

ISLAND JOURNAL

The Annual Publication of the Island Institute
Volume Three



ISLAND JOURNAL

*The Annual Publication of the Island Institute
Volume Three 1986*

The Island Institute is a resource management and information service for island owners, communities and visitors to islands in the Gulf of Maine.

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Letters



From the Executive Director

When we look back at our beginnings only three years ago, our sense of time becomes warped. Was the beginning of the Island Institute just a moment ago or was it in the dim past? It's rather like having a perfectly cylindrical telescope and not knowing which end of the tube to look through. Are the heavens near or far away?

Of course, it's a little early—actually way too early—to be thinking much about the history of the Island Institute, but this moment feels worth at least a little reflection. Currently at approximately 800 members, we think we will be staring at a membership of 1,000 in the near future. Our members come from all walks of life—fishermen, summer people, conservationists, government officials, yachtsmen, and tourists. But we all have in common a deep belief in the importance of conserving the lives, livelihoods, and landscape that the Maine islands have shaped and been shaped by for more than four centuries.

We feel a sense of our own history at the moment, as the Institute prepares to take a major step forward. We are forming our own separate nonprofit corporation, which we believe will allow the Institute to shape our future and also to act as a positive force that will help shape the future of the Maine islands. The challenges of becoming an independent organization are daunting, but we are confident of our mission and membership support.

As we look ahead to the real and difficult challenges facing island communities and residents, as well as visitors to Maine's islands, we are eager to recognize a few of the individuals whose perspective has helped shape the Island Institute in the past three years and whose vision impels us into the future.

First (age before beauty) is Tom Cabot, the industrialist, philanthropist, and patriarch of Boston's Cabot Corporation, a man whom the *Maine Times* called "the godfather of the Maine islands." He is certainly the godfather of the Island Institute. Plain spoken and direct, Tom Cabot opens most conversations with, "I'm 88 and I'm not going to live forever. I want to know what you're going to do today, tomorrow, and next week—not next year—to educate people

about the importance of the Maine islands." With Tom Cabot's energy and vision behind us, we press ahead.

Second, in years but not in generosity, is Betsy Wyeth, who is determined to see the island landscapes put to work, to be used for the kind of traditional enterprises that have shaped their shores, fields, and forests ever since Weymouth's *Archangel* lay at anchor off Allen Island. It was Betsy Wyeth's vision and generosity that created ISLAND JOURNAL three years ago through the gift of 10 signed reproductions of *The Reefer*, a painting by her husband, Andrew Wyeth. It is Betsy Wyeth's continuing pioneering spirit on Allen Island—seeking a blend of forward-looking fishing, forestry, and farming practices within the context of limited seasonal development—that has helped us define a thoughtful, balanced future for Maine islands.

Finally, Peter Willauer, President of Hurricane Island Outward Bound School, championed the idea of creating the Island Institute as a broadbased organization bringing together owners and agencies with responsible island users to create a future of balanced access up and down the coast. Benefiting from the use of the impressive logistical resources of H.I.O.B.S., Peter Willauer ensured that the Island Institute would establish itself quickly as a diverse and successful forum for the exchange of ideas.

Many of us think that the islands face unprecedented demands and challenges that must be confronted by the collective wisdom and intelligence of people from many different walks of life. Partially because the Maine islands are facing major land-use and marine-resource issues, the Island Institute is growing—and growing up—rapidly.

As we look ahead at the challenges and opportunities that the Island Institute and the Maine islands face, we also look back at our beginnings and acknowledge those three individuals who have brought us to the edge of another beginning and a hopeful future.

Philip W. Conkling

From the Editors

Holy crow, Volume Three! Another year; a little more grown-up; a humming staff; and a whole lot better publication.

Who would have believed it when we started three years ago? Apparently the answer is a lot of you. Aside from the copies we sent to members, last year we sold another 4,000 copies of ISLAND JOURNAL. And we figure that the publication gets a pass-by of two or three to one, giving us a readership of something like 10,000 island residents, owners, and visitors. Quite a collection we are.

Although several of us among the ISLAND JOURNAL staff and regular contributors are professional writers and photographers, our intent has always been to provide a forum for those who visit or live on and among the Maine islands. From the beginning, we have presented a blend of personal, individualistic narratives and images that expresses the power of the island life and landscape that shapes our different ends.

While we are not an especially political organ—whatever is best about and for Maine islands is our concern—we do have, as you might guess, some strong feelings and inclinations about this marvelous archipelago. However, we also know perfectly well that no real intelligence about the islands' deepest meanings is possible without participation from our diverse, far-flung readers. Rapidly growing membership in the Island Institute is, of course, gratifying. What we on the editorial staff of ISLAND JOURNAL continue to want

from you are words and pictures—right out of the blue—unannounced and without apologies or introductions. After all, how can a publication's integrity and fascination be maintained without a fully embodied sense of *US* throughout its content? We think that in some recess in each of us is an islander; at best, we are all islands connected within an archipelago.

For you who have never written for print, there is nothing to it. Even if you say that you have never written anything, stop to consider that you have undoubtedly composed wonderful letters to your parents, or children, or friends, or counselors. So, write to us! Start it out, "Dear Mom," if you have to, to get into the spirit of it. You would not read ISLAND JOURNAL if you did not have some concern and care for Maine's islands. Write to us about what you care about. Tell a story. Express an opinion. Explain a process or procedure. Tell us what you've noticed about something, for heaven's sake Although we can't publish everything, we are especially committed to bringing to print intelligent, honest portraits that tie together the many strong threads of Maine island consciousness.

And remember that there is no island event that is unimportant, no season or weather that's terrible, no feeling or understanding unworthy of expression, because in the end, where you are seethes with significance and beauty.

The Editors

From the Art Director

We are able to publish the ISLAND JOURNAL because of the combined generousities and talents of many island residents and visitors for whom the Maine islands are the most beautiful places on earth. The talent of our photographic artist contributors is obvious, as even the quickest review of this volume will reveal. The generosity of our contributors, however, goes largely unnoticed, and I would like to thank all our visual contributors (published or not) for their substantial support. Special acknowledgment and thanks are due to Jan Zimmermann, our new design consultant/production manager.

Even as you read this volume of ISLAND JOURNAL, we are beginning to prepare next year's edition, so I would ask you *please* to keep us in mind while on the islands. Many of our favorite images have come from nonprofessional palettes and cameras, and we are interested in seeing any and all island imagery. Please address any inquiries regarding submission procedure to our Rockland offices. I do hope to hear from many of you.

Peter M. Ralston

Island Institute Programs and Projects

Note: Many of our readers have been highly complimentary about *ISLAND JOURNAL*, and then, in the next breath, they ask just what the Island Institute does. Although it has always been our intention to use this publication to celebrate the significance of

Maine island life and not to beat our breasts loudly about the Island Institute, we thought our readers would be interested in knowing more about the kinds of things that occupy the time of our small staff when we are not putting together *ISLAND JOURNAL*.

Resource Management Programs

Adaptive Reuse of Island Lighthouses and Lifesaving Stations

For the past several years, the Island Institute has helped focus the interest of a broadbased group of individuals and organizations seeking new uses for Maine's automated light stations. Island Institute staff and volunteers have helped renovate the Cross Island Lifesaving Station in order to create the Cabot Biological Station. We have also helped stabilize the Damariscove Island Lifesaving Station to keep it from falling into further disrepair. In addition to sponsoring two conferences on future uses of Maine's lighthouses, we are working directly with local nonprofit groups and agencies interested in the restoration of Whitehead Island Light, Burnt Coat Harbor Light, and Petit Manan Light.

Currently we are circulating a proposal to foundations and New England corporations to fund a staff coordinator for this project in order to identify licensees for the remaining 40 abandoned island light stations.

Island Access

For the past two years, Island Institute staffers have been contracted by the Bureau of Public Lands to identify the state-owned islands

with recreation potential and to develop a joint public and private nonprofit management plan for their use in the future. One of the articles in this issue ("Log of the *Fish Hawk*") reports on this project in more detail, and one of our conferences in May has explored this issue in more detail.

Advice to Island Communities and Owners

The Island Institute works directly with island owner and community groups on a variety of resource management issues and concerns, including forestry, groundwater, land use, archaeology, agriculture, recreation, and wildlife management projects.

Recent major projects include a natural-resource inventory for the town of Islesboro as part of the island's comprehensive plan and a plan to minimize the impact of the renovation of Fort McKinley into 250 luxury condominiums and homes on Great Diamond Island in Casco Bay.

We have recently received a major grant from Island Foundations to establish an integrated resource management internship for graduate students, who will be working this summer with six island communities and six owners on a series of specific projects.

Research Programs

Through the Island Institute's Research Board of Advisers, we conduct a small applied-research program aimed at studying processes that, when better understood, can help island owners and communities plan for the wise use of the islands' diverse natural resources. The results of recent research projects are detailed in *People and Islands*, published by the Island Institute (see Publications).

