OPENING THE SHUTTERS QUESTION

Roger W. Moss

The restoration of the Samuel P. Grindle House on the Castine Common that begins this spring has required considerable research on architectural details such as the front entrance surround, the chimney caps, the six over six window sash, and the exterior shutters. Nineteenth-century photographs fortunately confirm physical evidence, including exterior shutters which were considered an essential feature of the well-appointed nineteenth-century house. This article reviews the use of shutters in Castine and provides some guidance for owners of historic houses. (End notes are found on page 10.)

Exterior window shutters—sometimes called blinds—are one of the most misunderstood features of historic American buildings. Today they are considered an optional ornament; but in the nineteenth century they were a necessity of daily living. In cities such as Boston, New York and Philadelphia, where row house façades opened directly onto the street, ground floor windows were often fitted with solid panel exterior shutters for privacy and security, especially before the establishment of professional metropolitan police forces in the mid-nineteenth century.

In smaller communities such as Castine—where houses were typically separated from the street by a fenced front garden—both the ground and upper floor windows would have louvered shutters. These could be opened or closed to protect from the deleterious effects of sun light on furniture, upholstery and carpets, while simultaneously ventilating rooms in the summer. Closed louvered shutters also deflected summer rain so the window sash could remain open for air circulation.1 To a degree they controlled the entry of flies and mosquitos in an age before woven wire window screens, and they offered some protection against the detritus that blew about unpaved streets.

Nineteenth-century architectural literature provides numerous references to the usefulness of louvered shutters. For instance, John Claudius Loudon, writing in his internationally popular Encyclopedia of Domestic Economy (1833), encouraged the use of shutters “as it is very desirable, in every house, whether of the poor man or of the rich, to preserve the color of such expensive articles as window curtains and carpets, and to exclude flies,

(continued on page 4)
CASTINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2012-2013

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The Castine Historical Society welcomes
Edward E. Leach as a new member
(gift membership from Marjorie Babcock)

The Castine Historical Society gratefully acknowledges contributions received in memory of Eugene B. Bruns Nancy (Ann T.) Buttfield Joseph Day Philip Day Hildegarde Perkins Jessie Richard and in honor of J. Alton Boyer

Thanks and recognition are extended to those who have recently added to our collections
Aynne Ames Matthew Basile John Curtin Sally Foote Rita Hunter Ann Miller Laurie and Jim Stone

We are pleased to announce that the 2013 Deborah Pulliam Memorial Lecture will be given by Castine resident Dr. Kerri-Ann Jones, Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs. She will be speaking at the Delano Auditorium of the Maine Maritime Academy at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 23rd.

Editors’ Notes:
The debunking of the claim that Castine was “settled” in 1613 in the last issue of the Visitor generated a variety of responses. One suggested that since there will be no Four Hundredth Anniversary this year, we could have a “Faux Hundredth Anniversary” instead. Another reminded us that in 1946 there was a Sesquicentennial Anniversary in Castine, participated in by a number of youngsters, many of whom are still with us.

Visit us online at www.castinehistoricalsociety.org
If you are a current Facebook user, please “like” us at https://www.facebook.com/CastineHistoricalSociety
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

What was the name of Castine’s first newspaper?
Correct answer: c.

While the Castine Journal was the first newspaper published in Castine, the other three choices were also Castine newspapers.

The Village Improvement Society was in charge of placing certain items around Castine in 1910. Those items were which of the following?
Correct answer: b.

It was voted to raise $125 to make signs that were to be placed at historic sites in the town. The following year, $200 was raised for the same purpose. In 1913, $100 was dedicated to taking care of the signs.

If you answered each question correctly in less than 60 seconds, perhaps you would enjoy learning more about the Society’s role in a multi-community project.

