

PHIPPSBURG TOUR

The traveler may drive completely around the peninsula from east to west, or the reverse. Following is a loop tour from the Bath junction of U.S. 1 and State Route 209 beginning on the east side. *Note: from Phippsburg Center all other villages may be reached within an eight-mile radius.*

Take a right onto SR 209 from U.S. 1, soon bearing left across a causeway into **WINNEGANCE** (Indian name: Wind Against), which is Timber Island, once an Indian camping ground. The causeway is over Winnegance Creek and crosses at a Carrying Place south of the causeway that Indians used as a shortcut between Casco Bay and the Kennebec River. Ten Tidemills once operated at Winnegance. The Morse Lumber Mill (1801) still is managed by the same family. Wooden ships were built here from 1842-1890.

About 1.5 miles farther on SR 209 (Main Rd.) take a right onto Fiddlers Reach Rd. which leads to the sites of Fort Noble (1734) and the Pleasant Cove Meeting House (1736) overlooking the Kennebec.

Another mile on SR 209 (Main Rd) is **DROMORE: BURYING GROUND (R)**, with earliest graves dated 1743, is one of 100 cemeteries in Town. A little further is Butler's Hill with its commanding view of the Kennebec River, of Phippsburg Center village marked by its white church, and of Dromore Bay formed by Lee's Island (L), where in 1717 eight Indian Chiefs planned peace talks to be held across the river at Arrowsic with Royal Governor Shute of Massachusetts. Sawmilling on the Bay began in 1785, ended early this century.

Lying at the foot of Butler's Hill is **STONYBROOK** where schooners were built from 1867 to 1890. Note the early brick **MANOR HOUSE (R)**. Stonybrook Rd. (R) leads to the west side of Town.

Next on Route 209 (Main Rd) is **PHIPPSBURG CENTER** with its many old homes, where wooden shipbuilding commenced in colonial days, ended in 1921. Take a left onto Parker Head Rd. across from the "Center Store."

The second building (L) on the Parker Head Rd. is the **PHIPPSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM** (open summer daily except weekends, 2-4 p.m., and by appointment), an early one-room schoolhouse (1859). Changing exhibits from the Society's collection include area archaeological Indian and colonial artifacts, documents, shipbuilding, agricultural and military memorabilia, as well as paintings, furnishings, costumes and other early appurtenances of daily living. The Museum also maintains a genealogy section and provides information on local history and historical sites.

Located below the Museum is the **ALBERT F. TOTMAN LIBRARY (L)**,

another mid-19th century building which, since 1923, has been a public library. (Open 12-5 p.m., Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 2-7 p.m. Wed., and Sat. 9-12). The collection of more than 8,000 volumes includes Maineana, art and local reference material.

Around the next curve is the architecturally important **JAMES McCOBB HOUSE** (1774) (L) (now a B&B) and listed on the National Register of Historic Places 1978. Nearby stood the similar Thomas McCobb house known as Spite House (1806), which was removed by barge to Rockport, Maine in 1925.

Continuing on Parker Head Rd. take a left onto Church Lane just before the causeway. This leads to a scenic area of old houses and to the **CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH** (1802) (Sunday a.m. services). This and the James McCobb house are cited in the Historical American Buildings Survey. In front of the church, beneath a 75 ft. English Linden Tree, is family tomb of Maine's first congressman from this district, Mark L. Hill. Said to have been planted in 1775, the Tree was dedicated in 1988 by the Historical Society and the Church as a **CONSTITUTION TREE** in the National Arborist Association's program. Seen across the river is Arrowsic, site of New Town (1679-89), first incorporated settlement on the Kennebec, and burial place of Brig. Gen. Samuel McCobb who served at Bunker Hill. Eighteen known Revolutionary officers and men are buried in Phippsburg.

Retrace this lane and proceed left on Parker Head Rd. The road soon passes the remains of two **SHIPYARDS** (L); the first yard (Minott) launched the **ARYAN** in 1893, the last wooden full-rigged ship built in North America; the second yard (Bowker) launched the **LAURA ANNIE BARNES** in 1920, last four-master schooner built in Phippsburg. **CENTER POND** (R), originally a salt marsh, was dammed in 1883 for ice business which flourished in Phippsburg until 1900.

Farther along, pause at interesting old family cemeteries before continuing to **PARKER'S HEAD**. Many famous sea captains and marine engineers were born in this craggy village. On his way to Quebec, Benedict Arnold is said to have anchored his boats off Parker's Head and "came ashore for a rum toddy."

Until the 1920's, quantities of big Atlantic salmon were caught here and sold for a penny apiece. The village was busy first with its sawmills until these burned in 1867, and then with its ice business, as many as 37 vessels waiting at one time to load ice for the West Indies and South America.

