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1905-1943  
Robbinston

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE HISTORY OF

Robbinston, Maine

Colonial Era to the

Early Twentieth Century

With a Narrative by Ernest C. Brown of the Beginning  
of the Brown Family in Canada and Later in Maine

1956

Jeff Barnes

August, 1994

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE HISTORY  
OF ROBBINSTON, MAINE

Jeff Barnes  
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Transcribed 1994

Completed at the University of Maine at Farmington for a course in Maine history taught by Dr. Bingley

This manuscript is not intended to be a complete history of the community but should serve as an overview of the town's first two centuries. The community was incorporated in 1811 and Washington County was incorporated in 1789.

This paper can be quoted without permission of the author except where citations of original authors must be recognized.

It is hoped this paper might serve as a basis for discussion of the history of the community, region and Maine in the public schools and as a heritage for the future citizens of the town.

It is with the suggestion of the instructor that prompted the typing of this paper and a desire to leave a small contribution to local history.

For a more detailed and personal sketch of the early and middle twentieth century history of Robbinston the "Diary of a Mailman" by Ernest C. Brown is recommended (diary of an RFD mailman 1905-43). Ernest Brown is my grandfather and a native of the community.

1480

The area of Passamaquoddy was occupied by the Indian tribe now known as the Passamaquoddy branch of the Abenaki group. It is believed the Indians lived in relative peace with their neighbors to the east, the Malisetts, and the Penobscot tribe west of the Machias River. The first white visitors to the area are believed to have been Samuel D. Champlain and company in 1604. The buildings on the St. Croix Island were destroyed in 1613 and the existence of the Du Monts colony was all but forgotten. The area that is presently Robbinston was probably occupied by coastal fishermen during the fishing season and a few adventurous woodsmen. After the Revolutionary War many Massachusetts businessmen began to speculate on some of the northern lands. Among these enterprising people was Edward H. Robbins from Milton, Massachusetts. He dispatched Johnathan Eddy, the leader of the fateful attack on Fort Cumberland, to explore the area of Passamaquoddy. Mr. Eddy reported to Robbins, who was an ambitious young Harvard law graduate (1775), that the area now Township Number Four would be a good commercial venture. There were two families living in Robbinston at the time. On October 21, 1786 Mr. Robbins purchased the area which now bears his name.

Mr. Robbins was a representative in the state legislature 1793-1800 and Lieutenant Governor 1802-06. In later years he was Commissioner of the land office of the Massachusetts Northern frontier. He was a Probate Judge in his native state until 1829. Mr. Robbins also bought land from Waterman Thomas, who sold parts of Township Number Five, which is now Calais. The land was bought in 100 acre plots, the so-called Jones plan, which all deeds are now based upon. There is evidence that one Jacob Boynden was living in Township Number Four when it was bought. The lake which he lived near while engaged in trade is now named for him. "Twelve families went to Robbinston at Mr. Robbin's urging."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ava H. Chadbourne, Maine Place Names (Freeport, 1957), page 17.

They reached the area by coaster and such noteworthy names as J. Brewer, Abel Brooks, Thomas Vose, John Balkam, and Job Johnson were among the settlers. In 1798, when the Massachusetts Legislature decided to build a new state house, Mr. Robbins was appointed the Chairman of the Building Commission. Charles Bulfinch was selected as the architect and the site was John Hancock's cow pasture on Beacon Hill. "Pine trees for the front columns and the roof of the legislative chamber were cut on the shore of West Magalloway Lake, on the Lieutenant Governor's land."<sup>3</sup> "John Brewer, one of the prominent Robbinston citizens, was appointed Postmaster in 1796. He held that position for twenty five years."<sup>3</sup> He was appointed by President Washington. The first settlers erected storehouses and traded with the urbanized area of Massachusetts. The majority of the settlers came from Massachusetts and most of them were enterprising people. At first religious meetings were held in each others homes, and until a log schoolhouse was built the students attended school in a similar manner. The men of the village took turns preaching the sermons and the women taught the children the few basic things they had to know. "Mr. Robbins took a great interest in his land and he showed it by sending readers for the school, suits for the preachers, and often visited his holdings by coaster."<sup>4</sup> Most of the settlers were Congregationalists in their religious faith. "Daniel Lovejoy was the first paid preacher in the Congregational Church in 1818."<sup>5</sup> The first settlers in Robbinston didn't find life easy. They had to carve a life out of the rugged Maine forests. The soil was not suited for agriculture on a large scale so they turned to the forest as a means of survival. "The first settlers in Robbinston erected a tide-mill

<sup>2</sup>Hardd A. Davis, An International Community on the St. Croix (Orono, 1950), page 204.

<sup>3</sup>Portland Sunday Telegram, February 18, 1939.