In January 2012, the Wilson Museum, with sponsorship from Acadia Trust and the Hancock County Fund of the Maine Community Foundation, began collaboration with the historical societies of Brooksville, Castine, and Penobscot to create the game Maja Trivia. This game is similar to “Jeopardy” and the questions relate to the history and culture of the area once known as Majagigaduce, currently the towns of Brooksville, Castine, and Penobscot. Each town created questions specific to its own history and teams of fifth through eighth grade students from the area elementary schools are now engaged in intramural competition in preparation for interschool competition to be held in spring 2013.

Several members and friends of the Castine Historical Society contributed nearly one hundred questions and multiple images related to Castine history that now have been integrated into a computerized game program. The teams compete in a venue where this information is projected onto a screen. Darren French, the Education Director at the Wilson Museum, has been meeting with students from each community on a monthly basis to test their skills and to gauge their interest in the game.

I recently attended a session in the Mitchell Room where two teams of students, grades five through eight, from Adams School were engaged in a practice competition. (See the picture on page 10.) I was impressed by their enthusiasm and their willingness to work together as a team to reach the correct answer. The Society anticipates hosting a day of multiple rounds of Maja Trivia to determine which Adams School team will face the winning teams from Brooksville and Penobscot in the interschool championship at the Wilson Museum in May. I expect this to be a very interesting event in which the entire community is welcome to join in the fun of learning local history.

This is another fine example of how the Castine Historical Society continues to enrich the community through outreach and collaboration with other organizations.

Marcia P. Mason

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

info@castinehistoricalsociety.org
www.castinehistoricalsociety.org

Castine Historical Society
(continued from page 1)

which totally destroy gilt picture-frames, and gnats, which are a personal annoyance; all houses that can afford it ought to have either shutter-blinds, or some description of outside blinds.” In the 1840s, the Swedish writer and feminist Fredrika Bremer traveled in the United States, where she observed louvered shutters everywhere. Writing from a home along the Hudson River, she reported, “Here, as in many other places, I observed how [Americans] exclude the daylight from the rooms.... But they say that the heat of the sun is too powerful here for the greater part of the year, and they are obliged as much as possible to exclude its light from the rooms.” Bremer was describing a practice that often drew comment from foreign visitors who failed to appreciate that New York City and Rome share approximately the same latitude, as do Portland, Maine, and Santander, Spain. She also mentioned the nearly universal use of dark green paint for shutters, as did the celebrated English novelist, Charles Dickens, who traveled to America in the winter of 1842 and commented, when he reached Worcester, Massachusetts, that “all the buildings looked as if they had been painted that morning.... Every house is the whitest of white;” every shutter is “the greenest of green.”

Given the widely acknowledged usefulness of louvered exterior shutters in the nineteenth century, it is no surprise that photographs of Castine historic houses taken as recently as the 1990s show virtually all of our handsome Federal and Greek Revival Style houses fitted with shutters. Unfortunately there has been a recent tendency to remove shutters—as had been done at the Historical Society’s Grindle House—probably motivated by a desire to avoid the cost and inconvenience of maintaining and painting them, or possibly the mistaken belief they were not original. This is unfortunate because it alters the articulation of the façade intended by the builder, lending the house a “Little Orphan Annie” blank stare. For that reason, the Castine Historical Society will return shutters to the Grindle House as well as the six-over-six light window sash appropriate for a house erected in 1850 before affordable large pane window glass became available.

Of course twentieth-century photographs only prove that until recently many Castine houses had shutters. The images do not show when our Federal houses acquired the shutters, which could have been installed at any time over the past two hundred years.

Earlier photographs and paintings provide some help. The collection of the Castine Historical Society includes a daguerreotype image of a Castine house on upper Main Street dated to c. 1850. [Daguerreotypes—the first photographic process—flourished in America from the early 1840s to approximately 1860 when the process was superseded by faster and easier methods.] The picture on the front page shows the Ebenezer Perkins house (c.1807) at 71 Main Street confirming that by the middle of the nineteenth century Castine houses had shutters. (See also 1859 familiar Fitz Henry Lane Castine painting on back page of this issue.)

"Faux shutters" are screwed onto siding rather than suspended from pintles. Author's photograph.

