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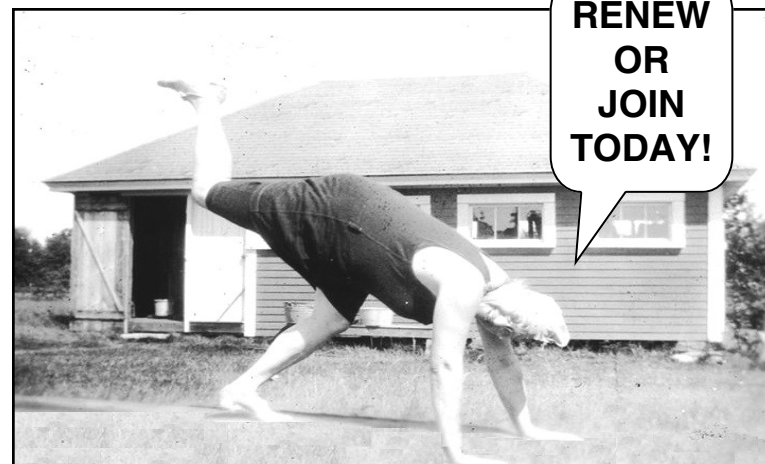
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YARMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Yarmouth History Center
Newsletter

Spring 2016

118 East Elm Street, Yarmouth, Maine

207-846-6259

The Browns of Brown's Point

Contributed by Yarmouth Historical Society member Gro Flatebo

Over the years my friend and neighbor Mary Estelle Blake shared with me pieces of the story of her and her family's life here in Yarmouth. As a writer it is impossible for me to ignore such a historically significant story. The pieces of this extraordinary story needed to be woven together so the history of the Brown family and their connection and love for the place they call Bay View Farm could be shared.

For six generations, members of the Brown family have continuously lived on Brown's Point, a stretch of land dividing the Cousins and Royal Rivers. Mary Estelle Blake, a descendant of the Browns, is a life-long Yarmouth resident with deep roots dating back to the mid-1700s. Mary Estelle's great, great, great, grandfather Moses Brown came to North Yarmouth and bought farmland from William Royall, but no records of that sale can be found. Moses Brown built a house in the area of what is now the Brown's Point subdivision only 200 feet from Mary Estelle's home on Bayview Street.

Moses Brown's name is recorded in old church logs for his marriage to his first wife Susannah, who died after five years of marriage, and his children's baptisms. Susannah bore three sons: Benjamin, Ephraim, and Joseph. Moses then married Joanna and had two daughters, but only one survived infancy. In the 1800s, Moses' grandson moved the house a mile north of its original location. It still stands today at the intersection of Bayview and Spring Street. The Brown family owned and rented out this house for nearly a century.

The next generation in Mary Estelle's family line is Ephraim Brown. His family lived in a two-story house built behind where Mary Estelle's barn stands today. Ephraim and his wife, Abigail Parker, had six children. At least two of their children were sea captains: Jeremiah and Moses. There is little information about Ephraim but the deeds passing the farm on to



Above: A postcard of Bay View Farm Inn and Cottages, Brown's Point. Mary Estelle Blake in the foreground.

his children acknowledge "the heirs of Ephraim Brown." In 1821, sixteen years after Ephraim died, his house behind the barn was cut in half, moved a mile away, and reassembled on East Main Street.

Ephraim's five surviving children inherited equal parts of his farm. Jeremiah, Ephraim's youngest son born in 1798, slowly acquired his siblings' shares, then bought out his neighbors to enlarge the farm on Brown's Point. In 1833, he married Eliza Ann Fulton, a niece of Robert Fulton, the inventor of the steamship. Eliza died in 1850 after bearing eight children. Captain Jeremiah later married Olive but they had no children together. Jeremiah's eight children knew Olive as mother. Both Olive and Eliza are buried at the old Baptist Meeting House. Their graves flank Jeremiah's grave.

Initially trained as a shoemaker, Jeremiah went on to become a successful ship's captain by the age of thirty-three. He also was a farmer, attorney, and town selectman. Captain Jeremiah prospered on Brown's Point. He sailed schooners and brigs up and down the East Coast, loading his schooners at the wharf he built near the mouth of the Royal River. A pile of rocks and wood cribwork still exists today on the shoreline of the point. Three storage buildings stood on the wharf and shore during those years, 1830 to about 1870.

