

# THE OGUNQUIT BREEZE

A MONTHLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER FOR THE COMMUNITY  
FROM THE OGUNQUIT RESIDENTS ALLIANCE



## Town News

- **3 year contract** for Matt Buttrick as of January 1st
- New **Code Enforcement Officer:** Tyler McOscar
- 14 of 18 applicants appointed to new Town [Comprehensive Plan Committee](#). In contradiction to the Select Board approved document (cited above), Planning Board participation was limited to 2 members.
- Town employees must be **vaccinated** or test weekly as of Jan 10th

## The Captain Maxwell House Decision

With a 4-1 vote the Planning Board approved the demolition of the farmhouse and barn (circa 1840) at 307 Main Street originally belonging to early sea captain Daniel F. Maxwell.

He was the master of Barak Maxwell's ships (see the *Wharves* story below) and was one of the 75 sea captains who lived in Ogunquit over the years. In 2008, the Maine Historical Preservation Commission stated that the structures were eligible for listing on the National Registry of Historic Places based on their "association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our (maritime) history."

*Continued* ↗



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In 2008, the Ogunquit Historic Preservation Commission (OHPC) stated that they "strongly objected to the demolition," citing historic, architectural and neighborhood significance along with structural viability. When recently approached again, the current OHPC in a vote 3-2 also opposed the destruction of these structures.

To learn more, access the [documents](#) submitted by the OHPC to their Planning Board packet. Site visit on the property on January 10th at 3PM-public welcome. Public Hearing for Design Review of proposed buildings to replace historic structures at the Planning Board meeting on **January 24th at 6PM.**

Check out the new   
[Maine State Law on Gas Detectors](#)

Protection from leaks from propane  
and natural gas appliances



# The Wharves



*Wharf Lane today*

If you walked down Wharf Lane in the 1880's, rather than the quiet road we use today on our way to the beach, you would have passed many fish shacks, storehouses and wharves crammed together on that short footpath leading to and running parallel to the river.

On your left as you entered the lane, was William Henry Perkins' boathouse where he

designed and constructed the Ogunquit Dorries used by the fishermen for trawling and lobstering. Customized to withstand the rough conditions and strong tides along the rocky coast of

Ogunquit, these 16 to 21 foot long sturdy boats helped support the local economy and livelihood of the local fishermen.



*Wharves 1906*

Nearby, Barak Maxwell was building ships used for long distance trading at his Beach Street boathouse. Between 1800 and 1884, 134 vessels were built in Ogunquit, Wells and Kennebunk.



*Low Tide by the wharves on the Ogunquit River showing a coastal schooner and the wooden bridge to Ogunquit Beach August 20, 1889.*



*Remains of wharves in front of Sea Chambers today*

While Perkins Cove has preserved the look and feel of the fisherman's life at the turn of the 20th century, much of the engine responsible for driving and ensuring the farming and maritime success and prosperity that Ogunquit enjoyed centered on the Wharf Lane area, where its first harbor was located. The town landing was also used by the coastal trading schooners, brigs and barques that carried lumber, firewood, dried salt fish, blueberries and other farm produce to Boston and other coastal ports. Storehouses located on the wharves housed the products to be shipped. Some ships traveled as far as the West Indies for molasses and rum.



*North end of Wharf Lane*

It's hard to imagine the robust industry that existed at that time in Ogunquit as lumbering, cattle raising, farming, ship building and fishing became prominent ways of life. Schooners were a common sight unloading and loading at the wharves. During the long period of 1660 to 1930, Wharf Lane/Bridge Street was the preferred and safest shipping destination in the region to serve the needs of fishermen, ship builders and traders.

