



Mary G Maynard launch in 1920 at East Coast Ship Company yard

A Window to the Past

Boothbay Region Historical Society

December 2022

Researching and preserving our history

Your stories will not be forgotten

From Our Archives



Grandpa Brings in the Christmas Tree
woodblock print by Asa G. Randall (1869-1948)

Christmas 1904

By Evelyn Hodgdon

(editor's note: a repeat, but such a lovely reminder of how we were many years ago)

Evelyn Hodgdon, the author of the below letter, was born in 1896 and died in 1974 in Oneonta, New York. She was the granddaughter of George and Angelia (Lewis) Hodgdon of Sawyers Island and the daughter of Frank Hodgdon, who was born on the island in 1867. They lived in the house now owned by Dawn and Bob Kidd.

Evelyn was educated at Columbia University in the 1930s and devoted her life to teaching in all its forms: volunteering in local schools, Sunday schools and churches while earning a living as a professor at the State University of New York at Oneonta. Following her retirement from SUNY-Oneonta in 1959 after a 25-year career there, she jumped right back in, teaching in Buckhorn, Kentucky and Milford Center, New York until her death. There is a center named after her at SUNY-Oneonta in recognition of her lifelong efforts to improve the education of children in rural areas.

Evelyn had a tradition of giving her memories as Christmas presents to nieces and nephews—a prudent course with ten sisters and brothers! Evelyn's 1941 Christmas letter about a summer trip to Sawyers Island was printed in this column in 1992 and published in "Sketches I." We are fortunate to also have her 1940 letter describing a 1904 Christmas. It was provided by Evelyn's nephew, Parker Hodgdon of Vermont.

Barbara Rumsey

Christmas Eve is a time when one thinks of all the people he loves and has loved. It is a time when a grown-up remembers other Christmases past. Because of all these things I write this letter to tell you of a Christmas 36 years ago.

The family then consisted of Wilbert, myself, Albert, Edith, George, Percival, Alva, and Clifton. Arleen, Alice, and Helen had not yet been born. We lived with our father, mother, and grandfather. (Of course some of the family are now your father, your mother, or your uncles and aunts.) Wilbert was ten years old. I was going on nine and Clifton was a brand new baby who arrived a little too early to be a real Christmas gift. All the others ranged between and were like steps.

The new baby was expensive and there was not much money left for other things that year. Mrs. Stimson was taking care of Mother and the new baby. I was supposed to look after all the other children.

My father told Wilbert and me that he could spare us just half a dollar for Christmas. Now if you count our family, you will find that there were eleven folks to buy for. After much planning, we, the two oldest, decided that if we did not spend anything for each other, we could buy eight five-cent gifts and a ten-cent one for Mother.

Wilbert fastened a box on the sharpshooter Father had made him. We called boys' sleds sharpshooters in those days. I can see the sled now and feel the thrill of excitement of starting off to shop, warmly dressed, with an awful responsibility of half a dollar in Wilbert's pocket. I can see the sun getting high over the woods on the river side of the farm. Chimney smoke from the wood fires of our neighbors interested us as we excitedly pulled our sled the three miles to the village. We hurried the process some by sliding down "New Road Hill." You know there were no automobiles on winter roads at that time.

All day we shopped. I can even remember a few things we bought. Mother's gift was a dish drainer, a ten-cent wire one that looked just grand to us. For Edith, a red hair ribbon; for George, colored crayons; and for Alva, a tiny doll for me to dress. We bought the baby a rattle. Oranges were not common on our table then. I never expect to see two oranges that look as large and fine as those we bought for Father and Grandfather.

All these things packed securely in our sled, we started home. It grew dark as we trudged back and the way seemed longer. We wished that the hill would tip the other way so we could ride down. The stars and the snow made the twilight bright, and the neighbors' lamps made the way seem friendly and cozy. Arriving home, we hid our box in the dark clothespress until it should be time to wrap the gifts.

Baby Clifton was to be nine days old on Christmas Day so it was decided that the tree could be in Mother's room. It had to be a small tree because the rooms you

get a “six point fir” and often we spent a whole Sunday afternoon searching for the right tree.

Now we had no electric lights at the farm, and candles on a tree were not considered safe, but it must be trimmed. I love to recall those pre-Christmas winter evenings when, after the barn chores were finished, the supper dishes done, and the littlest ones in bed, Father put the big lamp in the center of the dining room table, and we all gathered around it. We painted nuts with gilt paint, cut cardboard stars and bells and covered them with tinfoil. We made cornucopias with strung popcorn and cranberries. Father directed us and stopped mending a harness or tapping shoes to cut us a pattern now and then. As fast as someone finished a piece, it was carried to Mother’s room for approval and put upon the tree.

