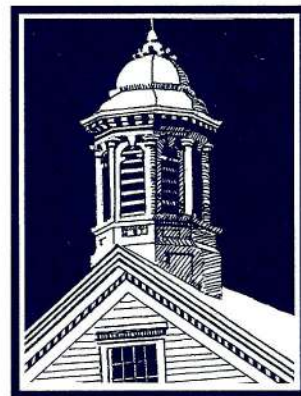


# the CASTINE VISITOR

CASTINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Spring 2008

vol. 18 no. 1



## AN OLD TOWN WITH A HISTORY – Part II

by Noah Brooks

Reprinted from *Century Magazine*, September 1882

*As promised in the last issue of the Visitor, here is the second half of Noah Brooks's description of his home town, as published in Century Magazine for September, 1882. Brooks is perhaps best remembered today for having been close to Abraham Lincoln during the latter years of his presidency. He first met Lincoln in the late 1850's, while both were in Illinois. Brooks then moved to California, where he wrote dispatches for the Sacramento Union, signed "Castine." (What the Californians made of that is not recorded.) Brooks returned East to Washington in 1862, where he and Lincoln were re-acquainted. After Lincoln's death Brooks continued his career as a journalist, of which the Century article is a good example. He planned to make his permanent residence in Castine, where he settled in 1894, but later moved back to California in hopes of restoring his health. He died there in 1903, but is buried in Castine.*

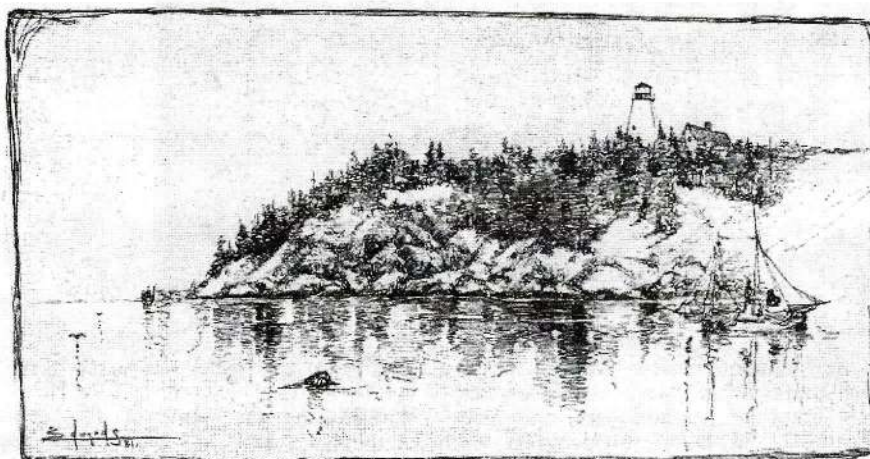
The only road out of Castine winds over a steep acclivity known as Windmill Hill, on which once stood a grist-mill. Just below the hill, going down the road leading to the main-land, and near an old battery erected by the British, is a spot that is haunted by tragic memories. Here, during the occupation of the town, six British deserters were shot. The poor fellows had managed to get as far up the river from Castine as Bucksport, twenty miles away, and, while chaffering with an American who kept the ferry at that point on the river, were induced by him to stay all night at the ferry-house. The wretch, knowing that a reward was offered for the apprehension of the deserters, sent word to the scouting party, and the men were captured in the morning, taken back to Castine, and shot. To this day the name of the faithless informer, Couliard, is held in execration by the inhabitants of the region. The date of this tragic occurrence is involved in some doubt, but it is well

known that the ghosts of the betrayed soldiers reappear on the anniversary of their execution, and that the wayfarer through the pasture in which the old battery stands hears a ghostly vol-

ley of musketry, a far-off scream, and then sees six blood-stained forms pass in solemn procession into the alder bushes where the soldiers were buried.

A much more authentic ghost, however, is that

of a little drummer-boy who was left imprisoned in the dungeon of Fort George, when the British evacuated Castine, after the signing of the Treaty of Ghent. Forgotten in the hurry of embarkation, the lad was left to starve to death. The dungeon was not opened until years afterward, and when the visitors explored its darkness they found the skeleton of the prisoner drooped over his dust-covered drum. Fortunately for the truth of history, the date of this tragical



LIGHT-HOUSE POINT.



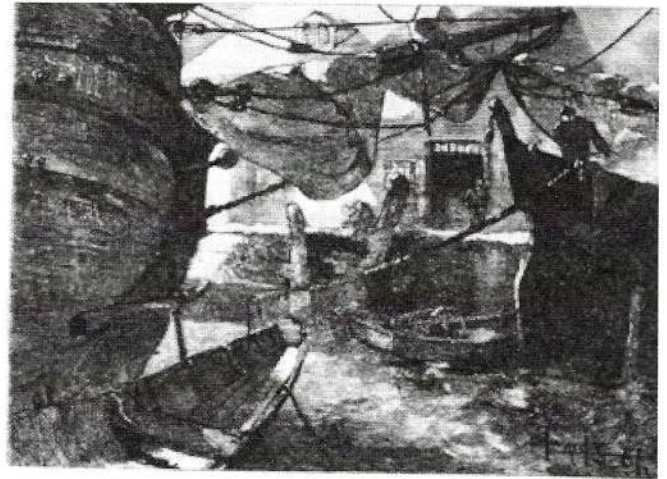
occurrence is fixed, and as the British evacuated the place in April, we can understand why, on the fifteenth night of each month of April, ever since, a ghostly drum-beat issues from the ruined dungeon, as if the shade of the imprisoned drummer-boy strove to attract the attention of the troops marching away from the fort to the shore.

