

South Bristol Historical Society

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Newsletter

South Bristol, Maine 04568

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Spring 2011

COMING SOON! Remembering the Civil War

The year 2011 marks the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War. In recognition of this important sesquicentennial, several of this summer's SBHS programs and exhibits will focus on what the turmoil of that difficult time meant to South Bristol and its people.

Our first event of the season will be a cemetery walk scheduled for 9:00 AM on Saturday, May 21. SBHS board members Larry Kelsey and David Andrews will lead a tour of the graves of Civil War veterans in South Bristol. Then in June, David Andrews will give a presentation on South Bristol men who served and their families, describing what was happening back home in Maine during the war years of 1861 to 1865. On July 21, we welcome guest speaker Tom Desjardin, author of *Stand Firm Ye Boys of Maine*, to our Annual Meeting. Tom's talk will highlight some of the Civil War battles in which South Bristol men were engaged

and will explain where and how Maine units served.

Our Civil War series will conclude in September with a program including a look at Maine's maritime involvement in the War. SBHS member Stan Wells will provide some background and then relate the story of the capture and burning of the Damariscotta-built bark *Lauraetta*, captained by Marshall M. Wells of Bristol, by the famous Confederate warship *Alabama*.

In addition to these programs, board members are mounting a Civil War exhibit to give visitors to the SBHS museum in the old Rutherford Library a sense of the men who enlisted from this area, how their lives were or were not changed by the experience, and how South Bristol itself fared throughout the war. SBHS is seeking photographs, diaries, letters, military gear—essentially any artifacts from the 1860's that could be borrowed, duplicated if possible, and then included in the planned exhibit. The photograph on this page is just one example of what we are hoping to display. If you are willing to lend Civil War-era items for this upcoming exhibit, please contact the historical society at 644-1234 or SBHS@tidewater.net.



This photograph, taken around 1865, includes a mystery man in the middle. The two seated figures are Edward Davis Gamage (left) and Nelson Winfield Gamage (right). If you think you can identify the individual standing behind them, please call 644-1234 or email SBHS@tidewater.net

SBHS News Notes

The recently dedicated S Road School will be the site for a special event planned for August: an Art Show featuring South Bristol artists, both current and from the past. If you would like to participate or if you have any information about artists who lived in South Bristol in years gone by, please call 644-1234 and let us know. In October, an informal evening will feature an oral history video and an opportunity to hear stories about old South Bristol and to view memorabilia perhaps long forgotten but rediscovered in someone's attic or desk drawer. Dates, times and places will appear in the Lincoln County News and will be included in the June membership mailing.

Just a reminder that all SBHS Board of Trustees meetings are open to any member who wishes to attend. Meetings are generally held on the third Wednesday of January, March or April, June, September, October and November. If you are interested in attending, please call Ellen Wells 644-1584 or Cathy Stockwell 644-1253 for the next scheduled meeting date, or email SBHS@tidewater.net. Also, keep in mind that in June the nominating committee will be reporting on their recommendations for trustees, so please let

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Ellen, Cathy or any current trustee know if you would be willing to serve or if you have a nominee to suggest.

SBHS is delighted to have received from Nobleboro resident Bob Nelson a wonderful collection of photos, documents and artifacts telling the story of Tracor, Vocaline, and Vast—names of the companies involved in the testing and placement of “sonobuoys” for the US government in the 1960’s and ’70’s in buildings located on what is now called Osprey Drive, just off the John Gay Road on Rutherfords Island.

SBHS recently received the following notice of a “great hands-on opportunity” for students and teachers, “or history buffs interested in exploring an area with a rich prehistoric and colonial history:”

What better way to spend three weeks of your summer than digging into the prehistoric and historic past of Maine’s south-central coast. Come join Dr. Neill De Paoli as he directs excavations at Pemaquid Falls. This

area was a popular locale for indigenous peoples as early as 4,000-4,500 years ago while its historic story began in the mid-1600s. At that time, English settlers established a farming hamlet around the falls, three miles upriver from the center of the early 17th century English plantation of Pemaquid... Participants will excavate the site of the late 18th century farmstead of prominent Pemaquid merchant Robert Given... and delve into the area’s early industrial past as they excavate a late 18th or early 19th century blacksmith shop. The program, which can be taken for college credit, runs for three weeks, from July 25 to August 12, Monday through Friday, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

If you are intrigued by this notice and want more information, contact Dr. Neill De Paoli, phone: 603-766-0561 or email ndppquid@yahoo.com.

