

BEALS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Vol. VIII, No. 4 (Fall 2008)

“THE BOYS FROM BEALS” IS THE TOPIC OF THE SEPTEMBER BEALS HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROGRAM MEETING

The Beals Historical Society program meeting will be held at the Beals Elementary School September 15th at 7PM. The meeting will be conducted by Kenneth Theobald.

Kenneth Theobald, of Brooks, Maine, was born in Bar Harbor and graduated from Ellsworth High School in 1961. As an entrepreneur, he has been involved in many start-up Maine businesses, either as an owner or consultant. Currently, he and his family (son Skip and daughter Dorie) operate Lexington Outdoors, Inc, which manufactures and distributes a collection of products that are unique to Maine. One of his favorite businesses is Maine Grilling Woods, which is a line of locally harvested wood for the BBQ and restaurant markets that is sold nationally through retailers and foodservice distributors. Another favorite is Ol' Time Woodsman Flydope. Several years ago, Ken purchased the original formula and creative rights to this unique product, which was originally produced for the logging camps in Maine in 1882. The family business has revived this historic product, which is now being sold throughout the US.

Mr. Theobald has always had a keen interest in Maine stories that are truly unique and inspirational, especially those that reflect the power of the human spirit to overcome great adversities on the road to success. One of these stories is the legend of the Beals Island boys basketball program. Ken grew up hearing the stories of the boys from Beals, with their legendary practices in rubber boots, the late night lobster boat ferry rides in the dead of winter and their indomitable fighting spirit. Since that time, he has always wanted to pay tribute to this phenomenon of spirit that captured the imagination of Downeast Maine and an entire State.

Ken presently has two “works in progress” which he hopes to have completed within the next year. The first is, “THE BOYS FROM BEALS” which is intended to be a non-fictional account and pictorial of the boy’s basketball team from 1948 through the turn of the century. The second project is a fictional novel based on the true story of the 1951 and 1952 State Champions who were the cornerstones of the Beals/Jonesport-Beals basketball dynasties that followed. The preliminary title of the novel is “THE HERRING CHOKERS” which along with the inspiring story of those championship teams, it is also a commentary on some of the local prejudices that the boys faced and overcame during those times.

The Society wishes to invite ALL those with basketball memories to attend. Besides the information Mr. Theobald needs, we would like to add the memories of these all basketball events to the archives. The meeting is free and open to the public. A 50/50 will be held and light refreshments will be served.

Time and Tide Project

The Elusive *Abbie C. Stubbs* - Part I

By Daniel F. Davis

In an article entitled “Between a Rock and a Hard Place” (*Fishermen’s Voice*, 1999), author Mike Crowe reminds us of a time when “ships along the coast [of Maine] were as common as semis are along the interstate today.” He writes, “In addition to the greater number of ships, before GPS (Global Positioning System), sonar, radar and engines, the risks were considerably greater.” Thus, shipwrecks were a common occurrence. Crowe further states, “Shipwrecks along the coast of Maine are said to number in the thousands. From the arrival of cod boats nearly four centuries ago, through colonial development, revolutionary war, booming expansion of trade and fishing in the 1800’s, to the evolution of steamships and huge freighters, ships have wrecked on Maine’s rugged coast. Winds, fog, tidal currents, high seas and human error are usually the causes.”

One such wreck is that of the *Abbie C. Stubbs*, a schooner that plied the waters of the east coast for more than a half century, generally from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to New York, but sometimes beyond. The circumstances of her demise are speculative at best, the facts relating to her final days becoming more elusive with each passing generation.

This wreck is of particular interest to me, since its remains are still seen on extreme low tides off Hicks’ Head, just a short distance from my home in the Alley’s Bay district of Beals. Her resting place has been a landmark just outside the anchorage for more than sixty years. My interest is further peaked as I recall my late father, Ralph Davis, Sr., saying that it was on the wreck of the *Stubbs* he had broken his

fingers as a young boy, while salvaging wood and other items of practical use.

