

WILSON MUSEUM BULLETIN

Fall 2016

Vol. 5, No. 14

A Mystery of the Bagaduce - Part II by Mary Dunbar Devereux

THE OLD LEACH FARM.

Not far from the first Narrows on the Bagaduce, Mrs. Leach lives with her family, in the old homestead built at the close of the Revolution by her grandfather, Maj. Leach. Connected with this fine old place is a beautiful and romantic story. In the latter years of the war the Major married a young girl who had grown up in the environment of the old town of Castine; a singularly beautiful and attractive girl who was but sixteen years of age when married. Major Leach took his bride to the little log cabin built on the high land overlooking the Narrows, where the tides rushed in and out; a country that is strangely beautiful today and we imagine how wild and rugged was the scenery in those days. They were apart from the rest of the world; alone, where the great wilderness stretched away and was lost in the mountains, and yet they were strong enough in themselves to be happy.

Some two years after, the Maj. went one day to Castine expecting to return in the evening, but the darkness brought to the little household no word from its protector. Maj. Leach had a thorough knowledge of the Penobscot waters and was a remarkable pilot. He had been impressed into the service of the English to guide their vessels toward the ocean and however reluctant the errand, he assumed the roll of pilot and ran the ship on a ledge near Eggmoggin Reach. Whether by accident or design we do not know, but I'm sure we have never heard that he expressed any deep regret for the action. Instead of being allowed to return to his home he was taken a prisoner to Ireland and kept

confined many months. Mrs. Leach during all this time watched over the cares of the household, guided and taught the little son that had come to them and successfully carried on the work of the forest farm, never thinking of giving way and returning to the village. She sowed and reaped the grain, and chopped wood, and did a man's work.

Indians were troublesome at that time and one quiet evening wolves made the forest echo with their cry, but she remained rigidly at her post. She sewed and worked for the neighbors, and this helped much in the need of the household. But she touched not a cent of the money they had saved before Maj. Leach's absence, and at last when he did return, with what he had brought there was enough to build the house where they lived so many happy years together. Maj. Leach was a much respected man in Castine, a man who was always doing for others, and who was dearly loved by his townsmen.

Through research, part of the mystery within this charming tale of historical fiction has been revealed. Two names were thinly disguised by the change of one letter: Pelatiah Beach and Jeremiah Bardwell. It appears that the author, Mary Dunbar Devereux, used a family story of her own ancestor Pelatiah Leach

(and neighbor Jeremiah Wardwell) as inspiration for this story. A 1904 article in Maine Chance, a Castine newspaper, made public her inspiration by recounting the tale of Pelatiah and Mary who were married in the latter years of the Revolutionary War. Mary, ...*a singularly beautiful and attractive girl was but sixteen years of age when married. Major Leach took his bride to the little log cabin built on the high land overlooking the Narrows [in Penobscot] where the tides rushed in and out; a country that is strangely beautiful today and we imagine how wild and rugged was the scenery in those days...*

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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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We hope you enjoy the rest of Mary Dunbar Devereux's story.

A Mystery of the Bagaduce - Part II *continued from Wilson Museum Bulletin Vol. 5 No. 13*

The master's words were fulfilled and "New House" with its barns and stables soon rose, facing the river, a house large and pretentious for the place and times, with wide fireplaces in kitchen and living room, white-sanded floors, small-paned, low windows and rude furnishing, varied here and there by pieces of finer make, brought from Boston by oft-coming ships. On the narrow mantel above the fireplace of the living room stood two small pictures on glass, set off with gilt and flanked with the pink-lipped conches brought by West Indian traders, and on the nearby wall hung a mirror with cable pattern frame in the upper section of which was set the picture of a ship in full sail. A corner cupboard stood in an angle of the room, displaying a fine array of pewter with a few rarer pieces of India china brought from over-seas. A piece of framed shell work hung over the master's mahogany "secretary" and against another wall stood a tall chest of drawers, also of solid mahogany, while at one side of the fireplace a high backed settle added the last touch to this quaint interior. Over this establishment ruled Mistress Mary Beach and her husband—"The Major" as he came to be universally called, from his connection with the neighborhood militia.

* * *

Master Beach of former years had been a sturdy and reliable young farmer; but "The Major" became the leading business man and authority of the town of Penobscot, incorporated in 1787 from ancient Pentagoet,—a man looked up to, honored, but feared by some and a puzzle to many. How changed from himself of former years! His manner had become that of a man of the world, and it much perplexed his simple country neighbors. Even his speech had changed, and tones never heard before entered into it.