Great was the rejoicing when the Treaty of Ghent was signed in December, 1814, and greater joy reigned, when, in the following February, the British evacuated the town for a second time. The overjoyed inhabitants illuminated their houses and indulged in general merry-making. During the British occupation the port was free for all imports, and the traffic of smugglers was brisk. Gold was plenty, and trade flourished, as the invaders paid good prices for whatever they bought. When this happy state of things was broken up by the peace, there were a few grumblers, doubtless, but the patriotism of the townspeople overcame all mercenary considerations.

It was thought necessary, however, for the General Government to maintain a garrison at Castine, and so once more the town was made a military post. Fort George was occupied with regular troops, and it is recorded that these successors of the British were not such desirable visitors as their predecessors. Betwixt the soldiers and the sailors of the port there was an irrepressible conflict. The former chiefly frequented a disreputable resort known as "The Hive," near the shore of the upper part of the harbor. "Oakum Bay," the rendezvous of the sailors and fishermen, was so near this house that frequent collisions and rows kept the town in an uproar. Curiously enough, this feud between the soldiers and the men of Oakum Bay was perpetuated until long after both parties had disappeared. Even to this time, for all that I know, there has been a standing quarrel between the inhabitants of Oakum Bay and "the down-towners." Sol Douglas, a fisherman's son, was chief of the Oakum Bay army, and when an attack was to be made on the other side, this valiant leader paraded his forces on Hatch's wharf, in full sight of the attentive enemy. Having thus struck terror into the hearts of the down-towners, the cohorts of Douglas, when night fell, assailed the foe with really dangerous vigor. The roughness of the boys of that period may be surmised when I say that one is told that a favorite means of extermination adopted by the down-towners was to raise a long and heavy plank against a tall poplar tree, in the darkness of the night, and, when the enemy from Oakum Bay were in position, drop it into their ranks with crushing effect. Sports like these

resulted in so many maimings and woundings that the selectmen were finally forced to interfere.

A tranquil sleepiness has come over the old port in these later years. The decay of American shipping has taken away from Castine one of its chief industries. The wharves are well-nigh deserted save where an old vessel's repairs engage the attention of a few solitary and leisurely workers. Along the water-front there is a flavor of mild decay mingled with the odor of the ancient fishing days. For Castine was once a famous fishing port, and from these weather-beaten wharves has sailed many a fleet for the Grand Bank, Bay Chaleur, and other fishing-grounds. And many a gray slab in the burying-ground, on the hill above the town, bears the sad inscription "Lost at Sea," last token of a mother's love for the brave young sailor who had gone out from the port never to return.



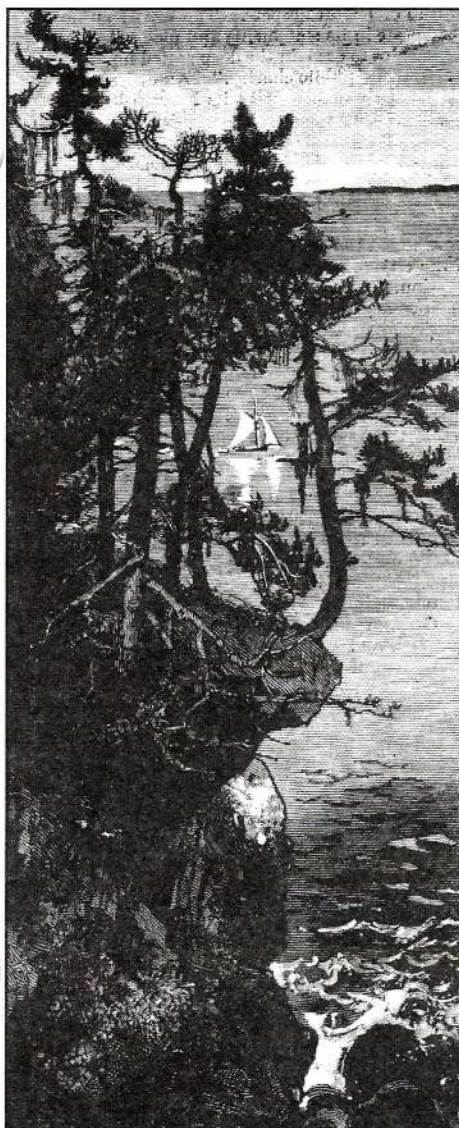
The town is pervaded by a semi-foreign aroma, reminiscent of the days when the chief business of the port was with lands beyond the seas. In the more ancient houses the visitor sees odd souvenirs of the old-time marine life of the inhabitants—queer bits of bric-à-brac brought from distant climes, curious waifs from ports frequented only by sailors and solitary explorers, and pathetic reminders of the weary watch on deck and the leisure hours in the fore-castle. Along the now deserted wharves one stumbles upon suggestive relics of the days of ancient grandeur when the port of Castine was a famous depot for a thriving shipping trade, and when the sound of the ship-builders' mallet on the gnarled oak mingled with the "Yo, heave ho" of the sailor. These are all gone now, and the sleepy port, basking in the summer sun, seems a lotos-land, in which it is ever afternoon.

