



BATTERY POINT The Civil War Comes to Penobscot Bay

At the outbreak of the Civil War, most major Atlantic ports were well protected by a system of new forts along with a few “re-habed” revolutionary battlements that were expected to defend against heavily armed war fleets. The volunteer soldiers and sailors from Maine had several days of travel to reach any action. All of these men were confident their families would be safe from the dangers of war this far north of the front lines. However, a few surprises were in store for the folks on Penobscot Bay.

Due to an economic depression in the mid-1850s, compounded by rumors of war, most of the Atlantic coast shipyards had closed or moved to more agreeable locales. Maine ship builders, though, were thriving. One account asserts that at the onset of the war there were forty four ship building firms between Rockland and Waldoboro, Maine. It should be noted that, although a breakwater for Rockland Harbor had been planned for years, it wasn't actually begun until 1880. Therefore, during the Civil War, Rockland Harbor was wide open to an invasion with no restraints, as were all other small harbors and rivers along the Maine coast.

The Confederates' tactic was to capture local vessels at sea and fit them out with small deck guns that could be easily concealed and a crew of rebels armed with rifles. Then, under the guise of a ship returning to port, slip into those unprotected harbor and destroy dry docks, shipyards, foundries, wharves, cranes, or anything else that could be used to supply or repair Union ships.

This prompted the Federal Government to order the Corps of Engineers to survey all minor ports along the New England coast and assess the viability of fortifying those harbors. In June and July of 1863, Portland engineer Thomas Casey performed surveys at Rockland, Belfast, Castine, Machiasport and Eastport, Maine. He determined all that was required for their defense was the mere ability to discourage an attack by the rebel raiders. Maine's politicians and veterans felt this view was grossly under anticipated.

Rockland Harbor was to have a duo of batteries, each with five cannon and an earth covered magazine for powder and shot. One established on Jamison Point, (on the northern side of the harbor), dared any ship to pass it's collection of three 32 lb. smooth bore cannon flanked by two 18 lb. swiveling siege guns. To gain the greatest coverage, these five weapons were arranged in a dog-leg line. The second battery, on Owl's Head's Half Way Point, sported the same armament as the Jameson Point sight except these five pieces were in a strait line. This arrangement of the two batteries provided over lapping coverage of the full width of Rockland Harbor. Would that be enough to ward off an attack? Were any of our local vessels seized and boarded? Did these batteries see any action? Those questions will be answered in our February NEWS.

Fall Craft Fair

The Mussel Ridge Historical Society is very pleased to announce our Fall Craft Fair this year will be at the Owl's Head Transportation Museum, (off Rt. 73). The doors open 9 a.m. on Saturday, November 17, with many new crafters in attendance. And, for the first time, patrons will be able to purchase a hot lunch at the M.R.H.S. baked food booth. Mark your calender. Hope to see you there.

All proceeds from the table rentals and any cash donations will be applied directly to the restoration of the town's two dilapidated one room schools. The income from our baked food booth and hot lunch



The MAY FLINT's first captain following her conversion was to be captain Edwin Dyer Peter Nickels of Searsport , Maine . Nickels started his sea-going career at the age of sixteen and now aged fifty he accepted the offer as master without hesitation . The FLINT was towed to Baltimore where she proceeded to take on a cargo of coal destined for San Francisco .

Signing on a crew of good men for the passage around Cape Horn proved to be a difficult task .The less strenuous steamship life appealed to the vast majority of competent seamen and those who qualified made the wise change from sail to steam . Boarding house keepers who supplied sailing ship crews were confronted with a scarcity of good men . Those men who were put aboard the MAY FLINT included a fair share of malcontents and a liberal supply of hard drinking individuals . Trouble began as soon as the crew were put aboard the big vessel anchored out in the stream. As they climbed aboard with their sea bags slung over their shoulders, the men headed for the fo'castle to settle into their new quarters . Un-packing of their sea bags brought forth several bottles of cheap whiskey . The collection of forbidden drink demanded a party so the men proceeded to barricade the entranceway and began to celebrate .



After sampling one or two bottles, a few of the men decided to report for work .Seaman James O'Brien was one of the men who turned to and was given the job of clearing up the deck . He went about his work but became confused about where he should stow a length of cable and sought out First mate Seymore Knight (also a Searsport native) for directions . Unable to locate the mate on deck, O'Brien decided to venture aft to the officers quarters , an area that was strictly off limits to seamen . It was here that O'Brien located the mate who promptly ordered the seaman out of the officers quarters and back to work . Although he did not obtain the information he sought , he obeyed orders and went back to work only to again enter the forbidden area not twice but a third time where upon the angry mate violently pushed O'Brien out into the port

passageway . O'Brien struck back at the mate and Knight was quick to retaliate . He beat O'Brien with his fists , knocking him to the deck and then kicked him in the stomach repeatedly . Rendered helpless and bleeding profusely from the blows to his head , O'Brien was dragged out on deck where he was quickly put in irons and triced up to the spanker boom . There he would remain he was told , until he was willing to obey orders return to work . Word of O'Brien's harsh treatment quickly reached the crew who decided to formulate plans for his release . Instead of addressing the issue they continued with their drinking .