"Why," said Capt. Bardwell, "if I didn't know 'twas Pel Beach, I'd think another man had come back in his skin."

"His very *skin* is changed," declared Mistress Bardwell in response. "Who ever heard before of black hair turning red?"

Indeed, since his return, the Major's hair had always shown streaks of dark auburn and reddish glints which even his wife did not recall in his youth, that wavy and beautiful hair which remained always abundant and glossy and lent a physical charm to the Major's otherwise rugged and stern face.

The months passed and the years, but never could the Major be persuaded to reveal the particulars of his wanderings nor even in what lands he had spent the period of his absence. Any inquiry on the subject seemed to provoke his wrath and



This Sheraton mirror has a cable pattern frame though it depicts a schooner not a ship. It was a bequest from Roland Howard.

suspicion. A passionately loving and hating soul, a keen business man and honored with the highest local posts of trust and responsibility, he ever remained a mystery to those about him. Even "New House" wore an air of secrecy and his shrewd countrymen sometimes hinted that the Major came not home empty-handed, even though an English prison had bound him during his stay abroad...

But, as years passed, the Major's peculiarities were accentuated and the distrust which a few had expressed, even as to his identity, grew acute.

"Strange," said Capt. Whitney at the Neck, "that Major Beach knows the harbor of Martinique better than I recalled it during our recent conversation, and, too, he chanced to mention the Goodwin Sands as if he knew the navigation of the Thames equally well. He must have travelled much between his release from an English prison and his return home! Yes, passing strange!"

"The new Pelatiah Beach is ten times the man he was before he saw something of the world; but why will he never speak of his imprisonment, his escape or his many experiences?" quoth the Rev. Mr. Powers.

"He's not Pel Beach, but another man in his shoes," said Uncle Bill Hutchins.

"The Major bargained with the Devil for his freedom and sometimes the Devil gets him," declared Nat Rhoads, the innocent of the hamlet whose sayings, however, sometimes had the strange and uncanny force of truth.

Even his wife sighed often and said that the Major's

hardships in prison had rendered him flighty and irascible, almost like another man at times; but she always ended by pointing to a tiny miniature of herself in her bridal dress, painted at New Falmouth by a wandering artist and declaring that the picture proved his truth and devotion, for it was carried in his pockets during his long absence and it was the only treasure that he brought home...

...This half-told, half-hinted story, never wholly died away in the years when his family grew up, married and settled about the town and the happenings of Revolutionary days became but fireside reminiscences of the older citizens.

* * *

No longer was it June but it was harvest time along The Bagaduce and the first frosts had glorified the maples and oaks and lined the roadsides with purple asters. The harvest moon shone full on the front of "New House" and, solemn and unrebuked, looked into the windows of the low living room upon the last of the Major's nights above the sods of his hillside farm. He lay stark and quiet in his coffin and by his side stood Mistress Beach, candle in hand, taking a quiet farewell of the husband loved and honored so well. She stood, still straight and lithe and alert, beauty hardly dimmed in her grief-blانched face, her eyes still gloriously dark and overarched by brows a painter might love to copy, her dark hair, despite her fifty-five years, wavy and beautiful. The touch of frost on the temples after all, was only a touch, glorifying the face which the harvest-moon caressed.

~continued on page 6~

Board Members Elected at 2016 Annual Meeting

On October 4, 2016, the Board of Trustees met for its Annual Meeting and election of officers and Board members (see side bar on page 2 for complete list). Officers elected for a one-year term:

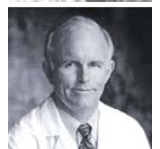
President Temple Blackwood ♦ Vice President Robert Downes
Treasurer Donald Small ♦ Secretary John Macdonald.

Two Trustees were re-elected for a three-year term, Richard Armstrong for his second term and John Macdonald for his first term (he has been serving the unexpired term of a former Trustee). Two new Trustees were appointed to fill three-year terms each. We are pleased to introduce our newly-elected Board members:

Marianne Buchanan - is an interior designer from New Canaan, CT who has been coming to Castine for almost three decades. She has held many roles with non-profits in Connecticut as well as the Hatch Community Youth Fund in Castine. Marianne and her husband, along with the Hatch family, are owners of the Castine Inn.



