

Mussel Ridge News

Spring 2009

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Issue 2

THE FIFTH SEASON

We've all heard that old saw about Maine having five seasons: Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter and Mud. Recently this reporter learned those five have been reduced to four and renamed Almost Winter, Winter, More Winter and Mud. However it's called, that period just before winter actually packs up to head for the Southern Hemisphere and continuing until the first Dandelion greens are dug, Mud Season to Mainers, can be as devilish as if a Leprechaun were in charge of Spring.

Before the roads were paved, Mud Season was more than a mild joke. Even foot traffic could be held up due to the mud. In some towns the boardwalks became so covered with slimy mud, or so badly tilted by the thawing and freezing they were unusable. Only the hardest adventurers attempted to walk in the muddy streets. Travel by horse and wagon was even worse. One report states the trip from Thomaston to Boston in 1825 could take three days, depending upon the road conditions and the timing of the ferry crossings. Another account divulges the dirty little secret that it was common practice to ask stage coach passengers to disembark when the team faced a steep hill. The team, coach and driver would wait at the top for the passengers to catch up and re-board.

On the farm, there was a huge pile of manure and bedding hay outside the barn warming up while the supply of fire wood in the shed could be almost depleted. Often, if there was another stash of cut and split wood readily available, a couple of men with a sled could haul it home, providing there was snow on the ground. An alternative was to go into the woods looking for standing deadwood to cut. The bottom three or four feet would be too wet to burn, but the upper trunk and limbs made a nice hot fire. Aren't we glad we don't live in, "... the Good Old Days"?

As reported in our last newsletter, many of the older vessels and boats too small to stay on their mooring all winter were laid up on shore. This created additional chores for many fishermen. The hulls had to be meticulously inspected before launching and repairs made without the benefit of blue tarps or shrink wrap. In May 1959, Peter Newman attempted to haul a lobster boat into the water at Cripple Creek. The tractor became stuck in the marsh, as did Phil Wood's dump truck when he tried to pull the tractor free. It's reported, "...the boat eventually reached the water by Yankee ingenuity."

This is the season when the skies are blue as a Dutchman's breeches one minute and gray as the Parson's coat the next. Pussy Willow twigs are in the stores for \$8 a bunch, the Red Sox are in Florida for spring training and last Fall's seed catalogs are in the bin for recycling. (Not too far back in time, they'd be in the outhouse for ... well, you know.) Battered old snow shovels stand ready by the back door while new Crocus' stand neck deep in snow. Optimistic Trout fishermen stand knee deep in cold streams while antsy children can't stand another day inside.

Linda Christie recently recounted a Fifth Season story



from her childhood. She and her sister had dug a cave into a huge pile of snow beside the driveway. At some point while playing in it, they come up with the idea to try the Eskimo life and sleep in the cave that night. To their surprise, Mother gave her consent without any argument. The girls eagerly spent the rest of the afternoon preparing for the adventure, until it began

to rain. By bedtime their "igloo" was a pile of slush.

The Mussel Ridge Historical Society is looking for your memories of life in Owl's Head. Do you have any stories or anecdotes you'd like to see in this newsletter? We believe, "You are the history of Owl's Head." For more information contact: Tom Christie at 594-2438.

DID YOU KNOW?

March 15, 1820: Maine became the twenty-third state. Did you know our little town was suggested for the capital of the new State? There had been nearly thirty years of contentious political maneuvering leading up to the separation of Maine from Massachusetts. In the Spring of 1819, an editorial in the *Hallowell Gazette*, a staunch supporter of the status quo, attempted to unravel the work on the proposed new State Constitution by, "offering ... Very Valuable and Curious Articles for the new Constitution." Article #6 recommended the seat of Government should be at Owl's Head for the first three years, (apparently, this was how long the new State was expected to survive). That same article went on to require voting by Hoot and by Toot, instead of yeas and nays. Article #7 suggested the coat of arms should be an Owl with an open arithmetic in its claw and the motto, "Success by hook or by crook". (ref: [Maine Becomes a State](#), p.p. 131-132)

April 6, 1921 : Maine Legislature approved the split of Owl's Head from South Thomaston. Did you know a disproportionate share of the State funding for roads was one reason the residents from Owl's Head petitioned the Maine legislature for separation? Although the residents from Ingraham's Hill and Ash Point opposed the split, the beach cottage districts of Owl's Head village, Holiday Beach, Crescent Beach and Cooper's Beach had experienced giant leaps in property valuations. After the separation, adequate funding became available for road maintenance and with the increase in ownership of automobiles, Owl's Head quickly became a bedroom community for Rockland. In four years the summer population had become greater than the natives. The 1925 tax rolls listed 248 residents and 290 non residents. (ref: [The Coastal Town of OWLS HEAD, MAINE](#))

Did You Know?