<sup>4</sup>Chadbourne, Ibid, page 17.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid

at Mill Cove for the purpose of sawing lumber and grinding grain.<sup>6</sup> Around 1800 the first boat was built in Robbinston by Thomas Vose. The vessel, The First Attempt, was one of many that gave Mr. Vose a reputation as one of the better shipbuilders in the area. In 1800 Mr. Vose moved into a mansion which he had built. Mr. Vose was engaged in lumbering and represented the District in the first legislature. He was a member of Governor King's Council. John Brewer was also active in local government and was a leading businessman of the area. "He was Brigadier-General of the militia and went to Ellsworth and Castine to inspect the troops."<sup>7</sup> Both Mr. Vose and General Brewer were active in local church affairs. In 1811 the Congregational Church was formed with a membership of six. Families of the Passamaquoddy Indian Tribe encamped peacefully in different parts of the town for many years. "Tradition has it that when night overtook them in the "North Land" they always found themselves welcome in Robbinston."<sup>8</sup>

Like Champlain, Albert Gallatin visited the area of Boynden's Lake in 1780 and then went on to greater fame elsewhere. Maine seems to be the breeding ground for people of ability and character but they leave the state when their talent reaches its most valuable level. It is also common knowledge that Benedict Arnold visited the area on one of his trips to the Island of Campobello where he had storehouses for his fishing business, Arnold was living in St. John, New Brunswick at the time. Arnold seems to have been playing both sides for what he could get from them.

The 17,860 acres in Robbinston were primarily forested with lumber that was suitable for shipbuilding. Most of the settlers that came were interested in the resources of the forests. Others were

<sup>6</sup>Norma Young, "Tall Timber, "Down East, VIII (June 1959) p. 16.

<sup>7</sup>

Lewiston Saturday Journal, February 18, 1911, page 7.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid

tired of the strict Puritanical society. "In 1790 Robbinston had a population of fifty-four but by 1800 this had increased to 127.<sup>9</sup>" The population increase illustrates the growing discontent in Massachusetts and the increasing importance of the "North Land." The leading businessmen in town, John Brewer, Thomas Vose, and John Balkam shipped lumber, apars, shingles, and built ships for markets in England and the United States. In the early economic years Saint Andrews served as the outlet for goods produced or harvested in Robbinston, Machias was the center of economic activity on the "Down East" coast. John Allan and Lt1 Deleshernier were in charge of protecting the settlers on the eastern coast. They maintained good relations with the Indians and kept the British out of the Passamaquoddy area. The Revolutionary War actually helped the economy of the Washington County area because a good part of the land was given to officers and other veterans who participated in the War.

The people who came to Robbinston were independent, enterprising and courageous. They were also concerned with the future of their town. In 1795 the first school was started and the students weren't dismissed on Saturday "until they had repeated the catechism and commandments."<sup>10</sup>

In 1800 John Balkam came to town from Massachusetts. His family was very ambitious and he became postmaster in 1821. As the population increased as the town became prosperous the old schoolhouse was eventually replaced with a brick one. In 1835 the Episcopal Church was build and shortly afterwards a Catholic church was constructed. The community gradually began to resemble the civilization that was left behind in the Boston area. The difference in the Passamaquoddy area was that the individual person had a part of the responsibility of creating a sense of community. "It is not possible to mention all those who toiled for the benefit of the community."<sup>11</sup> "John Balkam became prosperous, built a fine house, and was sent to the Maine Senate. He also served on the Governor's Council. The enterprising people of Robbinston, at one time or another, operated three saw mills, a grist mill and a sugar box machine."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Davis, Op Cit p. 90.

<sup>10</sup> Lewiston Saturday Journal, February 18, 1911, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Lewiston Saturday Journal,

<sup>12</sup> Portland Sunday Telegram, February 18, 1939.

Shipbuilding, using the resources of men and forest, was the major industry of the area. This is the only large industry the town has ever experienced. "On the fifteenth of January, 1810, a committee of seven was chosen to present the petition to the Massachusetts legislature. On February 18, 1811, Plantation #4 became the 183rd town in the District of Maine.<sup>13</sup>" The people were reflecting their desire for self-government. The citizens were working hard during the early nineteenth century for the advancement of the community. Strides were made in education, government, religion and the general prosperity of the region increased. Other towns in the region were being settled during this time. Township #5, presently Calais, was growing rapidly. The blazed trails of earlier years were replaced with roads."For years Robbinston was the center of trade for neighboring towns.<sup>14</sup>" Some of the timber was shipped on American ships and part was shipped on foreign vessels. a quantity of the lumber went to the West Indies. The fishing industry was also very important, and was until the 1950's. It supplied the people of the area with seafood and also a product for market. "Until the early nineteenth century there was a considerable trade with the Indians for furs that were shipped to Boston.<sup>15</sup>"

A few weeks before the incorporation of Robbinston a surveyor was running lines near a small lake in the town. He saw smoke near the top of a cliff and upon investigation found two men, Eleneza Ball and John Hall, making counterfeit coins. They had three kegs of coins fresh from the mint in Philadelphia. It is probable they were working for a merchant in the region. Surveyor Jones was bribed but the secret leaked out. Upon hearing of the operation Constable Downs

<sup>13</sup>

Lewiston Saturday Journal, February 18, 1911, page 7.

