

WILSON MUSEUM BULLETIN

Spring 2019

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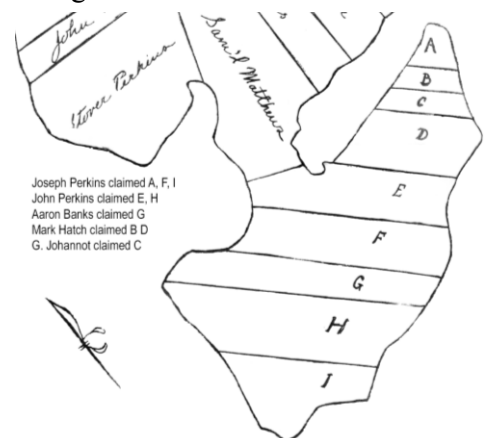
Quality Avenue



The Joseph Perkins home on upper Main Street.

One runs headlong into history on every street corner in Castine, none more so than Main Street. This broad avenue with overarching elms and stately homes elicits a nostalgia for an era when Victorian ladies and gentlemen strolled wooden-planked sidewalks down over the hill to the business district and the harbor beyond. Yet, the origin of upper Main Street dates back 100 years earlier to the time of the American Revolution.

On June 17, 1779, a small British fleet sailed into Penobscot Bay and anchored in Majabigwaduce Harbor. Soldiers went ashore, landing at what is now the foot of Main Street, near the home of Joseph and Phebe Perkins, then one of the few houses on the peninsula. About ten years earlier Joseph and Phebe had come here to live, buying a large tract of land extending from the Harbor across the peninsula to what is now called Wadsworth Cove, and from the center of the present Common on the east to somewhat west of the present Pleasant Street. Joseph's cousins, John & Phebe Perkins and Aaron & Mary Banks, owned neighboring lots. In fact the Perkins and their extended family seemed to own nearly the whole peninsula.



Survey by John Peters.

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.

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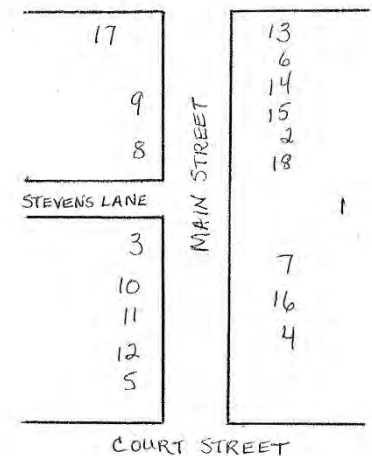
June 17 was a day long remembered in the Joseph Perkins family. Not only did the British land near their home, but a daughter arrived, their fifth child, and the first to be born in the new home in the wilderness. Phebe was, no doubt, attended by Dr. Calef, an ambitious Loyalist who had recently come from Ipswich, Massachusetts. The baby was named for Dr. Calef's wife, Dorothy, who remained in Ipswich with their children.

The next day a British force marched up the hill and camped on top, in the open space where the golf course and club house are now. Trees were cut and a road made between the Perkins farm and the site of a fort so that material could be dragged up the hill, and thus began Main Street. Soon the building of Fort George commenced. Men and boys from miles around, Loyalist and Rebel alike, were forced to work for the British. When the war was over, the British remained for some time waiting to surrender the Fort. But, as no American force arrived, in January 1784 the barracks were burned and the soldiers and Loyalists sailed for New Brunswick.

It was then that Joseph Perkins built a large home (1) up the hill and to the east of the road from the shore to the Fort. This was the first home on upper Main Street, beginning the transition from military road to residential. As Fort George was built on Joseph Perkins's land he took bricks from it for his chimneys (and perhaps to sell to others). Nothing but a photograph remains of his house; it burned between 1882 and 1900 (page 1).

About twenty years after Joseph and Phebe moved to upper Main Street, three beautiful Federal homes were built there. They are still standing, though one has greatly changed from its original appearance. The first of these is a very handsome brick house (2) with clapboard front, built by Daniel Johnston when he married Temperance Perkins, daughter of John Perkins, Joseph's cousin.