Recent research projects have included:

- Establishment and measurement of *long-term forest plots* on Maine islands to assess the growth, productivity, and future management of island spruce forests.
- Measurement of the effects of *sheep on an island meadow* to determine the number of sheep per acre that island pastures can

support and to assess the effects of different grazing regimes on island soils and vegetation composition.

- Measurement of the effects of different intensities of *hiking and camping* on Maine island soils and vegetation.
- Monitoring of the use of outer treeless islands by migrating *peregrine falcons*.

Other active projects proposed to foundations and government agencies include:

- Assessment of the effects of *harbor seals* on the lobster fishery.
- Collection of population statistics on island seabird populations to develop an integrated seabird management plan.

Education and Information Programs

The Island Institute sponsors a variety of projects that focus on the history of interaction between human and natural resources in the archipelago. Established and ongoing education programs include:

Island Schools Project

Focusing on the island school as the critical community institution of Maine's 14 islands with year-round communities, the Island Institute and the Island Schools Advisory Board are seeking ways in which island schools can establish cooperative programs to increase the efficient use of existing resources and identify additional resources to improve the quality of island education.

Cold Coasts

A 2½-week college and adult education field-ecology program, Cold Coasts is offered in conjunction with the Center for Northern Studies of Wolcott, Vermont. Based partly at Hurricane Island and partly at sea in a variety of sailing and motor vessels, the course focuses on the Maine islands as models of the way that man has adapted to and used the resources of the cold coastlines of the world.

"On the Coast of Maine"—MPBN Radio Program

In conjunction with independent radio producer Paul Carter, the Island Institute has produced "On the Coast of Maine," a weekly radio program that focuses on the issues facing Maine coastal and island communities in the context of rapidly developing pressure to use resources for conflicting purposes. These programs have been made possible by a major grant from the Maine Humanities Council.

Conferences

The Island Institute coordinates several conferences each year to bring together people from different backgrounds and points of view to discuss a variety of issues relating to the wise use of Maine's islands. The 1986 conference agenda includes:

- Maine Island Schools Conference: May 2-3, North Haven
- Island Recreation Conference: May 23, Hurricane Island
- Island Institute Annual Conference: September 13-14, Hurricane Island
- Island Town Managers and Officials Conference (schedule to be announced)

Publications

ISLAND JOURNAL

Maine's most comprehensive island publication, ISLAND JOURNAL serves as a forum for the best prose, poetry, art, and photography that the Maine islands have inspired for centuries and continue to inspire today. The Island Institute's annual publication is sent free to all members and is also sold through a network of 100 retail outlets throughout Maine and Massachusetts.

Back issues of the 1984 and 1985 editions of ISLAND JOURNAL are available through the Island Institute for \$9.95 plus 55 cents postage.

People and Islands: Resource Management Issues for Islands in the Gulf of Maine, by Philip W. Conkling, Raymond E. Leonard, and William H. Drury, 1984, 253 pp.

This technical publication of the Island Institute presents the research the authors have conducted over the past decade on topics in island botany, forest ecology, and ornithology. Specific topics include reports on the effects of island recreation, fire, and sheep raising. *People and Islands* is available from the Island Institute for \$15 plus 55 cents postage.*

Maine Island Schools Conference Proceedings

Covers the 1985 Island Schools Conference on North Haven: 14 presentations, 62 pages. Available from the Island Institute for \$10 plus 55 cents postage.*

*Discount to members: 20%.

Join the Island Institute

The Island Institute relies on membership contributions to support approximately one-third of its annual budget.

If the islands of Maine are an important part of your life, please help us shape a balanced future.

Membership Categories

- \$7,500+ **Founding Member**
- \$1,000+ **Benefactor**
- \$500+ **Patron**
- \$250+ **Guarantor**
- \$100+ **Donor**
- \$25+ **Contributor**

Membership Benefits

- \$7,500+ Signed and numbered limited-edition Andrew Wyeth collotype, *The Reefer*, plus the current ISLAND JOURNAL.
- \$1,000+ A day on Allen Island, showcase of Integrated Management Programs, with Island Institute Senior Staff, plus the current ISLAND JOURNAL.
- \$500+ Poster-size reproduction of 1984 ISLAND JOURNAL cover, *Sheep in Dory*, signed by Peter Ralston, plus the current ISLAND JOURNAL.
- \$250+ Signed copy of *Lobstering and the Maine Coast* by K. Martin and N. Lipfert, plus current ISLAND JOURNAL.

For All Island Kids!

If you are of school age and enjoy writing, drawing, painting, or photography, we invite you to send ISLAND JOURNAL work for publication. Before sending anything, write to us and we'll send you guidelines that will tell you what to submit and how to do it.

This winter we will choose our favorite pictures and stories and publish them in the 1987 ISLAND JOURNAL. When you write to us, we will also tell you about what we will award to the winners of this first creative competition.

We hope you will share your talents with everyone who lives on the islands, and we think you will enjoy learning about what kids on other islands are doing, seeing, and thinking. Please get in touch with us or ask your teacher for more information. Let's see which island sends us the most interesting work!

ISLAND JOURNAL staff. Seated (left to right): Julie Levett, Peter Ralston, Philip Conkling, Jan Zimmermann. Standing: David Getchell, George Putz, Richard Podolsky.

1985 Annual Island Institute Conference Proceedings

Focuses on topics ranging from biological research priorities to island forest management, aquaculture, and island recreation use. 110 pages. Available from the Island Institute for \$13 plus 55 cents postage.*

1984 Annual Island Institute Conference Proceedings

Focuses on topics ranging from island archaeology to history, landscape preservation, wildlife, and trends in the island real-estate pages. Available through the Island Institute for \$10 plus 55 cents postage.*

1983 Annual Island Institute Conference Proceedings

Focuses on topics ranging from island archaeology to history, landscape preservation, wildlife, and trends in the island real estate market. 101 pages. Available from the Island Institute for \$10 plus 55 cents postage.*

"On the Coast of Maine" Cassettes

Tape cassettes, Vols. I and II. Narratives of people and places along the Maine islands and coast. A rich blend of audio material on location. Volume I includes topics on the fisheries, boatbuilding, nature, and recreation use. Volume II is an in-depth presentation of the history of Damariscove Island, Maine's first permanent year-round community. Available from Paul Carter, Suite M, 465 Congress Street, Portland, Maine 04101, for \$8.95 each plus 55 cents postage.

\$100+ Signed copy of *Islands in Time* (2nd edition) by Philip W. Conkling, plus all benefits listed below.

\$25+ Current ISLAND JOURNAL.

Note: All members receive invitations to Island Institute conferences and programs, in addition to newsletters and discounts on existing publications.

Corporate Sponsors

Each year, a substantial number of Maine businesses with island-related interests become corporate sponsors and are recognized on the inside back cover of ISLAND JOURNAL.

Corporate Sponsorship Categories

- \$7,500 **Founding Member** (Also receive a signed and numbered limited-edition Andrew Wyeth collotype, *The Reefer*.)
- \$1,000 **Corporate Benefactor**
- \$500 **Corporate Guarantor**
- \$100 **Corporate Donor**

All contributions are tax deductible. Please tear out the card in the inside back cover and **join the Island Institute**.



WILLIAM THUSS



LOG OF THE FISH HAWK

While tracking down an N.C. Wyeth painting in the heartlands of rural Maine to photograph for last year's ISLAND JOURNAL, Art Director Peter Ralston found his trip suddenly interrupted. He couldn't imagine what an acre of good-looking outboard boats was doing in a lot surrounded by chain-link fence out on a lonely highway in interior Maine. In the kind of inductive leap that separates the quick from the dead, he shifted from fifth to third gear and pulled up to the small sign that read "Seaway Boats, Winthrop, Maine."

If he had stopped to rehearse his opening line, "I'd like to talk to you about donating a boat to the Island Institute . . .," he probably wouldn't have crossed the threshold of the offices attached to the boatbuilding sheds, where it was apparent the fiberglass

hulls were laid up. He who hesitates is lost.

Figuring he had perhaps three minutes to make his pitch on that cold March morning, Peter talked fast enough to the receptionist to convince her that she didn't want to deal with him without the benefit of her first cup of coffee, so she showed our art director into the cramped office of Nancy and Harry Farmer, co-owners of Seaway Boats with David and Ruth Alley, all of East Boothbay.

When Peter was shown in, Nancy, a short, attractive blonde, happened to be talking with Bob Nash, who had recently left Boston Whaler to become Seaway's marketing director. On his feet and off the top of his head, Peter began explaining how Seaway could help the Island Institute. Whatever he said was good enough for Nancy to get Harry

Farmer off the production line out back to listen to the rapidly forming proposal being made on behalf of the Island Institute out front.

The Farmers and the Alleys are the kind of people you think about when you imagine the personal qualities that have built and shaped Maine for generations. They are deliberate, direct, hardworking, and proud of the boats they build. They are also stubborn. Twice their boatyards burned to the ground in Boothbay, and in 1980, unable to afford the escalating price of land in the area, they decided to relocate the business inland, where land was cheaper and manufacturing jobs prized.

