

OLD TOWN MUSEUM

353 Main Street, Old Town, Maine 04468
Mailing Address: P. O. Box 375
(207) 827-7256
www.theoldtownmuseum.com

Established 1976

The Old Town Museum is a volunteer effort dedicated to preserving Old Town's history.

Janie C. Michaels, Wordsmith of Stillwater, Maine

It Spans the Stillwater River
This Bridge of longtime fame,
Two-tunneled is its structure,
With stoutest timbered frame;

Thus begins "In Memoriam" by Janie C. Michaels, a poem written in 1944 as a double tribute: to the double barrel wooden bridge that crossed the Stillwater River until 1951, and to Brigadier-General Charles Davis Jameson, Stillwater's most famous native son. It is a touching and nostalgic look at the old bridge and a tale of loss in the Civil War.

Jane Chase Michaels was born in Stillwater in 1864 the daughter of Granville Michaels and his first wife, Mattie A. Buck. After graduating from the Maine College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts in 1883, Janie taught school for a few years in Maine and Arizona, before studying German for several months at Berlin University. When she returned, she taught for seven years in Quincy, Massachusetts.

After her father's death in 1904, Janie left teaching and returned to Maine where she ran millinery shops in Augusta and Rumford. When a friend told her that women were being paid good wages out in the oil field regions of the west, she moved to Taft, on the edge of the Midway-Sunset Oil Field in California, where she served as teacher and Principal of the Taft Union High School. After a long teaching career, she retired and in 1936 she returned to Stillwater. While in the west, Janie had two short novels published, "Polly of the Midway-Sunset," a story of life in the oil fields, and "A Natural Sequence" set in Arizona.

Once back in Maine, she began writing poems and essays, many of which were published in the Penobscot Times. Her poems in the early 40's were often political, she was a staunch Roosevelt Democrat, or critical of isolationists who kept the U.S. out of the war until after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Then, in 1943 she wrote a series of playful poems about prominent Old Town and Stillwater citizens and the writing that followed was more historical and local



Janie Michaels

in nature. Beginning in 1955 she wrote a regular column of reminiscences of Stillwater called "Skitikuk: Recollections Touched With Fancy." These columns were expanded and put into a book, also called "Skitikuk," which was published in 1959, shortly before her death.

This book is available at the Museum and at the Old Town Public Library and her poems are preserved in the pages of the Penobscot Times, which are available on-line through the library's website. Chapter one of "Skitikuk" begins "In the days when lumber ruled in Maine and red-blooded men ruled lumber, the freezing of the Penobscot and the closing of the saw-mills sent the sturdiest men up to the camps in the towering forests." ~ Contributed by Betsy Paradis

Museum 2016 Schedule

Sundays at 2 p.m. at the Museum

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| Sunday, June 5 | Opening – The Bernard Langlais Collection/ Paige Doore, Colby College |
| Sunday, June 12 | Silly Songs / Old Town Museum Chorus |
| Sunday July 10 | Larry Wade |
| Sunday, July 17 | History of LaBree's Bakery / Bernie LaBree |
| Sunday, August | Penobscot Storytelling / John Bear Mitchell |
| Sunday, August | Genealogy Program |
| Sunday, Sept 11 | Patriot Day Program / Old Town Museum Chorus |
| Sunday Sept. | Images of Old Town |
| Sunday, October 2 | Six Basin Street Dixieland Band |
| October TBA | Co-sponsored with the OT library - Rhea Cote Robbins / readings from her new anthology of French heritage women |

Tentative schedule, subject to change

Visit the Museum web page www.theoldtownmuseum.org or check The Penobscot Times for more detail.

