



Friends of the Southport Historical Society

P. O. Box 3, Southport, ME 04576

HENDRICKS HILL MUSEUM

Newsletter ***** November 2017

Donald Duncan, Editor

Friendly Reminder

Perhaps we failed to send you a letter in March, or perhaps you forgot to reply, but several of our loyal supporters have not yet responded in 2017. If you see an X on the label attached to this newsletter, we have not heard from you. If you would like to respond, please send your check in any amount (payable to The Friends of the Southport Historical Society) to Cathy Messmer at PO Box 3, Southport ME 04576. If you think we have made a mistake, please let me know [Donald Duncan, 32 Blair Road, Southport ME 04576 or donaldduncan@roadrunner.com]

Ice Harvesting

From about 1850 to 1920, the harvesting of ice in Maine was big business. “An 1886-87 map lists the total harvests as follows: Kennebec River 1,855,500 tons, North Boothbay 80,000 tons.”¹ Nearly every hotel or rooming house cut ice in a local pond and stored it in nearby ice houses.



Sawyers Pond Ice Houses

In the second half of the 1800s local ponds were used and dams were built to create new ponds. West Harbor Pond used to be Campbells Cove and was salt water. The dam at the south end of the pond was built after the Civil War at the cost of \$20,000. It took several years for the water of the Cove to become fresh enough to produce saleable ice, but in the end West Harbor Pond became a profitable source of “frozen gold.”

Sawyers Pond on Southport also was a source of many tons of ice. There were two ice houses near the dam and a runway was built on which blocks of ice were transported under

¹ Tidewater Ice on the Kennebec River by Jennie Everson page 106.
80,000 tons of ice would cover a football field and end zones to a depth of over 40 feet!!

what is now Route 238 to several other ice houses on the shore near Pine Cliff. See the picture below. Millions of tons of ice were cut on the Kennebec River, stored in monster ice houses and shipped in schooners when the river became navigable in the spring. The industry provided winter employment for hundreds of local farmers and provided the needed winter exercise for thousands of local horses.

Basically here is how it was done.

Most substances contract as they cool and expand when warmed up again. Water is an exception. Liquid water weighs about 62 pounds per cubic foot at 60° F. But as the temperature drops through the 30s, water expands so that ice at 32° has a density of only about 56 pounds per cubic foot. This causes ice to float. A cake of ice 1 foot thick and 6 feet square will support a 180 pound man (if he stays in the middle!). If ice did not float, we would need SCUBA gear to harvest it!



Ice was not thought fit to cut unless it was at least a foot thick. If it got that thick before snow fell on it, the harvesters rejoiced, but if it snowed, the snow had to be removed for two reasons. First, the snow provided insulation and slowed the formation of thicker, ice and secondly, the ice was much more saleable and long lasting if it were clear as glass. Therefore the first step in harvesting was to clear the snow.

Next, a straight line was scored in the ice. The blocks were about 22 x 30 x 18 inches thick so a grid of rectangles 22" x 30" was laid out on the pond. The grid was only as large as could be cut and stored in one day, lest rain spoil the progress. The scored lines were then sawn to within two inches of the bottom of the ice. If the cuts went all the way through, the water would fill the cut and then freeze and the process had to be done again! This sawing was done in later years by a gasoline driven circular saw, but in the earlier days by a horse drawn, man-guided "plow."



Scoring the ice

A canal about 30" wide was cut so that rafts of ice could be floated to the shore, guided by men with long pikes. These rafts were about 22" wide by 10 feet long. When they were close to the shore, the rafts would be broken into 22 x 30 inch blocks for storage. If the ice house was at the pond, there was often a sort of escalator that

would be steam driven and which would carry the blocks to a ramp slightly above the level of the floor of the ice house. The blocks would then slide, by gravity, into the house and be directed by men inside to their place of final storage. Each one of these blocks weighed around 350 pounds so the process of guiding them by shorter picks as they slid was dangerous and required strength, skill and agility.

When the first layer was complete in the ice house, the ramp was raised and another layer put in. It boggles the mind now to think of the size of some of these houses on the Kennebec. "One had a total capacity of 72,106 tons. Two large and separate sets of houses --- 6 rooms under one roof and 12 rooms under the other. The larger of the houses was 403 feet long, 157 feet wide and 76 feet high at the gable."²

Sometimes, a schooner could be moored close to the ice pond so that the ice could go directly from the pond to the schooner, but more often the ice was stored on ice houses until spring when schooners would load and carry the "frozen gold" to New York, Philadelphia and even the far east, India and Japan.!

