

Location

USA
Maine
Phippsburg
Parker's Head

Name

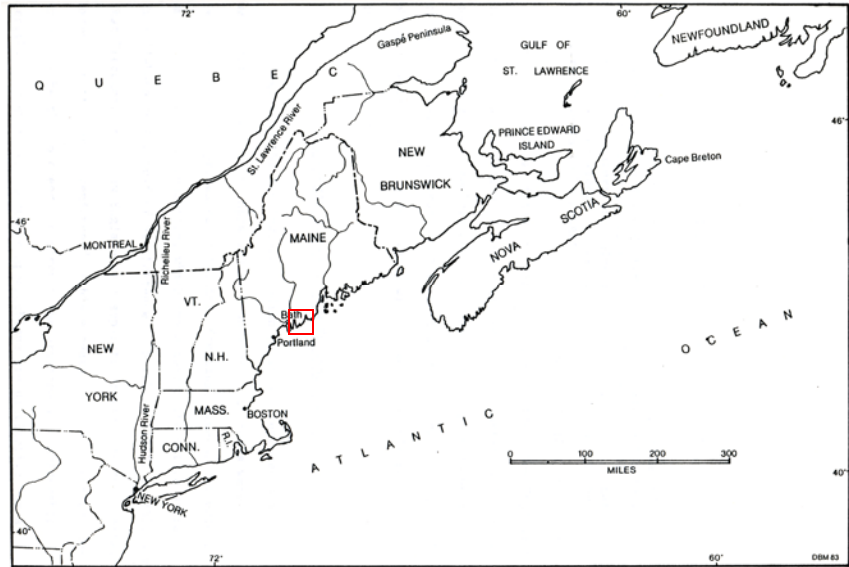
Parker's Head

Use

Saw Mill

Information supplied by:

Earl Taylor, 12/26/2006

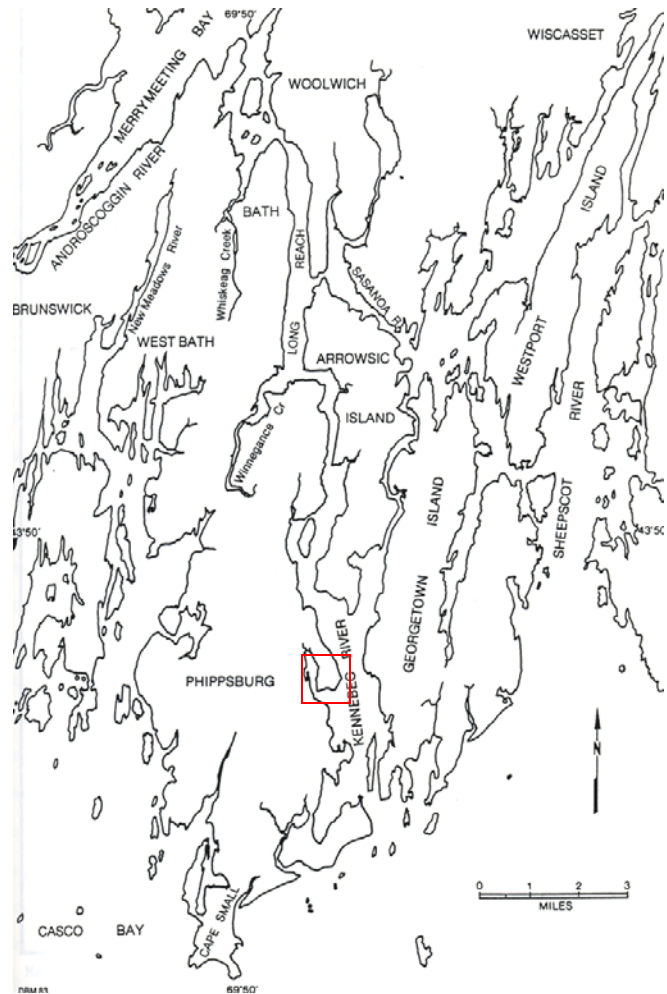


Parker's Head

Source: *Phippsburg: Fair to the Wind*.
Compiled by Members of the Phippsburg
Historical Society. Lewiston, ME: Twin
City Printery, 1965.

