

South Bristol Historical Society

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Newsletter

South Bristol, Maine 04568

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Historical Society News

S Road School Restoration

The wonderful work done by the S Road School Restoration Committee is obvious to anyone passing along Route 129 – the building looks spectacular. Recent gifts from the Reny Charitable Foundation and the Drukker Family Foundation have brought our total institutional support to \$45,000. We are grateful to the more than 170 individuals who responded to the Committee's fund-raising efforts, a strong demonstration of interest and commitment to preserving the town's history. With almost \$90,000 in gifts and pledges, we are close to our goal and hope to have the building and the classroom ready to welcome our school children and the public this fall. **Thank you everyone!**

The SBHS Collection

The generosity of the friends of the Historical Society continues to be demonstrated by the many donations of South Bristol memorabilia received each year. In fact, since the SBHS museum opened its doors, nearly 200 individuals have entrusted items to SBHS, many of them family treasures.

To give you an idea of the variety of artifacts and memorabilia that can be found at SBHS, here are a few of the donations received in the last two years: a key to a room at the Holly Inn; maps and plot plans of the Clifford's Cove area; glass plate negatives of an historic South Bristol house; the loan by the Estate of Catherine Walker of an extensive postcard collection; photos and other memorabilia from the filming of "Signs of Life" in South Bristol; a large notebook of photographs taken by Red Boutillier of ice cutting at the Thompson Ice House when still in business; 6-page handwritten letter from Sarah Emery to Marjanna Tracy; 1941 photo of Red Cross training class in SB in the 40's; the large sign that hung above the entrance to "The Autograph Library" at Christmas Cove; diary and genealogies of the Cook and Horner families; DVD and notebook with photographs and other materials relating to Heron Island; a ship in a bottle made in South Bristol.

SBHS is pleased that the Selectmen of South Bristol, sharing our concern that all these treasures be protected, replaced the roof on the building after repeated leaks caused damage to interior walls and ceiling. No harm was done to the items on display since they were protected by plastic sheeting.

More about *A History of the Families and Their Houses*

The following appears in the Preface to H. Landon Warner's book:

"The SBHS decided to publish Landon Warner's text as we received it and to make only editorial revisions. Warner was a meticulous historian and would have wanted these errors corrected. The SBHS is asking readers of this book to help identify and document changes needed in *A History of the Families and Their Houses*.... A procedure for sending corrections to the SBHS is provided on the last page of this book. The Society will maintain a list of corrections and plans to update the text in the future."

To date, only five such corrections or additions have been submitted, so included in this newsletter is a form similar to that which appears in the book. Please use it to send in your corrections or additions. If you do not need to use additional pages, you may simply fold the page in thirds, staple it and mail it to: SBHS, P. O. Box 229, South Bristol, ME 04568. Your help is much needed, and will be greatly appreciated.

2009 Program Preview

The first meeting this year will be our annual **Movie Night**, on Thursday, May 21 at 7:30 pm, Community Hall at the Union Church. Then in **June, July** and **August** our focus will be on different aspects of making a living from the waters that surround us. The exact topic of the June meeting will be announced later, but in **July** Gladden Schrock will lead off an evening of memories and stories about South Bristol fishing and fishermen, joined by several others, and with audience participation eagerly awaited. Then in **August**, well-known author and artist Loretta Krupinski will be on hand to introduce us to *Looking Astern – an Artist's View of Maine's Historic Working Waterfront*, scheduled for publication in August by Down East Books. Ms. Krupinski, a fellow of the American Society of Marine Artists and a South Thomaston resident, tells us that the book will include forty new paintings of historic waterfronts from Belfast to Bath, depicting fishing, ship building, steamboats and more. Come **September**, we expect to be ready to host an open house at the restored S Road School, and in **October**, Dave Andrews will report on his extensive research into the history of the schools of South Bristol. Dates and locations for these programs will be sent out with our regular late spring mailing as well as in the *Lincoln County News*.

