

BEALS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. XII, No. 4 (Fall 2012)

UPCOMING FUNDRAISING PROJECTS

BHS has two projects one of which is currently in progress. The "1939 Harold Gower" boat has now been shrink- wrapped by Sooner Noreen owner of Jonesport Shipyard. The wrap can be removed and replaced as needed. It also includes vents for air- flow and holes were drilled in the bottom of the boat for much needed drainage. It appears that most of the wood has rotted due to years of weather exposure prior to BHS moving to its property. Due to this damage, it has been recommended that a wooden cradle be built for the boat to rest in. Hopefully we can preserve the work and style of Beals Island's boat builder Harold Gower. We would like to complete the project this fall but in order to do so we will need your support. The total cost of the project is approximately \$1,000.

The second project also involves Harold Gower. BHS has a collection of 20 poster size photos including a description of Harold

building a boat. Each poster shows Harold using special tools to work the cedar planking into what is needed for the boat. His nephew, Douglas Dodge, gives a description of what is being done along with the name of the tool being used. In order to display this awesome collection, BHS would like to purchase a "Multiplex System 8000 Display Panels" wall unit. This unit has a steel frame mounted to the wall with double-sided panels opening to a 90 degree angle for an unobstructed view. For viewing, you flip each panel to look at the posters. This ten page, 160lb unit would be an awesome display of boat building at its finest and would cost \$1400 including shipping.

If you are interested in contributing to either or both of these projects, you may send your tax deductible donation to: Beals Historical Society, PO Box 280, Beals ME 04611. Thank you!!!!

BHS PROGRESS REPORT

This year has been one of great progress on many levels for BHS collections. Several projects have been completed at zero cost to the Society beginning with a set of State of Maine Registers that were musty and moldy from being stored in the old building. Archivist Martha Harmon suggested they needed to go through a freeze process to kill the mold and that we should contact Bangor Public Library. After making contact, BHS member Peggy Hughes of Utah, delivered the books to BPL and they froze the mold free of charge. A friend of BHS, Cathy Chandler of Dedham, picked up and returned the books to BHS. The registers are now on display at BHS. Many thanks to all involved in this endeavor.

Thanks to former BHS President Velton Peabody, we also have a large collection of interviews conducted by Velton in the 1970's of local people who have since passed on. Since these interviews are on cassette tape, they need to be digitized. Thanks to Peggy Hughes, this collection is now at Brigham Young University where it will be digitized

at no cost to BHS.

Also the collection of Beals High School band capes were taken to the dry cleaners by Eva Faulkingham. It was not a free of charge deal but the capes were cleaned at a low cost and look great.

BHS was happy to receive two beautiful floor standing glass showcases from Pleasant River Historical Society. It is believed that one of the cases dates back to the 1800's. Much appreciated PRHS!

Building maintenance has also benefited from free labor. This fall the northern end of the Heritage Center as well as all trim boards have been stained and painted by the Bucks Harbor prisoners. All they requested from BHS was lunch, which we were happy to provide! They also cleaned Tall Barney's gravestone and cleaned out the weeds from the Veterans Park. Many thanks to the boys and their supervisor.

We do appreciate all that has been accomplished and look forward great progress in the upcoming year!!!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**November 17, 6:30PM
at BES**

Christmas Talent Show
Please help us raise funds for our "Harold Gower" projects by attending this event!
Hope to see you there!

FIRST ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Upon special request, BHS will be hosting its first Christmas Concert at Beals Elementary School, on Saturday, November 17th at 6:30PM. Please join us as we find the Spirit of Christmas by singing the beautiful traditional Christmas music, as well as, the nontraditional.

This event will be a fundraiser for our "Harold Gower" projects. Hotdogs and goodies will be sold. Admission: Adults - \$5 and School Children: \$2. Looking forward to a great evening!

Condolences

BHS wishes to express its deepest sympathy to the family and friends of member
Ronald H. Peabody.
We are very sorry for your loss.

VIEWS FROM THE PILOTHOUSE 3

By Arthur S. Woodward

When you grow up on Beals Island, Maine, and travel to significant parts of that splendid coast, and travel to neighboring places plus those far away, you are bound to have lots of stories. This is particularly the case if your family business is primarily lobster buying, wholesaling, and transporting lobsters, and, in addition, if your family business also includes fishing for and transporting other kinds of fish, and related marine work. My earlier background includes experience in numerous boats of various sizes from small rowboats and dories to lobster boat types to lobster smacks and sardine carriers, marine construction, lobster trucks, and working with men from young to old. As we move through this narrative, VIEWS FROM THE PILOTHOUSE 3, we'll venture along the Coast of Maine with a brief side trip to Europe. Some of my new readers may not have had the privilege of becoming familiar with wet well lobster smacks or lobster cars, so I'll provide some brief descriptions for folks who haven't had the opportunity of growing up and working in the lobster business and other related experiences on the coast of the Maine State.