For years the principal industry of the village revolved around its Saw Mills which consisted of four separate buildings running two saws each, the whole group being under one roof and situated on the dam. Late one September evening in 1867, however, these Mills were consumed by fire, with loss estimated at \$10,000 by the four owners, Messrs. Oliver and Rollins, S.D. Reed, Esq., G.H. Duley, and the Jewell estate. Also destroyed at this time was a house on the Neck side of the dam.

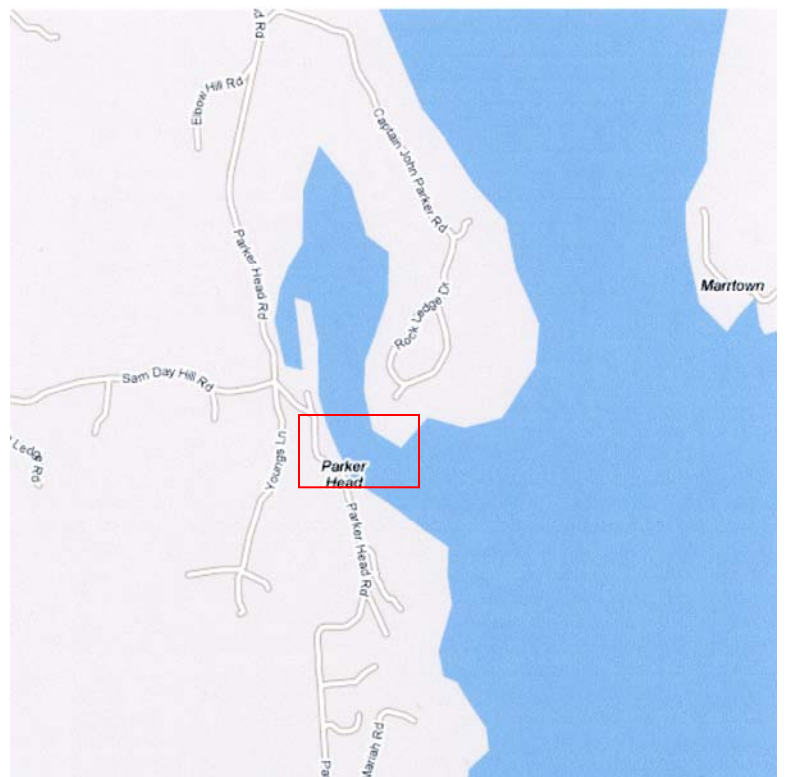
As a result of the fire, the next few years found many young men and active business men moving away from Parker's Head to seek employment. The



community's economic situation evidently became so desperate that in the summer of 1870 the Phippsburg Selectmen called a Special Town Meeting at which time the Town voted "to exempt from taxation for ten years, and to remit all the back taxes on the site, to any person or company who would rebuild the dam which was in utter ruin, and convert it into an ice pond, the design being to create business and employment for the people and thereby enhance the value of all the property in the place." As a result, John G. Morse I of the Winnegance section of Phippsburg, and a Bath partner purchased the old mill privilege and dam and commenced the building of a new dam; the final cost was over \$8000. Then began the Parker's Head ice business which flourished through the late 1890s.



Illustration from "Tide-Mills in New England." By Alfred Elden. Old-Time New England, XXV, no. 4, April, 1935.



Source: Tide Mills of Maine and Beyond. Compiled and Edited by George M. Carlton Sr.
[1980s ?]

Mills at Parker's Head

Daily Sentinel, Sept. 28, 1867.

Fire swept the saw mills at Parker's Head between 9 and 10 Thursday evening. The whole chain of buildings was entirely consumed. The mills consist of four separate buildings running 2 saws each, the whole group being under one roof. No fire engines are owned in the vicinity, so the devouring elements had full sway. The mills were owned respectively by Oliver Rollins, S.D. Reed Esq., G.H. Duley and the Jewett estate. The first named firm lost some \$1800 worth of lumber. A house owned and occupied by Mr. Wright, with a yacht valued at \$3000 on the neck side of the dam were destroyed. We learn that Mr. Wright's loss is nearly covered by insurance. No insurance on the mills or lumber. Estimated loss-\$10,000.

