

# ***Rockland Harbor History Quest***

***Difficulty: Easy***

***Time 1 hour 15 minutes***

## **Directions**

**From the North:** Come down Route 1 and into Rockland. Main Street in Rockland is one way, so you will have to make a small right and then left onto Union Street that will end in a stoplight on Route 1 again across from Dairy Queen. Turn left at the light, then right at the next light, which is Route 73, also known as South Main Street. Continue until you come to Mechanic Street on your left. Turn down Mechanic and make a right into Snow Street. Park in the Old Snow Shipyard parking lot. (The sign says Sharp's Point South, Old Snow Shipyard)

**From the South:** Take Route 1 into Rockland. At the light after Rite Aid make a right onto Route 73 or South Main Street. Continue until you come to Mechanic Street on the left. Turn down Mechanic and make a right into Snow Street. Park in the Old Snow Shipyard parking lot. (The sign says Sharp's Point South, Old Snow Shipyard).

## **Introduction**

Rockland has changed dramatically over the last 200 years. It has left behind much of its shipbuilding, lime burning, and fishing heritage to become a vacation destination. Where lime kilns once sent smoke and ash into the air there are now restaurants and art galleries. As you walk our Quest, try to picture the sights and sounds of an earlier time. The stops will give you information on important landmarks around the harbor. Use the map and our movement clues to find your way from one stop to the next. We hope you learn something, but most of all, we hope you have fun! Walk to a bench by the water, sit down, and begin!



As you gaze at the harbor and shipyard, imagine different ships being built while others are being launched. Imagine the fishing vessels, the schooners, the oil carriers, and the tugs. Imagine the ships heading to war: the sub chasers, the minesweepers, and the net tenders. Many of these boats were built right here and in other shipyards in Rockland over the last 200 years.

Most of the ships built here before World War Two were working boats with different duties. The fishing vessels would catch nets full of fish for the sardine packing plants and dried fish markets. When the war came, this shipyard built ships for the navy. Net tenders were built here to lay large nets to ensnare submarines. Mine sweepers were built here to look for mines and destroy them. Sub chasers were built here to seek out the subs ensnared by net tenders and destroy them. This park and the marine business next to it provided vessels that were used around the world.

*Get up, and walk northwest*

*To the buoy with a bell.*

*You'll learn its name at the end of the Quest*

*Now a family's story we'll tell.*



Captain Israel Snow, born in 1801, was the second of four generations of Israel Snows in Rockland and part of a family of shipbuilders. He bought what is now Snow Marine Park from Henry Ingraham, also a shipbuilder, in 1862. Captain Snow and his family eventually had their own ship building company, which started out just repairing the ships while only building one or two ships a year. Eventually, the company was one of the most prosperous in the area building many of the schooners that worked this waterfront. One of the first ships they built was the *Ned Sumpter*, a 104 ton two-masted schooner launched in 1863. These schooners took granite, lime and even ice to places all down the East Coast. Even today, one of the homes on Mechanic Street is owned by a member of the Snow family.

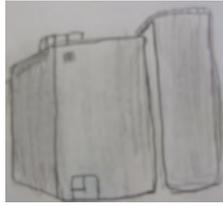
*Face your back towards the sea  
Walk towards the road and up the hill  
Take a left when you pass the tree  
At #36 amazing woodwork will give you a thrill.*



All the houses on Mechanic Street have two things in common; they were all built between 1850 and 1860, and they were all originally owned by fishermen and boat builders. This means that there is a lot of history crammed into one street of houses! Take your time to look at all of them, but we were especially interested in two of them with interesting gable decorations.

Two houses that our Quest is going to focus on are numbers 36 and 38, the two houses with the detailed eaves. Number 36, the rust colored one, was built in 1854 and its neighbor, 38, the yellow one, was built just a year later. The houses were originally owned by Captain Alexander Bennett and Charles Kenniston, respectively, although they bought the lots from Henry Ingraham. The one thing we wondered about the first time we saw these two houses was the decorated eaves. Why were they there? Did the design mean something special? It turns out that, in all probability, Bennett and Kenniston had boat building experience and did this artwork on their houses to pass the cold winter nights and to show off their carpentry skills.

