

# Mussel Ridge News

*A Free Publication of the Mussel Ridge Historical Society  
Owls Head, Maine*

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## MYSTERY OF THE *ANNA D. TORREY*

Seafaring in any era was, and still is, a hazardous business. Many of our ancestors took to the seas because it was the family's tradition. Those fellows were indoctrinated early into the life of a sailor, and more often than we care to admit, it was the sea that took them to their eternal reward. Most coastal schooners and small fishing vessels were usually "put up for the winter", but the larger commercial vessels were kept in service delivering the goods to foreign ports year round.

Such was the life of the brig, *Anna D. Torrey*, launched in 1854 at Prospect, Maine. Measuring 108 feet on deck (bow to stern), and drawing nine feet of water, she was capable of carrying 225 tons of cargo. Except for a couple of brief stints in the shipyard, over the next twenty five years she would deliver New England lumber, textile products, machinery, lime, granite and agricultural products to ports on the Gulf of Mexico coast and Caribbean islands. Returning to her home port of Boston, she unloaded molasses, sugar, cotton, turpentine, pine resin, and southern lumber. Often making the trip between ports in less than two weeks. The January 19, 1866 issue of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* ran this report: "Brig *Anna D. Torrey*, Haskell, 12 days from Richmond, at New York 17<sup>th</sup>. Fast"

"Haskell", mentioned in the article above was the ship's Master. During her career *Anna D. Torrey* sailed under at least three different Masters. The last one recorded was John Bray of Stonington, Maine. His brother, James Bray, was the ship's First Mate and great-grandfather of Linda Bray Christie. This is where our chronicle ends— and a family mystery begins.

Before radio and telephone, the newspapers reported the coming and going of all vessels in their area. In February, 1879 several papers ran the report: "A Boston Vessel Overdue. Brig *Anna D. Torrey* (225 tons of Boston) sailed from Pensacola with lumber Jan. 26 to Boston, and as nothing definite has been heard of her since, she has been given up for lost. Capt. Howe of schooner *Cyrus Hall*, ... left Pensacola in February, certain that he saw *Anna D. Torrey* off Hatteras, Feb. 15, and as on the 17<sup>th</sup> he encountered a very heavy gale he thinks the brig foundered at that time."

The Bray family believes their great grandfather, James Bray, had somehow survived and made his way to England where he lived for a long time. A researcher at the Stonington-Deer Isle Historical Society found evidence that the brig *Anna D. Torrey*, was still afloat and in service as late as 1885. She suggests the men on deck may have been washed overboard during the storm and managed to cling to flotsam until a passing vessel picked them up. This is a viable explanation with one caveat. If a man is tossed overboard with debris and other articles from his ship (known as flotsam) those articles could be a life saver or a battering ram. The overboard sailor has a 50/50 chance of surviving when flotsam is part of the ordeal.

In our search for a newspaper reporting the ship's demise or the loss of crewmen, we found neither; nor any debris or flotsam from the brig found on a beach; nor any obituary of any of the crew members. Likewise, we were unable to find any ship's record indicating they had rescued seamen off Cape Hatteras during that time frame. There was no record of the *Anna D. Torrey* landing at any U.S. or Canadian coastal port.

Yet, for some reason, James' own son went to England when he was twelve years old, staying there several months in search of his father. It's unclear what the spark was that encouraged him to make such a journey or what made the lad think he could find his father in an unfamiliar land. A review of the English census reports for that period show a number of men named "James Bray" all within the same age bracket as the *Anna D. Torrey*'s lost mate. Later, during the WW2 years, James Bray's grandson, Maynard Bray, spent a time looking for evidence that his ancestor had lived in England. Today, one hundred and thirty nine years after their disappearance, we're still wondering, "What became of the *Anna D. Torrey* and her crew?"

## Fred Flintstone's Mitten?

While digging a drainage ditch last summer, one of our readers unearthed an interesting stone. Resembling a child's petrified mitten, (pictured palm up), the stone measures 3¼ inches long by 2¼ inches wide. Our researchers think it could be ten to fifteen thousand years old and attribute it's pristine condition to being encased in the dense, blue marine clay that is so prevalent just below Owls Head's topsoil. And that's our April Fool's gag a little early this year.



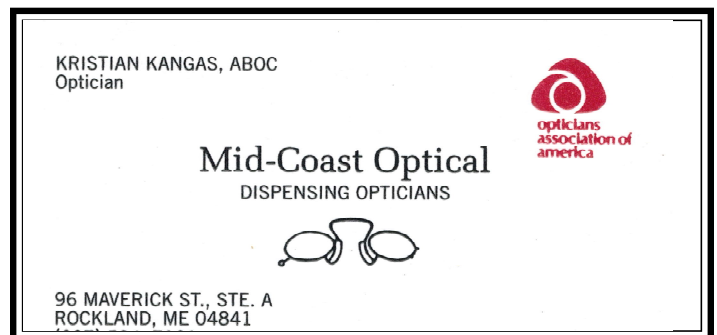
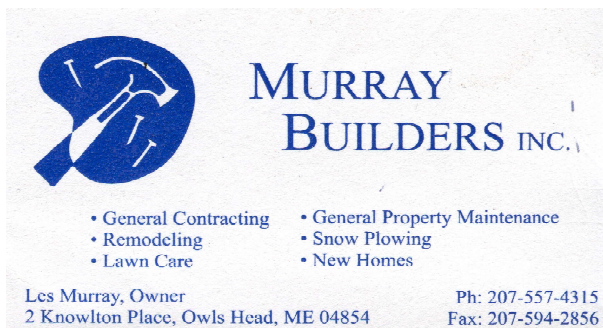
### OOPS!