There is a curious fascination, too, about the old place. He who comes once, comes again and again, as

continued on page 9

The Castine Visitor





The mission of the Castine Historical Society, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is to collect, preserve, protect, and make available a variety of materials that illuminate the historical development of the Castine-Bagaduce River Area from its beginnings to the present.

*The Castine Visitor* is published three times a year by the Society for its members and friends.

Lynn H. Parsons &  
Anne H. Parsons.....Editors

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**Castine  
Historical Society**

## Editors' Note

Treading in the footsteps of the Chadbourne-Davis's, the Grays, and Arthur Layton will not be easy for us. We hope to continue the quality of output that has characterized the *Castine Visitor* over the years and perhaps try some new features as well.

We retired to Castine in the summer of 2005, having been "summer people" since 1987, and "frequent renters" since 1975. Lynn taught American and European history at a variety of colleges and universities, but since 1971 he was at the State University of New York, College at Brockport (a canal town about 20 miles west of Rochester). Anne ran the computer facility for many years there, assisting novices (both faculty and student) in the mysteries of computer-assisted teaching and learning.

Lynn's research and publications concentrated mostly on 19th-century political history, a field that he continues to pursue. We're planning on taking advantage of this in future editions of the *Visitor*. Castine had an interesting political history both before and after the Civil War.

For example: Castine's only elected Congressman – so far as we know – was Hezekiah Williams, a Democrat elected in 1844 and re-elected in 1846, thus serving in the same Congress with Abraham Lincoln. He lived in the same house now owned by the Chadbourne-Davis's. There is a write-up on him in the official *Biographical Directory of the American Congress*, and in Wheeler's history. Does anyone know anything more about him?

And: In late 1814, an un-named Castiner traveled to Nova Scotia to meet with the British authorities to discuss a possible secession of New England from the Union as a result of the War of 1812. Do we know who he was?

We'll be pursuing these and other matters in coming issues. In the meantime, we're open to suggestions about future topics of interest.

We look forward to bringing you the upcoming history of the Abbot House by Paul Gray and a preview of this summer's CHS exhibit "On the Waterfront: Castine's Art from the Past."

Lynn & Anne Parsons

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Grateful thanks are extended to the following supporters who have recently added to the Castine Historical Society collections:

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### A YEAR OF CHANGE

*Today is not yesterday. We ourselves change. How then can our works and thoughts, if they are always to be the fittest, continue always the same. Change indeed is painful, yet ever needful; and if memory have its force and worth, so also has hope. Thomas Carlyle.*

This year promises to be one of great change for the Castine Historical Society. While 2007 was a period of change in the external appearance of the Abbott School resulting from the cupola restoration, roof replacement, and exterior painting, 2008 is likely to entail considerable change in the operations of the Society. The biggest change will be dealing with the large bequest from Deborah Pulliam's estate. Other transformations will result from the opportunities and challenges presented by Deborah's generosity.

One of the challenges we may face is keeping our membership committed and willing to invest time and money in the organization. While Deborah's largesse may mean that individual members' financial contributions are not quite as critical to the day-to-day operations of the Society, they will always be essential in maintaining the health and vitality of the organization. In this regard, I am pleased to be able to report that the response to the 2007 Annual Appeal has been encouraging. To date more than \$12,000 has been received from 120+ members and supporters.

Using even a part of the income from the Deborah S. Pulliam Endowment Fund will notably increase the operating budget of the Society. Although no firm decisions have been made yet, the Board is seriously considering hiring professional staff to aid in managing the Society's operations. Heretofore, the only paid employees involved in running the Society have been two part-time administrative assistants. The increasing workload of the Society being imposed on a relatively small number of volunteers must be distributed more fairly. Expanding the pool of volunteers might be one way to address this situation. Since many active members are seasonal residents of Castine and unable to work on tasks that are spread throughout the year, this is not the most practical method. We are coming to the conclusion that employing paid staff is probably the most logical solution.

Some experienced museum personnel have observed that going from an all-volunteer organization to one with a single full-time employee is the most difficult transition the organization will ever make. Authors have devoted entire books such topics. One example is *Institutional Trauma: Major Change in Museums and Its Effect on Staff*. An ad-hoc committee of Board members dealing with the staffing issue will consult this book as well as many other sources before recommending to the Board exactly how to best proceed. [continued on next page]



In the meantime, the operations of the Society are proceeding apace. The committee working on the new seasonal exhibit is putting the finishing touches on the task of identifying artwork for display this summer. The working title of the exhibit is "On the Waterfront: Castine's Art from the Past." If you have a painting, photograph, sculpture, textile piece, or folk art item with a Castine connection made by a deceased artist and would be willing to loan it for the exhibit, please contact Sally Foote, Mike Coughlin, Marcia Mason or me. The next issue of the Visitor will contain more information about the exhibit and other summer events. Either at the opening reception on June 30 or later in the summer, be sure to see the exhibit; you will be surprised by the breadth and depth of artwork relating to Castine.

