

# MUS-NEWS

Volume 6 Number 1

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## Have you been keeping the secret

We have found that one of the better kept secrets in Old Town is the purpose and contents of the Old Town Museum. Each year, we have hundreds of visitors from other parts of Maine, the nation and from foreign countries and yet we have a limited number of visitors from Old Town. We suspect a part of the reason is the local people who visit the museum may not be telling their family and friends about the displays.

Old Town played a very important part in the early development of the area, water power available from the river was responsible for the construction of a large number of mills cutting lumber, shingles and other wood products. The need to get these products to market resulted in Old Town being the northern terminus of the second railroad in the United States which carried material to Bangor. These products contributed to Bangor being one of the larger ports on the Atlantic Coast.

If you have visited the Museum in past years, you will find new exhibits are now on display. If you have not visited the Old Town Museum, stop by and spend a few moments to learn more of the history of this area.

## Museum Hosts Regional Meeting

On October 19, 2003, the Old Town Museum hosted a regional meeting of "volunteer operated" historical societies and historical museums. This was the second time in less than 2 years that the group had met in Old Town. Fourteen groups had been invited but only six were able to attend but this was one of the largest groups to attend this type of meeting in this region. Even though the number of groups was limited, those that attended found the meeting of value and expressed interest in the continuation of these Regional Meetings. Groups represented were: Brewer Historical Society, Corinth Historical Society, Hampden Historical Society, Old Town Museum, Orono Historical Society and the Veazie Historical Society.

Each group in attendance made a short presentation on their activities. This was followed by a groups discussion on several topics of interest including: grant writing and fund raising, attracting volunteers to assist on staffing and projects, cooperative activities, gift shop opportunities, how to attract visitors to the historical society/museum exhibits and the value of the State Organization.

# A Moment in Our History - What is a "Boom" worth

Last year, in a "Mus-News" article about the contributions General Veazie had made to Old Town, we mentioned his ownership of the "Old Town Boom" as a successful financial investment. A few who remembered the "pulpwood booms" in some Maine rivers, wondered about the value of a "boom". To understand the value of a "boom", one must go back in our history; before cell phones, before computers, before TV, before radio, before trucks, before electric lights, and before paved roads, to a time when there were few people living north of Old Town and the Penobscot River was the main transportation path to the North Country. This was also the time, when the primary source of power for lumber mills was "Water Power".

This was a time when hundreds of men spent the winter cutting trees in the "North Country" and hauling the timber to the nearest major river. Several different individuals or companies owned the land and/or had acquired the rights to cut timber so that there were several individual owners of the logs that were piled along the river banks. Each individual or company that owned logs had their own unique "Log Mark" which they would normally cut into the wood on the side of a log. Some would cut the "Log Mark" into the end of a log but "less-reputable" loggers would saw off the "Log Mark" on the end of the log and then put on their own "Log Mark".

For these logs to have a value, they had to be transported to a mill and the only available method was floating then down the rivers to the mills. Logs continued to float downstream from the start of the log drive in April until the drive was completed in the early Fall. To get some idea of the amount of logs involved one only needs to look at the reports that show in 1850, 176 million board feet of lumber were produced at mills located along the river between Milford and Bangor/Brewer. All or nearly all of the logs used to cut this lumber came floating down the Penobscot River.

Now to the value of a boom. As a basic definition, a "Boom" consisted of a series of single logs that were chained together, end to end, for the purpose of stopping floating logs or deflecting logs in a specific direction. If it was expected that men would be walking along a boom, the boom might be up to four-logs wide, rather than a single log, for ease in walking (or staying dry). One must also understand that the term "Boom" could refer to either an individual boom or a complex of booms and cribwork piers that served a common purpose.

To keep logs from becoming stranded when the "Spring Runoff" subsided, a boom was frequently placed across the mouth of a stream entering the major river to keep logs from being "backed" into the stream. As logs approached the area where mills were located, there was a need to sort the logs so that the right logs were delivered to the right mills. The main sorting of logs for mills in Old Town, Orono, and Veazie occurred at booms located in Argyle and Pea Cove with the logs transported from these locations to the specific mills in the form of "Rafts". Logs destined for mills in Bangor and Brewer were allowed to continue down the Penobscot River until they reached the "Bangor Boom" where they were sorted and rafted to the appropriate mill. When General Veazie owned the "boom", he received a fee for every log that passed through his "boom".

The sorting of logs at a boom was not an easy task. The boom where the sorting occurred consisted of a gradually-narrowing channel usually about 700 feet long and on the down-stream end there was an open "Gap" that was 15 to 20 feet wide. All of the logs had to pass through the "Gap".

It was not unusual to find several hundred men employed at a boom and the associated activities. These people worked for the "Boom Owner", not the people that owned the logs or the mills. Several men known as "Checkers" worked at the "Gap" and there were were additional "Checkers" located on rafts downstream of the "Gap". Each "Checker" was responsible for a series of "Log Marks". These "Log Marks" were not always visible as the logs floated toward the "Gap" so the logs frequently needed to be rolled so the "Log Mark" could be seen. As a log passed through the "Gap", the "Checker" responsible for the "Log Mark" on the log, used a pike pole to push the log towards the shore where a "Rafting Crew" caught the log and attached it to other similarly marked logs creating a raft. The "Checkers" located on rafts downstream from the "Gap" helped guide a log to the proper "Rafting Crew". The shore area nearest the "Gap" was normally assigned to the "Log Mark" having the heaviest run at the time. As the log run changed during the season, the shore areas might be reassigned.

