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"THE PRETTIEST VILLAGE IN MAINE"

Wiscasset Newspaper



oct 20,
2005

"Serving Alna, Dresden, Edgecomb, Westport, Wiscasset and
Woolwich"

oct 20,
2005

Here's The Latest Chapter In Remains Of Old Schooners

Top

Paula Gibbs

Wood engravings of the old schooners, Hesper and Luther Little, the waterfront signature of Wiscasset for many years, will net the town \$500 from sales so far, according to a Dresden couple.

Sweet Imaging, owned by Todd and Barbara Sweet, were approached by Wiscasset's former economic development director, Don Alexander, last fall, when some of the remains of the ships were being disposed of. Alexander asked the Sweets if they would be interested in engraving a facsimile of the two ships into slices of the old wood.

At a recent selectmen's meeting, Joe Carter asked what had ever become of the project.

"We have our first check ready to give to the town," Barbara Sweet told the newspaper last week. She said she had called the town office to see if she could present a check for \$500 to the town at the October 11 selectmen's meeting, but was told she needed to be put on the agenda.



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The Sweets have sold 20 of the pieces, she said, at \$195 each. According to the agreement the Sweets made with the town, \$25 from every sale is given to the town.

The saga of what happened to the ships, and their remains, since the ships were first brought to Wiscasset in the 1930s has all the makings of a short novel.

The ships were both built during World War I. The 210-foot Hesper was built by Crowninshield Ship Building in South Somerset, Mass., and launched in 1918. Luther Little was built by the Read Brothers Yard in Somerset, Mass. The original burned in 1916 when it was not quite finished. The second, 204-foot Luther Little was launched in 1917.

In 1932 both ships were sold at auction, to settle claims against the vessels, to Frank Winter of Auburn for \$600. The town later learned that in 1938, a 12-year old boy named Gardner Fay swiped the medicine chest from the Luther Little. Wiscasset Newspaper editor Robert Conlin wrote a story in the August 13, 1998 issue explaining that Fay, who became a doctor, kept the chest in his Concord, Mass. attic until he decided to return it to Wiscasset. According to the story, the selectmen "gladly accepted the gift, and remarked that it would go on display with other schooner artifacts in the future."

When the selectmen decided they should remove the remains, they appropriated \$125,000 for the job, instructing the successful bidder, Fore River, which received \$77,000 of the appropriation, to save the masts, cable stays, anchor chain and anchors, and the stern of each ship and the trail

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Wiscasset - Extensively renovated home with

boards. Other items listed as salvageable, according to a March 12, 1995 Wiscasset Newspaper article, were: stern piece and billet head; mizzen topmast; fore boom; fore topmast end piece; spanker masthead iron mizzen mast; two mizzen peak halyard bands; assorted wire; upper main masthead; fore topmast; fore mast; fore deck capstan; main topmast; staysail boom tripod; fore deck bollard; cutout sections of the starboard rail, bulwark, top timber, covering board structure; starboard forward section of taffrail, including fashion iron, one stanchion and approximately eight feet of log rail.

Former planning board chairman Norm Guidoboni subcontracted with Fore River to take the remains from the shore to the landfill. Guidoboni told the newspaper that Stuart Wyman and Bob Blagden worked with him on the job. Some of the remains were stored next to the landfill, while others were stored inside a small building on the site.

In early 1999, the selectmen came up with a proposal to build a tourist kiosk on the Creamery Platform to house the more valuable remains from the ships, but the idea was shot down by the townspeople.

In the summer of 1999, the town opened up the landfill, and let people pick through the pile.

That same summer, Jim and Lynda Plante, equal partners in Plante Model Shipwrights, Inc. in Rehoboth, Mass., presented Jim and Nancy Gillies with models of the two ships they had made from wood salvaged from the ship's remains. The Gillies, owners of the

custom kitchen, 2 baths and new systems.



Untitled
Max, Age 7
Lyseth Elementary

Wiscasset Motor Lodge, commissioned the Plantes to build the models, after becoming acquainted with them, and their talents, when they were guests at the lodge several times.

At a selectmen's meeting in January of 2001, selectmen were asked about the disposition of the remains. Third selectman Roy Barnes said Kevin James had a contract with the town "for everything on the left hand side," but no one had a contract for the remains on the right side. However, Barnes said James' contract had only been for a year, and the time had probably run out.

Several residents suggested selling the remains for 30 cents a pound. Much of the wood was white oak, which apparently is hard to find.

That same year the Department of Environmental Protection got after the town for not getting a permit to take the remains to the landfill, which had been capped at a cost to the state of \$380,000.

At that point there was still about \$42,000 leftover from the original \$125,000 removal appropriation. That summer, the selectmen once again opened up the landfill to let people take what they wanted from the remains of the schooners.

At the time, selectman Ben Rines said he hoped people would cart off most of the remains, so the town wouldn't have to use the rest of the money.

According to a document called the Wiscasset Riverfront Vision for the Year 2015, the ship's artifacts would be kept at the Wiscasset Maritime Museum,

which would be located in the old Customs House. Asked about this idea, the owner of the Customs House, LeGarage Restaurant owner Cheryl Rust, told the Wiscasset Newspaper in April of 2001, "I must say, it's a little eerie, considering it's mom's home..."

In August of 2001, Wiscasset town clerk Sandra Johnson announced at a dinner meeting of the Wiscasset Senior Citizens that a photo of the Hesper and the Luther Little, taken by Mark Gagnon, entitled "Lost Landmarks" had been accepted by the Smithsonian.

In January of 2004, the Hesper and Luther Little again made news when Wiscasset Town Manager Larry Cilley announced that he would conduct a campaign to raise \$60,000 to buy a diorama of the two ships, crafted by Camden artist John Gardner. The town paid for campaign brochures, insured it while it was in a display case at the town office, and paid to fix the glass in the display case when it was broken.

However, by the time Cilley left the job in July of that year, the campaign had largely fizzled, and the new town manager, Andrew Gilmore said he didn't think it was appropriate for town employees to be spending their time on the venture.

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