Barely past noon the tug Britannia arrived to tow the MAY FLINT out to sea . With the help of the few men who had chosen to work and the mates , a tow line was passed , the anchor raised and the big vessel started for deep water . As the vessel came down Chesapeake Bay , seaman Charlie Svensen was ordered aloft and because he hesitated too long, he was beaten by one of the mates . Both his eyes were blackened and when the mate finished administering his beating , Svensen was again ordered aloft . Unable to see because his eyes were swollen shut , he refused to carry out the order . For his refusal to obey the order he was knocked out with an iron belaying pin and left unconscious on the deck .

Captain Nickels requested the tug to come alongside and when she did he asked the tugs captain to inform the boarding house master of the un-ruly crew he had placed aboard .Because of all the unusual activity on board , the men had not been served their evening meal . It was now eight o'clock in the evening and the men were famished . When they demanded their meal they were told in no un-certain terms to wait until the steward was ready to feed them . When the food finally arrived later in the evening it consisted of only one biscuit and a cup of coffee for each man .Even the usual molasses supplied as a sweetener was absent .

Danish . Millers recorded several instances of seaman Edward Williams being frequently beaten by mate Knight . On some occasions the poor seaman was punished for the slightest infraction . This was mate Knight's fiendish method of retribution on the seamen he had chosen for special treatment . Among the many brutal beatings Miller recorded are the following :

One day captain Nickels made his appearance on deck, inspected his vessel and when some distance away from the wheel , ordered seaman Lundgren who was at the wheel to make some slight course adjustment. Lundgren did not hear the captains order and Nickels interpreted this failure to carry out his order as another act of insolence . He promptly stumped aft , grabbed Lundgren by the ear and punched him in the face . The seaman held fast to the wheel as he received Nickel's punishing blow , then lost his grip and the vessel yawed wildly offcourse . Completely ignoring the erratic behavior of his vessel , Captain Nickels continued to kick and beat the prostrate helmsman .

Hostile relations between the officers and crew began to intensify as the vessel neared the Equator . Seaman Charlie Svensen who had been the recipient of the mates diabolic treatment while the ship was still in Baltimore, was holystoning the deck near the wheel house and accidentally chipped off a bit of paint with the stone .Captain Nickels who had been watching Svensen , became disgusted with the mans carelessness . "Let me have the holystone and I'll show you the proper way to do it", ordered the captain . Svensen promptly obeyed the order and handed the stone to captain Nickels . As he did so the captain seized him by the throat with one hand and rubbed his face with the coarse stone until raw , bleeding skin ,was abraded away . His lesson completed , Svensen was ordered back to his holystoning .

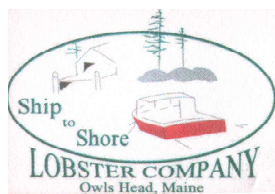
While the FLINT worked her way out of the doldrums , the men were put to work tarring the rigging . Seaman Ernest Stack became careless and spilled a bucket of tar on the freshly cleaned deck . Mate Knight immediately seized the man by the throat and threw him to the deck .He proceeded to cuff and kick Stack then dragged him to a spare spar that was lashed on deck . He propped him against the spar and continued choking him until Stack's face turned blue . Not to be outdone by his first mate, Captain Nickels put on a display of his perverse demeanor . Tobacco chewing Adolf Lassen had nearly completed his job aloft of taring down the main back stays , when down on deck captain Nickels passed by on the weather side .Without checking below Lassen attempted to spit overboard . Un-fortunately a few drops of tobacco juice fell on the captain's hat .When Lassen came down from aloft , Captain Nickels rushed at him , knocked him down and kicked him repeatedly in the stomach , all the while ttreating to kill him . Lassen's injuries were so severe as to lay him up in his bunk for several days .

When the MAY FLINT finally reached San Francisco the entire crew left the ship . Seamen Lassen and Stack filed cruelty charges against Nickels and Knight with the proper authorities in San Francisco . Their claims were substantiated by witnesses James O'Brien, Charlie Svensen and Edward Williams . A hearing was held and all charges against Nickels and Knight were dropped . At the hearing , Nickels actually had the audacity to state that he had not hit a seaman in ten years ! Such was life before the mast at the turn of the century .

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Smoke Signals- smoke rising straight up into the sky is a good indicator of continued fair weather. Smoke lying close to the ground indicates a change coming, possibly as soon as four hours.

Just dew it to it- when the grass is heavy with dew in the morning, (not from an overnight shower), the atmosphere will be dry and the day will be clear. A good day for outdoor activities.