<sup>14</sup>

Ibid

<sup>15</sup>

Lewiston Saturday Journal, Ibid.

tried to arrest Ball but was fatally shot in the process. Hall escaped to Nova Scotia and Ball was tried and found guilty of murder by a jury of his peers. The people of the "north land" respected the law and the need for order. "Many people have hunted for the treasure of "Moneymaker's Lake," but the only one who has made any money is the guides.<sup>16</sup>"

As students of history know, President Jefferson wanted to avoid war with England and France. He initiated and supported the Embargo Acts as an effort to ensure our neutrality. During the winter of 1812 the people of both communities, Robbinston and St. Andrews, New Brunswick, had been getting out lumber and loading it on the American and thirty British ships in the bay. "On the first of April, 1812 another Embargo Act was passed and was considered by many to be the precursor of war.<sup>17</sup>" The people on both sides of the St. Croix realized that they could gain nothing by enforcing the embargo and wanted to maintain relations that were as friendly as possible under the circumstances. "The state papers show that at the time war was declared there were approximately 324 soldiers in all of New England.<sup>18</sup>" The people of Robbinston became alarmed at the possibility of a few lawless people working raids over the border. General Dearborn informed Governor Strong of the situation and two companies of men were stationed at Eastport and one in Robbinston. The town had barracks erected and became the center for training of soldiers from other towns. The British came to Eastport in 1814, and the commander of the American forces saw it best to surrender to overwhelming odds. British cruisers such as the Spartan, Maidstone and Indian captured many American ships between 1812 and 1814. After the capture of Fort Sullivan in Eastport a strong force proceeded to Robbinston, "They

<sup>16</sup> Norma Young, "Murder at Moneymaker Lake" Down East, VII (June, 1959) page 34.

<sup>17</sup> Lewiston Saturday Journal, op cit.

<sup>18</sup> Lewiston Saturday Journal, op cit.



captured the town and the twenty-five men that were garrisoned there retired to Machias.<sup>19</sup> The people of the area were patriotic, but they were also very realistic. "War was avoided by a hair's breadth were the words of General Brewer."<sup>20</sup> During the occupation years 1814-18 the people of the area went about their business as usual but the presence of the British irked the citizens. The economy became very lax as there wasn't any way to ship the goods to market. Some people did make fortunes through privateering and others were successful at blockade running. The British influence upon the people of Robbinston was more indirect than it was upon the people of Eastport where the troops were stationed. Troops were kept in Eastport after 1814 by agreement between the United States and England until ownership of the islands was settled. This was finalized in the Webster Treaty.

"It took a little time for business to be restored after the war."<sup>21</sup> Shipyards became active again and the lumber industry continued for many years. The demand for ships came from all over the world. Men financed and built ships for themselves and others sold shares in the vessels until they were sold. There were at least seven shipbuilders in town that had widely known reputations in the industry. "It was a time of prosperity in the region."<sup>22</sup> Four new lumber mills were established in town. There was a direct ratio between the lumber industry and shipbuilding. The prosperity of one influenced the other. There are presently two brick homes standing in town that were constructed of bricks made at Liberty Point in Robbinston. "After the War of 1812 the brick kiln fell into disuse and other industries appeared."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Marion Jacques Smith, A History of Maine, (Portland, 1949), page 130.

<sup>20</sup> Ernest C. Brown, "An Historical Sketch of the Memorial Site," The Calais Advertiser, August 14, 1946, page 11.

<sup>21</sup> Lewiston Saturday Journal, op cit.

<sup>22</sup> Brown, op cit.

<sup>23</sup> Lewiston Saturday Journal, op cit.

A new tannery was built to process the furs that were bought from the Indians. As the economic prosperity increased the social life of the residents also developed. The social life extended into adjoining towns and Robbinston became the center of commerce.

The years 1820-57 were fairly prosperous times for the people of Robbinston. The system of lakes and streams provided a means of transporting lumber from the interior to the coast. John M. Brewer is known to have launched more than 100 vessels before his death in 1854. "Though he lived comfortably, and was considered one of the wealthiest men in the area, he died relatively poor."<sup>24</sup> The Eastern Maine area also had a hand in building some of the famous clipper shps. Below is a list of clippers built in Robbinston between 1850-56.

BUILDER	SHIP	BUYER	YEAR
1. James W. Cox	-- <u>Francis Palmer</u>	Boston firm	1852
" "	<u>Red Gauntlet</u>	" "	1853
James W. Cox	<u>Dictator</u>	Boston firm	1855
" "			
James W. Cox	<u>Juniper</u>	European firm	1853
3. Thomas Vose	<u>Virginia</u>	" "	1854

"The Dictator was captured and burned by a Confederate raider on April 25, 1863. It weighed 1293 tons."<sup>25</sup> The shipping along the St. Croix increased five fold between 1820 and 1860 with only a slight drop around 1840. By 1890 the lumber business had reached its peak. The businessmen of the area had very little capital to work with and this put the whole town in a poor economic state. The depression of 1857 further slowed the economic activity of the region. "In that year there was not the sound of a hammer save that of the auctioneer's to be heard."<sup>26</sup> In 1860 a retail cooperative was established and by

<sup>24</sup> Davis, op cit. page 167.

<sup>25</sup> Willaim Hutchinson Rowe, The Maritime History of Maine, (New York, 1948), page 317.

<sup>26</sup> Davis, op cit., page 184.

the end of the Civil War the economic trend was on an upward swing. When the Civil War started many people from Robbinston joined the Union forces and many failed to return after the War. The population of the town had decreased since 1860. In that year the town had a population of 1113. Other years that illustrate the population trend are listed below. In the 1980's the population of the community reached its peak in several decades. This is indicative of the quality of life in Maine and the desire of more people to live on the coast.