We've been receiving numerous calls and emails from our readership complaining that they are no longer getting the **Mussel Ridge News** in their email inbox. Our apologies to all. We recently re-assigned certain jobs and responsibilities among our people and obviously something was lost in the transition. Please call Tom Christie at: 207-594-2438 or email [tchristie@myfairpoint.net](mailto:tchristie@myfairpoint.net) to continue getting your NEWS by email. Or you can access it on the web <http://www.musselridge.org/news/> Also, If you've changed your e-mail address we need to correct that. Thanks for your interest in our work.

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Have you got memorabilia or pictures you'd like to share or donate? We'll gladly accept them for inclusion in our archives or to be photographed. 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 our ongoing projects. The winter months are usually uneventful while the Spring and Summer can be busy. For info on any of these subjects, contact Rod Weeks 248-330-0915 or Tom Christie 207-594-2438

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## VILLAGE SCHOOL GETS A NEW FACE

When we consider all the years this building has stood against the throngs of children, the ravages of weather and the years of neglect, it's a near miracle this lady is in as good shape that she is. The roof ridge doesn't sag—too much, and the framework that's well above ground is sound for it's age. The corners of the building seem to be plumb. Presently, there is no floor, just the remains of the old concrete that was poured when she served as the fire truck barn. It's highly likely her sills and the lower section of her studs are badly decayed. The chimney needs a few bricks re-pointed, which may lead to a whole new chimney. The windows all need to be replaced. The old stone foundation should be rebuilt or replaced with concrete.

There is still plenty of remedial work that needs to be done, but we are making progress. Our heartfelt thanks to all the folks who donated to this restoration and to the fellows at Murray Builders, Inc. who have so carefully listened to our wishes and tenderly brought this lovely lady back to life.



*Village School 2017*



*Village School over 100 years ago*

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### SCHOOL DAZE- View from the Superintendent's Desk

In 1929 Superintendent of Schools, F.L.S. Morse, took the Owl's Head parents to task writing, "... an education is of great value to their children and ... the school time is so short that every day is needed. It is a pity that parents should permit their children to be absent from school for trivial causes."

His report for 1935 shows Madeline Coffey, [Andrew Coffey's sister] visiting each of the one room schools on a weekly schedule as a teacher's aide. The remarkable thing is the regular teachers forfeited \$100 of their own pay to help cover Madeline's. The State picked up the balance of her pay.

In 1946, for the umpteenth time, Superintendent Morse reminded Owl's Head citizens of their need for a new centralized school and retire the town's collection of aging one room schools. Frustrated with the voters' seemingly indifference, he wrote in his annual report, "Owl's Head must not postpone this matter too long at the expense of the children. Putting aside money for this is good but steps should be taken to have the schoolhouse as soon as practical. No teacher can do as efficient work with six or seven grades as she can with two or three."

September, 1952 the brand new Owls Head Central School opened with six class rooms. Just four years later the town found it necessary to add two classrooms. Then in 1960s Owl's Head Central School became an integral part of Maine School Administration District 5.

At the 1981 Town Meeting, Art. 23 asked the voters if they wanted to change the name of the Owl's Head Central School to the Helen F. Wylie Elementary School. The motion failed with a resounding "NO!"



## 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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### **Florence Hammond Remembers When Winter Was FUN!!**

Florence Havener, Hammond a member of the Mussel Ridge Historical Society, presently lives in Florida. Some time ago she had an article printed in the Rockland Courier-Gazette, which just happened to show up on the desk of our staff reporter. Thinking it would be improper to reprint the article verbatim, yet wanting to share her story, he felt it could be para-phrased.

Florence's story was inspired by old pictures of the granite quarries in Rockland, specifically one known as Engine Quarry. She recalled her father, Fred Knight, cutting the ice off the quarry in winter and often took his children and a multitude of others from the neighborhood with him. He was very strict about the kids skating too close to where he was working. When he had loaded his truck with ice, he was faced with a problem: where to put all the kids for the ride home? According to Florence, they were all stuffed into the truck's cab sitting, standing, lengthwise, crosswise, up and down! "...packed in like sardines". She noted in her story that would not be allowed today.

