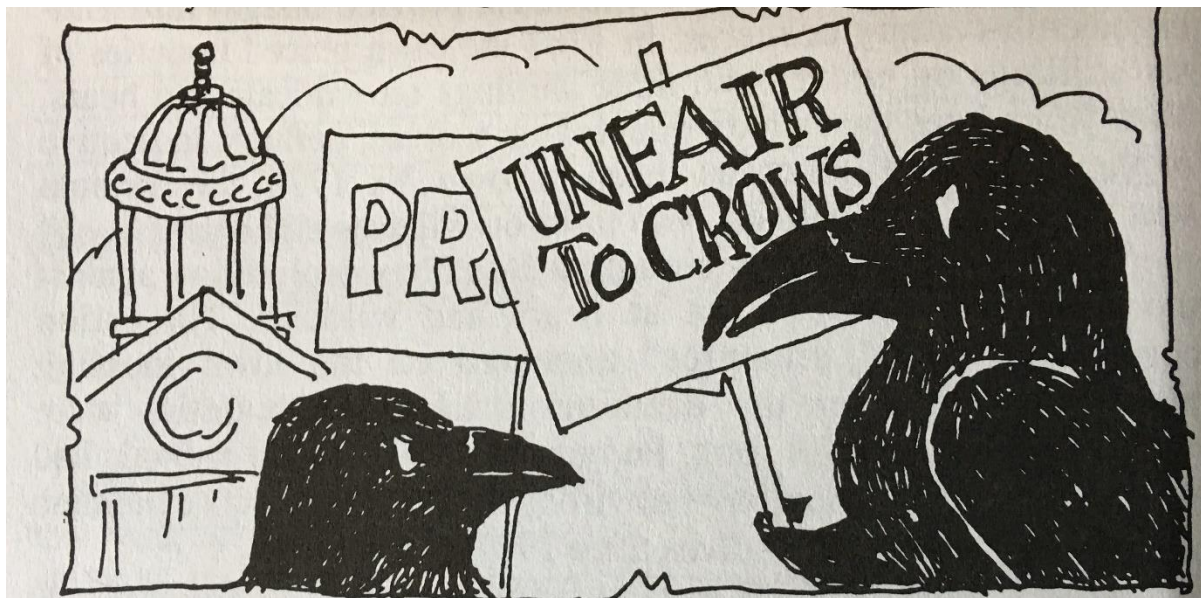


## **BRHS News January 2019**

*Researching and preserving our history*

**Happy New Year!**

**From Our Archives**



An imaginary depiction of crows demonstrating for their rights before the legislature. Courtesy of Bill Harris.

# Boothbay Beasts: Not So Wee and Not So Timorous

By Barbara Rumsey

Boothbay was settled in 1730 by Scotch-Irish immigrants who had been persecuted by the English in both Scotland and Ireland. Many of the Scotch-Irish saw a chance to settle here in America and to get that most cherished of possessions, land of their very own. Requirements? A few material goods, hard work, and the endurance of just a little more persecution in a little less familiar setting.

Of course, those who encouraged and supervised the settling of this area had motives of their own. Their motives had nothing to do with improving the lot of the Scotch-Irish, and everything to do with a return on their investment. In the developers' eyes, the frontier had to be secured and pushed eastward to make the land valuable; if nobody dared take up the land, protect it, and improve it, no profit accrued to its owners or investors. The many proprietors of the eastern parts (Maine) needed strong and committed bodies between themselves and the French and Indians. Bodies in forts such as Pemaquid were helpful but families in homes had a real stake in protecting the frontier. Predictably, everybody in New England, friend and foe, suffered during the Indian wars which went on until 1759. War was not all that threatened them; some threats followed them daily through the eighteenth century and into the next. Those Scotch-Irish who came to Boothbay put their bodies between members of the human race and all comers in the other species.

## Bears, Wolves, and Wildcats

Boothbay was incorporated in 1764 and the early town meetings, with their few sparse articles, provide insight into mid-eighteenth-century concerns. In 1767 the town placed bounties of six shillings on wolves and three shillings on wildcats and bears. Two years later the bounty doubled on wolves, perhaps indicative of the amount of delicious sheep in town. By 1771, the formula was back to six on wolves, with three on wildcats and bears. The Revolution years brought a Boothbay prohibition against the firing of guns except at bears and wildcats. No action concerning "wild creatures" appeared on the town meeting warrants until after the Revolution when the bounties were reinstated—but not for long. Perhaps the most fearful animals had been driven from Boothbay's environs for there is no more mention of wildcats, bears, and wolves after 1787.

When I used to walk briskly from streetlight to streetlight up Murray Hill Road to my childhood home in the 1950s, my fear was nameless; but not so long ago people knew very well what shapes to fear. A legend has come down to this day, related to me by Red Giles (1912-1996), of a Colbath girl attacked and killed by a wildcat. It is said she was on her way home from school and was

attacked on the old town road on Colbath's Hill, near the Fish & Game Club on Dover Road.

### The Ravenous Crow

In 1772 crows made a modest entrance on the warrant at two pence a head, perhaps signaling significant farming of the area and jealous protection by the farmers of the corn crop—food for both man and his domestic animals. In the following years, a crow article showed up now and then and was occasionally passed. In 1802, 1812, and 1817 articles promoted a bounty on crows but were voted down. In 1805, 1806, and 1807 crows' heads brought ten cents apiece, while in 1816, six cents apiece. The selectmen did try to ensure that all heads paid for were killed within town limits and all heads were presented to the town treasurer. The treasurer's job was evidently more "hands-on" than—a sharp eye was needed to distinguish an Edgecomb crow from a Boothbay crow and a strong stomach was required to handle and dispose of all those heads. Since the local crow problem was rarely addressed at town meeting and still more rarely supported, an appeal was made by Boothbay residents to a higher authority.