A powered wet well lobster smack was a decked over vessel with watertight bulkheads midships (generally) and a hatch in the deck. The bottom between the bulkheads was bored full of holes to allow free circulation of sea water, hence allowing the carrying of live lobsters in bulk in the well. Smacks had pilothouses and a ketch rig typically with two masts. Smacks varied in size from approximately 45 feet to 70 feet in length, 10 to 16 feet wide, and a draft of 5 or 6 feet. Powered well smacks served in providing vital commercial transportation of lobsters from later in the 1800s to the mid 1950s. Smacks saw service along the northeastern coast of the US and maritime Canada. Their carrying capacity ranged from some 5,000 to 17,000 pounds of lobsters. The last one built was the *Arthur S. Woodward*, built in Beals and launched in 1949. She was 60X16X6 feet, and was powered by a GM 6-71 diesel.

A lobster car is a floating rectangular wooden box, built of heavy lumber, up to maybe 30-35 feet long and 15 or more feet wide and about 4 feet deep. The sides and bottom have spaces between the planks to allow the salt water to circulate to keep the stored lobsters alive. The interior of a commercial size car is subdivided into pens or partings, maybe four or five on a side, each having a heavy plank door in the solidly planked deck. Many cars had heavy plank stakes on the sides to serve as fenders for boats coming alongside. A car probably had auxiliary buoyancy to keep the deck slightly more above water. Empty wooden barrels lashed on the ends or in later years huge blocks of styrofoam in some pens provided added buoyancy.

After Barney's Cove, Beals, was dredged our car was moored at the end of our wharf. It would have a small house that served as the office, and a telephone. We also ran the hoses from the gasoline pumps on the end of the wharf down to the car to enable the fishermen to fuel up while they sold their lobsters. We'd often go right aboard the boats and lift out their lobster tubs and pails and carry them to the scales, then pass their empty containers back to them, along with their cash. We'd even plug some of their lobsters. (Lobster plugs were small wedge shaped pieces of white pine about 1 1/4 - 1 1/2 inches long with pointed ends. The pointed end would be inserted in the membrane at the base of the lower "jaw" of the large crusher claw and sometimes in the pincher claw also. Lobsters

were not plugged to prevent them from biting people, they were plugged to keep them from biting each other.) All the fishermen had to do was cast off from the car and go about two boat lengths into the wharf and get as much bait as they wanted lowered right down aboard the boat. They could get oil, salt, gloves, oil skins, boots, fishing supplies, etc., right there at the wharf. Several men would tie up their skiffs etc. Our buying station was very convenient for our 70 or 80 fishermen.

One of the prettiest times of day on the ocean is at sunset. Sometimes when we'd be coming home from a trip to Hancock after delivering a load of lobsters on a summer day that had been picture perfect we'd be heading easterly, maybe somewhere in that 16 mile stretch between Schoodic Point and Nash's Island, we could look back toward the nor'west and watch the sun near the horizon in over the land. The sky and water surface would be changing appearance. That in and of itself was a terrific sight. Then, add to that beauty seeing the lighthouses light up for the night. There'd be Petit Manan Light, Nash's Island Light, and maybe we could see Pond Island Light. Then, too, when the astronomy was right, we'd see the full moon or near full moon in the southeast sky. To use a good Downeast expression, "Some pretty!" God's handiwork augmented by man's ingenuity...

For many years, up into the 1950's, Dad (Vernal) moored his lobster car out in the Moosabec Reach far enough off the shore so that it was in good tidal flow to keep the stored lobsters healthy. The car was moored directly off from Grammie Rose's house. On days when we'd be loading the smack from the car for a delivery to the pound in Hancock, or some other place to the west'ard, we'd frequently start before daylight. We'd go get the smack off the mooring and go in alongside the car and tie up. The rest of the loading crew would be out on the car. As we'd be loading, around daylight, we'd hear this very loud sound coming from in on the shore. It would repeat every few seconds. Loud sound, silence, loud sound, silence, etc., for some time... See, Grammie had a hen pen near her barn and a few steps from her house. You guessed it! Her rooster would be crowing. Now whether he thought we weren't fully awake and needed his alarm, or whether he was awakening the hens, or just making a racket early in the morning, I, obviously, can't say. But the irony of it was that here we were at work out at the car loading the smack, apparently before he got up, but for his own reasons he called out to one and all his good morning wakeup call.