This issue of the newsletter is the first edited by new Board member Lynn Parsons, with assistance from his wife Anne. In addition to having a doctorate in history and being the author of books dealing with aspects of American history, Lynn has some exciting ideas for future issues of the Visitor. Sally Chadbourne, my wife and co-editor, and I have enjoyed our two-year tenure working on this newsletter. We are grateful to Lynn and Anne for their willingness to accept this assignment and look forward to their contributions.

Delacroix Davis III



## CHS Appreciates Your Support

We would like to thank all of our members for their generous support of the Society. Including life members, we now number more than 600. Each new or renewed gift membership conveys all privileges of being a member of the Society, including a subscription to The Castine Visitor, published three times a year.

If you have an address change, winter or summer, please let us know. It is important to keep the files accurate so you receive all the CHS mailings. Thank you for your support. It is what makes the CHS and its members, near and far, an active part of the Castine Community.

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## In Memoriam

Last year, we said goodbye to two nationally-known literary lions, who, during much of their adult lives, made Castine their home.

Philip Booth died July 2; Elizabeth Hardwick on December 2. Their lives intersected through their relationship with yet another Castine literary lion, Robert Lowell, who was Hardwick's husband and Booth's longtime friend and fellow poet.

Phil Booth was born in 1925 in Hanover, New Hampshire, where his father taught literature at Dartmouth College, and from which he would later graduate. One of his mentors as an undergraduate was Robert Frost. He went on to Columbia University, where he earned his Master's Degree. His subsequent teaching career would take him to Bowdoin College and Dartmouth, and eventually to Wellesley College and Syracuse University. One of his Syracuse students was Stephen Dunn, who in 2001 was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry.

Phil served in the armed forces during World War II, and while stationed in Georgia met his future wife, Margaret Tillman, who had given a piano recital for the troops. They married in 1946.

Unlike many of his fellow poets, Phil Booth avoided the public-reading and book-tour circuit, believing that such activities subtracted from his time for writing. He produced ten books of poetry, of which his last was *Lifelines*, published in 1999. In his career he was recognized through fellowships from the Guggenheim and Rockefeller Foundations, as well as the National Endowment for the Arts.

In the 1990's the Booths became full-time residents in Castine, where his family's roots went back to the 1790's. He was a skilled sailor, and he and his wife were frequent attendees at the Castine Unitarian-Universalist Church, where a memorial service celebrating his life was held on August 18. He is survived by his wife Margaret, three daughters: Margot, Carol, and Robin, and seven grandchildren.

Stanley Kunitz said of Phil's work "Philip Booth has made himself a master of a province. . . . In his deep-rooted sense of place, the probity of his spirit, the integrity of his art, I find an essential beauty."

Elizabeth Hardwick (known as "Lizzie" to her friends) was born in 1916 in Lexington, Kentucky, one of eleven children. She graduated from the University of Kentucky in 1928, receiving a Master's Degree a year later. She then moved to New York City, intending to pursue a doctorate in English literature. Instead she turned to writing fiction, but it was as a reviewer and critic that she became best-known, starting with the *Partisan Review* in the mid-1940s. She reviewed all forms of literature – plays, novels, non-fiction – and became known for her uniquely incisive style.

She met Robert Lowell in the summer of 1946 and married him three years later. The marriage ended in the early 1970s, but the relationship continued until Lowell's death in 1977.

One of the most significant events of her career occurred in 1962 when she and Lowell helped to establish the *New York Review of Books*. Founded in the midst of a newspaper strike, it became a leading review journal whose style often reflects that of the earlier *Partisan Review*.

In Castine, she and Lowell first lived in the house on the Common between the Witherle Library and the Adams School. After their divorce the house was sold and she moved to her "summer cottage" at the corner of Water and Spring Streets. For many years thereafter she alternated between springs and summers in Castine and winters in her New York City apartment.

A memorial service was held for her in New York City on December 16. At the service, Joan Didion said "Lizzie had a lot of surprises, a lot of interesting curves. She remains the only writer I have ever read whose perception of what it means to be a woman and a writer seems in every way authentic and entirely recognizable."

She is survived by her daughter, Harriet Lowell.

Here are two vignettes. The first is of Phil Booth, by Carolyn "Dixie" Gray, a long-time Castine resident and former co-editor of the *Visitor*. The second is of Lizzie Hardwick, by Jon Jewett, formerly of Castine, and one of her closest friends in her later years.





CHS Archives

## Philip Booth remembered by Dixie Gray

I don't remember the day I first met Phil Booth, but I do remember the day I first met his poetry. While going through an anthology I had chosen for a class I was teaching at The University of Texas, I came upon a poem I didn't know, "Maine," by an author I hadn't read, Philip Booth.

