

THE LINSOTT BROTHERS - FISHERMEN OF ORR'S ISLAND

The following is a transcription of a Portland Sunday Telegram article by Mary P. Siteman
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the Linscott Boys of Orr's Island have been predominantly identified with Portland Harbor and Casco Bay fishing activities for many, many years. To hit the nail squarely on the head one should say, throughout their entire span of their long and successful lives, as the three surviving brothers are in one form or another still actively interested in that hard muscled, red blooded man's game which they took up seriously long before they reached their teen age .

Captain Moses B. Linscott who is in his 88th year, does not engage in business any longer but he loves to "putter around the shore" each day and is as interested in news of the local fishing fleet as he was when he was one of the "big guns" in the game. That is exactly what he and his brothers were at the peak of the local fishing business in Casco Bay 35 and more years ago.

William Henry Linscott, now 77 years old, still "plays around" each summer with a string of lobster traps. This year he baits and hauls about 40 each day just for the exercise and to "keep my finger in the pie" as he expresses it.

Captain Ike Linscott is 75 and baits and daily hauls half a 100 traps and if you think that is boys play some of you "Highlanders" just follow him around for a day. I'll bet you will be tuckered out long before he is.

James A. Linscott was the head of the family. A sturdy God fearing and law abiding type of Maine coast native. He was married three times. Of the first marriage there was no issue, of the second there was one son James A. Linscott Jr, who later worked heart in hand with his stepbrothers. For this third wife Captain Linscott married Mary Black and to them 11 children were born, six boys and five girls. Of his large family, numbering in all 12 children, only three sons remain but the name of Linscott will ever be linked with the town of Harpswell of which Orr's Island is a part.

In its hayday the brothers, including, James A., Moses B, John, William Henry, Isaac and Charles where the whole works in the Casco Bay fishing business with Lowell's Cove at Orr's Island the hive of their flourishing industry. Another brother Hugh, whose death occurred a year or so ago, was incapacitated from activity engaging in business with them.

They employed upwards of 100 men in their fleet, were outright and controlling owners of 13 vessels at one time, and followed every branch of the offshore fishing industry season round and around . Salt fishing at the banks, Browns and Leharve, and the Seal Island grounds. In the spring, swordfishing on George's Bank in the summer and trawling during the winter. Their fishing crews came from Portland, Gloucester, Nova Scotia and the Casco Bay Islands and these men were afforded lucrative employment in and out. For a number of years the fishermen all along the coast eagerly looked for a chance to ship with the Linscotts as they were known the lengthened breadth of the New England coast as "Lucky Fishermen" which sets the seal of highest approval rating. It is a true and tried belief among fishermen that one is either lucky or unlucky.

James A. Linscott Sr., the father of the boys, died while several of his sons were comparatively young. William Henry was only 14 and Ike was 12 so they had to pull up their boots in earnest and dig in with a will . Neither has stopped since and still like it. And Moses B. Linscott, today the most colorful maritime character in the entire length of the main coast, was the keystone of the rugged Linscott family arch. He was and still is a big man both in stature mind and heart. His brother William Henry

said of him during the past week Moses could easily have had a bank account running well along in the six figures today had his head ruled his heart. He literally gave away several fortunes and did not then, nor has not since, regretted it.



Grocery and ships store - Little Island

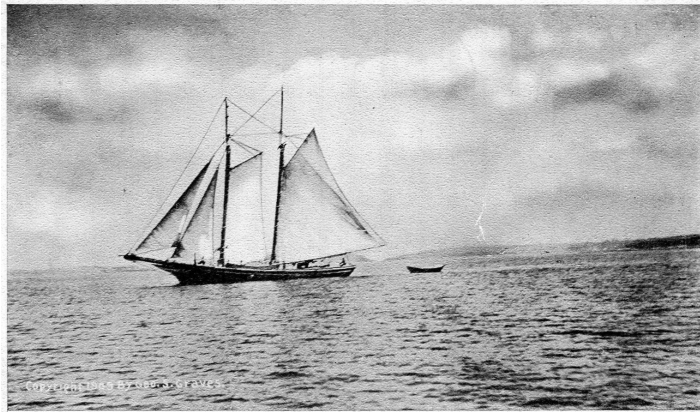
For many years, as a sideline, he conducted a large grocery and ships stores business at Orr's Island and customers came from far and near, loaded what they wanted unto their boats and kept their own accounts, and made no further accounting it. It is told of him that again and again Captain Moses assisted in lowering a beef quarter aboard a customer's dory with a full cargo of other supplies knowing absolutely that he was kissing the entire outfit goodbye as far as the payment went. But the good customer always came back with promises and appeals for more and went away each time with another load. In answer to chastisement of this easy method Captain Moses always replied "100 years from now I'll never miss a penny of it". He kept his money in a lozenge box whose hiding place was known to everyone as it was right where any one could see it and goodness knows how many needy and needless ones regularly helped themselves. No one has ever heard him express regret and if he had his life to live over again undoubtedly he would beat alone the same tack in perfect contentment.

The mention of his name, wherever he is known, evokes words of highest praise and genuine affection. He is spending his sunset days in happiness and contentment as he predicted he would, with his daughter and son in law, Mr and Missus Jerry Shea in their very comfortable home in the section of Orr's Island known as "Little Island" which looks out over the bold waters where seemingly only a few short years ago Captain Moses B. braved the terrors in many a winter storm with a stout heart and clear mind, piloting his sturdy craft to its home port after a hard day of snuffing salt brine for hours at a stretch in a smoky southern sea with its giant combers or in a heavily westerly chop, tired but always confident of reaching his mooring in perfect safety.