Meet Samuel A. Miles and Family

Many stories have been told about Sam Miles and his estate on Rutherford Island—some true, some fanciful. In an effort to separate fact from fiction, SBHS members Stan and Ellen Wells engaged in some extensive research, poring over documents and clippings collected by SBHS, records at the Lincoln County Courthouse and the New York Surrogate’s Court, US census and passport files, New York Times and Chicago Tribune archives, listening to oral histories, reading books written by Ruth Gordon, and most importantly, corresponding with Virginia Miles Saunders, the only living grandchild of Sam Miles. What follows is Part One of a shortened version of the notes prepared for Stan’s presentation at the July 2010 SBHS meeting; the remainder, including segments entitled “Isabel R. Miles,” “The Summer Camp,” and “The Wills and Memorials,” will appear in subsequent issues.

Part One

Family Basics

Samuel Arthur Miles was born May 10, 1862, probably in Bristol, England though some records say Bath, England. His father, Samuel Baines Miles, was born in 1822 and died in 1904. His mother, Jane Smith Miles, was also born in 1822 and died in 1881. He had a sister, Margaret, who remained in England.

Miles arrived in the United States on April 8, 1880, when he was about 18 years of age. He was by himself, probably with not much more than the clothes on his back. His name first appears in US census reports in 1900, living in St. Charles Township, Kane County, Illinois. The same report lists his wife as “Mary” though other documents refer to her as “Jessie” or “Maud Mary.” She was born in England, on December 20, 1863. Though only about 5 feet

tall, she was a world champion bicycle rider, known as “Jessie Oaks.” At the time of the census, they had been married for eight years.

Also listed in the 1900 census is a son Arthur T., born in 1895 in Illinois. Though not indicated in the census report, Arthur had been adopted in 1895. He was a “foundling” with the given name of Paul Hamilton, which was changed at the time of the adoption to “Arthur Thomas Stone Miles.” The adoptive mother’s name is listed as Jessie M. Miles, but was definitely the same “Mary” as listed in the census. Though Miles lived in Illinois at least until 1900, he and his wife traveled to England in 1894, and a passport application filed by Miles in 1920 indicates that he was in England from



Sam Miles in Chicago, date unknown. Photo courtesy Chicago Automobile Trade Association

March 1897 to January 1899. Whether Mary and young Arthur were with him or not is unknown.

Miles and his wife separated at some time after 1900, but were never divorced. Various sources suggest that this was because Maud Mary did not believe in divorce and Miles respected her position. There is no evidence that Maud Mary ever came to Maine. The only "Mrs. Miles" South Bristol residents ever met was Isabel Ries whom Miles introduced consistently as his wife. Nevertheless, records in the New York Surrogate's Court where Miles' will was probated list his widow as Maud Mary Miles, living in California where Arthur T. Miles also lived with his family. She died there in 1934, of heart complications thought by her family to have been caused by years of strenuous biking. Miles died, apparently of a stroke, at the age of 70, while visiting his sister in England on April 25, 1932.



Maud Mary Miles, known as Jessie Oaks, champion bicycle racer. Photo courtesy Virginia Miles Saunders



Sam Miles, probably taken in Chicago around 1902. Photo courtesy Chicago Automobile Trade Association.

Arthur Miles

As noted above, Sam and Maud Mary Miles adopted a son in 1896. The adoption papers state that the boy, known as Paul Hamilton, was born on February 22, 1895, in Kane County, Illinois. Adopted by the Mileses on March 24, 1896, he was renamed Arthur Thomas Stone Miles.

At some point, Arthur Miles moved with his adoptive mother to California. He and Geneva Heloise Smith were married on December 1, 1923, in California. Born in 1901 in Lewiston, Maine, Geneva had come to California with her parents Willard and Nellie and her brother Willard. The family planted ten acres of walnut trees in the town of Riverside, where Arthur and Geneva met.