A “Google” search of the Internet reveals nearly a dozen references to vessels bearing similar names, which might easily be confused with the *Abbie C. Stubbs* of our quest. Given the limited information available on these sites, it is difficult to ascertain if the *Stubbs*, whose remains lie in the shallow waters of Alley’s Bay, are one and the same with ships identified as *Abby C. Stubbs*, *Abby Stubbs*, *Abbie Stubbs*, and *Abby G. Stubbs* that are referenced in the search results. It is to our advantage that some entries include the ship’s origin, year of construction, owners, captains, number of masts, and other pertinent information. In addition, they include descriptors such as “brig”, “vessel” and “schooner”, which are helpful in identifying a particular ship and tracing what may be an obscure history.

A search of the Ellis Island Foundation website reveals that a ship named *Abbie C. Stubbs* was constructed in New Haven, Connecticut in 1882. She was built for American owners, flew under the American flag, and generally traversed the coast from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to New York. She grossed 345 tons, was 130 feet in length, and 32 feet in width.

With limited information available, our quest is reduced to a game of clues. There is no indication that the *Stubbs* mentioned on the website was a sailing ship. Rather, reference is made to an onboard engine. The question that naturally presents itself is whether the engine was auxiliary in nature, or the ship’s sole source of power. An entry from 1906, however, gives us an additional clue, referring to the *Stubbs* as a “New Haven schooner”, thus pinpointing the port of construction and establishing that at least this particular *Abbie C. Stubbs* was powered by sail, and causing us to lean toward New Haven as the birthplace of our very own *Abbie C. Stubbs*. Then

again, we must not assume references to seaport cities indicate anything other than "homeport" or "hailing port".

Further complicating our search, we find another possible port of origin presents itself, dating back to July 20, 1882. It is taken from a reference to a schooner by the name *Abbie C. Stubbs* being ashore off South Yarmouth, Cape Cod. She is described as a new vessel from Bath, Maine, carrying a load of ice for Wilmington, Delaware. It is safe to conclude, therefore, that we do not know for certain, at this time, the origins of the *Abbie C. Stubbs* that rests in Alley's Bay.

Of one thing, we can be sure: Ships known by the name *Abbie C. Stubbs* lived eventful lives, and carried out a variety of valuable services to communities all along our eastern seaboard. From 1882 through 1906, we find ships bearing the name *Stubbs* carrying cargoes of ice, lumber, and pyrites, rescuing crews off sinking vessels, assisting other vessels in distress, visiting ports from Nova Scotia to Alabama and even Cuba, being involved in collisions at sea, beached on Cape Cod and the rugged shores of New Brunswick, and caught in great ocean storms and presumed lost to the sea.

One of the earliest referenced dates for the *Abbie C. Stubbs* on the Internet is found in legal documents in Massachusetts District Court, dated May 3 and May 9, 1886, indicating that our vessel of interest may have been involved in a serious collision with another ship off the coast of Massachusetts in 1885.

There was little disagreement between the parties involved, including W.W. Dodge, captain of the *Stubbs* at the time, as to the material and controlling facts of the case. The collision happened about midnight between the fifteenth and sixteenth of July, 1885 (the Court established the date as July 15), near the whistling-buoy, five miles off Monomoy [Island] Beach. The 243-foot steam-collier *Perkiomen*, built in 1874 and belonging to the Reading Railroad, was on a voyage from Port Richmond to Boston, traveling north by east, with a full cargo of 1232 tons of coal. She was traveling at a speed of seven knots, the whistling-buoy having just passed her starboard side. The schooner *Stubbs*, of 328 tons, was on a voyage from Boston to New Bedford, with a partial cargo of pyrites, traveling south at four knots.

In the immediate vicinity of the schooner, and inshore from her, the atmosphere was clear. Chatham, Monomoy, and Shovelful lights could be seen distinctly, but offshore to the southward, extending over the shoals and the track of the steamer, there hung a low fog or mist, which shut out from the schooner Pollock Rip Light and the sidelights of the steamer, and also shut from the steamer the sidelights of the schooner. Since the fog bank hung close to the surface of the water, only the steamer's masthead light was visible to the schooner, that being some twenty minutes before the collision.

