

Waldoborough Historical Society

Waldoboro, Maine

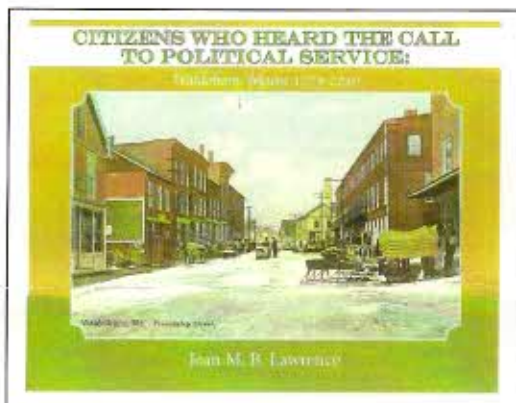


2011 NEWSLETTER

GENERATIONS of PUBLIC SERVANTS

The Historical Society is pleased to announce the publication of *Citizens who Heard the Call to Political Service* by Jean Lawrence. This book looks at the lives of those men and women who have served Waldoboro in both Augusta and Washington, from the American Revolution to the current day. Besides biographies of these individuals, there are a number of photos of people and places in town history.

This book is made possible by a gift from the estate of Mildred [Mrs. Ashley] Walter. Copies will be available for purchase at the Museum, at local book stores; a number of author signings are also planned. Price is \$14.95, profits to WHS.



STAN BAILEY REMEMBERS The SOCIETY

Stan Bailey, longtime Waldoboro resident, and one of the founding fathers of the Waldoborough Historical Society, has bequeathed to The Society a sizeable gift. This gift is part of the Bailey Charitable Trust, which we will share with other local organizations.

Stan was born in Burnham in 1903, but grew up in Waldoboro, attended local schools and graduated from Waldoboro High School, attended the University of Maine, receiving a degree in education. During World War II, he served as an officer in OSS [Office of Strategic Services] After the war; he worked for several New England companies in sales.

Stan was married to Anne Gay, and after her death to Marjorie Cleaves. Stan died in April 2001.

This gift provides us with financial security, and allows us to make improvements to the Museum. Thanks Stan.

The Treasure

After forty three years, The Waldoborough Historical Society has a number of things to be proud of: an impressive collection of artifacts including Waldoboro rugs and quilts; four antique fire wagons; a vintage school house; a superb genealogical collection; a Revere bell; and innumerable tools, photos, china, and clothes all of which reflect on what makes Waldoboro a special place. But perhaps our dearest treasure is the countless volunteers, who have strived to build and preserve what is special and worth saving of Waldoboro. From that small group of residents, who in 1968 felt that it was to save and promote the history of this small town on the coast of Maine; to those who raised funds for the buildings; to those who donated loved family possession to share with their neighbors; to those who devoted time to staff the Museum, give tours, present programs, and tend the gardens; and to those who worked tirelessly on the collection – cleaning, organizing, cataloging. This is truly our most prized possession – neighbors joining together in an effort to preserve that which is special about our town for future generations.

**VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED
And Welcomed**

COAL and the FIVE MASTERS

By Mark Biscoe

The seven enormous schooners built in Waldoboro – one by Levitt Storer and the remaining six by George Welt [for William Palmer] became huge money makers for their owners. For the most part, profits arising from these vessels' labors came from the transportation of coal. The mineral, with a higher heat value per pound than wood, and found in great abundance in the southeastern and middle Atlantic states, became a fuel choice in the last half of the 19th century. As the supply of hardwood dwindled, coal became more and more sought after as an alternative.

Transported by trains from the mines to the seaports of Norfolk and Newport News, Virginia; Baltimore, Maryland; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania could then be economically best carried by water north to distributing stations at New Haven and New London, Connecticut; New York City; Boston; and Providence, Rhode Island; Portland, Bath and Searsport. The rapid growth of the coal trade after 1870 had brought a demand for constantly larger cargoes as well as larger vessels. Along the northeast coast shipbuilders commenced to build schooners of three and then four masts, and finally in 1888, Waldoboro's *Gov. Ames*, the first five master, Levitt Storer's masterpiece. More five masters appeared, including six by George Welt of our town, constructed for the demanding William Palmer of Boston between 1900 and 1904. Beyond the five masters, ten six masters and one seven master were also tried from Bath, Camden, Rockland, and Fore River, Massachusetts. Most of these vessels remained very profitable for a number of years, making up to a dozen trips a year up and down the coast, until the improvements in steam driven metal ships brought the sail driven trade to a close about 1920.