YEAR      POPULATION <sup>27</sup>

1880...910

1890...787

1900...844

1920...747

1940...637

1960...476

After the War the economy regained and the economy stabilized for the general prosperity of the community. The most interesting incident in Robbinston immediately after the Civil War involved the border raid of 1870. The relations between the United States and Britain were not friendly in the early post-war years. The Fenians, or Irish-American, hoped to use these ill-feelings to their advantage. They intended to invade Canada, which would be traded for the freedom of Ireland. There had been border raids in 1866 when there were thirty Fenians in town. "The trouble had been calmed by General George Gordon Meade and a small company of soldiers. <sup>28</sup>" The Fenians planned to raid St. Andrews by the sea. As they embarked from Robbinston a British patrol boat fired a warning shot to scare them. "The cannon ball ended up in the lawn of the Reverend D. B. Sewall. <sup>29</sup>" It is said that a local citizen road through town in "Paul Revere" fashion yelling "the Fenians are coming." This resistance to the Fenian movement marked an end to their half-hearted efforts. The forests

<sup>27</sup>

Maine Register, (Portland, 1969) page 935

<sup>28</sup>

Lewiston Saturday Journal, op. cit.

<sup>29</sup> Guy Murchie, St. Croix, (New York, 1947) page 252.

of the area continued to yield a good living for many of the residents. In 1874 the 409 ton brig Mary H. Oriden sank with great losses to its financiers. It cost \$12,000.00 to \$15,000.00 to construct the larger vessels. Farming and fishing gradually equalled shipbuilding in importance. In 1880 the first sardine factory was constructed in the town. It employed many of the women and children who had previously been left to domestic affairs and schooling. "As the sardine industry developed in town wretched little shanty towns developed."<sup>30</sup> In John Spargo's The Bitter Way of Children (1906) the sardine factories of Washington County are mentioned as depicting "the sheer brutality industry shows toward children."

In 1866 the "Mansion House" was purchased by James S. Pike of Calais. Pike was an anti-slavery writer, had worked with Horace Greeley and was the United States Minister to the Hague 1861-66. He is also the author of such books as The New Puritan, The First Blows of the Civil War, The Pirate State and others. He wrote for various papers and usually spent the winters in Philadelphia or Washington. "After 1872 he was occupied as a critic of the Government."<sup>31</sup> Such noteworthy people as Charles A. Dana, Horace Greeley and Samuel P. Chase visited Pike at his summer estate. The "Mansion House" was purchased by Mr. Vladimer Simkovitch around 1900. He was a professor of economic history at Columbia University. Mrs. Mary K. Simkovitch, author of Here Is God's Plenty and co-author of Quicksand, is well known in the New York social world for her founding of Greenwich House. She devoted her life to helping others and always believed that a social worker must live with the impoverished to teach them to develop

<sup>30</sup> Davis, op. cit., page 238

<sup>31</sup> Robert F. Dresden, James Shephard Pike (1850-82), , (Durham, N.C. 1955) page 3.

their talents."She achieved world-wide fame for her work.<sup>32</sup>" Mrs. Simlovitch, even though she came from a wealthy family, recognized the needs of the masses. She established Greenwich House in 1907 which provided a day cre center and clinic for young children. The facilities were gradually expanded to provide training, and recreation. She also pioneered the campaign for women's suffrage, federal aid to education, kindergartens and parkks. The United States could use more people with her dedication and talents.

Every town has its local history and folk heroes. One of the more interesting stories that has circulated around town is the story of Bill Johnson, a "blue-water" sailor. Bill was long overdue from one of his voyages and the people of Robbinston had given him up for lost. He was also known for his tall tales. He finally returned scarred and darkened from his voyage. Bill claimed he had fallen overboard and had fought a shark to save his life. People considered this another of his stories. Years later a citizen of Robbinston was eating at a New York waterfront restaurant and met a friendly sailor. Finding that the Mainer was from Robbinston, he asked him if he knew "Sharky" Bill. It seems the sailor had been in the South Pacific when Bill had fallen overboard and had witnessed the event. "Bill had been so badly hurt they left him at the nearest port."<sup>33</sup> Bill died with the people of Robbinston disbelieving his story.

In the early 19th century the only black family up to that point in history moved to the community. They settled in the area known as the "Robbinston Ridge." The made a living from their small farm and had four children. One of the boys went to Boston to seek his fortune and the other two boys stayed with their parents

<sup>32</sup>New York Herald Tribune, "Noted New York Social Worker Dies," November 16, 1951, page 84.

<sup>33</sup>Norma Young, op. cit., page 68.

and sister to farm. Alex Bush became the provider for his eventually ailing family. Alex was always the first to help anyone in trouble. "He once told a Robbinston citizen "the world's just full of people nowhere's near as well of as I am."<sup>34</sup> Alex, who never swore, delivered his produce to Eastport for market. One day he had an accident but the people of the city promptly bought every piece of his produce from the overturned cart. He was very well liked by all who knew him. Alex was a lover of animals and very active in horse racing at state fairs. At one race he got so excited he put his pipe, still smoking, into his pocket. He won the race with a stream of smoke behind behind and the judges declared it illegal to use rocket power! As a friend said after his death in 1958, "Alexander Bush will be in my mind as long as there are people to remember."

Robbinston is only one small town in Eastern Maine but its people share the attitudes and values of the people who first came to America. They are noted for their independence and hard work. The economy of the area has fluctuated but people still prefer the lifestyle it offers. As a Robbinston resident said in 1932 at the age of 82, "the young people of today don't know what hard work is." Possibly each generation faces its own challenges that mold their perspective to succeeding generations. Generation gaps aside, Eastern Maine is not such a bad place to live.

