



Sebago  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# SEBAGO ECHOES

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## GRADUATION TIME



As high school graduations approach, we look back 100 years to the graduates of Potter Academy, Class of 1923. The Academy graduated seven students that year, three from Sebago, three from East Baldwin, and one from Waterboro.

The three from Sebago were all members of the extended Poor family. Cuyler Poor (1906-1996) and Bernard (“Barney”) Poor (1907-2007) were brothers, sons of Howard E. and Ella (Farrington) Poor. After graduation, they both went on to the University of Maine and took degrees in engineering in 1927. The UMaine yearbook of ’27 says of Bernard, who majored in electrical engineering, “Here is an eccentric youngster, whose keenness of mind makes him a hopeless arguer. Talking is his hobby and electricity is his forte.” Of Cuyler, they said, “We all know Cuyler for he knows all of us. As a hustler, he is second to none, with the possible exception of ‘Barney.’” Both boys left Maine to pursue their lives. Bernard ended up in Seattle and lived to see his 100th birthday; Cuyler went to North Carolina, where he died at the age of 90.

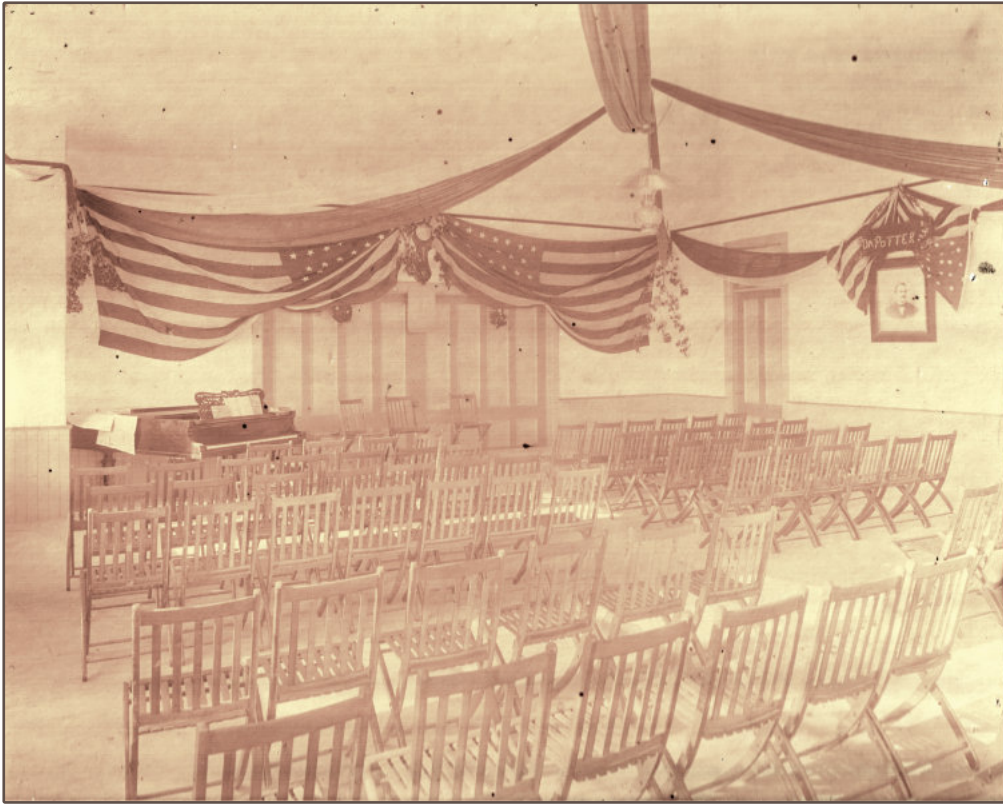
*Students and faculty of Potter Academy in 1923. Too bad the photo isn't labelled with names!*

The third Sebago graduate was Gladys Shaw (1905-1995), daughter of James A. and Lizzie (Poor) Shaw. Lizzie was Howard Poor's sister, making Gladys a cousin of the two boys. Three years after leaving Potter, Gladys married Clifton Wood, one of the boys from East Baldwin who graduated with her in 1923.

Clifton and his brother Clarence Wood were both part of that graduating class. By the time Clifton married Gladys, Clarence was already married to Gladys' older sister Avis, a double binding of the families. Clarence died very young, just 24 years old, in 1928. We haven't been able to discover what happened to him – if you know, we'd love to hear! Brother Clifton also died fairly young, at age 48, in 1954. He was the proprietor of Wood's Garage in Baldwin, and a licensed airplane pilot.

The third Baldwin boy in the class of 1923 was Fred Robbins. He married Lillian Douglass of Sebago,

## GRADUATION CONT'D



*The auditorium of Potter Academy all decked out for some event – a graduation, maybe? All we know about this photograph is that it was taken by John F. Haley (1852-1921), Sebago's first professional photographer, who operated a studio in the family house in Convene. We are indebted to him for many early shots of places around Sebago.*

daughter of Harry E. and Ethel May (Usher) Douglas.