Morning Colors- a rainbow in the morning indicates a storm approaching. This follows the same principle as “a ring around the moon means a storm coming soon” or “red sky at morning-sailor’s take warning”. All can be considered reliable early warnings. Keep an eye to the sky and expect a wind shift.

Leaf Peeper- when the other indicators of approaching bad weather have been noted, usually your last warning will be trees showing the underside of their leaves. It’s time to pick up your tools and head home.

Can’t Trust an Insect- Killing a spider does not cause a rainy spell. And don’t put too much faith in the woolly caterpillar’s stripes to tell how deep the snow will be. But, you can estimate the temperature by counting a cricket’s chirps for fifteen seconds, then add 37 to your count. Of course, this only works above freezing, but the result will approximate the day’s present temperature.

It should be emphasized that these predictors are not perfect. Local geography, large buildings, smog, tides or other situations could easily influence any weather indicator. You’d be a wise weather observer to pay close attention to your specific patterns, take notes and make the appropriate allowances.

ATTENTION MUSSEL RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS- Effective September first your membership dues were payable for anyone who is not a Life Member. The annual dues are \$5.00 per year or purchase a life membership with a one time payment of \$100. Make your check payable to: M.R.H.S. and send it to P.O. Box 133, Owl’s Head, Me. 04854
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remainder will be recycled into wildlife habitats, reinforcement for beach dunes or chipped into mulch for public parks.

Blueberries by the Numbers- 13% Blueberries are noted for their antioxidants, but did you know each berry is 13% protein? 85% Maine produces 85% of the blueberries used world wide and 98% of the berries consumed stateside. The blueberry has an average of 100 seeds. A certain Maine colony of blueberries has been tended by native Americans for at least 900 consecutive years.

CHATting IT UP

Its' that time of year again— friends and relatives coming for dinner, all wanting to discuss those issues we've grown so weary of. Try this subject as an alternative for their lofty contemplation. The NEWS takes no responsibility for this resulting in a family feud.

A well known phrase, "...as American as baseball, and apple pie...", was first used during the WW II years; probably coined by G.I. Joe, himself. However, research by the Mussel Ridge News staff suggests apple pie may not be as American as we think.

The truth is Apples have been cultivated for thousands of years in Europe and Asia. Wise old Solomon wrote in his proverbs, "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold on silver threads." Most of our favorite apple species were brought to the colonies by the third, fourth and fifth waves of immigrants; and the apple pie as we know it today is a descendant of an old German dessert called strudel.

On the other hand, there are pie fillings that could make the afore mentioned phrase politically correct. Long before the Europeans arrived on this continent, squashes, (including pumpkins), have been a staple of the natives' diet from Canada to Chile. Pecans have been grown in the southern portion of present day United States for at least a thousand years. Sweet potatoes, too, have been grown in approximately the same locale even longer. These, along with cranberries, corn, beans, fish, venison, Bison, and turkey, were the sustaining fare shared with the colonists that first miserable winter. Interestingly, small tarts of blueberry and pumpkin sweetened with Maple or Birch sap were a favorite treat of the Pilgrims.



Still, with all that evidence presented, 73% of the respondents to a recent survey voted the Apple pie as "the all American pie"!

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PENOBSCOT ISLAND AIR





2 eggs
1/2 cup milk

1/2 tsp. salt
2 cups blueberries

Blend sugar and shortening. Add eggs and milk. Add flour, baking powder, and salt which have been sifted together. Mix only until flour has moistened. Fold in blueberries. Spread batter in greased and floured 9" square pan.

Combine ingredients for crumb mixture.

Crumb Mixture

1/2 cup sugar
1/3 cup sifted flour

1 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 cup soft butter

Sprinkle over batter. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes.

*Susan Wilson
Owls Head Town Clerk*

A GOOD CUP OF JOE

Way back in 1913 President Woodrow Wilson appointed Josephus Daniels as Secretary of Navy. While in office, he made several reforms to Navy policy. One was to abolish the officer's liquor privileges on ships and bases. Consequently, coffee became the strongest drink on board and referred to as "a cup of Joe".

Coffee has been a staple in every lumber camp, ranch, ship's galley and downtown eatery from sidewalk diners to upscale restaurants for hundreds of years.

Have you ever wondered why those old timey cooks put egg shells into their coffee? They ground up coffee beans and tossed them into the boiler without the benefit of a filter or strainer. A residual chemical, (Albumin) on the shells causes the grounds to collect and sink to the bottom of the pot, thus eliminating any floaters in your cup. And too, the egg shells removes any bitter taste from the brew.

But, there's still more. Ask any cook worthy of their calling to give you the real secret to a good cup of Joe and you'll most likely be told, "Never wash the pot in soapy dishwater! Just rinse it out with cold water and let it dry." These simple tried and true basics will have any coffee connoisseur begging for a re-fill.



Jim Mullins House + Wagon