

*Excerpts from "Memories of a Lifetime"*

by A.C. Savage, 1902<sup>1</sup>

In writing out some of the occurrences that have been told me that happened before my time, I will say that my grandfather was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in the year 1756. He came to this country in a ship as a sailor at the age of fourteen, and landed at Salem, Mass. According to records he enlisted from Marblehead in May, 1775. He fought in the battle of Bunker Hill where he lost one thumb. He resigned in 1781 as Lieutenant.

He married Sarah Doliver in Marblehead and moved to Mt. Desert in 1798. He was a seaman and fisherman; built some kind

Above: In April 1851, 19-year-old Augustus Savage survived a storm that destroyed the Minot Ledge Lighthouse off Scituate, Massachusetts. *Gleason's Pictorial* 1, no. 1 (May 3, 1851): 20. *Courtesy of the Library of Congress*

of log cabin on the east side of Harbor Brook where my father was born in 1801. Grandfather died in 1816. At that time the land was covered with a heavy growth of timber; the path from Northeast to Seal was marked by blazed trees. My grandmother lived until 1851. She drew a pension from the Government and lived in our family after father was married until her death.

In the winter of 1812–13 my uncle Peter and Timothy Smallidge got out a lot of logs and yarded them in the brook just above where the bridge now is. In June 1813 the English ship “Tenedos” was lying at anchor near Bear Island. Uncle Peter and uncle Timothy, with father, started to tow the logs to Somesville, but they were intercepted by the enemy. The logs were cut adrift and they were taken on board the enemy’s ship as prisoners of war and were kept until after the battle at Norwood Cove; otherwise uncle Peter and uncle Tim would have been there. That was about four years before my grandfather died; he was a sick man then, but was very much wrought up and remarked that if he were well, he would like to give them “Bunker Hill!”

At the time of the first settlers at Northeast and Seal Harbor that I have mentioned, came traders, principally to supply the fishermen with necessaries and unnecessaries. A man named Brazier had a log store on the sand beach at Seal Harbor where boats could land at the door. At Northeast was another on the present site of the Kimball wharf. I have however forgotten the keeper’s name.

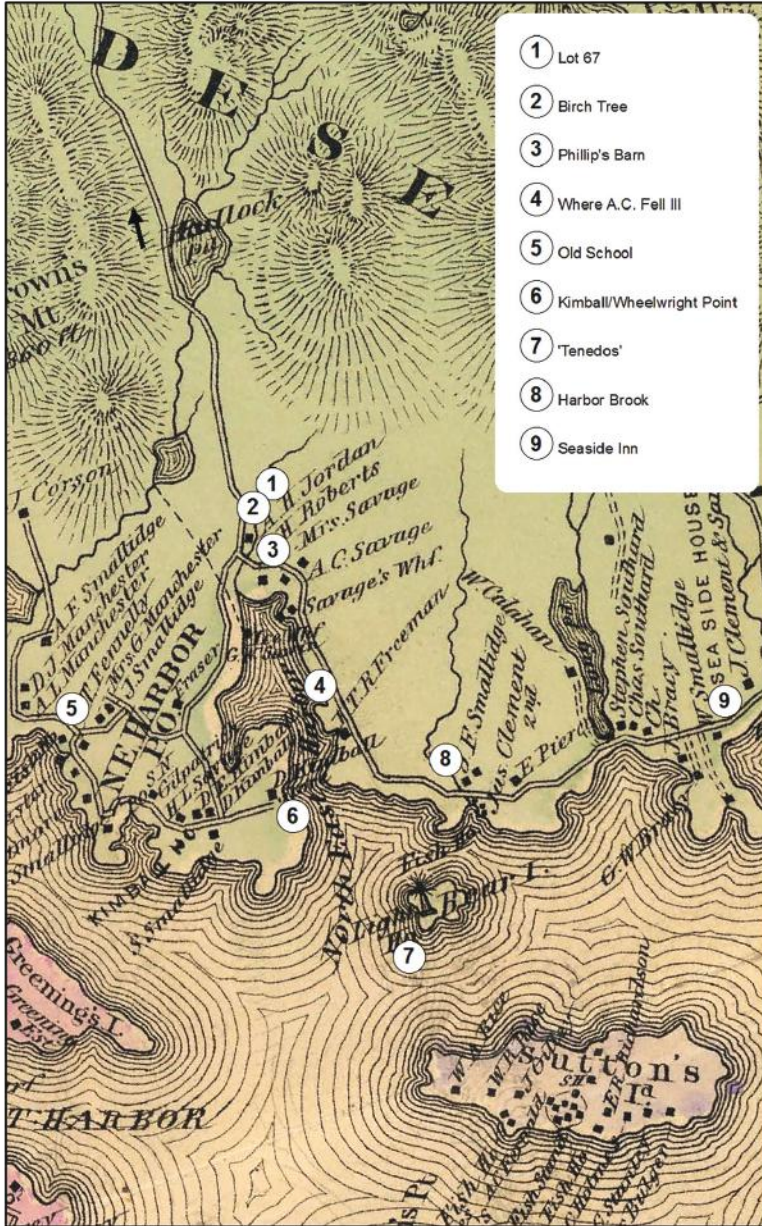
At that time fleets of fishing craft used to come into Northeast and Seal Harbor after completing their full catch of salted fish and await the time when they could return and report to their home Custom House. After having been absent for four months they would be entitled to a bounty from the Government. The Fishing Bounty Act was repealed in 1865.

