

THE PEMAQUID POINT HOTEL

In his latest book entitled “Strength in What Remains,” South Bristol, Maine author Tracy Kitter tells the story of a young Burundian named Deogracias who grew up in East Africa in poverty, escapes a massacre in his school by hiding under a bed, accepts an airline ticket to America given him by the rich father of a friend, quickly gives out of money so sleeps in Central Park, and in time nearly starves to death. Literally his life is redeemed when, by chance, he meets an ex-nun who sees his hunger, befriends him, finds a couple who give him a safe room in which to live, and gathers together a group of sponsors who help him return to college. Then he enters medical school, which has been Deogracias’s life-long dream. Eventually he returns to Burundi to open a medical clinic for his people. Then, Deogracias goes about his country with Tracy Kitter, to show the author the places he had lived as a boy. But they found that for Deogracias to talk of the people that had been part of his life proved difficult, if not impossible. For in the culture of Burundi, you dare not mention the names of the dead, lest you do the unthinkable and “gusimbura” them – that is, show them utmost disrespect by remembering them by name. It is very bad in Burundi to remember by name anyone dear to you who is deceased. In the Western World we try to remember. In Burundi they try to forget.

The Pemaquid Point Association has a historian, because here in America, our culture tells us it is good to remember those who have gone before us, and have left a contribution which we value. Today we are going to take a step back ... somewhere in time, to remember those persons whose collective gift to us is the Pemaquid Point Hotel.

Our story begins in 1885, when a land developer and general contractor from Round Pond named J. E. Nichols, sold a parcel of land on the tip of the Pemaquid Peninsula to the newly-created Pemaquid Land Company, of which he was Clerk and Treasurer. The Pemaquid Land Company had been chartered by the State of Maine in the same year, 1885. If you want a date of the beginning of Pemaquid Point, as we know it today, 1885 is the date to remember. More than any other entity, the officers of The Pemaquid Land Company made possible the Pemaquid Point we enjoy today. The combined wisdom of these nine men created this place. Here are their names: from Maine – James E. Nichols, F. E. Hitchcock, G. W. Ellis, W. P. Miller and Judge Oliver G. Hall; and from Massachusetts: W. F. Sawyer, Solon Bryant, G. F. Burnham, and C. W. Sawyer. First of all, consider how these men decided to lay out the roadways – on Cliff Road and on The Pemaquid Loop Road, the road design allows everyone to enjoy views of the shoreline. Here, the rocks belong to everyone. And so the view of the sea from any lot does not exclusively belong to any one owner, as, for example, at Christmas Cove. One can ride through Christmas Cove, and after the Gut, one never sees the sea. Restrictions on lot ownership here were written to create a place of good taste, beauty, rest and relaxation. These men desired to “build up a summer resort” which, above all, would be, not first of all business-friendly, but visitor-friendly and most of all family-friendly. Built into the real estate plan were many rights-of-way to the rocks and the sea. Sale of alcohol was forbidden on all property sold by the Land Company, and legal challenges to this restriction have been upheld to this day. This policy was different from that of the Burnside Land Company, who owned The Bradley Inn which served alcohol. It is interesting to note that the Burnside Land began just across the driveway on the north

side of the Pemaquid Point Hotel. Most of – if not all - of the land along the shore at the Point was in possession of the Pemaquid Land Company.

In the late 1800s, Bristol Mills had a thriving weekly newspaper called “The Pemaquid Messenger.” The April 26th “Messenger” carried this notice in the “Local Events” column: “It is said for a certainty that a hotel will be erected at Pemaquid Point this summer.” On May 10, 1888 was this entry: “Bristol has many men with pluck and energy, but she needs more of them. One of her citizens who is moving in the right direction is J. E. Nichols of Round Pond, who has contracted for a hotel to be erected on Pemaquid Point, and to be completed before July 4th, when it will be opened with a celebration at that place. The house is sure of a large patronage, and the guests may be assured of good treatment if it is managed by Mr. Nichols.” May 17th “Messenger” reported: “The lumber for the hotel at the Point is being hauled from Bristol Mills. The contractors for building the house are Messrs. Elliott and Pope of Round Pond, who built the cottages at that place last year and the year before.”

