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Photograph: Lobster clam bake crew at Murray Hill Indian Carry 1938

A Window to the Past

Boothbay Region Historical Society News

October 2021

Researching and preserving our history

Your stories will not be forgotten

From Our Archives



The flowers Boothbay soldier Charley McCobb picked on June 21, 1861 in Mary Todd Lincoln's garden in front of the White House in Washington, D.C. He sent them to Lizzie Blair of Boothbay, mother of Bess Reed, who owned and lived at the historical society building until the mid-1950s.

Charley McCobb: Civil War Soldier, Part II

By Barbara Rumsey

Last time, I described Charley McCobb's youth in Boothbay and his joining Company E of the 4th Maine Regiment on June 15, 1861 soon after the outbreak of the Civil War. In only six days, Charley was far from Maine and writing a letter to his close friend Lizzie Blair. She lived on the road later to be named Oak Street in present-day Boothbay Harbor, then Boothbay Village. In the letter, James is probably James Beath, Annie is Lizzie's sister, and V.M. is Volunteer Militia.

Charley McCobb's letter

Dear Lizzie,

The enclosed I picked in Mrs. Lincoln's garden in front of the White House. The scientific or common names I know not, but suppose you will know the common name and find the scientific one and put it in your herbarium.

Saw James in N.Y. — had a splendid time with him cruising about the city. Tell Annie that a letter directed to Chas. S. McCobb, care of Surgeon Banks, 4th reg. Maine V. M., Meridian Hill, Washington D.C. will be received without difficulty.

The flowers have been on the wall of the historical society for the 28 years [written in 2013] I've been involved there (and perhaps decades longer when it was privately

Bull Run, Libby Prison

Five weeks after enlisting, Charley, a hospital steward, was captured in the first major battle of the Civil War, the first battle of Bull Run at Manassas, Va., on July 21, 1861. He was a prisoner at Libby prison in Richmond, Va., for four or five months. While there in October, 1861, he wrote Lizzie a letter through someone who was released.

But we have only the news she sent on to her brother Ben Blair, who was in the merchant marine and mate on the bark *Mendi*. Ben joined the Navy later, serving aboard the steam-powered, bark-rigged *Mohican*. Her role was to chase Confederate raiders and perform blockade duties; she also took part in the bombardment of Fort Fisher in North Carolina in 1864 and 1865.

Lizzie wrote Ben that Charley was "taking care of about 40 wounded, doing a lot of reading of medical works, Cooper, and Dickens, and he gets some things denied to other prisoners."

Charley instructed Lizzie to tell Ben, *He (Charley) was a great deal better there than drifting on the broad Atlantic on an old wreck with very little provisions.*

Lizzie also told Ben that mutual Boothbay friend, George Kenniston, who later married Lizzie's sister Annie, *is in the building directly opposite and they can speak about once a week, send notes back and forth, and commune by signs when they happen to be standing at the same time in the door of their cages.* George Kenniston's house was recently torn down by the Congregational church to create a parking lot.

Charley was released from Libby prison after about five months. Local Civil War expert Earl Leavitt explained to me that early in the war, there was a prison exchange policy. Soldiers who promised not to rejoin the fight were permitted to go home long before the war was over. Severely wounded men might be released in an exchange. However, men from both sides broke the promises and returned to their units — the Confederates were especially notorious for doing so. General Grant halted the practice in 1864.

Yorktown, Fair Oaks, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville

Charley returned to the 4th regiment and sent another letter to Lizzie on May 2, 1862 from Camp Winfield Scott in Yorktown, Va. He wrote, *While out today taking a view of the Rebels while they were giving us a sample of their artillery practice, I saw a number of flowers in the open field directly in front of their works and within reach of*

and intended to send them to you. Tonight, when I looked for them in the book in which I had them in press they were missing.

The next day at 9 a.m., he added, *All quiet along our line this morning. The Rebels are firing quite briskly from one of their batteries.*

In June, the regiment took part in the first battle of Fair Oaks, and by December the regiment was involved in the four-day battle at Fredericksburg. According to Rev. William Leavitt, who served at the Congo Church in the 1860s, Charley regretted doing hospital work behind the lines and requested to go back to the front lines. He was made a second lieutenant on April 26, 1863 and returned to his unit, which took part in the battle at Chancellorsville a few days later.

Next and last time: Charley at the battle of Gettysburg.

For more articles by Barbara Rumsey about the Boothbay region check our website

www.boothbayhistorical.org/out-of-our-past

DESSERT GLORIOUS DESSERT

(yes, and cheese glorious cheese!)



Cheese Sale

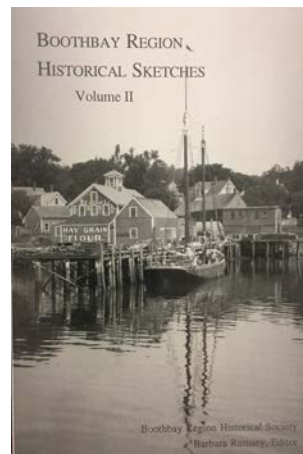
Friday, October 8, 10am - 2pm

Cheese and Bake Sale

Saturday, October 9, 10am - 2pm

Delicious freshly baked pies, cakes, cookies, brownies
Vermont's popular Grafton Village Cheese
We sell out quickly, so come early!
Boothbay Region Historical Society, 72 Oak Street
Boothbay Harbor
We look forward to seeing you!

MUSEUM STORE



Boothbay Region Historical Sketches Volume II

Barbara Rumsey, Editor

Learn about the creation of Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor, the War of 1812, the Civil War, the region 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 long, with 55 illustrations: 13 maps, 36 photos, and six drawings or documents. Trustee emeritus Alden P. Stickney drew many small sketches specifically for the book in order to enliven the text.

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*We're (normally) open year-round,
Thursday through Saturday, 10 am to 2 pm.*

Please check our website for COVID-19 restrictions.

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