The 1930 census lists Arthur and Geneva as living in San Fernando township, California, with two daughters: Mary Elizabeth, known as Betty, who was born April 22, 1925, and Virginia L. who was born in December of 1928. Arthur's occupation was listed as "auto mechanic"; Geneva was a homemaker. At the time of Samuel Miles's death in 1932, Arthur and Geneva were still living in San Fernando, as was Maud Mary Miles. Arthur died in 1976 in Placerville, California, and Betty died in 2009 in Asheville, North Carolina, never having married. Virginia is an artist and craftsperson, working in fiber, leather, and mixed media, and has three daughters, seven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. She lives with husband Richard Saunders in Barnardsville, North Carolina, near Asheville.

According to Virginia Saunders, her father "spent a lot of time on the estate in Maine. He used to tell me that one of his jobs was shutting the power down at

night and then running like the dickens to get in the house before the power went off entirely. He had Brights disease and needed the better climate that California offered, plus my Grandmother [Maud Mary Miles] was heavily into metaphysics, and California was full of it, and he was introduced to it also. Sam wanted him to go into the business, but office work wasn't for him."

Career

The 1900 census report lists Miles' occupation as "editor, *Cycle Age*." Little is known about this publication, but some pages of advertising which appeared in it have survived. *Cycle Age* probably later merged with *Bearings*,



Arthur T. Miles in January 1942.



Virginia Sauders, second from left, granddaughter of Sam Miles, and her daughters, Kathy, Kerry, and Kelly.

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another popular cycling magazine. It may well be that Miles met Maud Mary through his connection with cycling, either in the US or in England.

The 1890's have been called the "golden age" of bicycling, an important means of transportation and a popular form of recreation. The "bicycle craze" included racing; the first 6-day bicycle race for women was on January 6, 1896 at Madison Square Garden in New York. During the 1890's American bicycle manufacturers and dealers emulated their European counterparts and put on a show in January of each year. According to the *New York Times*, "These cycle shows were ably managed by Samuel A. Miles, later to become identified with automobile show business..."

A 1963 *Chicago Tribune* article gives a vivid account of the first auto show put on by Miles, referring to him as: "an imaginative pioneer writer on a pioneer trade journal, *Motor Age*, [Miles] built a lifetime career on the foundation of his first Chicago Automobile show in 1901. This turn-of-the-century automotive showman really started something when he gambled that he'd get back the rental paid for the Coliseum from the 50 cents per person admission charge to look at models of two gas buggies, three steamers and

five electrics in 1901." The article goes on to describe the indoor wooden track on which daring citizens were given free rides, a local alderman taking a driving lesson, a special night for cycling club members, and a floral parade of decorated vehicles as a climax. An image obtained from the Chicago Automobile Trade Association shows Miles seeming to look over the vast arena where the 1901 Auto Show was held.

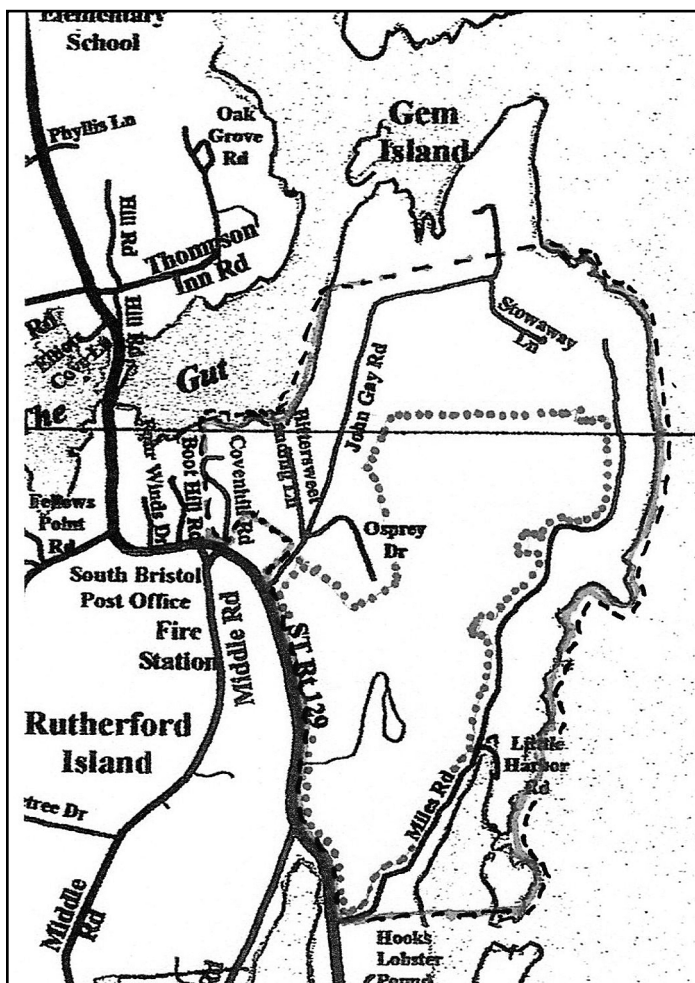
Miles has been called "the father of the modern automobile show," tracing his influence back to that first show in Chicago in 1901. Not long afterwards, he was hired, probably by the National Association of Automobile Manufacturers, to manage the annual National Auto Show in New York as well.