Well, ten weeks later, on July 4th, 1888, Mr. Nichols made his word stand firm, and a gala celebration was held for the opening of the new Pemaquid Point Hotel. The Bristol newspaper’s own band played, and the oration was given by Judge Oliver G. Hall, secretary and director of the Pemaquid Land Company, and great grandfather of our own Edith Hary. I was so fortunate as to find the complete text of his speech, which was filled with a vast knowledge of world history, and frequent references to the great hope America presents to the world. Let me quote for you the last paragraph of his message: “Veterans, it is but twenty-three years since the battle-flags were furled, and you and your comrades laid down your arms. The new era of a higher union of heart and purpose has arisen. The beautiful South and the vigorous North, reunited, like bride and groom, are taking up their march to a common destiny. What imagination is vivid enough to foretell the future of such a union?” Well, it was with such an oration that the Pemaquid Point Hotel was launched on its way into the future.

Even while the Hotel was under construction, in May 1888 the Pemaquid Land Company met at Dr. W. P. Miller’s office in Round Pond and decided to build a wharf at Pemaquid Point. It was done immediately, and steamers began to dock there that very summer. Passengers connected at Bath with the boat to Boston. The wharf and a small docking house were on the John’s Bay shore at the very end of Blinn Road, off the back side of the Pemaquid Loop Road. Also guests could arrive by train in Newcastle, and be brought by horse and buggy – later by Model T – to Pemaquid Point. One of the Hotel owners referred to the Newcastle trip as “the long haul.” Indeed, it was!

A real estate office for the sale of lots was maintained by the Pemaquid Land Company, within the Hotel, during these early years. Mr. Nichols, it seems, operated the Hotel for the Land Company for a year, and then purchased the Hotel himself in October of 1899, but sold it to Mr. Will A. Elliott and Mary C. Elliott in November of that same year. This is the same Mr. Elliott who had built the Hotel in 1888. The Elliotts immediately took advantage of a tax break for persons expanding hotel space in Maine, and they added two more sections, which more than doubled the number of bedrooms in the building. Also the Elliotts acquired other nearby properties and built cottages which served as annexes to the hotel. In the woods across Route 130 are three such cottages, used to house hotel guests. They not only provided rooms, but also additional water sources, as well as sewage outlets for the hotel system. Mr. Elliott liked to sing, and he

kept a small Cokesbury Methodist hymnal on a little reed organ in the parlor at the Hotel. That hymnal is there, today, having been placed back there by the present owners, to whom small touches of history are deemed important and to be preserved. Mr. Elliott had a small store behind the hotel, and each guest had a booklet in which to record purchases. Accounts were settled at the end of the guest's stay. Mr. Elliott said he never lost even a penny during his twenty-three years of hotel ownership.

In 1926 Dr. Herbert Carlisle Libby, Professor of Public Speaking, Journalism and Debating at Colby College, came to Pemaquid Point, purchased land, and immediately built a cottage for his family. By 1930 his new young face appeared among the Directors at meetings of the Pemaquid Land Company, for he immediately recognized the business opportunity of purchasing stock in this real estate venture. Within a year, Dr. Libby had bought up all the remaining stock and all the lots still for sale by the Pemaquid Land Company. Dr. Libby's contribution to Pemaquid Point was tremendous, for he used his academic connections to interest teachers in buying lots at Pemaquid Point. Teachers – whether elementary, high school, college or university level – teachers, he knew, would have summers free, making possible owner-occupancy, and decreasing the number of unoccupied cottages and rental properties. Community levels of interests were, to some degree, elevated, by the presence of professional educators, and the presence of one professional person tended to attract still another. From Scranton, Pennsylvania, alone, eight teachers came here, purchased property, and returned year after year, as long as each lived. One of these, Angie Scardamaglia, who lived on Monhegan View and was one of our Association members, passed away a month ago, leaving me the last survivor of these Scranton teachers. In 1984 The Pemaquid Land Company sold forty-three of their last available lots to Skip and Cindy Atwood, who thereby enlarged greatly the land belonging to the Hotel. Also they gained land space for wells to provide adequate water for the needs of the Hotel. Until this time, shortage of water had always been an on-going problem for every owner. By 1988, Dr. Libby's son, Carlisle Libby, had sold all the Land Company lots. The Pemaquid Land Company is no more. But for one hundred and three years, from 1885 to 1988, this business endeavor had been conducted in such a wise way as to make an enormous contribution toward creating the Pemaquid Point community that we know today.