Following a triumphal launching at the Waldoboro Town Landing, the five master would be towed down the Medomak River at high tide by a steam tug, beginning her life at sea, never to return to her birthplace. After dropping the islands of Matinicus and Sequin below the horizon, the new schooner with her fourteen man crew would steer southwesterly across the Gulf of Maine, near Cape Cod and into the treacherous waters of Nantucket Sound. On the way she would fall into line with the other "colliers" traveling south. A bit farther the fleet would perhaps split up, with one vessel heading to Norfolk, another to Newport News, and a third to Baltimore. After 1880 these coal ports were very often choked with vessels either loading or awaiting cargo, and any newcomer would have to anchor in the stream until her turn came. If all went well, it was possible to load a five master in about 27 hours; more likely, given the inevitable delays, loading time would be closer to six or seven days. Loading was done by gravity – freight cars were moved to the end of the pier by hand and the coal slid down long metal chutes into the hold. During this process clouds of black smut from the soft coal enveloped the ship, penetrating the living quarters, including the galley and the food. Below decks, in very confined spaces, gangs of [usually] black men or "trimmers" labored endlessly in the stifling darkness, shoveling coal to the sides of the vessel. For these services the schooner owner paid seven or eight cents a ton plus a small sum for beer to stimulate efforts.

When the last ton was leveled off, the hatches would be battened down, the schooner hauled out to anchor in the stream, and the steam pumps would wash down all the surfaces. Then when the wind was right, the ship would back up north. The average total time for such a trip made by the 15 Palmer coal ships in their best year – 1905 – was 22.75 days; of this 7.47 days were spent on the southward voyage, 7.47 days spent loading, 7.35 days spent northbound with their cargo. Unloading in places like Boston or Portland usually consumed another week.



Storer's Wharf

At Boston or Portland but also at other ports – Providence, Fall River, New Bedford, Plymouth Portsmouth, Bangor and Searsport, the coal was unloaded and loaded again into smaller ships traveling to some of the smaller towns along the coast. For many years such little vessels brought coal supplies to Waldoboro. At Castner's and later Storer's Wharf gangs of men would swing great barrels or baskets down into the hold from overhead pulleys and would empty the coal into wheelbarrows and horse drawn carts.

The Lincoln County *News* reporters notified folks all about the business:

June 16, 1874 – “Coal at Castner and Caldwell - \$8.00-\$8.50 per ton”

June 21, 1877 – “Coal low at \$4.35 per ton”

December 6, 1900- “Newly launched Fannie Palmer will sail tomorrow for Newport News where she will coal for Galveston, Texas”

May 17, 1900- “Schooner Gov. Ames arrived in Bangor with 2853 tons of coal for the mills of Orono Pulp and Paper. She is the first five master to port here.”

October 3, 1901 – “Gov. Ames arrived in Boston with coal. Will proceed to Newport News for more coal.”

April 24, 1902 – “Coal Shovelers Union men struck at Storer's Wharf for more money. Their places were filled with non union men with little delay.”

July 17, 1902 – “The coal shovelers' strike is on again.”

March 22, 1877 – “Those ugly piles of coal ashes are beginning to appear above the snow.”

Sources for this article: *A Shipyard in Maine* – Snow and Lee; *The Great Coal Schooners of New England*- Parker; *Popular Mechanics*, September, 1908; The Lincoln County *News*; The *Worthington Herald*, Worthington, Great Britain.

Mark Biscoe writes Waldoboro Wanderings in the Lincoln County *News*, and is also the author of *The Merchant of the Medomak*, and a frequent lecturer on local history and shipbuilding.



ANOTHER GIFT

The family of Randy Gross has generously donated all of Randy's genealogical research materials to the Historical Society. This is an impressive collection of original material as well as resource books and records. Randy was a dedicated and tireless genealogical researcher, whose original interest in his own family roots led him to research family trees from Waldoboro and beyond.

Randy wrote *The Cemeteries of Waldoboro, Maine and Surrounding Areas*, a two volume index of the majority of cemeteries and burial plots in town. This is an invaluable research tool for anyone involved in genealogical searches in the Waldoboro area.

Randy was a long time member of the Board of Trustees, he sat at the Museum twice a week during the summer, presented programs both at the Museum, and to other local organizations, and was an endless source of information and stories. He is sadly missed by all who knew him.

