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Photograph: 1905 Boothbay High School graduating class

Boothbay Region Historical Society News

January 2021

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A 1909 view of an unfinished gambrel-roofed Mill Cove icehouse. The endless chain conveys the blocks up into the icehouse. There is another gravity-feed trestle heading south to the right or toward the cove. Note the outside studding of the unfinished icehouse; it was to become double-walled to allow sawdust or straw to fill the cavities, as we do today with fiberglass batts or cellulose. I believe the horizontal boarding on the left is helping to contain the ice stacked outside the icehouse. Other shots show planks leaning on the boards, buttressing them.

Mill Cove Ice Company, Part II

By Barbara Rumsey

In 1869 Luther Maddocks moved from Southport to Boothbay Village, as Boothbay Harbor was then called, and remained so called until it was set off from Boothbay in 1889. Luther became known for his many business ventures in his adopted town of Boothbay and later in even newer Boothbay Harbor. He was the region startup king, no matter where: in Southport where he started a dogfish facility; in Boothbay and later the Harbor where he started fish factories and iceworks. Always in motion, he ran multiple businesses at the same time and lobbied on the local, state and national level for regulations.

Mill Cove Ice Co.

One of Luther's startups was an iceworks at Mill Cove. In May 1882, he started damming the head of Mill Cove to deepen the huge marsh behind it into an ice pond. Within a month the water was visibly backing up, not seen since the 1820s when the Reeds had a mill there. Though the created iceworks "lake" became known as Penny Lake in living people's memories, it was never so called in newspaper references I've seen up to 1920.

By summer 1882 the encroaching water was flooding the main route into Boothbay Village,

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Special town meeting was called to vote to raise 600 feet of the road on the Meadow by about three feet. The article didn't pass — maybe voters hoped the iceworks would foot the bill to raise the road.

In November 1882 Luther built up his facility by adding a slip for vessels to load ice at Mill Cove, as well as engine houses and elevator frames to lift ice cakes into the upper floors of a new icehouse and into vessels. He built a wharf many hundreds of feet long extending into the cove as seen on the 1885 Eastern Steamship map. Deep water to load three- and four-masters was pretty far out. The ice wharf at West Harbor was 1,000 feet long; Mill Cove's might have been nearly as long. Despite the length, vessels grounded out even with the cove dredged.

Flooding the Meadow

Meanwhile the townspeople fretted about the morass the flooded road through the Meadow had become. Warrant articles continued to come up for funds to raise the Meadow's road and install bridges. Eventually the road was raised at least three feet in the 1880s and numerous bridges did go in. In following decades it was raised many more feet. In the 1990s Lester Barter told me that decades earlier the State dug deep test pits on the Meadow road and found corduroyed pine logs about 10 feet down, maybe a bridge or a section of corduroy road. The Harbor worked on draining the Meadow incessantly, even without the dam creating havoc — it's a low place with little grade. Decades of appropriations went toward the effort. It still flooded in the 1980s.

Luther sold part of the iceworks to Nathaniel Webster of Gloucester, Mass., in 1885. More icehouses and a stable for the horses, an iceworks necessity, were added. One of their jobs was pulling the scoring groovers just before cutting. Men sawed the cakes, optimally 22 inches thick and nearly three feet long, and poled them through the canals to the endless chain that hauled them into the icehouse. Work was often done at night on ice ponds. It was said that the ponds looked like cities with countless lanterns moving or dotting the surface.

Luther left Mill Cove Ice by 1888. He often clashed with partners from away such as Webster; though necessary for cash infusions, they were not used to small town ways. In 1890, 70 men were at work at the Mill Cove. Iceworks fires were common, and in 1892 one of the Mill Cove icehouses burnt. Luther returned to the business, perhaps in the late 1890s, though his autobiography is vague.

Boom times in 1909

A banner year for Mill Cove Ice was 1909. The March 9 Register recorded, "Ice cutting, harvesting, and shipping this week has been just snapping at the Mill Cove Iceworks." A week later, the paper went on, "Luther Maddocks is hustling things at Mill Cove. Houses are full; they're building a large stack (ice blocks piled outside) and loading a vessel with another waiting. Byron Giles, who's cutting ice for Luther, has housed a fine lot of ice and is now cutting for vessels and stacking ice for

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southern ports. A four-master has loaded and sailed for New York. Large crews are working day and night to keep things humming. The muddigger *Leviathan* arrived from Portland and is dredging out the channel at Mill Cove Ice dock to allow vessels drawing 18 feet of water to load at any tide. As soon as finished, the company will commence to ship from the stack."

The Mill Cove iceworks, one of once-many powerhouses for local jobs, went out of business in 1918, earlier than some, later than others, but all victims of economic pressures and modern refrigeration.

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

Thank You!