The Weekly News - 1800's Style

On June 1, 1886, the *Pemaquid Messenger* began publishing local and regional news. Other newspapers publishing at that time included the *Boothbay Register*, the *Damariscotta Herald and Record*, the *Lincoln County News*, the *Squirrel Island Squid* (semi-weekly in July and August), and the *Liliputian* (Wiscasset). The *Messenger* was published in Pemaquid Falls with B.T. Cox as Editor and Publisher of the first three issues. He was followed by W.E. Lewis as Editor and Proprietor. The *Messenger* focused on the Pemaquid Peninsula but covered all of Lincoln County. Each town and village had its own column covering important events, such as who visited whom, who was under the weather, social happenings such as candy pulls, "sociables," and dances, arrivals and departures of various steamers, schooners, smacks, and other boats, and prices and catches of lobsters, clams, and other fisheries. Some issues contained feature stories or letters from subscribers describing steamer and schooner trips. The editors kept readers up to date on local businesses, new hotels such as the Pemaquid Hotel and land developments including those at Heron Island, Christmas Cove, and Pemaquid Point. By 1890, circulation of the *Messenger* had reached 1350. Publication ceased in 1897 or 1898.

The interesting *Messenger* stories recounted below give a hint of some of the travails South Bristol seafarers encountered in sailing to far-off lands. Stan Wells, grandson of Frank Wells, captain of the schooner which is featured, has added some comments following the stories.

Nat Hammond

Ed. Note: The following articles were transcribed by Nat Hammond from images of the *Pemaquid Messenger* on a DVD donated to the Old Bristol Historical Society and made available to SBHS. Spelling and syntax appears as published in the *Messenger*.



September 21, 1887 Volume II Issue #12 Under "Local Facts & Fancies"

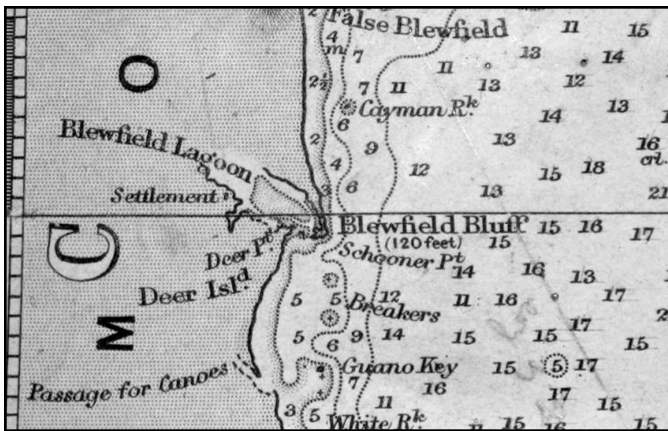
A dispatch was received, Tuesday night, announcing the safe arrival, at Bluefield, of Sch. *Eunie McKown*, Capt. Frank Wells, for whose safety considerable anxiety was felt, having sailed from New York, in company with Sch. *Mary E. Douglass*, who was abandoned in a hurricane. The Capt. of the *Douglass* reported, having seen the *Eunie McKown* the day of the hurricane, Capt. Wells was "driving her for all she was worth," with every yard of canvas spread. By doing this he probably cleared the hurricane.

February 22, 1888 Volume II Issue #34 A Sea Voyage

Near Bluefield, Mosquito Coast, Central America. On Board of Schooner *Eunie McKown*

