

Mussel Ridge News

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From “Rest Stops in Owl’s Head” Her Inn, Restaurants and Boarding Houses Since 1800 *Compiled by Carol Jean Walker in 1982*

Otis Villa

One of two early Ash Point boarding houses, Otis Villa, was opened about 1908 by May and Alvin Hurd. Alvin “Al” McNeilly, 65, grandson of May and Alvin, grew up at Otis Villa and remembers much of its early history. Al said that the boarding house was named for Dwight Otis, “a nice guy who thought the world of May and Alvin.” They thought the world of him too. It seemed natural to name their guest house after this wonderful friend.

According to Al, the Villa’s “heyday” was during the 1920’s and 30’s, when sometimes over 40 people came to eat at the house. May and Alvin’s children - Doris (McNeilly), Annabelle (Bay), and Millie (Pierson) - all helped run their parents “Villa.” With a kind of delicious emphasis Al McNeilly said, “They could all cook! Doris’ specialty was fried fish, Annabelle’s was doughnuts. In the kitchen was a big wood stove where they did all the cooking.” Al chuckled, ““And there was a table with a zinc top that they did everything on. - from plucking chickens to rolling bread.” Al’s first job was as the attendant to the door between the kitchen and dining rooms. A string was attached to the door, and Al perched on the wood box waiting for the waitresses loaded with either food or dirty dishes. Then he’d pull on the string, the door would open, and he helped things to run smoothly. His other early job at the Villa was ringing the bell for dinner. “Made me feel pretty important,” Al smiled.

Al reasoned that the stonecutters who worked the granite on High and Dix Islands caused the start of the Otis Villa. These workers needed to come to the mainland sometimes and they needed a place to stay. Ash Point was a natural mainland “port,” since it was so close to these islands. May Hurd realized this and opened up her home to the workers. Word spread quickly to the stonecutters’ families and friends back home that Ash Point was a great place to vacation. Before long, Otis Villa’s popularity increased. Even locals went there for dinner and supper. Sometimes too many guests requested lodging, and the “overflow,” was housed at Alvin’s brother’s, George Hurd’s, which is where the James Jenkins live now.

The Otis Villa menu varied with the season as the Hurds relied on their farm, as well as the ocean for much of their food. The main course was often haddock, rather than lobster. Al said it was surprising that lobster was only served once a week - haddock was much more popular. Sunday dinner was always chicken - which were killed on Saturday night! New potatoes for the 4th of July were a special treat, as were the warm apple, raspberry, and rhubarb pies at any time. Al remembered always smelling salt pork cooking - all the vegetables were flavored with it. Corned beef and cabbage, clam and fish chowders, vegetable and chicken soups were other Otis Villa specialties.

Some of the guests’ favorite pastimes were croquet, horseshoes, and rowing to the islands. With a bemused grin Al said, “They thought rowing out to those islands was such a great sport... just great.”

May Hurd died in 1927, but Annabelle kept Otis Villa going for the next few years. The house is still in the family, owned by Annabelle’s daughter, Barbara Rintz.



Ruth Lewis in front of Alvin Hurd’s Home c. early 1920’s

A GENTLEMAN SEA CAPTAIN FROM MAINE

Franklin Oliver Parker was born on the wild and stormy night of September 25, 1857, in the Owl's Head Lighthouse. His maternal grandfather was keeper of the light. Franklin, the son of Captain Frank Spoffard Parker, a fifth generation master mariner, and Abigail Coombs Mann, was literally born to go to sea.

The severe economic depression of 1857, coupled with the long Civil War that followed, made vessels to command hard to find. For this reason, young Franklin's father went overland to Washington Territory in 1868 to take a job as master of a vessel engaged the salmon fisheries. It was intended that his family would follow as soon as he became established in the Pacific Northwest. Up to the the year 1869, young Franklin's life was little different from that of most growing boys in a maritime environment...such as...Augusta, Portland, Plymouth (Maine) and South Thomaston. His father was away at sea during most of this time.

A few months after his father's departure for the West, young Franklin, aged twelve, sought and found employment on W. Clarks' 984 ton wool clipper "Brewster" of Boston which was engaged in the California trade. It is not known why he went to sea at such an early age but it is presumed it was for the purpose of helping with household expenses. He would most certainly have needed his parents permission and most mothers of this era were not in favor of their very young sons going to sea.

