

OLD TOWN MUSEUM

353 Main Street, Old Town, Maine 04468
Mailing Address: P. O. Box 375
(207) 827-7256
email: oldtownmuseum@gmail.com

Established 1976

MARCH 2023

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

Grandparents Remembered

Board Member Philip A. Dunn Jr.

Through life's circumstances, I inherited the family photographs of my paternal grandparents Harris and Gertrude Dunn. Looking at this myriad of multi-decade pictures makes me realize some of the connections and the lives my family lived long before I was part of the family. Over the years, I had heard family stories, but most were lost to me as the people that I see in the pictures are either young and active, unlike the old people as I knew them, or are simply pictures of people who I only knew as names referenced in discussion. These pictures are alive with people who had once lived and I knew them only through my elders' stories. These pictures represent many that I never met and still don't recognize because, as is often the case, these pictures are not marked, identified, or labeled. They are only archives of a time past.

The background of my grandfather Harris Llwellyn Dunn (August 12, 1900 to May 23, 1978) is traced to the first



At 50th Wedding Celebration.

Dunn of my line who came to the United States from Ireland Patrick Dunn (1775-1861). He arrived in Massachusetts and married a woman from Cape Cod named Phebe. They settled in Township 2 now known as Greenbush Purchase Lot 30 along the Penobscot River around 1820. They had 11 children: Thomas is in my direct line (1819-1890). Thomas married Susan Young (1830-1900) and they had 12 children. The direct line to me comes from Thomas's son



With the Grandchildren in 1965.



Painting the Fransway Hotel.

John Elbridge Dunn (1855-1936). John widowed from his first wife Jennie Spencer, resulting in no children. He then married Susan Harris (1869-1944) and they had 9 children. My direct line was his son Harris, my grandfather. (At this point, I can note that my grandfather's name comes from his mother's maiden name Harris. Also, I can note that Sam Harris the Old Town barber often mentioned was the brother of Susan Harris-Dunn) Harris married my grandmother Gertrude Tremblay (1899-1978) on November 17, 1919 and they had three children. Their children included my father Philip Dunn, Sr. (1920-1986), Edna Dunn-Lucas (1924-2013), and Harris, Jr. "Larry" (1937-2018). To complete the lineage to me, my father Philip Dunn married my mother Alice Lorraine Cox-Dunn (1929-2011) on May 11, 1957. They had five children: Mark (1957 infant), Philip (1958), Paula Dunn-Sprague (1959), Patrick (1961-1999), and Alice (1963-2008). This lineage makes my grandfather a fourth generation from Ireland and me a 6th generation.

The background of my grandmother Gertrude Adeline Tremblay-Dunn (September 13, 1899-May 23, 1978) is a little less clear as details aren't as easily known to me. My grandmother's line in America begins with her father Louis Phillip Tremblay (1860-1948) born to parents Hubert Tremblay and Adeline Chouinard-Tremblay who settled in Rimouski, Quebec, Canada. Family stories indicate that Hubert and Adeline came from France and that Louis was born on the ship which docked in Canada. Since they settled in Rimouski, Rimouski is listed as Louis's birthplace. According to his obituary, Louis came to the Orono area at age 19 and began working as a barber around that time (1880) until he retired around 1933. He lived and worked around the greater Old Town-Orono area and interestingly worked in

Sam Harris's barbershop (Susan Harris-Dunn's brother), the Thomas Violette shop and later the University of Maine barbershop. He married Henriette Gagne (Harriett Gonyer) sometime prior to 1888 (based on the baptismal certificate for his eldest son L. Phillip Tremblay of June 4, 1888). Family information indicates that he had 13 children with his first wife, not all survived to adulthood. My grandmother, Gertrude Tremblay-Dunn, was the youngest child of this group of 13 and was the only girl. Henriette died sometime around 1914 (details of their wedding and her death are probably in records associated to the former St. Mary's Church of Orono, if records survive.) and Louis remarried Mary-Ange- Celeda Sevigny in 1915. Again, family stories indicate that Louis fathered another 13 children, not all survived to adulthood. Based on the obituary, at the time of his death, Louis was survived by seven sons (from the blended family) and one daughter, my Grandmother Dunn. Based on the information that I have, my grandmother is either 2nd or 3rd generation from France. (it is noted from the family photos, Louis had three siblings. One looks like a 19th century woodworker and is identified as Hermann, one is a cloistered nun Sr. St. Catherine, and one is anonymous and appears as a business man)

I don't know how my grandparents Dunn met, but can only speculate as they came from two completely different backgrounds that somehow crossed paths in Old Town. My Grandfather Dunn was brought up across the street from the Milford Congregational Church. His family was brought up in that church. My great-Grandfather Dunn was a logger/riverdriver in the fall through spring and worked in the sawmill that was behind the church during the summers. My Grandmother Dunn lived at one time in a tenement



Sitting outside at Elm Street

house with her family at the base of French Island in the vicinity of properties adjacent to the current Dave's Service Center. As stated earlier, her father worked as a barber in Old Town barbershops. I speculate that they met attending school. My grandfather was an athlete in high school and my grandmother enjoyed socializing. They crossed paths somewhere. Neither of them finished high school. Also, because of their backgrounds, I would believe that some eyebrows were raised as my Grandfather was Protestant and my Grandmother was Catholic. At that time, in order to marry Catholic in the Catholic Church, both needed to be Catholic. I remember my Grandfather stating that he took lessons from the priest and only did that for a week before getting married. I am not sure how my Grandfather's relatives related to the union, but three of John Dunn's sons married Catholics and all converted to Catholicism. One of the family stories from the era is that my father at age 7 (around 1927) remembered when hooded members of the Klu Klux Klan marched from Milford to Old Town and the Catholics stopped the procession at the Milford bridge. My father remembered being "grabbed" by a Klansman who said, "I am going to get you." My father said he had recognized the voice, but didn't know who it was.

