

The Newsletter of the Tremont Historical Society

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THE SEARCH FOR ESTHER II

In 1961 I lost my father to a coronary. The loss hit hard. Then his lobster boat, the Esther II, aboard which I had spent many happy hours, had to be sold – a second excruciating loss for me. Over the years after that I often thought of tracking her down, but life and the emotions associated with her kept me from doing it. This is the story of my long-deferred hunt.

*George Trask
Spring 2008*



Tied up in Portland, looking fine, probably 2006

See story inside...

The President's Page

Dear Fellow THS Members and Friends,

Our Museum's summer season and our 2008 monthly programs have ended for the year. The Museum was open Monday and Wednesday afternoons from 1:00 – 4:00 pm from July 2nd through Columbus Day. Our special exhibit this year about the granite quarries of Tremont done by Steven Haynes was very popular with Museum visitors.

Five new books were added to the Museum's bookstore: Ruth Grierson's A is for Acadia; Writing on Stone, a book about Gott's Island by Christina Gillis; Ralph Stanley: Tales of a Maine Boatbuilder by Craig Milner and Ralph Stanley, Makin' Do by Virginia Libhart and Summers with Percy by Redmond C. S. Finney, a biography of Percy Reed.

Programs since June included Ray Robbins on the Dow family and Henry Raup on Tremont place names. Dennis Damon gave us Ruth Moore reminiscences and ballads at the Annual Meeting July 28. At the October meeting, Emma Reed Richards, Elsie Reed Lunt and Elaine Rumill Smith told us what it was like to grow up and raise families in Tremont – a program that drew one of the largest audiences of the year. The program was so popular that we hope to repeat it in the spring with other women from Tremont.

The Annual Appeal letter has just been mailed out. We are grateful to all loyal members and friends who have contributed in past years and hope you will be able to help us out again this year. We depend on our members and donors for a large part of our annual operating budget. Contributions can be mailed to the Tremont Historical Society at the address below. We operate with a frugal budget and volunteers. We will need volunteers in the Museum again next summer. If you would like to volunteer, please contact me during the coming months. It's never too late. Describing the history of Tremont and the Country Store and showing artifacts from Tremont families from the 18th and 19th centuries can be very rewarding and fun!

Sincerely,



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"Let's Ask Ralph!"

We have initiated a new feature in our Newsletters. Questions of various sorts are posed, sometimes by your Editor and sometimes by you—and these go to our Historian, Ralph Stanley.

In the further expansion of the details of the story about a July 4th excursion in 1871 from Ellsworth to Bass Harbor, I asked if anyone knew more about the Cough family who ran a store at Bob and Rosemary Tilden's home. I got a call from Della Dow who lives next door to the Tildens in the house which the Coughs occupied during those years. She provided me with a good deal of information on the family which I look forward to sharing in a future issue of this Newsletter. Ed.

RALPH'S PAGE

Being a reproduction of articles of historical interest, selected by Ralph Stanley

With apologies to Ruth S. Holmes of Kingfield, sister to our Historian and Host of this page, the Editor corrects the following error which appeared in Ruth's article "The Missing Branch of the Dix Family Tree" in our Summer 2008 issue.

In the third paragraph, the title of the book by Farrow, quoted by Mrs. Holmes, was printed as History of Scarborough, Maine. This, of course, should have been History of Islesborough, Maine.

As promised, we bring you the following story from the Bar Harbor Times, published May 11, 1978. It was originally published in the Bangor Daily News on April 8, 1901. Its author is unknown, but it was furnished to the Times by Janice Reed of Bass Harbor.

Ralph says that Capt. Robert B. Dix of this story was his great-grandfather's brother. Capt. Dix had come ashore from the coastal carrying trade and opened a store at Seal Cove. This business, however, failed because Capt. Dix was unable to persuade his creditors to pay their bills. So he decided to return to sea and became the skipper of the Hyena. Ed.

Story of a Shipwreck 77 Years Ago

Gloucester Mass, April 7, 1901

The southeast storm just before the Easter dawn threw up on the jagged rocks of Eastern Point the old Calais schooner *Hyena*, and within an hour the waves had torn her to pieces and swept off her entire crew of four men. Two of them, Elmer and Bennett Stanley, managed to reach shore and dragged their half-drowned and bruised bodies up the rocks, but her skipper, Capt. R.B. Dix of West Tremont, Maine, and the steward, Fuller, whose home is not known, failed to gain the land and were probably either drowned or killed outright by being dashed on the reefs.

The two battered sailors reached this city Sunday morning and after a short rest, told the following tale of the wreck.

