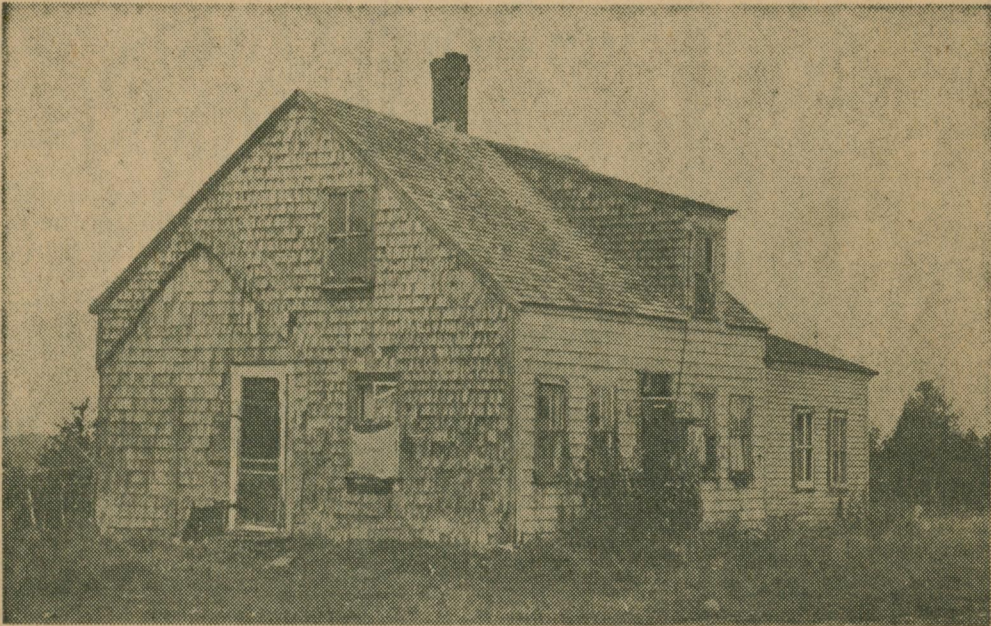


STATE AND COUNTY



PIONEER HOUSE—The oldest house in South Gouldsboro still stands, marking the birthplace of Ivory Sargent, the first white child born in the small community. Through the years, fishing has remained the main industry of the town. (Crane photo)

South Gouldsboro Boasts Colorful Seafaring Past

By JONAS CRANE

SOUTH GOULDSBORO, Jan. 28—South Gouldsboro is now a prosperous fishing village, but back in 1764 it was a small portion of a tract of land known as Township 3 in Gouldsboro Plantation. The original grant of this township was made by the General Court of Massachusetts to Nathan Jones, Francis Shaw and Robert Gould. The southwest part of the township went to Francis Shaw and it was eventually divided into two villages, South Gouldsboro and West Gouldsboro.

The first white child born in South Gouldsboro was Ivory Sargent, who lived in the house where he was born for 84 years. The old house is still standing and is the oldest structure in the village. Although the town has changed in many ways since the old house was built, the main industry is fishing as it was in the old days.

Shortly after Ivory Sargent's birth, a daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. Ruben Salisbury. They lived on Stave Island, which is located at South Gouldsboro's "dooryard," consisting of a half mile of Frenchman's Bay water. She was the first female child born in that section.

Some 50 years later Captain Jerry Stevens and his brother, Joseph, built the brig "Dilemma,"

the Fortune and Bonne Bays along the Newfoundland coast. The fish were so plentiful in the bays that sometimes a vessel would get as many as 2,000 barrels of fish in a few hours. The fleet usually got about 70,000 barrels of herring along the Newfoundland coast every spring.

The Americans were allowed to fish there by a treaty between the two countries, but the Newfoundland natives resented the Americans. The herring were the only source of income for the natives and they felt that their government had been unfair to them in signing the treaty. This bitterness often caused trouble between the American and Canadian fishermen.

