

OLD TOWN MUSEUM

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Established 1976

FALL 2022

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

Written for the Museum by Board Member Pam Martin Dorr



HALLOWEEN IN OLD TOWN (circa 1960's)

Standing near the Penobscot, you can see
The leaves across the way on every tree.
They have changed to red, orange and gold,
And the breeze from the River is a tad bit cold.

Halloween in Old Town is just near by
And you can feel that the anticipation
is very high!
What will happen on Old Hallows Eve?
Oh, so many things you couldn't believe!

Of course there is always Trick or Treat
So children will find something good to eat.
In our neighborhoods of long ago
To each and every door you could always go.

Decorations in yards and on windows
were seen,
And the light from the pumpkins glowed
orange and green.
Scary little ghosts lurked around;
Goblins and skeletons could also be found

Everyone knew who lived on their street
And you could hear the trudge of all
the little feet.

The stores in Downtown were all aglow
With paintings by children in each window.

Down in the park there was quite the scene;
They were preparing to crown
the Hunters' Breakfast Queen.

The girls were chosen from
Old Town High School,
Each one hoping they would get to rule.

My friends and I would enjoy the sight
And then go to a friend's house to stay
overnight.

Next morning would find us back at the Park
Eating pancakes, doughnuts, and ham
while it was still dark.

Then we'd go home and get ready for
the next day.

Awake in school we would try to stay,
But the best thing to us that was always clear
There would still be another
Halloween in Old Town next year!



**Old Town
High School's
VICTORY FIELD**
will be the topic of our
next program on
Sunday, Oct. 16,
Mary Gibouleau will
present the 2 p.m.
program concerning
the field's long history.

Down the Rabbit Hole (and Back)

Eisso J. Atzema

New items: The Old Town Museum has acquired many new artifacts this season and the season is not even over yet! All were of interest and, as always, their donation is highly appreciated. One acquisition, however, caught my special attention. Actually, this item was not even a donation. Rather, I came across it on one of my periodical perusals of eBay for Old Town related items. It was a postcard that clearly was Old Town related, but did not quite seem to match the description given by the seller. For that reason, I decided to buy it for the Museum (see picture above).

A Curious Picture

After I received the item, it gradually became clear to me that the card was actually of much more interest than I thought it would be. In all fairness, the description as the depiction of a parade float was actually more correct than I initially thought it was. However, instead of one float, there actually are several floats on display. The most obvious float is the one rigged up by the "Children's Camp" which is a reference to the Summer camps that were organized in the early 20th century in Old Town for school age children all over Penobscot County who were found to have contracted tuberculosis. In addition, there is a second float that bears all the insignia of Old Town's Tarratine Lodge of the Odd Fellows, one of the City's many benevolent societies. A smallish banner reveals that the float is actually one for the Rebecca Myrtle Lodge, the Odd Fellows' women's "auxiliary". There is a third float on the card, which looks like a car or a boat with lettering on its side that is only partially visible. Intriguingly, the card was sent out (on July 17 of 1916) by one Rae B. who mostly seems to have wanted to point out

that she actually was depicted on the card.

I did not quite know what to think of the card until I hit upon an article in the Old Town Enterprise describing the fully rained-out 4th of July parade of 1916.¹ Not only does that description mention a children's Camp float and one by the Myrtle Lodge, but it also talks about a float for the Penobscot River and Pushaw Motorboat Club which clearly fits the lettering of the third float. The postcard is a photo of the 4th of July parade of 1916! What is more, the article also mentions that the Myrtle Lodge float depicts the (biblical) scene of "Rebecca at the Well" with Rae Brown as Rebecca accompanied by the young ladies Dorothy Burnham, Verna Wing, Bernice Tasker, and Helen Hutchinson. Clearly, Rae B. is Rae Brown and surely she is the woman most to the front on the float. The article also makes it clear that the nurse on the Camp float (the only other person---aside from the Myrtle float driver---who is clearly visible) must be Margaret Hughes, the Penobscot district nurse at the time.