Florence was no different than any of us who grew up in those days in her love for skating, or for that matter, any outdoor activity in any season. She recalled how she would rush home to get her homework and chores done so she could go skating with her friends after dark on an outdoor skating rink. She remembers how the kids were allowed into the store where a small woodstove would dry them out. And when it got late, the store keeper, Walter Spear, would flash the lights off and on to indicate it was time to go home. She muses, "Do kids nowadays have the fun we did? Skating and sliding in the winter, playing and swimming in the summer?" This reporter can assure her that they do, if taught how.

She made sure that her kids did. Even after moving to Florida, she found an indoor roller skating rink to teach the kids to skate, complete with tumbles, bumps and giggles. Florence said she continued to skate up to age sixty-six. During the day she took the kids to the beach.

The Mussel Ridge Historical Society members clearly agree that Florence is a force to have on your side. At many of our events she has buzzed around as though she was still on skates. We look forward to her return, even if it's only for a short visit.

## A Home for Memories

Have you ever wondered what happened to Grandpa's old WWII foot locker that had his name, rank and serial number stenciled on the side? Or what ever happened to his photo album which had the pictures of your great grandparents in it? Unfortunately, the answer is almost always (a) no one had any further use for Grandpa's old army trunk so we gave it away or (b) no one knew who the old people were in the photo album so we threw it away.

At the Mussel Ridge Historical Society, we have heard this sad story far too often. The loss of every old-timer, either through death or migration to warmer climes, represents a dispersion or loss of important and often irreplaceable local historical information for this community. Thoughts and recollections that could have been the subject of books and pamphlets were never written; photos and letters of historical significance have not been collected, documented and conserved; oral histories that could have been easily recorded and transcribed, never were.



This brings us to our proposed Home for Memories. The Society is currently developing plans for a Local History/Research Center, an environmentally-controlled storage facility where we can assemble and manage a local history collection of donated photos, documents, local histories, oral histories and similar ephemera. This Center will make it possible for the Society to more effectively pursue several of the key tenets of the mission statement outlined in its bylaws:

- Promoting interest in, and knowledge and appreciation of the history of Owls Head, the Mussel Ridge Islands and their inhabitants and visitors;
- Collecting, identifying, interpreting, preserving, exhibiting and making available for education, research and pleasure: historical documents, records, photographs, information and artifacts relating to the above;
- Produce published material pertaining to the history of the area

The implementation plans should be firmed up very soon, as will a financial program of grants and donations needed to fund the local history center. STAY TUNED for the rest of the story!

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### Owls Head Folks



*Brad Gregory & Amber "frogging" in the village pond, c.1996*



How many know who this fine lady was?  
\*\* Hint: She was Town Clerk at one time



## THE BACK ROAD

Some of the old maps of Owl's Head show the road from Head of the Bay to the village as the "Back Road" and, unlike present day North Shore Drive going up and over Post Hill, it appears to circumvent the south-west side of Post Hill. Wayne Lindsey recalls his grandfather, who was born 1875, talking about how it did, in fact turn at the base of Post Hill went out toward the Libby farm then circled back toward the village.

There is, in fact, an old dirt road often used by hunters, hikers, and snow mobilers that traces that route and can be accessed right at the foot of the West side of Post Hill. Once you get out into the fields, this road will connect with other trails to take you to Ash Point Drive, Evergreen Cemetery in the Village and points along South Shore Drive. This makes a nice Sunday walk, though parts of the road are rough. Wear good hiking shoes and let someone know your plans if not familiar with trails. Also if anyone has ever heard of Perry's Hill, please let us know??



*1873 Chart of Owls Head*



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\*\*\*Answer on last page!

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### RE-QUOTABLE GREAT QUOTES

From Albert Camus— "In the depths of winter, I finally learned  
that within me there lay an invincible summer."

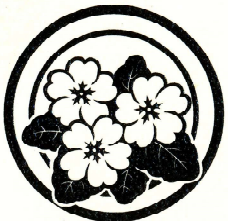
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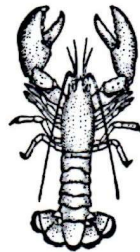


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## Recipes from the Past

### Molasses Doughnuts - *Ethel Curtis Campbell*

2 eggs  
1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 cup molasses  
2/3 cup sour milk  
2 T shortening  
1 t salt  
1 - 1/2 t. baking soda  
1/2 t. ginger  
enough flour to roll (about 3 3/4 cups all purpose flour)  
Yield about 3 dozen

Ethel Curtis Campbell was born at the family homestead at Ballyhac in Owls Head. My great Aunt Ethel lived in Rockland and made doughnuts to sell from her home on the corner of Granite and Union St. As a child I remember so well visiting her and she would give us doughnuts she was making. What a treat!

*Carolyn Meserve Philbrook*

\*\* Ellena Dyer Fredette

\*\*\*This was an essential tool in Victorian households. Both parts pictured above were heated, and a piece of fabric was placed between them. When the iron was rolled over the fabric, it created stylish pleats for women's and children's clothes.

