



Reed Bros Shipyard. L-R standing Grace Reed, Rodney Reed, Roland Pinkham, Herman Pinkham, William Reed, Lewis, Ira Lewis. From left, kneeling, Lewis Johnson. Rest are unknown.

A Window to the Past

Boothbay Region Historical Society News

August 2022

Researching and preserving our history

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From Our Archives



*1904 Boothbay Harbor photo looks up Commercial Street to the McCobb store on Townsend Avenue
near the intersection with Oak Street*

Upper Commercial Street, circa 1904

By Barbara Rumsey, 2014

When I decide to write about a subject, often I don't really know if I've written about it before. So I skim through the titles of the 570-plus articles I've had in the Register since 1988, and I sometimes stop to consult some of the text to double check. This was one of the thorny ones — the main crossroads in Boothbay Harbor, upper Commercial Street and Bank Square, is a popular spot for photos. I'd written about a couple of other perspectives on the spot, but I hadn't written about the adjoining shot.

The shot looks up Commercial Street to the white building at the corner of Oak Street and Townsend Avenue. It was J. L. McCobb's Dry Goods built in 1880, which then occupied the site of the 1906 bank building, now a jewelry store. In preparation for the bank's construction, the McCobb store was moved up Oak Street and is west across from the post office. It now houses Mel's Pizza.

On the right is the brick C. J. Marr clothing store in the Gregory Block. The structure was built about 1901 by Dr. George Gregory who came to town from the Maritimes and went on to found the hospital in 1907. He had his doctor's office on the second floor of the Gregory Block, and he also rented space to a dentist. The third floor housed apartments and a tailor. In 1902 C. J. Marr

The building with the window awnings to the right of C.J. Marr's is the custom house, as it has been called since it was built. In 1883-1884 its builder, Isaiah Lewis, first built the Lewis Block, later Carbone's. As soon as he finished that, he built the custom house/savings bank building, just northwest of the Lewis Block in 1885. It housed the savings bank and the small local customs office for arriving and departing vessels. It was all very convenient, naturally located near the harbor's major wharves. It was equally convenient for both Marr, who was the customs official, and for Lewis, who served on the bank board. That savings bank, the first bank in the region, dates back only to 1872. Before then you obtained loans from other townspeople or out-of-town banks in Wiscasset or Bath.

Also in 1885 the rise in the street in front of the custom house was blasted to lower the grade. The 1880s saw buildings moved, obstacles blasted, and general jostling in the heart of the business district. Bank Square was widened from formerly narrow streets to its present width by moving buildings back, as seen in this photo. Previously stores were in the middle of the now wide intersection. Simultaneously, upper Commercial was also modernized with moving and new construction. The first summer tourist boom was in full bloom in the 1880s, and Boothbay was sprucing itself up.

The left side of the photo is more problematic, since it's hard to make out where one store stops and another starts. Asa Tupper (born 1898) and Lester Barter (born 1906) described to me the businesses along that stretch in the 1916 period. The 1904 Sanborn Insurance map also identifies them at the time of this shot. The sign on the building with the gable end showing is partially legible, "Spa" on the lower line; the map describes it as an ice cream shop. The sidewalk section heading between the buildings led to Ernest Barter's cobbler shop. The next building was the Harris & McClearn drug store (later Porter's lower store) and offices above for Judge Cyrus Tupper, Judge John Brackett and Dr. Barrows. Further up to the corner was a barber, and finally John Lake's hardware store on the corner of McKown and Commercial. He lived above, where accountant Henry Hurford has his office.

Many of the harbor's commercial buildings formerly had a public space called a hall on the second floor for meetings of all kinds or dances. As seen here, the second floors also housed professionals who provided services unrelated to the merchandising businesses below. It was more the rule than the exception. In the 1950s and 1960s, I went to a dentist on the second floor in the Gregory Block and to barber Fred Marlowe on the second floor on Townsend Avenue. He was a familiar figure until 1995 standing on the sidewalk below his shop in his white barber jacket when free — no better way to advertise that he could cut your hair immediately. Times have changed: I think Henry Hurford is the last professional in the harbor to offer a service on

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

SPEAKER SERIES

Early Shipyards of Boothbay



Ada Cliff, ship model on display at Boothbay Region Historical Society built by Jon Dunsford