Continued on page 4. . .



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From the Chair

As our yards, fields, and parks begin to reappear from under the snow, and ice, the excitement grows for taking leisurely walks without the need for scarves, hats, gloves or boots. At the Yarmouth History Center, the excitement is also growing as we start another spring membership drive.



Each spring we reach out to our members, thank them for their support, and invite them to renew so they can continue to enjoy all the events hosted by the History Center, including: the lectures, the art exhibits, the Royal River Film Series, and more.

Membership also supports the ongoing work of the Center's staff who carefully review, catalogue and preserve the memorabilia and artifacts donated to the History Center. This is the process that led to Sandy, the mechanical horse from Goff's Hardware, becoming part of the History Center's collection. This horse, ridden for many years by so many children, now resides at the Center and is made available for all to enjoy.

These programs and this work don't just happen. It takes our talented staff of Amy, Maura, Karen, and Katie and the many volunteers that support them to keep this going. And it takes the financial support of all our members to keep these hard working people employed.

So please, when your membership renewal arrives in the mail, send it right back with your membership dues. Don't make the mistake of assuming your membership is not important or appreciated. The Yarmouth History Center is a gem that belongs to us all and benefits our entire community. Each year our membership drive reaches out beyond our current members, so more can enjoy what the Center has to offer. We hope you will help us by encouraging your neighbors and friends to become members. The more, the better.

Thank you.
Bill Harwood

Gifting a Piece of History

Our Annual Fund and Membership Campaigns help support the Historical Society. The Society is also strengthened by donations to the collection. Donations of artifacts help us preserve the history of our community and region. Every artifact, be it an old bible, glass milk bottle, hand stitched petticoat, or letter from an early resident, tells a story of a time in our town's history.

This fall the Center received a gift from the Goff family. It was Sandy the mechanical horse, the beloved fixture of Goff's Hardware Store. On a recent visit to the History Center, former Yarmouth resident Scott Scharf was thrilled to find Sandy. He was inspired to make a donation along with a request that it be turned into dimes to ensure that every child could ride the horse for free. Thanks to the Goff family and Scott, Sandy's story in Yarmouth's history continues. We are grateful to all who have supported our mission through donations to the collection.



Above: Sandy the mechanical horse.

Continued from Page 5. . .

Mary Estelle's mother, Gertrude Brown Blake, was born in 1885 and was the fifth generation to live on Brown's Point. She and her husband, Orland Blake, farmed the land on Brown's Point. Orland started his career working on the trolley line that ran from Portland to Freeport. With his brother Lester, he then ran the Blake Brothers Bakery in the building that now houses Handy's until Lester left for the Great War. Orland farmed Brown's Point and started a milk run in 1921, selling 100 quarts of milk per day. He later shifted his sales to a wholesale business. He continued to sell milk for nearly fifty years. Like his father and Captain John Brown, Orland was a selectman in town, serving terms in three different decades.

During the Depression, Gertrude and Orland mortgaged their home for farm expenses and were in arrears on their taxes and insurance. The bank



Above: The Brown's white cape on Bay View Farm.

foreclosed in 1937, requiring the family to move to the Brown's 1836 white cape. Gertrude and Orland lived in that house with both Mary Estelle and their son, Edmund, until the couple passed. Orland died in 1974 and Gertrude died six years later.

Edmund Blake, Mary Estelle's brother, was born in 1910. He ran the Bay View Farm with his father and also was employed to do maintenance, cleaning, and carpentry for the First Parish Church, US Post Office in Yarmouth and Cumberland Fairgrounds. Edmund never married and lived in the white cape on Brown's Point until he died in 1989.

Mary Estelle was born in 1920 and graduated from North Yarmouth Academy in 1938. She was the chief operator for the telephone company in Yarmouth for a dozen years, then worked in the Portland office of New England Telephone. She retired in 1982, after forty-two years of service. She'll grumble that she retired because they wanted her to learn how to use a computer. She then worked as a home health aide and spent 15 years as the crossing guard at Handy Andy's corner. Mary Estelle never married and is the last of the Brown family to live on Brown's Point.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Gertrude and Orland sold several house lots at the south end of Bayview Street. The remainder of the Brown's farm land was sold off in 1977 and is now bisected by Brown's Point Road. This road's name only hints at the story of the Brown family and the generations of Browns who, for more than two centuries, called Brown's Point home.