The Oldest Map of Old Town and the School District System

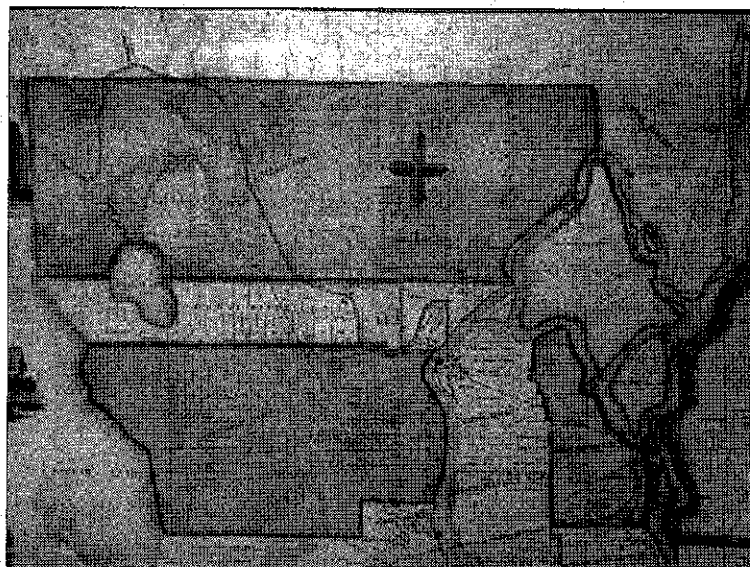
One important source of information about the history of a town is its representation on maps. In the case of Old Town, we do not have much to go by for the period predating the separation of the town from Orono in 1840. There are a few early survey maps that provide us with some information, but there are no maps depicting all of the town's infrastructure at a certain time. The oldest such map dates back to 1855 and thus provides with a good idea of what Old Town might have been like in the period right before the Civil War. The same map also has another feature, which we will talk about in this article.

The 1855 map of Old Town was produced by the survey and cartographer Edgar Woodford (1824-1862) of Philadelphia, then lithographed by Friend & Aub and printed in two sheets by Wagner & M'Guigan. A framed copy of the map can be found in the hallway of the basement of the Old Town Public Library. The Old Town Museum has a copy on display as well, while the Fogler Library at the University of Maine owns yet another copy.

Why Woodford produced this particular map is not entirely clear. It is one of relatively few maps he published, almost all of which are of smaller Maine towns. Over a period of just two years, in addition to the Old Town map, Woodford would publish maps of Belfast, Calais, Camden, Ellsworth, Frankfurt, Hallowell, Orono, Richmond, Rockland, and Thomaston. As far as we know, however, Woodford never came to Maine to do any surveying himself. For most of these maps, he relied on surveys by one D.S. Osborn(e), about whom I have not been able to find anything, but who is listed on the maps as a "civil engineer." As far as I can tell, Old Town was the only town not surveyed by Osborne. According to the information given on the map, Lore Alford (1801-1868), the town surveyor at the time, provided the necessary information.

All of these maps are set up in the same way. In the middle is an overview of the whole area of the community with some topographical features, as well as detailed maps of the most important neighborhoods in each community. On the left and the right side of the map, street views of the most noteworthy public places and residences are shown. For the most part, the maps are in black and white, but some coloring is used to mark the boundaries of the community. To add more color to the print, the area map is usually also divided into administrative units relevant to the community. In the case of Rockland, recently incorporated as a city, the city area is divided into the seven wards defined in its charter. In the case of Old Town, the town area is subdivided into the original settler lots as delineated by Paris Holland, while the colors mark what the map refers to as school districts. These school districts are what we are interested in here.

Nowadays, we tend to think of a school district as comprising a whole town or even several towns, but clearly that was not the case then. So, what was meant by a school district at the time? Actually, the first school districts were created in the course of the 18th century in an attempt to manage the ever increasing number of students. Whereas before each town had been completely responsible for the education of all of the students living within that town, towns began to divide their territory into smaller districts, where each district would be responsible for at least some aspects of the education of the students living within that district. In 1789, the first Education Law of the State of Massachusetts (of which Maine was then legally part) recognized the practice by giving towns the legal authority to define the boundaries of their school districts. The districts themselves, however, were not given any legal status. This was a problem, as it usually was incumbent upon the districts to erect and maintain schoolhouses. Initially, the towns would still provide funds, but increasingly the districts



became responsible for covering some of the running expenses as well, making the districts (and therefore the town) vulnerable to legal action. In 1817, the Massachusetts' legislature remedied this situation by making the districts corporate entities. This allowed others (including the towns!) to sue a district, but it also allowed the districts to buy, own, and sell property. In addition, the districts were allowed to directly collect taxes for the building and maintenance of their schoolhouses. Over time, many school districts would not only own their schoolhouse(s), but also acquire the lots on which they were sitting.

