



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

## **A Window to the Past**

*Boothbay Region Historical Society*

**February 2023**

*Researching and preserving our history*

*Your stories will not be forgotten*

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## **From Our Archives**



*This tranquil winter scene shows the William McCobb house, between the Harbor and East Boothbay, surrounded by oaks and apple trees in about 1930. It still has oaks and apple trees in those locations though one venerable oak went down a few years ago.*

## William McCobb, Blacksmith, Part II

By Barbara Rumsey, 2015

When Caleb Hodgdon came to the village of Murrays Mills (later Hodgdon's Mills, now East Boothbay) in 1826, he split it wide open. The pure Montgomery-Murray family farm, consisting of a few families and hundreds of acres from Linekin nearly to Back Narrows, ended.

He, and others who joined him, turned the extended family farm into a town. I knew, before I wrote “Hodgdon Shipbuilding and Mills” in 1995, that if I had McCobb's first blacksmith account book predating 1828, I might learn more about those transitional village years.

However, though five years passed after McCobb's later account books appeared in 1990, the first one hadn't shown up by 1995. I could fill in blanks from mid-1828 on up with the later books, but Caleb and those who followed him came before then. I'd learned early in my research years not to hope for too much from sources, knowing that they always answered some questions while raising others. But that didn't stop my wishing.

### **Chasing Caleb through the pages**

Still, the details in McCobb's 1828 to 1866 account books were wonderfully revealing in mapping out village development. In the fall of 1828, McCobb repaired and

someone for him, often trekked to McCobb's, more than a mile west of the village, sometimes many times a week. Caleb's list of jobs differed radically from most men, exponentially larger with only minor attention to the usual needs, such as hasps and staples, shoeing, mending shovels, coffee mills, andirons, kettle bales, and wagons and sleighs. You can see that anything made of iron or steel was likely to have been made locally.

### Shutting, shanking, newlaying and upsetting

Caleb occasionally had household ironwork needs, but his also included large amounts of timber dogs, spindle mending, shutting (welding) tools, shanking augers (lengthening shafts on drills), getting cart hoops, sharpening millpicks, newsteeling or newlaying (edging with tool steel) cutting tools such as chisels and axes, and upsetting (thickening) axes, getting rafting staples, caulking irons, bowsprit caps, deck nails, hatch nails, pump and rudder irons and mast hoops. So he had: logging camps from which rafted logs were floated down river to the mill; a gristmill for which he needed millpicks; and vessels under construction in need of ironwork.

Such assumptions are confirmed in other contemporary primary sources, such as customs records, spotty tax lists, rigger account books and court records. The mills are well-documented and Caleb launched three vessels in 1829: the 78-foot schooner *Elizabeth*, the 58-foot pinky *Union*, and the 60-foot schooner *Adventurer*. On March 12, 1829, Caleb Hodgdon and the future owner of *Adventurer*, Captain Vinal of Scituate, Massachusetts, were McCobb's only clients. The vessel was nearly done and Vinal was on hand to take her away. He and Caleb walked or rode to McCobb's that day, seeing together much of the terrain we see today between the village and the big hills.

### The crew

Caleb Hodgdon's shipbuilding and housebuilding crew is laid out too. Caleb saw that their tools were repaired or made by McCobb. Perhaps his doing so kept his men from breaking up their six-day work week of ten-hour days by trotting off to McCobb's to have their tools seen to. In December 1828 he had a broad axe, costing more than half a week's wages, made for Andrew Dunton; Dunton may have headed the crew fashioning the frames for the vessel.

Also that day Caleb picked up two chisels for Thomas Babb, one for James Preble and four for William Adams; and he had one chisel (half a day's pay) repaired for William McFadden, two for Andrew Adams, and two for Levi Reed. Caleb had one axe fixed for John Kelley and one made for Joseph Booker. The old region names emerge in the crew, a third of them to follow shipbuilding in their own yards here in the 19th century.

chance to make an educated guess why. Personalities do not emerge, nor does motivation. When McCobb's helpers left, there were just terse notes in the account or day book recording the day it happened, so he could pay them to that point and no further. The human presence is there but the drama is absent.

Account books help you slip in history's back door to see how local people lived. I just regretted the absence of that missing pre-1828 account book.

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)

## MUSEUM NEWS

### New items for sale in our Museum Shop



You have always wanted this map of Boothbay Harbor, and now it can be yours, framed, for \$40!





Beautiful matted 19th century clippings from Harper's Weekly.

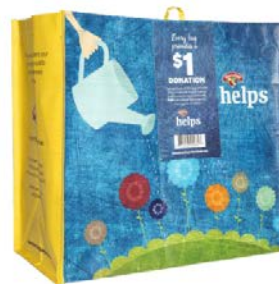
\$10 each or 3 for \$25.

*Come have a look!*

## MUSEUM NEWS

### COMMUNITY BAG PROGRAM

Buy a bag at the Boothbay Harbor Hannaford during the month of February, and \$1 is donated to us. Thank you Hannaford. And thank you Hannaford patrons.



### SUPPORT US & THE ENVIRONMENT

Every \$2.50 reusable Community Bag sold at our Hannaford location this month will send us a \$1 donation.

Learn more at [hannaford.bags4mycause.com](http://hannaford.bags4mycause.com)

## SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Last year, with your help, we were able to present the first Boothbay Region Historical

higher education seems even more pressing, and we come to you again for your help in funding this scholarship.

Donations at any level are welcome. Checks may be made out to Boothbay Region Historical Society with “scholarship” written in the memo line or in a note with the check, our mailing address is POB 272, Boothbay Harbor, ME 04538. You may donate with a credit card on our [website](#) using the donation box with “scholarship” in the note box.

Last year, along with many individuals, the following businesses generously donated to the scholarship fund:

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

The staff and trustees thank you for considering this opportunity to join us in making an investment in the future of our children.



*Boothbay Harbor High, graduating class 1917*

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## About Boothbay Region Historical Society

We are a [museum open free of charge](#), year-round.



We provide a free [third grade history](#) program, a free [speaker series](#), and present [special exhibits](#).

We work on special projects: funding a college

scholarship for a Boothbay Region High School student, digitizing our collections,

writing an exhibition catalog.

We maintain the 1874 [historic house](#) which is our museum and offices, and a [museum store](#).

We do it with three part-time staff and our dedicated trustees and volunteers



**But we couldn't do it without you!**

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

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