

WILSON MUSEUM BULLETIN

Autumn 2017

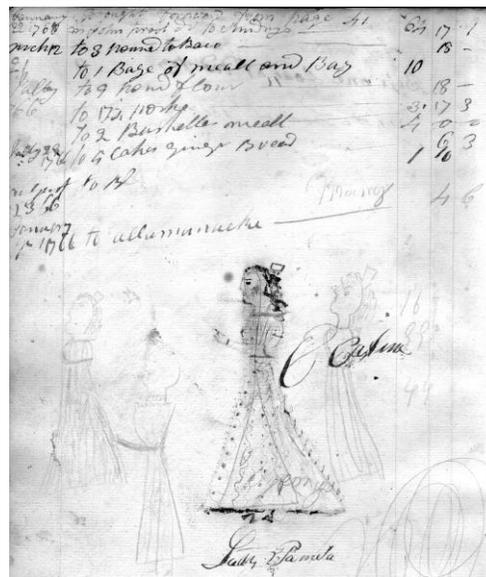
Vol. 5, No. 16

1762 Trader: Capt. Wescutt's Ledger

By Mark E. Honey

MISSION

Building on the legacy of its founding family, the Wilson Museum uses its diverse collections and resources to provide learning experiences to stimulate exploration of the history and cultures of the Penobscot Bay region and world.



In August, Professor Liam Riordan led a workshop at the Wilson Museum's Hutchins Education Center entitled *The American Revolution in a Contested Borderland: Penobscot Bay & Eastward* in collaboration with the Friends of Castine Fortifications. Its purpose was to gather together aficionados of the time period to discuss the holdings of local repositories with the goal of bringing to light new or little-known primary sources from the era surrounding the American

Revolution. The focus of the event was on Loyalist sources.

The Wilson Museum is fortunate to have Captain William Wescutt's Ledger in its collection donated by C. Russell and Jean Devereux. This is a ledger kept by Wescutt, a merchant and trader (though not a Loyalist), with entries as early as 1763. Over the 254 years of its existence, other family members also made business entries in the ledger as well as recorded family births, marriages, and deaths, and even a few doodles.

Historian Mark Honey found the ledger of immense value and a treasure trove informing the times. The following is a slightly edited version of a two-part article Mark wrote for his column "Before the Mast" in the July 17 and 24, 2003 editions of the papers of the Penobscot Bay Press. The reader will note that Mark used the modern spelling of Wescott in his article, however, the original ledger uses the Wescutt spelling throughout.

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In the early years of settlement there was no such thing as established communities. Settlers reached out to one another, often from a great distance, and always from isolation. Settlers at Sedgwick, Penobscot, or Deer Isle looked to one another for support and assistance, establishing a maritime community confined only by the distant horizon.

Traders were an important part of this early community, purchasing items produced, manufactured, or harvested from the land, and in return, offering goods that could not be produced on the land. Many items were taken in on barter, though some were paid for by British pounds, pennies, or shillings. Customers kept accounts and were often carried for months at a time. The bill could be settled by cash or the trader could simply ask for payment by hay, shingles, dried fish, or even labor.

William Wescott was one such trader. He was born in York on March 10, 1734. He married Elizabeth Perkins at Wells on December 29, 1756. She was the daughter of John Perkins and Elizabeth Pierce, and many of her siblings would eventually be found living in Penobscot.

Wescott settled at what is now North Castine. His descendants would later build at least two homes on his old homestead, which are still standing today. Capt. Wescott probably built his first home near the Bagaduce River, complete with his own wharf. His farm was also the site of an artillery battery during the Revolution, and in a strange twist of fate, he may have occupied the same property once owned and occupied by Baron de St. Castin.

Wescott was living at "Majabagaduce" as early as 1762, though the earliest date in his ledger is February 20, 1763. Wescott was perhaps the first trader on the Bagaduce, providing we do not include Castin and others from the 17th and early 18th centuries. As such, we have at least three different places of trade for the early settlers, first at Fort Pownal on Cape Jellison, begun in 1759, second at Wescott's on the Bagaduce, and third at Shadrach Watson's at Naskeag.