The *Hyena*, with 206 tons of coal from Perth Amboy for Calais, sailed out of Vineyard Haven early Saturday morning and had good weather until off the Highland Light when the wind freshened from the southeast and then came on the rain. Capt. Dix, after standing some time to the northeast, decided to steer for Salem, and after missing out the twin lights of Cape Ann, kept along the shore hoping to pick up Eastern Point Light six miles to the westward. It was sometime after midnight, Elmer Stanley thinks, about 3 a.m., when he sighted surf off the starboard bow, but Capt. Dix, believing there was sufficient water, kept right on, until suddenly the waves were sighted breaking right ahead. The schooner was [sic] jibbed over, but it was too late and a great wave gathered her up and threw her onto the rocks just off High Popples at East Gloucester, a mile to the eastward of Eastern Point. The schooner immediately began to pound and strain and the crew, hearing her timbers crashing, cleared away the only boat in the hope of reaching shore.

Bennett Stanley was the nearest to the little craft and as she bobbed up he jumped in. The next wave parted the painter and swept the boat far out of the reach of the other three men. Bennett Stanley was [sic] not in the boat scarcely a minute when it capsized, leaving him to battle with the great surges among the jagged rocks. Most miraculously he was enabled to thread his way among the rocks until he felt the beach beneath his feet. Then

came the terrible struggle with the undertow. Finally he managed to gain a foot-hold and after a little while he pulled himself up beyond the sea.

When the vessel's boat, with Bennett Stanley in her, washed away from the *Hyena*, Capt. Dix with the other two men being driven forward by the heavy seas which were sweeping the decks, sought refuge on the bowsprit, in the vain hope that the schooner might hold together until morning, when lifesavers would see her. But no ship, however strong, could have long withstood the fearful onslaught of the seas, and within a short time, one after another of the masts were carried away until finally, one gigantic wave lifted the *Hyena* and literally smashed her to pieces.

How Elmer Stanley, thrown like his brother into the raging surf, managed like him to finally reach shore, only a divine Providence knows. His struggle against the undertow was as terrible as that of his brother. Bennett soon joined him and the two men went to one of the little houses of East Gloucester where they were cared for.

Before leaving the scene of the wreck, the two men lingered for some time in the hope that the captain and the steward might reach shore, but nothing was seen of either.

Thousands of people visited the scene of the wreck Sunday and a sharp watch was kept for the bodies of the skipper and the steward, but at dark neither had been recovered.

The *Hyena* was one of the oldest vessels engaged in the carrying trade on the coast, being built in St. George, Me. in 1851. She was re-topped about five years ago and has always been considered a good strong craft. She was owned by Howard Boardman of Calais. She was 95 tons burden, 90 feet over all and drew eight feet of water. It is thought that both the vessel and cargo were insured.

Capt. Dix leaves a widow and a married daughter in West Tremont. Neither of the Stanleys could give any account of the steward except that his name was Fuller.

The Bar Harbor Times article of May 11, 1978 continued with the following genealogical information, which may be of interest to many of our readers. Ed.

Capt. Robert B. Dix was the son of Capt. Jonathan T and Apphia (Bartlett) Dix and the grandson of William Dix, Jr. and his wife Eunice (Tinker) Dix.

His wife was Maria L. Lunt. He was a nephew to Capt. George Dix, who married first, Sally Pomeroy and 2nd, Julia Bailey. A son of this union was Dr. George Dix, the benefactor of the Dix Memorial Vestry, West Tremont Methodist Church. A sister to Robert B. Dix, Eunice, married Capt. George Reed.

Numerous descendants of this family live in the area today, as Jonathan and Apphia were the parents of eleven children, and his brother George had seven. Some of the family names are: Gott, Walls, Murphy, Dix, Lunt, Stanley, Rich, Reed, Davis, Lawler, Hamblen, Gray, Welton, Sullivan, Ralph and Bennett.

Elmer Stanley was the son of Capt. John Bowen and Avilda Reed (Cunningham) Stanley. He married Josie Billings, who apparently died well before him and they had no children. His sister Eliza Ann married Joseph "Hes" Rumill of Seal Cove and during his later years, Elmer "Uncle Al," resided with his nephew and wife, Arthur H. and Lelia (Reed) Rumill, as did another brother, Bowen Stanley.

William Bennett Stanley was not a brother to Elmer, as stated in the above article, but an uncle. His father was Capt. John Leonard Stanley. Wm. Bennett Stanley married Gertrude Meager and they had five children.

Wm. Bennett Stanley also survived the wreck of the schooner *Virginia* on Thompson's Island, Boston Harbor, during the Great Gale of 1898 when scores of ships and many lives were lost. His father, captain of the *Virginia*, lost his life to this great storm. It was Capt. John Leonard Stanley's birthday Nov. 27, 1898 when the *Virginia* went ashore.

