



## ***One-day opening of Cafe puts visitors back in time***

*100-year-old Piscataqua Cafe still furnished; woodwork gleams*

*by Bill (Pappou) Drew - Story and photos*

Situated on pilings at the river's edge is a New Castle landmark, a plain white building with a sign on one side that reads, "Piscataqua Café." Visitors ask, "Is it open for business?" "What does it look like inside?" "What's its history?"



*Down Cape Road to the Piscataqua Cafe*

The Café was built over 100 years ago by Luther Amazeen and is now owned by his great-grandson. In those days some patrons arrived by boats docking at the end of a long pier. Walk-in guests came via River Road then Cape Road.

On only rare occasions is it open to the public. It was one of these, an event put on by the New Castle Historical Society, that I had the opportunity to visit this historic building..

As I move down Cape Road leading to the Piscataqua Café, my first encounters are with old and new friends coming to and leaving the event. It's a social in the middle of the street. I'm a storyteller so the conversation is usually more



*Early 1900's view showing long wharf where customers arriving in boats tied up*

than just a few words.



*Event Day: Lots of activity- Lots of people*



Approaching the building, my attention is diverted to the left, that of old photographs of town scenes displayed on the lawn opposite the Café. There is lively discussion and a variety of explanations as to where the views were from, and the buildings that are and are not in existence. As different opinions are expressively offered I extract myself from this social intercourse, turn and face the entrance to Piscataqua Café.

Piano music is heard in the background; that of Ragtime tunes from the early 1900's. It sets the scene.

I mount the steps to the front porch of the building.

To my left are fresh flowers on a small table beside an old Adirondack wooden chair. It brings back memories of my grandmother many years ago sitting on





the back porch of her home in Portsmouth, cooling off on a warm summer afternoon.

On the opposite side is an easel holding a painting. The artist, a descendant of the original family that built and owned the Café, is Tania Amazeen-Jones. The painting is up for auction. (Debbie Schulte, town historian, was the high bidder)



Entering the front door I observe a large main room. There is natural wood everywhere; floors, ceilings, walls and furniture. It is not the bright work of highly varnished wood seen on sailing yachts but one with a soft patina yielding a comfortable and cozy atmosphere.

There is lots of activity centered about the long counter on the left filled with pastries and at the far end a bowl of lemonade. Beyond and behind the counter is the kitchen area.



In the center of the room there is an intimate sitting area of a stuffed couch and chairs. Above hangs a chandelier made of running light enclosures from old sailing vessels.

To the right is a beautiful staircase surrounded by wood leading to the second floor. There are a couple of period paintings of children hanging on the wall of the stairway.

I proceed to the heart of the Café, the main dining room. It overlooks the Piscataqua River with a view of the Naval Prison at the Navy Yard to the left. As my eye sweeps across to the right, the entrance to Portsmouth harbor is seen in the distance.





There are individual tables each with chairs, tablecloth, flowers, and settings which give the appearance the Café about ready to open for customers. Antiques are everywhere.



At the far left is a beautiful carved piano leading one to imagine happy times of background music and accompaniment to joyous songs sung by all. Perhaps a sea shanty or two was delivered and maybe a few limericks depicting the life of seafarers.



move on upstairs to visit the bedrooms. The largest and most beautifully furnished is the master bedroom. A number of antiques give the air that the residents of 100 years ago are about to walk in.

The other bedrooms contain period furnishings and are simple in nature yet reminiscent of those in my grandmother's guest bedroom: A bed, a table or two, a closet, a chair - all period furniture. I note the dressers as being similar to ones I've experienced in the past. To open a drawer, each had a particular combination of pull one side, then the other, jiggle along the way and finally success. It always seemed a bit easier to close them than open them.