There may have been other traders, but these are the earliest known to me in the years prior to 1765. Settlers in all of the earliest communities of Hancock County, from Penobscot to Blue Hill and beyond, were familiar with these men and their establishments. Fort Pownal may well have had a building dedicated to the purpose of trade and barter, but it is likely that Wescott and Watson stored most of their goods in their own homes.



The George Wescott home is one of the homes mentioned in the article. George was the grandson of William Wescott. The house was started in 1800, but wasn't finished until many years later because of the 1807 Embargo. As George was born in 1809, this house was probably built by his father.

Board Members Elected at 2017 Annual Meeting

On September 26, 2017, the Board of Trustees met for its Annual Meeting and election of officers and Board members (see side bar for complete list). Officers elected for a one-year term:

President Temple Blackwood ♦ *Vice President* Robert Downes
Treasurer Donald Small ♦ *Secretary* John Macdonald.

Four Trustees were re-elected to three-year terms, Temple Blackwood for his third term, Robert Downes for his second term, Jeanmarie Reed for her third term and Johanna Sweet for her second term.

One of the critical components of a trader's enterprise was a vessel, suitable for trips to Boston or the West Indies. Wescott appears to have had a sloop named the Frankeforte. The vessel carried goods of local flour, cloth, molasses, meal, tobacco, iron work of all kinds, crockery and ducke (canvas). The West Indies also provided a market for dried fish, shingles and timber, and in return, provided molasses, sugar and rum. A trader's vessel also served to carry passengers from place to place.

A store ledger is more than just a record of trade, debt and barter. It is an historical document that sheds light on a particular time in history. Historical documents written prior to 1780 in Hancock County are rare. These early documents give us a limited window from which to view settlement in embryo, particularly in those critical years prior to the American Revolution.

Capt. William Wescott's ledger documents the foundations of early trade and commerce, the names of many of the early settlers, the stark simplicity of life on the frontier, and the understanding that the early pioneers were not completely isolated from their former homes or the major population centers of their day. Wescott's ledger also served as a record for his own family, listing names and dates for his children. In short, this ledger is the first document to record the history of Penobscot, and by extension, the future communities of Castine and Brooksville.

Settlers, by necessity, lived by their wits, learning to make do with what they had. The ledger reveals the importance of handmade spruce shingles in the local economy, which often served as a form of currency. One settler sold 13,000 shingles to Wescott, another 7,000. The shingles were all manufactured by hand, using an axe, a wooden mallet, and a froe. Ready markets for these could be found in the growing settlements around

Boston. Oak and pine logs were also taken in trade, labor was exchanged, and oxen were hired to clear the land or till the soil.

Jeremiah Springer provided 7¼ days of labor in 1765 and was credited for 3 pounds and 15 pence for his efforts. His son was also hired out to work on Wescott's sloop, being paid 2 pounds for planing the hull. Springer also sold 47½ cords of wood for 95 pounds, and 7,000 shingles for 21 pounds.

It is easy for us to simply read the figures and move on, not contemplating the incredible amount of work and time involved in manufacturing these products with nothing more than simple tools, brute strength, and determined discipline.

John Grindle purchased ducke, meal, molasses, rum, tobacco, port, knives (sic), and flax on November 23, 1765, a typical range of products provided by Wescott. In later years, Joseph Wescott, the son of Capt. William, was employed by Dr. Oliver Mann, working with his oxen in some capacity. James Leach worked for eight days to frame a house, and subsequently purchased 3 pounds sugar, one handkerchief, and one under-waistcoat.

Rum was a popular item, by the mug or the jug, indicating, perhaps, that Wescott's trading post also served as the local watering hole, and by extension, the focal point for news, information and gossip. His emporium was located just south of a natural crossing which would be used in future years by the Castine/Brooksville Ferry. Travelers from Northern and Southern Bays, the Penobscot River, and the islands of Penobscot Bay used these local waters as highways for commerce, communication and settlement. Fort Pownal, Wescott's and Watson's were known destinations to these travelers, serving as beacons of hospitality and trade in a world still ruled by thick forest, strong tides, and dark and silent nights.