Recently, a longtime resident humorously suggested to me that in the mid-nineteenth century an enterprising Portland shutter salesman sailed into the Bagaduce with a shipload of irresistible green shutters. This is an amusing but unlikely concept given the lack of standardized window sizes in the Federal period. Shutters could not simply be nailed to the siding like the modern plastic or aluminum “faux shutters” beloved of artificial siding contractors. To function, shutter must fit within the window frame. (continued on next page)
Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., has called to my attention a Portland, Maine, building contract dating to 1835 that mentions shutters, and a similar contract for Bangor dating to 1833 that stipulates shutters on all the windows. But suspicion that Castine’s shutters might not date back to the Federal period probably can be traced to an otherwise useful book by Joyce K. Bibber, wherein it is remarked that exterior shutters “had not been common in northern states during earlier years” of the nineteenth century, only becoming popular “during the Greek Revival period.” This comment is easily refuted by examining the substantial body of Northern New England iconographic sources dating from the early nineteenth century.

The artist Henry Sargent (1770-1845) also provides us with a useful illustration in his famous painting, “The Dinner Party,” dating from c.1821, which clearly shows both louvered exterior shutters partially closed as well as interior shutters built into the window-reveals that are shown partially closed to control light. This dual use of both interior and exterior shutters is not uncommon in New England Federal Style houses of more sophisticated and expensive construction. The Daniel Johnston House (1805) at 90 Main (on this page) has the finest surviving set of louvered exterior shutters in Castine as well as interior shutters. This combination offered several choices for responding to a variety of conditions ranging from bright sunlight to summer rain.

Hopefully this brief history of shutters will encourage owners of Castine’s historic houses to retrieve their shutters from the basement or barn and reinstall them; or, if they have been lost, to acquire paintable wooden reproductions measured to fit their windows with appropriate hardware from one of several reputable manufacturers. Last summer the owner of the Charles Francis Clark house at the corner of Court Street and Dyer Lane painted and reinstalled his original shutters long in storage, much to the advantage of the appearance of his house (see photo below). Perhaps this gift to the street is a harbinger of things to come.

Detail of Daniel Johnston house (1805) on Main Street with original shutters including hinged pair for Palladian window. Note interior shutters in left window. Author’s photograph.

When Castine, Massachusetts, was rapidly becoming one of the most prosperous Down East towns—with extensive personal and commercial connections to the state capital in Boston—dated watercolors, paintings, architectural sketches, engravings and lithographs of that city clearly illustrate Federal houses fitted with exterior louvered shutters. For example, in a watercolor view of Beacon Street c.1808, the John Phillips House (1804-5), the Thomas Perkins house (1804-5), and the Thomas Amory house (1803-4) are clearly shown with shutters. An 1829 lithographic view of Summer Street in Boston illustrates four Federal houses with shutters on all floors, some closed, others open. Finally, a photograph of “Montpelier” (erected 1794-97) in Thomaston, Maine, taken before its demolition in the nineteenth century, show shutters that must have been part of the original design; the house was derelict and had long been owned by Henry Knox’s heirs who could ill afford basic maintenance, let alone the cost to add shutters for convenience or fashion.

(End notes are found on page 10.)
FOR THOSE WHO YEARN FOR THE GOOD OLD DAYS . . .

While perusing the Annual Reports of the Town Officers for the past century or more, your editors uncovered bits and pieces that provide hints about life’s realities in an era long past. Sometimes the hints are little more than that, raising as many questions as they answer.

We offer, for example, a description of “The Worst Kind of Nuisance.” The By-Laws of the Board of Health, first adopted in 1887, were re-printed eleven years later in 1898. What prompted the Board of Health to request the Selectmen to publish them again? Were they being ignored? Or had the previous summer proven to be unusually hot?

“Dead People Cannot Apply for Aid” might seem to be obvious in today’s world, but not apparently to the Board of Selectmen, who also served, then and now, as “Overseers of the Poor.” Their role resulted in legal battles in 1899 with the towns of Vinalhaven, Brooksville and Bangor. Result: one win, one loss, and one tie. Total legal costs: $135.08.