For the Chicago Automobile Show in 1904 Miles installed huge mirrors on the floor beneath every car so visitors could see the running gear. Unusual cars such as a lavender Packard and a royal blue, white and olive green Locomobile also appeared at these early shows. By 1913, \$40,000 was spent on a ceiling of imitation stained glass and Coliseum sidewalls of "Grecian-Roman style wood paneling." Another *Chicago Tribune* article, on January 2, 1927, described in great detail the show scheduled to open two days later. Persia and King Darius were chosen "to provide the decorative inspiration" which included 15,000 yards of Persian gold cloth, a giant figure of King Darius in his chariot and balconies reconstructed "to give the effect of the great colonnade ...within the court of his palace."

Reporting on the 1930 Nation Automobile Show which had just ended its thirtieth annual session, the *New York Times* (January 12, 1930) quoted Miles as saying that the paid attendance and sales totals had surpassed those of every other year except 1928. He estimated the crowds at 35,000 daily, giving proof that public interest had not waned as some in the industry had feared. He continued to manage the annual shows in both cities until his resignation in 1932, just weeks before his death.

In addition to running the annual shows, Miles was involved in other ways with the automobile industry. As manager of the National Association of Automobile Manufacturers, he was active in efforts to institute a system of drivers licenses that would allow drivers to move from one state to another. He was also named by the American Automobile Association to a committee to consider future policy governing auto track racing, an activity deemed necessary at that time for the development of the industry. In 1908, Miles served as chairman of the Orphan's Day run in New York where over 200 autos were promised by their owners and by dealers so that orphans could be given rides around New York. "A pleasant route is being laid out that will give the children a view of the Park and the neighboring suburbs."

During World War I, Miles became a leader in a war-time effort to increase the use of highways for rural transportation, particularly for the transporting of foodstuffs. The "Rural Motor Express" was created by the Council of National Defense, and after the war-time emergency was



The outer line of dashes represents the Miles Estate at its most extensive, around 1920; the inner dotted line represents the approximate boundary of the estate in 2000.

over, it continued to expand under peacetime conditions.

Sam Miles in Maine

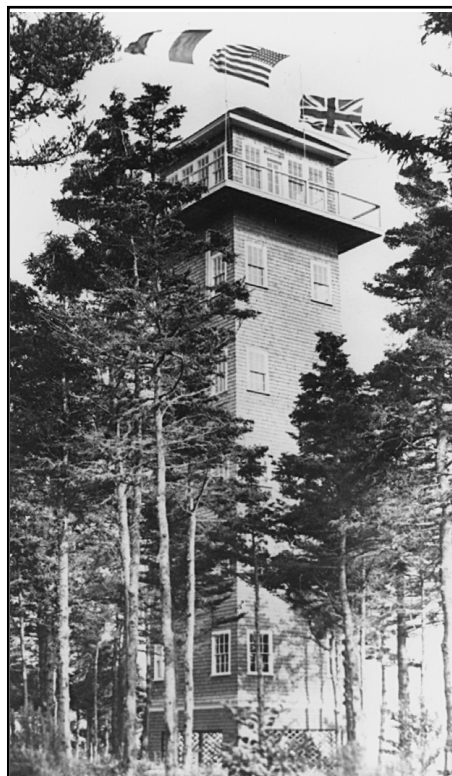
The story is told that Miles, then living in New York, mentioned to friends in Portland, Maine, that he was looking for a place where he could “smoke all day and wear a sweater with patches.” He was advised to go to Christmas Cove. Once there, he was especially pleased that he could live in the town of Bristol, the name of his boyhood home in England.