Stanley descendants are many, some of which cross over into the descendants of the Dix family mentioned above. A few of their names are: Spurling, Stanley, Fernald, Reed, Leonard, Gott, Walls, Erskine, Smith, Higgins and Coleman. +

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The Search for *Esther II* George Trask *Continued*

At some point Robert Dunbar had sold the boat, now called *Finestkind*, to a man from Braintree. Sometime in the late 1980s or early 1990s, Ray spied her in a Braintree boatyard, recognizing her both by name and lines even though she was missing her steering shelter and was otherwise in pretty hard shape. She looked like she was being used as a dumpster, he said. He tracked down the owner, bought her, and hauled her back to his home in Marshfield. He had a carpenter friend, Greg Wheeler, who was interested in learning wooden boatbuilding, so Ray got him a job up in Bernard to learn as much as he could from Chummy. When he came back he began the rebuild of the *Esther II* for Ray, as a bass boat rather than a lobster boat. Another boat carpenter helped finish the rebuild.



Most of the deck removed—lots of work to come



Cabin and companionway pretty well along.
This builder leveled up the hatch. Bobby's hatch followed the crown of the cabin.

She was re-launched in the late '90s and still had enough problems that Ray called Chummy to come down and haul her back to his shop for an estimate. Chummy did and so the *Finestkind*, neé *Esther II*, went back to Bernard for a visit sometime around 1999 or 2000. Ray said when Chummy called back some time later, after looking her over, it was like the veterinarian calling, the Friday after you took your old dog in, to tell you he had to put the dog down. Chummy said "Ray, you haven't got deep enough pockets for this one. She needs a new keel, stem, and horn timber, and maybe a few new planks and timbers." The estimated cost was \$25,000 - \$30,000.



Back in the water for the first time in ten or more years, 1997 or thereabouts.

Ray decided to cut his losses and sold her “to a boat builder in Surry” whose name he couldn’t remember, who in turn sold her to “a woman in Thomaston,” he thought. That was the last he knew of her. He did say he had loaned his album of photos of her reconstruction to the Surry boat builder and had never got them back.

By this time I was getting pretty excited. A few rounds of the name game revealed that the boat builder was not in Surry at all but was Carlton Johnson of Redfern Boat in Lamoine. Ray called back Monday night to say he forgot to tell me he had submitted a picture of the boat at re-launching to *Woodenboat* magazine, which was published in the March/April 1998 issue. I decided to drive up to Bernard my next day off to see if I could track down Carlton, and to stop on the way to see if a copy of that issue of the magazine was available at the *Woodenboat* Store in Brooklin.

On the way home from work Tuesday I stopped at the Bath library to see if they had an archival copy of the magazine, and they did! Except for hull lines the boat didn’t look much like I remembered her. She was lying at anchor in a place I didn’t recognize, dark green, black bottom paint with a white boot-top, and bass-boat style topsides of mahogany finished bright. The original *Esther II* had been a typical lobster boat of the 1950s – white, medium buff trim, copper bottom. When I got home, I looked up Carlton Johnson on the Internet, got a phone number, and called. He gave me instructions on how to find his shop, and Thursday the 11th I headed for Bernard. Stopped in Lamoine on the way down from Ellsworth, but didn’t find Carlton. His wife said he was a hard man to catch up with but gave me a time the next day when I might find him at the shop.

Friday, I headed back to Lamoine where I had a wait for Carlton and spent it talking with one of his crewmembers. Carlton finally showed up awhile later (back from a trip to the lumber yard in Ellsworth) and told me that, yes, he had owned the boat briefly, but she didn’t suit his needs. So he sold her to a couple in Portland, not Thomaston. Ray’s pictures went with her and he couldn’t remember if he got them back or not. To protect the new owners’ privacy, he wouldn’t give me their names; but said if I would send my home address, phone number, and email address to him, he would forward the information to them and they could respond if they chose to. Disappointed, I headed back home to Woolwich, stopping in Brooklin on the way, where I was able to buy a copy of the March/April 98 *Woodenboat*. That night, I emailed Carlton the information he had requested and began an impatient wait to see if the Portland people would respond.

At Carlton Johnson’s shop in Lamoine, after Ray received an opinion from Chummy Rich that she needed a new stem, keel, deadwood, and horn timber – essentially her whole backbone – and decided to sell her. Carlton bought her, used her one summer, did a little more repair work, and then sold her to Nance Monaghan and Bruce Bailey of Portland. This is probably around 2001 or 2002



Sunday night when I checked the email there was one from a Bruce Bailey, who said he was “offshore from China.” Since China, Maine doesn’t have any “offshore” I decided this was worth opening - to satisfy my curiosity if for no other reason. Well, Bruce – who sets up offshore oilrigs for a living – was one of the new owners of the *Esther II* along with his partner Nance Monaghan, a private investigator in Portland. He gave me their home phone number and her cell phone number. Better yet, attached to the email was a picture of the same green boat, now with white and buff topsides, on a mooring off Portland’s Eastern Promenade with Mackworth Island – where I work – in the background.



