

RELICS

imagining my recent ancestors and other kin
using the traces they left behind

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This volume was created for any of my relatives who might be interested in the people discussed within and to provide information to my descendants about their ancestors and other near kin of the past. A copyright is asserted in order to assure, especially, that the authors of certain material, especially Kate Gardner and Wesley Woodbury, retain credit for the stories they created. This book is entirely factual to the best of my knowledge.

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Cover image: Two four-masted schooners, each over 200 feet long, were towed into the harbor of Wiscasset, Maine, the *Hesper* in 1932 and the *Luther Little* in 1936, and there the owner ultimately abandoned them. Both built around 1917 in Massachusetts, the *Hesper* had her masts cut down and was hauled closer to shore with the *Luther Little* in 1940. They then settled in the shallows, 50 yards from U.S. Route 1. I first saw them in the 1950s, just as they appear here, listing toward one another. By the early 1960s they had deteriorated almost beyond salvage, although a group came forward in 1978 with the hope of restoring the old ships to some degree.

When a sparkler, tossed from a nearby small boat, landed on the *Hesper* during the July 4th celebration in 1978, however, the ship caught fire (not for the first time). In 1981 the salvage group abandoned its efforts to save the ships. In 1998 the town of Wiscasset decided to demolish what was left of them. Certain relics were saved, though, and are displayed in various places where they can remind us, who knew them, what we used to look at as we crossed the long bridge over the Sheepscot River. The image of the two schooners, shown on the cover, is from a wood-burning I made in 2018 on a 7" x 12" piece of poplar, depicting them as they appeared in the 1960s.

Not to know is bad. Not to want to know is worse.
West African proverb

A friend hears the song in my heart and sings it to me when my memory fails.
from Pioneer Girls Leaders' Handbook

*It isn't death you want to fear, but the life not lived. You don't need to live forever; you
just need to live.*
from the movie "Tuck Everlasting"

Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself.
unattributed

Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing.
Benjamin Franklin

If all else fails, immortality can always be assured by spectacular error.
John Kenneth Galbraith

*Your lifespan will be recorded as two dates separated by a dash. You can — indeed, you
must — write your own life story on that dash.*
David A. Woodbury
October 24, 1950 —

OTHER BOOKS by DAVID A. WOODBURY
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Babie Nayms

The Clover Street News

Tales to Warm Your Mind

Fire, Wind & Yesterday

Cold Morning Shadow

AS EDITOR and CONTRIBUTOR

Three Naked Ladies Playing Cellos

CONTENTS

Prologue	5
Fading Photographs	8
Peter Spencer Barraclough Sunderland	14
Kate Gardner's Diary	16
Henry Tufts, Jr.	56
Mary Jane, Mary Jane	58
Eliza's Poem	65
Everett Hugh Woodbury	67
Victor in Antarctica	76
Woody	101
Fly Rod Crosby	179
A CARD	183
The Farmington Militia	192
Loose Ends	203
Afterword	215

Prologue



Hardly had I finished the memoir of my early years, *I Shall Pass This Way But Once*, in June, 2022, when I realized the imperative to bring together into one volume the additional information I have uncovered about my ancestors and relatives, including the articles about some of them which, over the previous decade, I had published as separate pieces at *DamnYankee.com* and *DavidAndrewWoodbury.WordPress.com*.

In the memoir just mentioned, the first chapter, Count Your Blessings, was written by my mother and another chapter, Sealed in Amber, discusses a few of my other ancestors, but not in the detail found here. The articles in this volume take a closer look at some of those people.

It has frustrated me in my old age to consider how little I paid attention when my parents were alive and not only alive but mentally agile enough for me to seize upon their knowledge. I was too busy then, too consumed by my jobs, (23 years at Great Northern Paper Company, about which I wrote a widely-acclaimed article, The Fall of Great Northern Paper, and ten years at Penobscot Valley Hospital), and I was further overwhelmed by the needs of our son, Sam. The jobs were both in management and in workplaces which, beginning in the mid-1980s, were financially strapped and which therefore expected low-level managers, such as I, to carry the work load previously assigned to at least three sometimes unrelated full-time positions.

My parents were in their fifties and our daughters in elementary school when the pressures of work became crushing. Sam was born in 1990, and within months we began to understand the challenges he would present. (He was 27 years old before we learned that his mental and physical limitations arose from the recently-discovered mutation of the KAT6A gene.)

These aren't excuses. These facts help explain how it became impossible to pay attention to frivolities like stories of my ancestors.