Finally, although the town of Castine once attempted to ban automobiles from most of the town except parts of Main Street, it proved to be a losing battle. See the chart “Horses and Autos in Castine, 1914-1930.”


BY-LAWS OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH OF THE TOWN OF CASTINE.

Adopted by the town, August 22, 1887.

Reprinted in the ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TOWN OFFICERS OF CASTINE FOR THE YEAR ENDING FEBRUARY 28, 1898.

1. A public funeral shall not be held for any person who has died of scarlet fever, diphtheria, small pox, cholera or typhus fever; and the body of any person who has died of any of these diseases shall neither be brought within nor carried without the jurisdiction of this board without permission in writing from the board, nor shall there by a disinterment of any such body after it has once been buried, without the written permission of the board.

2. No dead animal shall, within the jurisdiction of this board, be put into any river, well, spring, cistern, reservoir, stream or pond.

3. The collection of refuse matter in or around the immediate vicinity of any dwelling-house or place of business, such as swill, waste of meat, fish or shells, bones, decaying vegetables, dead carcasses, excrement, or any kind of offal that may decompose and generate disease germs or unhealthy gases, and thus affect the purity of the air, shall be considered the worst kind of nuisance, and must be removed or disposed of either by burial, burning or otherwise, and in such manner that it may not be offensive to the neighborhood wherever located.

4. No privy vault, cesspool, or reservoir into which a privy, water closet, stable or sink is drained, except it is water tight, shall be established within fifty feet of any well, spring, or any other source of water used for drinking or culinary purposes.

5. All privy vaults, cesspools or reservoirs named, shall be cleaned out twice a year, once in the spring, but not later than the fifteenth of May, and once in the autumn, not earlier than the fifteenth of October.

(continued on next page)
6. Earth privies and earth closets, with no vault below the surface of the ground, shall be excepted in section 5: but sufficient dry earth or coal ashes must be used daily to absorb all the fluid part of the deposit, and the entire contents must be removed at least monthly.

7. All sewer drains that pass within fifty feet of any source of water used for drinking or culinary purposes shall be water-tight, and in sandy soil the limit shall be eighty feet.

8. Swine shall be kept in such place and manner as not to be offensive to the persons residing in the vicinity; and their pens and yards must be kept deodorized by the application of dried muck, dry earth, or some other effective absorbent. The same rule with regard to deodorization applies to horses, cows, and other stock.

Board of Health: Curtis Stevens, E. E. Philbrook, M.D., S. J. Wallace.

“Dead People Cannot Apply for Aid. . .”

From the ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TOWN OFFICERS OF CASTINE FOR THE YEAR ENDING FEBRUARY 28, 1900.

Statement of the overseers of the Poor [George A. Wheeler Bennett D. Perkins George Wescott]

We have again been obliged to exceed the appropriation, though not to such an extent as last year. The beginnings of the year found us with three lawsuits on our hands. The town of Vinalhaven brought a suit against this town for the expense of burial of Mr. John Sylvester and son, residents of this town, whose bodies were found on the shore. Mr. Sylvester had a pauper settlement in this town, but was not, at the time of his death, or for a year or two previously, receiving aid from any source. We refused to pay the bill presented for several reasons: First, because it was an unreasonable and exorbitant one. Second, because there was no evidence submitted as to any coroner’s inquest being held. Third, because we did not believe this town was liable under the pauper laws, as dead people cannot apply for aid, and we had the affidavit of the widow that she had not called for aid, and did not know that she was receiving it from the town. While we believed then, and still believe, that the equity of the case was with us, on account of the uncertainty of the ruling of the court on certain technical points, and the certainty that the expense to the town in any case would be greater than the amount of the bill, we compromised the matter by paying a part of the bill.