The sole graduate from Waterboro was Dorothy Smith (1906-1986), daughter of Walter and Addie (Johnson) Smith. She went on to college, at the University of Maine in Orono and Bates in Lewiston, becoming a teacher at Gould Academy in Bethel. During summers, she was an operator for the Baldwin and Sebago Telephone Co., rising in the company as it grew and merged with Standish Telephone Co. She was active in the Grange and other civic organizations.

In the student publication that May, Gladys Shaw's poem "Au Revoir" appeared. Its final stanza read:

Soon our lessons will be ended  
And our high school days be  
o'er.  
So now fare thee well, dear  
Potter,  
Fare thee well and 'au revoir.'

## SMELTING: A SEBAGO SPRING RITUAL



A sure sign of spring in Sebago is when the smelt begin to run. When stream water reaches 40 degree and light fades away after sunset, smelt head upstream to spawn. Once a run begins it lasts just about a week, as long as the water temperature remains 40 or above. A cold rainy day or a snow fall will shut a run down. As soon as it warms the run continues.

At one time smelting was as much a ritual of spring in these parts as hunting for fiddleheads, and if you had a good fishing spot, your spring menus always featured these "french fries of the lake." Anglers took them by hook and line, called jigging, or by using a dip net with a long handle and a lantern to scoop them up at night.

Wherever it was legal to take two quarts for personal use or consumption you'd find a gathering of fishermen.

"Wherever it was legal" brings us to a few stories of Sebago fishermen and women who might have taken an "it ain't illegal 'til you're caught" attitude towards smelting in local waters. There was the case of Olive Irish in 1972. Her husband Lester really wanted a mess of smelts for dinner one night. The Irishes lived near Lakin Brook, a good source of smelts, but where fishing was restricted to hook and line. Dinnertime was near, though, and Olive wanted a faster method, so she took her dipping net and went to catch supper. The warden, she thought, wouldn't notice her if she was quick. But the warden, who had earned the nickname Pretty Boy Floyd in local circles, caught her red-handed, and she had to pay a \$20 fine – a stiff price in those days for a fish dinner!

In those day, the Bridgton News had a column from the Municipal Court, listing all the people who had been brought up on charges in the previous weeks, so all your misdeeds were made public. The ribbing from Olive's friends was probably worse the the fine!

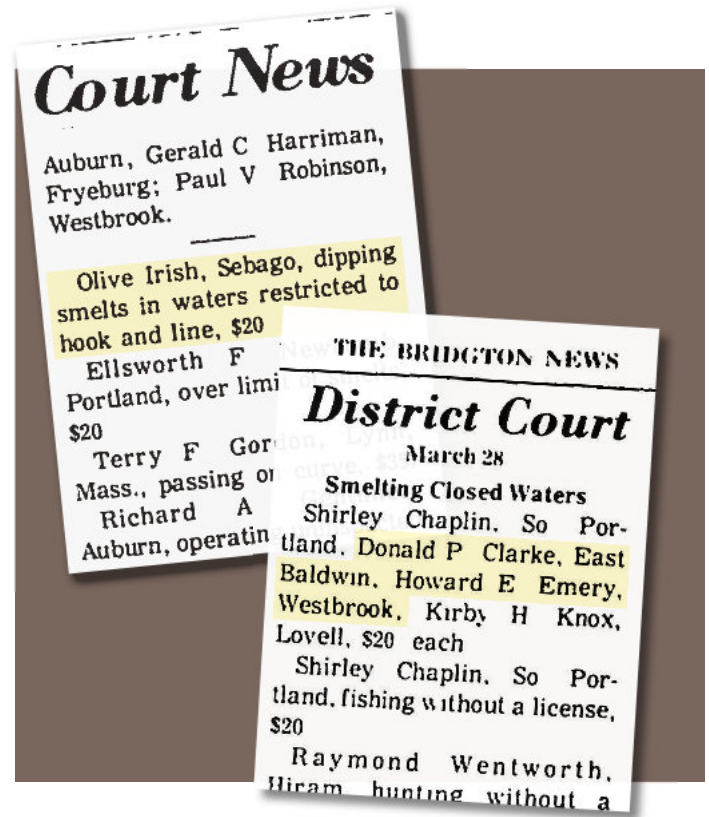


## SMELTING CONT'D

Another case that made its way into the paper involved Gibby McAloney, his friend Howard Emery, and in-laws Don Clarke Sr and Jr, who decided to go smelting up Lakin Brook on a Sunday afternoon in April of 1973. They figured the warden wouldn't be around that day. But just in case, Gibby positioned his wife Marje and her friend Millie in the car at the top of his driveway on Peabody Pond Rd as lookouts. If they spotted the warden coming down the road, they were to start tooting the horn. And as extra insurance, they took the dog with them, knowing he would bark at anything. Well, the dog did start to bark and bark and bark, but since there was no horn tooting, they told him to shut up. They should have listened to him! The warden didn't come down the road; he'd come through the woods on the tote road and surprised them in the act. They all scattered; Don Jr legged it, and Gib crawled on his belly through the bushes, losing his glasses on the way. The dog got away, too. But Howard and Don Sr were nabbed. They were fined, and appeared in the Bridgton News' column of shame. Since Don's wife had warned her husband before she went to work not to do anything stupid like go smelting where it wasn't allowed, he dreaded what she'd say if she saw the paper. He made a point of getting to the mailbox on Wednesday before she did so he could intercept it.