*Beautifully decorated houses stand before you,  
Turn right and see the grain silos so tall,  
Walk down the street is all you have to do,  
Watch out for the train track so you don't fall.*



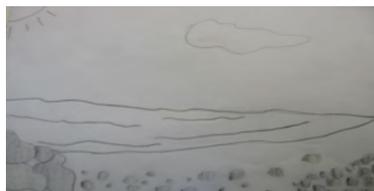
The tall gray buildings, one a square and one a cylinder, that sit on the corner of Atlantic and Mechanic Streets were grain storage buildings. They were built for about \$750,000 in 1965 to transport grain by boat. Rail travel had become expensive. Unfortunately, the business was not very successful, and they have not been used since 1984. These buildings are now just interesting landmarks.

*As you say goodbye to the old grain mill,  
Go around the corner, you must go away  
On your right sits the Dragon Cement pier, it doesn't sit on a hill,  
You're in the right place if you get a clear sight of the bay.*



The symbol of the Dragon Cement company is a dragon itself, which is what you see here. The Dragon Cement company in Thomaston once wasn't what it is now. A long time ago, this pier might have been used to load the barrels of lime that came out of the quarries up on Old County Road and shipped down Limerock Street onto ships bound for Boston and New York. The lime was, and still is, used today since 1733 for plaster and mortar. Eventually, the good quality lime was used up. Before it was used as cement, it was used on farms to help fertilize the land. It used to be very popular because of the train traveling on railroad, shipping lime all around the state. Now the last of the poor quality lime is used at Dragon Cement to help create cement all around New England.

*Now that cement has crossed your path,  
Travel until a gray brick path is in reach,  
Do not hop in to take a bath,  
Follow the path to frigid Sandy Beach.*

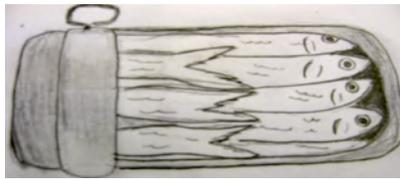


Walk down the steps and enjoy this pretty little beach. It wasn't always this beautiful. Some adults who grew up in Rockland still call it "turd beach" or "poop beach" because of the raw sewage that was constantly flowing into the harbor before the water treatment plant was built. Before the 1970's, very little wild life was in the harbor. Sea weed wouldn't grow because the sun couldn't penetrate the soupy water, most fish couldn't survive, and people rarely saw sea birds other than gulls. Once the water treatment plant was built in Rockland, the harbor slowly began to recover. Now, you can see a lot of wildlife. People fish off the breakwater, you can see ducks such as long tail ducks, black scoters, and different types of gulls. Sometimes

you can see harbor seals swimming in the water. Although it looks still, every 12 hours between 3 and 4 billion gallons of water move in and out of the harbor with the tides.

From Sandy Beach, you can see islands North Haven, which is only 12 miles off shore from Rockland, part of Vinalhaven, and also Green Islands. You may also see Big and Little Hurricane Islands. If you look out and to the right, you can see the windmills on Vinalhaven. To your right is a point that was the site of the launching of a schooner built in Rockland. In 1907, schooner Mertie B. Crowley was built in Snow Marine Park. It was a six masted schooner. Many people, some from Bar Harbor, some from Ellsworth, came on steamboats to watch the launch. With a cargo of coal, it was sent off to Boston from Virginia on January 18th, 1910 and crashed into the Wasque Shoals off Martha's Vineyard. The ship sank but everyone was saved.

