge NEWS is printed in the first 10 days of February, May, August and November. If this sounds like something you could do, call Tom Christie at 207-594-2438 or Kay Dodge at 596-6879

BRAIN STEAM

While on a recent road trip, Elizabeth (Bray) Mitchell asked a question that quickly morphed into a game of trivia and that inspired an idea for a NEWS column. Future Brain Steams will include riddles, puzzles and trivia, (hopefully submitted by our readers) from the pre-Google years. Therefore, we think they should be answered with our computers turned off and our brains fired up to a full head of steam, hence the name.

Today's quiz comes from the 1960's music. Answers can be found on another page in this issue.

- 1.) Was it radio station WBZ, WMEX, or RKO that broadcast the "Woo Woo" Ginsburg show?
- 2.) How did he get that nick-name?
- 3.) On his show he had a segment featuring his choice for the worse rock and roll song. Which song won that title week after week and actually became a hit because of it?
- 4.) Where is "Woo-Woo" now?

Answers on last page

An Unusual Find in Owls Head

A 1959 Courier Gazette article tell of a World War I German helmet being found during a road construction project in Owls Head.

A power shovel operator on a highway construction job on what the article called “the shore road” spotted the helmet on top of a load of dirt he had just scooped up from the old road bed. The article stated that the road had been built since the end of World War I. The construction crew placed the helmet on a stake by the roadside, the same way graves were marked on the battlefield, where it attracted considerable attention from passing motorists. One theory to where the helmet came from was that a soldier brought it home from the war and had discarded it.

Submitted by Andrew Carpenter

A SAD FIND

We’re always on the lookout for little tid-bits that would make an interesting read. This item, from the Encyclopedia of Civil War Shipwrecks (page 48), is an update to the article in our Winter 2013 issue describing the capture of civilian ships from Maine ports during that period in our history.

“Israel R. Snow (Israel L. Snow) U.S. Schooner, 95 tons, Draft 8 feet 6 inches. Cargo of eight hundred bushels of lime and one hundred bushels of potatoes. Built in 1853 at Owls-head, Maine. En route from Rockland, Maine, to Savannah. Was beached on Tybee Island on December 18, 1865, with cargo on fire and ship leaking. (Spence, *list*, 682-83)”

On a positive note, our research for that 2013 article revealed that the Confederate military officers were given explicit orders to treat all civilians with dignity and respect. In 99% of their encounters with the Confederate Navy, ship’s civilian crew and passengers were given another vessel and sent on their way or taken onboard the Naval vessel and delivered unharmed to a neutral country.

The 1% of the cases where civilians were treated outside the standing orders usually involved a specific Confederate naval officer who was married to the daughter of a Portland, Maine, sea captain. Seems she was noted for being a “...real shrew when it came to her wifely domestic responsibilities”.



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1931

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HEART THROBS

“There might be something in a name after all— floral powerhouse FTD was founded in 1910 by John Valentine.” (reprinted from *Better Homes & Gardens*, Feb. 2015)



Speaking of Valentine, isn't it interesting that the symbol for Valentine's Day is a big red heart? We often use the heart to describe our feelings such as, “My heart is full of love.” or “My heart is broken from ...”. Sometimes we associate the heart with locations as in the “...heart of Dixie” or “Home is where the heart is.” And then, there are those places we can't actually see such as “...the heart of the matter...”, “heart and soul”, and “You'll always be in my heart”. Certain catch phrases come across as a bit too casual and over used: “Bless your heart!”, “achey, breaky heart”, “heart felt” and everybody's favorite— “heart healthy” foods. No doubt you could come up with at least six more for the list.

It's obvious to us the heart is a huge part of our life; working far beyond it's original purpose of pumping our blood around the circuit. This Valentine's Day give your heart a good check-up, (if you haven't yet) and give someone close to you a wonderful gift of your time, flowers, candy, cookies, or a special card. But most of all, give love. We wish all of our readers a very memorable Valentines Day.

Norcross Point in the winter, photo taken from the light-house area. In 1898 Karl & Florence Borgerson had a boat built here. In 1902 the old building blew down on the new boat. The first steamers used to land at this wharf.



Info from Helen Feeney Leach

ASH POINT. MAY-26-1880
Rev. S. M. Duntou preached here at 10 a. m. Sunday.
Ed Smith has decorated his boat in fine shape and christened her Ava.
Maynard Hall has adorned the Owl's Head accommodation with a brilliant coat of paint.
David Geer has removed the board fence from the road in front of his orchard and put up a stone wall.
The fishermen are doing better. They report better luck this week than last. Ed. Witham and Charles Crowley yarned 749 pounds one day and 500 pounds the next.
And now as the season advances both maid and matron are daily seen armed with a case knife and tin pail meandering through the fields and along the roadside in pursuit of the gay and festive dandelion.

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LET'S GET TOGETHER

Not receiving this newsletter in your e-mail or would you like to sign up? Have you got memorabilia or pictures you'd like to donate? We'll gladly accept them or photograph the article(s) for our archives. Cash contributions to the Mussel Ridge Historical Society are tax deductible and we'll gladly give you a receipt. We also have need of volunteers to help with the our ongoing projects. Winters are usually uneventful.

Contact Tom Christie 207-594-2438 OR Kay Dodge- 207-596-6879 kayed38@myfairpoint.net
OR Carolyn Philbrook at 207-596-7803 ballyhacme@gmail.com.

HEY! WANNA DO DOUBLE GOOD DEED?

By sharing this copy of the Mussel Ridge NEWS with a relative or friend, (instead the waste can), our work will be promoted in a larger circle of people, which may lead to a new member or volunteer for our society; and the life of a tree may be extended for a few more days. Thanks

Recipe from the Owls Head Cookbook

St. Patrick's Day is just around the corner, here is a recipe you should add to your recipe box.

2 quarts cold water
3 Tbsp. sugar
1 tsp. pepper
2 bay leaves
1 Cup canning salt
2 tsp. mixed pickling spices

A bottom round roast is excellent to corn. Mix together water, salt, sugar, pepper, bay leaves, and pickling spices in a large bowl. Put in beef and cover with an inverted plate to hold the beef under the brine. Allow beef to stay in brine for about 48 hours, in the refrigerator.

Kay Dodge



AN IRISH BLESSING FOR ANYONE (whether you're Irish or not)

“May God grant you always...
A sunbeam to warm you,
a moonbeam to charm you,
a sheltering angel so nothing can harm you.
Laughter to cheer you,
faithful friends near you,
and whenever you pray, Heaven to hear you.”

BRAIN STEAM answers: 1.) WMEX, 2.) he used a train whistle, 3.) “Louie, Louie” by the Kingsmen
4.) He lives in Ogunquit, Maine;