After the separation of Maine from Massachusetts in 1820, all prior legislation regarding the district system was confirmed in Maine's first educational law of 1821 and by 1855, the system was firmly in place for all of Maine. During the later decades of the 19th century, control of the districts was increasingly delegated to so-called district agents, often de facto professional administrators which were appointed by the town. In many cases, this practice dramatically curtailed the independence of the districts and would ultimately lead to the replacement of the system by the current superintendent system in 1894.

While the district system was in place, the size of a school district was determined by the number of potential students within its boundaries, but especially for the rural areas, easy walking distance was a consideration as well. In practice, not all school districts in a particular town served the same number of students and the number of districts in a particular community was hardly an indication of the size of that community.

Upon inspection, the Woodford map shows us the boundaries of what appear to be seven school districts in Old Town. We do not have any other sources confirming these boundaries, nor do we know when exactly these boundaries were drawn. We do know that for most of the second half of the 19th century, Old Town had eight school districts. We also know, however, that District #8 (West Old Town) was split off from District #5 some time before 1869, when it is first mentioned. It seems plausible that the split occurred after the map was taken in production. Thus, with this one exception, the map most likely depicts the boundaries of the Old Town school districts that were in place until the dissolution of the district system in 1894.

Of these eight districts, District #2 (the "Village") was by

Oldest Map (continued)

far the most populous and the most affluent. By 1855, the district was serving six hundred students and it was responsible for three schoolhouses. The biggest one (on Brunswick Street) housed a primary school, a so-called intermediary school, and a grammar school. The other two were smaller two-room schools. In addition, the district was responsible for what was probably a one-room school on Treat & Webster Island (now French Island). In contrast, Districts #3 (Outer Bannoch), #5 (Pea Cove), #6 (Pushaw), as well as the later #8 (West Old Town) were the least prosperous and their schoolhouses must have been modest single-room buildings. The schoolhouses of the other districts (Stillwater East and West, Great Works) most likely were simple two-room buildings, housing both a primary and an intermediary school.

With a little bit of searching, most of these schoolhouses can be found on the Woodford map as well. The Bannoch school and the one at Pea Cove are indicated on the area map as schools, while the schools in Stillwater, Great Works and Old Town proper can each be found on the detailed maps. The area map does show a structure where the Pushaw School would have been (at the corner of what is now College Avenue Extension and Gilman Falls Drive), but does not list it as a school. There is not enough detail for either West Old Town or French Island to find their respective schoolhouses (where the former actually might not have been in operation yet).

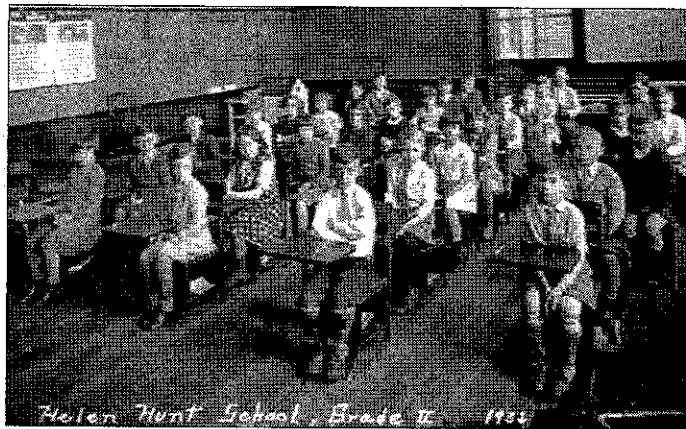
Finally, although there is no evidence of any private schools in the 1850, it should be pointed out here that by then Old Town had one more schoolhouse within its boundaries. Whereas for most towns in the area, the children of the Penobscot tribe were to attend school in the local schools, in the case of Indian Island, the state had committed itself to provide education on the island itself that was to be separate from the local school districts. Whether such education was actually made available before 1850 is not entirely clear, but that year a "convenient schoolhouse had been fitted up" on Indian Island, which was used for a few years. By 1852, however, no education was available on the island and the next reference to any education specific to the Penobscot tribe was in 1857, when apparently a school was being kept on Indian Island and the town of Old Town was deputized by the state to oversee any expenditures (and possibly the hiring of teachers). As agreed upon, however, the island was not assigned to a school district. This situation only came to an end by 1878, when the Sisters of Mercy took over the Indian Island school. One year later, expenditures became the responsibility of the agent of the tribe and the local priest. Effectively, this severed any ties between the Old Town school system and that of Indian Island.