That morning Harry, Nancy, Ruth, and Bob began to think about building a 23-foot outboard, their Seahaven model, for the



PETER RALSTON

As David and Harry handed us the keys, Harry quietly asked whether we knew how to handle boats. Although we had joked about pulling out a Department of Transportation road map of Maine, we thought better of it, since the occasion, although lighthearted, had a larger measure of seriousness. As we pulled away from the ramp, we took our hats off literally and figuratively to the Farmers and the Alleys, who had expressed such confidence in both our helmsmanship and our greater mission.

We headed into the short southwest chop of Linekin Bay and pinched ourselves as we passed Thread of Life Ledges, leaving them to starboard, and entered into Muscongus Bay. We made for the lee of Eastern Egg Rock, where we knew National Audubon researchers were preparing puffin burrows for their amazing transplant program, and then left to starboard the demolished Franklin Island Light Station, now just a tower and a pile of rubble where the lovely and historic keeper's house used to be. We made straight for Georges Harbor, which lies between the pastured shores of Allen and Benner islands, where much of the energy and insight for the work of the Island Institute had been envisioned and first field-tested.

As occasionally happens on an early June day offshore while the coast is alternately courted by the contentions of spring and summer, a rolling frontal cloud made up over Bremen, Medomak, and Friendship and bent the afternoon light into long shafts of flame that danced over Georges Harbor like the tongues of Pentecostal fire. Here, in this very harbor, Captain George Waymouth celebrated Whitsuntide on a day such as this in 1605. Few people know that the granite cross on Allen Island at the eastern entrance of the harbor commemorates the first Anglican service held in the New World.

As we headed north into the mouth of the St. George River at Maple Juice Cove, both Stahls Hill in Waldoboro and the Camden Hills were framed in the background, and all of the mid-coast lay at their feet, quiet save for one sound, the high-pitched "key, key, key" of a pair of courting ospreys. And so it seemed fitting to name our new boat for one of the most archetypal island species that returns year after year to the same coastal and island nests: the only hawk found on every continent of the globe, and the only hawk that feeds exclusively on fish, becoming thereby a species of both air and water. We christened her *Fish Hawk*.

It happened that the magazine *Country Journal* picked up the Island Institute's

sheep story from our 1984 ISLAND JOURNAL and ran it as a summer cover story. Soon both CBS News and the *Wall Street Journal* were on the phone, interested in covering the same story. So one of the *Fish Hawk's* early tasks became transporting film crews and journalists for the annual arrival of Konrad Ulbrich's 80 Scottish Blackface sheep on Allen Island. A few weeks later, *Fish Hawk* brought together sheep raisers and interested island owners from up and down the archipelago for a one-day meeting and wool gathering on Allen Island amid the Blackface flock to discuss methods and strategies for increasing the number of sheep on Maine islands.

In late July, the *Fish Hawk* began working on a Bureau of Public Lands contract to survey the recreation potential of the state-owned islands between Cape Elizabeth and Schoodic Point. For the next four months, various Island Institute staff and research associates would spend two to three days a week in good weather (and poor) visiting 125 of the most promising state-owned islands selected from carefully researched Bureau of Public Lands files.

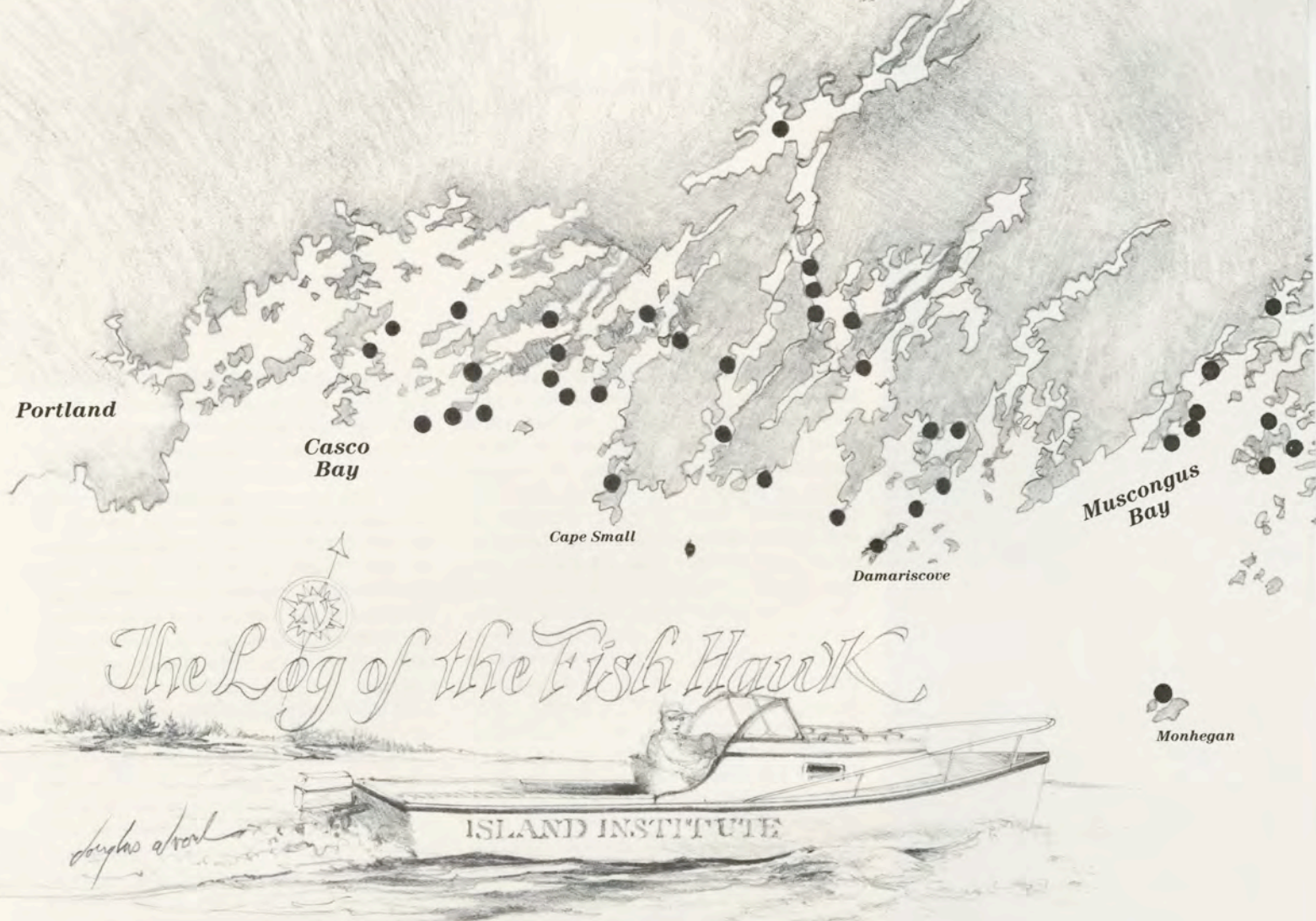
Even though this job had its share of white-knuckle moments—such as the time we got caught in the tail end of Hurricane Bob off Jewell Island in 8-to-10-foot seas and 40 or 50 knots of wind and fog looking for the narrow passage between Outer Green Island and Green Island Reef—we have to admit that the work offered more than its share of good times, seeing the coast and islands as few are privileged to know. And *Fish Hawk*, along with her 90-h.p. Johnson, was well up for the task. As they say in Waldoboro, "She took a licking and kept on ticking."

The island survey had another serious dimension. The Maine coast and islands have the highest concentration of private ownership in America. Approximately 95 percent of the island acreage is privately owned. As recreation pressure continues to build on the Maine islands, as it has in recent years (see 1984 ISLAND JOURNAL, "Boats [2]" and 1985 ISLAND JOURNAL, "Coastal Kayaking"), state and local officials are going to have to answer the question, "Where can people go?"

Right now, in the absence of information as to which islands the public may use, people go anywhere and everywhere and inevitably private property rights of island owners and residents are increasingly compromised. Some island owners (including some that are members of the Island Institute) believe that the less said about the issue of public access to Maine islands the

Island Institute. After a few more conversations and another meeting in Winthrop, the Farmers and the Alleys decided to donate the use of one of their new production boats. And because a Seahaven without an outboard is like, well, a boat without oars, they even helped arrange for the consignment of a 90-h.p. Johnson outboard motor as part of the deal.

