

The Bethel Journals

Bethel Maine History

Fred L. Edwards

For the September 1897 Bethel Agricultural Fair, Fred Edwards was Superintendent of Stock. Mr. Edwards had the largest herd on the grounds and one hard to beat. He known as one of Bethel's heavy farmers, keeping sixty head of cattle and cutting 125 tons of hay this year. The livestock he brought from his farm to exhibit included a pair of large handsome 3-year old steers, yearling bull, 2-year old bull, all black and shiny, 3 cows, 3 bull calves, heifer calf, all of Holstein blood; 2 Durham cows, Ayrshire cow, and 2 Durham heifers.



Fred L. Edwards, 38, as his photo appeared in the 1904 special edition of the Bethel News

His biographic sketch written for the 1904 Bethel News covered his career up to that point as follows: Mr. Edwards is one of the busiest of Bethel's substantial business men. He is engaged in farming and lumbering, each done on an extensive scale. He was born in Bethel, October 14, 1865, the son of Col. Clark S. and Maria A. Edwards. He was educated at Bethel public schools, Gould Academy, Bridgton Academy and Gray's Commercial College for his business training. After his schooling, he was associated with his father in the management of extensive farm property and lumbering interests for several years. Even prior to his father's death in May 1903, he had assumed complete oversight of the Edwards properties and business operations. Mr. Edwards not only controls the home property, comprising several hundred acres of farm and timber lands, but is owner of large, valuable farm and timber properties in Albany and Greenwood. Mr. Edwards also gives consideration attention to raising high quality Holstein cattle stock. His Holstein herd numbers from fifty to seventy-five head which he sells to select buyers as occasion demands.



Fred L Edwards from a photo published in the 1931 special edition of the Oxford County Citizen.

While associated with his father, lumber operations focused mainly on getting out ties for the Grand Trunk Railway. Later this developed into cutting pulp wood, spool stock and cord wood and is now the mainstay of his lumbering enterprises. At this point he is contemplating manufacturing lumber and spool stock in his own mills: one in Bethel on his own land, another in Albany and a third at Roxbury. He employs a very sizable work force.

On June 28, 1890, he married Susan G. Frost of North Bethel. They had one daughter, Dorothy, born in 1910.

In February 1894, he started a milk route in Bethel delivering to about 20 customers.

Following the death of Col. Edwards, Mr. Edwards continued farming on a large scale, raising thorough bred cattle and conducting lumbering operations in Bethel, Albany and Roxbury. In 1920 he bought the N.R. Springer house on Main Street (across from the Bethel post office in 2007).

His sound business judgment was recognized throughout the state. He was a director of the Rumford National Bank and the Norway National Bank. He has served as a Democratic member of the Maine House of Representatives in 1914-15, 1922-23 and 1930-31.

In 1943, Mr. Edwards donated a lot of land to the Riverside Cemetery Association that is divided by the North Road from the main cemetery grounds. In 1945, Mr. Edwards along with Henry Boyker donated land for the first runway of the Bethel Airport. The eastern end of the airport property had been part of the Riverside Park and Bethel Agricultural Fair grounds, originally belonging to the farm of Moses A. Mason.

Fred Edwards died in 1947 and Susan Frost Edwards died in 1961. They are buried at Riverside Cemetery.

EDWARDS AND FROST FAMILY HISTORY

(Excerpted from History of Bethel, Maine by William Lapham.)

THE EDWARDS FAMILY

Grandparents and parents of Fred Lee Edwards

Enoch Edwards (grandfather) of Gorham, Maine married **Abigail McLellan**, also of Gorham, farmed in Otisfield where their son Clark Swett Edwards was born on Mar. 26, 1824 and brought up on the Otisfield farm. He came to Bethel in 1848 with Edwin R. Eastman; the two men bought out the store business of Kimball and Pattee in a store which stood on the northwest corner of the Common.

Clark S. Edwards (father) married Maria A. Mason, a daughter of Ayers Mason, Dec. 5, 1849. Maria Edwards died March 6, 1885. They had seven children. Clark Edwards enlisted at the outbreak of the War of Rebellion (Civil War). He was given the rank of Captain and commanded the first company raised in Oxford County. Five of the couple's seven children were born before the war.

Read more about Clark S. Edwards.

Fred Lee Edwards—After Clark Edwards returned to Bethel from the war, their sixth child, Fred Lee Edwards, was born Oct. 12, 1865. Fred Edwards married Susan Gray Frost on June 28, 1890.

THE FROST FAMILY

Grandparents, parents of Susan Frost Edwards

Aaron Frost (grandfather) was born in 1779 in Berwick. He married Mrs. **Susan Gray Bennett** of Falmouth who was born 1780. He was a carpenter who came to Bethel from Groton, Vermont. He died October 19, 1860 and Susan Frost died March 10, 1861. From her first marriage, Mrs. Frost had a son Francis Bennett who died in 1846.

They had 11 children born between 1804 and 1825.

Orange Clark Frost (father) was the sixth child born Feb. 23, 1812 (in Bethel?). He first married Cyrene Straw Hastings*; his second wife was Mary M. Hastings.

For many years he was in the livery business in Portland, returned to Bethel, then moved to Auburn, came back to Bethel, 1864, and died in Bethel. His home is described as below (down river from) Mayville, actually in the Swan's Corner section of North Bethel according to the 1880 map of Bethel.

Susan Gray Frost—The fourth child of Orange C and Mary Hastings Frost was named Susan Gray Frost, born Feb. 15, 1869. She married Fred L Edwards June 28, 1890.

* Orange Clark Frost and Cyrene S. Hastings Frost also had a son who was named Orange Clark Frost (1839-1859).

References: Note 1. Bethel's Main Street Through History. Rosalind R. Chapman, 1997 *The Bethel Courier Family History information source is William Lapham, History of Bethel, Maine. Riverside Cemetery, burials.*