



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

A Window to the Past

Boothbay Region Historical Society News

March 2022

Researching and preserving our history

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From Our Archives



Illustration caption: The Greenlaw smokehouse property, on the water side of Boothbay Harbor's Atlantic Avenue in the 1930s, is now the site of Sea Pier. The Allen Art School took over the smokehouse buildings in the foreground; they became the Tar Pot restaurant and Allen's Boothbay Studios where the art students met. Smokehouses had roof vents to allow the smoke to escape, as seen on the building behind Boothbay Studios.

The Sea Pier Property, Part I

By Barbara Rumsey, 2019

In the mid to late 1800s, the east side shore of Boothbay Harbor below High Street and nearly to Road's End was given over to fishing businesses. That is not to say there were none at the head of the harbor or on the west side, or in other parts of town (then Boothbay), but the east side was preeminent.

The fishing businesses were initially codfishing and mackereling outfits, with schooners traveling to the fishing banks in the Gulf of Maine for cod, then seasonally following the mackerel up the coast from Virginia to Canada. There was some inshore fishing as well. Those firms had very little in the way of a plant, mostly sheds or small buildings to keep fish line, seines, salt, and other essential commodities. The principal fishing months for cod were March to July, then July to November or December for mackerel, according to one 1866 Boothbay diary. The older panoramic shots of the east side show fishflakes (wooden "tables" upon which split fish dried) blanketing the ground. One late 1800s business even put fishflakes on their flat roof. The canning of fish and shellfish also was introduced into the area by the late 1870s, so there

was a mixture of activities at the busy fish processing businesses.

Dotting the east side from south to north in 1885 were the following fishing firms: McClintock, Nickerson, unidentified, Maddocks, Nickerson again, and Pierce. As they moved from drying or salting fish to canning, the plants became greatly more expensive with the need for coal-fueled steam power. The requirements of capital to run the businesses meant constant turnover in ownership and names over the next few decades. I thought I could put all the puzzle pieces together, but decades later it remains a dizzying problem. Some names that came and went as firms were sold, sometimes yearly, were Baldwin, Pickert, Capen, Trident, Neptune, Phinney, Sawyer, and Littlefield. But, the question mark in the 1885 list above is who was on the site of Sea Pier. Situated between Nickerson and Maddocks but unnamed, perhaps it was associated with Maddocks, being closer to it.

Canning greatly expanded when sardining came to town. Local fishermen knew that herring was a big business down east and figured they could make a go of it too. Dave and Mabry Greenlaw were induced to come from Eastport in 1894 to trap herring for bait and smokehouses, and they placed their business on the site of Sea Pier. The Greenlaw smokehouse had the characteristic elevated ridgepole, lifted to allow ventilation and the smoke to escape. The Greenlaws went back to Eastport and persuaded C. E. Capen to come and start a sardine factory in town in 1895. As would be expected, local mover and shaker Luther Maddocks jumped at the sardine opportunity too, as did many others. It was unusual that innovations came from downeast rather than from below, such as Massachusetts or another state.

By August 1897, sardine factories were so prevalent on the east side that a complaint about the constant blowing of their whistles was filed with the Harbor selectmen by 22 residents, mostly west side Harbor storeowners. Conversely, I imagine the east side fishermen heard the sweet sound of money in the whistles. Aside from the factories whistling the work schedule, boats signaled the size of their catch as they drew near the factories. There were also complaints about the smell. But by 1900 the sardine business was the greatest single industry in the Harbor, even though the work was not year-round. Men and women walked many miles from all over town to work at the canneries. It stayed a big thing right into the 1930s.

The Greenlaw property did not become a sardine factory, but continued with smokehouses; in 1910 there were three, as well as four buildings for other related uses on their wharf. In 1921 the Allen Art School, which called itself Boothbay Studios and advertised as a "Summer School of Industrial, Normal, and Fine Art," started occupying space closest to the street on the wharf. Boothbay Studios had a central dining room, the Tar Pot, and three houses that were used as dormitories. The principals were Frank Allen and Henry Snell who employed about 10 instructors and had as many as 160 students, many of them art teachers. The attendees would have boarded in houses in the area or in art school houses and dorms. Local man Chester Brown,

industrial arts, middle and high school teachers, and curriculum building. Boothbay Studios continued until it closed in 1942.

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

EXHIBIT NEWS

Captains and Vessels of the Boothbay Region 1800 to 1921



Capt. John Seavey

Our new exhibit opens on Thursday, April 7. "Captains and Vessels of the Boothbay Region 1800 to 1921" explores the stories and histories of Boothbay's captains and of the vessels built in the Boothbay region during America's golden age of sail. This exhibit will run through the end of the year.