A mile on from Parker's Head, see **OLD STONE SCHOOLHOUSE** (1836) (L) (private home). Coxs Head Rd (L) leads to the residential area of **COX'S HEAD** overlooking the mouth of the Kennebec and Fort Popham, the Popham Colony Site on Sabino Head across Atkins Bay, and the islands out to sea. The summit of the promontory (private) was manned in both the American Revolution and the War of 1812.

From Cox's Head one summer's day in 1814 Maine's "Paul Revere" galloped a dozen miles to spread the alarm in Bath when the British warship **BULWARK** stood off Seguin Island with armed barges poised for attack, and firing cannon. American forces were under the command of Gen. William King, later Maine's first governor.

From Cox's Head Rd. travel through the pleasant countryside for 1 mile and rejoin SR 209 (Popham Road.)

Take a left on SR 209 (Popham Road.) The road winds another 2 miles through wooded areas and across salt marshes with lovely glimpses of the sea and islands, past sandy beaches, cottage developments and Silver Lake to **POPHAM BEACH**. Enroute from the salt marshes is **POPHAM BEACH STATE PARK** (R) (no camping). Soon pass Silver Lake (R). A nearby cottage was once an ice house where a chute slid the ice half a mile to Atkins Bay.

Further on at a sharp right-hand curve, Fort Baldwin Rd (L) winds around Sabino Hill to "Hoss-Ketch" Point, **SITE** of the historically significant **POPHAM COLONY** of 1607.

One may imagine the arrival in late August 1607 of the two English vessels bearing approximately 100 male settlers, three months after a similar expedition had arrived at Jamestown, Virginia. Fair indeed was this northern coastland at this season, but in the dead of winter the wilderness proved far less hospitable than the milder climates of Virginia.

Thanking God for their safe arrival, in the first Episcopal service in America, the northern Colonists, with Sir George Popham as president, started building their settlement in what was to be a "palisaded entrenched fort" named St. George. They built the 30-ton pynnace **VIRGINIA**, the first American-built British vessel to later engage in transatlantic trade and the forerunner of the area industry that became famous around the world. A model of the **VIRGINIA** executed by the late Carl H. Langbehn may be seen at the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath.

Sickness and misfortune beset the Colonists in the bitter winter of 1607-08. Disheartened at the death of Sir George and the waning interest of their English sponsors, the survivors returned to England, their elaborate building plans for the settlement never realized.

For many years the Colony Site was obscured in controversy, and was long thought to be where Fort Popham now stands. A state archaeological examination confirmed the Sabino Head Site in 1962. The site was re-confirmed in 1996.

In a nearby field, on private property, is a stone (now covered and seen only by landowner's permission) bearing what runologists have identified as **RUNIC**

MARKINGS attributed to Norsemen, early 11th century, and translated: year 19 (1018) A.D. is ill (famine) year." The bucolic explanation is that these marks were made by somebody's grandfather's plow.

In any case, today's Popham Colony is predominately a summer one of cottagers and tourists. Still, whereas formerly a handful of rugged individuals remained year-round to brave the stormy ramparts that daunted Vikings and Colonists, many newcomers are changing Phippsburg's year-round population.

From the Colony Site a footpath (L) leads up Sabino Hill to **FORT BALDWIN**, manned by Coast Artillery in World War 1 and 11 and memorialized in 1986. Fort Baldwin, Fort Popham (see below) and the State Park form a complex under the jurisdiction of the State Conservation Department's Bureau of Parks and Recreation. The Fort Baldwin property at the summit of Sabino Head is maintained as a scenic observation station offering a sweeping panorama of the Kennebec River estuary, Popham Beach, the islands and the sea.

Retrace to continue on SR 209 (Popham Rd) to **POPHAM LIBRARY** (1910), owned by Popham Beach Improvement Association (summer programs) and **POPHAM CHAPEL** (Ded. 1896) (Sunday services summer). Local events are held in these buildings and on the grounds.

Next road on the right (Sea St.) leads to the former U.S. Coast Guard Station (Bed & Breakfast) and summer colony (roads private).

At the end of SR209 (Popham Rd.) (L) to Hunniwell's Point is **FORT POPHAM** (1865) (State-owned, daytime only, picnic tables, limited parking area, park ranger). Manned seven times, this unfinished semi-lunette is principally known as a Civil War fort. Granite blocks are strewn about as if by a giant hand. Of particular architectural interest are the handsome circular granite staircases which, unlike other sections, have withstood the ravages of time and weather. Sections unsafe for the public have been sealed off. Nearby on the beach a **CIVIL WAR CANNON** from the Fort points out to sea.

