

## History of an 1800s Ship Chandler's House

Circa 1840, Jeremiah Fowler had a Greek revival house built in a small coastal town in the eastern most area of the USA, on the Bay of Fundy, with tides up to 30 feet. There are car ferries, islands, forests (hunting and fishing), exploring unpopulated cliffs and rugged rocky shores where tidal changes make obvious differences in landscape. Long legged wharves attest to the height of the tides and the town is surrounded by these wharves.

Fowler had arranged to marry a Boston lady coming on ship with all her English antique furniture. There was a terrible storm at sea and the ship, with all aboard, sank. Nothing was ever recovered. Fowler was so distraught he didn't want anything more to do with the house, so he sold it to Simeon Ryerson, a ship chandler with a growing family.

Simeon Ryerson added on the back wing – kitchen, dining room, sleeping room, 2 upstairs bedrooms and storage room. Later he added the first bathroom in town. He had 7 children, 2 boys who didn't live to adulthood, and 5 girls. One, Adelaide, married a Sumner, who was a colonel in the Civil War. They inherited the house and remained there the rest of their lives, but had no children.

Another daughter, Albertina, married Dr. Charles Johnson from East Machias and moved to Illinois. They had 2 children, a boy and a girl. The boy, Simeon Johnson, became a doctor like his father and the Illinois Central Railroad Company hired him to be the doctor at a coal mining town 50 miles south of Springfield. Dr. Simeon Johnson had 4 children. Albertina brought the oldest, Walter Ryerson, back to visit her home in Lubec every summer.

When the Sumner's died, they left the house and furnishings to Effie, Dr. Simeon Johnson's wife, and his oldest son, Walter Ryerson. The Johnson's returned east, leaving 3 bedroom sets, a large heavy square piano of the type used by Grieg and his wife, 2 folding chairs that look like officer's camp chairs from the Civil War, 2 etageres and a Victorian dining room set.

The house stayed empty 12 or more years until Ryerson, a freelance writer, suggested to his new wife, Lois (a package designer for the largest toiletry house in the world at that time), that they go up for their honeymoon (late 1930s). They figured if they liked it they would keep it, otherwise would sell. The Lubec house had history, elegance and style. That was satisfying enough to start on. They made repairs to the house so they could spend summers there. Over the years they collected antique furniture and sundries of the period to replace items that had been removed earlier. Now the interior presentation is museum quality (photos are available upon request).

There are unique moldings and hand crafted plaster painted in tints on the ceilings for elegance and accent. The front stairs were crafted by the same carpenter who did the stairs in the historic Ruggles House in Columbia falls, though they are done in quite a different style.

The barn contains an old carriage and sleigh, early American church benches, copper washing machine with gears and other items no longer used in the house.

After 11 years, a child was born and the free lifestyle had to change to more substantial way of living. Ryerson got a job with the Ford Foundation and the Encyclopedia Britannica, before going back to freelance writing when their daughter got out of college. Summers were always spent in Lubec no matter what they were doing. That was their first love and they finally closed out everywhere else and had that as their headquarters. Unfortunately, the house and property is now too much for Lois to maintain.