Jeff Barnes

<sup>34</sup>  
A. E. Mc Inmis, "Written in Hill Dust," Down East, VXIV (September, 1967) page 38.

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A NARRATIVE OF THE BEGINNING OF THE BROWN  
FAMILY IN CANADA AND LATER IN MAINE

Written by Ernest C. Brown, 1956  
Typed by his grandson, Jeff Barnes, 1994

This handwritten narrative had been "sitting around" since I was six years old and I still have the letter to my mother that accompanied it. He states that at some future time she might want to share this with me, but to use her own discretion. I had seen it over the years, forgotten about it, and found it again. After typing my history of Robbinston, it seemed appropriate that this be included also for its interest and possible preservation. It is from memory, and my grandfather had a good one but had no written records to go from. He states in his letter that his brother Josh knew the history better than he but we have no record of it being recorded. This is the best record and the complete story as I know it. Josh died before he could write it down and this is an attempt to save what information is left to record. He writes that "you are the first one in my family I have ever told the story to." He also states "the whole thing could be thrown in the trash if you want to." Thirty-eight years later the trash man has not arrived so we can document what was written for local interest and family color. I hope other family members will view this as an attempt at preservation of some "family tree" material.

Verbatim Narrative

My grandfather (that of E. C. Brown), whose name was William Brown was born William McKeernan in a town in North Ireland. Most of the inhabitants in the North of Ireland are Protestant Irish, and that was his religious faith. His father, Joshua McKeenan was a merchant, sometimes called a trader. In company with his brother-in-law they owned a merchant vessel and carried freight between Ireland and Scotland. The brother-in-law's name was Brown and it was thought his people were at one time Scots.

On an October day somewhere at a seaport in Scotland they left for Ireland with a full cargo of horses, mules, steers and cows. A severe storm came up with gale force wind. Sails were blown away and the rudder was useless. The large vessel floundered



and sank carrying her full cargo and all twelve men to a watery grave, nicknamed in prose, Daive Jones' Locker.

McKeenan, my great grandfather, left to mourn our loss a large family of twelve. There being no insurance either on ships or cargo the widow was left penniless. My grandfather was then sixteen years of age. His brother John was a year older and they had to be the chief support for the younger sisters, brothers and invalid mother. So William and John enlisted in the English Navy as Ireland was a satellite country of England.

For two years the two brothers cruised with the navy all over most parts of the world. South America, Africa, Australia, the United States and Canada. On Dominion Day in Canada (July 1) they sailed into the harbor of Halifax, Nova Scotia. The ship dropped anchor in the harbor nearly a half mile from the shore landing. Fifty to seventy sailors were allowed to go ashore for "shore leave." of four hours. The average stay in port for the warship was three days. Many times this gave the sailors an opportunity for a second trip ashore. He met an attractive girl on this first shore leave and went looking for her on the second leave. He found her in the company of an English officer. The girl seemed to prefer the sailor to the officer and the officer, being of higher rank, ordered the sailor to depart. The girl, hearing the order of the officer to the private, thought it was overbearing and unnecessary. She walked away at the side of the private who was later destined to be my grandfather. A few minutes later the officer tried to take the girl from the sailor and met several Irish punches on the nose which ended his shore leave for that cruise.

That evening, when the sailor returned to the ship, his brother came to William and told him he had just learned that on account of the scrap with the officer of the King's Navy he was going to be punished. Right there both brothers decided to escape as soon as it got a little darker. Two of his companions joined and on the dark side of the warship where they went overboard quietly. They strapped their few belongings to their heads. Twenty minutes later the two brothers and a sailor by the name of Watson reached shore. They never learned whether the other sailor turned back or was drowned. The water was very cold and they last saw him treading water about half way to shore.

They rested a few minutes until they heard boats being launched from the side of the ship. They took off for a hiding place in the woods. The first night out they decided to change their name from McKeenan to Brown. It was a more common name in Canada than an Irish name would be. Watson kept his own name. They then started a trek to the United States that they had heard so much about while living in Ireland. They slept in the woods during the day and walked by night. One always stayed awake during the sleeping hours while the others slept. Twice the first night they heard the ship's siren warning the population of deserters being at large.

Not daring to follow roads they kept in the woods and fields along the shore line. They knew that by doing this they would reach the American border sooner or later.

Three weeks after leaving the ship they arrived at S. John, N. B.. They had to avoid anyplace as large as St John so they circled the City and several days later arrived at S. George, or LeTang near St. George. The Nova Scotia border was nearly in sight by this time. It was here that one of the "Brown" borthers feet were cut so badly and swollen that he couldn't walk for several days. He bade his brother John and Watson goodby and they kept on and eventually reached St. Andrews. Here they stole a row boat and landed in Robbinston, Maine. Evidently Watson and Brown separated at this point. It is thought tht Watson stayed on a farm in Perry and Brown went into Aroostook County, Maine as they were advertising for farm hands. William hadbeen befriended at LeTang by a French family. They dressed his swollen feet and when he was well gave him new shoes and clothes to cover his bruised body. He thought his brother might be waiting for him near the Maine border but he never found him. He went back to LeTang or St. George, fell in love, and married a local girl. He was the father of fifteen children of which my father was one

Seven years after he had married and located near St. George, N.B. a British waaship came into St. John on Dominion Day. Some of the

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officers drove over to St. George as they made a lot of that holiday. My grandfather was an athlete to no minor degree and had just taken the Canadian championships in the hop-skip and jump hurdle. One of the English officers recognized him as one of the deserters. He tried to arrest him but he had made many friends in the area. A crowd gathered around the officers with a warning not to try arresting him. They never returned and William McKennean had his name changed to Brown (by law I suppose). This is the story of how my grandfather happened to settle in Canada and my father came to Maine when he was about thirty-eight years old from St. George, N.B.