About four years after his first trip to sea, the Parker family finally came West. Mrs. Frank S. Parker, son Frank (jr.) daughters Mary Augusta and Elizabeth settled in the then small town of Seattle. The father and son were by this time both steadily employed at sea, the father as captain and Franklin jr. as a seaman and then a mate on various Pacific vessels. The senior Parker died sometime around the turn of the century while in his early seventies. Young Parker continued to advance himself and in 1891 while employed as second mate on a West Coast vessel, he married Annabel Gray on Jan. 10th of that year at San Francisco. She bore him three children and stood by his side throughout their 42 years of marriage.

In 1894 he was employed as chief mate of the 1,364 ton wooden bark "Oregon" which had been built in 1875 at Bath, [Maine] Late in that same year while discharging a cargo of lumber at Vladivostock the "Oregon's" master, Captain McKarty and two men went on a hunting trip in the barks boat. When they did not return after a long absence a search was begun and the boat was discovered with the body of one of the men. His skull had been smashed in but no trace was ever found of the other man or Captain McKarty. Being the senior officer on board, Franklin assumed command of the "Oregon", his first command. He was 37 years old.

Upon his return to San Francisco from Vladivostock in early 1895, he bought into the "Oregon" as was the customary arrangement between a Maine shipmaster and his owners. After 1895 ... he took his family to sea. For six years his wife Annabel, son Barron and daughter Mary shared the home-like quarters of the "Oregon" Most times he was full of life, enjoyed a good time, like to socialize and love to dance. Calm and firm, but kind and generous, he was master of his vessel at sea and master of his home ashore.

Shortly after Captain Parkers return from Newcastle in 1903, the "Oregon" was sold and cut down to become a barge for the use of coal mines at British Columbia. She was lost at Nome several years later. Captain Parker was [then] employed by the California Shipping Co. and put in command of their bark "St. James". This vessel had been built by Flint & Co. and launched at Bath in 1883. She was sold by t his firm in 1909 and was wrecked about 1918 in the South Pacific. From 1909 til 1917, Capt. Parker commanded the iron barkentine "Archer" of 900 tons. She was owned by a Washington based lime company.

At the time of the U.S. entry into the First World War, there were three German sailing vessels laid up at Astoria, Oregon. As was the United States policy at the time, all three vessels were seized by the Collector of Customs of Portland, Oregon. Captain Franklin, then being one of the few men on the coast with unlimited papers at that time, was sent there to fit these vessels for sea. One of these vessels named "Dalbek" was re-named "Red Jacket" and made a voyage to Honolulu under tow. Upon her return Captain Parker was given command of her.

Since the age of sailing ships was rapidly drawing to a close, finding men with experience before the mast was becoming difficult. To overcome this handicap a system of "cadets" or apprentices was implemented to supplement the available experienced men. This practice had been in use in foreign countries for decades and since these young men were in-experienced, they could be paid much lower wages. Eight high school boys were signed on along with 10 seamen for the trip to Comox, British Columbia, where the "Red Jacket" loaded a cargo of coal for Honolulu. She made two more of these round trips, the last one having had her name changed to "Monongahela".


As fate would have it, in April of 1919, Captain Parker was given command of another of the three German sailing ships that had been seized at Astoria in 1912. In the words of Captain Parker, this vessel, formerly called "Kurt" and now



known as "Moshulu", was the "finest vessel I ever put foot aboard of". Of 3,116 tons, she had been built in 1904 in Scotland for a German firm. His last command was a 7000 ton steamer named "Celestial". After this command he retired to his home in Berkley, California. His daughter Mary said of her father, "He loved his native state and was always in spirit and behavior a New Englander. He never forgot his boyhood days spent there." On May 9th, 1943, the gentleman captain from Maine went to "Meet his pilot face to face".

Editor's note: The following article, submitted by Gene Barron, was originally written by J. Farrell Colton and printed in a 1958 magazine, Annual Dog Watch. Since the original text was far too lengthy for our purposes, Gene found it necessary to submit an abbreviated version. We hope author Colton approves.

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Gardens



It seems to me that everyone has experienced some kind of garden in their lives. Maybe it was just a houseplant that Grandmother had in a sunny window in her apartment, or maybe it was the lilac and the peonies that grew by the back door of the house we lived in when we were young. But I think that some way of growing things is a part of most people's life experience.

My mother had a flower garden in our backyard when I was a kid. I didn't pay too much attention to such things in those days, but I remember some of the plants that grew there—iris and daylilies, peonies and chrysanthemums. I remember Mom working in the garden a lot—at least I thought it was a lot—it probably wasn't, really. And I remember that she had a plant in it that she didn't like. It had fuzzy leaves and magenta flowers and I don't know the name of it. I could never figure out why she had it in the garden if she didn't like it. Maybe someone who would be seeing it had given it to her and she was obliged to keep it!