Several months later, on a June afternoon, we arranged to meet the Farmers and the Alleys at high tide at the East Boothbay ramp to launch the Seahaven and bring it around to a mooring in Cushing. We got to the ramp early and wondered whether the boat would really show up. But within a few minutes, she rolled into the lot behind David Alley's pick-up and backed down the ramp into Linekin Bay.



better, that any greater attention focused on Maine's islands will only make the problem of island trespass worse. But we look at the emerging conflict between island access and private property rights differently. With over 4 million visitors to Acadia National Park annually (and growing at a rate of 10 percent per year), and "Vacationland" the official state license-plate motto, it seems to us the cat is already out of the bag. Rather than pretend the issue will go away, we believe the challenge is to help identify islands where use is acceptable, and ecologically sound, and where it can be monitored and managed effectively.

Back aboard *Fish Hawk*, various members of the Island Institute staff and research department discussed these matters while making site visits to 125 Bureau of Public Lands (BPL) islands. Many islanders recall that the BPL became the steward of the state's islands identified under the auspices of the Coastal Island Registry, a process whereby island owners were required to show clear chain of title prior to 1913, the date it became illegal for any more state-owned islands to be sold into private hands. The 1913 law was a good example of closing the legislative barn door after the horse was not only out, but in the next county. Of the total 250,000 island acres along the Maine archipelago, the state's ownership amounts to approximately 3,500 island acres—less than 1½ percent of the total. A significant percentage of the latter figure is in ledges, significant to wildlife but not suitable for

much recreation use.

Of the 125 islands we visited aboard the *Fish Hawk* in 1985, we believe that 80 BPL islands totaling 150 acres have recreation potential to small-boat owners such as kayakers, rowers, day sailors, and outboarders. The figures do not include the nine Bureau of Parks and Recreation islands comprising another 500 acres in all, mostly in Casco Bay. Some of the BPL islands are truly small gems with pocket sandy beaches, clam and mussel beds, old-growth forest remnants, and luxuriant raspberry, blueberry, and wild currant bushes. Islands in eastern Casco Bay off Harpswell, in Muscongus Bay off Bremen, in the tidal rivers between Bath and Damariscotta, and off Stonington are particularly significant.

However, the striking feature of what we learned from our island visits between July and October is that it will be difficult to direct island use to publicly owned islands. We believe some of the private nonprofit conservation organizations with island holdings, such as The Nature Conservancy, the National Audubon Society, the Philadelphia Conservationists, the Appalachian Mountain Club, the Friends of Nature, and others, will be called upon in the future to cooperate with public agencies to develop a *balanced, managed policy and program* of making Maine's treasured islands more accessible to the public to avoid the current situation in which private island owners are forced, often unwillingly, to fill the vacuum created by inaction and uncer-

tainty.

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It was an early, steely-gray November morning when we cast the mooring pennant off the *Fish Hawk's* foredeck for the last time in 1985. An indecisive norther, due to build during the morning, was beginning to make up as we headed out of Broad Cove in Cushing for the return trip to East Boothbay. Rafts of eider in winter plumage were floating on the swells surging over Muscongus Bay's half-tide ledges. On such days and at such tides, eider rafts become an additional navigational aid marking the dangerous ledges where these ducks feed on the summer's set of mussels. We easily picked out The Sisters, Old Gangway, Long Ledge, Midway Rock, Devils Elbow, and Devils Limb while cruising at 3,800 r.p.m. until we rounded into the confused sea making up off Pemaquid. We made the Point just before full flood, knowing that with the building norther, wind and sea would be opposed and the passage green and nasty.

The *Fish Hawk* picked her way deliberately through the peaks and troughs of the green and gray sea, which had flattened a bit by the time we were abeam the Thread of Life Ledges. Because it was still early and we had made good time, we couldn't resist one last poke into Damariscove Island Harbor, the site of the first permanent European settlement in Maine. As we headed into the harbor, past the ornate Lifesaving Station that begs for renovation and sensible use after years of abandonment and neglect, we



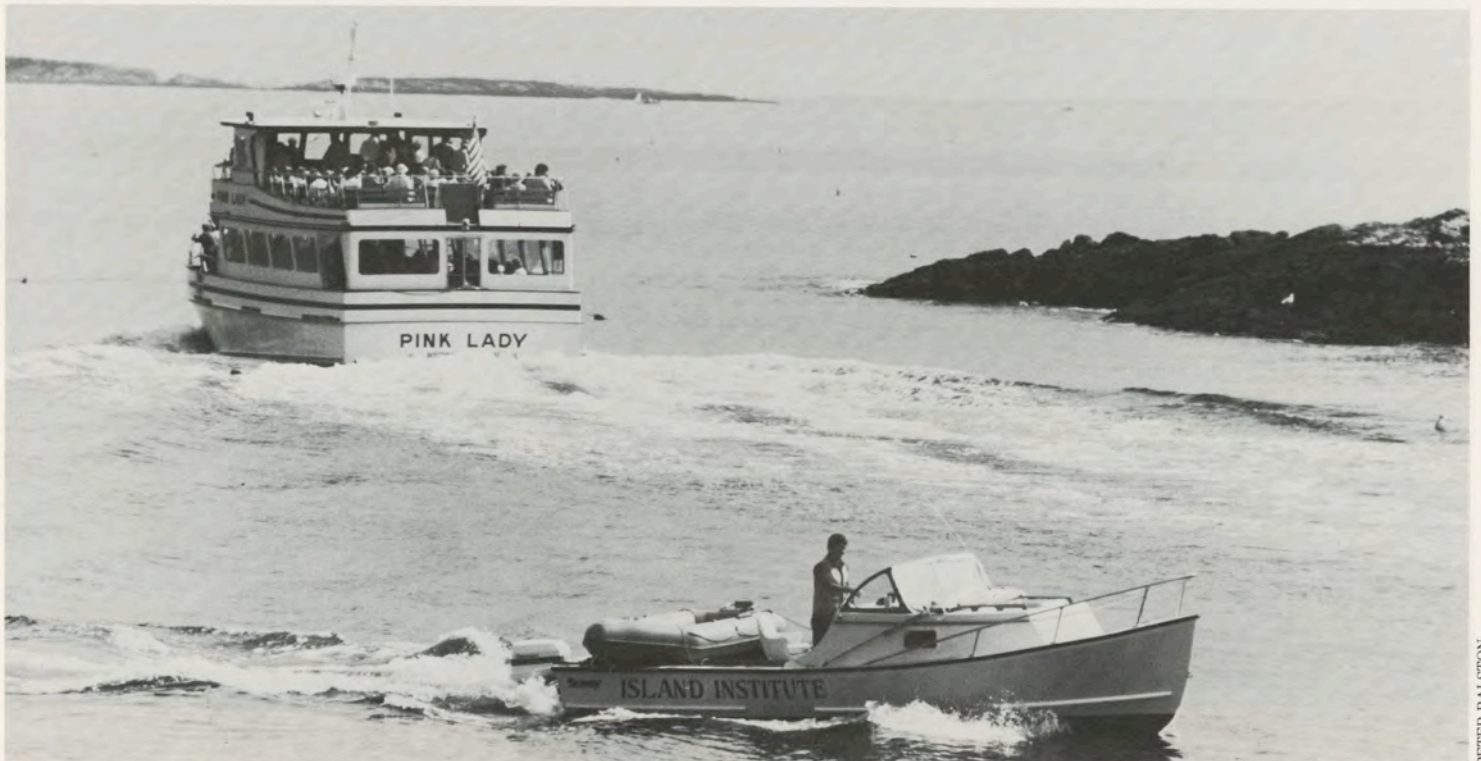
Islands where *Fish Hawk* called.

were heartened that a crew of volunteers from the Island Institute and Outward Bound had been able to put up plywood coverings over the huge Queen Anne-style open windows of this stunning reminder of Maine's past. We remembered the August night that we anchored in the harbor, watching a rising full moon cast long shadows from the station

against Damariscove's ledgy outcroppings. It was then that we renewed our resolve not to see Maine's most important historic site slip unnoticed into obscurity.

David and Ruth Alley were raking leaves in their yard as we pulled into their wharf and returned the keys to *Fish Hawk*. To the extent that the six months we spent on the

water in Seaway's boat helped focus attention on broad island resource management issues, such as public access, historic preservation, island sheep raising, and the like, Seaway's gift of the use of *Fish Hawk* was a gift to the people of Maine and elsewhere, people for whom the Maine islands are cherished landscapes. ♦



Fish Hawk off busy Boothbay Harbor.

Along the Archipelago



Lichen-Covered Trees, Double Beaches, Great Spruce Head Island by Eliot Porter.



PETER RALSTON

Tree-length birch firewood on Allen Island.

SEEING WOODS FOR THE TREES

Island Forestry

By Philip W. Conkling

Irving Smith, a pulpwood buyer for Champion International, stood looking over the 200 cords of spruce piled at the edge of the woods on Allen Island. "Island spruce," he said, "is as good a pulpwood for high-quality paper as there is anywhere." Because Irving Smith was involved 30 years ago in island pulpwood harvests for the Bucksport Mill (then owned by St. Regis Paper Company) and is now a buyer for the world's largest paper company, his opinion is of more than passing interest.