I experienced another rooster's crowing in a very different place. On one or two of our trips to Switzerland (this has nothing to do with lobsters or pilothouses), my wife and I were staying in a quaint small hotel in Interlaken, a nice bed and breakfast, named The Pilgerruhe. Early in the morning we'd hear a rooster crowing, and whether it was his intent or not, he succeeded in awakening us or getting our attention. We got to enjoy hearing him. I don't recall that we heard him on any other trips there.

One afternoon we were buying lobsters out on the lobster car. The weather looked changeable and foreboding, and as we looked up across the Reach to the nor'west we could see a very heavy ominous dark cloud forming up there in over the land, and it appeared to be moving in our direction. We watched it in amazement as this heavy black squall came down the Reach, headed in our direction. We thought about what we'd do if it hit us. We figured about the only reasonable thing to do was hold on to the heavy vertical plank

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stakes on the sides of the car. The wind and rain squall came right down and across the Reach and hit where we were in kind of a broad sharply defined front. Lessie Faulkingham's lobster boat was on her mooring just off of our house, and a little way down the Reach from where we were. We saw that front of the squall hit Les' boat and rip the pilothouse right off of her. Mom (Thelma) could have seen it from home had she been looking out of the window. We were OK on the car, and the little house didn't blow off, but we got a pretty hard hit in a very short period of time.

In the lobster business there is a lot of loss as well as some gain. As long as you can keep the balance on the plus side you can stay in business. One morning Dad and Uncle Shirt (Erroll), and I think maybe Curt Alley and Frank Burke were out on the car, and I was in on the wharf. Dad hollered to me and said for me to load the dory with crates and get out there quick. I threw some crates into the dory and quickly rowed out to the car. The lobsters that were in the car were dying and several hundred pounds were already dead. That summer in the late 1940s or 1950s the problem was the lobsters were afflicted with a contagious lethal disease called Red Tail. It's my understanding that that is controllable now, but back then there was no treatment. We quickly went to work bailing the lobsters out of the car, crating the live ones and throwing the dead ones into the dory. We loaded the dory with the dead lobsters. At that time Obed ("Bub") Peabody was captain of the smack Grace M. Cribby. Bub took the dory in tow and towed her out into the Reach and towed her in a fast turn so as to roll her over and dump the dead lobsters. We were running our regular trips in our smack to Hancock, taking some 14,000-15,000 pounds per trip. We'd unload at the pound and start down Frenchman's Bay, headed for home, and we'd have maybe 2,000-3,000 pounds of dead lobsters on deck, mostly victims of Red Tail. We'd shovel them overboard. We had no disposal guidelines. This was repeated trip after trip for several trips. In the lobster business shrinkage is selling fewer pounds of lobsters than you bought. Shrinkage is out of pocket loss. The Red Tail shrinkage was a very hard blow to Dad's business.

Petit Manan. The name connotes a small island out to sea, and manan may be a Micmac Indian word. It was named by Samuel de Champlain who explored that coast in the early 1600s. There is something special to me about Petit Manan. In the Downeast vernacular it's said as one word: "Tipmanan" or "Titmanan". There are Petit Manan Point, Petit Manan Bar, and Petit Manan/Petit Manan Light in that locale. The gray granite 119 foot tall light tower and its accompanying house and buildings are on the low rocky island. The present tower was built in 1854.

Petit Manan is 16 miles from Beals, south of west by a few points. On a clear night the white flashing light of Petit Manan can be seen from the Beals - Jonesport bridge.

In some of my other narratives I've written about passing Petit Manan in fair weather and at night and in the fog. This vignette is essentially about Petit Manan, because, as I said, it's a special place to me. In good weather we would generally cross Petit Manan Bar, passing its two navigation buoys. In rough weather, fog, or bad weather we'd go out around Petit Manan, and then run in for Schoodic or Nash's Island, depending on whether we were heading to the west'ard or east'ard.

In our other smacks, the *Flora Belle* and the *Pauline McLoon*, it would take about two hours to go from home to Petit Manan. The *Arthur S. Woodward* would do a little better so it would take about

an hour and thirty five minutes from home to Petit Manan. The tall light tower stood out in grand silhouette against the sky on pretty days.