# The Wharves *continued*



*Charles Woodbury 1898*

There were five wharves on the Ogunquit River between what is now the Sea Chambers property, north to Wharf Lane:

- 1) Sullivan Wharf sat in front of the Sea Chambers and was used to store and load cord and firewood shipped south to heat homes in coastal communities. By 1900 it was in ruins.
- 2) Sawyer's Wharf was owned by a dynamic trader named Christopher Sawyer who lived nearby on Shore Road. (Wharf Lane was called Sawyer Lane at one time).
- 3) The town dock came next where all the fishing boats pulled in. As a result of the increased activity generated by the fishermen, there were a half dozen fish houses lining the lane with a smoke house located towards its east end.
- 4) Captain Sam's Wharf was next, owned by Sam Perkins. Several years after he built his fish house high on the pilings on its north end, a severe storm washed it out to sea.
- 5) The next wharf was located next to Captain Hiram Perkins fish house over 100 years ago. Dubbed by locals as the one owned by "Joe-Not-Littlefield," this wharf was the largest of the wharves and was the last one used by the trading schooners.



*The Dolphin Post*

If you're in the vicinity of the Anchorage Hotel at low tide and look at the river you will see a post jutting up there. This is the last Dolphin Post left of several that existed during the years that schooners were frequenting Ogunquit. To assist the ships in and out of the harbor, these posts were set at the river's edge as a private aid to navigation and as a point on which to secure a line from the schooner awaiting tide to cross the river mouth sandbar, a process known as warping. The force of the incoming tide was strong enough to pull the ship around close to the wharf to safely dock there.

Historic photos and books allow us to learn about what life was like in Ogunquit years ago, but it's particularly important that we preserve and protect the historic components that still exist today. If we aren't able to do that, we're going to lose some of the most meaningful places that contribute to Ogunquit's uniqueness, and once they're gone, they can never be replaced.



*The replica of the Ogunquit Dory at the Heritage Museum*

# The ORA Food Taxi

The story began a year ago when Ogunquit resident Anne Rebello wanted to do something to assist those who needed additional help with their food security as Covid-19 was continuing to wreak havoc on individuals and families. People were losing their jobs, their homes and potentially their lives in increasing numbers. She settled on collecting and delivering donated food and supplies to a local food pantry. Anne singularly researched all of the local pantries and selected the Biddeford Food Pantry site for their need and the fact that they are open three days per week for donations and pick up of food and supplies for area families. Thus, the "Food Taxi" from Ogunquit was born.

Founded by Rita Riley in 1981, the Pantry is the oldest in Maine. Over forty years ago, Rita had been visiting an elderly woman at her home to provide assistance and a friendly face for conversation. When asked to make a cup of tea, Rita found almost no food in the house and realized the great need in Biddeford for helping those who had little money. Deeply troubled by this, Rita began collections in her garage, which eventually became the Biddeford Pantry.

Fifteen years ago, Don Bisson, looking for a place to address his own personal mission of helping those who needed a hand, walked into the Pantry building and ended up becoming the volunteer manager and then director of the program. Today this Pantry, with over 40 volunteers and its own facility and truck, assists with providing quality food at no cost to over 700 families, an almost 25% increase in those in need since the onset of Covid-19. Each individual and family is treated with respect and dignity no matter their circumstances. Each is provided with 3 weeks of food at a monthly visit. As a 501 c (3) non-profit organization, the Pantry depends on the financial support of grants and donations from area stores and bakeries, and the community. That is where the Food Taxi has come into play.



In the past year, Ogunquit residents have dropped off over \$10,000 worth of goods that have been delivered by the Taxi on an almost weekly basis!

The [ORA website](#) provides a list of needed provisions and directions for drop off. Check out the [Biddeford Food Pantry](#) website for hours and more info.

People find different ways of donating. Most leave their boxes of goods or gift cards at the door to 23 Spring St. Some write checks. Some donate once, others repeatedly, including those on tight budgets who donate regularly. This fall, an individual who had just discovered what the Food Taxi was doing, donated several times with large orders. Leaving Ogunquit for the winter, she left seven \$100.00 gift cards to Hannaford to be used each month in her absence. Another person sent several boxes of food and cleaning products from her home in Colorado!

The Pantry volunteers and recipients greet the weekly arrival of donations from Ogunquit with cheers and appreciations from one Maine community to another. As the Food Taxi enters its second year, the hope is to expand our contributions to this rewarding program.

This goal can be accomplished with your continued support and getting others to jump on the Taxi.



**Thank you!**