John Macdonald, MD - is Senior Medical Advisor for Criterium Inc. After an illustrious career in oncology Dr. Macdonald and his wife retired to Castine where he has served as past president of the Castine Historical Society.



Hugh Porter - is Associate Director of Admissions at Maine Maritime Academy. He is a licensed Maine Forester and Wood Scaler and has served in various capacities in Education such as Forestry Instructor, Assistant Dean of Students and substitute teacher. He is an avid outdoorsman who lives in Winterport, ME.



EARTH LOOM – Interactive Exhibit

The Earth Loom, a large standing loom, has lived this summer on the porch at the Wilson Museum overlooking beautiful Castine Harbor. Using simple over/under finger weaving, folks of all ages have been enjoying the art of weaving. This exciting activity has involved people from all over the world. Their stories are incredible and a few are included here.



Jeff and **George** visited the Museum to explore and research the area in which their father, a maritime captain and graduate from the first class at Maine Maritime Academy, once roamed. The two are writing a book, and after discovering the Earth Loom project, the men thought it a fitting way to honor their father. One brother wove in beautiful blue fabric to represent a wave and the other drew a sketch of each boat their father ever captained onto white ribbon and wove that in as well.



Boots, a woman who spent many years working for a teen homeless shelter in Bangor, wove her belt into the top of the weaving. The shelter she worked for found that giving away belts was a way to reach teens in need. She wanted to honor all the young people who have come to the homeless shelter and those who are still out on the streets.

Carla from Amsterdam was so excited about our weaving project that she decided to donate her current knitting project and weave it into the loom. She said it has reignited her creativity and inspired her to do more crafts, which is her passion.



This museum **visitor** is from Canada. She recently noticed that the tomatoes grown in her hometown were sold at Tradewinds in Blue Hill. In honor of her hometown tomatoes, she wove in a red ribbon with her town's name on it.

Hannah, pictured at right, was visiting the area from southern Maine with her best friend. Here she is weaving in honor of her late daughter, Susan, who was an artist for many years at Spindlenworks, a non-profit art center for adults with disabilities.



Glenis, a 91 years young local lady, grew up visiting the Museum as a child. She chose the coral orange color to represent the joy that visiting and exploring the museum has given her over the years. She also brought some wonderful artifacts for our Education Team.

Two gentlemen visited, one from Arizona and the other from Belfast. They said they were not weavers and probably never would be. Then, when they heard the weaving stories, they decided to work together and pick out a fabric that felt like Arizona — and wove it in!



The Wilson Museum is a home for stories: some from the past and faraway places, others from the present and our daily visitors. Add your story to ours. Do you know of a class or group that would enjoy learning to weave on the Earth Loom? Contact the Museum's Education Team to discuss bringing this program to your school or organization, 207-326-9247 or info@wilsonmuseum.org.

Collecting Castine 2016 Fundraising Event

Thank you to everyone who made this a successful event!

It was an evening of outstanding support for the Castine art community as well as the Wilson Museum. Over 65 generous donors including five members of the Mallonee family, hailing from Bangor, Washington DC and New York, attended *Collecting Castine's* inaugural event, honoring Barbara Mallonee (1926-2015), an artist who enjoyed being in Castine, as well as participating in and supporting the arts.

Attendees enjoyed delicious hors d'oeuvres with cocktails, viewed an exceptional exhibit of original artwork, and cast their votes for a work of art which the Wilson Museum then purchased for its permanent collection. We are pleased to announce that the People's Choice was *Twilight's Last Gleaming* by Gregory Dunham.

Following the selection of the People's Choice, all other artwork was available for purchase by attendees

and museum community in Castine and have a wonderful time doing it!



Mallonee family attended event in honor of Barbara Mallonee.



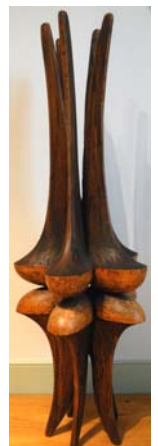
via a silent auction. This was a fast-paced, fun process with over one third of the artwork going home with excited buyers.

Collecting Castine was made possible by the talent and creativity of the artists, the generosity of the donors, and dedication of the Museum's Board, staff and volunteers. A hearty thank you goes to MarKel's for supplying and manning the bar.