I thought the poem was wonderful. It captured Maine's character, looking at it the way you might when you have a close friend with a flaw that you first overlook and later come to treasure. It also captured the look and feel of the place—after all,

we've all seen the old cars "Thick as cows in backlots off the blacktop,/ East of Bucksport," and we've all been "down the washboard/From Penobscot to Castine."

After that, I came to know Phil and his poetry and found them both well worth the knowing.

Phil was born and died in New Hampshire, but he was a true Castiner. He spent his childhood summers here with his grandparents in the Main Street house where he and his wife Margaret later lived for many years. His roots on his mother's side of the family were very deep in Castine, and Phil, in an interview for *The Castine Patriot*, in 1980, said, "What I write is rooted in this house, this street, this town. I'm positive that I received at least as much education on Dennett's Wharf, between the ages of six and 18, as I got from four years of college and a year of graduate school." And in an interview with Haines Sprunt Tate for *Maine Times*, in 2001, he said that though he hadn't set out to be a "Maine Poet," he began to realize that "the place had entered him, and his poems, in fundamental ways."

Phil was a part of the town all his life: You could run into him at the Post Office; you could see him out sailing; you could meet him at the Variety, on the town dock, or on Main Street; and even into his later years he always marched proudly in the Memorial Day parade with his fellow veterans. He knew the essence of this place and it gave breath to his poems.

When Booth died, the *Atlantic* called his work "laconic, scrupulously crafted lyric verse notable for its spare colloquial language and contemplative presence of mind." Phil discussed his work in his book *Trying to Say It*, where he described his writing process.

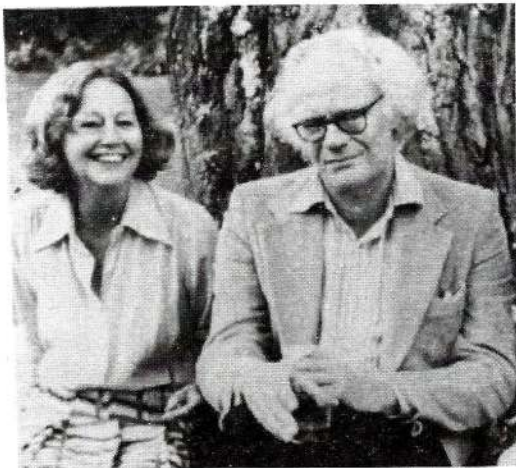
"Writing a poem is for me an act of using language to discover, or at least explore, what I can know about what I feel."

"My purpose, as best I know to say it, is only to use right words to define the perhaps meaning of a world I want to love, and to establish some structure of language which—as accurately as possible—reflects my sense of the relationships implicit in that world's superficial disorder."

"I think of myself as a participating observer, . . . but I probably have a built-in New England reticence that I come by honestly. I like and admire Maine talk in its most laconic aspects."

Enthusiastic, but soft spoken, friendly and engaging, Phil talked rather slowly, always seeming to measure his words. His words, after all, were extremely important to him and to his readers, and he chose them carefully to teach us all to experience this place and its waters as he did. Phil said, "Being a poet is not a career, it's a life. Writing poems is not a career but a lifetime of looking into, and listening to, how words see." His words "saw" this part of Maine, its place and its people; his words also showed his readers how to see things we might have known were there but didn't know how to notice.





CHS Archives

## Elizabeth Hardwick remembered by Jon Jewett

Mrs. Lowell. Elizabeth. Lizzie. That was how she was known in Castine, where she spent over 50 summers. In New York she was Elizabeth Hardwick. Miss Hardwick to the timid. The renowned and highly regarded writer and critic whose contributions of original thinking and candid views helped shape the landscape of contemporary writing and how we look upon the writers and literature of the past. She was a cofounder of the New York Review of Books, where on October 7, 1971 she published "In Maine," a profound essay on her thoughts of Maine and her people.

So often she would say that the most powerful influence in her life, her way of thinking and how she viewed the world, *the slant and the angle. . . how it all works*, was being from a small town. It was the neighborhood – and the neighbors. It was not only the tuna sandwich

at the lunch counter of the 10-cent store; it was about the waitress who made and served the sandwich. Did she ride the bus to work? Did she have children? How many? *Girls or just boys.*

The human character and "place" provided Lizzie with a vast landscape for deep contemplation and expression. It was her natural-born curiosity-driven wonderings about *how it all works*, nurtured in Lexington, Kentucky, that made Castine, Maine, the special place in her heart and life.

While living in Boston in the late 1940's, Lizzie and her husband, Robert "Cal" Lowell came to Castine to visit a Lowell relation: Miss Harriet Winslow, a proper Washington woman of some means who owned the house on School Street, there on the Common between the library and the town school. Harriet Lowell, their daughter, is named after her.

Not many years after the Lowells' first summer visit Miss Winslow bought "the brickyard property" on Water Street, "the north end." The primary interest of this purchase was the simple frame barn tucked away in the alder patch where Water Street turned into Spring Street. The barn, seated on a slight bluff with extensive views up the Bagaduce, deep into Smith's Cove, and along the inner harbor, according to Miss Winslow, was to be "a place for Bobby [Cal] to work."