Its brilliant beacon was good to see in the night hours. However, in times of fog or snow you probably would not get a glimpse of the lighthouse or the island. You'd run your course and time from the buoy off Nash's Island. Just before your time was up you'd slow down or stop and listen for the fog horn on Petit Manan and the bell buoy off the light. If you didn't hear them you might run your course a couple of minutes more, then listen again. If you heard nothing you'd shut the engine off and listen. Generally you would hear the trumpet and the bell buoy. In a well smack you'd also hear the water sloshing around in the well as the smack rolled or jumped in the sea. Once you were assured of your bearings from Petit Manan you'd set your course for the whistling buoy off Schoodic Point, etc., and reverse the process going home. Be reminded that in those days up into the 1950s we had no electronic navigation aids.

It truly was, but it just seemed that Petit Manan was a special way point as we traversed that part of the Maine coast.

Our smacks were well maintained. They were in service year round, but their work would slack off in the spring for a little while until it was time for the "fall" season, which started in late June or early July, with fishermen selling their carred lobsters and shedders striking. That brief hiatus in lobster transportation would give us time to paint the smack and do any maintenance necessary in preparation for a very busy fall season.

Even though we were careful, there was wear and tear, and winter was especially hard on smacks. Salt water ice grinding against them, salt water ice having to be pounded off, and snow having to be shoveled off the deck, plus the buying and transporting many thousands of pounds of lobsters could leave a smack looking rather tired and worn by the end of spring. One spring, maybe in June, c. early 1950s, the *Arthur S. Woodward* was seriously showing the harsh effects of winter and year round work. Dad decided to take her to Machias and haul her out at Lester Young's repair yard and give her a complete restoration. It's a pretty trip from Beals to Machias, going down the Reach and out by Mark Island, past Libby Island Light 16 miles from home, in by Cross Island, up past Avery's Rock Light, on up the bay where the first sea battle of the American Revolution was fought (with the Americans winning), past Machiasport, and on up the Machias River to Lester Young's yard. The present Helen's Restaurant is located just about where the ways and cradle were. When the ASW came into the yard she looked very tired. She was run into the cradle and secured and hauled up on the ways, right beside U.S. Route 1. The restoration work included burning off the white paint on her sides and sanding and painting the sides white, preparing all the rest of her for repainting and then painting and dressing up a little. We raised her waterline, I put numbers showing her draft fore and aft and painted them black, and we painted her bottom with red copper paint. Her well was painted inside with red copper. Capt. Stevie Peabody ("Capt. Guns") was helping us and he wanted to paint the well, some of which required reaching up to complete. When he finished and climbed out of the well he was one copper paint mess! In his good humor that didn't bother him, and he got cleaned up. We painted the pilothouse white with lead color roofs on the pilothouse and engine room. The decks were painted lead color with white rails

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and waterways, the doghouses to the fo'c'sle and engine room were white, the masts were buff color with white mastheads and I painted a black band in the middle of the mainmast so the diesel exhaust wouldn't blacken the buff. The masts were painted using a bos'un's chair. The fores'l boom and gaff were buff with white ends. I did the lettering, painting the name on both sides of the bow and on the stern and the ring buoy on the pilothouse, plus her hail.

When we finished the job the ASW looked like brand new, and maybe more like a pleasure craft than a hard working lobster smack. We launched (said "lanched") her and took her home to go to work carrying lobsters.

The *Margaret S.* was a 33 footer built by "Cracker" Gower for a former Beals Islander who lived in Manset. She was used to take out sailing parties, so she had some yacht-like qualities, including cushions on the sidelockers in the cabin and having her Studebaker engine piped out through the stern. She was eight feet wide with a flush cabin and a pilothouse, and had a built down keel. When my cousin, Erroll George and I were boys our dads were in business together, They decided to buy the boat, and nicknamed her "Scurse". The name came from a reply from a fellow who answered "scurse" (scarce) when asked about how lobstering was. Erroll George and I knew when they were bringing the boat home from Manset so at noon the day they were to arrive we went from school up to Uncle J. P.'s wharf to see her. The tide was down and they had her tied up at the end of the wharf. I remember looking down at her, and how pretty and "cute" she looked several feet below us.

Erroll George and I spent a lot of time in the "Scurse". We'd take her out for sails, and sometimes one of us would take her out, and we enjoyed operating her. Our dads said she was automatic, because all they had to do was get aboard and we'd have her underway.

