The Whitmore Family of Old Pulpit Harbor Village

The Whitmore Family lived near the last cove before the Harbor mouth. "They looked down on the big wharf- for schooners which bought goods and took away salt hay, and which received the mail when the Thoroughfare was frozen solid- and the grain shed with its scales, the ice house, a gas pump, and the Beverage store on the beach."  

Reuben and Mary Thomas Whitmore were married on January 23, 1845. (Mary was a daughter of James Thomas, the clerk of the Baptist Church who wrote the order of exclusion for his brother Nathaniel). Reuben and Mary had five children, Augustine (Gus) born June 8, 1872, Eda, James Leon, Annie and Ernest. The extended Whitmore family were prodigious letter writers and they saved hundreds of the letters that passed from parents to their children and back again. The vast majority of the letters were sent between Mary and her son James Leon who attended college on the mainland.

From those letters, we can get a number of brilliant snapshots of life in Old Pulpit Harbor Village, especially as it was lived at the beginning of the 20th century.

Mary to her son Leon:
May, 1903-

The fields are green, yellow and blue. Violets are in their prime now. I've got a young gosling in the house... Miss you.

November, 1903-

It commenced to snow last evening and is still at it. Mr. Mullen had a paralytic shock last Thursday and come to think of it, it is the second one.

It was Children's Day (at the church) yesterday and Mr. Dunbar gave the children a nice sermon... your father has had a loaf day... Avery Dyer is going to deliver the mail tomorrow. Do you sleep comfortably?

November 30, 1903-

... the meeting bell has rung and we are gathered around the chimney... still snowing. This is the third week of three (Church) meetings.

...we will have our mail now brought to the door by Avery Dyer..

...we had duck for Thanksgiving dinner.

...I've got two dozen nets to carry in and two dozen eggs... we've got to get the sugar firkin filled and get rum and tobacco. We're going to kill and pig this week.

...They say the North East school master is a peeper. (?)

...Leon, I'm afraid you set up too late nights... do they give you hard lessons

P.S. Thursday 12 o'clock Hurrah! Free mail delivery has begun.
Avery just brought your letter
January, 1906-
It seems lonely since the holidays I forget and put your plate on most everytime.

Aunt Fannie "got a cinder" in her eye while sifting coal ashes... they think she will lose sight in that eye she has been having a hard time.

Ira is ice boating.

They say the measles is here. Job's family had them first, now others.

October, 1906-
It is quite thick fog and the fog bell is ringing right out... Ernie has four little kittens, one week old... How are your funds holding out?

April, 1909-
The ground froze Saturday night. Pastor Pringle gave a very good sermon. His sermons are all first class.

We have not made out garden yet it is so cold. Last week there was a Grange organized here so you can see we are getting up in the world.

The fishermen are doing nicely

Omar Thomas was buried last Saturday. Now I am getting sleepy... waiting for your visit.

Mary, 1909-
The bobolinks and hummingsbirds have come...

October, 1909-
We have bought a 5. mo old colt, he's pretty and can kick... We have a basketball team to school. Uncle Gus Whitmore has taken up smoking.

Murry Stone has got married. It has been raining all of the fore noon.

December, 1909-
Annie said you were deer hunting... I was reading today that there had been seven killed deer hunting this fall 3 mistaken for deer and 4 accidentally. Pa says tell you his deer tasted awful good.

They chose a committee to fix the church. Mr. Herzog says he will help.

I shall have to commence to get ready for Christmas soon. We are not going to have any presents this year. Well goodbye.
Eda to her brother Leon:

November 1903-

The telephone lines are all busted up, expect it will be a long time...

There isn't much sickness in town... It is getting to be the thing to move away.

We will be moving soon.

Some of the people here are afraid of the small pox, there are a number of cases in Camden.

We start RFD... Will Sampson was around selling boxes.

Elisha's wife shingled her house and picked hens' til 12 o'clock night and had her kid before morning. Do you wonder?

Hollis isn't feeling very well got pain inside

I see Tillie out exercising her lamb got him hitched to her sled.

Did you bob for apples, walk downstairs backwards and all those things at your Halloween party?

To Leon from his sister

February, 1906-

Ern came to supper and staid overnight because it was so dark and muddy…

Over the phone is not a very safe place to talk privacy.

Deacon Crockett was buried Sunday... The Masons came, about 50 of them after the sermon they went through their programme. The church was crowded. I expect he has suffered terribly. What a relief it must be to go when one has endured so much if we only believe and trust in God. We had sausage and graham rolls for breakfast. Marm held a little kitten up to the phone so I could hear him.

Erm is twisting yarn and spinning all day Monday. I made a little ice cream, chocolate. I wish you were here.

We've got the washing and ironing done don't the wind howl though.

Orrie went to Rockland and had all her teeth out and I tell you she is a bird now
Aunt Flora to Leon
March, 1906-
Thanks for remembering me in your last letter... I have many things to make me sad and it sometimes seems that I am forgotten by everyone. It seemed like a ray of sunshine...

Cousin Ira To Leon
It is dull times around here... Since Orrie had her teeth out we don't need to worry about being bit.

It has been horrid cold... it makes the foxes hungry. One came out and caught a hen today.

They are building 10 gasoline boats this winter where there was not one before...

The Principal of the mainland school Leon was attending to Leon:
September, 1904-
My dear Whitmore, what about new boys from North Haven?

Hope you will bring Beverage and Crockett with you next week. The more of the right sort the better. I shall expect you to add to the number.

Mrs. Ellerton James of Nahant to Mary:
March, 1906-
Yesterday was Town Meeting... the dinner was served at Frank Joyce's house by the "Ladies Aid"... We're going to have a chopping bee... Orrie's bunnies are going off like hot cakes all the children want one or two. We're going to have a clam chowder dinner. It rained so much Saturday night, it flooded everything water flowed over bridges cisterns are full

October, 1906-
Now I am writing to ask if you can get me another cat to mate with yours? I should be glad to pay a dollar for a black, tiger, yellow or tortoiseshell... but I do not want a cat with any gray...
Whitmore Family Reunion at the Grange Hall

Reuben Whitmore