Maine began issuing vehicle registration plates in 1905. The first and only slogan "Vacationland" appeared on the plate in 1936.

FOLLOWING SEAS

Way back in 1801, the body of water we call Rockland Harbor was known as Owl's Head Bay. A few of the old ships' logs also use that name. By 1863 it was being called Rockland Harbor and the name Owl's Head Bay was assigned to the waterway that includes Owl's Head Harbor and the Mussel Ridge Channel down as far as Sheep Island.

The harbor at Owl's Head was a favorite anchorage for the coasting traffic on Penobscot Bay while they waited for a good breeze. With a tavern and store right on the waterfront, it's understandable why so many captains would choose Owl's Head for a lay over. The anchor field was protected. They could resupply or repair with minimum effort and when the wind picked up, the vessels could quickly get underway for their next destination.

The following discussion is excerpted verbatim from the book, The Coastal Town of OWLS HEAD, MAINE.

"By 1823 the sailing traffic anchoring at Owls Head harbor had increased dramatically. On July 15, Hezekiah Prince Jr., customs officer for the Eastern district, reported 25 sail of vessels in the harbor waiting a wind with a great number of passengers on board.

"Being aware that navigational aids were required to assist the increased water traffic, the Maine delegation to Congress requested a lighthouse on the eastern shore of Owls Head.

"In 1824 Congress authorized the purchase of land from the heirs of Captain Nathaniel Merriam (1776-1821) and in 1825 the granite light tower was completed in September.

"The light tower ... in 1873 was equipped with an Argand lamp with a hollow circular wick and, when lighted reflected the flame from a parabolic reflector that had a silver coated surface which increased the light showing through the tower windows. Whale oils was the lamp fuel of choice until about 1855, when the price of \$2.55 per gallon caused the lighthouse service to issue refined lard oil.

"Though kerosene was available in 1860, at \$0.90 per gal. the service delayed until 1878 to change over to this cheap, clean fuel."

(Author's memo: Not mentioned in the above excerpt is that the fog signal in 1873 was on the rocky ledge just below the light tower and activated by wave action rising and falling inside a tube. It's this action of the water that forced air through a whistle at the top of the tube.)

"The job of keeper was much sought after as the pay averaged from \$300 to \$600 per year. The first keeper, Isaac Sterns was paid \$350 per year for trimming the wick and firing the lamp every night for 13 years. The last civilian keeper of the Owl's Head Light was Archford V. Haskins in 1953.

"In March of that year Haskins was one of only two civilian keepers in service on the Maine Coast. The U.S. Coast Guard manned all other light house stations ... "

WAR OF 1812 - MARGARET HEARD

Submitted by Connie Painter

During the War of 1812 a minor skirmish took place at Ash Point. Teenage Margaret Heard with her two younger brothers kept a steady barrage of muzzle loader gunfire from their hiding place behind a giant rock on property where a new house was built in the 1960's by Harold Doty. The children drove back a group of British land

scouts to their warship, anchored in deep water near Ash Island. The citizens in the small community were appar-

ently more or less used to the war's disruption as years later along shoreline homes (later used as cottages) unusual round holes were found in some ocean facing walls, as well as musket balls. Howard and the late Norma Meserve have one from their cottage on Lucia Beach Road. Growing up I



always heard that one or two sailors from a British warship had been buried on Sheep Island.

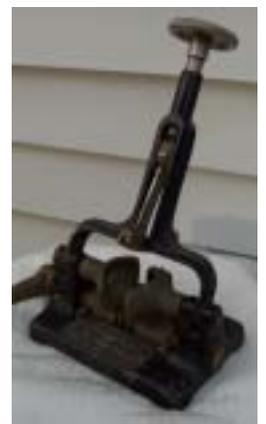
In the early 1980's my then teenage son, John Painter and his friend Jeff Curtis were exploring Sheep Island and came across bones they thought were human. Upon returning home they turned them over to the Knox County Sheriff's Dept., who investigated the area, determined the bones were human, but could not trace to whom they may have belonged. After keeping them for several years, the Sheriff's Dept. returned the bones to the town of Owl's Head. I am not sure what happened to them at that point. Could they be the remains of a British Scout, perhaps wounded by Margaret Heard and her brothers?