But more than Mother's flower garden, I remember Dad's garden. That was a Victory garden—do you remember those? Victory gardens happened during World War II, so that families could have fresh, healthy food that they couldn't buy. Dad grew dahlias and raspberries in a garden of their own, but all the vegetables he grew in the Victory garden. Each of us three girls had a particular vegetable for which she was responsible. I was very young then, and my vegetable was, of course, radishes. They were about the only thing a person as young and impatient as I was could handle. I didn't like the taste of radishes, but I did like growing them. They were very satisfying. They grew fast and they were lovely and round and red. There were other things growing in that garden, of course—including peas and beans and squash and tomatoes. Mom used to can the tomatoes, as everyone's mother did in those days, I suppose. There was a surprise benefit to our Victory garden. Besides the fact that we were able to eat fresh vegetables all summer and into the fall, we spent a lot of time together as a family working in the garden. I expect that much of what Mother and Dad did was repair the places where we girls "helped", but we never had the feeling our work was a hindrance. And it gave us a good feeling to know that the vegetables we grew, freed up others for "our boys" who were at war.

It was only years later that I learned that our boys never got the vegetables or the meat we also didn't get. I wonder who did?

Even so—and even if we had known that—the Victory gardens were a way for ordinary folks to feel as though they were helping the war effort, whether they were, in fact, or not. To say nothing of the fact that we all had good fresh vegetables!

submitted by Marty Shaw

LET'S GET TOGETHER

Not receiving this newsletter in your e-mail or would you like to sign up? Have you got memorabilia or pictures you'd like to donate? We'll gladly accept them or photograph the article(s) for our archives. Cash contributions to the Mussel Ridge Historical Society are tax deductible and we'll gladly give you a receipt. We also have need of volunteers to help with the our ongoing projects. Maybe you'd like to advertise your business in the NEWS—just \$15.00 per issue or \$60.00 per year.

Contact Tom Christie 207-594-2438 OR Kay Dodge- 207-596-6879 kayed@midcoast.com
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VIEW FROM THE TEACHER'S DESK

Madeline Coffey taught, (beginning in 1934) as a teacher's assistant on weekly rotation at the Ingraham's Hill, Timber Hill and Ash Point schools. Her salary was \$166.00 which was achieved by the full time teachers forfeiting a small sum from their wages and the State of Maine contributing \$100.00 This position lasted about three years until she married and moved away.

Irene Lunden was born in Massachusetts in 1907. Around 1911-12 her family moved to a house on the corner of Spruce St. & Mt. Pleasant St., (Rockport, Maine). In 1929 Ms. Lunden was a teacher at our Ash Point School, (Owl's Head). As reported in the Superintendent's report, (Feb.1932), she taught there for two years then took a position in the Rockland School system. Her salary in 1931 was \$ 340.00 plus \$ 8.50 for janitorial services. (Our researchers are unsure if this was a monthly salary or for a half year) She boarded with Inez Rackliff Dyer Montgomery during her term at Ash Point.



Ash Point School circa 1936

Norma Curtis Meserve & Bernard Curtis

ANADAMA BREAD



Legend says that this was invented by a New England fisherman whose wife, Anna, had a penchant for serving her husband cornmeal and molasses day after day. One night, angry and hoping to find something other than his usual fare, the fisherman mixed flour and yeast into the cornmeal and molasses and shoved the whole mixture into the oven to bake. When the concoction was well done, he took his place at the table mumbling, “Anna, Damn her!”

½ cup yellow cornmeal	1 pkg. active dry yeast	1 egg, lightly beaten
3 tbsp. butter or shortening	¼ cup warm water (105°F - 115°F)	2 tsp. salt
¼ cup dark molasses	3 cups sifted all-purpose flour	¾ cup boiling water

Combine the cornmeal, butter or shortening, molasses, salt and boiling water in a small bowl. Cool until lukewarm. Sprinkle the yeast over the warm water in a large bowl. Let sit five minutes.

Add the egg, the cornmeal mixture and half the flour. Beat with a wooden spoon until well mixed. Stir in the remaining flour. Use hands if necessary to mix well. Shape into a ball, put into a buttered bowl and turn the ball to coat the surface. Cover, let rise until doubled in size. Punch down.