Grandfater William McKeenan Brown lived an honorable life in St. George. where he was highly respected as a first class citizen. He died at the age of 88 but grandmother Brown died much younger. He was a stone mason by trade and so was his oldest son William.

END

Ernest C. Brown  
Brooks Bluff  
1956

Robbinston, Me

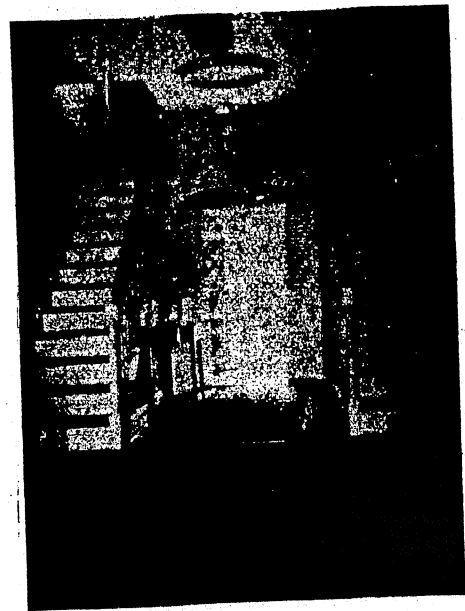
For more material that may be interesting see Diary of a Mailman, 1905-48 from the diaries of Mr. Brown. They are available in the Calais Free Library, UMO Folger Library and the Maine State Library in Augusta, ME (transcribed in 1994).

The "Mansion House" was  
built in 1791 by Gen. Brewer.  
It was a tavern and hotel  
in its early days. It is presently  
owned by a New York family.

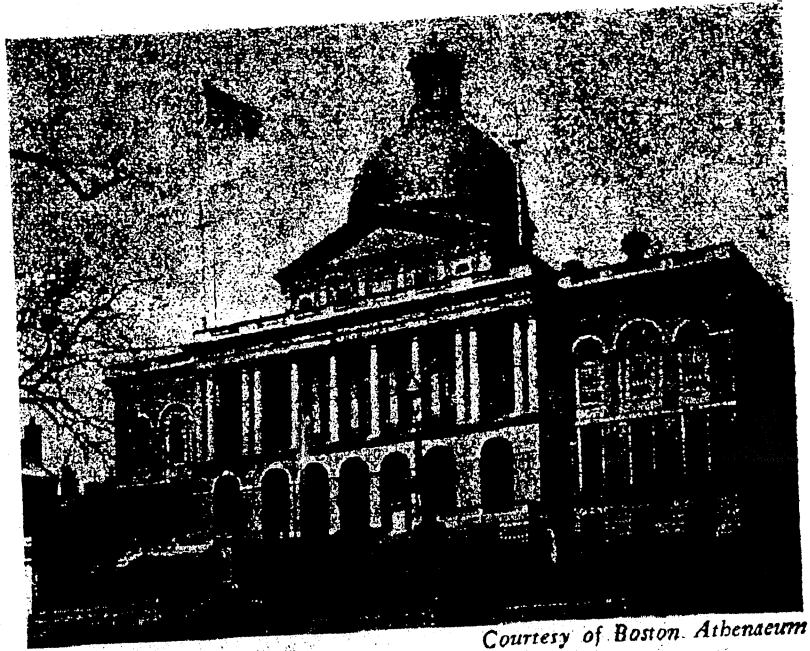


MANSION HOUSE, ROBBINSON

Passamaquoddy Bay



Dual Staircase - part of colonial  
interior of the Mansion House.



Courtesy of Boston Athenaeum

### THE BOSTON STATE HOUSE

as originally designed by Charles Bulfinch showing the twenty-six St. Croix pines, twelve columns in front and fourteen behind, some of them partly concealed in the wall.

Symbolic of the one time  
economy of the area.

### BLACK HOUSE AT JOE'S POINT

There were five block houses built at St. Andrews during the War of 1812. Only one is still standing, now a residence.

St. Andrews, New Brunswick was the  
rival port of Robbinston. It is  
presently a resort town.

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

"Brothers of Passamaquoddy: I am glad to hear by Major Shaw that you accepted the chain of Friendship which I sent you last February from Cambridge, & that you are determined to keep it bright and unbroken. When I first heard that you refused to send any of your warriors to my assistance when called upon by our brothers of St. John, I did not know what to think. I was afraid that some enemy had turned your hearts against me. But I am since informed that all your young men were employed in hunting, which was the reason for their not coming. This has made my mind easy and I hope you will always in future join with your brothers of St. John & Penobscot when required. I have desired my brother the Gov<sup>r</sup> of Massachusetts Bay, to pay you the money which Capt. Smith promised you for sending my letters to the Micmack Indians.