The second home (3), which was built about 1805, was the first on the west side of upper Main Street. It was probably built by Davis or Nathaniel Willson of North Castine for Mason Shaw, Justice of the Peace, when Castine was shire town of the county. In 1811 the John Brooks family (John's wife Phebe was the daughter of Joseph Perkins) were living in the house. 1811 was a memorable year for John and Phebe Brooks's four-year-old son, Joseph. His uncle Rufus was drowned August 11 in Parker Cove, Islesboro, and young Joseph could look across the street to grandfather Joseph Perkins's house and extensive yard. Many years later he wrote "...I could see the procession form in Grandfather's yard and see them spread the pall over the coffin; there were no trees in the way to obstruct the sight; - it was the first funeral I ever held..." In 1821 the house was purchased by Joseph L. Stevens, a young physician who had moved to Castine over a year earlier. In July of 182 Dr. Stevens married Joseph Perkins's grandchild, Dorothy Little. Dorothy



Photograph of painting done by Fitz Henry Lane of the Stevens house.

was the daughter and namesake of that Dorothy who was born the day the first British occupation forces landed. For sixty years Dr. Stevens was active in the community, and the family occupied this house. The artist Fitz Henry Lane visited here in the 1850s, a painting he made shows a large square-frame house with a luxurious garden.

The third home (4) was built in 1807 by Joseph's son Ebenezer Perkins when he married Mehitable Littlefield. This, like the Johnston house, was a large square home still little changed. Ebenezer, a captain since age nineteen, led an adventurous life which included having his ship burned by the British, being captured by pirates and subsequently rescued from a barren island. In 1827 he died at his home in Castine. In 1828 the home was purchased by William Witherle for the price of \$35 paid monthly to Ebenezer's widow until her death, which occurred in 1857. As a girl of sixteen, William Witherle's wife, Sarah Bryant Witherle, had watched the house being built. It would remain in the Witherle family until the middle of the twentieth century.

These four houses were probably the only ones standing on upper Main Street when the British again occupied Castine during the winter of 1814-1815. No doubt officers were quartered in each of them, as they were in all the larger homes throughout the town. And again, there were soldiers marching up the street.

In 1828-29 a church (5) was built below the Shaw-Stevens house. In 1848 this Main Street church, known as "the fancy church" or "the Orthodox church" was enlarged to provide space for fourteen slips (pews). Twenty years later it was raised and the tower rebuilt to appear as it does now.

Samuel Adams built his home (6) around the 1830s near the corner of Main Street and Battle Avenue. Mr. Adams was a deacon in "the fancy church" and, after his death, the house was sold to the church for use as a parsonage. His daughter Sara married William H. Witherle, elder son of William and Sarah Bryant Witherle, and they lived in "a pretty story and a half house." (7) This is said to have been built by Robert McFarland (a blacksmith and constable) but the exact date is unknown. Some years after Sara died, W.H. Witherle married Jane

Russell Cate and remodeled the house, making a much larger one.

In the late 1840s and early 1850s a number of houses were built, most by members of the Jarvis family. J.H. Jarvis had six sons and one daughter: John, William, Frederic, Francis, George, Jackson and Rebecca. J.H. Jarvis had a shipyard on Perkins Street and his sons John and William carried on the business after his death. Francis Jarvis was a ship master and captain of the *Osterval*, a ship built in the Jarvis shipyard. Fred, Will and John had a business on Water Street. Fred built the house just above the Shaw-Stevens house (8) and Frank just above him (9). John built the house immediately below the Shaw-Stevens home (10). The Jarvis houses were all "built like a ship's galley – the rooms strung along in a row."

Below these on the same side of the street is the home built for Captain Moses Gay (11) who, while on a voyage, wrote his brother to "start me a house on Main Street with doors high and wide enough for me to pass through easily." Moses Gay was a large man who was married to Phebe Perkins, daughter of Joseph's cousin John.