As I was doing a little bit more research on these names, it dawned on me what made this photo so appealing to me. In fact, the Independence Day parade of 1916 was the last parade before the United States became involved in the "Great War" and in a way forever lost its innocence as a nation. The gaiety in the photo is emblematic of the quiet before the storm that was this watershed moment in US history.

Slowly Down the Rabbit Hole:

At least two of the people depicted were also personally affected by the war. First and foremost there was Margaret Hughes (1888-1964), a Prince Edward Island native who had trained as a nurse in Portland and who was then hired as a district nurse to coordinate the care of tuberculosis patients in Penobscot County. Almost as soon as the US declared war, she joined first the Red Cross and then the Army Nurse Corps and quickly found herself right behind the front lines in France. In 1918, the Old Town Enterprise printed at least two letters sent from "over

there” (as she put it) in which she describes some of her experiences.² After the war, she worked as Maine's state nurse for the Anti-Tuberculosis Association and then was Superintendent of Nurses at the Children's Hospital in Portland. Many years later, she died in Patchogue, NY. I have not been able to find out how she ended up there, but perhaps she was teaching at one of the colleges in the area. She never seems to have married.

The other person was Dorothy Burnham (1895-1981),³ a daughter of Horace Mann Burnham (1849-1941), Old Town's main pharmacist and well-known figure about town. In the summer of 1916, Dorothy was a student at the Normal School in Farmington and Bernice Tasker (1895-1986),⁴ who joined her in the photo, was a classmate from Monroe who happened to be visiting her the week of July 4th.⁵ During the war, Dorothy's older brother Horace Cleveland Burnham (1892-1958) would join the service as an Aerial Navigator. Pictures of his flying permit and military passport can be found on Find-a-Grave, even though the current whereabouts of these documents are apparently unknown.⁶ It is unclear whether he served abroad, but if he did he would have had one of the more dangerous jobs in warfare at the time.

(Edna) Rae Brown (1895-1965) does not seem to have been immediately affected by the Great War. In 1920, she married Lois (Lewis) Littlefield and became the mother of four daughters, including the twins Bernice (“Bunny”) Littlefield Cousins (1921-2014) and Beatrice Hackmack McCleary (1921-2016).⁷ Sometime during World War II, Beatrice would join the military. In what capacity exactly is unclear as her digitized military records only contain her name, but after the war she used the GI-bill to obtain various degrees from a number of universities and pursued a career in what seems to have been early computer science, mostly in Illinois. Possibly she was involved in automation projects during the war as well and she may have been one of the many women whose contributions to computer science were quietly erased from history...

It also occurred to me that almost everybody mentioned so far was either not born in Old Town (Rae Brown) or left town (Verna Wing, Dorothy Burnham, Beatrice Hackmack McCleary) or both (Margaret Hughes). Certainly, this kind of ongoing (relatively) large-scale migration would be a recurring theme in Old Town's history as well.

Back Again?

At this point, I obviously had gone down quite a deep rabbit hole, but then, what is wrong with that as long as one gets out of it again? At least to me, the whole point of history is to ponder what has been, what might have been, and what perhaps will be. If an artifact helps to kickstart that process, all the better and I am glad that I managed to acquire this particular photo for the Museum. Hopefully, it (and the many other artifacts in our collection) will incite other people to think about the past as well.

1 Old Town Enterprise, July 8, 1916, p.1

2 Old Town Enterprise, October 5, 1918, p. + October 12, p.1

3 <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/178900442/dorothy-brown>

4 <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/119319703/bernice-lulu-monroe>

5 Old Town Enterprise, July 8, 1916, p.3

6 <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/6071502/horace-cleveland-burnham>

7 <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/chandler-az/beatrice-mccleary-7007762>

A Glance at the Past

from Our Archives of The Penobscot Times

The Penobscot Times **May 16, 1947**

- The Herbert Gray P.T.A. sponsored a Tag Day with proceeds to be used for the benefit of the school playground. Mrs. Charles Cowan was chairman, assisted by Gertrude Wickett and Barbara Wood.