The barn would later play a primary role in Lizzie's life in Castine. It was there that she made a place to work: a small cramped bedroom with a card table for a desk. It was there that she entertained – often large "after-theater" parties following fund-raising events for the CHS. Writers, young and not so young, sought Lizzie out and would come to the barn with their manuscripts and hopes. *Come by in a few days and we'll talk.* If Lizzie felt the writer had talent and the manuscript was worthy, it would be returned looking like butcher's paper with her red edit marks. If it was not up to her demanding standards there was the gentle touch. *Keep working.*

In Castine, as it was in Lexington, Lizzie had less interest in the "gentry" than she did in the working people with their contributions of labor and character. Without them Castine would not have worked for her. Lizzie was endlessly fascinated with the working husband-and-wife combos. Elmer and Eddie Wardwell, who worked for Jim and Mary [McCarthy] West. Eddie's yeast rolls and her seafood casserole. Ross Bowden mowing the grass and wife Bea at the Hardscrabble gas pump. *Today I got a very cheerful call from Susan Hatch. Something about David painting the trim. I didn't know I had trim.* Link and Geneva Sawyer, Link with the paint brush and his Constable's badge and Geneva working the stove.

Lizzie would often come to Castine on Memorial Day to open up after a long-distance telephone call from Belva Hutchins regarding what Oakley had done and what needed to be done. There was picking up the key from Bea Spurling there at Freddie Wardwell's office and a stop at Ken's Market to find both Ken and Leida taking and packing the delivery orders. *Minding the register.*

Always a part of her life was the Corner Store in all of its incarnations from the Rexall Drug Store to Sylvia's. Sylvia Pratt had a special place in Lizzie's heart for the nearly brutal hours she worked there as *sole proprietor – a woman.* And then it was on to Gail's, and in her last summers, Janice and Ernie. *There can't be enough profit in a cup of coffee and the Bangor Daily to keep that place going.*

She would recall Mary McCarthy, whom she had met in the 1940's, and the evenings at Mary's and how much she missed the "four o'clock tennis" at the golf club where for a few hours each late afternoon a mixed group of all ages played round robins of mixed doubles, mixed abilities and mixed laughs, before drifting off to one house or another for post-game drinks or perhaps dinner. And after dinner there would be the rides around town.

*OK, Kiddos, let's finish up the dishes and go check out the scene.*



if, like the fabled lotos-eaters, he were ready to cry "We will no longer roam." The people of the town have been divided into two camps—those who desire summer visitors and those who set their faces as a flint against all incursions of strangers. The former are those who want to see a little life infused into the old place and who have need to turn an honest penny by taking boarders, while the latter are of the old conservative party who have secured incomes, and who regard all of non-Castine birth as being little better than aliens and foreigners. Most of the great families of the elder days have decayed, leaving behind them but a few representatives of their renown. The pomp and glory of those old days linger only in tradition. There are those who remember when the yellow four-horse coach, with outriders, of the first United States Senator from Maine, Honorable John Holmes, used to drive grandly hither from Alfred, two hundred miles away, to bring the Senator and his family to visit his relatives in Castine. Here, too, were the kin of General Cobb, Washington's friend, counsellor, and associate. Elegant people were there in those grand old days. When Castine was reckoned an aristocratic place, and when famous men and beautiful women, who had traveled the world around, used to say that they met nowhere in the young republic finer society than this.

Like many another community removed from the stress and strain of the world's activities, Castine has a social structure that is peculiarly its own. The line betwixt the upper and the lower crust is not so sharply drawn as in the elder days, perhaps; but it is there, nevertheless. There is a great gulf fixed between the upper and the middle class, although the population of Castine is so small that either of the two divisions mentioned cannot number more than a few score. Men and women attend the same church as their grandfathers and great-grandfathers did before them, greet each other with formal courtesy on the street, and consider each other perfectly respectable, and yet would no more think of exchanging visits than of flying through the air. There is an upper, a middle, and a lower class as well defined as in an old-fashioned English borough town.

The peninsula, according to the records, was nearly equally divided betwixt Captain Joseph Perkins and Captain John Perkins, and almost all the deeds of lands run back to one or the other of these two worthies. The documents signed by Captain John Perkins, by the way, bear, over his proper name, the legend "his X-mark," much to the chagrin of members of the "Royal Family," who probably do not know that their illustrious ancestor was afflicted with a palsied hand that made

necessary that sign of inability to write. It was in front of Captain Joseph Perkins's house, near the foot of Main Street, that the British landed in the Revolutionary War. The family mansion bearing the name of this gentleman of the old school was built later, about one hundred years ago, and is a very good specimen of the antique gambrel-roofed habitation now so rarely met with, even in New England. There are yet standing in the village a few houses of the ante-Revolutionary period. In these days of renaissance, when eager searchers after the old and curious pervade the land, even so remote a place as Castine has suffered from the ruthless invader. Bric-à-brac hunters from the great cities have swooped down upon the place, begging permission to ransack old garrets in search of brass andirons, spinning-wheels, Washington pitchers, Dutch clocks, and the discarded paraphernalia of other generations. These forayers are held in contempt by the high-bred inhabitants, who resent the impertinence of those who have carried off, by main strength and assurance, many an heir-loom which the lawful owner would neither sell nor give away.