From The Collection

How many times have you forgotten a password? How many times has your method of keeping track of your password failed you? Having to keep track of something like a password is not a new problem. Years ago, instead of a password it may have been a combination. The Center is working with the Merrill Memorial Library on a research project. This research uncovered documents recording the purchase of a safe as well as notes revealing efforts to remember the safe's combination.

There is a receipt from 1905 for the safe's purchase and documents recording its service to the community. We learn that the safe survived a flooded basement. Another note tells about our country being at war and the decision to store ration coupons in the safe. There is an exchange of letters, reminiscent of an email thread, searching for the combination of the safe. In 1950 the library wrote to a Mr. George Crockett at his home in Florida, "I am sure, you will remember, that you opened the safe belonging to Merrill Memorial Library several years ago. We are in trouble again! . . . When the Ration Board was through using the safe everybody just forgot the combination, not realizing that they were the only ones who could open it. . . I don't suppose you would happen to have kept that combination by any chance?" The library did obtain the combination and to safeguard against losing it a group was chosen to be the keepers of the combination. Now that the safe's combination is documented and secured, the question today is. . . where is the safe?

Thanks to our Annual Fund Donors

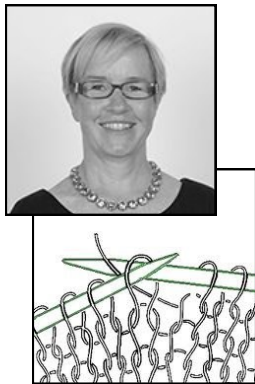
June 2015—February 2016

2016 Spring Lecture Series

Lectures are **free** for Yarmouth Historical Society Members and \$5.00 all others. This lecture series is sponsored by the Leon and Lisa Gorman Fund

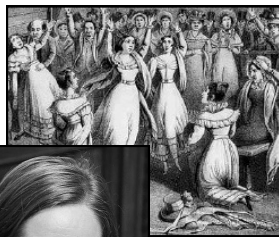
Tuesday, March 15, 7:00 pm "The History of Knitting"

Yarmouth History Center is pleased to host Anne Emlein, Chair of the Textiles and Fashion Design Program at the Maine College of Art. Emlein, an artist, designer, and educator, will speak about the history of knitting, from its early days as a handcraft to its use in the textile industry and contemporary fashion. Emlein's core expertise includes teaching knitting, textiles for apparel, and fine arts textile courses. She has exhibited her knitwear, apparel, and fine arts work throughout the country.



Tuesday, April 19, 7:00 pm "Preserving Modern Architecture"

Yarmouth History Center welcomes Historic Building Consultant Margaret Gaertner. Gaertner will speak about the challenges and opportunities in preserving works of modern architecture.



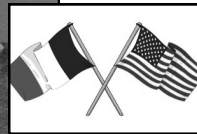
Tuesday, May 17, 7:00 pm "Women in Revivalist Religion"

Lucinda Hannington, Director of Education and Visitor Services at Victoria Mansion, will be our guest speaker. Hannington, who earned her MA in American and New England Studies from the University of Southern Maine, will speak about "Keepers of the Faith: Women in Revivalist Religion."



Tuesday, June 21, 7:00 pm "Franco-American History"

James Myall, co-author of "The Franco-Americans of Lewiston-Auburn," will speak and read from his book on the history of the local Franco-American population from 1850 to 2014.



Save The Dates!


Saturday, April 9, 2016
APPRAISAL DAY
10:00 - 2:00 pm
Appraisers from Foreside Antiques


Saturday, September 17, 2016
HISTORIC HOUSE TOUR
A Walking Tour
of Vintage Homes

Kathleen Brooks
Mr. and Mrs. Kent Hilton Jr.
Gerald King
Scott Logan
Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Parkhill
Leslie Webber-Honoring the 50th Wedding Anniversary of Beth and John Hodgkins
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In Memory of John Whalen
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Browns of Brown's Point continued. . .