(continued on page 6)

Item	Price
to 1 pound flat	5 0 0
to 1 mug toby	5 7 6
to 1 quantity fish	5 5 0
to 1 bus hull meall	1 18 0
to 1 pound ducke	0 10 0
to 2 mugs of clif	1 12 6
to 1 gallon rum	
to 1 pound of toby to 1 bushell meall	8 6 6
to 4 1/2 of toby meall	2 12 6
to 3 gallons meall	3 0 0
to 2 gallons sugar	0 16 3
to 2 mugs toby	0 10 0
to 1 mug toby	7 1 0
to 1 mug Brought forward	1 18 0
to 1 gallon meall one mug sampson	19 0 0
to 1 mug toby	2 6 0
to 2 gallons meall one mug drinke	2 6 0
to 2 gallons meall one mug	2 17 0
to 36 pound fish	8 5 4
to 10 1/2 pound fish	0 10 0
to 1 gallon sugar	1 5 0
to 1 gallon meall 6 bushell	0 10 0
to 1 gallon meall	1 6 0
to 3 pound fish	72 10 0

2017 Summer Programs



Food



Nature



Collaborations



History



Collecting Castine 2017 Fundraising Event

Thank you to everyone who made it a success!

For the second year in a row, an exciting evening of outstanding support for the Castine art community as well as the Wilson Museum was enjoyed by over 48 generous donors, 19 artists, and two Fitz-Gerald family members honoring Clark (1917-2004) and his wife, Elizabeth "Liddy" (1927-2016) Fitz-Gerald. Both husband and wife were accomplished artists and active participants in the Castine community.

Attendees enjoyed delicious hors d'oeuvres with cocktails, viewed an exceptional exhibit of original artwork, mingled with the artists and cast their votes for a work of art which the Wilson Museum then purchased for its permanent collection. We are pleased to announce that the 2017 People's Choice was *Fitz-Gerald Studio* by Joshua Adam.

Following the People's Choice selection, all other artwork was available for purchase by attendees via a silent auction. This was a fast-paced, fun process with a third of the artwork going home with excited buyers.

Collecting Castine was made possible by the talent and creativity of the artists, the generosity of the donors, and dedication of the Museum's Board, staff and volunteers. Thank you to Carl Little for writing the forward to the catalog. Also, a hearty thank you goes to MarKel's for supplying and manning the bar.

The Museum encourages everyone to visit the galleries in town to continue to enjoy Castine's vibrant art community.

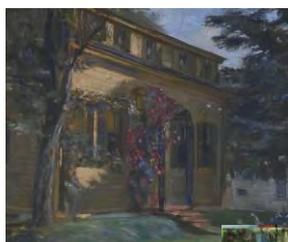
Proceeds from the event's commissions and donations will be used to grow and maintain the Museum's collection and the event. Plans are already underway for *Collecting Castine 2018*. Mark your calendar for August 6, 2018, and come out to support the art and museum community in Castine and have a wonderful time doing it!



People's Choice winner Joshua Adam with Executive Director Patty Hutchins.



Leah & Stephen, children of Clark Fitz-Gerald.



Before

A portion of the proceeds from last year's *Collecting Castine* was used to clean and conserve two paintings. These depict the house on Perkins Street that is now the Museum's administrative office. The work was done by Domenico and Bonnie Mattozzi from The Maine Project for Fine Art Conservation in Portland.



Before



After



After

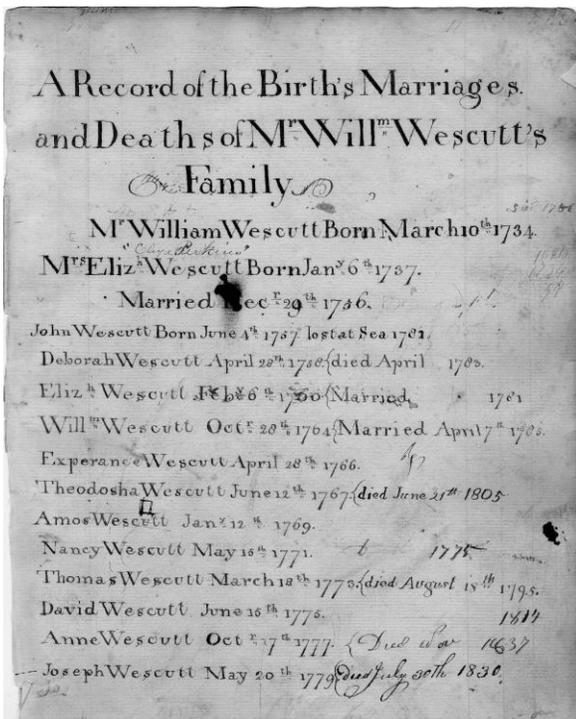
(continued from page 3)