As we were discussing different ways this wood might be moved to Champion's mill at the mouth of the Penobscot River, Irving recalled how island wood was sluiced into coves, boomed into rafts, and then loaded by conveyor 30 and 40 years ago. Although the equipment, logistics, and costs of moving offshore spruce are daunting, Champion International is interested in helping to develop a wood-transport system, since, as Irving puts it, "The Maine islands have the largest concentration of old-growth spruce left in the state."

Today something like 90 percent of

Maine island land is forested, although less than 100 years ago, a nearly similar percentage of acreage was cleared pasture. Collectively the islands have a standing volume of something on the order of 5 million cords of wood. When the exuberance of the natural reforestation of Maine islands in this century is considered and then viewed in relation to the serious supply shortage of spruce and fir that looms over mainland commercial forest land, some people think that Maine island forests are going to be increasingly valuable economically. It is possible that these sea-girt forests will again play a role in Maine's economy approaching the importance they had in the past.

To visit such a woods in the 1980s, undisturbed since the decline of island-based economies after the turn of the century, is to witness the coastal spruce forest at its apogee. Phalanxes of tall, sturdy red and white spruce stand trunk to jowl, hiding the sun from the dark interiors. There are a half-dozen Black Islands offshore and numerous Black Points on the mainland. These places are named not for the color of their rocky

shores but for the characteristic dense growth of spruce, long known to foresters as "black growth." Even though the islands off Saco and Casco bays, and those tucked up the tidal rivers, have significant stands of white pine and red oak, the islands have always been a world of spruce.

Dangling in the unpruned branches of dark evergreens around the shore are a profusion of old man's beard and shield lichens which are also found in the shady understory amid clumps of ladder and goblet lichens, dozens of species of hairy cap feather and pincushion mosses, and an equally diverse array of sinuous ferns. The emerald carpet of an island spruce woods is a Lilliputian world of miniature forests. It is easy to think of this scene as timeless, changeless. The forest primeval (ah, wilderness!).

But impressions are deceptive. Forests are living things, and, like all living things, change with time and eventually die. Because so many of the island forests date from the period 1900 to 1920, the vast majority of trees are between 65 and 85 years old. A



PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER RALSTON

Bill Drury and his portable sawmill, Greens Island.

spruce tree over 80 years old usually begins to slow down in growth (we should be so lucky) and is consequently more susceptible to the ravages of various heart rots and the force of wind. The northwesterly, northeasterly, and southeasterly gales that rage across Maine take an annual toll out of any forest in broken or uprooted trees, but the older a forest, the higher the damage.

Nothing is more likely to take the pleasure out of exploring an island forest than a walk through an overmature stand in the process of collapse. It's mainly an expedition on hands and knees. And aesthetics aside, the potential fire hazard in such a woods is frightening.

Not only are most island forests of relatively recent growth, most have been harvested off and on for three centuries to supply a bewildering variety of enterprises that have helped shape the state's coastal economy. Although white pine figures centrally in Maine's early forest history because of the British Admiralty's interest in a dependable supply of masts, spars, and bowsprits for its huge "Ships of the Line," most white pine trees were not large or shapely enough to fit the Navy's demanding specifications. Those trees not marked with the King's Broad Arrow were felled by local entrepreneurs. The records of Richard Trelawney's fishing station on Richmond Island off Cape Elizabeth describe small-boat expeditions to the Casco Bay islands to cut pine timbers and beech barrel staves. Clapboard Island and the various Stave Islands along the coast were named for these early colonial forest products.

Beginning in the 17th century and straight through the Revolutionary War, deckloads of island spruce were shipped

aboard small sailing vessels and later pinky schooners bound for Boston, a city that experienced the country's first energy crisis. It is today hard to conceive that it was easier to sail five to eight cords of Maine spruce 200 miles to the Boston waterfront than it was to haul an oxcart-load of firewood over wheel-rutted roads from 30 miles outside the city, where the unbroken forest began. But that's how it was, the first loads of Maine cordwood being unloaded at Boston in 1680.

The larger islands, such as Deer Isle, Vinalhaven, North Haven, Beals, Swans, Isle au Haut, Matinicus, Friendship Long Island, Cliff, and Chebeague, all considered their forests from a different point of view. Each had significant boatbuilding yards that

depended on a local supply of boat timbers and planking. Although the bigger shipbuilders on the mainland began importing white oak and yellow pine to use in large ships—the so-called Downeasters— island boatyards generally built smaller sloops and schooners for offshore fishing or the coastwise trade. Because these boats had to be cheap, they used a lot of local wood, especially spruce. Reuben Carver, Vinalhaven's prodigious boatbuilder, joked that after ribbing, planking, and sparring a schooner with spruce, he cut a deckload of spruce cordwood for her maiden voyage. Virtually everything but the sail was made of the light, tough, and plentiful wood.

None of these uses for staves, masts,



Island owner salvaging spruce blowdown, Deer Isle Thoroughfare.



56-foot LCM landing craft loading island firewood destined for Monhegan.

clapboards, firewood, or boatbuilding, however, had the kind of far-reaching effect on island forests as had the establishment of the lime industry in mid-coast Maine. Beginning in 1734 and continuing for the next century and a half, kilnwood was cut along the coast to supply the lime industry centered in the towns of Camden, Rockport, Rockland, and Thomaston. After the Revolution, men such as Henry Knox moved east to the frontier to make their fortunes quarrying the highly localized deposits of limestone. They burned it to produce lime, a product used for both mortar and plaster in virtually all construction from the colonial period through the early 20th century. At the height of the lime industry, there were 120 kilns, each of

which burned 20 to 30 cords of wood every time they were fired—which could be as often as every two weeks. The arithmetic is telling: By 1845 the mid-coast lime industry was burning 45,000 cords of wood annually, a level that was sustained for the next 45 years.

Virtually all of this wood came to these kilns on the decks of small sloops and schooners called kilnwooders. Later on, thousands of cords were landed by Johnny woodboats, specialized vessels in the trade that were first built in the St. John River valley; hence their name. The Johnny woodboats could carry 200 cords of wood stacked so high under the booms that the helmsman needed a pilot in the bow to guide him when

coming into port.

It's not hard to guess where a good deal of the kilnwood came from—*island spruce forests*. In the early decades of the 19th century, most of the smaller islands in Penobscot Bay had probably been cut over for the first time to supply the rapidly growing commerce in lime. Before lime was replaced by materials like cement and gypsum, spruce kilnwood was being imported to Maine's mid-coast from the Nova Scotia coast and islands, most notably Grand Manan's extensive forests.

The last wave of utilization of island wood products began with the rise of Maine as the largest pulp- and paper-making area in the country—and, for a time, in the world. From the 1920s through the early 1960s, many of the coast's larger islands, such as Cross, Roque, Head Harbor, Foster, Frenchboro, Swans, Marshall, Long Porcupine, and Allen, supplied tens of thousands of cords of spruce pulpwood to the coastal mills of Pejepscot Paper in Topsham and St. Regis in Bucksport. Some of the technology of moving pulpwood over the waterways of the northern Maine woods was adapted for use on coastal waters. St. Regis used tugs and huge barges not to drive wood across lakes and *down* the Penobscot, as did other companies, but to tow pulpwood *up* the Penobscot to Bucksport, a harvesting scheme that lasted until St. Regis and other woodland owners abandoned water transportation in favor of an extensive system of woods roads.

In the past 20 or 25 years, very little wood has been harvested from the Maine islands. In fact, many with formal or informal restrictions against wood cutting import significant volumes of firewood from the



Uses of the timber harvest: dimension lumber for on-island post-and-beam construction.



Timber harvesting for land clearing: before and after (1981 and 1983) views of Allen Island pasture.

where trees grow to enormous sizes, you get a general idea of the importance of this ecological factor.

The abundant moisture that falls, drips, and rolls in from the foggy Gulf of Maine also contributes to the abundance of natural regeneration in the forest understory. In a mature island forest, a whole new spruce generation is established under the old trees (called advanced growth), waiting for the monarchs above to fall or be cut to allow enough sunlight into the understory to encourage a new race for the sky.

Those island forests established around the turn of the century are reaching maturity over a large area all at once. The major problem that many owners will face in the next decade is what to do when these even-aged woods begin to fall apart, to collapse in a heap during a windstorm or from the effects of a variety of heart rots, which love the cool, damp climate of the islands even more than spruce does. These are what trigger today's nightmare of twisted trunks and impenetrable thickets—without any help from us. And once it starts, the process is irreversible until the entire woods replaces itself over a period of 10 to 20 years, which in the life of the forest passes as fleetingly as childhood.

Back on Allen Island, Irving Smith, now joined by Don Rader and Joel Swanton of Champion International, gazes out at the progress of the harvest where forest use is coming full circle. Approximately 60,000 board feet of timbers had earlier been sawn by a wood contractor's portable sawmill to produce lumber for a spruce-post-and-beam, and spruce-planked-and-floored barn. By sawing lumber on-island for the barn rather than hauling it from the mainland, Allen Island's owner, Betsy Wyeth, has saved about 50 percent in lumber costs.