The *Esther II*, moored off the Eastern Promenade, Portland, probably in 2002 or 2003.

In this more familiar setting I recognized her as the same boat that I had seen - and admired enough to circle around - off the Eastern Prom in September 2003, as my son-in-law to be, David Tyler, and I ferried stuff out to Chebeague Island for the upcoming wedding! I couldn’t wait for a more civil hour, so picked up the phone and called the home number. Nobody there. I left a message and then called the cell number. Nance answered, listened to my story, and then kindly told me that the boat was stored for the winter at Blue Water Services in West Falmouth and that I was welcome to go out and look at her. She gave me the name and phone number of Jim Capobianco, owner of Blue Water, saying the boat wasn’t covered yet and that Jim would be happy to give me a tour.

So Monday morning, ten days from the start of this quest, I called Jim and made a date. Took a two-martini lunch and drove from Mackworth out to West Falmouth. Jim was very kind, setting up a ladder so I could go aboard and then showing me some work he had done on the aft part of the keel. As I backed out from under the stern after inspecting his work, there in the turn of the bilge was the plugged hole of the old *Esther II*’s side scupper (as opposed to stern, which the reconstructed *Esther II* has). At that moment, any doubts I had about whether or not this was my old friend vanished. It was like a homecoming after decades away. I shed a tear.

Since then, I have retrieved Ray Noyes' photo album (turned out Carlton did still have it), copied all the pictures and returned the album to Ray, and made up booklets of old family pictures of both *Esthers* and their early history for Ray, and Bruce and Nance. The boat, which I guess was called *Finestkind* through Carlton's ownership and had no name on her for the first few years of Bruce's and Nance's ownership, is now renamed *Esther II*. She still looks great.

Early last spring (2007), Bruce emailed me that he and Nance were considering selling, and did I want to buy her. Alas, I was in the process of finishing off a new glass Seaway and had no money left. Thought about selling the new boat and buying the *Esther II*, but she doesn't fit the role I have planned for the Seaway very well. Not one to give up easily, I polled my siblings about sharing the purchase. Many emails from siblings and offspring later the end result was that we all decided she is just too deep a hole in the water. So, at least for now, I will have to settle for the rush of finding her and for memories of wonderful times spent aboard her. Truth be known, though, I still haven't totally given up on bringing her back to Bass Harbor to live out her days. We'll see. +

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AN INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF SAMUEL K BRACKET, MARINER

by Malcolm A. MacDuffie

You may remember that a year ago I concluded the three-part story which my father wrote for an English class at M.I.T. in 1923. I had found these manuscripts in materials in my father's study in Bernard. But unfortunately the third installment had been misplaced and I was forced to relate it from memory—but without the special style and flavor which was its author's special gift. At the time, it seemed I could do no better. Fortunately, at last the third installment has been found, and I'd really like to share it with you. The Editor.

Recap

Let it be remembered that in the first two installments, Capt. Bracket was telling how the schooner with the load of pumpkins and hay and farm implements, but also sheep and an ornery bull, was becalmed in a dungeon of fog, and the Green Island fog signal began to intrude itself on the bull's animal instincts, sounding for all the world like a love-sick heifer in the spring of the year. So the bull broke loose from his pen, and as the wailing of the horn continued became more and more agitated, taking offense at members of the crew for inhabiting the same planet as himself and charging them from all directions at once. The helmsman had fled to the yawl-boat slung on davits over the stern; the cook and the mate and the boy were all treed in the starboard shrouds; and the captain was below, loudly, profanely but in futility commanding everyone above decks to do something about the situation. That is where we left our cast of characters at the end of the second installment.

The wind had been steadily rising, and the captain's yarn had been accompanied by its thin, eerie piping and the steady rapping of a halyard on the mast. It was evident that the fog was lifting, giving place to the sharp Atlantic drizzle that, even in the summer months, seems to lay the flesh open to the bone. We heard the singing whisper of it on the deck above, and a few drops that had found their way through the open skylight splashed noisily in Mr. Bracket's foot-easing tub of warm water. That worthy rose from his stool and removed the block of wood that held the transom open, and when he had assured himself that all was properly made fast, he sat down again and resumed his yarn.

“Well sir, it might seem funny to some folks—five of us roosting, like so many Plymouth Rocks, in the fore-shrouds and the skipper (as smart an’ bold a man as ever took out papers) cooped up in the caboose with his ears hot enough to set th’ hay on fire—but it wasn’t funny for us, not a mite. ‘Twas cold enough for jack-boots and short-coats and here we had nothing but our jumpers and carpet slippers. We had to blow on our knuckles and swing our arms to keep warm while the ox-critter and the Old Man called on us to come down and do battle..