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

Proceeds from the commissions and donations will be used to grow and maintain the Museum's collection and the event. Plans are already underway for *Collecting Castine 2017*. Mark your calendar for August 7, 2017 and come out to support the art

More 2016 Additions to the Museum's Art Collection



From left: print by Conni Whidden Ortman, two pastel portraits of Phil Perkins by Reg Willson, and a framed watercolor *Four Flags*, by Barbara Mallonee, all by donation. Sculpture *Seed of Life* by Clark Fitz-Gerald purchased at auction.

Great-grandmother Beach placed her palm softly upon the cold hands which never before had failed to respond to hers, and silently thanked God for her life with this strong, stern lover. In a moment she reviewed very much of all those years, but she thought especially of that long absence and of the return that at times seemed, even to her, to be the coming of a different man and the beginning of her own love-life and his. Was there still a doubt in her mind that he really *was* the husband of her youth, or his *double* come to take his place and a far greater place in her life and the world's? She stretched out her hand to push back the heavy hair, lately showing gray upon his temples and concealed in which he had in his youth laughingly shown her a dark birthmark which he said would identify him, living or dead. But great-grandmother Beach cast aside in scorn her own lingering doubt even in the act of removing it by proof. She laid her hand gently, for an instant, on those thick gray locks, then slowly turned to gaze across the moonlit fields to the open grave awaiting the master by the side of the little lad—the child of their later union—who had gleefully laughed through three years of adorable babyhood and then been laid in the family burying ground on the river bank.

* * *

The summer of her life and love was over even to the harvest and frosts of death. Though great-grandmother Beach lived on for twenty years, calmly and nobly, in the larger sense her life ended when the stern, sin-scarred and irascible soul of Pelatiah Beach went to its last accounting.

For a century Major Beach has slept his quiet sleep on the hillside overlooking the Narrows and the Upper Bagaduce. For nearly as long his wife, Mary, has slept by his side—an hundred years with their early December darkness and snows; an hundred years with their lingering winters, broken by the brave little song of the chickadee and the tardy south wind creeping over the ocean and upon the icy shores of New England; an hundred Junes with their sudden surprise of bloom and glow and gladness, the low summer moon reflecting in the quiet waters, and the cry of the nesting loons echoing afar from the reedy marsh by the river bank; an hundred Septembers with their fruitage and the sweet odors of orchard and meadow and cornfield, the early flame on the maples and the spike of ladies' tresses over the mown fields where the tang of autumn is felt even while summer lingers; an hundred years and the mystery in the lives of the tenants of those low green houses has never been solved!

Still stands, higher upon the hillside, "New House" which was their home—staunch and sturdy—still a home with the open doors of hospitality and neighbor-

liness, still welcoming back each summer the fifth generation of the descendants of Pelatiah Beach.

On a bright, cool September morning of 1915, the Major's great-granddaughter sat before his desk of mellow old mahogany, sat in the Major's solid arm-chair, fingering the knobs and handles of that old desk, familiar to her from earliest childhood but never quite losing its awe-inspiring aspect. She glanced from the windows out over the hillside and across the river, musing of those old days when great-grandfather was young and had been carried off by the Redcoats; of when he had looked out upon this same scene or had sat on the same spot, quill in hand and intent on public or private business.

Suddenly her attention was drawn to the fact that one little drawer, just pulled out, seemed a bit more shallow than its face would indicate, and pressing the bottom of that drawer, she found that it slipped back easily, disclosing a second bottom and between them a shallow space only an eighth of an inch deep, but containing a neatly folded sheet, yellowed with age, yet otherwise as if just sealed and laid there. She took it up wonderingly and found on its outer fold, in the neat but bold hand familiar from her perusal of many of the Penobscot town records as the writing of Major Beach, these words:

"When I am dead, for the eyes of my wife, Mary Beach," and in addition,— "What I never could tell you—but I know that your love is great and that you will forgive both my sins and my silence— Pelatiah Beach."

That was all and a date just an hundred years before. Turning the folded paper, she found it still sealed with the bit of red wax as the Major had left it.

The Major's secret, the mystery of his life, lay in her hand, superscribed, "For the eyes of my wife." It was not possible that the crevice had been unknown to great-grandmother Beach. It was not probable that she had never discovered the paper and read its inscription, but she must have postponed or repudiated the act of uncovering what her husband had all his life hidden from her. Perhaps she had postponed it from time to time until death had come to tell her all—or nothing!