Starting out with "little or nothing", to quote Captain William Henry, they first bought the vessel "Constitution" and that, proving a success, added vessel after vessel built spanking new each a financial bonanza. Among those which they owned outright or in which one of or several of the Linscott boys would hold large interests were, besides the "Constitution", the pinky "Louisa", the "Little Dreadnought", the "George E. Hagan", the "Willie and Alice", the "Moses B.", the "Josie May", the "Julietta" and the "Cora E. Smith" and the "Mary Smith", the "Eva and Mildred", the "Maid of the Mist" and others.



Eva and Mildred



PORTLAND HARBOR, ME. The MOSES B. LINSCOTT leaving for the Sword Fish grounds M 418

These names will conjure up interesting memories in the minds of many old time main coast fishermen. Some were built at Bath others at Harpswell and elsewhere but when the Linscott Fleet was setting its sails and weighing anchor at Lowell's Cove at Orr's Island, prosperity was at its zenith and fewer ports gave forth an atmosphere of greater commercial activity. The very best of luck followed in their wake during the heyday of this industry. They later were sold and the Linscotts never knew wholly what end they made. Is known that good fortune followed them in the care of the Orr's Island brothers.

Many years later the "Willie and Alice" went to her watery grave on the roaring bull ledge off Metinicus and the "Cora E Smith's" bones lie on or near Monamay Point Nantucket Shoals. The "Mary Hagens" funeral dirge was sung in Boston Harbor and the "Maid of the Mist" met her doom on the Shark Rocks in Penobscot Bay. The "Josie May" finally was sold for snapper fishing in Pensacola and the Moses B. Linscott went to the Western Islands as a freighter.

The three surviving Linscott Brothers are comparatively hail and hardy for men of their years. All are of the old school, courteous and thoughtful of others, their word is as good as their bond and these characteristics were typical of the entire family. William Henry has two daughters and is extremely proud of his grandchildren. His grandson, Wendell William Tetley of South Paris, a graduate last June of Bates College is spending the summer with him and is his daily companion on his trips to his traps. Captain William spends his winters in South Paris, Maine. His beloved mate Sadie Doughty Linscott passed away several years ago. He has a comfortable home at Orr's Island with considerable land surrounding it right at the head of Lowell's Cove looking out to sea.



He is a "white ribboner" in the extreme definition of the word. An out and out "tea totaler". A lovable man, tolerant of the other chap's weaknesses, he loves to tell the story of how he quit

smoking 23 years ago and the great battle he fought in conquering the habit. Pyam Alexander, well known Portland businessman and sometime resident of Orr's Island, offered to bet \$100 with William Henry and several others that they could not quit smoking. William Henry says he did not take up the bet, but turned his pipe upside down after employing it and then and there bought a new pipe and a piece of tobacco and upon coming home laid his purchase on the kitchen mantelpiece against the day that the struggle became unendurable. Exactly a year to the day he decided he could stand it no longer and frankly confessed his inability to hold out another minute, took down the pipe and piece of tobacco, filled the pipe, got a match, placed the pipe in his mouth, lit the match getting it just to his pipe bowl when "NO SIR" he said, I'm not going to weaken now or I'll never conquer the habit. He snuffed out the match, and quenched for all time thereafter, his inclination to yield to temptation, but it was a long hard battle before he entirely quelled the desire for just one sweet drag on that alluring pipe. He says Pyam stood it just six months and then in a moment of extreme weakness which happened to be on the Casco Bay Steamer, gave in but never got it lit. He just chewed it up and swallowed it "in one bite".

Ike, like his brothers Moses B. and William Henry, has the lovable and honorable traits of character that have made them outstanding men in the community. Jovial and friendly, he has has a kindly word and ever ready smile for and from all. He is still very spry and carries his three score ten and five years lightly. There is a merry twinkle, suggestive of the mischief loving boy, in his eyes. He too has lost his faithful mate but is happy in the love of his living children. One would travel far and wide to find three equally congenial brothers with every commendable trait of character that makes for the highest and best of a well rounded life.

[Isaac "Ike" Linscott lived at Lowell's Cove, Orr's Island, in the house later owned by "Sam" Doughty and after that by Lester Harris. He lived there for 52 years. The house had always been owned by two families, each living in one end of the building. This house was in the family of Sam's first wife, Lillian Linscott, whom he married in 1913, and so passed to him. After Lillians death he continued to live there until he married Ethel Snell. He then sold the property to Lester Harris, son of Leona Doughty and Alfred Harris, and took up residence in a house across from the Orr's Island Post Office on Rt. 24 which belonged to the Snell family. He lived there until his death in 1982. Lester Harris was finally able to buy both halves in about 1975. In early 1980's the house was sold to people from New York for \$26,000.]



Ike Linscott



James Linscott

[James Linscott lived on the east side of Lowells Cove just to the north of his brother Isaac. The house most recently belonged to Arnold Bennett and was destroyed in a fire in 2018. It has been rebuilt.]

[William Henry Linscott lived on Smith Hill above Lowell's Cove for half a century.]