Brothers: I have a piece of news to tell you which I hope you will attend to. Our enemy, the King of Great Britain, endeavored to stir up all the Indians from Canada to South Carolina against us. But our brethren of the six Nations & their allies the Shawanese & Delewares would not hearken to the advice of his Messengers sent among them, but kept fast hold of the ancient covenant chain. The Cherokees & the Southern tribes were foolish enough to listen to them and take up the hatchet against us. Upon this our Warriors went into their country, burnt their houses, destroyed their corn and obliged them to sue for peace and give hostages for their future good behavior. Now Brothers never let the King's wicked counsellor turn your hearts against me and your brethren of this country, but bear in mind what I told you last February & what I tell you now.

In token of my friendship I send you this from my army on the banks of the Great River Delaware, this 24th day of December, 1776.

George Washington

The next day Washington crossed the Delaware to surprise the Hessians at Trenton. Washington considered the Passamaquoddy valuable allies. We still don't know how to deal successfully with the Indians - for his heart and the betterment of society.

## WOMEN AT ROBBINSON TOWN MEETING FOR FIRST TIME

They Didn't Vote But Were Greatly Interested in the Deliberations of the Men.

1914

Town meeting was held March 30 and 31 and for the first time in the history of the town women attended. Reserved seats were given them in the balcony and all possible courtesy was shown them by the men folk. They told the Commercial reporter as they were leaving the hall that they enjoyed the meeting very much and that they all would surely attend the meeting next year. Following are the names of those present: Mrs. Henry Poor, Miss Annie Lamb, Mrs. Ralph Tracy, Miss Ella Brown, Miss Leonora Harvey, Miss Elizabeth Blackwood, Mrs. William Blackwood, Miss May Blackwood, Mrs. Cora Goodwin, Mrs. Isaac Golding, Miss Winnifred Trumble, Mrs. E. M. Ingersoll, Miss Agnes Reynolds, Mrs. Thomas MacDonald, Mrs. Oscar Morrison, Mrs. Seth Gerry, Mrs. Leonard Brown, Mrs. Ernest Morrell, Mrs. Raymond Morrell, Miss Ruth Sherman, Miss Minerva Sherman, Miss Evelyn MacDonald, Mrs. Seth Johnson, and Mrs. Allen Sherman.

Miss Mattie McNutt went to Boston last week where she has secured employment.

Loring Holmes went to Machias last Thursday on business, returning Friday evening.

The grange will confer the first and second degrees on two candidates Friday evening, April 10. The topic to be discussed April 21 is Roadside Improvement.

Postmaster S. E. Cox has had a new hardwood floor laid in the postoffice.

Miss Alice Poor, teacher in the public schools at Gloucester, is spending her vacation with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Poor.

Miss Marion Hunt was the guest of friends in Calais for several days last week.

Henry Ward, who has been spending the winter in Calais, was in town last week calling on friends and relatives.

*April 1914*

### Discontinuing Highway

Can a public highway which has been used for 100 years be discontinued if there are no residents along the same, but one person owns a farm there and goes to and from same every day?— [J. E., Maine.

The county commissioners, after a petition has been filed, notice given and a hearing, may discontinue a highway. If a person is damaged on account of such discontinuance he is entitled to compensation. If he is dissatisfied by the amount awarded to him, he can appeal to the supreme judicial court.

From *Times*

*The above slip refers to the "School-house Lane" in No. Robbinston. Question asked by James Brown, and answered by an attorney connected with the "New England Homestead"*

## ROBBINSON'S TOWN MEETING WAS ILLEGAL

Warrant Was Defective and Another Session is Called for April 20;

### Death of Winslow Gates

1914

Owing to defects in the annual town warrant, the court has ruled the meeting was an illegal one and a new meeting has been called by the selectmen, to be held Monday, April 20. Aside from the regular articles, the following ones of importance have been included: To see what sum of money the town will vote to raise for contingent expenses; to instruct the selectmen to meet on the first Monday of each month in the Town hall, to transact all town business; that all bills must be audited by the town auditor-elect before being paid; that all town orders must be signed by two or more of the selectmen after being drawn; that the town treasurer be authorized to lend money at a rate of interest not exceeding six per cent., to take up all outstanding town orders; that on all outstanding orders now bearing interest said interest to cease - June 1, 1914.

Winslow Gates, youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. Humphrey Gates, died at his home in Needham Heights, Mass., Monday evening, April 6, at the age of 32, measles and pneumonia being the cause of his death. Winslow was a young man that was well liked in this, his home town, where he always lived until a few years ago, when he went to Boston, where he received employment as a machinist. He leaves to mourn his loss, a wife and two children. Much sympathy is expressed for the bereaved wife and family.

Postmaster S. E. Cox has changed the postoffice from the east corner of his store to the northwest corner, making it more convenient for the patrons and giving more comfortable quarters to the R. E. D. carrier. The change is appreciated by all.

Schools begin for the spring term Monday, April 20.

W. Henry Poor has been chosen superintendent of schools for the ensuing year.

The third and fourth degrees will be conferred on several candidates at the grange Friday evening, April 17. Deputy F. P. Washburn will be present and will take the chair during the initiation. A harvest supper will be served.

Mr. and Mrs. Humphrey Gates went to Boston to attend the funeral of their son, Winslow.

On Monday, James Ross, who until recently was first selectman of the town of Robbinston, and who was indicted for refusing a voter access to the town records, appeared and entered a plea of guilty. A fine of \$50 was imposed. This is one of the results of Robbinston's town war, during which three elections were necessary to finally decide who were to handle the town's affair for the year 1914-15. Mr. Ross was a selectman and was a candidate for re-election. After the election it was proven that the election was invalid, owing to irregularities in the warrant, and a second election was held. This, too, was not according to law, and a third election was held. An audit committee was appointed, consisting of three members to inspect Selectman Ross' books, but he refused to permit one of the auditors to examine them, and suit was entered against him, with the result stated. Peace is once more established in the town and the affairs expected to move along in the usual way.

