

THEAKSTON-SMITH HOME

Across from the Pemaquid Point Hotel, one can enter the ocean side of the Pemaquid Loop Road. The first house on the right, known for its spacious front porch, is the Theakston-Smith Home – the subject of my talk this morning.

In 1905, Frederick Theakston, who had business connections in the U.S. and Canada, and was a member of the N.Y. Stock Exchange and a resident of the Village of Wiscasset, built this summer home at Pemaquid Point for himself and his wife. Early photographs show a clear field between the Theakston home and the Hotel – no trees at all. Now the area is thick with foliage. Featured in many of the old pictures is a 5 or 6 year old blond girl named Sarah Jackson, who was Mrs. Theakston's niece. The Theakstons had no children, and so little Sarah became the center of their attention. Workmen were hired to build for her, in the rear side yard, a lovely three-room playhouse, which was still standing, but in decaying condition, when I first visited Pemaquid Point in the summer of 1963. I peeked inside and was able to imagine how grand a playhouse mansion it once was.

The original Theakston property is still mostly outlined by a low stone wall, with breaks for entrances and driveways. You will notice that this stone wall runs for quite a distance on both sides of the Loop Road. The Theakstons owned properties now occupied by the Brush home, the Zajtchuck home, the Brown home and the Erdman home. The Theakstons had a swimming pool on the cliff overlooking the Cove, and at mid-Century, around 1950, Mrs. Mary Charlton of Ludlow, Vermont and Camden, South Carolina, purchased the Theakston lot on the ocean side of the Pemaquid Loop Road, across from their main home. She used the Theakston swimming pool as the basement and foundation of the year-around home she planned and built. She lived in that home until her death at age 104 in the early 1970's. Mrs. Charlton gave her friend, John Dougherty, the adjoining plot of ground toward Kresge Point, on which John built his little gem of a saltbox in 1973.

In the mid-1950's, two teachers from Scranton, Pennsylvania – Helen Smith and Cassandra Lewis – came by Pemaquid Point to visit colleagues, teachers also from Scranton, Mary and Frances Scardamaglia, and sisters, Natalie and Angie. As happens with many of us, one sight of Lighthouse Cove, the waves, the sky, the rocks and there can be no final departure. And Helen and Cassandra returned to Pemaquid Point again and again. They met Mary Charlton, they saw the little cottage next door to the Theakston's home – a cottage used as their guest house -- and through Mrs. Charlton, Helen Smith made contact with Miss Marion Theakston of Halifax, Nova Scotia who had been the recipient of the Theakston property upon the deaths of her aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Theakston. Marion had spent some time at Pemaquid Point, but being Canadian and preferring to reside in Nova Scotia, she had closed the homes and had left them unoccupied for several years. Helen Smith went to Nova Scotia, found Marion Theakston in the hospital, and convinced her to sell the little white guest house, which Helen shored up, had the roof replaced and had painted inside and out. This was 1959. After spending a summer or two in Pemaquid Point, Helen and Cassandra noticed that the younger members of the staff at the Hotel were using the Theakston porch at the big house as a smoking place. Fearing a fire, Helen again made contact with Marion Theakston and offered to purchase the main big house. I happened to be at Helen's home in Scranton, Pennsylvania when Western Union called with a telegram from Nova Scotia which read, "It's yours, darling." This was 1961. Helen sold the little house to Phil and Katherine Robinson in about 1964.

For 11 years, Helen and Cassandra entertained friends and relatives in this lovely home. They became a part of the life at Pemaquid Point. They volunteered at the new Miles Hospital canteen, at the Bristol Library, and at the Fisherman's Museum at the Lighthouse. Martha Phillips and I, also colleagues of Helen and Cassandra, came to visit for five days each June as soon as school was out. We were working and playing guests. We helped with painting, cutting grass, restoring walls, laying brick pathways and gardening. There was constant entertaining, partying and laughter. Our playmates in those days were Katherine Leggett, Helen Pearsoll, Hilda Siemon, Henrietta Brown and Mary Charlton. As I remember it, this was life as it was meant to be – pure paradise!

When Cassandra died of a massive heart attack in 1973, for several summers, Helen was alone with her beloved kitty, Jenny. Then she was joined by her twin brother, Herbert Smith, a vice president of Canada Dry. Herbert and Helen had some wonderful years together. They purchased a home in Scranton, and spent winters there. From late May through August, they were at their lovely home, on what was then called Spring Lane at Pemaquid Point. Herbert's health began to fail in the late 1980s, and he lived until about 1989.

I want to speak again about the Theakston's little five year old niece, Sarah Jackson, who was the apple of their eye. Sarah spent every summer of her youth at Pemaquid Point. Unfortunately, when she was in her mid-teens, a deep misunderstanding rose between her and her aunt and uncle -- and her invitations to Pemaquid Point ceased. Sarah's little playhouse withstood the summer heat and the winter winds for 60 years and as I said, it was still standing when I first came here in 1963. But early in the summer of 1964, Helen Smith hired Mr. Wilder Fossett to tear down what remained of the decaying wood so he could clear the land. About a month later, Mr. Fossett and his wife were at the Portland General Hospital visiting an ill friend. As they were standing in the hall talking, a nurse or nurse's aid walked by, stopped, approached the Fossetts and said "Did I hear you mentioning Pemaquid Point? When I was a child I spent so many happy summers there with my aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Theakston. Tell me," she continued, "is my little playhouse still there?" Mr. Fossett, in telling of this conversation to Helen Smith, said, "God forgive me, Miss Smith, but I didn't have it in me to tell her that I had just destroyed what was left of her little playhouse, so I told her, 'yes, the playhouse is still there and it is as pretty as the day that it was built for you.'"

Helen lived until about 1999. Several years earlier, she had given her property at Pemaquid Point to the four children of her younger brother, Walter Smith, and so now Nancy Smith, George Smith, James Smith and Sarah Feaster come with their families for a week or two each summer. In weeks when they are not in residence, the home is for rent. If you pass by while one of the nieces or nephews is here, you might see a lemonade stand at the end of the driveway and you might be so fortunate to meet the

children of the next generation of Smiths – Francesca, Geoffrey, Samantha, Alexa, Jacqueline and John - learning for themselves the magic of being at Pemaquid Point.