In 1922 Verena and Walter Brackett purchased the Pemaquid Point Hotel for \$7000. Verena had worked at her in-law's hotel on Monhegan, but the boat trip over to the island made her seasick. So she convinced her husband that they should purchase the Pemaquid Point Hotel on the mainland. For one year they continued to run the Hotel with wash basins and oil lamps - which is another way of saying "no running water and no electricity." But in 1923 the Bracketts paid for electricity to be brought down from New Harbor. Also they put plumbing into the Hotel. The way they did this was to add to each floor on the north end, a third section and dormer, containing a bath for each floor. This provided baths to serve sixteen rooms. The Hotel had its own horse stable, and in buildings in the rear were a small dry goods and grocery store, a laundry, and quarters for chauffeurs and other hired help.

In September of 1944, Verena and Walter Brackett bought the cottage next door to and north of the Hotel – the home now owned by Odette and Fred Conron. This land originally had been owned by the Burnside Land Company, was sold by Huldah and Robert Burnside to Helen S. Wright, who built the cottage, and purchased water rights

from the Burnside's. By 1935 this property was owned by The Pemaquid Land Company, and was sold by Dr. Libby to Henry H. Chamberlain, a prominent citizen of Round Pond. His widow, Phebe Chamberlain then sold the property to the Bracketts in 1944, and for a few years it was an annex to and a part of the Pemaquid Point Hotel. From about 1950, there were five other owners, before the Conrons purchased the property in 1982. Odette and Fred's cottage was 100 years old in 2009, last year. As you pass by, give a nod of congratulations. Thanks to the Conrons, the property is in great shape, and it has been here 101 years!

For a year during the 1940s and World War II, the Hotel was taken over by the Navy, and was closed for civilian use. The Bracketts spent that winter in California, returning the next season. When there was a shortage of gas for travel, the main entertainment for guests was going down on the rocks to enjoy the view, to hear the sounds of waves and to feel the ocean breeze and spray. Then vacationers returned to the Hotel for lunch or dinner. Verena Brackett said that the staff often served several hundred persons at dinner in the Hotel Dining Room. One night, a waitress heard two guests speaking softly in German, and when this was reported and investigated, authorities arrested the two men as spies, who were sending messages to a German submarine off shore. So there was excitement along the way! Guests could walk up to Minnie Martin's Tea Room for a mid-morning or afternoon treat. Mrs. Martin had cigars, and all sorts of baked goods and pastries for sale. There was penny candy for children to carry away in green and pink striped bags!

In 1945 the Pemaquid Point Hotel was purchased by Lucy L. Allen. So far, she was owner for the longest period of time - 30 years. Mr. Allen's main business was managing a laundry in Damariscotta, so we can surmise that most of the inn-keeping was, indeed, done by Lucy Allen. Mr. Allen was on the scene, doing odd jobs, but his name, for whatever reason, is not on the deed, and she is the sole owner. Mrs. Allen was the last owner to operate a full-fledged dining room on the premises. The Hotel had a staff of about fifteen persons, with women doubling as waitresses and as chambermaids. Most were local people, but all had sleeping quarters at the Hotel.

In the 1950s Mrs. Allen put in a swimming pool, across Route 130 from the Hotel's main entrance. Skip Atwood and I cannot agree about the size of this swimming pool. My remembrance is that it was quite small. He remembers it as of Olympic proportions. At any rate, I recall that water was provided to the pool by a garden hose that was up high on props, with room for cars to go beneath the hose that was elevated over the Pemaquid Loop Road. I remember also that the water was very cold.

Outside buildings on both ends of the main Hotel were built in the early 1950s, under Mrs. Allen's ownership. The units on the left, as one faces the front of the Hotel, were originally on the right side, but were motel-type structures that were not permitted by Pemaquid Land Company rules, so Mrs. Allen moved these units to the left of the Hotel, onto Burnside land, and the present owners appropriately renamed them "Burnside." The two buildings on the right side of the Hotel were designed as cottage-type structures, meeting Pemaquid Land Company regulations. The one nearest the lighthouse, now called "Monhegan" was originally a small take-out restaurant. The sign that stood in Damariscotta advertising this restaurant is on display here today, indicating the 12 miles to Pemaquid Point. Lucy Allen owned the Hotel property from 1945 to 1975.