The last evenings were spent in the kitchen. Father kept the stove filled with split wood till the top glowed red. We took turns shaking the popper till the big milk pails were filled with popcorn. The molasses syrup was cooked till it was brittle in cold water. Father stirred the corn and syrup together and all helped make big platters of corn balls. We made both molasses and vinegar candy. If I remember hard, I can smell that kitchen now. How glad I was to have Father’s help with all the dirty dishes we made.

We were ready for Christmas Eve. Father did the chores early. Supper was early and quickly cleared away. We could all sit up late. Everybody was “dressed up” and somewhat hushed. We filed into Mother’s room to “have the tree.” The littlest ones always went first, and we watched their faces to catch the excitement and wonder there. Mother has told me that we had the usual lovely gifts from aunts, uncles, grandparents, and friends. I do not remember much about “having the tree” or the gifts, but I remember Wilbert, Dad, and I sitting at the dining room table after the house was quiet and sharing with Father section by section the best orange I ever ate.

It was good to undress by the airtight stove, put on warm night clothes and get into bed to cuddle “the next to the baby” and wonder if it were wrong to think of Mother and Clifton as a Christmas Madonna and Child.

This Christmas has always been clear in my mind. Perhaps because I was almost nine, perhaps because I felt so responsible, perhaps it was the new baby, or because Father did some of the things that Mother usually did. Whatever the reason, its family fellowship is a lovely memory. My wish for you is such Christmases to look back upon when you are grown.

Much love,
Aunt Evelyn

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

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

Come celebrate with us on Saturday, December 3, 10 am to 2 pm
at Boothbay Region Historical Society!



We will be serving delicious home-made holiday cookies and treats, and the museum will be festively decorated with our special antique decorations.

RAFFLE



A spectacular two-foot-tall **Christmas Tree Pinata**
filled with toys and treats including a plush Teddy Bear.
Someone you know needs this! Maybe everyone?
And then we have:

Holiday Gift Basket

Antique basket with:

Atlantic Edge gift certificate for 8 fresh 1-1/4 lobsters

Lighthouse Swedish wash towel Sheepscot Pottery scallop soap dish, and a Maine keychain

Lobster cocktail napkins, Balsam fir mug mat, Pot buoy magnetic memo pad

Downeast Candies saltwater taffy sampler

Braided starfish coasters (set of two)

Everyone you know will want this, too.

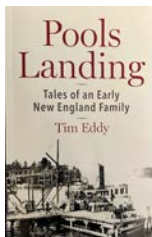
Come and buy you raffle tickets before 1pm this Saturday. See you there!



SHOP WITH US

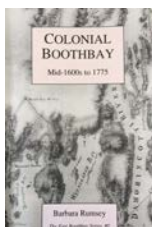
Holiday sale on everything in our museum shop!

All books, maps, and gift shop items will be 10% off on sale
December 1st thru 17th. Stock up for Christmas.



Pools Landing: Tales of an Early New England Family
Written by L.B. Eddy

A beautifully researched history, this story begins in England, and continues to Maine with detailed descriptions of how people were living, how land was passed down, and the road the author took to uncover this story.



Colonial Boothbay: Mid-1600s to 1775
Written by Barbara Rumsey

Boothbay was a "howling wilderness." Find out why, and discover who the very first settlers were and how they survived and thrived.

Coming of Age on Damariscove Island, Maine



A moving story of growing up on a Maine island.

Find more books, maps, and more [on our website](#)
or in our museum store

Our Holiday Wish List

Do you have a folding table you no longer need?
Give us a call! We may be able to take it off your hands.

Our goal is to promote our history and serve our community

Here is what we do:

Run:

A museum open free of charge, year-round

Manage:

A research archive, with thousands of photographs, account books, diaries and much more

Offer:

Free third grade history program

Free speakers series

Yearly special exhibits

Assist:

Researchers and historians from across the USA and around the world

Develop special projects:

Digitizing our collections

Writing an exhibition catalog

And we maintain our 1874 historic house

Thank you for your support!

We couldn't do it without you.



Let's celebrate our cultural heritage together

[Follow us on Facebook](#)
[or click here for our website.](#)

Boothbay Region Historical Society

72 Oak Street

Post Office Box 272

Boothbay Harbor, Maine 04538

207.633.0820

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

Copyright © 2018 Boothbay Region Historical Society, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list.](#)

Subscribe

Past Issues

This email was sent to <<Email Address>>

Translate ▼

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)
Boothbay Region Historical Society · PO Box 272 · Boothbay Harbor, ME 04538 · USA

