

These notes were written by Helen Hallett (my mother) about about her "Grandma Handy" (Linda Coffin Nash Handy). They probably were written in the 1960s, possibly for Kathy/Chris/Carole/Karen/Virginia/Terry.

After the death of Captain Marcus Handy in 1881, Grandma Handy married Merle Tracy, ("Uncle Merle").

The original handwritten material appears to have been a draft. Portions resemble another longer memoir that focuses on "Uncle Lue" (Deasy) who married Marcus' sister Emma Handy after the death at sea of her first husband, Stephen Clark, in 1878.

transcribed to a digital text file by her son, Joe Hallett in November 2014.

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Remembering my grandparents, and other relatives on my fathers side of the family is like looking through a kaleidoscope, a matter of bits and pieces, as I saw them infrequently. My fathers father (your great great grandfather) I never knew. He was captain Marcus Handy – a sea captain who made voyages to Europe and the Barbadoes (ed note: Capt Marcus Handy died in Cuba) where he died of yellow fever when he was in his early 30s. My father's sister Hetty (Mehitable), and his brother Fred, with their mother, accompanied Capt. Marcus when he sailed until they were old enough to go to school. Then



they stayed behind. Grandma Handy (your great great grandmother) looked after the farm and livestock and kept things going while her husband was away which he would often be for months at a time.

Their house was in Southwest Harbor, a little town at the top of the point of land stretching out in the Harbor—just to the right of the Penobscot River if you look at it on the map. A rural coastal town with nowadays a population of perhaps 1000 people. Fewer then, I imagine. Fishing was one of the main occupations, besides farming and summer borders were becoming a business, with the advent of automobiles.

If you have ever visited Sturbridge Village you may remember a little red farmhouse with pointed cables on the front, sitting in a farmyard with chickens in the backyard. It is almost a replica of grandmother Handy's house, only at her house the backyard stretched a way back and then took a dive downhill to the water.

Until I was 11 or 12 (ed note: 1916-17) we went to Southwest Harbor for two weeks every summer during my father's vacation sometimes Aunt Hetty was there too, with her son Joseph, two years older than I. But usually I was the only child. It was never boring to me, at home we lived in a city suburb, and I was delighted to feed the hens, collect eggs, hunt for potato bugs or other pests in the large vegetable garden, and most exciting of all, sometimes be taken out in the fishing boat. Then the



fishermen loaded me aboard and enveloped me in borrowed oilskins several sizes too large, and commanded me to be quiet and keep out of the way. There was not much spare room. It smelled of past loads of fish, and once beyond the cove and into the harbor we headed out to sea, but we were soon drenched with spray and pursued by shrieking gulls anticipating our catch. My problem was always in urgent need of a bathroom—no doubt a great nuisance to the fisherman—who would find a pier somewhere and put me out to ascend via a rope ladder.

Grandma Handy was very busy, as in addition to us, she usually had at least four summer "guests." That was before the days of motels. Most small towns had one modest hotel. The only other accommodations were rooms in private homes, many of which bore signs saying "Rooms" or "Guests". Usually least breakfast and dinner were provided too.

Grandma Handy, like most housewives of the day had no electricity, an outhouse, (no bathrooms) and enormous black kitchen range which consumed stacks of wood from their own woodlot and which had a large trough at one side which held hot water. For any larger quantity of hot water it required filling large kettles and heating them up on top of the stove. She had a summer kitchen, with lots of windows facing the water. It was cooler there in the summer and she did most of the preparing of food there. There were also two soap stone tubs for laundry. And on



wash day (always Monday) grandma would get up at 4 am, having put her clothes to soak the night before.

The soap she used was strong lye soap which she made herself. The white clothes went into a huge copper boiler to be boiled on the stove, stirred frequently with a long wooden cleft stick made for the purpose. After that they were rinsed and put through bluing water to further whiten them. Finally, the wash was hung on lines in the back yard, where wind and sun gave them a freshness no modern dryer can achieve. Grandma usually had all this done by the time we came down stairs at 8 o'clock. Then breakfast was served, like all the other meals, even for one or two people, in the dining room. In the summer we ate at 8:15, and even on washday, grandma was not one to stint on breakfast. At the foot of the stairs there was a red velvet ribbon on which were three metal chimes with red flowers. Beside them a little padded stick. To call us all to meals grandma would strike the little chimes. On any morning breakfast might be hot blueberry muffins made that morning, scrambled eggs and bacon (home cured), coffee with thick cream from grandmas cows and perhaps home canned pears, or quinces, or apple sauce from one of their several apple trees.

After that the boarders vanished, but we helped do the dishes and bedrooms before we left for any "vacation" pursuits. After each meal the table was set again for the next meal and covered with a large cheesecloth cover to keep flies away. That was before pesticides, and flies and



other insects were a constant problem. Everyone had fly paper.

Bedrooms were furnished with pitchers, washbowls and chamber pots, and each morning all had to be emptied and washed, the pitchers filled with fresh water again from the pump in the kitchen. But with so many helping hands everything was usually ship shape by eleven and we were free to explore the country - perhaps go blueberrying, or take one of the small boats out for a long row, or pack a picnic lunch and climb one of the nearby hills. Or we might hitch up one of the horses to grandma's little brown carriage which seated 4 and had a top with a fringe just like the song. Usually the boarders were away until dinner at 6, too.

Grandma was seldom free to come with us. There was just too much to do. She had a lovely flower garden in which she did all the work. For the farm work there were two hired men, but she canned veg. from the veg. garden and preserved fruit from the apple trees - berries and grapes went to make not only pies, but delicious jams and jellies conserves. Delectable smells of her cooking were always...