

History of Bucksport

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The first inhabitants of Bucksport were a 5,000 year old prehistoric culture known as the Red Paint People, that would later be referred to as the Maritime Archaic. They were thought to be a highly advanced native fishing culture that buried red paint in their graves along with stone tools and weapons. The first archaeological dig in the state of Maine, if not the entire United States, was initiated by Professor Charles Willoughby in 1891 on Indian Point, on a site where the present-day mill is located.^[1]

Once territory of the Tarrantine (now called Penobscot) Abenaki Indians, it was one of six townships granted by the Massachusetts General Court to Deacon David Marsh of Haverhill, Massachusetts and 351 others. Colonel Jonathan Buck and a number of the grantees arrived in 1762 to survey the land, then returned to Haverhill. In June of 1763, Buck came back to settle permanently what was known as Plantation No. 1, building a sawmill on Mill Creek, as well as a house and store. By 1775 the plantation had 21 families.^[2] Legend has it that Buck burned his mistress for being a witch, and that she promised to return and seek vengeance on the town. It is believed to be her foot and leg that appears on his tombstone, reappearing each time it has been replaced.^{[3][4]}

During the Revolutionary War, the British military built Fort George at Castine. On April 14, 1779, the stronghold became the site of a major American naval defeat called the Penobscot Expedition. The following day, when most of Plantation No. 1 was deserted, the 16-gun Royal Navy sloop HMS *Nautilus* anchored at the harbor. Its crew burned the town, sparing only those remaining inhabitants who swore allegiance to the Crown. But following the peace treaty of 1783, the town was resettled and called Buckstown Plantation after its founder. Incorporated on June 27, 1792 as Buckstown, it was renamed Bucksport in 1817. The town was occupied by the British during the War of 1812. In 1851, the East Maine Conference Seminary was opened by the Methodist Church as a preparatory school, but closed in 1933 when Bucksport opened its first public secondary school.^[5]

Bucksport is also well known for its bizarre and fantastic stories. In 1892, a circus elephant named Charlie broke loose and roamed the town a free animal. He was finally captured , with the help of a pit bull, who cornered the elephant so his handlers could secure him.

On the evening of October 13, 1876, a triple homicide took place, leaving an old man named Robert Trim, his 32-year-old daughter Melissa Thayer, and Thayer's 4-year-old daughter Josie murdered and their family farm burned to the ground. The authorities soon arrested a sea captain despite the lack of witnesses, evidence or motive, and his trial was one of the biggest the young state had ever seen. The captain was found guilty and sentenced to life in Thomaston Prison.^[6]

In 1898, another notorious murder took place. A woman named Sarah Ware went missing on the evening of September 17, and her beheaded and badly decomposed body was discovered by a search party two weeks later near Miles Lane. A man named William Treworgy was eventually tried for the murder but was acquitted, and the case remains unsolved to this day.^[7]

The town's surface is uneven, with ponds and streams. Farmers grew hay and potatoes. Shipbuilding, however, would become the principal occupation. Many worked at fisheries, sailing to the Grand Banks for their catch. Other industries produced lumber, ships' pumps, blocks, plugs, wedges and wheels, boats, barrels, carriages, leather, boots and shoes and stone work. In 1874, the Bucksport and Bangor Railroad was completed. It provided Bangor with shipping access to Penobscot Bay during winter months when the Penobscot River froze.^[8] The Maine Seaboard Paper Company in 1930 opened the Bucksport Mill, a paper mill with two machines which manufactured 300 tons of newsprint per day. Now it is owned by Verso Paper, and has 4 machines with a capacity to manufacture 482,800 tons annually. The factory produces lightweight coated paper used in such publications as Time Magazine and the L. L. Bean catalog.^[5]

References:

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7. The Sarah Ware Murder
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