

# Mussel Ridge News

*A Free Publication of the Mussel Ridge Historical Society*

*Owls Head, Maine*

**Winter 2019 ~ Issue 41** [www.musselridge.org](http://www.musselridge.org)



## **WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH THE HEAD OF THE BAY SCHOOL (A/K/A) THE OWLS HEAD GRANGE HALL?**

Dear Readers:

We believe the original white building at the corner of Ash Point Drive and North Shore Drive was built somewhere between 1828 and 1840, although it was about one half its present size. The original building was used as a school house until the school closed around 1920 or 1921. In the early 1940's the Town again used the building to provide a classroom for Grades 7 and 8 and was also used as a meeting place for the Town. In 1943 the Head of the Bay School, as it was known by then, closed and the building stood vacant for a number of years.



In 1938, the Owls Head Grange No. 563 was organized and served as a forum for farm issues and informing the public on local government matters, such as who would best serve the Town as a selectman or moderator at the annual town meeting. In 1952 the Owls Head Grange No. 563 leased the vacant school building from the town and held their meetings there for the next 51 years until 2003 when Ellena Fredette, Grange Master, disbanded the Owls Head Grange No. 563 due to lack of attendance. At that time, the property reverted back to the Town.

On November 17, 2008 the Mussel Ridge Historical Society ("MRHS") entered into a long term Lease Agreement with the Town wherein the MRHS took over the responsibility for preserving, maintaining, and insuring the Owls Head Grange Hall, as it was more commonly known as by then, as a part of the Town's cultural history.

During the years that preceded the MRHS entering into its Lease Agreement with the Town, the original School Building/Grange Hall had been enlarged to include a kitchen, an entry way and a pit toilet. Over the years, however, especially during those times when the building was unoccupied, the building suffered from neglect. Even after the MRHS entered into the Lease in 2008, the Grange Hall has remained unoccupied and is currently being used only as a storage facility.

By 2014, it was becoming visibly evident that the Grange hall was in dire need of repair. With the Town's approval, the MRHS hired Resurgence Engineering and Preservation, Inc., a structural engineering firm out of Portland, Maine, to inspect and make recommendations to the Town and the MRHS as to what needed to be done to prevent further deterioration. The report was startling - not only in the scope of the work that needed to be done, but also the cost which was estimated to be \$275,000. This price tag only covered the cost of stabilizing the building. It did not include any new improvements such as the cost of installing insulation, plumbing, electricity, heat, air conditioning, water or septic system.

Further, it was noted, that any future use of the building by the Town or the MRHS will be limited because the lot the building sits on isn't much larger than the building itself so there is simply no extra room to:

- Dig a well for water
- Put in a septic tank
- Put in a septic field or
- Provide for a parking area

Even though the mission of the MRHS is, among other things, to preserve and protect historical buildings in Owls Head, such as the Grange Hall, the MRHS simply does not have the funds needed to have the Grange Hall fully restored. Nor can we justify spending what funds we do have in an effort to save the Grange Hall when we have no "end use plan" for the building.

Since 2014, no decisions have been made or proposed by either the Selectmen or the MRHS to address the problems mentioned in the structural engineer's report.

This is where you, the Reader, come in. The MRHS would like very much to hear your thoughts as to what we should do with the old Owls Head Grange Hall. Here are some possible courses of action:

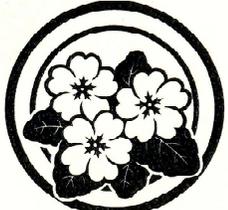
1. The MRHS could begin a fund raising campaign to try and save the entire Grange Hall Building – the estimated 2014 cost was \$275,000+
2. The MRHS could follow a proposed compromise plan whereby only the additions, which were added on to the original Head of the Bay School, are demolished, thereby saving the original school building. The estimated cost is expected to be around \$30,000+.)
3. The MRHS could terminate its Lease and turn the property back over to the Town for it to decide its fate.

Please let us know what you think. You can write us a letter at P.O. Box 133, Owls Head, ME 04854 or you can e-mail us at [secretary@musselridge.org](mailto:secretary@musselridge.org)

You can vote for any of the ideas listed above or you could suggest one of your own. All ideas are welcome. If your vote is for some form of restoration, tell us how you envision we should use the property.

Thank you.