The Boothbay region has been famous for boatbuilding for over 200 years. The historical society has found and named 546 vessels built in the Boothbay region in the 19th and early 20th centuries. What did they look like? Who built them? Who were their captains? Where did they go? What did they haul? Using diaries, ships logs, paintings, blueprints, half-models, and a slide show of photographs of captains and vessels with exciting stories of their adventures at sea, the new exhibit at the Boothbay Region Historical Society answers many of these questions.

See you in here April!

MUSEUM NEWS

**This survey closes on March 17 - we look forward to hearing from you!
And we thank all of you who have already taken the survey.**

We are looking for community input to help us plan for the future. Please take a few minutes to take this short anonymous survey. You may skip any questions that do not apply to you.

We need input from the wider community. What do you like about us? What do we do well? What needs improvement? Where should we allocate our resources in the future? We want to serve our community as best we can, and your input is crucial to our planning process.

([LINK to survey](#)) or call us at (207) 633-0820 and we will mail you a written copy of the survey.

We'd love to hear from you by Monday, March 7th, after which the online survey will be closed. Our goal is to complete the strategic plan by this June and we will keep you up to date on the progress and results. We encourage you to be honest, don't hold back!

If you have any questions or concerns please contact us at 207-863-0820 or boothbayhistoric@gmail.com

**Thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm
for the Boothbay Region Historical Society.**

TRUSTEE NEWS



We welcome new trustee, Wendy Korjeff Bellows!

Bigelow as a research associate and safety officer for more than 40 years, working for various scientists on different projects, including many weeks at sea. In between work, restoring an old farm/house with her husband Alan, and riding her horses (and being an active part of the Maine Combined Training Association), she has served on the Board of the Boothbay Opera House, on an Admin. Code committee for the town of Boothbay, taught marine science classes for summer Great Explorations programs, and assisted in the resurrection of an old loom at the Boothbay Railway Village & Museum. In her spare time, Wendy enjoys fiber arts (spinning, weaving, dyeing) and, more recently, oil painting. Her paintings can be seen at the Boothbay Region Art Foundation.

EDUCATION NEWS

Thank you!

Thanks to your generous donations, we have raised over \$1000 for the Boothbay Region Historical Society college scholarship. We are well on our way towards establishing a permanent, yearly scholarship fund for future graduates of Boothbay Region High School. Most of the donations are from individuals, but please join us in thanking these contributing businesses:

Bath Savings, Boothbay Harbor
Bayside Inn B&B, Boothbay Harbor
First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Bath
First National Bank, Damariscotta
Hodgdon Yacht Services, Southport
Pinkham's Gourmet Market, Boothbay Harbor

and again, thank you to the many individuals who, together with our business partners, have made this possible.

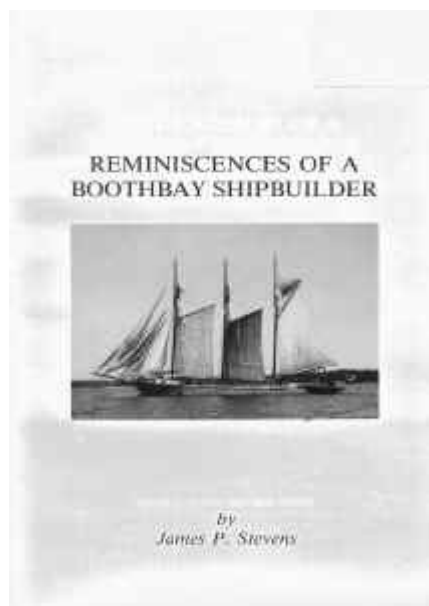
If you didn't have a chance to donate, we are continuing to accept donations which will help insure scholarships for years to come.

[Click here to donate.](#)



Barbers Island class of 1967 (in the 1950s)

MUSEUM STORE



Reminiscences of a Boothbay Shipbuilder

By James P. Stevens, \$10.00

This profile of Boothbay region shipbuilders was written as a gift for the nation's bi-centennial in 1976. Jim gained his intimate knowledge of calking methods as a watchful child in his father's East Boothbay shipyard in the 1920's. His 1930's and 1940's experiences at Camden and South Portland yards, as well as his later partnership in Goudy & Stevens Shipyard, gave him added perspective as an adult.

Coasting, caulking, and wooden shipbuilding, the three occupations included in this book, have now nearly vanished. He has worked in four industries which share that distinction: the sardine

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

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