Captain Jeremiah Brown built Mary Estelle's home in 1836, a simple cape with two chimneys, an ell and a carriage house with a cupola that affords a view to Casco Bay. The barn at the end of Bayview Street was built in 1855 to store hay, wood, bricks, and apples. In it, Captain Jeremiah amassed goods each winter, then sailed off as soon as the ice left the river. He sailed up and down the East Coast and to the Caribbean.

Mary Estelle kindly shared with me Captain Jeremiah Brown's ship's logs. An early account book starts in 1831 and tracks his voyages with the schooners *Clio*, *Washington*, and *Phenix*. Captain Jeremiah's cargoes included oak timber, hay, pine, molasses, and cotton. At home, Jeremiah was a selectman and recruited teachers and collected the school tax. He also served as executor for a number of wills and was guardian for several children. He oversaw estate auctions and disbursed inheritances. He was paid \$1 a day to work as selectman.

It is evident that Captain Jeremiah was a smart, industrious man. He owned outright at least one schooner, *Maria*, and shares of others. He prospered and provided what must have been a comfortable life for his family on his 100-acre Bay View Farm on Brown's Point.

While seventeen of Jeremiah's account books are saved, few of his letters survive. Mary Estelle has a handful of letters from Captain Jeremiah Brown to his son, John Brown, while he served in the Navy during the Civil War. When John joined the Navy in 1862, at age twenty, Captain Jeremiah advises his son to "behave well and save any wages you might have." Most touching, each letter begins with "My Beloved Son" and ends with a blessing from the devout Baptist, "May God guide you at all times and watch over you, for good is the prayer of your father." And like any good father, he encloses postage stamps in his letters, so his son can write home as often as possible. Captain Jeremiah died in 1871, giving his five children equal shares of the Bay View Farm.

If I were to choose a favorite of Mary Estelle's ancestors, it would be her grandfather, Captain John Fulton Brown. His collection of English bone china, a primitive South Pacific Moorish bowl, a Chinese thermos, and a wooden Turkish pipe attest to his extensive travels. His presence is evident today as Mary Estelle still predicts the weather with Captain

John's brass barometer and a painting of a ship he captained hangs above her mantel. He left a legacy through his numerous logs, account books, and letters, giving me a glimpse of his humor and stature.

In 1864, Captain John went to sea on a Yarmouth-built merchant ship probably as a second mate. In his log books from his early sailing years, he filled two-thirds of each page with latitude and longitude readings and documented the weather, how the sails were set, and business of the ship. Yet here and there throughout the worn books his personality shines through: February 25, 1865 "First part of this day light winds and variable. Latter part, fresh breezes from the south and east. Singing on deck in the dog watch." John writes quick lines on the open ocean about being lonesome for those at home. He is idealistic and, at some point during this trip, he pens 26 "Rules to Go By." They include:

Keep good company or none.

If your hands cannot be usefully employed, tend to the cultivation of the mind.

Good company and good conversation are the very sinews of virtue.

Drink no intoxicating liquors.

Never run in debt unless you see a way to get out of it.

John married Mary Abby Jane Lovell of Gray, Maine in 1867. They seemed well-suited for each other, both hard workers. By 1873, at age thirty, John Brown was Captain of the *Jennie Phinney*, a Yarmouth brig built specifically for him. He carried cargo up and down the Atlantic coast from Nova Scotia to Buenos Aires. Captain John's log books are disciplined with just a hint of personality revealing how he dealt with bad cooks, sleepy first mates, deserting seamen and sick crew members.

In 1876, Captain John bought out his four siblings to acquire the Bay View Farm, paying them \$800 each. Captain John's brother Charles was the exception. He didn't sell his parcel to Captain John despite his financial problems. Charles's parcel included the Brown's old wharf. This parcel would not become a part of the farm until 1957 when Mary Estelle purchased it.

Captain John Brown often asks his wife, Mary, to join him on his sea voyages and she and the children traveled to Buenos Aires in the winter of 1877. Thirty eight letters between John and Mary have survived, tracking the ups, downs and loneliness

of the couple's lives. The Browns kept up a strong correspondence over the nearly thirty years Captain John was at sea, as he was gone for months to years at a time. There are gaps of time between the letters, and many are missing, but the ship's log books verify Captain John was gone consistently throughout their marriage.

