



Log cabin, ex-gas station, corner Rt 96 and Little River

A Window to the Past

Boothbay Region Historical Society News

June 2022

Researching and preserving our history

Your stories will not be forgotten

From Our Archives



Navy battleships reputed to be in Boothbay Harbor's outer harbor in 1915.

Nailing down the exact when, what and where took nearly a year.

Battleships in Boothbay, Part I

By Barbara Rumsey, 2014

For many years there have been copies of an image at the museum that I was uneasy about. The shot supposedly showed a fleet of battleships in the outer harbor, yet traditional local sources did not seem to mention visits by such impressive vessels. I would have thought it was a banner event for the region, and I'd wanted to write about it for a long time. With no scrap of detail about the shot to confirm or correct it, I couldn't write, and I was aware that a fraction of photos were badly mislabeled. I hoped it was a Boothbay photo, but needed location, vessel identifications and a date.

The white fleet?

In March of 2013 I decided to take the photo out of the limbo of being identified, but possibly wrongly. You stumble over the limbo stuff too often as you go about your day. The shot was reputed to show the North Atlantic fleet off Squirrel Island in 1915.

I'd heard, as had many people, of "the great white fleet" (16 battleships and 14,000 men) that Teddy Roosevelt sent around the world in 1907 on a 14-month goodwill mission, combined with a demonstration of our power. Yet these ships were reputed to have been here in 1915. Hmm.

Our resident local expert on boatbuilding and vessels, including Navy vessels, is Robert Rice. As we focused in on the photo, he remarked that the ships just didn't look like the wide-hulled white fleet. That seemed to throw out the 1907-1909 white fleet. I read about that fleet and found it did not come to Maine, so it was settled two ways.

Another lead on one photo caption was that the battleships were attending the tennis tournaments on Squirrel Island. Yet there was no mention of a visit in Squirrel's printed

I told Robert I'd go back to the local society sources: Clifford's 1906-1960 region history; filed documents on vessels; and the Boothbay Register notes I'd taken on all surviving issues to 1944, with focus on those from 1876 up through 1915.

I did so, though I'd been through those sources countless times; I found no mention, but that didn't mean it hadn't happened. The sources cherry-picked info.

Robert Rice gets to work

Handicaps in identifying the photo were: the haze when the shot was taken, and the ships' coal smoke obscuring features. Other problems — ships of the same class looked identical and vessel names were repeated in successive generations of ships.

There have been eight Naval vessels called *Massachusetts*. Talking about them had to include added details. Also, since some traveled together or never did, there was constant mixing and matching, "If this one, then not that one." It was a puzzle requiring that many variables be kept in mind.

Robert could only afford a little time to consult his books on Naval vessels, and came up with tentative identifications of the ships by their features, including how many stacks, visible guns, turrets and so on. He guessed at least the *Kansas*, *Virginia*, *Indiana* and *Massachusetts* in the aughts, maybe between 1907 and 1910. He said he'd confirm their identities when he could.

Jonathan Eno helps out

Back in January 2013, Jonathan Eno of the Bar Harbor area wrote asking for images of World War II rescue tugs and aircraft rescue boats built by Sample's and Norman Hodgdon shipyards, which we had. He was working on a book on Naval vessels that came into Frenchman's Bay from 1876 to 2003, and hoped for images of all of them.

Remembering his deep knowledge of Naval vessel that steamed that far down east, I asked for his help. Ships that went to Bar Harbor had to go by Boothbay.

Jonathan was generous with his knowledge and time to answer my question, "Can you account for battleships on the coast of Maine in the early 1900s — aughts or teens?"

His response shows his depth of knowledge: "My best guess is that your photo is early 1900, perhaps before. In the photo enclosed, there are five ships. The only dates that put them all together are 1897, 1899 and 1900. That said, 1903 saw the visit here of the *entire* North Atlantic Fleet, roughly 40-50 ships including support vessels. There would be a fair possibility that your photo relates to that time. 1904 was not a big year here, most battleships went to the Med on a cruise. 1905 was again a big year for battleships

Additionally, he had a copy of the very image we were working on, sent to him by Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

I may not know much about Navy vessels, but I know who to get to help — Robert and Jonathan!

