



*Photograph: East Boothbay, from church to Coles house, winter 1930s or 1940s*

## **A Window to the Past**

*Boothbay Region Historical Society News*

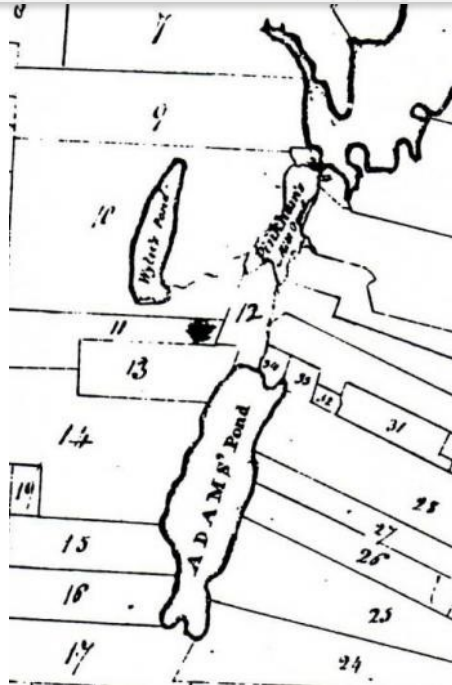
**January 2022**

*Researching and preserving our history*

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## **From Our Archives**



*Illustration caption: This 1815 map section shows lot #12, sold by John Farnham to the Adamses in 1769. It controlled the waterway on its right side, draining Adams Pond to the north. As many as three mills and dams were along it. Pinkhams Millpond above it was created and bulged in size when impounded by another dam in Ovens Mouth River. The Adams shipyard was just north of the upper dam on the east side I believe. Farther above on that side was their shipbuilding site down on the river at presently Shore Hills or Joan Rittall's, across from Miss Piggy.*

## The North Boothbay Adams Shipyard and Mill

By Barbara Rumsey, 2014

The sites mentioned in this article had many more names and owners over time than I give here, but to include them all and their explanations would require much more space.

The extended Adams family had about a 100-year record of local shipbuilding and milling. To go back to the beginning, Samuel Adams came to Boothbay by 1762. His work was housebuilding, and one project was the town's 1765 meetinghouse at Boothbay Center which served as the church and town hall. It was located at the site of the Memorial Park and was moved to an East Boothbay shipyard in 1848.

Samuel Adams settled above Boothbay Center. Water above the Center drains north, so

along where Toots Adams now lives 250 years later. In 1769 Joseph Farnham sold them lot #12 on the map, the waterway just north above Adams Pond to where it starts to broaden toward Ovens Mouth.

### Adams Mills

By 1770 Samuel Adams had a mill along that stretch, at times grist and at times saw. From deed work I've done, I know that different spots in the quarter mile of waterway above the foot of Adams Pond were used for millsites, including a fulling and carding mill. We're most familiar with the site that Adamses deeded to Joseph Dodge in 1870, becoming the Dodge mill of the 20th century. It occupied the site just across Adams Pond Road from the pond.

When the broad watery expanse above the quarter-mile Adams Pond outlet stream was impounded above, it was called the Great Pond or Baker's or Pinkham's Mill Pond and that (also) quarter-mile pond powered a pre-1761 mill well above Adams's. It was an important area until late in the 1800s, with a now-discontinued town road crossing the milldam from Dover to the woods below Boothbay Mechanics on Route 27. The last time I was at the dam site, bedlogs were still visible at low tide. Two of Samuel's 11 children, David R. Adams and James Adams, were mill owners born in the mid-1770s. They, and father Samuel at times, owned both the Adams and Pinkham mills into the mid-1800s.

### Adams Shipyards

David and James were also shipbuilders from perhaps the 1810s, launching into Ovens Mouth up above Pinkham's millsite. Sawmills and shipyards, natural outgrowths of each other, were often allied. Boats need lumber; efficient production of lumber needs mills. D. & J. Adams built vessels near Pinkham's mill and at a site north above there, down on the water west of the Rittall place and/or Shore Hills — all properties owned by the Adamses.

Though I believe they started building in the 1810s, I can't tie specific vessels to them until 1828, when they built a 70-foot schooner, followed by a couple of pinkies of about 50 feet and an 81-foot schooner by 1832. My personal favorite of theirs was the 83-foot topsail schooner, *Julia & Martha*, built in 1833. The schooner had an amazingly long life, given that vessels were assumed to have a 20-year life span. It was still under sail until at least 1911. Some of the ship's adventures in its 80 years at sea, 40 of which it sailed out of Boothbay, were two groundings in 1845, damage and a life lost in 1847, ashore in 1855, and waterlogged in 1888. It was rebuilt at least twice in the years it sailed out of Boothbay. Four more known Adams vessels followed, including the 92-foot brig *Tecumseh* in 1843. Thereafter with D. & J. Adams in their

they built many more unknown vessels.

### Deeper water, bigger vessels

There were difficulties launching into shallow Ovens Mouth River. Two shipbuilding nephews of D. & J. Adams, Andrew and William (born 1805 and 1808), left North Boothbay for more favorable Hodgsons Mills (East Boothbay), as did shipbuilder John McDougall decades later. A. & W. Adams arrived in the village in the late 1820s, where they became respected local shipbuilders.

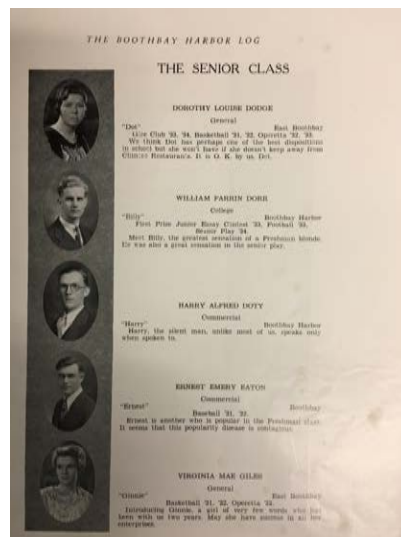
Though the two brothers consistently worked together, they had different life styles. Andrew came to the village, stayed, acquired lots, and built his house in 1839 (Bill Lewis's house near Lincoln Street). William's residency was flexible, going back to North Boothbay for spells, and he remained generally uninvested in the village for a longer time. While he built a house on the south corner of School Street about 1848, he never owned the land. Benjamin Reed deeded the land to William's son, William Irving Adams, in 1861. Such cavalier approaches to ownership were common.

Next time: more on Adams shipbuilding.

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

[www.boothbayhistorical.org/out-of-our-past](http://www.boothbayhistorical.org/out-of-our-past)

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to Susan and Debbe for their service.**

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**Thank you!**

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*Barter's Island class of 1967 (in the 1950s)*

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**Lastly,**  
We wish all of you a happy and healthy 2022!



*Back Narrows school class, c. 1915*

*Let's celebrate our cultural heritage together*

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