WHAT IS IT? SOLVED!

We had no takers of the identity of the "What is it" item in the Winter Newsletter. I take that to mean that the readers were as stumped as my family has been for the past 45 years or so. The lady of the house bought her usual end lot \$5 box of junk at the auction and her husband made the usual fun of her buy. Now the family usually had a lot of fun going through these boxes. Sometimes they found real "goodies" but even the junk seldom got thrown away.

There have been many guesses made as to what this particular item might be, but no one knew for sure. The one idea most everyone came up with was that it held some sort of ball, probably a golf ball. The "thing" sat all these years in the cellar of this couple, being moved occasionally from one place to another when it was in the way.

Now that we are in the 21st century with all the fancy technology and information available on the internet, the mystery has been solved, thanks to Jason Philbrook. The thing is a patented 1915 Golf Ball Dimpler. Ours is the exact one pictured on lelands.com, an online auction house, and sold for \$2,454.18. This is what Lelands had to say: A golf ball without dimples is, well a heavy ping pong ball. The early 20th century die cast machine gouged the mini-craters that make the ball fly straight, far and true_ if you hit it right. "The Rolling Die Does It Right" says the engraving of the Fulname Co. in Cincinnati on the base. The metal device weighs about 10 lbs. It comes with an ancient looking ball which is held in the things vice like clutches. A pendulum device swings over it, puncturing its surface until the ball is covered with dimples.



WE NEED YOUR HELP

Recently the Mussel Ridge Historical Society (MRHS) signed a lease with the town for the two remaining buildings in Owl's Head that once served as one room schools. One of the buildings is on the corner of North Shore and Ash Point Drive and is commonly known as the Grange Hall. The second is the building across from the fire station and an undated picture of that building is shown here. (This picture was originally from Dot Leadbetter and Mary Dyer.)

Our next step is to develop a plan on how to use/preserve these buildings, and we need help from people who may not be members of the MRHS to get this work done. As a first step, we will hold a meeting where we hope people will come and give us their ideas on what they would like to see for the buildings and share suggestions for fund-raising. People attending the schools or their families are particularly welcome and we would love to have additional pictures of either building.



Village School (now located across from the fire station)

The meeting will be held on Sunday, May 31st at 2 pm at the Owl's Head Community Building. If you are not able to come but would have some ideas or would like to help in the planning process, please call Bonnie Post at 594-9263.

Business Directory

We thank the following businesses for advertising with us, and making this newsletter possible.

Owls Head General Store



2 South Shore Drive
PO Box 38
Owls Head, ME 04854

Martha Luttrell (207) 596-6038



Owls Head Lobster Co.
23 Lobster Ln
Owls Head, ME 04854
(207) 594-0679
Owls Head, Maine

Frankie's Garage

Auto/Truck Repair ~ Car Inspections ~ Commercial
Inspection ~ Ramp Truck Tow ~ Motorcycle
Inspection ~ Trailer Inspection



Tel (207) 594-8123
Cecil Fogg, Owner
50 Weskeag Rd Owls Head, Maine 04854

Newcomb & Reynolds, PA

Attorneys at Law

166 Main Street
PO Box 1115
Rockland, Maine 04841
(207) 594-5178

Rockbound Computer

rockbound.net



156 New County Rd
Rockland
207-596-7803

Carolyn Philbrook, Jacob Post, Arthur Grierson
Serving Midcoast Maine for over 17 years.
Computer Sales, Service, Networking, Tutoring

Jake@JakeBarbourInc.com



Jake Barbour (207) 594-5552 V
PO Box 1178 (207) 596-0107 F
Rockland, ME 04841 (207) 975-1515 C

Danforth Construction



Aaron Danforth 596-0602

392 Ash Point Dr. Owls Head, ME
New Construction / Repairs of Any Size / Painting

Barbara's Hair Salon

594-2658



Barbara Fournier
10 Island View Terrace
Owls Head, ME 04854