**Thank you Nat Wilson for your generous donation of this beautiful
watercolor by Earle G. Barlow.**



The watercolor is a portrait of the *WANDERER*, built in 1854 by John McDougall. At 1197 tons and 184 feet long, she was the largest ship built in Boothbay yards. Earle

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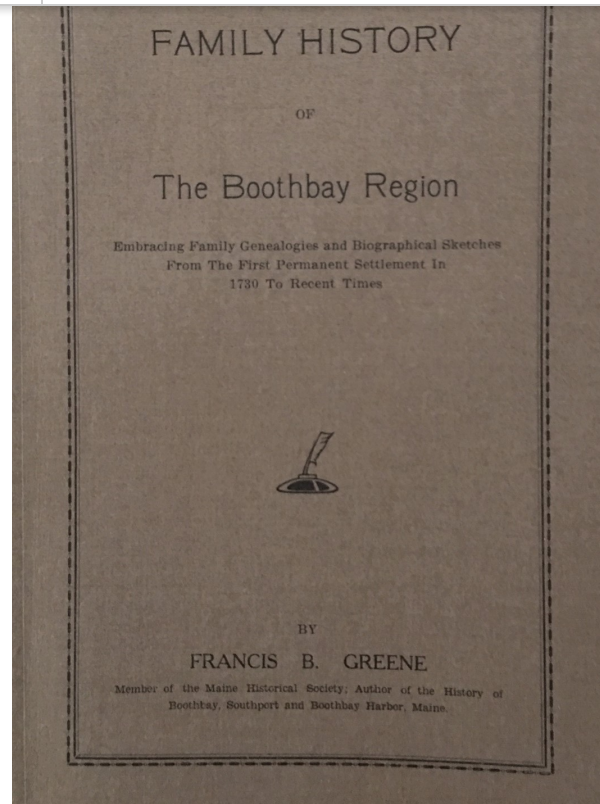
...served in the Navy during WW II, studied art at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts, taught art at Brunswick High School, had his own art gallery Studio of Ships, and sailed across the Atlantic on a boat he built. His work has been exhibited at Mystic Seaport Museum, Maine Maritime Museum, Penobscot Marine Museum, Univ. of Maine, and Kennedy Gallery in New York. He passed away in 2013.



Detail from Earle Barlow's watercolor The WANDERER

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Family History of the Boothbay Region

by Francis B. Greene

\$25.00

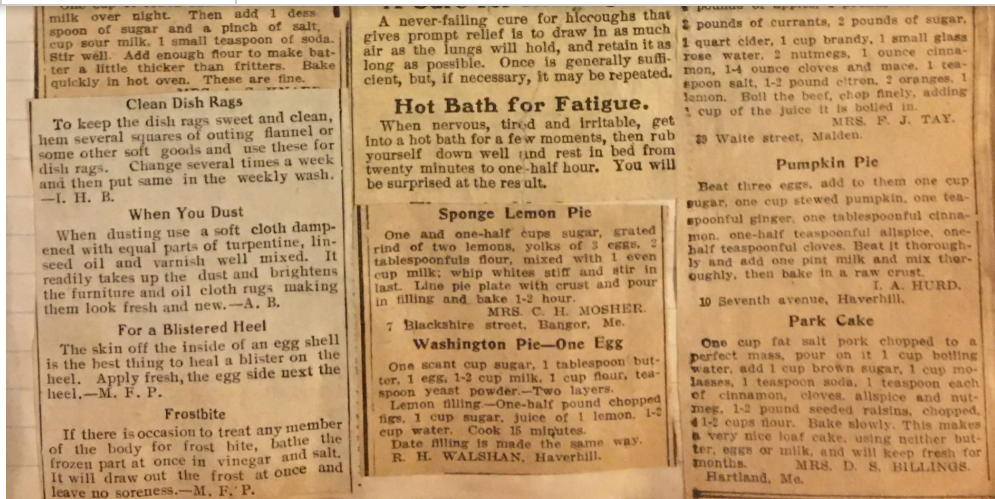
This book of family genealogies and biographical sketches is a second printing of pages 462 to 647 of the "History of Boothbay, Southport and Boothbay Harbor, Maine" published in 1909. It covers the period from the first permanent settlement in 1730 to 1906, when "History of Boothbay, Southport and Boothbay Harbor, Maine" was published.

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BRHS Recipes of the Month

FROM OUR COLLECTIONS recipes from the recipe scrapbook of Elizabeth Reed.

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Elizabeth Freeman Reed was born in Boothbay Harbor in 1874, the last of three children. Her mother died a few days after giving birth to her. Her father, Capt. Freeman Reed was lost at sea in 1889 when Elizabeth was 14. Elizabeth went to Mt. Holyoke College and taught school mostly in Boston and New York. She retired about 1940 and moved back to her home in Boothbay Harbor (now home to the Boothbay Region Historical Society). Elizabeth Freeman Reed's death in 1953 ended 226 years of family ownership of the house at 72 Oak Street.

*And very best wishes to all of you
for a happy and safe 2021
from all of us.*

Let's celebrate our cultural heritage together

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