Harris Dunn and Gertrude Tremblay were married at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Old Town on November 17, 1919. A family story is that Phillip Tremblay, Gertrude's brother, who was Old Town City Marshall, handcuffed them together at their marriage. After they got married, they lived in a small house also across the street from the Milford Congregational Church where they raised their three children. In 1943, they moved from that house to their long time residence at 45 Elm Street in Old Town located at the intersection of Elm and Middle Streets. This house had belonged to Phillip Tremblay who sold it to them.

Harris Dunn was a Painting and Decorating Contractor. As a young man, he worked summers in the woods, but took on house painting as a profession. Family pictures show many projects including the Fransway Hotel in Old Town and the old Stearns High School in Millinocket. He did many homes in the greater Bangor area doing both in-

side and outside painting along with wallpapering. Many young men came in his employ throughout the years. I worked one summer with him on his last project in 1974 as he painted the former Ruth Ross family home on the corner of Center and Shirley Streets. During the Depression into the 1950s, he also had a wood business cutting logs and delivering firewood to local homes in the greater Old Town area.

As young people, my grandparents Dunn were active in many projects. Between family stories and pictures, I found out that my Grandfather Dunn organized Minstrel and Community shows, managed a local semi-pro baseball team, and was active including being Master of the Old Town Grange. My Grandmother Dunn sang in many of these shows and traveled in some of the medicine shows with Chief Poolaw. Family stories include my Grandmother and Grandfather socializing with the Chief and his wife and having them wash their car at my Grandfather's place prior to the bridge being built to Indian Island.

I knew my grandparents as older people as I grew up in the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, they were people more adjusted to staying home and rocking in a line of chairs on their side porch watching the traffic coming up Elm Street. Through the summer, I can remember the fragrances coming from the multi-colored peonies that bordered the side porch as laundry often swung in the breeze above our heads as we sat in the chairs. I can also remember coming into the kitchen from that porch and smelling the cooking of roasted chicken and cookies. The kitchen table was always set for the next meal with glass plates and metal silverware with napkins. My grandmother often had local ladies come to her house for card parties and they called themselves the "Jolly Four." I still remember my grandmother traveling with her neighbor Mrs. Irene Dumont in an old peach colored Plymouth Fury. Both women were rather short and their heads seemed to barely overlook the dashboard as they came down the street never traveling more than 20 miles per hour. My grandfather set up my Uncle Larry Dunn in business in a small floral shop at the corner of Elm St. and Stillwater Avenue directly across the street from Old Town High School. My grandfather was the push behind the Southern Belle Flower Shop as he did most of the pick-up and delivery. My grandfather spent time "puttering" in his side buildings that were just falling over with collections of stuff only meaningful to him



Harris with wood truck



Gertrude and her friend Irene Dumont

including paint can leftovers from many jobs of the past. His old black panel paint truck sat neglected in the dooryard, a reminder of working days of the past. He also had two 1954 Chevrolet Belair cars that had seen better days parked and waiting for resurrection.

In the Mid-1970s, I would stop by my grandparents' house in the afternoon after classes at Old Town High School. My grandmother would be walking around in her familiar attire with an ever present halter apron. It was said that she had "hardening of the arteries." (today, we would say early onset of dementia) My grandfather would be sitting watching TV. He always wore button down white shirts, even when he worked as a painter, with his money and wallet in the front breast pocket. It was pinned with a safety pin and he would undo it when he accessed it. Sometime around this period, my grandfather had had a series of mini-strokes and no longer drove. He had drawn out speech. Together my grandparents would watch soap operas and he could recite back the storyline without missing a beat. My Cousin Rose Lucas Provost would often sit with them in the afternoon

watching Match Game '74.

On May 23, 1978, my grandmother was walking to the kitchen area of her home and slipped on one of the throw rugs on the hardwood floor. She hit her head and the ambulance was called. She was transported to the hospital. My father, his sister, and brother met at the house with my grandfather. Within an hour of the transport, the hospital called to tell the family that my grandmother had died. After that call, the family began to discuss the situation in my grandparents' living room. My grandfather got out of his chair, walked out to the side porch area, picked a few weeds in a flowerbox and came back to the living room. He suddenly collapsed in his recliner chair. An ambulance was summoned. By the time the ambulance got to Bangor, my grandfather also died. They died a few hours apart after a marriage of nearly 59 years. A double view wake and dual funeral was held at the Baillargeon Funeral Home. My grandparents Dunn are buried in the Lawndale Cemetery in a plot between my grandfather's oldest brother Albert Dunn and my grandmother's oldest brother Phillip Tremblay. They are across the road from my great grandparents Dunn. Many more stories can be told, but these are some of my best memories.

REFERENCES:

- The History and Genealogy of Greenbush, Maine by Eleanor Crouch and Joyce Sanborn May 2001
- Greenbush, Maine A Historical Sketch by James Rollins July
- 1984 Marriages of St. Joseph's Catholic Church Old Town, Maine 1860-1960 By Robert E. Chenard

**We would enjoy sharing
your story with
Newsletter readers.**

**Please email us at
oldtownmuseum@gmail.com**

**MUSEUM
BOARD OF
DIRECTORS**

- Eisso Atzema
- Joe Ayotte
- Barbara Connors
- Pamela Dorr
- Robert Dorr
- Philip Dunn,
- Carol May,
- Cassandra Pool,
- Bill Osborne
- Carolyn Smith
- Robert Stanley
- Tiffany Tibbits
- David Wight

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State and Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail: _____

OLD TOWN MUSEUM
Established 1976

P.O. Box 375
 353 Main Street
 Old Town, Maine 04468

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**