Next month, Battleships in Boothbay, Part II

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

SPEAKER SERIES

Sprucewold: The Early Years



Sprucewold Lodge

Thursday, July 21, 4:30 pm
Alan Fisher

On Thursday, July 21, 4:30 pm, at Boothbay Region Historical Society, historian and long-time Sprucewold resident will present "Sprucewold: The Early Years." Early in the 20th century, four local Boothbay Harbor businessmen began creating a summer colony in Boothbay Harbor aimed at the new American middle class. Building on the presence of several large summer hotels and the founding of three important summer

Focusing on the period up to the end of World War II, this talk will examine the processes the four businessmen used, and the population they attracted, both short term in the hotel and longer term in the cabins, to establish the Sprucewold colony.



Alan Fisher taught Russian and Ottoman history at Michigan State University. He and his wife Carol have been spending summers in their Sprucewold log cabin since 1971.

Admission is free. Currently all talks will be offered both in-person and on Zoom. To request a Zoom link please email us at brhszoom@gmail.com

Doors open at 4:15. In-house seating is limited and if offered will be on a first-come, first seated basis.

Call us at 207-633-0820, or email brhs@gwi.net for the latest information.

BAKE SALE JULY 2



Celebrate July Fourth with homemade treats!

To help you properly celebrate July Fourth, on Saturday, July 2, Boothbay Region Historical Society will have delicious pies, scrumptious cakes, tasty breads, mouth-watering cookies, and much more at our annual July Fourth Bake Sale.

The Bake Sale runs from 9:00 am until sold out.

Bring your friends early and stock up!

This year's sale will be held at the museum at
72 Oak Street, Boothbay Harbor, rain or shine.

For more information: call us 207-633-0820 or email brhs@gwi.net.

WELCOME NEW TRUSTEES!



Wendy Korjeff Bellows graduated from Bates College and worked at Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences for more than forty years. She has recently taken up painting and her oils can be seen at the Boothbay Region Art Foundation.

Merritt Blakeslee is a former academic, and amateur historian who has written and published on topics ranging from 12th century French literature to the Civil War in Appalachian Tennessee to the Texas Revolution to the mapping of the Rocky Mountain West.



Lucy Cressey met her husband Butch Cressey while on vacation in Boothbay. She has spent years researching the Cressey family, and helps others with genealogical research. Lucy worked for many years at the Boothbay Animal Hospital.

EXHIBIT NEWS

Captains and Vessels of the Boothbay Region

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!

MUSEUM NEWS

Two beautiful photographs are being raffled

In conjunction with our exhibit "Captains and Vessels of the Boothbay Region 1800 to 1921" we are raffling two magnificent matted and framed photographs, 9" x 25", of vessels built in the Boothbay region, the *James E. Newsom* and the *Lillian Woodruff*. We thank the [Windjammer Emporium](#) for donating these photographs to us.



The three-masted schooner *Lillian Woodruff* was built by Hodgdon Brothers in East Boothbay. Her launching took place in June of 1889. *Pemaquid Messenger* reported that 200 people attended the launching, and that the schooner would be commanded by Capt. Hodgkins in the fruit trade.



The 23 year career of the four-masted schooner *James E. Newsom* began at her launch on August 23, 1919 at the East Coast shipyard in Boothbay Harbor. The spectators in the foreground, men and women, adults and children, all appear to be focused on the anticipated moment as the *Newsom* slid down the ways. The smoke in the photo is from insufficient grease on the rails for launching.

Tickets for each or both photographs may be purchased in person
at the historical society or from any trustee.

You may also send us a check, made out to [Boothbay Region Historical Society](#), with a note indicating which photograph the tickets are for.

The tickets are \$2 each or six for \$10

and the winning names will be drawn on Saturday, August 27th.

The winner must either pick up the photograph in person or arrange for shipping.

As always, we thank you for your support!

Let's celebrate our cultural heritage together

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

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