1820—About this time my father and uncle Will Roberts bought the lot No. 69 at the head



Augustus Savage in his youth, circa late 1840s. *Courtesy of Sam McGee*

Asticou and Northeast Harbor,  
selected places named in “Memories of a Lifetime.”



Map of local place names compiled by Sam McGee, Rick Savage, and Gordon Longworth. *The Topographical Map of Hancock County*, Lee & Marsh, 1860. Courtesy of the Library of Congress

of Northeast Harbor.<sup>2</sup> They divided it North and South between them. There was at that time a log house on it and both families thrived there a few years. They both went coasting and fishing in the summer and in winter they hauled out logs and cordwood to sell in western markets. They cut and hewed frames for their houses, rafted logs to Somesville for the boarding, sawed and shaved pine shingles for their houses and barns. They each raised families, all of which I see before me in my mind and recall the many happy times that have gone never to return. Alas, how sad! To think that all long ago have gone to God and left only my humble self—to know I soon must follow.

In 1832 Mr. Daniel Kimball, who kept the store on the west side of the harbor, contracted with Boston parties to build a ship. My father worked on her until she was launched in 1833. My mother took me to the launching and that brings me to my first experience with salt water. Being one year and three months old it seemed an unusual experience to me, and it caused me to cry for all I was worth, “Stop the Ship!” when immediately both anchors were let go without further orders, whereby she was prevented from bumping her stern against what is now called Wheelwright’s Point.

As time flew on and I awoke to the scenes of life I found others in the family older than I, three sisters and two brothers. We were happy children enjoying play both winter and summer. I began going to school in 1838. The school was the same where my father went, one term only, which ended his schoolboy days. He was however taught at home by his father to read, write and cipher by the simple rules; also to cast interest on notes. My father used to tell me that his father was considered quite well learned, having attended the schools in Glasgow before coming to America.

In 1840 Thomas Pung, who was keeper at Mt. Desert Rock, came to my father’s house from Bath and became sick with typhus fever and died. My two brothers, older than I had it and Tyler died. I had it, but not so severe. How plain I can remember the day I was taken sick! There was no road on the east side of the harbor at that time so I had to walk along the shore at low tide. When the tide was up we went by the wood road above the ledge where the Curtis road now is. The day I was taken sick, mother sent me down by the shore to go to aunt Harriet Pung’s. I went and did the errand and on my

way home I became dizzy and fell off what we called “the big rocks” about half way from Pung Head to our wharf. After a time I got up cold and wet, the tide having flowed up around me, my face and head bleeding.

However, I got home and was put to bed where I lay for several weeks, a part of the time unconscious. The doctor used to come on horseback, there being no carriage road to Somesville. It was a rare thing to see a man on horseback. The doctor brought his medicine in saddle bags, just in front of the saddle. His orders were not to give any water to patients unless boiled, and little of that. Oh, how we used to cry for cold water and could not have any! Doctors have learned better since. My oldest brother, Smith, was drowned in the harbor by the upsetting of a boat, in 1843. It was a sad blow to all the family. There is a birch tree just across the brook on the left as you go to the ryefield and it always reminded me of that dear brother. He climbed it one day nearly to its top and trimmed off the limbs with a hatchet; this was a feat in play. Another was to climb a tree and allow the other fellow to cut it down; often it would be more pleasant for the other fellow than the climber. My second brother died with the fever in 1840.