Some of the early settlers listed were John Backman [Bakeman], John More, Jonathan Stover, Daniell Blacke, David Joy, Luxford Goodwin, John Smart, and John Grindle in 1765; Jeremiah Veasey, Daniel Wardwell in 1766; Joseph Lowell in 1768, John Nutting in 1769; and Elijah Winslow on January 8, 1771. Archaballe Haney, September 1765; Aron Bankes, March 4, 1766; John Daly, June 8, 1766; and Thomas Binney, May 1775, are names recognizable to those of us who have spent years working on local family history. Most of the men mentioned here would establish permanent roots in the communities of Penobscot, Castine and Brooksville, raising families who finished the work of establishing communities along the Bagaduce.

There are other names mentioned in these pages, and other records of trade and barter. They are simple lists of activities and responsibilities performed by men who lived in a far distant age. Their forgotten

hardships, cares, disappointments and achievements mean little to us now, but these were important milestones in the progress of community. Frontier life was not just something experienced by Hollywood's version of the Wild West, but a real life experience lived by those hardy settlers who chose to create a home, and a way of life, along the rivers and bays of downeast Maine. Life was not defined by heroic characters of blazing guns, but by ordinary men and women who lived simple and incredibly difficult lives.

We often spurn the ordinary and mundane for the dramatic – it is how our culture has trained us – but the simple understanding of life on the Bagaduce prior to 1776 can only be found in the letters, documents and ledgers which have survived to this day. Capt. William Wescott's ledger is of supreme importance to our understanding of those frontier years, revealing fragments of life and providing new ways of understanding the foundations of community.



A beautiful hand lettered page from William Wescott's ledger (transcribed to the right) lists his family and their important dates. Note that even family members were not always certain of marriage and death dates.

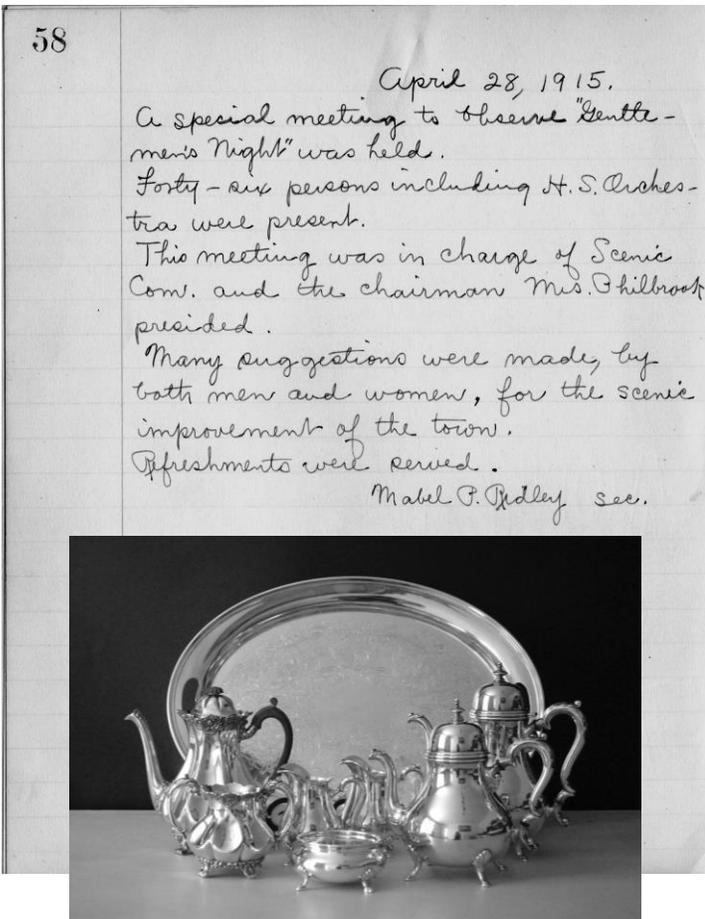
A Record of the Birth's Marriage's
and Deaths of M^r Will^m Wescott's
Family
M^r William Wescott Born March 10th 1734.
M^{rs} Eliz^h Wescott Born Jan^y 6th 1737.
Married Dec^r 29th 1756.
John Wescott Born June 4th 1757. lost at Sea 1781.
Deborah Wescott April 28th 1758. died April 1783.
Eliz^h Wescott Feb^y 6th 1760. Married 1781.
Will^m Wescott Oct^r 28th 1764. Married April 7th 1785.
Experance Wescott April 28th 1766.
Theodosha Wescott June 12th 1767. died June 21th 1805.
Amos Wescott Jan^y 12th 1769.
Nancy Wescott May 15th 1771. 1775
Thomas Wescott March 18th 1773. died August 18th 1795.
David Wescott June 15th 1775. 1814
Anne Wescott Oct^r 17th 1777. Died Nov 1837
Joseph Wescott May 20th 1779. Died July 30th 1830