* * *

The wax crackled under the pressure of the fingers holding it, but it was still guarding the Major's message to his wife! "For the eyes of my wife," whispered that wife's great-granddaughter; and she dropped the paper, still unopened, into the brisk blaze on the hearth beside which the Major and Mistress Polly had spent so many evenings in the far-away past.

The tale of that man's wanderings, of his sins or perchance his crime, would never be known. It would remain forever a mystery of The Bagaduce.

While we have discovered the inspiration for the story and that the characters and many of the events actually existed, it still leaves a mystery that may never be solved. Did Pelatiah Leach really come back a “changed” person? No hint of this was made within the newspaper article. Could this be where Mary Dunbar Devereux’s imagination took over or did she have family lore to draw upon?

Collections Conversations

Abby Dunham, Collections Manager

People sometimes wonder why museums have artifacts in storage. It is not because museums are deliberately hiding their collections; often it is a balance of limited space, providing access, and preserving the artifacts.

One of the primary reasons artifacts may be in storage is that museum have limited exhibit space. Exhibits take up more space than storage, and museums can quickly run out of areas where collections can be displayed. Even with selective exhibits, visitors sometimes experience what is termed “museum fatigue,” where the amount of visual stimulus and information is overwhelming. By not overfilling exhibits, museums provide a visual load that is easier to handle. This also permits for a rotation of materials on and off exhibit, keeping exhibits and interpretation fresh, and giving visitors the opportunity to experience exhibits and artifacts in new ways across multiple visits.

Rotation of artifacts also ties in to another reason museum collections storage is important. Some artifacts can be sensitive to light levels or temperature and humidity fluctuations. Even in the most tightly sealed and controlled exhibit building, environmental monitors detect changes when lights are on and people are present. Sensitive materials are therefore best preserved in storage where exposure to environmental change is more limited.

Even when materials either cannot be on exhibit or are restricted to short exhibit periods, their presence is important to museums in fundamental ways. In the case of the Wilson Museum, education through the collection is at the heart of our mission. Exhibits are only one way that the Wilson achieves this goal; it is also done through programming and research. Collections are the basis for the Museum’s programs with knowledge distilled from our artifacts being

REFERENCES

The Leaches of Penobscot, Parts II through VI. Mark E. Honey, BA/AA. Ellsworth, Maine: Bound manuscript, 5 Jan 1996.

“*The Old Leach Farm.*” Maine Chance Vol.1 No. 5 [Castine, ME] 20 Aug 1904: page 2.

The Trail of the Maine Pioneer. Members of the Maine Federation of Women’s Clubs. Lewiston, Maine: Lewiston Journal Company, 1916.



used by the Museum’s Education Team to enhance a school curriculum as well as inspire talks, demonstrations, and hands-on activities at the Museum. Further, there are materials that the Wilson has in storage that may not be visually interesting for exhibit purposes, and there are collection materials that, to the casual observer, may seem the same or very similar to other materials, both may prove extremely valuable to scholars and researchers in their investigations.

Preserving artifacts and their diversity is an important task of museums, and thoughtful consideration needs to be given to every object that is acquired. Each artifact in a museum collection creates an obligation of a high-standard of care. Since appropriate exhibit and storage spaces are both limited in area and expensive to maintain, museums must be selective in their acquisitions and cannot accept everything they are offered.

Thus, when a donor gives great granny’s prized possession to a museum and then, on the next visit, doesn’t find it on display, the donor and their family should not jump to the conclusion that the museum does not consider it an important artifact. By accepting the gift, the museum has agreed to do its best to ensure the artifact’s continued preservation and availability for future generations, and that may mean it is best kept in storage for extended periods of time.



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

WILSON MUSEUM

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

JOHN PERKINS HOUSE

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

**THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH
& WOOD SHOP**

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

BAGADUCE ENGINE CO.

May 27-September 30
Same hours as Wilson Museum

Volunteer Hero!

Mary Reed signed up this spring for the inaugural year of the Young Docent's program. As a graduate of this program she attended the Museum's Members Reception and offered "tours" of her favorite exhibit case to attendees. Since then she has helped with special programming, cleaning, gardening, and mailings. Whatever task we have given her, she has embraced with energy and eagerness. In July



Thank you, Mary!

she volunteered to give tours of the parlor bedchamber at the Perkins House during the House & Garden Tour. Near the end of August, Mary called, out of the blue, to see if we would like help and, as it turned out, a bad cold had laid low several staff members, so she was a most welcome guest docent in the Perkins House that day!