As a result of the collision, the *Perkiomen* was sunk and subsequently blown up by the government, having been determined an obstruction to navigation. The *Abbie C. Stubbs* struck the *Perkiomen* so hard on the port side that it tore off the steamer's smokestack and main mast. The crew of the *Perkiomen* abandoned ship and no lives were lost. The *Abbie C. Stubbs*' bow was crushed, and the vessel so severely damaged that she was run ashore on Monomoy Beach to keep her from sinking. After part of her cargo was thrown overboard, she was later removed from the beach by a tug and towed to New Bedford, her port of destination, where she delivered what was left of her cargo, and earned freight in the amount of \$258.55.

GENEALOGY FAIR SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER

A **HUGE** Genealogy Fair will be held October 18, 2008 at the Beals Elementary School from 9AM-2PM. Genealogists from Steuben to Perry will be bringing their books, records, pictures, computers, etc. Family history for all of Washington County should be available. The meeting is free to the public. Fresh crabmeat rolls, steamed hot dogs and homemade goodies will be available for sale. Please come and learn about your family history and fill-in the gaps on your family tree.

The Court found that both ships were at fault since neither had adhered to the fog-signal prescribed by sailing rules. Since vessels are obligated to observe the fog-signal rule, not when actually enveloped in a fog, but also, when it is necessary for a ship to make its position known to another that happens to be *within* the fogbank, it was the opinion of the court that both be held liable for the consequences of the collision.

In the lawsuit resulting from the accident, the *Abbie C. Stubbs* was taken and sold for \$7,760.53 net. It appears an effort to recover damages in New York Circuit Court on October 6, 1886 failed when the petition for removal was denied.

The next mention of the *Stubbs* appears about twelve years later. An article in *The New York Times*, published April 18, 1898, makes reference to the *Abbie C. Stubbs* and offers insight into the fact that her service extended far beyond the harbors of New England and New York. In that article entitled "Conditions in Cardenas", we find her referred to as a "schooner" from Mobile, Alabama. In that account, the Norwegian steamer *Britannic* had left Cardenas, a seaport town located on the northwestern coast of Cuba (population 25,000), on April 11, 1898, and had arrived in New York on the morning of April 17, carrying fifteen passengers, among whom was Joseph L. Hance, United States Commercial Agent at Cardenas. Mr. Hance was to arrive earlier, but his departure from Cuba had been delayed for several days "owing to the presence in port of the lumber-laden American schooner *Abbie C. Stubbs*, from Mobile. The schooner's papers being in good shape and there being no apparent danger to the vessel while in port, Mr. Hance finally took his departure without waiting for the schooner to leave port."

There is every reason to believe that the *Abbie C. Stubbs* cited in the foregoing articles, dating back to 1885 and 1898, is the same *Abbie C. Stubbs* that frequented the shores of Moosabec Reach and found her final resting place on the mud banks of Alley's Bay more than thirty years later.

The final entry of our Google search states that the fate of the *Abbie C. Stubbs* was unknown as of 1925. In the second part of this article, we will offer evidence to the contrary and conclude our story with some personal and second-hand recollections of the events leading up to her grounding and eventual loss.

We welcome any information that you can offer regarding the *Abbie C. Stubbs*, to be included in Part II of this article. You may contact us at the following: Daniel F. Davis, PO Box 22, Beals, ME 04611, Tel. 207-497-5958 or Carol Davis at cfddavis44@yahoo.com



Note: Special thanks go to Isaac and Eva Beal of Beals for providing the photo of the *Abbie C. Stubbs*, taken by Muriel Kelley, also of Beals.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!!

The BHS woodcut collectible price is being reduced from \$18.00 to \$12.00. The woodcuts are available while supplies last at the Beals Town Office or contact Carol at 497-2675 or cfddavis44@yahoo.com.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Currently the membership roll consists of 112 renewals and 1 new member. BHS wishes to welcome new member Nancy Buck of Manitoba Canada. Nancy is a descendant of Clement Smith Beal.