“Cook finally allowed he had a scheme that would capture Old Hundred. He borrowed my knife and went aloft with it, and after some messing around, down he comes, much to the skipper’s disgust, with about three fathom of tops’l halyard which he made into a nice runnin’ bowline. Then he stuck his head an’ arms through the ratlines, lowered the noose down till it hung just offen the deck and waited, spread-eagled like a man about to be flogged, for the bull to walk up and be snerled up and made fast. But the old feller knew better and only cocked a wary eye at thet twistin’ and curlin’ piece of six-thread, and then looked up at Cooky, his eye chock full of ill-feelin’ and revenge. Fact is, he was keepin’ a sharp lookout fer all of us and if a man so much as contem-plated comin’ down on deck, he was on the spot where thet man figured to light and ready to send him aloft again. He had gotten used to the skipper’s swearin’ which, by now, was as continu-ous and lively as the Meth’dist church bell at home, of a Sunday mornin’. But he wasn’t quite re-conciled to the Green Island fog horn. He was always bellerin’ back as if to say, ‘Hold th’ fort fer I am comin’.’ And takin’ side rushes at the fore-boom whose slattin’ worried him a lot, but which hung jest too high fer him.

“Well, we stayed put fer three mortal hours before things began to happen. Cooky had become so wild with hunger as to lose all his sense of caution and attempted t’get to the galley. While the bull was aft, buttin’ the wheel-box to pieces to see why it grunted and squealed so from inside, he dropped from the shrouds and got into the deck house safely. But the animal hed spied him and so let the wheel-box alone and come gallopin’ down the deck (though how he could gallop with the rollin’ of the ship gettin’ worse every minute, I can’t see) and butted his head right through the galley door and stood there, stompin’, snortin’, and twitchin’ of his tail. The sight of that big, square head and rovin’ mischievous eyes inside his pantry must’ve taken what little sense was left in Cooky, for we see him pilin’ head foremost through the glass light at the for’ard end of the house, onto the foremast pin rail. From there he sprung to the windlass, then to the knight-heads and finally onto the bowsprit, where he straddled, his teeth chatterin’ and his eyes bulgin’, too scared even to swear while the bull shook the galley in his efforts t’get clear of it, until every pot and saucer in the place hed banged to the deck. It was heart-breakin’.

“I hed been listenin’ to the Green Island horn for some time and it seemed to me that the sound had been growin’ fainter. ‘Good,’ says I to myself, ‘soon we’ll be out o’ hearin’ of it and th’ beast will go back inter his pen and go ter sleep.’ Well, I was a greeny for, though I’d been hand-linin’ from home one winter, how was I to know that an inshore set of tide would carry us down along Green Island and into Blue Hill Bay and that Long Ledge lay midway between Green Island and Beach Neck and right where we were headin’ fer at that minute. As I said, the roll was gettin’ worse, but I had forgotten the fact, in the wild interest of watchin’ Cooky jump fer the bowsprit. The skipper was the first to hear the surf on the neck (it doesn’t break on Long Ledge at flood water) and he yelled for Cooky to let go an anchor, him bein’ in what the papers call ‘a strategic position.’ Cooky happened to look down just then, as the *Sarah* dropped into a hollow, and he saw bottom just as plain as I see you. He tumbled aboard then—bull or no bull—but the *Sarah* hed gone and done it. She rose on a big smooth swell and then set down on good, hard rock with a jar that would make you fairly sick. Of course she canted over onto her beam ends, quick as a wink, just as the bull was in full charge at Cooky. That carried him off his feet and hove him and the heifers bodily overboard in a grand, sliding rush, that ended in a three-fold splash as the beeves took the water. Of course, we was so scared we hardly noticed, but we all reached the deck at once and began to take orders. The old man was now as cool as a pig on ice and soon hed us jumpin’ about as

fast as the slant on the decks would allow. Riley an' I got the boat overboard and under the ship's bows and the rest passed us th' kedge an' payed out cable while we carried it a couple of hundred fathom to seaward and let it go. We got back aboard and hove on the line till we hauled her about and headed her to wind'ard. While we kept the line taut and waited for the tide, I looked about fer th' cattle. The fog hed lifted an' Green Island had turned off th' horn, and, sure enough, there was the old boy, follered by the two youngsters, makin' fer the shore as tight as they could push. They arrived presently, and were soon feedin' real peaceful on the patch of witch grass and thistles growin' there. Maine cattle would thrive on ship's hardware, I do believe.