In the case of Castine vs. Brooksville for the support of Charles E. McIntyre we were defeated by reason of the false statements made to us by McIntyre’s mother in regard to her son’s age. She gave us a written statement as to the date of birth of her son, but gave a different year when the case came up for trial, and her last statement was corroborated by other testimony. It is needless to say that had we known the truth we should not have brought the suit.

In the case of Castine vs. Bangor for the support of Joseph H. Hussey and family, the decision was in favor of this town. . . .

expenses, Castine vs. Bangor $53.38

expenses, Castine vs. Brooksville $30.08

expenses, Castine vs. Vinalhaven $51.62
Castine begins to anticipate a parking problem . . .

Voted: that all the streets be closed to the use of automobiles except Main street, and that of Main street so much be closed as is north of Court street and also the western half of Main street between the upper and lower lines of Court street and the western half of Main street between the upper and lower lines of Perkins street.

Voted: that the punishment for the violation of this enactment shall be for the first offense not over fifty dollars and costs, and for the second offense not over fifty dollars and costs or thirty days imprisonment, or both and costs.

The above quote from the Castine Annual Meeting 1905 was cited in an article Selling Cars in Castine: 1910 – 1983 in the Summer 2004 Visitor in an article adapted from a 2002 lecture by Mark Honey.

![Horses and Autos in Castine, 1914-1930](chart)

Beginning in 1911, autos here were taxed to the tune of $850, but we don’t know how many there were. In 1912 auto taxes dropped to $800. The Selectmen’s Report for 1913 is missing from our records. Beginning with 1914 we have a sixteen-year record of what might be called Castine’s “horse-auto ratio.” Note that the critical year was 1921, when autos outnumbered horses for the first time. After that, it was all downhill for the horses. Although horses (and cows) continued to be listed in Reports for another ten years, the record of the number of autos disappears after 1930.
Curator’s Corner

Paige Lilley

CHS Receives Gift of Documents from Witherle Library

During the span of one hundred years in its current home, the Witherle Memorial Library received donations of many significant archival papers reflecting the history of Castine. The Library Board of Trustees recently voted to approve the transfer of these materials into the care of the Castine Historical Society and the Wilson Museum. Although Castine’s public library will continue to maintain its Castine Collection of rare books, newspapers and town records (on microfilm), it is now turning over most of its manuscripts, photographs, drawings and diaries to the two other organizations in town dedicated to preserving archives and artifacts.

In preparation for renovating the Library and expanding its services, Library Director Anne Romans began working in 2010 with Executive Director Patty Hutchins from the Wilson Museum and me to carefully evaluate the Library’s manuscript collections in an effort to decide which materials would end up where. Criteria for the choice usually depended on how the Library’s items would relate to existing collections at each organization. The process was another productive example of collaboration among the three organizations.

Certain items received by the CHS form cohesive mini collections, such as a group of paintings and drawings by Noah Brooks and two albums of prints by late 19th century Boston area photographers Augustine H. Folsom and Baldwin Coolidge. An eclectic mix of single items came to the Society as well, ranging from an 1811 letter to the General Court of Massachusetts to the 1994 Adams School Cookbook. In some cases, like the Normal School circulars or the correspondence about the history of Fort George, the reason for housing these at the Library was clear. In others, such as the 1952 birthday card to Mr. F. Bradley or the undated snapshot of a group of ladies on Main Street in winter. (See picture below.) It’s unclear as to why the items ended up at the Library. (Identification for Mr. F. Bradley and the ladies in the photo are welcome.)

A two-page sign-up sheet from the Library collection documents the formation of an early 20th century historical society in Castine. The sheet is headed with these words:

Castine Historical Society

All gentlemen and ladies genuinely interested in the formation of an association with the above title, whose object would be two-fold; 1st, the promotion of an intelligent interest in the collection and preservation of everything relating to the municipal history of the town—its public records, social customs at different periods, amusements, business, etc., and 2nd, who are also interested in all matters relating to the history of our State and especially that of our coast-settlements, are respectfully requested to show their interest by signing their names to this paper, and if a sufficient number of names are obtained public notice will be given of the time and place of the first meeting for the purpose of organization.