The next nine years were difficult ones for the charming old Victorian structure. Between 1975 and 1984 there were four groups of persons who owned the property. First, were Warren L. and Lucille E. Eldridge, from Damariscotta, who called the property "The Pemaquid Motor Hotel". On their advertisement brochure is the by-line "Where the Rockbound Coast of Maine found it's Name". Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge sold the Hotel in 1979 to a retired Chief Petty Officer named Leo E. Julian, who passed away in late Spring, this year. One knew where to find "The Chief" as he liked to be called, for always there was loud country music playing on his radio, near where he was working. To preserve the wood of the buildings, he often painted them with used motor oil, or dark brown stain, with a trim in green. In 1981 the Hotel was purchased by four men: Kenneth L. Thomas, James Koulovato, Nick Papadopoulos and Peter Bissias. The Interests of the other three were purchased by Peter Bissias, who, a year later, signed the deed selling the property to Ward C. Nay and Peter M. Richard from Los Angeles, California. These two men ran the Hotel one season, before selling the property. You can understand the overall condition of the buildings when I tell you that in the early 1980s the sale price was just \$69,000. The Hotel had been stripped of many valuable furnishings, and lawn chairs were being used in the main reception area. The buildings were almost to the point of being abandoned and torn down, so that the land could be re-sold.

Then, in 1984 Good Fortune smiled upon the old Hotel, and upon all of Pemaquid Point! A young couple who owned an award-winning restaurant in Massachusetts, saw a film about an old hotel, called "Somewhere in Time," starring Christopher Reeve. Cindy and Skip Atwood were inspired by this film to come to Maine to search for a hotel of another Era that they could purchase and restore to its former glory. The last place they searched was the Pemaquid Region - and at the very end of that peninsula, look what they found! Cindy and Skip Atwood possessed every attribute needed to fulfill their dreams: a feeling for history, a special interest in the Victorian Era, impeccable taste, love of their chosen work, determination to work endlessly to see the project through to the very end, and adequate funds for doing the job at hand. Every area of the Hotel has been remodeled, repainted and refurbished under Skip and Cindy's direction and care. They first remodeled the outside buildings, and furnished the rooms with attractive Victorian decorations. Bathrooms were completely refurbished. In the main hotel, walls in some of the smaller rooms were removed to create larger rooms - some with private baths. The thirty-one rooms on two floors upstairs eventually became twenty rooms. Missing fixtures and furnishings were replaced, most often with the finest of Victorian Period antiques - even down to the little reed parlor organ, which holds Will Elliott's hymnal. This major restoration lasted about eight years, but Skip Atwood is quick to say that the maintenance is an on-going never-ending process. Where the swimming pool had been, Skip and Cindy built a lovely Victorian Carriage House, with an apartment on the second floor, and with space downstairs that serves as a garage for their antique station wagons, and as a studio or classroom for artists, whenever summer workshops are in session. To the "Burnside" units, they added a peak to the middle of the roof, and porch-like decks in the front, giving the building an uplifting new look. Green awnings on the dormer and tower windows added a touch of magic to the front of the main Hotel.

Verena Brackett lived until 1987, and became a very close friend of Cindy and Skip Atwood. She shared with them detailed history of the Pemaquid Point Hotel, and gave them numerous items that she had purchased and had used in the years of her managing

the Hotel. The two large Oriental rugs that graced the living room during the Brackett's ownership, are in the same place today – a gift to Cindy and Skip from Verena Brackett.

Will Elliott's grandson was on the Internet one day, and saw, for sale, an old desk bell, with this notation: "This bell was the original one used at the Pemaquid Point Hotel in Maine." The former owner's grandson purchased the bell, and sent it to Skip and Cindy, who let me bring it here to show you today.

So we have spoken the names of many persons who had a part in giving us The Pemaquid Point Hotel: J.E. Nichols, the Directors of the Pemaquid Land Company, Judge Oliver Hall, Will and Mary Elliott, Verena and Walter Brackett, Lucy Allen, the Eldridges, Leo Julian, the Kenneth- James- Nick-Peter foursome, Ward Nay and Peter Richard, and the Atwoods - Cindy and Skip. A writer named Jo Coudert has correctly said, "We are a link in a chain of life that recedes immeasurably behind us and stretches infinitely ahead of us." As part of this chain, Cindy and Skip Atwood have stepped in when dreadfully needed, and have re-created for us a Veritable Treasure! The Pemaquid Point Hotel's former glory has been enhanced and exceeded by its later glory. There are very few places or institutions or persons that can make such a claim. Let us be glad, for it can truly be said that The Pemaquid Point Hotel is, today, enjoying its Golden Age.

Anne D. Lewis
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