Between the Gay house and the church is the home (12) built for John Dresser and his wife Mary, a daughter of Samuel Adams. Her sister Sara Witherle lived across the street. John Dresser started a rope business and his son John W. Dresser continued the business. The house later became the home of Dr. Harrison Webster and was a small hospital. Dr. Webster is said to have swum across the Bagaduce River to reach a patient, there being no boat available. He volunteered for service in World War I and was killed in action.

On the east side, at the head of the street, is a house (13) built by Charles E. Jarvis. It was the home of Isaac Hutchinson, master of the ship *John Perkins* in 1852.

Below the home of Samuel Adams (6) are two houses thought to have been built by Frederic A. Jarvis who bought the land and sold part of it in 1847 to his brother-in-law Isaiah Wescott (14). Captain Wescott was the master of the ship *William Witherle* built in Castine in 1851 at a cost of over \$46,000.

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*Postcard of upper Main Street
published by G.W. Morris.*

Education Happenings - Haley Griffin

My first year as Education Coordinator has been busy and exciting as I have learned about and taught a wide variety of subjects and met wonderful teachers, children, and families.

Home & Away brought 41 home schooling families to a new monthly program featuring Maine history and local field trips.

Life Was Better at the Lake February Day Camp was inspired by the Museum's exhibit on the Swiss Lake Dwellers, a people who lived 7,000 years ago. Students experienced aspects of this ancient life-style from crafting pine bark baskets to making sparks fly with a bow drill!

Castine Products gave Adams School 3rd and 4th graders a taste of nineteenth century Castine industries and trades through making rope, labelling cans, assembling a timber-frame model of the Perkins House, and, best of all, making hand-cranked chocolate ice cream.

Maine during the Civil War, requested by Mirus Academy of Ellsworth, featured the lives of Civil War soldiers, Maine's involvement in battle, Mainers' relations with their southern neighbors, the roles of women, and the War's impact on Maine's economy.

Blacksmithing programs, an exclusive night tour of the Museum, and a friendly game of croquet enticed students from Maine Maritime Academy to visit.



The fun will continue into the summer! In addition to the Wilson Museum's great exhibits, be sure to visit the Museum's sun porch for an innovative activity similar to an Escape Room. There will be pop-up activities around campus such as rope-making and paper-making, in addition to everyone's favorite regular programs of blacksmithing, woodturning, and boatbuilding.



Champion: Logan Leach (Brooksville)
2nd Place: Emery Leach (Brooksville)
3rd Place: Annelise Small (Castine)

And the Winner Is...!

The seventh annual Maja Trivia Tournament of Champions was held June 5 at the Hutchins Education Center. Finalists from each school competed with support from a standing-room-only crowd, consisting of classmates, family, and community members. Wilson Museum's Director Patricia Hutchins facilitated the game.

Additionally, the Wilson Museum provided a delicious cookout for everyone. Chefs for the day were Temple Blackwood, Jan Ordway, and David Wyman. The Castine Garden Club provided a veggie platter, while the Castine Woman's Club provided homemade cookies.

Guest Exhibit



Visions: From the Mind of Robert K. Kufrovich

Artist, beader, and woodcarver Rob Kufrovich takes inspiration from Tupelo Bog Wood, mainly the root wood of tupelo trees that grow in America's southeastern swamps. This talented artist's work will be on display all summer in the Museum's main hall.

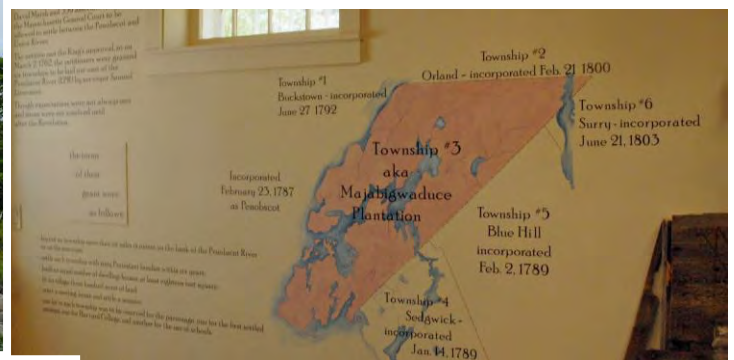
For new works of art by local artists, don't miss the *Collecting Castine 2019* fundraising event on August 5. Contact the Museum for more information.