The former Coast Guard dock is now leased from the State of Maine by the Town of Phippsburg. A local boatowners landing ramp is within this area.

From the Fort, looking (L) across Atkins Bay is Cox's Head. Easterly across the mouth of the Kennebec is Long Island and Bay Point. Right are the islands in open sea, several manned in the War of 1812 - the Sugar Loaves, Stage, Salter's, Pond, Wood and **SEGUIN**, bearing one of America's earliest lighthouses (1795) which stands 188 feet above sea level, highest on the Maine coast, now automated.

In today's fast paced society, few will relate Popham to the resort era of the "Gay Nineties" and the days of moonlight sails, regattas and excursions, church socials and

square dances. hotels and boarding houses (now supplanted by camper vehicles) were thronged. Folks arrived with their trunks for the season; passengers, merchandise and mail came from Bath by steamer. Kerosene lamps lighted boardwalks for evening strollers. Vendors' wagons made the rounds with groceries. Horse-drawn carriages were transportation. Ladies with parasols and pompadours graced the beaches. Everyone flocked for the docking of Eastern steamships from Boston at the State pier where now solitary seagulls perch on rotting piling.

Despite rosy plans, Popham never became a Bar Harbor, its heyday fading into history along with the Colonists and the Revolutionists-and the rum-running "20s of less nostalgic memory. Popham settled into somnolence in the summer sun, a vacation sanctuary of *dolce far niente*. This too fades under pressures of changing times and tourism.

Retrace, remaining on SR 209 (Popham Road), 4 miles to Jct. with SR 216 (Small Point Rd.) Left on SR 216 to **SMALL POINT** area (secluded summer colony, campgrounds).

Enroute 1 mile from Jct., watch for Alliquippa Rd. (R) leading to Town landing. Nearby is **SITE OF "ANCIENT AUGUSTA,"** 1716 fishing settlement. For protection against Indians, settlers built a stone fort 100 feet square overlooking the harbor, the New Meadows River and out to sea. Grist and sawmills were built and later the sloop **PEJEPSCOT** carried lumber and fish to Boston, returning with merchandise and more settlers. Phippsburg's first road was cut from here through the wilderness easterly to the Kennebec, connecting settlers on both sides of the Town. In 1721 Indian wars caused temporary abandonment of the settlement.

Continue on SR 216 (Small Point Rd.), you will pass the **SYLVESTER HOMESTEAD** (1767) which is located on a private road to the left named "Sylvester Rd." This is where Phippsburg's first schoolroom was an upper "chamber". Small Point Rd. continues to wind deeper into Small Point to Hermit Island.

From Popham, at the mouth of the Kennebec, to Small Point, is a region of sandy salt marshes traversed by Morse's and Sprague's narrow salt rivers and divided to the sea by Morse's Mountain, once known as Mt. Ararat. The beautiful Popham and Small Point beaches extend outside this region, skirted by fantastic sand dunes, wind-blown and wave-washed, in whose bosoms are buried the drifting wreckage of unknown ages.

In a now nearly inaccessible spot near the Point of Rocks forming the west side of Sprague's River, settlers in 1750 discovered an **OLD BURIAL PLACE** with 80 unmarked rough field stones, arranged in regular rows, which remains a mystery to this day. The graves, large and small, were laid out Saxon fashion, stones at head and foot of each. The venturesome may find some of these markers not yet obliterated by time and tide. Whether these might be graves of people from "Ancient Augusta" or even from the

Popham Colony has never been established.

Retrace SR 216 (Small Point Rd.) past the Jct. with SR 209 (Popham Rd.), past the **SMALL POINT BAPTIST CHURCH** (1828) (open year-round), to Saw Mill Corner, Jct. of SR 216 (Small Point Rd.) and Route 217 (Sebasco Rd.) with SR 209 (Main Road).

Take a left onto Route 217 (Sebasco Road) and watch for West Point Rd. (L) which leads to **WEST POINT** village (2 miles). This village is a "typical" Maine fishing village with its picturesque setting and skilled fishermen who have established world tuna-fishing records.

This has always been a fishing place, white men through several generations succeeding Indians in taking the bounty of the sea. Visitors learn the source of the neatly plastic-packaged fish of the marketplace and enjoy watching boats come in with their catches of cod, hake, mackerel, whiting, etc., and lobster for the city markets. Many artists, too, find inspiration in this rugged setting.

The **CARRYING PLACE** settlement here is co-called because Indians carried their canoes across to their island camping grounds.

Along the West Point Road on a ridge high above sea level overlooking Casco Bay, a signal station was operated in the War of 1812. When suspicious British ships were sighted, two large boards painted black (one is at Phippsburg Museum) were used to signal the Munjoy Hill Observatory in Portland 14 miles away and to warn local fisherman.