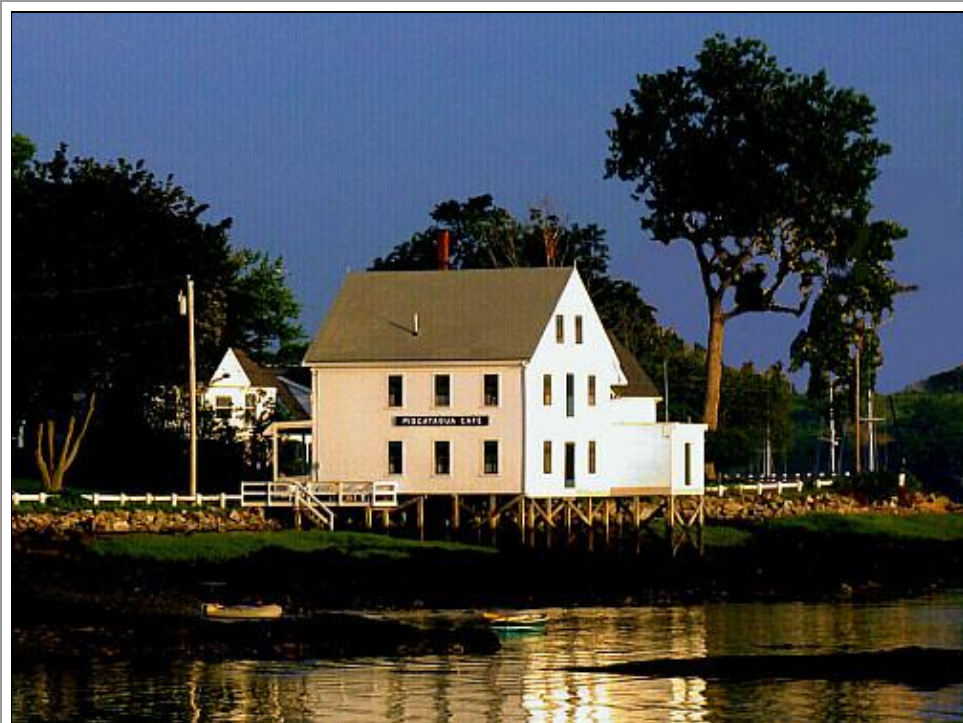


return downstairs and quickly partake of another pasty then bolt for the exit before someone reminds me that I am supposed to be on a regime of discipline.

It's into the street where there are more people, more stories, and a chance to marvel to others what has just been seen.

The simple New England architecture of the outside shields the truly exquisite artistry of the builder that is contained inside. To have preserved this structure for this long without inside paint or other modifications is truly a marvel.

It is an historic treasure and I feel fortunate to have felt its presence. To a degree, now you have too.



*The Piscataqua Cafe*

### *HISTORY*

*Luther Amazeen and his brother Alexander purchased the house across from the Piscataqua Café in 1864. Its origins date back to the 1690's. The structure is dated as hand sawn timber was used in the construction of the foundation and support beams. The brothers converted it into a two family home, each with ownership of their half.*

*In addition to a barn that was built on his property in 1897, Luther built a small building on the site of the current Café. This building burned and its replacement, the Piscataqua Café, was completed a couple of years later.*



*It opened its doors in 1898 and then, unfortunately, was closed in 1908 with the death of Luther. He drowned while fishing for lobster off Odiorne Point. He and his descendants have used the building for over 100 years as a summer residence where the cool breezes off the water provide a relief from the heat of the mainland.*

*During the following years Luther's son, also named Luther, was not interested in running the Café. The building was used for a variety of purposes. One year between 1910 and 1916, a destitute family was allowed to use it as a winter residence and there is evidence that Luther Jr., installed a stove pipe for a stove in one room on the second floor. Other than this one instance, the building has remained unheated.*

*For many years the first floor was used for storage while the family used the second floor as a summer residence and guest house. At one time the building even housed a competitive sailing club.*

*With the passing of Luther Jr., Rardy (Gerard), his son, owned it. Then it came into the possession of the current generation Paul Amazeen and his wife Carrie. They treasure this venerable building and maintain its original beauty. Their family home is close by, in the house across the street, Luther Sr.'s original half of the house he and his brother purchased in 1864.*

*The Piscataqua Café sits across the street, a testament to history and longevity.*

***[Go to Letters in September, 2008](#)***

*August, 2008*

*Copyright © Rye Reflections 2008. All rights reserved.*