New Path

Meander down to the harborside level of the Perkins House.

Building a Community in Township #3



New Exhibit

We have been busily creating a new exhibit to tell the story of how the Township #3 community was built by the earliest families using ingenuity, tools, and sweat equity.



National Register of Historic Places

Fifty years ago the Perkins House was honored with this distinction. Finally, we will have a plaque!



Expanded Museum Store

There are new and exciting treasures here by which to remember your Museum experience.

Perkins Family Reunion June 29 (1- 4 p.m.)

The afternoon's activities will include tours of the historic home with family portraits and memorabilia displayed, donuts cooked over the fire, and more!



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Frederic Jarvis later sold the rest of the land to Mark Lufkin, also a ship master (15). These two houses are very similar, though Noah Brooks who bought the upper one in 1893 added a wing to his. Noah Brooks, author and journalist, was a grandson of Joseph and Phebe Perkins.

The house between the two Witherles (16) was built for F.A. Hooke, one of the two Customs Inspectors of the town. His first wife, Sarah Witherle Hooke, died in 1865, and Mr. Hooke later married Lucy, daughter of Dr. Bridgham.

While the names mentioned may be of little interest to the casual reader, it is interesting to note that, for the most part, they were all related, sometimes several times over. This complicated web of family and community is often the basis of a nostalgic resistance to change.

However, things were changing. The Civil War and embargo brought the period of affluence to an end. In 1872 the first building (17) of the Normal School (a teacher training school) was erected. The plans for this building were drawn by Alfred Adams who had wanted to be an architect but whose father Samuel (6)

insisted he enter the family business. Soon town residents were taking “Normal” boarders or roomers. The lovely Shaw-Stevens house received a pseudo-mansard roof to increase the space for rentable rooms.

Twenty or more years later a home (18) for William A. and Caroline Perkins Walker was built near the foundation of Joseph and Phebe Perkins home. Mrs. Walker was a descendant of Joseph’s cousin, John, and was brought up in the John & Phebe Perkins House on Court Street, now restored on the grounds of the Wilson Museum.

In the 1890s a stage driver called Main Street “Quality Avenue” and added “We poor mortals live in Pucker Row.” Since then the street has changed little

in appearance though its residents have changed. Then, at the back of these houses were gardens, barns and pastures, at the front, a quiet road and plank sidewalks. The following quote, from an unknown source, appeals to the nostalgic quality of Castine, “As the days shortened so that sunset came about 7 p.m. a veritable procession walked up Main and

Pleasant Streets after supper -. What for? Why just to stand on Fort George and see the sunset.” Today, Main Street is still a very pleasant evening stroll.



Postcard showing upper Main Street published by W.A. Walker.

A Gathering of Traditional Small Boats

The Downeast Chapter of the Traditional Small Craft Association is pleased to sponsor the dedication of the Wilson Museum's new Antique Boat Exhibit and Boat Shop on July 3, 2019, beginning mid-morning. The Chapter will bring their own boats to show, making this a great opportunity to see a wide variety of small boats and chat with their knowledgeable and enthusiastic owners.

At 11 a.m. Penobscot Marine Museum Curator Ben Fuller will give a talk about small peapods. The aromas from the outdoor bake oven will entice attendees across the street at noon to sample Museum-made bean-hole beans, pulled pork, blueberry buckle, as well as a variety of smoked fish (mackerel, alewives, or smelts) from the Downeast Salmon Federation's smoker. At 2 p.m. take part in the Exhibit

and Boat Shop ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony followed by Tom Jackson, Senior Editor for WoodenBoat, giving a talk about the current uses of traditional small craft. Then, to top it off, there will be a showing of the WoodenBoat video *The 2015 Small Reach Regatta* provided by Small Reach Regatta.