OLD TILDEN HOUSE.

The human bric-à-brac, too, is becoming each year more scarce. The town is rich in traditions of queer characters whose adventures and whose racy sayings would be a mine of richness to a novelist. "Old Dave Sawyer" yet lingers to tell fortunes and chant his ditties for the rising generation as he did for the former one. But the visitor

will miss old Fitts, the barber, bell-ringer, and general factotum of the village, who settled every question by lugging forth his only book, "Mackenzie's Five Thousand Receipts," that eminent authority being considered sufficient for all things. Then there was Daddy Morey, the author of "Morey's Dictionary," a work which existed wholly in the imagination of those who quoted from it, for the alleged lexicographer, a sort of "Caleb Quotem" of the town, used words of learned length and thundering sound, without the slightest idea of their meaning. But Dave Sawyer is still the poet-laureate of Castine, and, for the reasonable price of ninepence, he has been known to

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tell five very excellent fortunes; and for the moderate compensation of half a dollar, he will "chuck in" a few choice songs. Last Summer, walking along the summits of the cliffs of Light-house Point, with an old friend, we heard, in the still summer air, the dip of oars on the sea below, and, looking over the woody margin of the cliffs, beheld Dave Sawyer lazily drifting along on the transparent water, which, sea-green and changeable blue, swam beneath his little cock-boat like another atmosphere. Descrying us far above his head, Dave paused, resisting the tide-flow with a backward stroke of his oars, and lifted up his voice in a strange, wild chant. And as he seemed to float in the glorified air, we heard some such words as these:

"Twas March the twentieth day,  
No bread corn to be found;  
We were forced to go a-codfishing  
Upon the fairy ground.

When we got to Deer Island,  
Our anchors we let go,  
We overboard our small skiff,  
And on shore did quickly go.

We bought two quarts of rum, my boys,  
Our friend-folks for to treat,  
And down to Bill Morey's  
And joined the drunken fleet."

There are forty verses more of this delicious ballad, all of which tell the adventures of a party of fishermen who finally resolve

"Never to go to Bill Morey's  
A long time for to stay."

Of the old customs yet surviving, none is more delightful to the returning children of Castine than that of the ringing of the curfew. At nine o'clock at night, the old church-bell, which has swung in its belfry high for many a year, admonishes the villagers that it is time to extinguish lights and fires. The matin rings at seven o'clock in the morning, and the day is divided by a solemn peal at twelve, noon. Until 1817 the "meeting-house" was not warmed in winter, the families of the great being allowed the use of foot-stoves, little tin contrivances filled with live coals for the comfort of elderly ladies and invalids of the privileged class. As late as 1820, one of the members of the church was publicly excommunicated for the offense of "the selling of bull beef," and twenty years earlier, three persons were visited with the same ecclesiastical discipline for having refused "to make public confession of sin committed before uniting with the Church." In the

memory of the present writer, it was not uncommon for intentions of marriage to be proclaimed by "reading the banns of matrimony." After the morning service in the meeting-house, the town-clerk mounted a footstool, and, beseeching the attention of the congregation (every one of whom knew what was coming), read in a loud and formal manner the written proclamation of intended marriage. Subsequently, the "publishment" of intentions of matrimony was written and posted in the church vestibule, and it was delightful for the smaller boys to stand by and watch for the coming of the promised bride, who needs must pass, with averted but self-conscious looks, under the bulletin whereon her impending fate appeared.

Until a very recent date, all matters ecclesiastical were regulated by a vote of the town. It was the town that voted, in solemn convocation, the money required for "the support of the preaching of the gospel," the minister's salary, the pay of the sexton, and all other incidental costs and charges, being matters for public debate. It is on record that when certain inhabitants of the peninsula, who objected to going several miles to the main-land to attend Divine worship, commenced a subscription to raise funds for an edifice nearer home, the town of Castine, in solemn assembly, resolved that it, the aforesaid town, "deems the undue and immoral measures which have been adopted by the agents of this subscription, as an insult offered to its inhabitants at large, and calculated to form a schism in their religious communion, and establish a party spirit." Nevertheless, the meeting-house was built, and the town, in consonance with the time-honored tradition and usage, assumed charge of this "immoral" establishment, and ultimately indemnified its daring projectors to the amount of its cost. To this day, the town in its corporate capacity rings the bell that has knelled the flight of the souls of many generations of sturdy New Englanders.

It does not require a great event to disturb the even current of social life in Castine. As in the old days, the coming of the daily stage down Windmill Hill, carrying the mail and heralded by a pompously blown horn, was the event of the day, so now the arrival of the steamer at the village wharf, twice a week from Portland, furnishes an occasion for a reunion of most of the leisurely inhabitants, men, women, and children. To see the people come and go, to speculate upon the appearance of an infrequent stranger, and to watch the noble Lewiston as she glides out of the harbor, is a diversion that never palls upon the senses. Even the stranger soon falls into the custom of sauntering down to see who has come and

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who is going, and he must indeed be dull who does not enjoy this gentle pleasure.