Miles probably first purchased land in what is now South Bristol in 1908. In that year he bought various properties from George B. Kenniston, the Boothbay Land Company, George W. Clifford and George W. Lakin. Then in 1909 he added property purchased from Marcellus Coggan, and more land was acquired in 1911, 1912, 1919, 1920 and 1922. All these parcels are listed in a 1925 deed from Samuel A. Miles to Isabel R. Miles, which deed was not recorded until after the death of Miles in 1932. He also acquired other property in 1920 which was not included in the deed to Isabel Miles and was probably part of the property conveyed to a camp established by Miles on the John's Bay side of his estate.

Miles began construction on a house on the high point of his property in 1914, contracting with Leonard Tibbetts. Later he had a pump house and boat house built on Little Harbor, and the now-famous tower was built near the house. Still later an indoor pool was built beside the main house. He named his estate Clifton, the name of a village on a steep hill in Bristol, England, where he was born. It is now one of the oldest and most affluent areas of the city of Bristol.

According to stories told by Alva Farrin, waterfront caretaker for Miles, the tower built on the high point of the land near the house was a birthday gift to Isabel Miles. He referred to it as “The Observatory and Water tank” and was said to be reminded by it of towers on the cliffs in England. Farrin also recalled that Miles had a telescope he used to check the gauge on the water tank on top of the tower, and if necessary, a pump would be started up to replenish it. Miles was very concerned about fire and had system of pipes throughout the property to provide water to fight any fire.

Another South Bristol resident, Mervin Rice, also had many memories of Miles and his estate. In an interview in 1998, Rice said: “...My father did maintenance and would go to Damariscotta with the horse and get freight off the train. A lot of the freight would come in the winter and they would get it with a horse and sled. It was an all day trip, they would leave 4 o'clock in the morning....It was a big horse and it walked most of the time. My father kept



The original “Miles Tower.”

the horse at his house on the S Road. It would be after dark when we got home, they would get stuff all boxed up off the train. They would get large bags of sugar and stuff. It was all the horse could haul to come back with. I think a lot of it was stored in the rock building that has no windows. When the kids came to the Salvation Army camp in the summer he'd use it. He'd have a bunch come for 3 weeks, then another bunch, then another bunch. He'd take in a lot of kids through the summer months.... At Halloween time he'd have a big Halloween party for all the schools. He liked to hear kids sing. He had a great big donkey on the wall. You'd go pin the tail on the donkey. Anyone got it in the right place would get a prize. There were other games we'd play. He loved kids, that's all. He just loved kids....”

During the legislative debates over the proposed separation of South Bristol from Bristol in 1913, one of the opponents of the separation referred

to “one man, owning one-third of Rutherford's Island, has had it fenced in and not one foot of it can be purchased by any except those of his class...They come to this Legislature asking you to give them this island that they may fence it about and establish here a miniature Eden...where they will be exempt from the tax necessary to maintain the municipality...” There is little doubt that the “one man” mentioned was Sam Miles. While he may well have favored the division, the actual effort was initiated and led by long-time permanent residents, one of whom was the builder of Clifton, Leonard Tibbetts. After the end of World War I, Miles offered to build a memorial archway honoring those lost in the war, which would have been located roughly at the fork of Routes 129 and 130, thus reflecting the separation—but the town of Bristol refused the offer, and it was never built.

Miles was active in various community and civic organizations in the area, including the Damariscotta Rotary Club, the Masons, the board of the Lincoln County Memorial Hospital in Damariscotta and the Christmas Cove Improvement Association which he served as president in 1924-26. He and Isabel spent three months or longer each year in Maine, and also maintained a residence in New York City.

Watch for more about Samuel A. Miles and family in future newsletters.

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