Ice Harvest Elizabeth Bryer

Pale Winter sun glints low across the ice.
Smooth space, on which I skated
Yesterday is smooth no more.
The surface grooved in squares
By my brothers, uncles, cousins, neighbors,
With strange long tapered one-man saws.
They're cutting up my skating place to blocks--of coldness,
To keep our food, and chill our lemonade when Summer comes.
But now black lanes of water lie frigid
In the channels
Leading to the icehouse ramps
Where men wait with fork and peavey
To pack each block into
Its proper place,
With sawdust all around to keep them from becoming
One huge solid mass.
The patient old gray horse
Is harnessed to the block and tackle gear.
Forward he goes,
Hauling the blocks to the door,
Then back to let the hook
Pick up another -- or maybe
Several blocks will go together this time.
So it goes all day
Until the gelid harvest is secure.
Alas! my skating place is
Gone until the cold returns
To mend the ravaged pond,
And I can skate again

² Ibid page 158

2017 Annual Meeting

Cathy Messmer was elected at the 2017 Annual Meeting replacing Dick Snyder as President. Dick was elected at the Annual Meeting in 2007 replacing Joyce Duncan who had served as President since 1997. Dick oversaw the discussions on expanding the Boatshop and carried that project through to its conclusion in June of 2008. Under his leadership we have had interns to help with computer work and generally help run the museum. We will miss Dick's hand on the helm and trust that he will continue to take an active part in the activities of the Friends.

Maine State Historian, Earle Shettleworth gave an illustrated talk on a collection of glass slide photos of everyday life in early 19th century Lincoln County taken by itinerant photographer E. Joseph Leighton. We also learned about the nature of photography in those early days.

Thirty Years

Along with the rest of the country, Southport celebrated the Bicentennial of the United States on July 4, 1976. The Town appointed a Historical Committee who put on a proper celebration and exhibition of historical artifacts. As the fireworks faded from the skies in 1976, there was seen a need for a place to preserve and exhibit what had been collected. Thus the Museum came to life through the generosity and hard work of many people. We hope to tell the story in more detail this summer.

On February 8, 2018, we will celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the moving of the Museum building from the waterfront at the head of Pierce Cove to its present location. That spring of 1988 saw great activity with volunteers stripping wallpaper and getting the museum fit for the public. On July 16, they had the grand opening.

This summer on July 16 we will celebrate that event with a presentation at the Town Hall. Nan Jackson will be heading up a planning committee consisting of Evelyn Sherman, Sarah Sherman and Donald Duncan and Jim Singer. If you have ideas of events that would add to the celebration, please feel free to call Nan at 633-2003.

From Fish House to Restaurant: The Power of a Southport Place, 1770-2017

Jack Bauman

In her book *The Power of Place* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999) historian Delores Hayden describes how over time a particular place, a house, a hotel, a bridge, etc. can be powerfully, and memorably etched on the cultural landscape. The small waterfront parcel of land at the end of Cozy Harbor Road, now a Town Landing and the site of Oliver's Restaurant, enjoys a long history as such a special place.

Professor Bill Messmer, who lives on Cozy Harbor Road, has carefully researched the ownership of this parcel and how it was used during the 17- and 1800s. According to Bill, in 1772, Samuel Pierce, a local entrepreneur, owned 80 acres, stretching from Pierce Cove to

Cozy Harbor, including both Joe's and David's Islands. Samuel Pierce died in 1796 and his widow, Elizabeth, passed the property to their son, Jonathan.

A probate of Samuel's will indicated that there existed a "fish house" in the vicinity of the present public wharf and restaurant. As a place where fish were salted and dried, and fishing supplies, such as nets, bait, and other gear were stored and sold, the site would have ranked high in importance in 18th century Southport. Southport had been significant as a maritime site in proximity to the bounty of Atlantic cod as early as the 17th century.

The first solid evidence of an actual profitable barn-like, windowless fish house on the current Cozy Harbor site dates to about 1828, the year when Jonathan's taxes bumped up very considerably. Emolyn Pratt in her piece for the Old House Book refers to the existence of a "building" here in 1779, and gives many more details of the operation.