Captain John's real personality comes out in his letters to his wife. "I feel just like fooling a little today. I hope you have not got over it, we have had such good times fooling and talking nonsense and I believe it is better than talking sense all the time." Mary's letters to John are less romantic. Her harried replies talk about managing the farm and children alone. "I want to get gutters and a cistern on the house next year as it has been so dry we need carry all our water from the far spring." She worried about crops, the hired help, and the weather. The farm produced hay, apples, and timber as well as livestock.

In 1881, Captain John replaced an ailing Captain Humphries on the brigantine *Alice D. Cooper* and ventured to Europe and India for cargo, taking coal and returning to England with jute. This was the largest ship he captained, boasting three large masts. He was at sea for 23 months. In his letters from Bombay, he has buyer's remorse for the farm. "Wish I had not bought the farm now it has meant so much trouble for you." The purchase set him and his wife on a lonely trajectory where she stayed home with seven kids and managed the farm while he went to sea for another twenty years to clear their debts.

In the 1890s Captain John traveled to New Zealand and Australia, the voyage taking four months each way. The Australian wool market was strong and he made several trips between Melbourne and New York with bales of wool in the hold, but his older wooden brig counted against him and often had trouble getting cargo.

In 1893, his ship collided with an Italian barque while both were on the way to Barbados, causing \$3000 in damage to his ship and another \$600 of damage to the Italian ship. "Paid off mate H. Halloway as a useless article. It was through his foolishness that got us into this scrape."

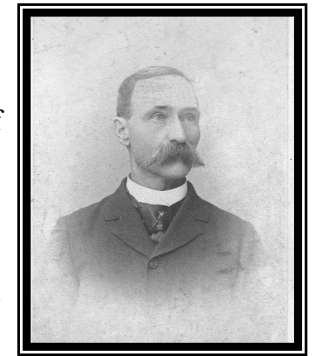
His log books also described seeing northern lights, water spouts, brown streaks of "whale feed" around Cape Horn, icebergs, and a sea quake off the Australian Coast that "shook the ship from stem to stern (for fifteen seconds) as if the ship was being dragged over rough rocks." The logs give insight into Captain John but also

global economics in the 1800s. In the 1860s and 1870s, his holds are full of coal and sugar up and down the East Coast between Nova Scotia and Cuba. He travels to Buenos Aires to pick up hides, skins, and bales of feathers. In the 1880s, he ventures to India and Europe with jute and coal. Finally, in the 1890s, the wool trade brings him to New Zealand and Australia.

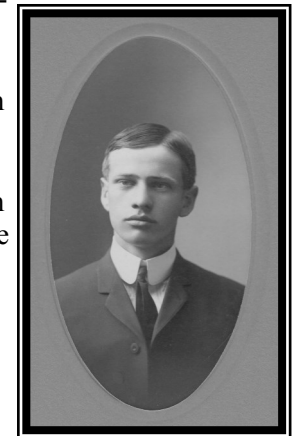
Captain John retired from the sea in 1895 at the age of fifty-three. His last log book entry on April 8, 1895, gives no hint that this is his last port. He sails into Boston harbor to unload and the entry is the same as every other day. He may have retired because he was financially comfortable or the crash with the Italian ship may have counted against him. More likely he was technologically out-of-date as shippers preferred the speed of steam engines. It's ironic that his great uncle and namesake, Robert Fulton, began the shift that put Captain John Fulton Brown ashore for good.

After he retired, John and Mary started a boarding house and Bed & Breakfast on Brown's Point, sprucing up the house and buying all new furniture. The family continued to run it until the 1930s. There are photos of Captain John Brown in his later years showing him as a tall, rangy man with a bushy Mark Twain mustache. He always rode his black horse at the front of the Yarmouth Memorial Day parade.

Captain John made sure his family was cared for. He gave his daughter, Gertrude, and her husband, Orland Blake, a lot to build a house in 1908. It is now the yellow house on the corner of Bayview Street and Brown's Point Road. In 1921, he gave them the Bay View Farm for one dollar in exchange for the right to live on the farm and receive eggs, milk, apples, and other farm products free of charge. Captain John Brown died in 1927.



Captain John Fulton Brown



Orland Henry Blake,
Yarmouth High School
Class 1904.

Continued on next page. . .

Continued on page 7. . .