In 1841 the road along the east side of the harbor was built by George W. and John S. Jordan, brothers who had lately moved from Ellsworth and settled at Jordan’s Pond. They lived there many years and did a prosperous business in saw mills, long and short lumber, ship timber etc. etc. The road above mentioned was laid out by the County Commissioners. Many of the townfolk thought it unwise and that a road could not be built along said route without enormous expense. It seems that the Jordans did not think so, if it be true that they contracted and built it for one dollar and a half per rod. They were workers and did an honest job.

In 1844 my father had a coaster schooner called “The Four Sisters.” When school was not keeping I would go on a trip occasionally, being then twelve years old. The following winter he bought, at Bath, Me., the schooner called the “Trenton.” She was a fine coaster: two top masts with topsails that set from the deck. She had a fine cabin and two staterooms finished in mahogany. She was formerly a packet running from the Kennebec to Boston and carried many passengers. She was in my eye a perfect model, so I shipped in

her as cook, cabin boy, and agent for passengers, going to and from Boston, New York, and nearer ports.

For the former duties I received ten dollars per month; for the latter one half the fare for passenger money. At that time, 1845, there were no steamboats on this route. We sometimes had five or six, and once I remember ten passengers. The fare used to be one dollar for girls and one dollar and a half for men. The girls, when not seasick, would help me cook and do the cabin work, so altogether we had a jolly time. Girls used to go to the factory, and general housework; young men often shipped and went to sea. I did well that summer and lay by a small sum for future use so that when I was eighteen years old I had three hundred dollars which I put into the schooner "Protector," the first of which I had command. (I will mention later on.)

In the spring of 1846 I shipped with Captain Nathan Smallidge in a large topsail schooner sailing from Salem, Mass. I do not now recall her name. We first went to Calais. We loaded with lumber for Philadelphia, where we arrived safely without material incident. On the passage, I still being the cook and cabin boy, my duties were in the galley on deck, but in any case of emergency I was expected to pull and haul with the others. As this was my first experience with yards across which necessitated many more ropes than the fore and aft rig, and having some leisure, I used to go aloft to note their workings. I could climb easily and rather liked it in fair weather, although I can recall some experiences that were not so pleasant. A brother-in-law of the captain was our mate at that time and a jolly good fellow was he, good and true, Abraham Gilpatrick. A year or two later he was washed overboard and drowned. We discharged our cargo in Philadelphia and took on a load of coal for Salem, Mass. Another trip was a load of spruce wood loaded at the head of Northeast Harbor and carried to Boston and sold to the railroad. They then burned wood instead of coal.

In 1847 my father bought the schooner "Brainerd." I sailed with him for three successive years in coasting trade along the coast to Boston, New York and other ports. In 1850 the "Brainerd" was chartered to Captain Thomas Manchester for a fishing voyage to Labrador, and I went as one of the crew.



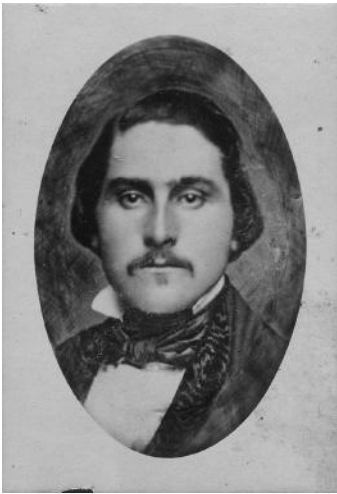
Bird Rock off the coast of Labrador, 1864. *Courtesy of the Library of Congress*

We sailed about the twentieth of May, called at the Gut of Canso, shipped some men and necessary stores, sailed along the south side of Cape Breton Island, called in at Louisburg. Saw the ruins of the old French forts that were captured by Sir William Pepperell, of the French War time, all of which was interesting. From there we sailed along by Scutari, on up the Gulf of St. Lawrence and came to anchor in a one sided harbor, called Cow Bay, on the north side of

Newfoundland. Here lived a few families who subsisted on fishing and farming and seemed to be in comfortable circumstances. In one family we visited there were several grown up boys and girls; their nearest neighbors were ten miles along the coast.

We bought some potatoes and butter there. The potato bin was about two rods away from the house, a simple hole in the ground logged up at the sides and covered with earth and brush to protect it from frost in the winter. This place was entered from the cellar of the house in winter, not being lighted from any direction. This was in June and the potatoes were of the most delightful flavor I have ever eaten. Codfish there were not plenty, but halibut—my! you could count them by twos and fours, by looking over the side of the boat, and the water was so clear that you could see perfectly in fifteen fathoms.