The mill has carried eight up and downs saws with usual complement of small machinery, such as shingle, lath, picket etc.

It is considered the best privilege on the Kennebec River, being open all winter to navigation, is three miles from the mouth of the river and Fort Popham and ten miles from Bath.

Logs come down river to supply the mills.

Source: Tide Mills of Maine and Beyond. Compiled and Edited by George M. Carlton Sr.
[1980s ?]

[note that Carlton included a picture of the ice house and called it the mill]

Source: *Stories of Phippsburg, Maine. Volume II The Old Days*. From the Files of the Phippsburg Historical Society. Phippsburg Historical Society, 1984.

THE PARKER'S HEAD TIDE MILL CO.

Ada M. Haggett

Thomas McCobb Reed was born in 1804 at Parker's Neck, or Parker's Head Neck, as it was sometimes called. He was the sixth child, fifth son, of the eleven children of Andrew and Betsey (McCobb) Reed. It was he and his older brother William, born in 1800, who set into motion for the Lower End or "Foot" of The Neck and the Village of Parker's Head events of major consequence that were to last for years. An old, undated newspaper clipping I have capsules these happenings in this way:

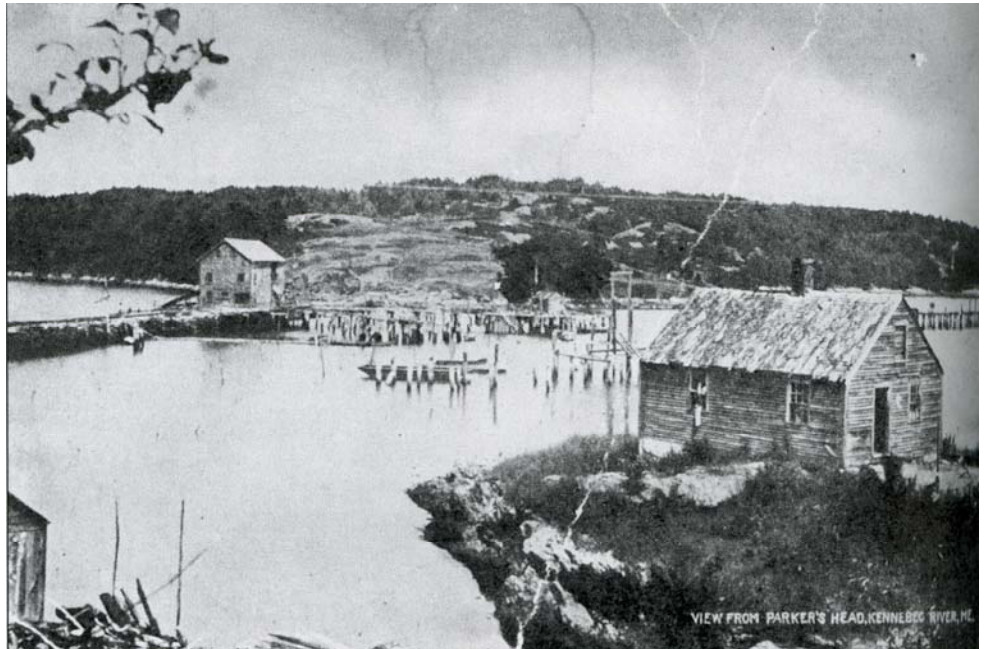


Illustration of ice house that replaced the mill, looking east from Parker's Head village toward the Neck.

"In 1836 old Col. Andrew Reed sold certain milling privileges at Parker's Head to William Reed, Thomas Reed and B. C. Bailey, and for years a number of saw mills were operated there, giving employment to many men. In 1837 the dam was built and the mills set in operation and later a milling privilege was sold to William Wildes who operated there for some time. This property, the Reed farm, later came into possession of Thomas Reed, and he in turn sold it to Morse and Robinson. It has been said that his disposal of the property was due to the fact that he thought he was unjustly taxed in town and that he sold out and moved to Portland."