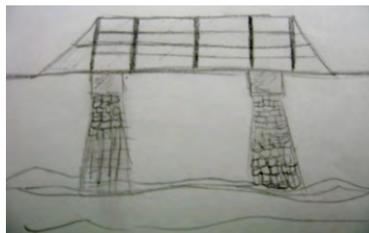
*Go back up the steps and take a right,  
Follow the path, a gazebo is on your left.  
Go down the long path, a brown building is in sight.  
That is Boston Financial, and there you may rest.*



The Boston Financial building behind you used to be where five lime kilns were located and so it was called Five Kilns. If you were standing next to the five kilns in 1880 when they were working, you would be black from the smoke from the burning lime. It was said that from a boat coming into the harbor at night, all you could see was the glow of fires and black heavy smoke. At times, the smoke made it hard to breathe and it turned white laundry on clotheslines grey.

Later in this spot a sardine packing plant was built. All of Rockland smelled like fish from the canning and the waste from the process that went back into the harbor. An old joke was "Camden by the sea; Rockland by the smell." You could smell it from miles away. Now this part of the harbor is the home of offices and restaurants and is considered a great place to have a business.

*Behind you is the old MBNA,  
Walk with the ocean to your right,  
Your destination is not far away,  
Stop when a small bridge is in sight.*



As you reach the last stretch of the boardwalk, you will see a green trestle bridge connected to a small white shed. A trestle bridge is a bridge structured with triangles to help support it. This one was part of the lime trestles that carried lime in small trains to the kilns that were all along the Rockland harbor. If you lived on the harbor you would be dealing with a lot of smoke and ash every day from the kilns.

If you look out beyond the bridge you will see what looks like a long wall of rocks in the harbor with a lighthouse at the end. That is the Rockland Breakwater. The breakwater was built Between 1881 and 1899

with 700,000 tons of granite, and a lighthouse at the end, to protect the harbor, boats, and the lime kilns from storms. It was completed in 1902 after the lighthouse was relocated four times.

*As you leave the boardwalk, and continue your walk,  
On your right you'll see a bridge that is green,  
Go straight, then go left from the dock,  
Then at the bottom of the hill an anchor, where a seagull may preen.*



This is the home of the Rockland Lobster Festival which has been around since 1946. The first one was in Camden, and only lasted one day. Since then it has been in Rockland and lasts an entire week. At every festival there is a grand parade, and of course, lots of lobster! Each year, they serve at least twenty thousand pounds of lobster. The festival brings in about one million dollars each year! They donate some of the money to places like Penobscot Bay Medical Center, the Children's Museum, and the Rockland Police Department. About 1,000 volunteers are needed. They hire bands for entertainment for the observers and have tents where people can buy goods such as candles, hats, and scarves. In these tents, you can find a tank full of sea creatures. There are also carnival rides, game booths, and lots of fun food.

*Standing on the platform looking out to sea,  
Walk North East on a narrow street,  
On your right a small park you will see  
Buoys that are very neat.*



The buoys in Buoy Park have a rich history. Rockland Harbor has buoys scattered throughout it, and each with a different story to tell. Bell buoys like the one at the beginning of our quest are used to warn boaters of shallow spots or rocks. The channel markers are used to show the channels so big boats like the ferry can pass through the harbor and not run aground. If you watch the ferry coming in or going out you'll notice that it doesn't move in a straight line because it keeps to the channels. Buoys are very important in the Rockland

Harbor because they are signposts for boats. The buoys' job is to keep us and everyone that passes through the harbor safe and warn all the captains where they can and can't go.

The lobster buoys are a big part of the Rockland Harbor because we are the Lobster Capital of the World. All lobstering buoys are painted differently, so fishermen can tell which buoys are theirs. Lobster buoys are attached to the lobster traps to mark them. Mooring buoys are spheres that keep a boat in place. Lobstermen and vacation boaters use these to tie up their boats in the harbor. To get to shore, they use a rowboat or inflatable boats.

*The "Winds" are a place where people can stay.  
Go there to get the quest treasure chest,  
Walk in the door to the place where you can pay,  
and ask for the "Box for the Rockland Harbor History Quest".*

Thank you for walking our quest. Please be sure to write your name in the quest book and stamp your quest with our stamp. We enjoyed having you walk our Quest.

-8th Grade Rockland District Middle School Students  
Class of 2015