According to Bill Messmer, it is that 1828 structure whose bones reside in what is now Oliver's Restaurant. In 1828 Jonathan Pierce used the barn-like building to store and sell fishing supplies and perhaps -- but not for certain -- general merchandise. The barn-like structure with its attached wharf facilities long remained as a prosperous fish house enterprise selling nets, bait, and other fishing supplies and catering mainly to the bank cod business.

Thomas Marr married one of Jonathan Pierce's daughters, and upon Jonathan's death in 1848, the fish house became Marr property. Jointly run by brothers Thomas and Nahum Marr, the fish house business thrived until 1870 when the popular demand for fresh fish foretold the demise of salted cod. In 1910, Warren Marr purchased the building and converted the once bank cod establishment into an ice cream parlor.

Soon after Marr's parlor opened, a ship, carrying three "ten-pin" bowling alleys, foundered in shoal waters off Boothbay Harbor. They were salvaged and Marr bought one them and installed one alley on the first floor of his ice-cream shop. The other two were sold to the owners of Mouse Island where they currently exist. Many people well remember bowling candlepins in the Cozy Harbor alley.

The Marr family sold the ice-cream parlor and bowling alley to Malden, Massachusetts resident Earl Pratt in 1920. Earl Pratt with his father, Ezra, also purchased Joe's Island, renamed it Pratt's Island, and proceeded to build cottages for rent. Later, many of these lots were sold to the current residents of Pratt's Island.

Nineteen years earlier, in 1901, the Reverend J. D. Payson and his wife, Laura, who was a Marr, opened the Cozy Harbor House in what is now the Southport Yacht Club. They remodeled the historic house to include a kitchen and dining room, while adding a spacious enclosed porch making the Cozy Harbor House, a successful summer boarding house.

It was Earl W. Pratt Senior, Ezra's son, who in the 1920s transformed the Marr's ice-cream parlor and ten-pin alley into the legendary "Ye Cosy Harbor Pavilion."³ Later in the 1920s Pratt Senior further expanded the business by erecting a pavilion with a dance floor adjoining the ice cream parlor. The second floor made space for a pool and a billiard table. In 1946 Gus and Emolyn (Em) took over management of the Pavilion and renamed it again, this time the E. W. Pratt General Store, familiarly called "The Alley."

The Alley was made nationally famous in the 1990s when it was featured by a CBS show, "On the Road," starring Charles Kuralt (1934-1997). Nevertheless, in spite of all the

³ According to Evelyn Sherman, daughter of Earl Senior, Cosy was spelled with an "s" rather than a "z" because Earl Senior had difficulty writing a cursive "z."

publicity Gus (Earl W. Pratt, Junior) and his wife “Em,” diligently, even stubbornly, preserved the character of the old “Pavilion,” formerly the fish house.

However, it was Earl Pratt Senior, who in 1923 added another important dimension to the once old fish house, then ice cream parlor, then bowling alley, and then pavilion. That year, in the upstairs poolroom where Ezra and friends regularly gathered to socialize, they founded the Southport Yacht Club, a motor-boat-racing club with a congenial mixed membership of summer cottagers and year-round people.

The Yacht Club (whose flag featured a flying goose) used Payson’s Cozy Harbor House float. When the club officially incorporated in 1925, hotelier Payson freely conveyed the deed to his hotel float to the fledgling SYC. Therefore, until 1939 when the SYC purchased the SYC property from the Augusta National Bank, the hotel complex, and the store property were technically joined. The Cozy Harbor House had gone bankrupt in 1936,

Upon Gus’s death in 2007, the once fish house, later ice-cream parlor, pavilion, and general store site was purchased by the Town of Southport. Part of that site became a public wharf and dock for commercial fishermen. Gus Pratt’s building was moved back from the shore and turned ninety degrees and was leased by the Town for a restaurant, but minus the stools, and minus Gus’s meticulously cooked and served, precious little hamburgers.

The powerful memory of the place lives on: of Gus’s hamburgers, crab rolls, and sturdilys, of Em’s pies, Roscoe’s rocker, and of the thousands of SYC youthful sailors who over the years, crowded Gus’s at lunchtime during the summertime.

Many of the artifacts from Gus Pratt’s store are on display at the Hendricks Hill Museum, including the counter, stools, ice cream scoops, cash register and Roscoe’s rocker.

Joshua Chamberlain

During the summer, Ron Orchard guided many groups through the Museum, but one visitor from the south stands out. He and Ron were going up the stairs from the Post Office Room to the Marr Room on the second floor. As they got to the top of the stairs they were face to face with the Civil War exhibit when the man spoke up. “If it weren’t for that man from Maine, we’d have won that war.”