From Cow Bay we sailed from the Bird Rocks on the Labrador coast where we arrived in good time to get some eggs. The Bird Rocks are two small barren islands, not a tree or shrub on them, one of them about three acres in extent and the other about two. On our way from Cow Bay we passed several large ice-bergs; from one of them ran a large stream of water.



Augustus Savage at around the time of his marriage to Emily Manchester, circa 1854. *Courtesy of Rick Savage*

After arriving at the Bird Rocks we ran into a little harbor to the north, about four miles distant, and next morning we manned out a boat, (five of us), to go for eggs. We landed on the smaller ledge, just as the day was breaking, hauled our boat up and hid ourselves so the birds would light and lay their eggs. They began to come from all directions, the air seemed to be full of them, but having discovered us they would not light while we were there. We began to look around and found that eggs were to be picked up almost everywhere. We gathered up three barrels of nice fresh eggs which had been laid the day before, as we learned from some men who were



camping on the shore for the purpose of gathering the eggs; the sea was rough the day before and the islands had not been visited. The campers were part of the crew of a vessel that had been there and had loaded with eggs and they were stopping to gather the second load. These birds are called Murr, and resemble the Gull. The egg is one quarter larger than the hen's egg, shade light blue with darker specks. In the month of October we arrived home with a good fare, but were made sorry to find that a great fire had swept all over the woodland bordering the east side of the harbor and north to Sargent Mountain, to Jordan Pond and Seal Harbor.



Augustus Savage, left, with workers and family members at the Asticou Inn, circa 1900. The boy on the right leaning against the post is thought to be John C. Savage (1874–1938), Fred L. Savage (1861–1924) is the man with mustache wearing a hat, and Annie Somes Savage (1867–1896) is on the far right. *Courtesy of Sam McGee*

The coming winter I took lessons in navigation from an elderly shipmaster, having as I thought to go to sea for a living. About this time Captain Edward Higgins, of Bar Harbor, advised me to take long voyages and offered me a berth with him. He had then a nice clipper ship built at Pembroke, Me., but my father wanted me near home.

In 1851 my father bought the schooner “Protector” for me. I bought one fourth of her. In the winter of 1850–51 we had cut and hauled out about two hundred cords of wood. We had a yoke of oxen and drove them that winter, when not in school, so my first trip as



Augustus Savage, circa 1905. *Courtesy of Sam McGee*

master was with a load of wood bound for Boston in April. We were caught in the first part of the gale that swept away the lighthouse from Minot Ledge. After losing a part of the deck load we got into Portsmouth by hit rather than by good wit.

In 1852 I went to Labrador for codfish. Thomas Manchester was my pilot. We went through the Strait of Belle Isle and along the

coast to about fifty-five degrees north. In the winter I went to school at home, and also to a term at Southwest Harbor. This was the last of my going to school.

In the spring of 1863, I applied for and was appointed acting ensign, U.S. Navy on temporary service. Was examined as to seamanship and navigation by Commodore Montgomery, Charlestown Navy Yard, on board the training ship "Savannah." After remaining six weeks was ordered to U.S.S. Delaware, in Baltimore. Sailed about the twenty-fifth of March.

The first of April was at Fortress Monroe and joined the fleet that was to advance up the James River with the army. May, June and July brought many stirring incidents that were new to me and need not be recalled here. History will tell you more clearly than I can of the campaign of 1864–65. I need only say that I came home in the summer of 1865 by permission, after the steamer had been put out of commission.

In 1866 bought the little schooner "Alert" and traded along shore until 1868, when suddenly my father died. He was building a vessel at the time and was somewhat involved in debt. I administered on his estate, procured owners and finished the vessel and launched her in 1869. Later I bought out all of my father's heirs.

In 1870 we began taking summer boarders and I may say that we were the first house to open its doors to "Rusticators" at Northeast Harbor. Among our first guests were Commodore Fyffe and family; also some noted artists, Hollingsworth, Brown, and others. The voyage of life to us has been peaceful and happy, and now at the age of seventy I wish to say that I do not take any credit to myself, but grant it all to your kind mother. She has been "The Guiding Star."

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<sup>1</sup> Permission to publish this excerpt courtesy of Richard M. Savage II.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Savage's notes indicate that the place of settlement was actually Lot 67.