Retrace to Route 217 (Sebasco Rd.), turn left for **SEBASCO ESTATES**, Rock Gardens Inn and Sebasco Harbor Resort (summer resort, golf, tennis, sailing). Watah Lake, behind the main lodge, was the once famous Cornelius Ice Pond. Great vessels arrived in the deep harbor to load ice for all parts of the world. A local boy, swimming nearby, came up with a British coin dated 1740 King George II and an 1842 U.S. penny.

Beyond the Sebasco Harbor Resort entrance the traveller, proceeding on macadam road which eventually swings to left, will soon turn right at a small cemetery and after a short distance will reach a dirt road (Basin Rd) which passes through the west side of Town back to the starting point near the causeway. At 1 mile and again at one-half mile beyond, be sure to bear left on narrow road. This is the scenic old **MEADOWBROOK ROAD**, winding through a once populous area of farming, shipbuilding, sawmilling and feldspar mining. At times, the road skirts the waters of The Basin (L), known for its excellent harbor. Side roads (L) to summer colonies and year-round residences - 4 miles on this road is Jct. with Stonybrook Rd. leading to SR 209 (Main Rd.), the east side of Town.

Alternatively from Sebasco Harbor Resort entrance, retrace Rt 217 (Sebasco Rd) to Jct. with SR 216 (Small Point Rd.) and SR 209 (Main Rd). Left 3 miles back to Phippsburg Center.

On this route once stood the **MARRYING TREE**, an ancient oak under which an eloping couple were wed on horseback in 1763. This was also known as the Sprague Oak for the family that settled here in 1762, and as the Tavern Oak for the tavern once located nearby. Such taverns served mostly rum to travelers. In those days, liquor was sold like any other commodity in stores. Barbados rum and molasses came in dried oak kegs on sailing vessels from the West Indies in trade for Phippsburg dried fish.

If you look carefully on the left as you drive along, you will note a single brave flag waving beside a solitary gravestone at the edge of the road. This marks the grave of a soldier of the War of 1812 who died at Cox's Head, and as the traveler can see, is respected by highway crews and historians alike.

Public buildings before passing Center Pond (R) to reenter Phippsburg Center: the **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** (L); the **FIRE STATION** and the **TOWN HALL** (R). The Elementary School (some 200 pupils) was built in 1958, replacing one-room schools in the small communities scattered over the Town's 18,400 acres. The Fire Department, manned by 30 volunteers, also provides ambulance service. Long in disuse, the Town Hall (1881) was removed from its original site and restored in 1988-89 to accommodate the increasingly complex business of Town government. The building houses the offices of the Selectman, other Town personnel and meeting rooms for the many boards and committees now involved in Town affairs. The Phippsburg Veterans and Mariners Memorial Park is located at the Town Hall parking lot. This Park was dedicated in November 2001 and is in remembrance of Phippsburg war era veterans and also those mariners who lost their lives at sea. The World War I/II memorial stone was previously located at the Phippsburg center. A short hiking trail extends from the back of Town Hall, along Center Pond, and ends at the Fire Station. Like other small Maine communities, Phippsburg has felt the impact of population growth, rising property taxes, tourism, environmental and related problems, all changing the pattern of local lifestyles and government.

Map Legend

Junction U.S. 1 – SR 209

Winnegance

1. Winnegance Tidemills
2. Sites of Fort Noble and Pleasant Cove Meeting House

Dromore

3. Dromore Burying Ground
4. Butler's Hill
5. Stoneybrook – Manor House

The Center

7. Historical Society's Museum: Albert F. Totman Library
8. James McCobb House: Congregational Church: Constitution Tree
9. Minott and Bowker Shipyard Sites: Center Pond

Parker's Head

10. Parker Head Village

Cox's Head

11. Old Stone School House
12. River and Sea Views

Popham

13. State Park opposite Fox Island
14. Seguin Island Lighthouse
15. Popham Chapel: Civil war Cannon: Fort Popham
16. Popham Colony Site: Fort Baldwin

Small Point

17. "Ancient Augusta" Site
18. Sylvester Homestead
19. Small Point: Mysterious Old Burial Place
20. Small Point Baptist Church

West Point

21. West Point: Indian Carrying Place: Fishing

Sebasco

22. Sebasco Resort Area

Meadowbrook

23. Old Meadowbrook Road

Ashdale

24. The "Marrying Tree" Site: Tavern Site

25. Roadside Grave, War of 1812

The Center

26. School, Fire Station, 1881 Town Hall (Municipal Offices), Memorial Park