The date that Andrew Reed conveyed the above-mentioned milling privileges to his sons, William and Thomas, and to Bernard C. Bailey of Bath, was April 28, 1836. The deed, which is found at the Registry of Deeds at the Court House in Bath, gives the "right and privilege to flow, overflow and cover with water all the flats, marsh and land I now own, or am in possession of, situate in Parker's Bay so called in said Phippsburg by erecting dams or mills at Parker's Head so called."

Evidently matters moved along rapidly for I found a Notice in the old Bath newspaper Lincoln Telegraph, under date of April 13, 1837, that both the 17th Legislature of the

State of Maine and the Governor had approved an Act "to incorporate the Parker's Head Tide Mill Co."

By January 25, 1838 it was possible for Advertisements to be published in the Bath paper such as the one that follows:

500,000 Pine Boards for Sale.
The Subscriber offers for Sale the above Quantity of Lumber in lots to suit purchasers, all to be delivered on the wharf at Parker's Head Mill, in Phippsburg, near the mouth of Kennebec River, a good and safe harbour for vessels and sufficient water for vessels of from 100 to 200 tons burthen to load.
B.C. BAILEY

As the years went by, it was Thomas Reed who gradually became the dominant figure in all of the activities of The Neck and Mill Neck, for as his father, brother William, and other interested parties died, left Town, or just weren't interested in the proceedings, he came to assume more and more rights to the property until, eventually, he owned everything.

It can be said that the Village of Parker's Head and the community of ten houses and a schoolhouse that Thomas controlled at the Lower End of The Neck truly came to life during the 1840's, 1850's and for most of the 1860's. As for Thomas, not only was he involved in the life of the people as to the Tide Mill Co. but also he maintained a store "at the Westerly End of the Dam" and, in 1846, he was prime backer in the construction of the Parker's Head Church (razed in the Fall of 1972). In Town affairs he served at different times as Clerk and as Selectman. He was a wealthy man but, from what I have read, generally liked, at least by the residents of Parker's Head. The others within Our Town did not care for him, it was probably due to a streak of envy because of his business abilities.

The Parker's Head Tide Mill Co. flourished until the night of September 26, 1867 when a fire, caused by a lighted match thrown among dry mill shavings, destroyed all the Saw Mills on the Dam, thus bringing economic disaster to the Village and the community at the Lower End of The Neck.

At the time of the fire Reed was 63 years old and evidently had no desire to "pick up the pieces" and start over again. Then, becoming truly unhappy with his Phippsburg taxes, he left his native Town for good.

On December 15, 1874 "Thomas Reed of Portland, County of Cumberland" sold, with the exception of two small lots others had bought, his "home-stead farm" which, of course, meant all of Parker's Neck. Also included in the sale was the Mill Neck, plus his store and the land on which it stood at the Village end of the Dam. The price was \$5,000., a considerable sum in those days.

The gentlemen who acquired the above were Alden Morse and John G. Morse of Phippsburg and James D. Robinson of Bath. They were the same ones who, on September 9, 1870, had bought "certain Mill privileges and other real estate at Parker's Head Mill Pond." By the time of their 1874 purchase they had repaired the Dam and had turned the former Mill Pond into one of Ice, thereby creating a new industry for the area.

Although the Village of Parker's Head would thrive again during the Kennebec Ice Years, it would never recapture completely that certain quality of 'excitement' that had once prevailed under Thomas M. Reed.

Today, a true Relic of The Past is the broken Dam that stretches from Parker's head Village to the Lower End of The Neck.

Observer issues: December 19, 1973, January 2, 9, 1974. (The above was lifted out of a long article I did on the residents of Parker's Neck. It was also condensed. A.M.H)



Illustration of Ice House seen from the Neck looking west toward Parker's Head Village from *Phippsburg* by Elin B. Dozois. Images of America Series. Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia, 1999.

Illustration from GoogleEarth