“We lay there, every second wave lettin' the old *Sarah* down on a bottom as hard as Pharaoh's heart, for as much as an hour. We gave a heave on the th' bars now and ag'in and, sure enough, she worked herself clean off an' away as safe as a peanut in a bank vault. Of course she had opened up some, and the old man calculated to take her back to Islesboro, heave her on the mud and caulk her seams.

“Next morning we were in the harbor ag'in and alongside Peter Farnum's place, ready to take th' bottom on the ebb. News of a vessel come in used to fly around pretty fast in them days, and t'warn't long before the owner of our lading come rattlin' up lickety-larrup, in a brand-new, two-hoss buggy. The fust thing he yells on seein' the skipper is, ‘Is me cattle safe?’ The old man cocked his hat a little athwart his eye, spraddled his legs a little in a way he had when riled, and began to roll up his sleeves. ‘Them danged beeves of yourn,’ says he, ‘can chew terbaccer and spit cabbage fer all me. They come aboard here unwanted and they left unasked, droppin' no callin' cards behind ‘em and, as I hope t' play a harp, if you don't get off this boat of mine to once, I'll heave you after your blasted cows and be damned to you.’

“Well, of course, here were two able-bodied men who neither understood each other's words nor cared a hoot—and so they come together in the hottest mill you ever saw. Th' old man finally got the' upper leg and hove Brickly, shoes first, overside. The water was only about a foot deep, which was a shame, for Brickly swore somethin' shockin' when he lit.

“‘Bout a week later, a feller who had a herrin' weir on Green Island bar came home with a yarn about a crazy moose or elephant, most likely, that was rangin' Green Island, drivin' the lighthouse keeper indoors whenever th' fog horn was workin', bellerin' most fearfully meanwhile. So they took a scow and a dozen men off there and brought him, the bull of course, back with them.

“By the by, if you should ever chance to meet Capt. Allen Benson, don't you ever mention cattle, or farmin' or even poultry or milk pails to him or he will shet up like a clam and be nasty to his neighbors fer a week.”

A deep, rattling snore from the mate's bunk sounded a timely and appropriate finis to Captain Bracket's yarn. I got up softly and escaped into the drizzling night, leaving “the old man” up to his ears in the interesting and vital past.

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IN MEMORIAM: Lester Radcliffe 1926-2008

Our long-time Honorary Board member, Lester “Junior” Radcliffe, has joined the honored ranks of those who have served long and well, helped their neighbors and spoken good words for many, and have gone on to a new life. Junior and Edith spent their first winter of marriage as tenants in our family home, “Red House,” next to Thurston's wharf. He was a good neighbor to my parents through all the years, and to me. In his memory, we reprint his life's story written by Nan Lincoln, which was published in the Bar Harbor Times,. Ed.

BERNARD (Oct 29): Lester Radcliffe who managed Thurston's Wharf in Bernard for several decades, died at age 81, Oct. 26, 2008, at his home in Bernard, after a long struggle with heart and lung disease. He was born in Bass Harbor, Dec. 9, 1926, the son of Lester Radcliffe Sr. and his wife Audrey (Thurston).

His parents divorced soon after he was born and his mother remarried Harve Moore and started another family with him. Young Lester was mostly raised by grandparents, wharf manager Fred. W. Thurston and his wife Rena. He spent his after school hours and summers helping his grandfather out on Thurston's Wharf.

Lester was only 16 years old, and a student at Pemetie High School in Southwest Harbor, when Pearl Harbor was bombed. Wanting to be part of the action of World War II, he left school to join the Army Air Force. While the service kept him busy, stationed at various bases including Panama, he never did get involved in the fighting action, which was likely a relief to his sweetheart, back home, Edith Worcester.

After the war, Lester returned home to Bernard to finish school, marry Edith, start a family and go to work full time for his grandfather on Thurston's Wharf. Gradually he assumed more and more of the responsibility and after his grandfather's death bought the controlling interest in the wharf from his mother.

For the next 30 or so years, Mr. Radcliffe was largely responsible for the livelihood of pretty much every family in Bernard, all of whom, in one way or another, were involved in the fishing industry. Men like Cass Smith, Ralph Benson, Henry Sawyer, Filmore Turner, Myron Albee, Harve Moore, Frank Seavey, Randall Farley, Jasper Rich, Lloyd Robbins, Morris Thurston and Arthur Black, whom he inherited from his grandfather, and a new generation of fisherman, like Merton Rich and Wendell Seavey, who had followed their fathers into the trade.

"The best asset a wharf manager can have is diplomacy," Mr. Seavey says. "And Lester was a natural diplomat. In all the years I worked with him, we never had an argument." Nor, it seems, did the other fisherman who brought their harvest in to Thurston's Wharf.