*THE MUSSEL RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY*



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*Elaine J. McNeilly, CPF*

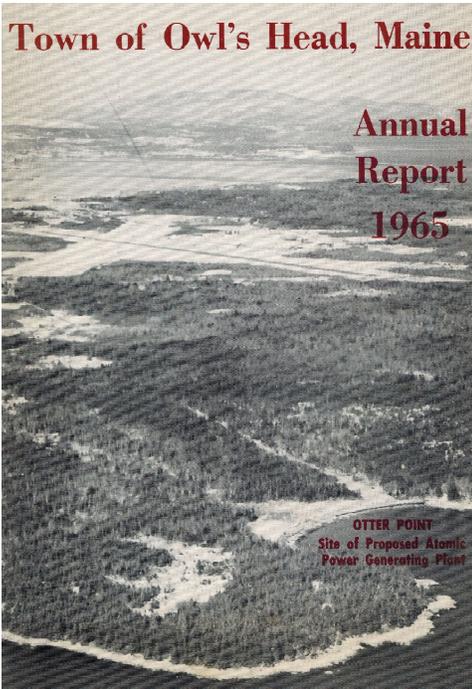
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Does anyone remember this handsome fisherman from Ash Point ?

*Answer on page 8*

## 54 Years ago...



We should all be thankful Owls Head did not make the final cut!!

“Otter Point in Ballyhac has been suggested as an ideal location for an atomic generating plant. Our study on this has been limited. We do feel that some legislative action on the part of the town will be needed to control the bounds of commercial and residential building. About one-fifth of the town's total acreage could be involved by railroads, power lines, roads, plant and restricted areas. When zoning was first started in our town the thought of an atomic generating plant was never considered. The construction of such a plant is possible in the near future. We are told a plant of this type would be beneficial to our state and neighboring states.

Therefore we have minimized a proposed zoning amendment to give the town control needed to keep commercial and residential building within bounds.

As you can see from the projects long range planning is needed, as considerable time and money is involved to make this a reality.”

*1965 Report of the Owls Head Planning Board*

### Footnote:

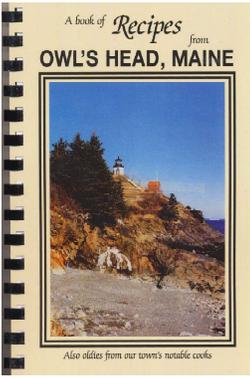
Maine Yankee Nuclear Power Plant was a nuclear power plant built at an 820-acre site on Bailey Peninsula of Wiscasset, Maine, in the United States. It ran from 1972 until 1996, when safety and other problems at the plant became too expensive to fix. *Wikipedia*



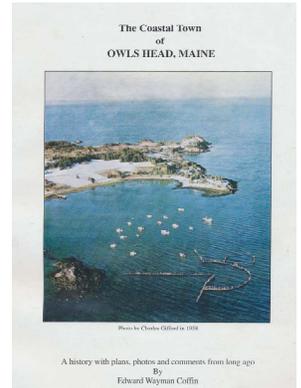
## March 2, 1920 Courier Gazette Owls Head News

Owls Head became a town in 1921 when we split off from South Thomaston. One of the reasons it was always told: schools were not in good repair. This article a year earlier makes mention of the condition of a school. Not sure which one, most likely the village. At this time in our history, schools in operation were: Ingraham's Hill, Timber Hill and Ash Point. Other schools before this also included, Ballyhac School, Head of the Bay (Grange Hall) and the Village School. At one time in the 1930s, complaints were: too many students at Ingraham's Hill and Timber Hill, up to 50 students in a one room school house. Older girls were put to the task of helping to teach the younger students. This of course interrupted their learning. I remember my mother (Norma Curtis Meserve) telling me when she went to Ash Point School in the 1930s, she helped teach the younger ones as one reason the teacher was preparing for her upcoming wedding!