This event is free and open to the public! It's a boat-enthusiast's dream day ÷ don't miss it!



Drawing by Steve Brookman.

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. We are saddened by the length of this list.

Their legacy will live on.

Arthur Bruce Boenau

1926-2019

James Bower

1937-2018

Robert Dick

1921-2019

Harry Kaiserian

1938-2019

Wendy Knickerbocker

1948 - 2019

Lawrence Mutty

1934-2019

Leah Sample

1923-2019

Mark Saunders

1966 - 2019

David Unger

1932-2019

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

Doris A. & Philip L. Garland

Marcia Hutchins

Harry Kaiserian

James & Betty Knott

Alice Trowbridge

Harry Kaiserian (1938-2019)

The Wilson Museum and, indeed, the whole Castine community lost a good friend on February 20, 2019 in the passing of Harry Kaiserian. Not only was he active on the boards of many local organizations such as the Friends of the Witherle Memorial Library, the Bagaduce Ambulance Corp, Belfast Senior College, Castine Men's Club, and the Wilson Museum, but thanks to his wide-ranging interests as well as his passion for food and cooking, he imparted his knowledge and enthusiasm to local school children and nearly every community group in town.

At the Wilson Museum, Harry began volunteering as a Council member and was quickly "promoted" to Trustee in 2007. Over the years he served as Treasurer, Vice President, President, chairman of the Finance Committee, and member of the Executive Committee and the Education Advisory Committee. He had recently been reelected to the Board following a short hiatus after serving three consecutive terms. While he actively promoted the Museum and its programs, he always strove to bring the community together whenever he could. In 2009 he secured for Castine the travelling *Abraham Lincoln: Self Made in America* exhibit that appeared in only forty venues across the country and only two in all of New England. Above and beyond securing the exhibit, he coordinated a group of community organizations to supplement the exhibit with programming that was unsurpassed and enhanced everyone's understanding and appreciation of Lincoln and his era.

His humor and stories will be missed.



Wendy Knickerbocker (1948-2019)

It is with sadness that we note the recent passing of a former colleague and active community member, Wendy Knickerbocker. Wendy loved books, so her career as a librarian and author was a labor of love. While working at the Wilson Museum, Wendy organized the Museum's library, allowing the book collection to be searchable on the Museum's database. She also skillfully indexed both Wheeler's *History of Castine* and Doudiet's *Majabigwaduce*, thus making historical research in these two references more convenient. A published author, she was awarded the Seymour Medal from the Society for American Baseball Research in 2001 for *Sunday at the Ballpark: Billy Sunday's Professional Baseball Career, 1883-1890*. Through her research Wendy was convinced that Castine's Noah Brooks wrote the first youth novel about baseball, *Fairport Nine*. Her skills and passion for history, research, and books have enlightened us and will continue to benefit the community and the wider world.



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

**WILSON MUSEUM
BAGADUCE ENGINE CO.
ANTIQUÉ BOAT EXHIBIT
PERKINS HARBORSIDE LEVEL**
Weekdays 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Saturdays & Sundays 2-5 p.m.
May 27-September 30

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

**THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH
WOOD SHOP DEMONSTRATIONS**
Wednesdays & Sundays 2-5 p.m.
July & August

Advancement Coordinator

Executive Director Patricia Hutchins is pleased to announce that Elizabeth “Liz” Solet has joined the staff of the Wilson Museum as Advancement Coordinator. This new position is focused on promoting the Museum’s programs, exhibits, and resources through fundraising efforts.



Liz has experience in marketing and communications for both nonprofits and small businesses, as well as grant writing and program management. She previously worked for the Maria Mitchell Association, the Springfield Science Museum, and most recently, the Southwest Harbor Public Library. She is excited to learn about the Museum’s collections, exhibits, programs, and the vibrant town of Castine, and looks forward to building connections within the Museum community and beyond.

~Welcome Liz ~