There are legal ways to get a mess of smelts, though smelting is no longer allowed in many ponds and rivers in Maine, including Sebago Lake and all its tributaries. Smelt populations around the Sebago Lake area are under stress for reasons stretching back to the 1800s, when dams were being built along rivers and streams to power the sawmills that were the backbone of the local economy. Both salmon and smelts became land-locked by the dams, and salmon fry were vulnerable to predation by eels and pickerel. As early as 1873, salmon eggs were being hatched at the Salmon Hatching Works at Edes Falls in Naples to restock Sebago Lake and other large lakes. By the 1970s, salmon populations had declined enough that lake trout, or togue as we call them, were introduced to the lake to provide additional angling opportunities. Togue were stocked in the lakes between 1972 and 1982, by which time it was apparent that the lakers were too successful. Both the trout and the salmon feed on smelts, and the togue were out-competing the salmon. The smelt population was being decimated, and the salmon population was suffering. Togue are still a problem in Sebago Lake today, enough that the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife maintains no bag limit for smaller togue. It is the only fish they let you keep when ice fishing.

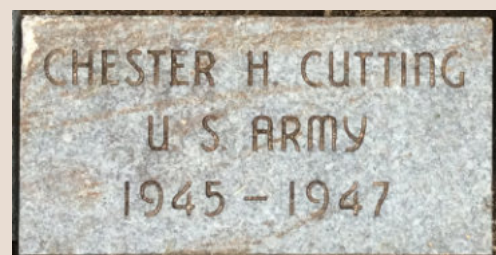
Today, if you want to go smelting, and keep out of trou-



ble, you'll probably need to travel north. Most local waters have restrictions or outright bans on smelting. Salt-water smelts are less restricted, however, and you can go to smelting camps on the coast for a taste of an old-time spring tradition.

## VETERANS' STONES

The stones commemorating Sebago's members of the armed services in Veterans' Park are one of our ongoing projects. All men and women who lived in Sebago at some point in their life and served in any of the armed service branches are eligible for a stone. We will be ordering additional stones soon. To purchase one for yourself or for a family member, please contact us by [email](mailto:contact@sebagohistoricalsociety.org) at [contact@sebagohistoricalsociety.org](mailto:contact@sebagohistoricalsociety.org) or talk to any member of the Society. The cost for an 12" x 6" granite, engraved like the one shown below, is \$140.





## 2024 CALENDAR

We're hard at work on the 2024 SHS calendar, the next in our series exploring the different neighborhoods of the town. This coming year, we focus on the Convene area. Do you have any old photos of buildings in Convene, or any old stories of people who lived there? If so, we'd love to talk with you! Please [email](mailto:contact@sebagohistoricalsociety.org) us at [contact@sebagohistoricalsociety.org](mailto:contact@sebagohistoricalsociety.org) or talk to any member of the Society, and we'll get in touch with you. Thank you!

As always, the calendar will include notes on birthdays, anniversaries, etc. Do you have any events you'd like included? Send information to: Sherrill Brown, 573 Peabody Pond Rd, Sebago, ME 04029. \$.50 per name, (so an anniversary would be \$1, a birthday \$.50).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

This is the time of year we pull together our presentations and events for the coming season. On July 8, 7pm at the Spaulding Library, we'll sponsor a talk by Adam Cook of the Narrow Gauge Museum, giving us a preview of the equipment he'll be bringing to Sebago Days. On September 12th, Katherine Rhoda will be with us to show off old-time, unusual musical instruments from the turn of the last century (have you ever seen a Marxophone?). We're looking around for houses to include in our ever-popular house tour, usually held in August, and planning a Fall Festival for October 14th. Stay tuned for details.

Is there a subject you'd like us to address in a program or an event you'd like us to host? Please speak up! We're always open to suggestions. You can [email](mailto:contact@sebagohistoricalsociety.org) us at [contact@sebagohistoricalsociety.org](mailto:contact@sebagohistoricalsociety.org) or talk to a member of the Society.



*Sebago*  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## OUR MISSION:

**To encourage and promote an interest and appreciation of the history of the Town of Sebago through the collection, research, and preservation of such information, materials, or items and to develop educational programs of historical or genealogical importance relating to Sebago's history.**

## MUSEUM:

**347 Convene Road, Sebago**

## MAILING ADDRESS:

**PO Box 59, Sebago, ME 04029**

## EMAIL:

***[contact@sebagohistoricalsociety.org](mailto:contact@sebagohistoricalsociety.org)***

## WEBSITE:

***[sebagohistoricalsociety.org](http://sebagohistoricalsociety.org)***

## MEMBERSHIP:

Please become a member to support our work. An annual membership for an individual is \$10, or a family membership is \$15. Student memberships are free. To join, please download the [membership form](#) and mail it with your check to the address above. **OR now you can sign up and pay online at [sebagohistoricalsociety.org/membform.php](http://sebagohistoricalsociety.org/membform.php).**