(continued on following page)
(continued from previous page)

The meetings of such a society are not likely to be held often enough to cause any interference with the meetings of any of the various societies or associations now existing here and any trifling expenses incurred would be met by voluntary contributions.

What follows below is a partial list of signatories.

The signatures continue on a second sheet. The back of one sheet includes brief minutes, in faint pencil, of a meeting December 15, 1915 to elect officers for the Society.

The Witherle Library, as the recipient and long time home of these materials, placed certain restrictions on the gifts. At both receiving institutions records will refer to the transferred items as part of the Witherle Memorial Library Collection. In the unlikely event that either institution is dissolved, the Library will be consulted regarding the disposition of the collections, but they will always remain in Castine.

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Below Adams School students practice for Maja Trivia
(see President’s Letter, page 3)

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End notes from Opening the Shutters pages 1, 4 and 5

1 To shed rain away from an interior, shutters must be mounted so the louvers direct the water away when closed; if mounted backward—as can be seen on the side elevations of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation meeting house—the louvers would direct the rain into the building.


3 Fredrika Bremer, Homes of the New World (New York, 1853), I, pp. 35, 470.


5 All the Federal-era houses illustrated by Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., “The Federal Style in Hancock and Washington Counties,” The Castine Visitor (Summer, 2003), sport a full set of shutters, including The Rev. William Mason House at Main and Court (1797), the Doty Little House at 23 Green (1801-02), the Daniel Johnston House at 90 Main Street (1805) the Ebenezier Perkins House at 71 Main Street (1807), and the Adams-Cate House at 46 Court Street (1815). Physical evidence also confirms the use of shutters on the Hale House at 86 Court (1810-12) and the Mark Hatch House at 133 Court (c.1800).

6 The practical need for exterior shutters gradually declined with the invention of inexpensive woven-wire window screens, roller blinds and, eventually, fans and air conditioning.

7 E-mail from Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., to Roger W. Moss, October 15, 2012. Contracts with detailed specifications for domestic structures are rare in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century; master carpenters such as Castine’s Doty Little (1766-1852) tended to build five bay, center hall, four over four room houses with minor variation agreed to by a handshake.


**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.

- Individual $25.00
- Family $40.00
- Sustaining $60.00
- Contributing $100.00
- Patron $250.00
- Benefactor $500.00

Please renew my membership

Please send a gift membership to:

Name ____________________________

Address __________________________

Gift Membership Category Check ____________ Or Money Order Enclosed ________________

*Clip and mail to Castine Historical Society, P.O. Box 238, Castine, Maine 04421*

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**Shopping at the Abbott School Gift Shop**

The Castine Historical Society Gift Shop is open by appointment (326-4118) on weekdays throughout the spring. Members receive a 10 percent discount on all Gift Shop purchases. Can’t be in Castine this time of year? We would be pleased to ship your selections to you or a gift recipient (shipping charges will apply, as will five percent Maine sales tax only for purchases made at the store or shipped to a Maine address).

Selected items available for shipping (Shipping charges are $5.00 per order under $75; $10.00 per order $75 and over):

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<th>Price</th>
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<td>Castine Artist Ned Coombs Limited Edition Prints</td>
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| Waterfront Village                                      $30.00
| Fisherman’s Bend                                        $30.00

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| CHS Logo Ball Cap, one size                              $18.00
| F.H. Lane print Placemats (set of 4)                     $75.00

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| Adult size S __ M __ L _                                  |

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</tbody>
</table>

To pay by check, mail to CHS, PO Box 238, Castine, ME 04421

(5% ME tax) $____

To pay by Visa or MC, call the CHS Administrator at 207-326-4118

Total due $____

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*Spring 2013*
"Castine Homestead" painted in 1859 by Fitz Henry Lane. The Willson - Shaw - Stevens house c. 1804-06 at corner of Main Street and Stevens Lane was remodeled in 1890's and mansard roof added. Painting is in a private collection.