Collections Conversations

Abby Dunham, Collections Manager

Founded in 1913, the Castine Woman's Club has long been an active and dedicated arm of the Castine community. At a meeting on May 2, 2017, the members of the Club "... voted to pass the Castine Woman's Club Minutes, Scrapbooks, etc. over to The Wilson Museum." The collection given to the Museum spans the long history of the Club, beginning with its first volume of minutes through to a scrapbook that has pictures from programs earlier this year. This gift recognizes the importance of the records kept by the Castine Woman's Club to the wider community and secures a permanent place for these records as a resource for future generations. Included among the Club materials are books of minutes, photographs, membership lists, and information on community service projects.

The ties between the Castine Woman's Club and the Wilson Museum stretch back to Club members Georgia Wilson and Ellenore Wilson Doudiet (wife and daughter respectively of Museum founder John Howard Wilson). The Wilsons gave some family silver to the Club for its tea service; the service is still



regularly used at their annual meetings, which are hosted at the Museum. Currently, the Club and Museum co-host several public programs throughout the year.

Through reading the minutes, we can learn a wide variety of things including the involvement of the Club in a variety of charitable projects, speakers brought to town for programs, and even the lunch menu at some meetings. The Club has always concerned itself with the well-being of local children and education for all ages. This is evident from the first annual meeting where there was discussion of how to end the custom of a single common drinking cup in a school building and the need for there to be more children's books in the library. Minutes from later meetings show follow up on these concerns and continuing involvement in such projects. In recent years, some of the Club's most visible and recognized activities have focused on raising funds for college scholarships available to local students. Other charitable projects during the Club's history have ranged from local civic projects to international aid and relief.

While the minutes alone are a wealth of information, the photographs, newspaper clippings, and handwritten correspondence and thank you cards demonstrate the great vitality of the Club's past. The Wilson Museum, now steward of the Club's more than 100 year old past, looks forward to many more years of collaboration with the Castine Woman's Club.



IN MEMORIAM

We remember the following members of the Wilson Museum who believed in the Museum's mission and gave of themselves to further its outreach.

Their legacy will live on.

Solveig Cox
1931-2017

Isabel Crain
1922-2017

Faith Davis
1936-2017

Robert Hall
1927-2017

William Jackson
1925-2017

Additionally, the Wilson Museum has recently received generous donations in memory of the following members:

Faith Davis
Marion & Arnold Wyman

WILSON MUSEUM
P.O. Box 196
Castine, ME 04421

WILSON MUSEUM

May 27-September 30
Weekdays 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Saturdays & Sundays 2-5 p.m.

JOHN PERKINS HOUSE

July & August
Wednesdays & Sundays
Hour-long tours at 2, 3 & 4 p.m.

**THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH
& WOODSHOP**

July & August
Wednesdays & Sundays 2-5 p.m.

BAGADUCE ENGINE CO.

May 27-September 30
Same hours as Wilson Museum

Volunteer Heroes

Talk about dedication! A project to build an outdoor bake oven went from a two-day project to one lasting for more than a week. While lots of people stopped by to check on the progress, Bob & Julie Andrews from Belfast and John Campbell from Dedham were here every day doing the heavy lifting and mixing needed to see the project through to its tasty conclusion.



Thank you!