Thursday, August 24, 4:30 pm
Jon Dunsford

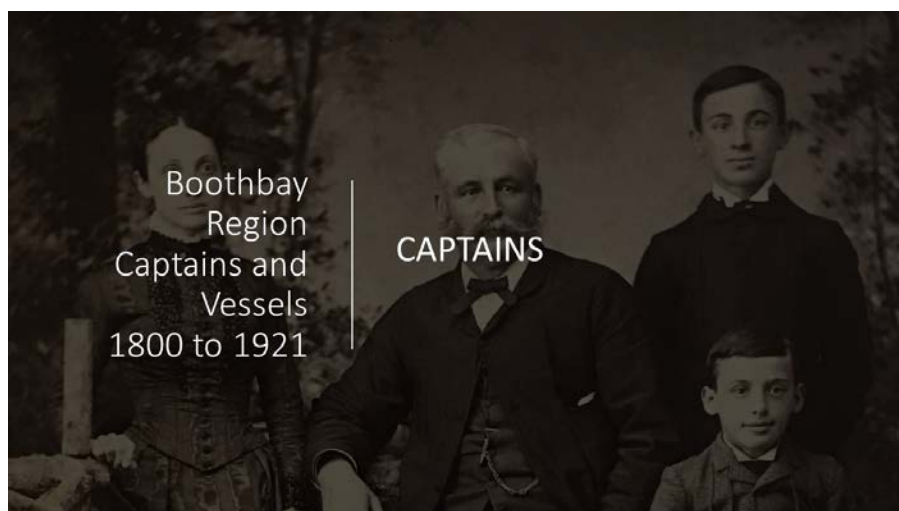
On Thursday, August 25, at 4:30 pm Boothbay Region Historical Society presents Jon Dunsford's illustrated talk "Early Shipyards of Boothbay" an overview of the first one hundred years of shipbuilding in our region. Using images from the Boothbay Region Historical Society archives and other sources, this talk focuses on the Age of Sail: what was built, by whom, and where. Dunsford knits together a shipwright's tale utilizing his own meticulous work as well as the research of Barbara Rumsey and the late local historian Jim Stevens.

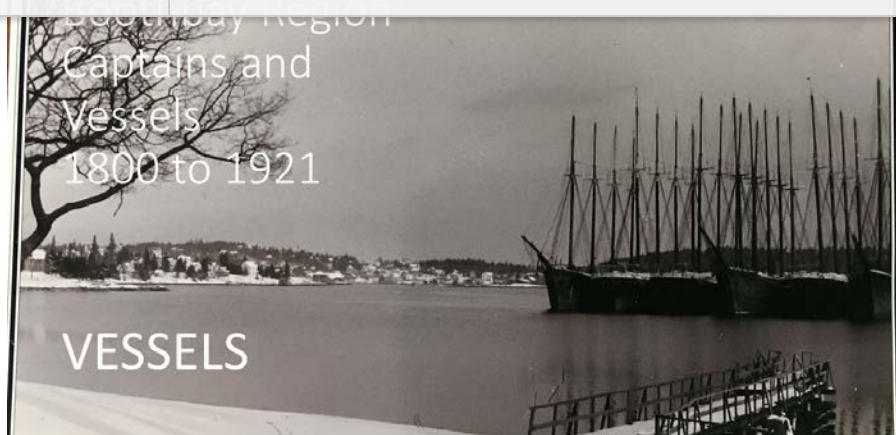


Jon Dunsford is a retired engineer and recreational sailor who has been an enthusiastic student of the maritime history of New England most of his life. He has been studying the vessels of Boothbay and building models for nearly ten years.

Admission is free. Donations are gratefully accepted. Currently all talks are offered both in-person and on Zoom. The Zoom link is on our [website here](#). **Doors open at 4:15. In-house seating is limited.** Call us at 207-633-0820, or email brhs@gwi.net for the latest information.

EXHIBIT NEWS





This model of the *Ada Cliff* built by Jon Dunsford is currently on loan to us for this exhibit and for Jon's talk "Early Shipyards of Boothbay" on August 25th.

The model will return to Jon after his talk.

Come to the Boothbay Region Historical Society to see this exhibit, and come again on August 25 at 4:30 to hear Jon's talk!

This wonderful exhibit runs April 7 through December 31, 2022

Boothbay Region Historical Society
is open Thursday through Saturday, 10 am to 2 pm.

See you soon!

Let's celebrate our cultural heritage together

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Boothbay Region Historical Society

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*We're open year-round,
weather permitting
Thursday through Saturday, 10 am to 2 pm.*

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