Turn into a well buttered loaf pan (9"x5"x 3" deep) and cover with a towel. Let rise until doubled in size again. Sprinkle the dough with cornmeal and bake in a preheated oven at 350° F for 40 to 45 minutes. Cool on a baking rack when done. Makes one loaf.

WINTER READNG

Four hundred years ago, “cabin fever” weighed far heavier on a person’s mind than anything we might experience today. Folks in the city may have had a slightly better time staving off the winter doldrums with church meetings, quilting bees, visits to their local general store or any number of social gatherings. For the isolated farms and ranches life was bleak in the winter. Other than the daily chores of tending to the stock or mending the various farm implements, there was little to while away the dark hours. If inhabitants of the house were few, conversations eventually ceased for lack of stimuli. To these outposts, visits by a roving peddler were a Godsend; delivering goods and merchandise for the body sure, but also circulating the local gossip, news papers and books for the mind.

Authors in the 17th century were excessively descriptive, often committing several pages to one thought. Additionally, the print was very small which necessitated frequently resting the eyes when reading by lamp light or candle. Consequently, a reader was able to glean a whole winter’s worth of entertainment from one book. This member of the Mussel Ridge Historical Society spent several months reading all 473 pages of an 1880 copy of *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*.

Written by Daniel De Foe in 1719, the saga opens with a teen aged butcher’s son sneaking away from home for an adventurous life of care free wandering. As might be inferred from the title, Crusoe’s next sixty years were filled with maritime mishaps and personal pitfalls. I was surprised to learn that soon after setting sail on his first voyage, young Crusoe was forced to abandon ship in a storm and then, set upon by pirates and taken to Morocco as a slave. It’s quite some time after his escape from that ordeal, while en route to Guinea from his Brazilian plantation, that our hero is shipwrecked and cast ashore on the twenty-eight year adventure we’re familiar with.

Chapter II of this epic novel reveals that after finally being rescued and delivered to his home in England, he became very discontented. Out of desperation to be away from the big city he sailed with his companion, Friday, for their plantation in Brazil. Stopping at their former island refuge, they’re greeted by a colony of Englishmen, Spaniards and natives. Friday was reunited with his father, but later killed in a skirmish with some natives. Crusoe wandered for a full decade before returning to England by way of Madagascar, China and Siberia.

De Foe so masterfully wove the real life social issues of his day into Crusoe’s adventures, it would be difficult for any reader to remember this is a work of fiction. Interestingly, some of those eighteenth century problems, like “cabin fever”, still plague us today.

“I DIDN’T KNOW THAT!”

We stole these tidbits from the *History Channel* * Sampson Rope Company, Spokane, Wa, holds the oldest U.S. trademark. * The Three Musketeers candy bar was so named because it was originally marketed in chocolate, strawberry and vanilla.

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF, AGAIN



Way back in the early days of Maine's statehood fireworks were a problem. February, 1821 the legislature approved a law stating, "That if any person shall offer for sale, set fire to, or throw any lighted cracker, squib, rocket, or serpent within the State, without license of the Selectmen of several towns, respectively, first obtained thereof; he shall forfeit for every offence [sic] the sum of five dollars"

A hundred and twenty-eight years later, Frederick Bird of Rockland attempted to "correct an intolerable situation that seems to take place in the state every Fourth of July" He went on to describe the chaos that abounds when a municipality regulates the sale and use of fireworks while the adjoining towns have don't, resulting in indiscriminate use and abuse of fireworks statewide.

Maine had been one of four states that allowed only sparklers and small novelty fireworks. Now, it's a new ball game since LD 83, An Act to Legalize the Sale, Possession and use of Fireworks was passed in July, 2011, just in time for the holiday. The law grants Maine's municipalities the option of banning or restricting the sale and use of fireworks with less than 500 grams of explosive content. A pyrotechnician's license is required to set off fireworks exceeding 500 grams. Some towns allow the sale of fireworks all year long, but restrict the dates they can be set off, such as New Years Eve or Independence Day. Though some towns have banned the sale and use of any fireworks entirely, the ordinances are difficult to enforce either because of limited police personnel or vague wording of the ordinance. And too, some citizenry have a total disregard for any local regulations.

Since LD 83 was enacted, a number of ancillary bills have been introduced. One was intended to establish restrictions on fireworks in consideration of military vets who might be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and another to protect farm animals from the noise and brilliance of fireworks. The Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee decided they needed one more summer to collect data on fireworks activities and study it's impact.

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