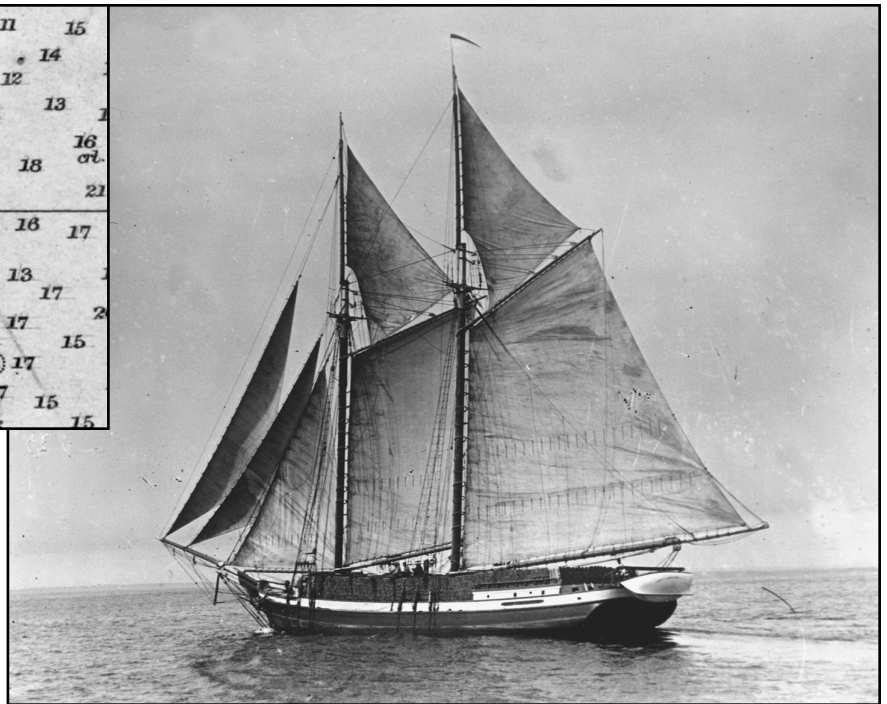
There being at present several persons on this coast from your vicinity and thinking a few lines from them would be interesting to the readers of your valuable paper we hereby give you a short sketch of our voyage since we left New York, on Monday, Dec. 12 at 7 A.M. The Schooner *Eunie McKown* in company with the Sch. *May M. Dyer* left Pier 3, East River for the Mosquito Coast, with the following persons on board from Bristol. On the *McKown*, Frank Wells Master, Eugene Sproul Mate, George Coombs, A.B. On the *Dyer*, Henry Bradley Master, Will Clark Mate. The passage out was not an eventful one with the exception of two moderate gales and one very heavy squall, which knocked the old Sch. flat, while laying under a storm try-sail and a close-reefed fore-sail, carrying the try-sail away and landing it over the stern, where it towed for the space of an hour.

The *Dyer* being in company with us that night, we were somewhat anxious for her safety, but she turned up all right next morning having fared about the same as ourselves. Strange to say we were in sight of the *Dyer* every day but one, from New York to Hayti, where we parted, she going to Grand Cayman and we to San Andres. Before separating we ran down and took a letter from the Captain to his brother Ambrose, whom we expected to meet at San Andres, also we threw a line, to the end of which Mr. Clark bent a bucket of tar, of which we were much in need, as George wanted to anoint his hands with that article which all sailors love. After this date nothing happened worthy of mention until we arrived, three days later, at San Andres, making the passage from New York to San Andres in fifteen days. Here we found Capt. Ambrose in his new Sch. *Relief*, which gave us a salute as we rounded alongside and dropped our anchor. The anchor had hardly got bottom before the natives began to flock aboard. They being told that we should do no business that evening they dispersed giving many cautions like the following: "Save ice a barrel of flour, Sar", "Don forgit dat ar bread, Massa. Capt.", "Don forgit ole Joseph Brown, you bess ole fren, Sar, be sur an keep dat ar hog fat." Next morning they came down on us like a flock of buzzards on a dead mule, cabin full, decks full, and every available space full—in fact everything full, but ourselves—all wanting to be waited upon first and acting like wild men. This days sales amounted to about \$3,000, in bills from \$2.00 upwards. That gives you an idea what confusion a business like this makes in a little cabin 8x10ft, with the mercury at 95 in the shade. "Phew, where is the smelling bottle."



The area around "Blewfield" (Bluefield) as it appears on the chart most likely used by Capt. Wells in 1888, found in the attic of the Wells house at Christmas Cove.

The Schooner Storm Petrel, about the same length and of the same vintage as the Eunie McKown. Photo courtesy of W. H. Bunting.



When night comes on, all hands are tired, but happy enough. But when the first canoe comes alongside in the morning and reports that a death occurred on the Island from small pox, this being our first notice of the presence of that dread disease, and also being informed of three new cases reported that morning, the first thing we think of is the exposure of yesterday, and one says to the other, "if we are not plastered we are lucky boys," and we wished ourselves wading in the 5ft. of snow in the old State of Maine. But we finally concluded, we are here, and must make the best of a bad situation, but it casts a gloom over the Island and business falls off to mere nothing. After laying here a few days the *Dyer* arrived, from Grand Cayman and the three vessels' crews spent the Sabbath together, there being seven of us from Bristol, Capt. Ambrose having his nephew, Everett Bradley, on board. As we had nothing to detain us longer we sailed on Monday for Corn Island where we arrived at 8 A.M. the next day. After laying at anchor a few hours and not being boarded, we resolved to go on the shore, and did so, but being threatened by the first man we met, if we brought small pox to the Island, we concluded that discretion was the better part of valor, so we retreated in good order to the "Old Sch." again. While sitting in the cabin in the evening talking over the situation, our cook, a rather timid Hollander, rushed into the cabin apparently with all the symptoms of the small pox. — (unreadable)—fever. On being asked what he had been eating, he replied that he had only eaten, 12 oranges, 15 bananas and he had taken 3 cathartic pills, a heavy dose of epsom salts, and now wanted a dose of Jamaica ginger, but we concluded that he would die before morning and omitted the Jamaica ginger. At twelve midnight we weighed anchor, and proceeded towards Bluefield. At 9 A.M. on the 11 inst. we came to anchor at the mouth of the Lagoon. In a short time we discovered a canoe approaching with two colored individuals in it, and with a yellow flag flying. They edged down toward us until within about 50 yd. when the