Dad died in 1998 just before he turned 71, as he had predicted he would thirteen years earlier, but Mom lived until 2017 and died at the age of 92. Her mind was unreliable, though, for most of her last fifteen years.

Excerpt from Dad's prediction, assuming "71st year" meant 71st birthday. He died 11 days before reaching 71.

01 July 1985

I record my understanding, with out bias, I would know the truth, I listen to me. If I will not believe, who then, would?

I'll not live to my 71st year for a cause common to many. Of all I

In order to draw any information from my parents I'd have needed to interview them (separately) and get them each to unload boxes of old letters and photographs and documents. I'd have needed to steer the discussions and prevent interruptions and digressions. (Neither of them could have stayed on topic for more than a few minutes.) And I'd have needed to foresee that, by the mid-1990s, the chance was slipping away fast for turning those aging family records and my parents' memories into a coherent history.

In fact, I had no concept of what would emerge from my father's stored boxes until after he had died. A couple years earlier, Mom delivered to me several cartons of stuff from Dad "for safe keeping." It was right after he died when I left Great Northern Paper and took the hospital job in Lincoln. Beth and I sold our Millinocket house and moved to Lincoln within a year, and I didn't give those boxes a thought for a few more years — just unpacking our own stuff took that long.

Mom gave me a couple of things as well, soon after we moved, and I laid them aside. One was an autobiographical narrative of her years between high school and meeting my father in Florida. The other was her grandmother's diary from 1884. Mom also put together a short genealogy, which helps but leaves many holes unfilled. Otherwise there is scant documentation of her family's history.

After I felt settled in our new house and after relaxing a little about Sam's situation I began poring over the materials which neither Mom nor Dad could any longer help me with. Fortunately I could relate some things to the stories I could remember hearing in my childhood — the names of Mom's relatives whom we sometimes visited in Ohio when we lived there, for instance.

Dad's stuff gave a much more complete picture of his immediate ancestors, but we didn't talk about them when I was young. This will become more plain as you read the stories I've pieced together from what I unearthed in those boxes of old letters and documents. There is so much material, though, that nothing coheres easily. Mysteries abound. Because these relics give me so much more information about Dad's family than about Mom's, and because the surname, Miller, is so much more common than Woodbury (when conducting research), I can connect more potential Woodbury cousins to my family tree than Millers.

Dad's grandmother and Beth's ancestors each left behind an elegant photo album. Sad to say, both albums were filled with late-nineteenth-century formal photos of unnamed people, although names were penned on a few. A few more can be identified from other sources. Most are useless portraits presumably of close relatives, but we can only guess who is in this photo or that one. We can only wonder who the extra child is in a family picture, or maybe it's not the family of five-plus-a-friend that we thought it was but some other family of six. The albums are ruined now, because I pulled many pictures from each of them, which had been glued in, finding names or other clues on the backs of a few. Unless the images were removed, though, there would be no chance of discovering any information whatsoever, so why even keep the albums?

There is a lesson in that for all of us: Choose some definitive photographs of each current and recent family member, print them, label them, and at least bag them by family group so that a descendant in the next century can identify the people who populate all the

other snapshots they will inherit, not to mention the billions of digital images that may or may not survive the intervening file server crashes and changes in technology that will occur in the meantime. (Some protocol will supersede .jpg within a hundred years and render all our current digital pictures unretrievable.)

Beth, my wife of almost a half century, has comparable quantities of old photos and documents from each of her parents' families. The chance still exists that a volume similar to this might arise from those resources.

As I was becoming aware of the scale of the project to sort and archive all the material left to me I was also readily perceiving my duty as steward of it all. It was I who was entrusted with this stuff. To be fair to my five younger siblings, to my cousins whose ancestors appear here, and to all our descendants, I needed to do something besides hoard it all and burden my own offspring with it. Obedient to that duty, as long ago as 2010 I began publishing articles one by one about individual family members from the past and about family groups.

Mom's narrative of her beginnings, as mentioned, is included in *I Shall Pass This Way But Once* and is centered around meeting Dad. I'll start this volume off with the other pieces that I have on her side of the family: a look at a couple photographs, an account of her fourth-great-grandfather's Revolutionary War heroism, and then her grandmother's diary. The articles that I've written on Dad's family will come after that.

Since these were originally written as separate pieces, you will encounter some repetition of relationships and other details. The further you are removed from the generations represented, the more helpful these clarifications may be. And if you're related to me, it may not be difficult to calculate your own connection to the people named within.

September, 2023