Wood contractor Konrad Ulbrich of Warren, owner of a World War II landing craft, is calculating the costs and efficiencies of different methods of loading his 56-foot diesel-powered barge to move 200 cords of Allen Island spruce pulpwood and logs to the mainland. Although the tasks are daunting, forest economists' predictions about the rising price of wood in the 1990s, when the mainland supply begins to get pinched, creates an urgency to get the job started.

As in all novel enterprises, there are both rewards and penalties for those who lead the way. But if no one is willing to start relearning island woods ways, we're all stuck, like Pogo, confounded by insurmountable opportunities. ♦

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER RALSTON

mainland, to say nothing of dimension lumber for on-island construction.

Meanwhile, time marches on in the life of the forest. Island spruce trees that were large and beautiful in 1970 are beginning to get creaky with age at a time when the huge commercial forests of inland Maine are being cut to salvage spruce and fir ravaged by the appetite of an indigenous insect pest. Although named the spruce budworm, this small caterpillar actually builds up to epidemic levels by feeding on spruce's chief associate, the balsam fir. It is the percentage and proximity of balsam fir in the forest that determines the rate and severity of damage from budworm.

There's an expression among foresters that three foggy nights will kill a fir tree, and, while overstated, the adage correctly accounts for the fact that balsam fir rarely

achieves commercial size on the foggy peninsulas and islands of Maine. In these nearly fir-free forests, landowners get, for free, what most commercial foresters would give their cruising sticks to create: unbroken stands of spruce that need no expensive budworm protection programs or untimely budworm salvage operations.

The incidence of maritime fog conveys an additional important advantage on coastal and island spruce forests: water for sustained tree growth and abundant natural regeneration. In interior Maine, there is a drought during the growing season every decade or so, on the average. But on islands and along the immediate coast, it is rare to find trees that show a reduction of growth during dry years. If you remember that the only true rain forest in the temperate zone is found on the foggy Olympic Peninsula of Washington,

THE PLACES WE WALK



Ecological Ambles on Maine Islands

By George Putz

On the Fox Islands there is a stretch of shore that I have walked a thousand times. Usually I simply wandered along my way and thought about whatever the morning's work had been and tomorrow's would be. You know those walks: alongshore excursions, ruminating, occasionally nailing something down in your mind; and if not, no matter.

Over the years, again and again, the features of the course have reappeared until they have become more than mere landmarks. When you do anything a thousand times, sheer probability brings variation, a change in expectations, and, once in a while, revelation.

The first few years were educational in

an objective sense. I learned the marks, the notable trees and rocks, patches of shrub, and the names of grasses, sedges, and wildflowers. Over a decade's time, I watched swatches of blue chohosh, bunchberry, gooseberry, and fern establish themselves, flourish, and then decline to expiration or nearly so. Dramatic blown-down spruce

snags and wildlife wolftrees of the early period became rotten hazards by decade's end. Delicate seedlings pushed through their remains, signaling regeneration on the one hand and considerable sentimental loss on the other. As the walk became a home, a peripatetic alma mater, I began to idealize the places that once had been into something they somehow were supposed to remain.

How stupid! All walkers know that there are no two identical walks. That is why there are walkers. Routes are not things. They are processes, forums for change and wonder when your heart allows it or your will permits. As nearly as I can tell, my mind just goes along for the tour, taking notes out of some sort of embarrassment. It is only recently that I have finally become comfortable enough with revolution in the woods and fields to act as a registrar of their changes.

I must be at least a little crazy to brag about my walk's going to hell. Since I stopped doing it regularly, my walk has become a complete mess, and middle age has me knowing why. It seems so *wild* now, so preternaturally out-of-bounds. Finally a stranger, I begin to understand my old walk. It is no longer measured and ruled, and so the elemental truths about a stretch of Maine island shoreline are revealed. Salt, wind, fire, and people are equal over time, so our looking for stability is hapless. But for those with open minds, there are yet some useful things to learn.

The Processes: Salt, Fire, Rock, and Wind

The first thing to notice is that one side of an island is different from another, and that a basic rule of the difference regards the "ocean side" in contrast to the "inshore side." These differences obviously have to do with wind exposure, but also, and probably more importantly, with *salt* exposure. While fog distributes salt more or less democratically, the tumbling surf and wind on the ocean side of islands broadcast their salt content violently and specifically onto the exposed shoreline. Where salt is driven into the bark of shore spruce, it produces burls, those odd, round, swollen growths on the limbs, trunks, and butts of spruce that make the scene like something out of *Alice in Wonderland*.

The geomorphology of the landscape combines with soil, wind, and salt exposure to allow or disallow different plant covers to develop. All island buffs know that small microvalleys hosting tiny brooks have been scraped out by ancient glacial action in expanses of even-aged woods and old field that seem to have psychological space far beyond their actual acreage. The huge, massive, moss-and-lichen-covered boulders that seem to appear magically in the woods everywhere on Maine islands take on near-religious qualities to those who pay attention to them.

Not surprisingly, hunters are adept at knowing a place's deeper meanings. It is not enough to know of a certain isolated glacial erratic boulder in a patch of wilderness.

What's important is whether near to the boulder are the expected tracks of a young raccoon this year, and what's in its scat. No one mentions the three wild apple trees nearby; but if the scat is reported to be heavy in huckle and rugosa seed, then careful observers figure they had better check out the place for themselves, come deer season. Islanders who have no interest whatever in wildlife or the landscape nevertheless understand their transcendent unity. They understand that there is no place on an island you go that has not been trod many times before, and used. *Places* are assumed, *processes* are at issue.

Fire in the woods is far more common than is generally supposed even in this age of ecological awareness. Natural fires have occurred just about everywhere, but by nature they are different in occurrence and result from human-caused fires. Usually fires, whether natural or man caused, are not devastating to the soils, and indeed often just prune the covers, invigorating the growths that do not succumb to the flames. However, when fuel loads become excessive, or drought extreme, the soils will actually cook, baking out their organic nutrients and so become impoverished. As a result, these soils are capable of supporting much less growth of any species than before. Quite commonly, stands of birch and soft maple replace a spruce-fir forest severely burned by fire; and it is a common mistake to assess a forest of such covers as being young because of the small size of the birch and maple trees—when, in fact, they are often relatively old and stunted because of burned-out soils.

All fires in the woods have their individual characteristics, their own personalities, routes, temperatures, and effects. In places where fire has burned many times, for whatever reasons, it is interesting to move through the landscape and read the different "edges": this fire here, that fire there, and then later another fire crossing through the older boundaries. Sparse island covers of white and gray birch, soft maples, or pitch pine and jack pine signal FIRE and offer food for thought to those who would compare these fire-baked soils with those otherwise abused or unfortunate.

Often as not, the original conditions that lead to truly serious island forest fires—those that cook the soil—are created by *wind* in places where the soil is not capable of supporting tree boles and stems that have reached a certain size, weight, and weather-exposed mass. At this critical point, the trees topple in the inevitable gales that frequent the coast of Maine. Usually this happens in clusters, as one tree "to weather" is felled, thus giving the storm access to the less wind-tolerant trees behind and so creating a blowdown. These maelstroms of dead limbs and trunks often invite fire and thus become the explanation for shoreside patches of either young coniferous stands or, more likely, glades of berry canes and softwood or deciduous trees that come down to the ocean side of islands. Wind also leaves its mark in the "hummocky" pattern

of ground conformation, large bumps hither and yon through the woods that cannot otherwise be explained.

So much for the processes that intrude upon island walks, and on to the patterns that appear over and over again along the way.

Beaches and Shores

Old, glacially created, freshwater run-offs made beaches by eroding the landscape behind them and dumping the spoil at the shore to be distributed by waves and tidal currents. Deposited in quiet water, sand and silt make ideal environments for molluscs—clams, mussels, and oysters. Early island dwellers, used to collecting their life-sustaining calories either by shooting moving animals with projectiles or by collecting roots and berries by singularly unromantic means, *loved* mud flats full of molluscs. One day of squatting in the flats collecting clams equaled 20 of running around in the woods looking for bigger game.

So Indian island life was quickly established thousands of years ago, and mostly on beaches with productive mud or sand flats, with southern and easterly exposures where the sun was warm and winds would blow the damnable bugs away. Mollusc shells tend to sweeten the normally acidic soils of Maine islands and so alter the usual patterns of island forest cover. The Indians disturbed island lands from the beginning, often with fire, to encourage plants that would attract game animals. But their enduring legacy was to create many places where grassy covers persist because carbonates of the shell deposits provide greater advantage to the grasses than to the woody plants that would otherwise have dominated. Persistent shoreside meadows often lightly overlies sites of prehistoric habitation.