Thus, the first map of Old Town also teaches us a lesson on the history of the Old Town school system and the Maine school system in general. A few questions remain. Why, for instance, is there a chunk of land in the Western part of Old Town that goes with District #1 (mostly Great Works)? Likewise, why does District #2 stretch into the Moor Tract (the part north of Orson Island)? At this point, I do not know the answer to the questions.

~ Eisso J. Atzema

REFERENCES:

- Chadbourne, Ava Harriet *A History of Education in Maine: A Study of a Section of American Educational History* (Orono, 1936)
- Finley, Nancy "A Noble and Precious Life". Edgar M. Woodford, *Civil Engineer, Abolitionist, and Soldier*. See: <http://connecticuthistory.org/a-noble-and-precious-life-edgar-m-woodford-civil-engineer-abolitionist-and-soldier/>
- Nickerson, Kenneth *150 Years of Education in Maine; Sesqui-centennial History of Maine's Educational System and the growth and Development of the Maine State Department of Education* (Augusta, 1970) (see also www.maine.gov/education/150yrs/150years.html)
- Norton, David *Sketches of the Town of Old Town, Penobscot, Maine. From Its Earliest Settlement, to 1879; with Biographical Sketches* (Bangor, 1881)



The Riverfest Committee is seeking your help with the publication planned for this year in connection with our annual community festival. This year we will publish a history of the schools. We are looking for pictures of the old schools and classrooms as the one above. (Even better if the students are identified.) We have several pictures already but would certainly welcome more. If you have pictures you are willing to share, please call Carol May, 478-9012.

'Images of America - Old Town' Shaping Up Nicely

Imagine a book with 200 images of Old Town complete with captions describing their role in Old Town's history. Now imagine that the book was solicited from us by a national publisher with thousands of books to its credit. Imagine no more! The book is well on its way to completion approaching its final phases and will be submitted to the acclaimed Arcadia Publishing Company of Charleston, South Carolina, for printing by the end of the summer. Look for it to be available early next year if not before.



Peter Stowell

Drawing on the vast photo collection of the Old Town Museum, author Peter R. Stowell has also acquired rare images from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and the Old Town Public Library. Local people have contributed as well, including Diana Poulin, Larry Mishou, Carol May, Charlie and Linda Weeks from Missouri, Clark and Ann Young from Portland, Gary and Alexandria Thorne from Maryland, Pete Taylor from Washington, Maine (and French Island), Rick Vaillancourt from Greenbush, Bernie LaBree from the Bakery, Charles Norman Shay from Indian Island, John and Angela Cyr, Betsy Huyett Paradis, Benson Gray, historian of wood and canvas canoes, and more.

The Old Town Public Library has offered its complete resources for the book, from rare image files to items from its archives to its accessible online images of Old Town newspapers going back to 1888.

We're still looking for photos of people: old cabinet photos of your grandparents, images of Bud Leavitt, Bernard Langlais, Herb Sargent, and other Old Town notables.

If you have old photos to share, let us know. We will scan them to professional standards and return them to you immediately.

Richard Eustis (1932-2016)

On January 27th, 2016, our museum lost a valued long-time board member who was actively involved in every facet of the museum's operation when Dick Eustis suddenly passed away. As our treasurer, he kept meticulous records of our finances, as a professional engineer, he oversaw the maintenance of our building, and as a historian, he was in the process of constructing a detailed inventory of our holdings. Additionally, he was our tour guide, photographer and wrote numerous articles for our publications. A loss such as Dick's has left many jobs to fill and we are gradually taking on all that he did. His daughter, Debbie Eustis-Grandy, has graciously provided us with the many files he kept at home on his personal computers, with the last ones being transferred during his April 30th memorial service. So, if my response to your recent donations has been tardy, please understand that we continue to be very thankful for your support.