Southport and Westport

Clipping from Ron Orchard

Westport and *Southport*, sister steamboats built at Boston in 1911, were known in Boothbay and Penobscot Bay waters as the “Twin Vessels.” They were identical ships – each 125 feet long, handsomely appointed and powered by 450-horsepower engines, although for some reason, *Westport* was the faster of the two. Both had whistles that sounded a chime-like signal, so that even in a fog those waiting on the dock knew that one of the “Twins” was coming in for a landing. Captain Nahum Brewer had *Southport* during her nine years on Kennebec-Sheepscot service. The painting of *Southport* shown here was done by the late Alden Stickney and is on display in the Town Offices.



Although neither vessel experienced serious troubles during her years in Maine, *Southport* did run into difficulties twice in the narrow waters of Townsend Gut. Once during a dense fog she struck a ledge off Southport Island, and another time she missed a buoy and, before her engine could be

reversed, she struck the Southport shore. No major damage was done to the vessel, but she did spring a leak, and as a precaution passengers and freight were put ashore.

In 1920 both *Westport* and *Southport* were transferred to Penobscot Bay to run on the Mt. Desert and Blue Hill Lines from Rockland. Their last run as far as Brooklin was in April of 1934. That summer both vessels steamed south – *Westport* to Block Island and *Southport* to the Potomac River. After several years as ferry boats during which *Southport* was converted into an automobile ferry, both vessels entered government service.

Following World War II, *Southport* ran as an excursion vessel at Manhattan New York, and *Westport* took out deep-sea fishing parties from Boston.

Facebook

For those of you who use Facebook, the Museum now has a Facebook page, set up by Ann Roche. If you search for Hendricks Hill Museum, you bring up our page where you can see some pictures and news of the museum. You can also read this newsletter and past ones of our website, Hendrickshill.org.

A Chance to Help

Your editor is always on the alert for future Newsletter ideas. If any of you would like to suggest ideas or write an article, please let me know. As you can see from this and past newsletters, there is a vast variation in subject matter, and I am always willing to help with editing

Volunteers, Our Guardian Angels!

Without our Volunteers we could not operate. There have been a total of 926 volunteer hours since last November. This year we had 304 visitors from 23 states. The countries of Malta and Nova Scotia complete the list. Again we give special thanks to Nan Jackson who scheduled all the guides. She kept careful track and hardly anyone missed an assignment.

Martha Amesbury	Ron Farnham	Meredith MacKusick	Becky Singer
Kathy Bugbee	Gerry Gamage	Carole McCarthy	Jim Singer
Kathy Cartier	Tim Hanley	Jerry McGrail	Dick Snyder
Larry Crane	Dan Harle	Susie McGuinness	Meg Snyder
Karen Curtis	Jean Hasch	Bill Messmer	Pegi Stengel
Ann Cyr	Jean Hawley	Cathy Messmer	Rob Stengel
Conrad Cyr	Toni Helming	Meredith Mitchell	Jean Thompson
Fleet Davies	Gene Huskins	Ralva Orchard	Mari Tiwari
Campbell Demallie	Nan Jackson	Ronald Orchard	Linda Wacholtz
Peter Doelp	Hilary Jacobs	Michael Pollard	Priscilla Wallace
Donald Duncan	Enid Johnson	Ann Roche	Skip Williams
Joyce Duncan	Shelby Kaider	Evelyn Sherman	Bruce Wood
Bob Eaton	Mary Lou Koskela	Sarah Sherman	Carole Zalucky

Friends of the Southport Historical Society
P. O. Box 3
Southport, ME 04576

Museum Trustees

Ronald Orchard, Chairman
Kathy Bugbee, Secretary
Mary Lou Koskela, Treasurer
Donald Duncan
Bob Eaton
Jean Hasch
Gene Huskins
Bill Messmer
Evelyn Sherman
Sarah Sherman

Friends Officers/Directors

Cathy Messmer, President to 2018
Jean Hawley, Vice President to 2018
Carole Zalucky, Secretary to 2018
Becky Singer, Treasurer to 2018
Larry Crane to 2018
Tim Hanley to 2018
Kathy Bugbee to 2019
Nan Jackson to 2019
Shelby Kaider to 2020
Ann Roche to 2020