*Carolyn M Philbrook*



**MUSSEL RIDGE LITERATURE ORDER FORM**



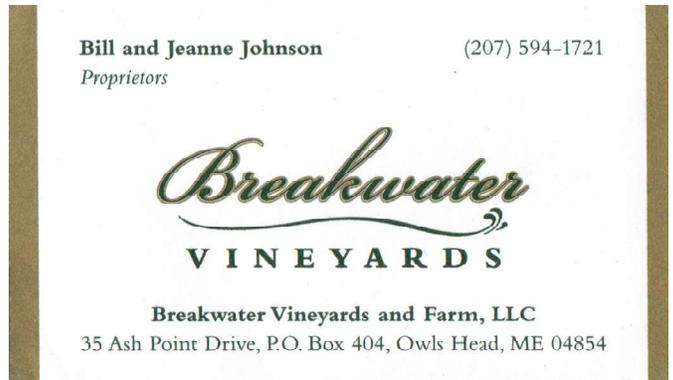
# \_\_\_\_\_ copy(s) of "A book of Recipes from Owls Head, Maine" at \$15.00 each= \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 # \_\_\_\_\_ copy(s) of "The Coastal Town of Owls Head, Maine" at \$32.00 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 # \_\_\_\_\_ box(s) of six note cards with envelopes at \$10.00 per box = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Check if items are to be delivered: \_\_\_\_\_ OR, if they are to be mailed \_\_\_\_\_ (add \$3) = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Both the O. H. Cookbook and the Coffin O. H. History book may be purchased at the Blue Yonder Coastal Artisans store at the Knox County Regional Airport.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Total the column and make your check payable to **Mussel Ridge Historical Society** \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Mussel Ridge Historical Society  
Volunteer – Membership - Donation Form**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ Town \_\_\_\_\_ Zip----- \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Our newsletter is sent to everyone on our email list and we don't share addresses with anyone.

\_\_\_ I Would Like TO HELP Preserve the History of Owl's Head in the Following Ways

\_\_\_ Develop programs \_\_\_ Help with fundraising \_\_\_ Help on restoring the Homestead

\_\_\_ Bring food for events or sales \_\_\_ Help with events \_\_\_ Have lawn sale

\_\_\_ Staff the Homestead \_\_\_ Have truck \_\_\_ I have pictures that could be scanned

\_\_\_ Research. I am particularly interested in the following areas \_\_\_ ---- \_\_\_\_\_

Have talent/service I could donate \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ I would like to help in another way. (Please tell us how) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ I have historical items I might like to donate or loan

\_\_\_ I AM JOINING the MRHS at the Following Level & My Check is Attached

\_\_\_ 1 Year Regular (\$10) \_\_\_ 1 Year Sustaining (\$35) \_\_\_ Lifetime (\$100)

\_\_\_ I AM MAKING a Tax Deductible Donation to the MRHS for \_\_\_\_\_ & My Check is Attached

I Would Like the Funds to go to the Following Area

\_\_\_ General Operations \_\_\_ Archival Museum

\_\_\_ Old Homestead \_\_\_ As the MRHS thinks is best

Signature of Person Accepting the Form \_\_\_\_\_

*Mussel Ridge Historical Society, PO Box 133, Owl's Head, ME 04854 history@musselridge.org*



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## TRAIL'S END - FISHERMAN'S BEACH

Recollections of a Summer Kid growing up on Ash Point in the 1950s & 1960s

*By: Rodney B. Weeks*

From 1900 until 1970, Ash Point was a far different place than it is today. It was much poorer and far less populated. During the 1920s, 30s and 40s, Fisherman's Beach (at the end of Ash Point Drive) only had one house on it and it belonged to Otis ("Ote") R. Lewis. His house was aptly called "Trail's End" and the small stone beach in front of it was primarily used by local fisherman to catch herring - not lobsters. Jim Mullens and Fred Fredette built a fishing weir just off the beach which went straight towards the South end of Ash Island.



*Bait House about 1965*

Just before the beginning of and after WWII, lobster fishing gradually replaced herring fishing as the local man's primary way of making a living. There were at least five men who moored their boats and fished for lobsters from Fisherman's Beach. They were, Al Crowley, Ote Lewis, his son, Don Lewis, Alfred "Fred" Fredette, and Maurice "Morris" Harvey. A narrow strip of land in front of Trail's End was (and still is) owned by the Town of Owls Head which allowed access to the beach. The fishermen built a square platform at the end of the small strip of land and had a Bait House on the north half of the platform. On the south half of the platform they attached a long wooden ramp, in two sections, which lead down to the shore. This allowed the men to slide their wooden rowboats ("punts") down the ramp and across the small flat stones to the water's edge. When the men came in from fishing, they had a long rope

with a steel hook attached to it at the base of the ramp. They would pull the rope down to the water's edge and attach it to the bow (front) of their punt. Then they would walk up the shore, up the ramp, across the platform to the other end of the rope which was run through a pulley attached to the back of the bait house. They would then back their truck up to the platform, parallel to the shore, and attach the rope to the back of their truck. The fisherman would then start his truck and begin pulling the punt up the shore, up the ramp and onto the platform. The fisherman would then back his truck back down to the platform, unhitch the rope from his truck and take the hook off his punt and take it back down to the base of the ramp for the next fisherman to come ashore. He would then pull his punt to one side of the platform and store it up on its side to make room for the next punt to come up the ramp.