The worst outbreak came in the winter of 1877-78 when a fleet of 22 Maine vessels, equipped with improved seines that doubled the catches, sailed into Fortune Bay. The new seines were 2,400 feet long and 150 feet deep, and the natives felt that such equipment would soon deplete their herring supply. A mob of about 200 Newfoundland citizens got into their boats and surrounded three Maine vessels, the "New England," the "Ontario" and the "Moses Adams." The natives warned the Maine men to take up their nets and get out. When the Yankees refused, a riot broke out.

The seines of the "Ontario"

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Some 50 years later Captain Jerry Stevens and his brother, Joseph, built the brig "Pilgrim" on the island. When she was finished Captain Jerry sailed her around the "Horn," and a young sailor named Richard Henry Dana was before the mast. This young sailor eventually became famous as the author of "Two Years Before the Mast."

Dana was not the only literary figure who had a connection with Stave Island. Nathaniel Hawthorne and his son, Julian came there for a picnic while they were spending the summer at West Gouldsboro. They were part of a large party who made a real Maine chowder from freshly dug clams and used the shells as spoons when the chowder was served. After the feast was finished the young people pelted each other with overripe dogwood berries and then went to a nearby barn to dance to music of Miss Charlotte Hill's fiddle.

South Gouldsboro never attained literary fame, but it eventually became outstanding in another more practical field. It became a "sardine town" when the canning boom came to Maine some 75 years ago. Before that it was the site of a lobster factory. Many of the lobsters were caught around Stave Island. The island was also a good location for herring weirs and this fact probably had a lot to do with the sardine factory being built in the town.

The first sardine factory was built in 1901 at a cost of \$10,000 and it had an \$18,000 pay roll the first year. That was a lot of money in those days, and it brought a boom to the town. Later a clam factory and fish stand added to the prosperity.

Today sardine factories are a highly mechanized operation, but in the old days they were strictly a hand labor outfit.

The fish were loaded into the boats by men with small dip nets, and other men with small dip nets unloaded them when they arrived at the factories.

There were jobs for all members of a "sardine family." Small boys armed with sharp knives cut the larger fish and carried them in baskets to the women who spread them out on flakes to dry. In time flaking machines took over the work, but in the early days the factories needed men, women, and children to carry on the work.

There were weirs around Stave Island long before the sardine factories were built. In the old days curing pickled and smoked herring was an important industry in Maine. Since large fish were needed, the weirs were used mostly in the fall when the big fish came in schools.

In the spring the fishermen

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The seines of the "Ontario" and "New England" were seized and cut into small pieces. Then the rioters turned their attention to the schooner, "Moses Adam," which was commanded by a South Gouldsboro man named Solomon Jacobs. When the rioters tried to board the vessel they were stopped by Captain Jacobs and his men who stood at the rail with loaded revolvers and threatened to shoot the first man who tried to board the schooner.

This resistance saved the seines, and Captain Jacobs got about a half cargo of herring. Then reinforcements for the mob arrived, and they dumped all of the fish out of the seine. But it was not destroyed, and the Maine men felt that they had won a victory as they sailed away from the mob.

But the rest of the fleet, perhaps feeling that the natives were justified, made peace with the Canadian fishermen and purchased enough herring to fill their boats. That night the natives put on a jubilee celebration blowing fog horns and firing guns to honor their victory.

The South Gouldsboro factories were torn down some 30 years ago and the men turned to lobstering. But there are still herring weirs and a lot of lobster traps around Stave Island. Times have changed, but the island and the village are still linked by a common bond in the fishing business.

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In the spring the fishermen shipped on the herring boats that were equipped with gill nets and haul nets. There were about 50 Maine vessels engaged in this business. Most of the South Gouldsboro men shipped on vessels sailing out of Lamoiné and Deer Isle.

If there were no herring along the Maine coast, the fleet sailed on to the Magdalen Islands in Canada. They also fished in

fog horns and firing guns to honor their victory.

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