She got a lot of use. We carried lobsters in her, they went trawling for hake, they dragged scallops, and we towed crates with her. She would lug, meaning she'd carry a heavy load. A wet crate of lobsters would weigh about 140 pounds. One time at Blackduck Cove we loaded her with, I believe, 50 crates. She was deep loaded, but still had freeboard aft. The load was in her cockpit from about midships aft, and would have weighed about 7000 pounds. She'd easily carry 4000 - 5000 pounds of hake home from off shore.

Our dads had a trip of lobsters going to the west'ard, I think it was either to Dyers Bay or Winter Harbor, and whether the smack was broke down or going somewhere else I don't remember, but Uncle Shirt took the lobsters in the "Scurse", and Erroll George and I went with him for a fun adventure. The Studebaker was replaced by one or two more engines over time, the last one being an eight cylinder Buick Special. All replacement engines were piped off up through the pilothouse. The "Scurse" was a good sailer, and one time she outsailed a brand new boat, this when she was soaked up and maybe needed her bottom cleaned. The *Margaret S.* was a wonderful addition to the family business.

Exploding steak??!! One time Dad and I were staying aboard the *Arthur S. Woodward* while some engine repair work was being done at Southwest Boat Corporation in Sou'west Harbor. It was a damp misty morning, but we walked up town to get something for dinner. When he and I were running the smack I was the cook, using that wonderful Shipmate cast iron marine stove, burning hard coal. Parts of the stove would get red hot at times, and biscuits would bake in just minutes. Uptown we decided a steak would be good, so we got a beautiful big one and went back down aboard the smack. (Side note: the cabin had a fresh coat of paint...) Dad was resting on the sidelocker in the cabin and I started to get dinner and get ready to

fry the steak. I think Dad was asleep. I wanted to sear that nice steak so I took a damper off the stove and set the big cast iron fry pan right there on the stove just above the very hot coals. The fry pan heated alright! I dropped the steak into the frypan and instantly there was a burst of smoke and grease flying out of that pan! Just as instantly Dad yelled out, "Put the damper on quick!" The cabin was filling with the greasy smoke, and how he knew I had taken the damper off the stove I don't know. I guess we both were envisioning what that greasy smoke would do to the new paint. We managed to clean up as necessary, and I suppose we proceeded to finish dinner and enjoy it. So, let that be a lesson to you. Next time you're cooking on a very hot coal stove don't heat your skillet over the coals without the damper in place, unless you want to replicate the exploding steak aboard the *A S W*!

Once we hauled out the *A S W* on the railway at Southwest Boat Corporation in Sou'west Harbor. When the work was finished it was determined that we'd lanch (launch) her on the tide late Saturday afternoon and go home. All was in readiness, or so we all thought, for the lanching. The process started, sliding the big cradle holding the smack down the ways. She moved down OK for several feet, and then something went wrong and the cradle stuck on the ways. Try as they might, the cradle remained stuck. The only reasonable thing to do was to wait until the next high tide early in the morning and try again, meanwhile attempting to fix the cradle with its heavy load. Early Sunday morning we and the boatyard crew were ready to try again to get the smack afloat and free of the cradle. This time it worked! The cradle slid down the ways and the water took the weight of the smack and she floated free. It being Sunday morning, the Lord's Day, it was unusual to be aboard the smack and going in her. Sundays she was generally on the mooring - no work. We got underway and headed for home, about 40 miles and four hours to the east'ard. The diesel ran perfectly and screamed her delightful sound at 1750 RPM. We arrived home and put the *Arthur S. Woodward* on her mooring, rowed ashore, went home and greeted Mom (who of course was going to church), cleaned up, and made it to Sunday School and church. A rather busy and atypical Sunday morning.

You know how the salt water spray leaves your pilothouse windows with a coating of salt? I recommend that you try to keep your pilothouse windows clean so that the views from your pilothouse are crystal clear.

CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS

If you are searching for that one special gift that is good for the person who has everything, BHS might just what you are looking for! BHS has a limited quantity of yearbooks, dating from 1945 -1968, it will sell for \$15 each. If interested, contact Carol at cfdavis44@yahoo.com or send your request to: BHS, PO Box 280, Beals ME 04611. Please include \$2.75 for shipping.

We also have "Tall Barney and His People" books available at \$15 plus \$2.75 shipping. This book includes the two books compiled by Velton Peabody, which consist of the legends of Tall Barney and the genealogy. Great gift for the younger generations or for people who are researching their family genealogy!

OLD YEARBOOK REQUEST

BHS is looking for any yearbook before 1945, plus 1962, 1966, 1983, 1984, and 2001 through 2012. If you wish to make a donation of either of these books, please call 497-2675 or email cfdavis44@yahoo.com. Thank you!