When the "Rafting Crew" had created a raft of the appropriate size, it was cut loose from the shore and attached to other rafts with the logs of the same "Log Mark" that were anchored to a buoy in mid-river. A series of rafts with the same "Log Marks" was known as a "Swing". Twice a day, a "Running Crew" took "Swings" downstream to a shore area leased by individual mills. The "Swings" might be moved using a

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bateau having 4 rowers plus one man in the stern and another in the bow or by a steam powered boat. The bateau crew might also sort a swing by specie and in the process create a new string with each raft being a single timber specie. This step was valuable to those mills that needed a specific specie for a product.

When the mill needed logs, a raft was broken and the individual logs driven loose to the mill. As the "Boom" remained in operation until Fall, new rafts replaced those that had been broken to supply the mill.

## Some Highlights from the 2003 Season

The opening of the Museum on April 25, 2003 found the nearly \$50,000 worth of repairs to the bell tower had been completed and with minor exception, the work had made it through the winter. The Contractor, when told of the minor item, returned immediately and put everything in good order.

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The Museum saw an increased number of student group visits during 2003. The Board is extremely proud of the fact that the Museum has taken on additional significance to the School Department in helping children learn about the history of their community and area. General attendance at the Museum was up over previous years but the mix had changed. There appeared to be more "in-state" visitors and less from "out-of-state". The Museum is still trying to encourage an increase in the number of visitors from the local area.

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The Summer "Sunday Afternoon" programs were well received. The musical programs brought out the largest attendance but others drew respectable numbers.

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Virginia Fortier reported that extensive progress had been made on the "Video History Project" but there was still a lot to do. Assistance on the project is being provided by University of Maine faculty and staff. It is expected that the completion of this phase of the project will produce two "professional-quality" tapes featuring Old Town

people talking about their memories as children growing up during the early part of the 20th Century.

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Sylvia Schuler, a University of Maine student, joined the staff of the Museum after our previous student graduated. Sylvia has been extremely helpful in staffing the Museum during the days it was open and assisting on the Sunday Programs.

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Harold Lacadie, one of the Museum Board Members, developed a CD of old photos of various scenes in and around Old Town. This was completed in time to be one of the items sold by the Museum at the Sept. 27, 2003 "Riverfest". The Museums Booth at this festival was very successful.

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Several new exhibits were developed for the 2003 Season with some exhibits being changed during the Summer. These were in addition to the standing exhibits of Old Town's relationship to the early lumbering industry. One of exhibits this past year featured new donations to the Museum.

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Would you like to obtain an item from the Old Town Museum Gift Shop? The following items may be ordered by sending an order with a payment check made out to the Old Town Museum. The order and check should be sent to the Museum % B. Csavinszky, 18 Sewell Drive, Old Town, ME 04468. In the local area, you may avoid the Shipping & Handling by picking up the items. Call B.Czavinszky (827-7685) or B. Clarke (827-2650) if you wish to pick up an item.

Item	Price inc. Tax	Ship & Handle
Historical Photos of Old Town on a CD	\$11.03	\$1.22
Old Town T- Shirts sizes M, L, XL & XXL	\$15.75	\$2.50
Plaque of St. Mary's Church (Now OT Museum)	\$21.00	\$2.75
Cookbooks	\$7.88	\$1.50
Afghans - tapestry	\$50.00	\$7.50

# Membership Drive - 2004

Membership in the Old Town Museum is one way which anyone can help in preserving the history of the Old Town area. Dues and donations are a substantial help in the funding of the Museum operations. Remember, the Museum does not charge an admissions fee nor is it supported by tax dollars. Your Membership payment or your donation is greatly appreciated.

We hope the readers of this issue of Mus-News will continue their support of the Old Town Museum. We especially hope you will be generous in any donations to the Museum's "Repair Fund". The Museum is the place where the history of the area is displayed for your viewing. A place to visit to bring back old memories and a place to show your children (or grandchildren) how things were in earlier times. Please visit the Museum even if you are not a financial supporter. A visit may bring back old memories.

Remember, donations of any amount to the Museum may qualify for a tax-deduction in accord with IRS Regulations. Donations should be sent to the same address as dues.

If you would like your donation dedicated to the Museum "Repair Fund", please indicate on the Donation Form.

If you would like to donate to the Museum or become a member of the Museum, please complete and mail the form at the bottom of this page.

The Old Town Museum  
 PO Box 375  
 Old Town, ME 04468



TO:

Old Town Museum; PO Box 375; Old Town, ME 04468

Membership or Donations

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ ESpNL

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership or Donation  
 (Circle appropriate item and if Donation, fill in amount)

Individual	\$20	Senior	\$10
Family	\$30	Life	\$250
Group or Business	\$100	Donation:	\$ _____

1976-2004  
 28 years of Service  
 to Old Town and it's  
 Surrounding  
 Communities

353 Main St



Membership entitles you voting rights at the Annual Meeting and free admission to the Museum and it's Sunday Programs (Special Ticketed events excluded) Donations are "Tax-deductible" but Memberships are not.

\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like to be a Museum Volunteer, please call me at (Telephone No.) \_\_\_\_\_