Here and there tiny coves, some even with beaches, have collected driftwood, lobstering gear, and the effluvia of a maritime civilization. A century-old sheep track leads you back around the sea wrack and onto a cottager's trail. These trails have their own rules. Where there is a jutting rocky prominence overlooking the sea, a fork off the main path leads to it. Where a good beach exists, the trail goes down to it, usually to lunge off the island by way of an adjacent ledge. Behind the beach is a difficult, indifferent trail for high tides. These pathways provide clues to who lives here: the elderly with children unenthused with the island, or economically distressed professionals in midcareer, or renting tenants do not make trails that go around obstacles since they cannot find the means, or time, to keep the trails cleared the way they are supposed to be, the way they've always been.

At a little chasm, the place where your path in the woods comes out at the shore, there is a trickling waterfall emerging from a deep darkness in ferns and mosses, a spot where young and adult walkers alike are compelled to sigh and think of leaving a small talisman. Then the trail hesitates at a plank seat wedged between closely spaced trees, an island owner's pew for visions and



Old field, Criehaven.

PETER RALSTON

thought; the shores of Maine islands are rife with such natural churches. If you continue toward a cottage, you come to "the Park," where years of family projects have cleansed the forest of lower limbs and where brush piles year by year have evolved into bonfire or clambake fuel for the Labor Day cabin closure.

Second-Growth Woods

Somewhere along the shore trail you may stumble across a wall. If you follow it inland you will usually find woods growing on land that 150 years ago was pasture for cattle and horses where the soils were relatively deep and flat, and for sheep where the soils were rocky or steep. Every 50 yards or so, extraordinary surprises wait in these woods: patches of hardwoods, rock and rills, little microchasms and depressions of fern and skunk cabbage, withered hackmatacks (larch), cedars, or hemlock. Everywhere it's wet and ledgy, the mosses and lichens seem to go a little crazy, rife in free patterns and scales. Whether you are looking down from a high ledge or crouching to examine a few square inches, there is this repeated theme of form and pattern, redundant through telescope and microscope alike. Where Ice Age kettleholes became farm ponds, spongy bogs often encircle the now-small patch of open water, playing host to pitcherplants and owls, cattails and redwings, perhaps a bittern, swallows, and a kingfisher, and—if you're very lucky—a mink or an otter. Summer walks here can be frustrated by insects, but in winter here is a place to trek to with skates, and friends, and wine—a place to try to make a good figure-eight while the children search for "black ice," transparent

inches through which to watch the pond life below.

Where people planted trees, of course, things become especially interesting. Here and there, all along the habitable Maine islands, are groves of tree cover that make the island wilderness walker suddenly take notice, and become suspicious. A lone white pine, a big one, looms near the shore; perhaps a big sugar maple struggles in the midst of the spruce, and close inspection reveals old and unhappy apple trees. More apple trees appear, and a thick-wristed mountain ash languishes at the edge of a hillside field of berry canes. These abandoned domestics cry out for our attention.

Upland Heaths

Faint game trails lead us back into the uplands, the craggy, often ocean-side hills that so often remind those who know them of Scotland, and in places even of Greece or Bosnia. From here you look down on flying birds, perhaps to a seal rock offshore, often at a lobsterboat close-in, risking summer storm damage to go after the shedders that surely lurk in the gaseous undersurf that pounds these exposures. It is in these heath-thickets that you also find the sweetest island blueberries, and chokecherry, juneberry, pincherry bushes, which are everywhere intruded upon by the alder hells of scoured, sour soils.

Old Fields

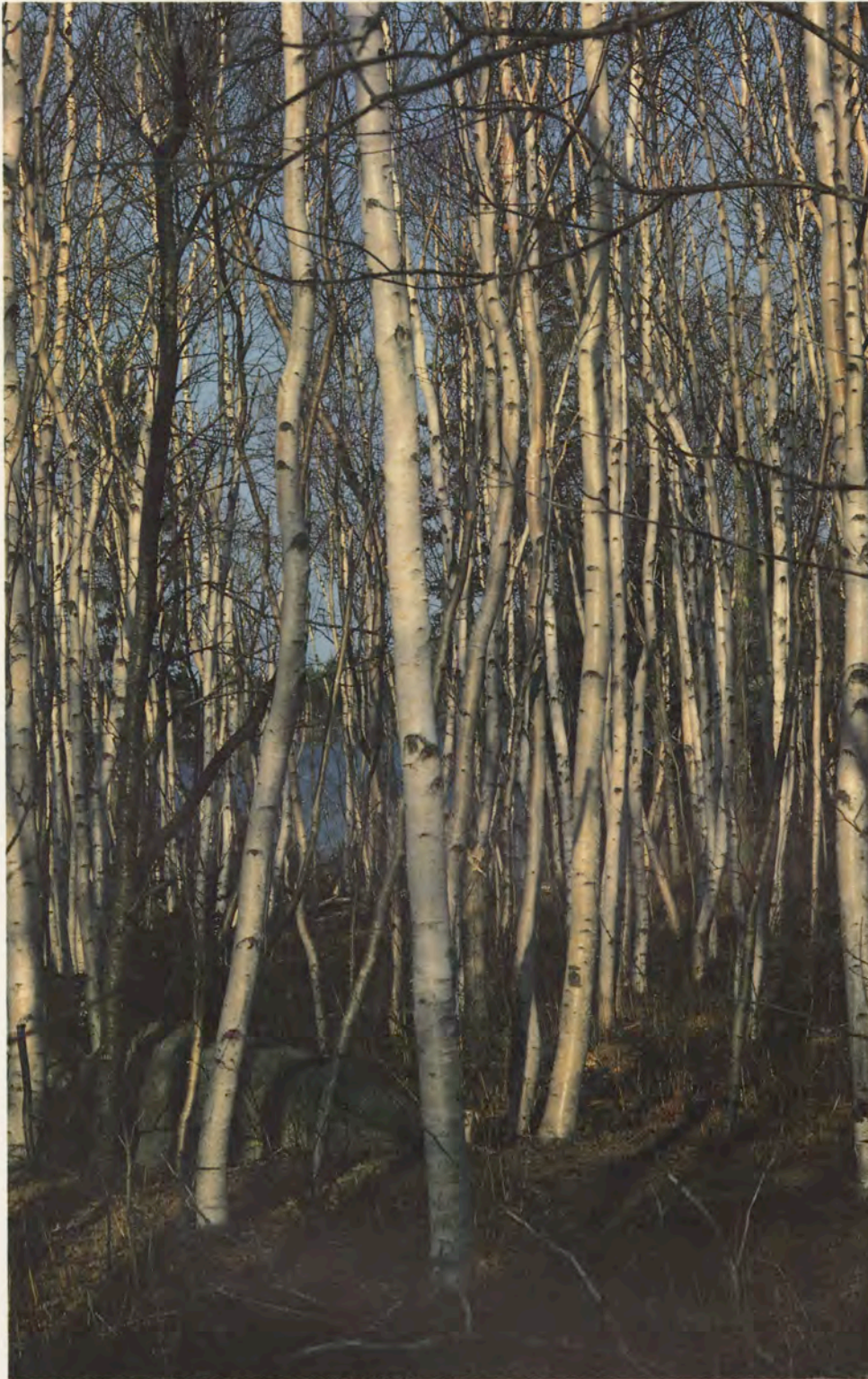
Such variety in small places! A straight-line walk across an island may in an hour's time bring you up off a sand-and-pebble beach and across an old hayfield nurturing a dozen different grasses and blotched with

odd clumps of native and introduced shrubs. A snarl of young spruce (and a few fir) await you at field's edge, hiding the stone fence a dozen yards behind the creeping line of new growth. Here you can read the hard times that were the end of New England's final years of farming for the nation.

From about 1880, the island farmers began to let their fences go. They quit making a special effort to mow and tend their fields right up to the rocky bounds of the walls; and they stopped fixing the walls themselves. Each year thereafter, the mowing blades hung a bit farther back, the mowman more and more loath to risk a hang-down or chipped bladetooth, or to strain his aging team. By about 1910, when the whole jig was up, the full pattern through which we walk today was established—lenses of remaining field covers in the midst of concentric bands of differing forest types.

Walking through today's island forest and shrubby covers, you can tell the mown acreages from the mere pasturage by the rock on the surface. Commonly, on one side of the stone fence the land will be relatively smooth, perhaps hummocked in places. On the other side will be ledge and boulder erratics that either intimidated the first pioneer of the land or constituted the limits of his needs and endurance. It was left for livestock to desiccate the soils, putting the ledge and boulder into even higher relief.

The mentally active walker will find the stone fences, the oddly placed piles of fieldstones, and certainly the cellarholes of our woodsways more like a neighborhood than a wilderness. Often surrounded by riotous lilac, the lichen-infested, semicollapsed foundation stones still quiver and speak to us



GEORGE PUTZ

Second-growth white birch on reverted field, Vinalhaven.

of the care and hope that once infused them. Here the blood, sweat, and tears of history are a living presence.