fore-mast shouted "Schooner Ahoy, ware ye from?" and being told we were from San Andres, he said "I come to look for de quarantine, Sar,". Capt. answered "Quarantine? Who are you?" He then looked around to his companion, and said, "Jim tell him who I is." Jim says, "Him am the boarding doctor, Sar," and he told us that we would be obliged to lay in quarantine 14 days. Our hearts sank within us when we looked around and saw nothing to gaze at only cocoanut trees, and mango bushes, for the next 14 days, and the words of Alexander Selkirk came to our mind:

"O solitude where are thy charms.
That sages have seen in thy face,
Better dwell in the midst of alarm
Than reign in this horrible place."

On Sunday we made a flying visit to the quarantine hospital in Cotton Kay, of which I send you a rough sketch, and you may draw your own conclusions as to what kind of a place it would be, with no attendance and nothing but snakes and pilicans for companions. We concluded that the *McKown* was good enough for us. But as we are all well at this date, we hope we will not be compelled to occupy the quarters on Cotton Kay. Not wishing to take up too much of your valuable space, or tire your readers, we will close by saying:

Carry me back to the old State of Maine
Where the oak and the pine trees grow,
Where the light dancing snow flakes are
thick in the air.
There is where these wandering boys
want to go.

Yours truly,
Wanderers

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March 28, 1888 Volume II

Sch. Eunie McKown, Capt. Wells has arrived in New York, but 17 days from Bluefield, C. A.

More about Captain Wells

My grandfather, Capt. Frank Wells, was born in 1857 in Pemaquid Falls, the hamlet near Poole Bros. in Pemaquid. He was the son of Capt. Marshall Wells, himself a blue-water master mariner. Frank Wells went to sea as a young man, perhaps even in his teens, and by the late 1880's he was a first mate and later master of several two- and three-masted schooners like the *Eunie McKown*. His first mate on the *Eunie McKown*, Eugene Sproul, was his brother-in-law, having married his sister Susan.

These vessels were known as "coasters" as they mostly carried all kinds of cargo up and down the Atlantic coast as far as the West Indies and Central and South America.

The so-called "Mosquito Coast" mentioned in the *Messenger* article is located on the Caribbean coast of what is now Nicaragua – quite a distance from mid-coast Maine. Its name did not derive from the insect but rather from the Miskito Indians who were native to the area. The town of Bluefields (as it is now spelled) can be found in a modern atlas.

Capt. Wells and my grandmother, Rachel Thorpe, of Christmas Cove, were married in 1882. He continued going to sea for a living until shortly after Rachel's father, Loring Thorpe, died in 1892, and he and his family, including my father who was then three or four years old, moved from Pemaquid Falls to Christmas Cove. Although he stayed ashore, many of the charts he used on his voyages were stored in the attic of the family home there, including the chart of the Caribbean which he must have used on the voyage described above. For many years he operated a successful seasonal business catering to the growing summer community in Christmas Cove, including guests at the Holly Inn. This business eventually grew to include a pool hall, bowling alley, ice cream "deck," and the saltwater swimming pool that later became part of the Christmas Cove Improvement Association. He also built several of the older summer cottages at the Cove for their original owners.

Capt. Wells became active in South Bristol affairs and was one of the leaders of the effort that eventually led to the "secession" of South Bristol from the old town of Bristol in 1915. He was elected one of South Bristol's first Selectmen at that time. He died unexpectedly in 1919 at the relatively (at least by today's standards) young age of 61 and is buried in the Island Cemetery in South Bristol.

Stan Wells