The bait house stored the fisherman's oars, boots and other equipment and also the bait barrels. Bait barrels then were made of wood and filled with fish renderings from the sardine packing plant in Rockland. The bait was then covered over with salt to preserve the rotting dead fish as long as possible. Needless to say if you were ever having problems with your sinuses, one quick duck inside the bait house would clear your head up real quick.

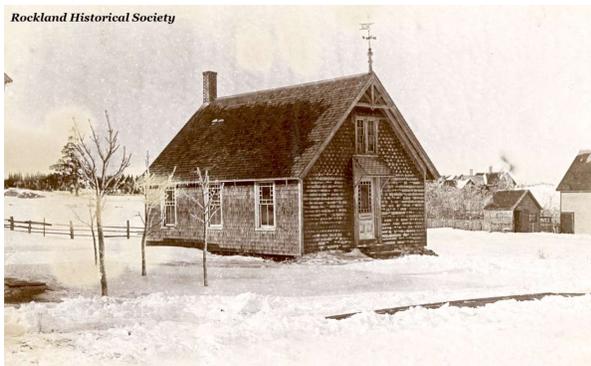
One of the "jobs" I got to do as a kid to help out the fishermen was to take the empty bait barrels out of the bait house and tip them over dumping the remaining contents down the wooden ramp and onto the small stone beach. The "contents" were the left over fish guts, blood, and scales. This made the wooden ramp very oily and slick so the punts could easily go up and down the ramps. However, on the hot summer sun, the stink could be overwhelming. I can remember well my mother assigning me the task of washing the dog in the ocean each time he would go down to the shore and rolling around on those warm flat rocks. If a fresh coat of fish guts had just been dumped down the ramp then the dog would love it even more and come home smelling to high heaven.

Sadly, today, all of Trail's End has been gentrified. Eleven new houses have been built on the hill going down to the shore or on the shore itself. Only the narrow strip of land and the top section of the wood ramp remain. The platform is gone, the bait house is gone, the lower portion of the ramp is gone, and saddest of all, the fishermen are all gone too. Harland Hurd, son of Alvin Hurd, rebuilt the Ash Point Weir [originally built by Fred Fredette (1896-1975) and Jim Mullens (1865-1937)] and operated it during the 1950s.



*Fish Weir at Ash Point (Trails End) in the 1930s*

### Ingraham's Hill Chapel- Then and Now



Vera Payson Mathieson remembers as a girl attending church there and a Witham used to preach there summers and Beulah Wotton played the organ.

“It was built in 1886 on land donated by Charles H. Holman and last attended as a church in the mid 1930s. Most remember Alfred and Florence Young who lived there. They pre-dug a cellar and turned it around and moved it and remodeled it for their home. “ (*The Coastal Town of Owls Head, Maine by Edward Wayman Coffin*)



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## Recipes from the Past

### Mincemeat *by Evelyn Learned Ross*

*Taken from Our Owls Head Cookbook*



6 lbs meat (beef or venison)	4 cups vinegar
10 lbs apples	2 t. nutmeg
2 lbs suet	3 (12 oz) pkg. raisins
8 t. mace	2 t. cloves
4 t. cinnamon	8 t. salt
8 cups cider	
5.5 lbs sugar	

Cook meat til tender. Put meat, suet, apples, and raisins through meat grinder. Put large kettle with remaining ingredients and simmer til done. (May be cooked in large roaster in oven at 200°; stir occasionally.) Adjust seasonings to taste. Brandy may be added. May be stored in a large crock or put in sterilized canning jars and sealed.

### Our Name

Owls Head, the name of the town, is said by some to have been named by Samuel de Champlain in 1605, when he sailed by on his way up Penobscot Bay. The Republican Journal, in an article dated Dec. 16, 1853, claims the name Owls Head was given by Gov. Thomas Pownal. Some historians claim the headland was called Bedabedec (Point of Winds) by the Wawanocks, a local Indian Tribe.



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*Answer from page 2 photos*

Albert Crowley (1892-1953). Owner of the first Bait House on Fisherman's Beach.  
 Son of Charles "Tim" Crowley (1859-1925) and Jennie E. Hurd (1860-1936). The Crowley family lived in the house that was later owned by Maurice "Morris" & Helen Harvey on Ash Point Drive.