- The Library League held a successful tag day with the money being used to purchase books for the High School.

“Next week The Penobscot Times will be printed in a new location in the Armory building at the corner of Stillwater Avenue.

“The present site of the newspaper plant is part of the O.G. Morin property which was sold to the Alpert brothers of Bangor on January 1.

- “The new location was rented from the City of Old Town, after weeks of fruitless search for a suitable privately owned building.”

- The Pine Tree Pals met at the Stillwater home of Gladys Sutton.

- Mr. and Mrs. Leon Moore of Alton were announcing the birth of a baby son, David Leon.

- Mr. and Mrs. Richard Rand and daughters Phyllis and Shirley of Milford, traveled to Presque Isle to spend Mother's Day with Mr. Rand's mother, Mrs. Charles Rand.

- Mr. and Mrs. Clare Frye of Bradley were announcing the birth of a daughter.

- The Nekanegat Club met at the Bradley home of Mrs. Marjorie Crane. Those attending included Lena Knapp and Ada and Betty Spruce.

- Miss Claudette Bonneau spent the weekend with her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. George Cyr.

- Calixte Baillargeon, who was attending the McAllister School of Embalming, was spending the weekend at home with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Baillargeon on Middle Street.

- Mr. and Mrs. Robert Haggett of Orono were announcing the birth of a daughter.

The Penobscot Times **January 16, 1970**

- The Old Town Rotary Club started a fund to purchase an electric scoreboard for the Old Town High School football field. The initial contribution of \$300 was presented to Ronald Henderson, secretary-treasurer of the First Federal Savings and Loan by club president, Charles Cowan.

- The Old Town Jaycees announced that Edward Elton was named their Outstanding Young Man.

- Mr. and Mrs. Robert Dubay were announcing the engagement of their daughter, Roberta Ann.

- The Penobscot Women's Club met at the home of Hazel Guillard. The next meeting was planned at the home of Lillian Godin.

- The Molmutoc Club met at the home of Mrs. Paul Cyr. Mary Montville, representing the Community Betterment Committee, spoke to the group.

- Sp/4 Martin G. Jackson, husband of Mrs. Janie Ouellette Jackson, was promoted to sergeant. He was serving a tour of duty in Vietnam.

- Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Mallett were announcing the engagement of their daughter Janice to Bruce Johnson.

- Mr. and Mrs. James Nason were announcing the birth of a daughter, Tracy Lynn. Maternal grandparents were Mr. and Mrs. Edward McLaughlin and paternal grandparents were Mr. and Mrs. Charles Nason.

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Looking Toward Fall

We have enjoyed a busy summer at the Museum and were happy to be open each week Wednesday through Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm. We feel that our consistent schedule has enhanced attendance and certainly aided in the acquisition of several new and exciting items to add to our collection. Several visitors were new to the Museum and some were old friends who came in to browse our collections and reminisce with our new Museum workers, Lauren Tibbitts and Brian Folster. Lauren and Brian have been well appreciated members of the Museum staff and have helped with introducing visitors to our collections. Guests are invited to stop in and look over our collections which have been newly organized.

We would really like to keep you informed of Museum events. Please return the form which appears below and be sure to include your **clearly written email** so that we can reach you more often with what's happening at the Museum.

The Museum will remain open through November and this fall, we are anxiously awaiting a new digital sign to announce Museum programs and other events. Thanks to a generous Museum friend we will be able to "get the word out" on what is happening at the Museum! **Please send along your email so that we can keep you informed digitally, as we hope to get newsletters out more often.**



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State and Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail: _____

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Established 1976

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Individual \$30 | Senior \$20 |
| Family \$50 | Life \$400 |
| Group or Business \$175 | Donation: \$ _____ |

Membership entitles you to voting rights at the Annual Meeting.
The Old Town Museum is a 501(c)(3) organization.

PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR EMAIL FOR FUTURE NOTICES FROM THE OLD TOWN MUSEUM

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