"There's a lot of things that can rile up resentment between fisherman," Mr. Seavey says. "Someone thinks he's getting short-changed on bait, maybe, or his territory on the wharf is getting encroached; could be anything to spark off an argument. But Lester always seemed to know how to put out those sparks, using his good humor and common sense."

In addition to keeping the peace at the wharf, Mr. Radcliffe was also responsible for keeping a good supply of bait on the ready, gas and oil for the boat engines, and all manner of marine supplies. He also had to negotiate the best prices for the catch with the big dealers in Boston and New York, and be on hand with a big wad of cash to pay the fisherman when they came in, once or twice a day.

If Mr. Radcliffe had a knack for keeping the wharf business running smoothly, his home life, on the other hand, was a bumpier ride and eventually he and Edith divorced after having two sons together. At some point, also, his social drinking tipped over the edge into addiction. But eventually he sought help through Alcoholics Anonymous. At the time of his death he had been sober for close to 30 years.

A.A. not only helped Mr. Radcliffe achieve sobriety, it also brought love back into his life after several years as a single guy. His first "date" with his second wife Trudy (Beale) was an A.A. gathering.

"Oh, I'd known Lester pretty much all my life," Says Mrs. Radcliffe. "But I was locked into a bad marriage for most of that time. After I got divorced, I asked Lester one day if he was going to a meeting that night, because I

really needed one, and could use a ride. He said he'd take me. That was about 25 years ago, and we've been together ever since."

Trudy brought two of her own children to the marriage, Leon Jacobs and Kathy (Donovan) both of whom grew very fond of their gentle, kind-hearted step father. Leon, who had struggled with his own addiction problems was especially grateful to Mr. Radcliffe. "He was always very understanding, and supportive," says Mr. Jacobs. "He really helped me get through some rough times."

In the past few years Mr. Jacobs was able to return that kindness by helping his mother care for her increasingly disabled husband, making it possible for Mr. Radcliffe to live out his final years, and eventually die, at home. It was Leon who was with him in his final moments. "I was glad to do it — be there for him, after all he had done for me," Mr. Jacobs says.

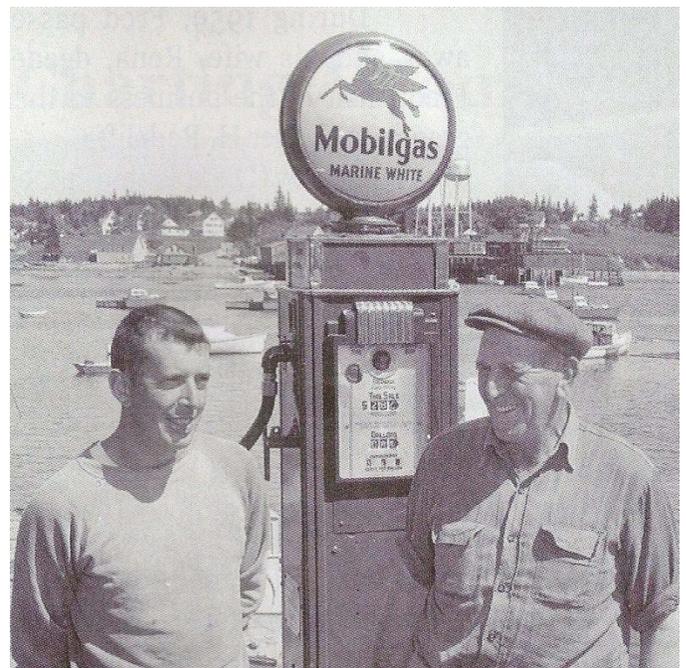
After retiring, and turning the wharf over to his son Michael, Mr. Radcliffe spent his days tending to his raspberries, getting out on the water with Trudy as much as possible, rooting for the Red Sox, and serving, as long as he was able, on a variety of community volunteer boards including the Tremont Historical Society, the school board and the board of the little Bass Harbor Memorial Library.

While not a big history buff or reader himself, he felt education was important. Back in the 60s he had flown in the face of local convention by becoming one of the original supporters and trustees of the consolidated MDI High School. He was also proud that both of his sons had graduated from college and then some.

While his son Michael brought the wharf into the 20th century and soon after into the 21st century with new ways of marketing to international customers, computerizing records and opening a seasonal restaurant, he says he also has tried to maintain some of the "old fashioned," aspects of managing a wharf. "Fishermen are the last cowboys," Michael says. "And they still require special care and handling. I don't keep a wad of cash in my back pocket like my dad did, and the services the wharf provides are somewhat more limited, but we still try to take care of our own, and everyday, I try to employ the skills and common sense practices I learned from watching my dad."