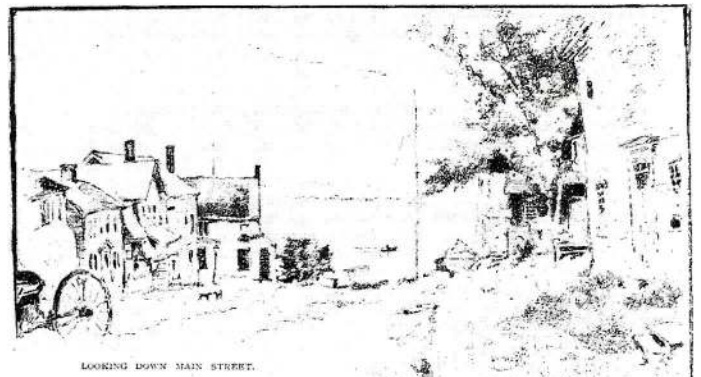
There is one drive—it is “around the ten-mile square,” but, for the aquatic rover with sail or oar, there are endless excursions. The town and its surroundings are saturated with the air of the sea. The current phrases are nautical, and local figures of speech are almost saline in flavor. With any native son of Castine, to climb a tree is to “go aloft,” and he for whom the sexton has tolled the bell has “weighed anchor.” The door-yards are “ship-shape and Bristol fashion,” and he who has a competence of this world’s goods has “salted down” what he has saved. Even the superstitions are drawn from the sea. The pig must be killed at high tide, if the pork is not to shrink in the cooking; the varying sounds of the rising and falling of the sea are tokens that presage disaster or good tidings. To go almost anywhere on pleasure bent, one must needs take a boat. Therefore almost everybody owns a sailing craft, and he who cannot row or sail any ordinary craft is little better than a “land-lubber” whose imperfect education unfits him for human fellowship. There is a tradition that Castine boys are born web-footed.

There are few more lovely and extended panoramas of land and water than that beheld from any one of a half-dozen points on the ridge above the village of Castine. The irregular peninsula is divided at its highest part by a sort of backbone, on one side of which the town is built; the other, which slopes to the north and westward, is mostly covered with woody pastures. Southward is the bright bay, skirted by the low blue line of Long Island, backed by the azure hills of Camden. North-westerly, the Penobscot winds around the bluff headlands, and disappears in the distance of purple and gray-green hills. To the eastward, the quiet town, half hidden in masses of foliage and bright with old-fashioned flower-gardens, stretches to the water’s edge, where a few weather-beaten craft lie sleeping at the wharves. And, around all, the beautiful bay of the Penobscot gemmed with innumerable islands, sweeps like an enchanted sea.

One street skirts the water, and along its edge are built the few shops or “stores” required for the modest wants of the inhabitants of the region. Here one may study character in the amphibii who bring hither their slender products of fishing and farming from the islands of the bay, or from the opposite shores of Brooksville. The gaunt women bring their stuff to “trade” at the village stores, rowing “cross-handed,” some of them, and all of them wearing that patient air of sadness that often marks the New Eng-

land provincial for its own. Up from the stores, Main street, embowered with horsechestnuts, maples, and elms, leads steeply to the ridge; and, cutting Main street at right angles, is the street called Court, grass-bordered and skirting the Common, a turfy mall given to common use by one of the founders of the town. Other thoroughfares branch out from this simple system of streets, and lanes and roads stray away delightfully from the center of the village and lose themselves in the sweet fields that environ the fringed and scattered groups of houses. There, on a breezy hill-top, is the village pound; beyond it the venerable burying-ground, which strangers and new-fangled people call a “cemetery.” There is a hearse-house, which is a corporate care, and the town-house; and there floats the flag of our country over an ancient brick custom-house in which the records of a dead commerce are still scrupulously guarded.

Easily reached by steamer, and lying on one of the much-traveled routes to Mount Desert, Castine has, of late, attracted the covetous eyes of pleasure-seekers and yachtsmen. The old town is half-startled into a vague expectancy, as one awakening from a dream. There are many signs of summer visitors. And, since all other sources of income have dried up or dwindled, the long-despised stranger is tolerated by some and welcomed frigidly by others. It is possible that Castine will never again be the slumbrous and tranquil town that it has been. But no rude influx of strangers, no incursion of unappreciative sight-seers, can destroy for the thoughtful and well-versed reader of history the subtle charm that invests the storied peninsula. The village may be said to be overlaid with traditions. Now and again the Maine Historical Society makes a pilgrimage hither, and a local chronicler, Dr. G. A. Wheeler, has gathered, with much care and loving labor, ancient records and documents into one valuable volume, whose pages well attest that Castine is, as Dr. Holmes has said, “one of those old towns with a history.”



LOOKING DOWN MAIN STREET.





A photograph of Castine in the CHS Archives taken in the late 1800s from Hospital Island shows numerous shipyards, a sardine factory and Hoopers garage among other identifiable buildings. This is a preview of the 2008 Castine Historical Society Summer Exhibit entitled **On the Waterfront: Castine's Art from the Past** that will be featured in the next *Visitor*.

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