In January of 1829 the state legislature was petitioned by twelve leading Boothbay citizens: William Reed, William Maxwell Reed, Benjamin Reed, John Murray McFarland, John McClintock, Ephraim McCobb, John McKown, Jacob Auld, Eleazer Sherman, David R. Adams, Nicholas T. Knight, and Edmund Wilson. They wished to have measures taken "to lessen the evil" caused by crows which "have become very numerous and very destructive and they are not less so in other parts of our State." The House of Representatives responded February 19, 1829, in this way:

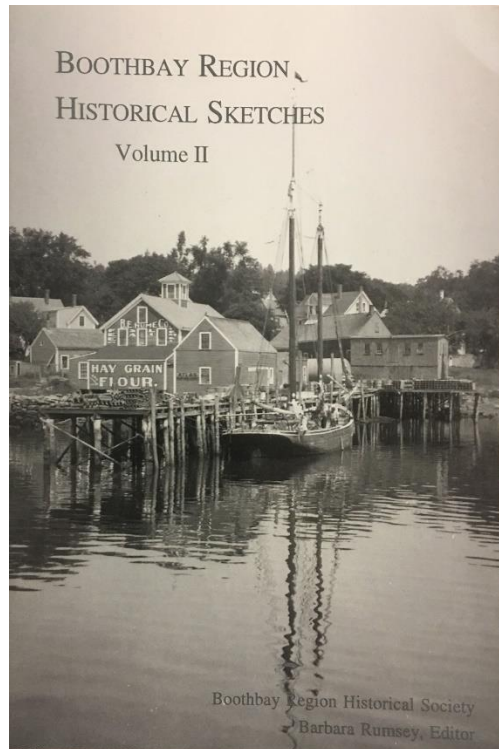
### Crows Declared Immoral, Lawless, and Greedy

The Committee to whom was referred the Bill to prevent destruction by Crows have bestowed all that attention on the Subject which its importance demands - They have examined with great care the Constitution of the State & can not find any Exclusive privilege therein granted to the sable part of the feathered race - And being satisfied that Crows, reckless of moral principle, & regardless of rights & the laws of the State, do prey upon the hard earnings of the honest yeomanry of our Country, & inasmuch as said Crows have not appeared by themselves or their Counsel to remonstrate against the passage of this bill, the Committee reports the same as taken into a new draft which is herewith submitted.

I doubt that there had been a diligent effort to duly and legally inform the crows of their rights to protect their interests. Nevertheless, the crows carried the day for the petition was "indefinitely postponed" and consigned to the legislative graveyard where everything not acted upon ends up. I like to think that the Boothbay men were good-natured about their lack of success and about the committee's use of the crow issue as comic relief. Even legislators need momentary vacations from the usual paper-shuffling tedium.

For more articles by Barbara Rumsey check our website  
[www.boothbayhistorical.org/out-of-our-past](http://www.boothbayhistorical.org/out-of-our-past)

## From Our Museum Shop



**Boothbay Region Historical Sketches, Vol II**  
**Edited by Barbara Rumsey**  
**\$15.00**

Have you read this fascinating book? This second volume of Sketches includes 56 more articles from the BRHS column in the Boothbay Register. The subject matter ranges from: the creation of Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor, the War of 1812, the Civil War, local brickyards, vanished features, Linekin Neck, the region in the 1840s and in the 1910s, profiles of some of our residents, and more.

Barbara Rumsey wrote most of the articles, while Asa Tupper Sr., Jim Stevens, and Alden Stickney provided four of them. The book is softcover, 288 pages, with 55 illustrations: 13 maps, 36 photos, and six drawings and documents. Trustee emeritus Alden P. Stickney drew many small sketches specifically for the book in order to enliven the text.

To buy your own copy, call us at 207-633-0820 or email us at [brhs@gwi.net](mailto:brhs@gwi.net),  
Wednesday through Saturday, 10am to 2pm.

**On Exhibit at BRHS**



Former Boothbay Region Band member and bass drum player, Harry Pinkham, wore this uniform for many years. Harry played in both school and town bands until he graduated from high school in 1946.

**Visit Boothbay Region Historical Society to read the rest of Harry's story, and see other local uniforms in this exhibit.**





*Who are those guys?*

**Boothbay Region Historical Society is open all year,  
Thursday through Saturday, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.**

Thinking of joining us? Your membership helps us preserve the region's fascinating history, your cultural heritage.

**What did we do in 2018?**

We enjoyed talking with our several hundred visitors over the year, and organized and hosted fourteen events including a speaker series, special tours, and (fun!) fundraisers. We curated special exhibits, helped researchers in our archives, and developed educational programming for Adult Education and Boothbay Region Elementary's third grade classes. We accepted donations (thank you!) of Boothbay region artifacts and documents, and continued the ongoing work of cataloging and caring for our collections.

We thank you all, members and non-members, those of you who donated items for our fundraisers, we thank our many volunteers, our visitors who stopped by the museum and archives, and those of you who commune with us through enews or on Facebook.

Why do we do this? Because we are passionate about history, and know that facing our future with intelligence and wisdom depends on understanding our past. But we couldn't do it without you.

**Thank you, you made it a great year!**



## *Celebrate our cultural heritage*

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