In addition to his wife Trudy; his sons Michael of Southwest Harbor and Steven of Chesapeake VA; his stepchildren Leon and Kathy; Mr. Radcliffe is survived by his half brothers William and John Moore; half sister Mary Moore; one granddaughter; a great grandson; and several step grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his half sister Anne Moore Rich. A Memorial Service will be held at some time next summer. Those who wish can donate in Lester's memory to the Bass Harbor Memorial Library or Hospice of Hancock County at 93 Cottage St. Bar Harbor 04609.



Lester with Harve Moore on the wharf, 1960.

Courtesy Paper Talks Magazine, 2002

BOOKS FOR SALE!

Tremont Historical Society carries a number of books which we think might be of interest to folks near and far. Some are historical in nature; others are of various sorts, with Tremont authors. The Directors have recently decided to offer these books by mail to readers of the Newsletter. The following list will serve as your catalog.

Author	Title	Price	Plus 5% Tax
Abbe Museum	The Indian Shell Heap	\$ 7.50	\$ 7.88
Dean Lunt	Hauling by Hand <i>History of Frenchboro</i>	25.00	26.25
Wayne Libhart	The Jury is Out	10.00	10.50
	The Jury is Excused	14.95	15.70
Virginia Libhart	The Enchanted Land	8.95	9.40
	Carrie's Dream	8.95	9.40
	Carrie Makes Waves	8.95	9.40
	Makin' Do	8.95	9.40
Ruth Grierson	A is for Acadia	15.95	16.75
Ruth Moore	The Weir	10.95	11.50
	Spoonhandle	10.95	11.50
	The Fire Balloon	15.00	15.75
	Candlemas Bay	10.95	11.50
	Speak to the Winds	10.95	11.50
	A Walk Down Main Street	10.95	11.50
	Tired Apple Tree (poems)	8.50	8.90
<i>Native of Gott's Island, whose novels received the following plaudit from the New York Times: "It is doubtful if any American writer has ever done a better job of communicating a people, their talk, their thoughts, their geography and their way of life."</i>			
Sven Davisson, Ed.	Foley Craddock <i>Stories by Ruth Moore and Eleanor Mayo</i>	14.95	15.70
Sandy Phippen, Ed.	High Clouds <i>Letters of Ruth Moore</i>	16.95	17.80
Wendell Seavey	Working the Sea <i>Autobiographical</i>	15.95	16.75
Tremont Women's Club Muriel Trask Davisson, Ed.	Two Tall Tales <i>Serially written by 24 members of the Tremont Women's Club, 1940's and '50's</i>	9.95	10.45
Craig Milner & Ralph Stanley	Ralph Stanley: Tales of a Maine Boat Builder	24.95	26.20
Raymond C. S. Finney	Summers with Percy <i>A Biography of Percy Reed</i>	15.00	15.75

Book Orders should be sent to Tremont Historical Society, P.O. Box 215, Bass Harbor ME 04653. Please add shipping costs of \$3.00 per book, and 50 cents for each additional book in the same order.

We also have copies of a booklet published in 1998, "The Historic Homes of the Town of Tremont," with photos and historical facts on 85 structures in the Town of Tremont. These booklets are available free on request. If mailed, we ask for a donation of \$1 to cover mailing costs.

The following Response Form gives readers of the Newsletter an opportunity to show support for our work in recording Tremont history and making various artifacts and materials available to the public through the Country Store Museum. Membership by payment of dues is only one way of doing this. Another is by responding to our Annual Appeal each year in late summer or early fall. For those who live in the area, we invite your offer of time and effort to help by staffing the Museum or work in other areas of interest to you. Please let us know of your interest in contributing to the fulfillment of our Mission.

& -----

RESPONSE FORM

Please clip and mail to Tremont Historical Society, P.O. Box 215, Bass Harbor ME 04653

Yes I/we wish to begin membership in the Tremont Historical Society

Yes I/we wish to renew membership for another year.

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$10.00 per person for annual dues.

Please make checks payable to Tremont Historical Society

Dues paid at any time of the year will provide membership status through the next June.

Contributions to the Annual Fund in any amount carry membership status until the following June.

Please list names of all persons for whom dues are paid, or all donors of contributions.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Check if this is a summer address If different, please enter winter address below:

Address _____

If you would like to receive e-mail notices of meetings, etc. please enter address below.

E-mail address _____

MISSION STATEMENT
Adopted June 24, 2002
By the Membership
Tremont Historical Society

The Tremont Historical Society shall be dedicated to preservation of the history of the towns of Tremont and Southwest Harbor and adjacent islands. It will achieve this mission by gathering, cataloging, preserving, and making available to the public historical materials, such as genealogies and information showing the growth and development of the towns, as well as artifacts.

Tremont Historical Society
P.O. Box 215
Bass Harbor ME 04653

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04653
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FALL 2008 NEWSLETTER