1914



Calais Advertiser, Calais, ME

By John K. Brooks

## Continuation of Robbinston History

An Address delivered to the occasion of the dedication of World Wars I and II Memorial at Robbinston, Maine, Sunday July 4, 1946:

By Ernest C. Brown

Master, Local Grange, No. 443  
P. of H.

We have met on this occasion to dedicate a monument in mem-

This town came into being, like so many other towns in Maine, through land grants. After the Revolutionary War period, the United States was bankrupt and unable to pay all the soldiers for the time served in the Army from 1775 to 1781. Accordingly, land grants were used to pay off many of the officers. This town was given to Colonel Robbins of Milton, Massachusetts. It was later known as Township No. 4. His deed reads: "One dollar and other valuable considerations for service rendered during the Revolutionary Period." He purchased the town in 1786 and it was incorporated in 1811 under the laws of the State of Massachusetts. There is no record of how long Colonel Robbins stayed here but it is known that he stayed just long enough to dispose of his holdings. For a short period the town was called Robbinstown, but before its incorporation, it was changed to Robbinston. Colonel Robbins was not a benefactor in any sense of the word but - knowingly or unknowingly - he left us a heritage in that he sold his holdings to Americans of Anglo-Saxon descent. Many of them were builders, traders, farmers, and lumbermen. All were workers. Shipbuilding and brick making flourished for many years. There are two brick houses standing in the town that were made with bricks manufactured in Robbinston over 100 years ago.

ory of the veterans of World Wars I and II. It is fitting and proper that this tablet be erected on this most historic spot in the town of Robbinston. It was on this very spot that the militia was trained under Governor Strong and General Dearborn to resist the British raids in 1812. It was later discovered that the British were interested only in taking the islands or Passamaquoddy Bay. Eastport, being an island, was captured; but Rob-

It was in the latter part of the 18th century that a certain legislator named Cabot arose in the Massachusetts Assembly and asked to be heard. His request being granted he proceeded to talk over two hours. He requested - yes, almost demanded - that the Northeast section of Massachusetts be separated from the Western section; that it be divided from the populous and industrial part and made into a separate state. In describing the Northeast section of the state - which is now Maine - he said, (among other things), "It is a vast wilderness, a primeval forest. It is larger than all the other New England States combined. There is much wasteland. It is filled with lakes and rivers, ponds and bogs, hills and mountains, and is too cold for much vegetation. It is frozen over from early fall until late spring; and worst of all, it is inhabited only by wild Indians." His arguments prevailed years later and the Northeast section of Massachusetts became Maine in 1820 with the "wild Indians" thrown in, if there ever were any!

Other legislators had different ideas as to why this section should become a separate state and history records that it was to offset the slave state of Missouri. Today, the Northeastern section of Massachusetts - once listed as a vast wilderness of little consequence - has become the vacation state of the Nation.

Someone has said that anything worth having is worth fighting for. That must be true when it

binston, being on the mainland, was not molested. However, the British cruiser, "Spartan" was sent up to Robbinston and here captured an American vessel with a prize cargo valued at \$15,000. Very soon after this, preparations for resistance were begun. Barracks were erected back of the church that stood here, fortifications were built, and the field was used as a training ground for soldiers from this and other sections of the state. On July 11, 1814 a detachment of British soldiers

comes to our form of government, Democracy, because we have been fighting for it since the Mayflower first set sail for these shores. History records that we fought for it under the first President of these United States, George Washington, and we have been fighting for it ever since.

We fought a Civil War to protect and maintain Democracy in the Lincoln Administration. History relates that we wanted to show the rest of the world that we practice what we preach.

Then later it was the Spanish-American War, and we left our shores to uphold our form of government, Democracy.

In 1917, we entered World War I and we were told - and history records - that we were fighting "to make the world safe for Democracy." We sent our boys and girls three thousand miles across the Atlantic Ocean to protect our form of government. Twenty years later World War II broke out and we not only sent our boys and girls three thousand miles across the Atlantic, but we sent them seven

came to Robbinston from Fort Sull - then known as Fort Sull - and arranged with the American officer in charge there, to evacuate Robbinston. Great was rejoicing when a truce was agreed upon and war was avoided - nearly two years of preparation. Had it not been for this truce in 1814 between the British and the Americans, Robbinston would have had a place in history as a scene of battle. "War was avoided by a hair's breadth" were the words

thousand miles across the Atlantic to protect, maintain and preserve our form of government - Democracy.

*"Life is the mirror of slavery king.*

*'Tis just what we are and  
The give to others the best  
have*

*And the best will come back  
you."*

Friends, I believe these tablets and girls whose names appear on the Memorial Tablet gave the names they had; and today we honor them. Their names are indelibly engraved on this bronze tablet and will be there years and years after we, who have erected it, will have crumbled to dust.

And now I have the honor to present it to the Town of Robbinston on behalf of the Grange.

*Ernest C. Brown*

The Memorial Site was a joint effort of the Grange and members of the local churches.

Ernest Brown was Representative to the Legislature for six years and owned and operated the Brooks Bluff Cottages.