

BRHS News February 2019

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From Our Archives



Boothbay Harbor in 1890

By Barbara Rumsey

This photo was taken from the site of Chip Griffin's law office on Boothbay Harbor's east side. When taken, about 1890, the Menawarmet Hotel stood there and the vantage is from the hotel wharf looking west to West Harbor and McKown Point.

On the far right is McFarland's Point, the southernmost part of Commercial Street called "the South End" in the late 1800s. It is covered with "marine hospital" buildings used by "ship surgeon" Billy Sawyer in his vessel wrecking business, now the site of Tugboat and other businesses. The steamer *Enterprise*, brought to these waters by East Boothbay Races in 1887, is

plowing through the icy channel. Seen behind her mast/cargo boom is the West Harbor icehouse, near the site of the present post office. The ice wharf juts out nearly to the marine railway and the site of W. H. Reed's growing Oake Grove Hotel, operated up through the 1940s and early 1950s by his daughter-in-law Lulu Dorr and granddaughter Connie Reed Wright

Just forward of the steamer's bow is a black speck, a man evidently walking on the ice to Harbor (aka John's, McFarland's, Little, and Sawyer's) Island. Only one building occupies the island in the photo, but about ten years later Billy Sawyer's brother Melvin developed the island for a fish processing area with wharf, windmill, and flakeyard.

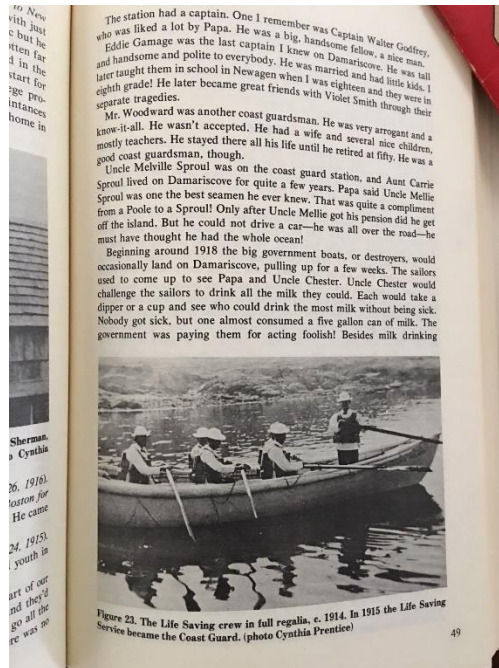
Directly far across from the Menawarmet wharf is the snowy expanse from Four Corners toward McKown Point. Barely visible are the old Reed (now Connie Reed Wright) and Thorpe (now Rick Thorpe) houses. McKown Point, bisected by the wharf building's smokestack, has but one building on it and looks strangely bare without the Swann cottage at the top and the other cottages, houses, D.M.R., Bigelow Lab, and Coast Guard buildings.

The steamer *Enterprise* was retired and converted to a barge the same summer the Menawarmet burned--1913. The August 30, 1913 *Register* recorded: "Farewell to the honored, venerable and faithful old steamer. How many thousands tons of freight she has brought to our shores in the quarter century she plied between Portland and Boothbay! Her life is to be taken from her, but her body goes floating along." And the October 11, 1913 *Register* went on, "What a tale this grand old servant could tell if she could speak of sunshine and storm, both of herself and of the human freight she has carried safely these many years." Among the people I've talked to about Boothbay summers, I've heard more affection for the steamer era and that form of transport than for any other.

For more articles by Barbara Rumsey check our website
www.boothbayhistorical.org/out-of-our-past

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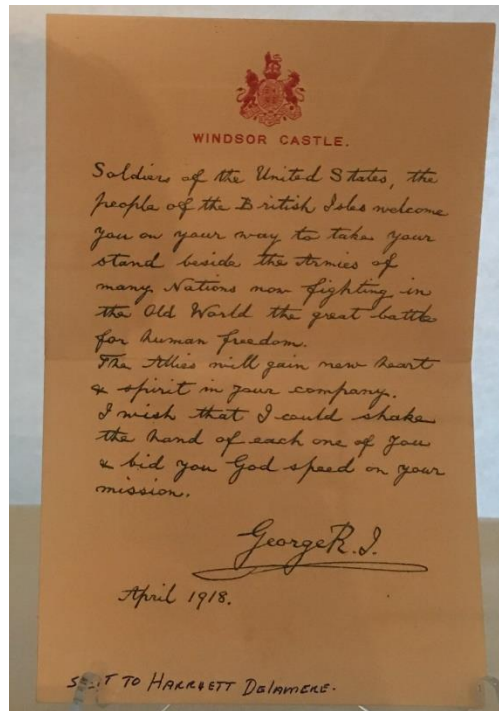
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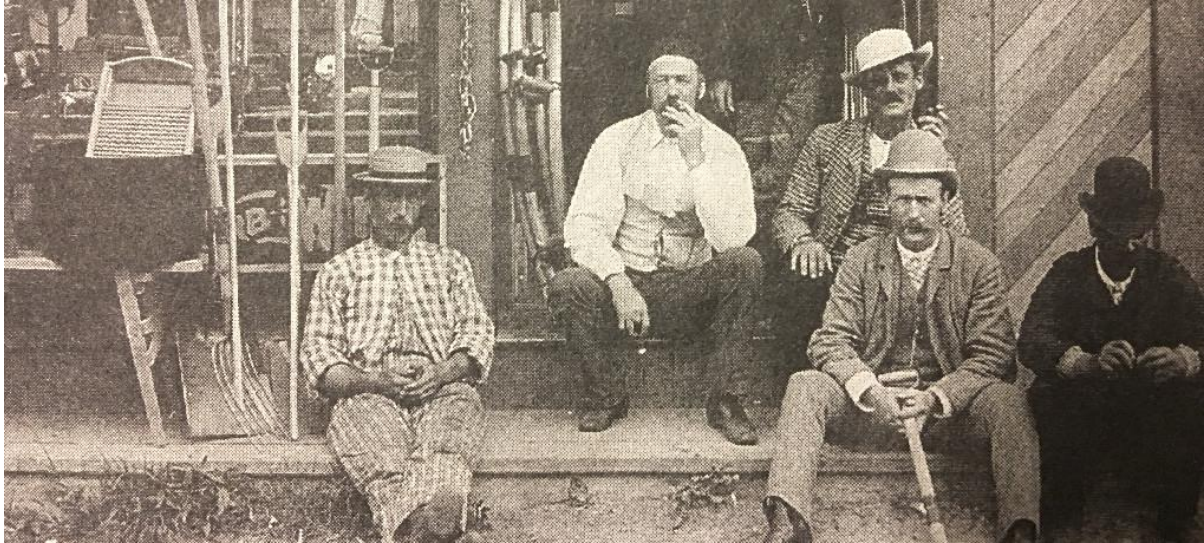
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