



A YOUNG MAN'S HOPE was fulfilled by patience and hard work two centuries ago when a stretch of wilderness became the Town of Gouldsboro. Seen here is the Gouldsboro Town House which stands near the spot where the young settler pitched his tent and surveyed the area. (Crane photo)

Enthusiasm Was Key Word In Settling Coastal Town

By J. R. CRANE

GOULDSBORO—Two centuries ago what is now the Town of Gouldsboro was just a stretch of unexplored wilderness in the District of Maine which was part of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. A few fur traders came ashore to buy pelts from the Indian trappers that came there to trap mink and muskrats. When storms came the coves and harbors were full of the ships of the English cod fishermen who came in large numbers to harvest the crop that was commonly called "New England Silver."

Exploring parties sent out by the various land companies invaded many sections of the District of Maine. One of them was headed by an energetic young man named Robert Gould. He first visited the Gouldsboro region in the summer of 1761, and was deeply impressed by the West Gouldsboro region with its views of Frenchman's Bay and the Bar Harbor mountains.

Names given

Names that are familiar in Gouldsboro today appeared on the list of newcomers. The Gustails and Libbys came first, followed by the Whitakers, the Hills, the Spurlings, the Tracys and the Joys. Finally it was decided to incorporate the settlement as a town and everyone agreed that since Gould had been the moving force behind the project, the new town should be called Gouldsboro.

In those days the Crown required that a certain number of people settle on a grant before a township could be incorporated as

a town. Township Three lacked a dozen or more citizens to make up the required quota. But a steam roller-like Gould didn't let a little thing like the lack of a few names on his census list stop his project. Along with the settlers' names he listed their cats and dogs, their oxen and even their goats. Consequently, a tabby cat owned by John Doe became Tobias Doe, a billy goat went down on the list as William Doe. Rover the dog was listed as Rollo Doe and the oxen, Star and Bright, became Sterling and Buckthorn Doe.

Seventy-six pounds and two shillings were voted for the expenses of the new town, and Gould's dream was complete.

Today the voters of Gouldsboro assemble in a Town House near the place where Gould pitched his tent when he made the first survey of Township Three. The Indian trail that he followed has been replaced by a black top road, but the view of Frenchman's Bay and the Bar Harbor mountains is just as unlifting as it was the day Gould first saw it through an opening in the forest.

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Likely Prospects

Gould had no money except the small salary he received as a surveyor, but he was full of enthusiasm and was apparently a natural-born promoter. Consequently, when he decided to promote a settlement in his favorite region, he headed for Boston to obtain financial backing. After shopping around a bit he selected a Boston merchant, Francis Shaw, and Colonel Nathan Jones as the most likely prospects for the help he required.

Shaw, who had made a lot of money in his business, looked upon the project as an investment. But Colonel Jones wanted a closer relationship with the property to develop it and make it his home. The Gouldsboro region was listed as Township Three on the maps of the Crown, and in due time the Courts of Massachusetts gave the three a grant of all of Township Three.

Shaw and Jones had plenty of money to finance their share of the deal, but Gould had to get outside backing to take care of his part of the deal. Being a fluent young man full of enthusiasm for the project, when he contacted the Boston agent of the English firm of John Lane Esq., he got the money needed without any trouble.

The Lane company took a mortgage on one third of the land as security, and Gould was in business. But that was only part of his problem for he needed settlers to make the project a success. However, the fast talking young surveyor tackled the problem with the same energy and enthusiasm that he had used to get financial backing. He went up and down the Maine coast looking for people who were dissatisfied with their way of life, and before long a steady stream of settlers were headed for Township Three.

Gould figured, and rightly, that the Crown's Commissioners would not leave their plush Boston office to come to the Maine wilds to investigate any census list. After receiving Gould's list, the officials made a tentative recommendation that the petition for a town be granted. Then they filed it and promptly forgot Gould and his ambitions.

As things worked out the laxity of the Commissioners was of little importance, for the Revolutionary War started. For a time residents of both Boston and Gouldsboro were much more interested in its outcome than in the fate of the proposed Town of Gouldsboro.

Becomes Town

But Gould was a persistent fellow and after the war ended with a victory for the American forces, he introduced his petition to the new American Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It was favorably received and in 1789 an Act of Incorporation was issued that made Plantation Three the Town of Gouldsboro.

Alexander Campbell Esq., Justice of the Peace, was empowered to issue a warrant for the first town meeting, and to name a man to notify the inhabitants of the town of the proposed meeting. Squire Campbell selected Thomas Hill, Yeoman, to carry out the action. He informed all of voting age that the meeting would be held at the home of Samuel Libby at 10 A.M. Thursday the 23rd of April 1789.

At the meeting all required town officers were chosen. They included Fence Viewers, Deer Reeves, and a Sealer of Leather.