The following is a copy of Dick's obituary which appeared in the Bangor Daily News on February 6th, 2016.

OLD TOWN - Richard (Dick) A. Eustis, 83, passed away unexpectedly on Wednesday, January 27, 2016 at a local health care facility.

He was a mentor to many, a tech geek (how many seniors have 2 desktops, 2 laptops, an iPad, and over 3000 people in their e-mail contact list?), and a respected member of the State, National, and International Civil Engineering community. Dick was born in Strong, Maine, on October 24, 1932, to Ralph and Marion (Richardson) Eustis. He graduated from Strong High School in 1951, and from the University of Maine with a degree in Civil Engineering in 1955. At the University of Maine, he was a member of Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity and served as class treasurer for the past 50 years. Dick served in the military (2nd Armored Division, US Army, Germany) from 1955-1958, ending as a decorated Sergeant.

At the time of his passing, he was a Maine Professional Engineer (PE), a Fellow of the Construction Specifications Institute (FCSI), a Certified Construction Contract Administrator (CCCA), and a Life Member of the American Society of Civil Engineering. Dick spent nearly 40 years working for the University of Maine System, beginning in 1958 as Assistant to the Maintenance Engineer at

the Orono campus. In 1970 he was appointed Assistant Director of Facilities for the UMaine System, rising to Director of Facilities in 1974. A few years later he became Associate Vice Chancellor for Facilities, and retired from that position in 1998. During his years with the UMaine system he oversaw construction and maintenance of many new and existing buildings at all 7 campuses.

Dick was also heavily involved in the Engineering profession outside of his work for the University. In 1970 he joined the Construction Specifications Institute (CSI), and over the years served in multiple capacities with the Maine and Northeast Region chapters, as well as the National organization. He was appointed a Fellow of CSI in 1986, and served as National president in 1996-97. Under his leadership CSI became the lead society in coordinating National Engineers' Week. In 1994 he took his engineering interests internationally, and was an active member of the Atlantic chapter of Construction Specifications Canada (CSC). Dick was one of the founding members of the Northern New England Chapter of the Eastern Region Association of Physical Plant Administrators, and served a term as president of the Eastern Region. In 1995 he also began serving on the Maine Association of General Contractors (MAGC) Building Committee.

Retirement simply meant that Dick had more time to devote to Engineering (continuing with his CSI, CSC, and MAGC work) and other interests, and was active in all of these up until the time of his passing. He traveled extensively, attending and giving presentations at state, regional, national, and international meetings of Engineering organizations of which he was a member.

Since 1998 he has been a member of the Old Town Museum Board of Directors, and has served that organization in various capacities - most recently as treasurer. Also in 1998, he became a facilitator for Maine QBS (Qualifications Based Selection) which guides clients in need of construction/design services on how to best select designer professionals based on their qualifications for conducting a specific project. Dick participated in many Penobscot Valley Senior College programs, and served a term as the organization's President in 2011. He became a member of the AARP Capital City Task Force in 2009, and spent time lobbying lawmakers in Augusta on issues important to Seniors.

Ever the technology geek, Dick was involved in creation of both print and digital resources (newsletters, websites, collections databases, etc.) for numerous organizations, including the Old Town Museum, and State, Regional, and National chapters of CSI. From 2002 until his death he was editor of the National CSI newsletter The Fellows.

Dick is survived by his daughter, Debbie Eustis-Grandy and her husband Matt Grandy, of New Sweden, Maine; dear friend and companion Laura Messinger, and her family; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was pre-deceased by his wife Elizabeth Currier Eustis, his sister Marjorie Eustis Smith, and nephew Mark (Joe) Duane Smith.

A memorial service will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests making a donation to the Old Town Museum, PO Box 375, Old Town, Maine, 04468.