Too often our automatic response is to wonder where the old dump is, and to hope that some other jerk hasn't already scrounged through it. Half the time they have; the other half you can't find it, for there were two schools of 19th-century Maine trash consciousness based, I believe, on one of two variables—workhorses or Calvinism. Either one was sufficient to hide old dumps. In any case, the alder hells, aspen groves, berry thickets, and birch stands around cellarholes which await intruders on yesterday's dead dreams, give preparation for a state of mind other than

pillage at a cellarhole's plaintive yawn. Our bragging about the piece of broken knick-knack, the logoed piece of crock, the rusted mass that was once a shotgun action, all of which we take away with us, by way of self-aggrandizement, misses altogether the meaning of these places.

There is usually a knowledgeable lady in town who will, with books and her own personal collection, date your cellarhole based on the bottle fragments you show her. If you are lucky, she will recall from childhood the family name after whom the place was called, and perhaps even a descendant of the place still in the area. You can, in other words, research the place, perhaps go through town records, and otherwise in lots

of ways protect yourself from its meaning. "The Civil War sent them out West," you'll say; or, "They moved to the mainland when the steamboat was discontinued, after the quarries closed." "There was a fire, in 1911," you'll discover. Whatever, this will protect you.

Missed are the incanted pledges that went with the rusted Masonic swordhilt; and how desperately needed were the portents of the still-blooming narcissus as a hard-working woman planted them during her first pregnancy over 120 years ago. That button, found near the tumbled hearth, once helped to cloak a beating breast that wanted the best for his family, missed his lost buddies in the Maine Rifles, helped to heal the finger he crushed while skidding fence-stock out of the nearby cedar swamp. The gone-in-the-teeth apple trees nearest to the cellarhole live on because their rootstock is hawthorn, their towering crowns still feed deer and raccoons on the button-man's grafted tree—one that had gone wild from colonial times, that he liked "for keeping," and probably the only one of its type on earth.

You cannot smell the sauerkraut, the mustard pickles, and cider that once waited in this walled depression. The smells and their causes have vanished. But there remains a fragment of the nurture that once transpired, simmering up on the once-clear spaces through which we stumble. This is the wholesome melancholy of cellarholes.

Intense engagement with Maine islands is madness of a kind. There is little reliable money here, no long-term reward for the engaged. Maine islands have that enigmatic mien of all true places of power: compelling (and repelling) indifference. If you never existed to admire their beauty, islands would still kill their deer every winter and moan on their ocean side in gales, unheard, unseen. They are a pure gift, and speculating on their ostensible values as *land* is the kind of pride that history has buried many times.

One's wanderings through Maine's mostly reverted woods have a way of tricking the mind into illusions of isolation. Were it not for winter, we would all soon be consumed by the jungle of vegetable potential that resides in nearly every square foot of these sacred acid soils. Isolation can be experienced in only a few yards, for there is something inherent to our island places that seems actually to love the ravages to which we subject them. It is as if we are all being continuously dared to do our most terrible work, to test the island once again, and so give it to another generation to prove to us its tenacious, almost nasty, heartiness. ♦

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Housekeeper on horseback, Roque Island.

ROQUE

An Island in Time

Text and Photographs by David R. Getchell, Sr.

Many people who have never heard of Machias or Jonesboro, Maine, may still have heard faint whispers about Roque Island—a 1,500-acre collection of one large and 10 smaller islands on the eastern corner of the Maine coast. In the same family ownership since just after the War of 1812, Roque's story is that of a working island that has derived a return—sometimes attractive, sometimes not—from its fields and forests for 175 years. The ebb and flow of the maritime enterprises with which Roque Islanders have been associated is generally unappreciated by the occasional visitors who have heard only of Roque's legendary beaches, cliffs, and gunkholes.

The watchman ran aft on the night-shrouded deck of the privateer *Ranger*, which lay at anchor near the mouth of the Potomac River. Grabbing the speaking trumpet, he called to the officers:

"There are boats making for the ship!"

Captain Thomas Simmons of Salem, Massachusetts, tumbled from his bunk and grunted to his second mate: "Mr. Peabody, let no boats come alongside; no one has any business here!" He and his young second officer scrambled up the black hole of the companionway and onto the afterdeck of the little brig, where they were met with a blast of gunfire from pirates swarming over the rail near the bow. Captain Simmons fell with

a musket ball in his leg. The second mate, clad only in a white nightshirt, grabbed a boarding pike and rushed forward, rallying the small crew behind him. As he charged the mob swarming over the side of the ship, a second barge closed on the other quarter. The first mate was busy at the magazine, leaving the defense in the charge of 25-year-old Joseph Peabody, himself an obvious target in his white gown.

In the fierce battle that raged during the next few minutes, only the fearless determination of the brig's crew held the pirates at bay. The tide of the fray turned when Peabody ordered the ship's cannon, though unshotted, to be fired at the first barge, the blast and smoke giving pause to the attackers.

"Give 'em cold shot!" Peabody yelled at the gunners, and a moment later the cannon thundered again, this time sweeping the barge with teeth of death. That was enough for the pirates, who preferred less aggressive victims, and their barges disengaged and dropped back into the darkness.

When the confusion of the battle was over, an accounting showed one of the *Ranger's* 20-man crew dead and three wounded, as well as wounds both to the captain and young Peabody. The attackers, nearly 100 in number, lost 15 dead and 38 wounded.

This skirmish in the unsettled times

following the American Revolution between a commercial vessel on a peaceful trading voyage between Alexandria, Virginia, and Havana, and a band of piratical refugees holed up on an island near the Chesapeake, was of slight historical consequence, but it was a major turning point in the life of a Massachusetts farm boy who was to found a commercial empire and father a dynasty of New England notables. In sparing the life of the young second mate, Joseph Peabody, the battle also had direct bearing on the history of one of Maine's most unusual coastal islands.

◆◆◆

"Almost every morning when I wake up, I say to myself, 'I can't believe I have this job. It has to be one of the best in the world,'" says Ken Rich. Getting out of bed, he looks out the window of the handsome old colonial-style farmhouse. Below, a gravel track winds down a low hill through pastureland to small red buildings standing square and solid on granite wharves. A lobsterboat on a mooring is silhouetted by a bright orange sun rising over sharp spruces on the bluff across the cove. The soft bleat of nearby sheep blends with the ever-present rote of the sea on the far side of the island.

"After eight years here, I still find this place almost unbelievable," says the handsome, bearded Rich, a stocky 50-year-old.

◆◆◆

Less than a year after the night battle with the pirates, Joseph Peabody was himself a ship's captain and spent much time at sea for the next several years. In 1795 he married Elizabeth Smith, sister of his deceased first wife, who bore him seven children during her long life. By the turn of the century, the former farm boy and sea captain was a respected and prosperous Salem merchant and owner of a growing fleet of world-girdling commercial vessels.

Meanwhile, far to the northeast, a large island shaped like an "H" in Maine's Englishman Bay was undergoing a series of ownership changes typical of that period of feverish real-estate transactions. The island, with the strange name of Roque, was acquired in large part in 1803 by Salem merchant Joseph Fenno and two other men. Fenno in turn bought out his partners and purchased the balance of the island from another owner. In June of 1806, Fenno, along with partner and equal shareholder Joseph Peabody, gained full title to Roque Island.

In his fascinating little book, *The History*

of Roque Island, Maine, published by the Colonial Society of Massachusetts in 1964, John Peabody Monks writes: "Joseph Peabody made good use of Roque Island He and Fenno . . . built a tidal dam across an arm of a cove. The remains of this dam, which presumably operated on both the ebb and flood, are still clearly visible today. The power from the dam turned a gristmill on one bank and a sawmill on the other. The latter was located near a small shipyard, where repairs to some of Peabody's sixty-three ships were carried on, and where were built two schooners and a brig. Peabody sent down to the island a ship carpenter, John Shorey, who probably built these three vessels, and the two old houses still standing today."

In 1814 Peabody acquired full title to the island from Fenno, apparently in payment for a bad debt.



Roque is unlike any other island on the Maine coast. Although with 1,360 acres it is the largest, by far, of a group of islands, each

quite spectacular in its own right, Roque is almost hidden by the others from the open sea. Seemingly a solid wall of spruce and stone from afar, the barrier islands closer on are seen to provide several passages into a sizable harbor. Almost unbelievably, the harbor's entire northwest shore, well over a mile of it, is a beach of fine white sand, the gemstone in a priceless ring of coastal wilderness. Here one gets the feeling of being far from anywhere, of having discovered the consummate gunkhole on a coast long famous for its secret anchorages. Dark spruce forest checkered with a few small fields covers all but the northwest peninsula of the island, where the fields and buildings of the homestead are located.

The history of Roque is replete with odd incidents and unusual people, from two Indian suitors who died racing each other on the Great Beach for a maiden's hand, to the unplanned landing of two Canadian warplanes on the beach in World War II (they flew off without harm). But such oddities aside, simple day-to-day living had its share of characters.



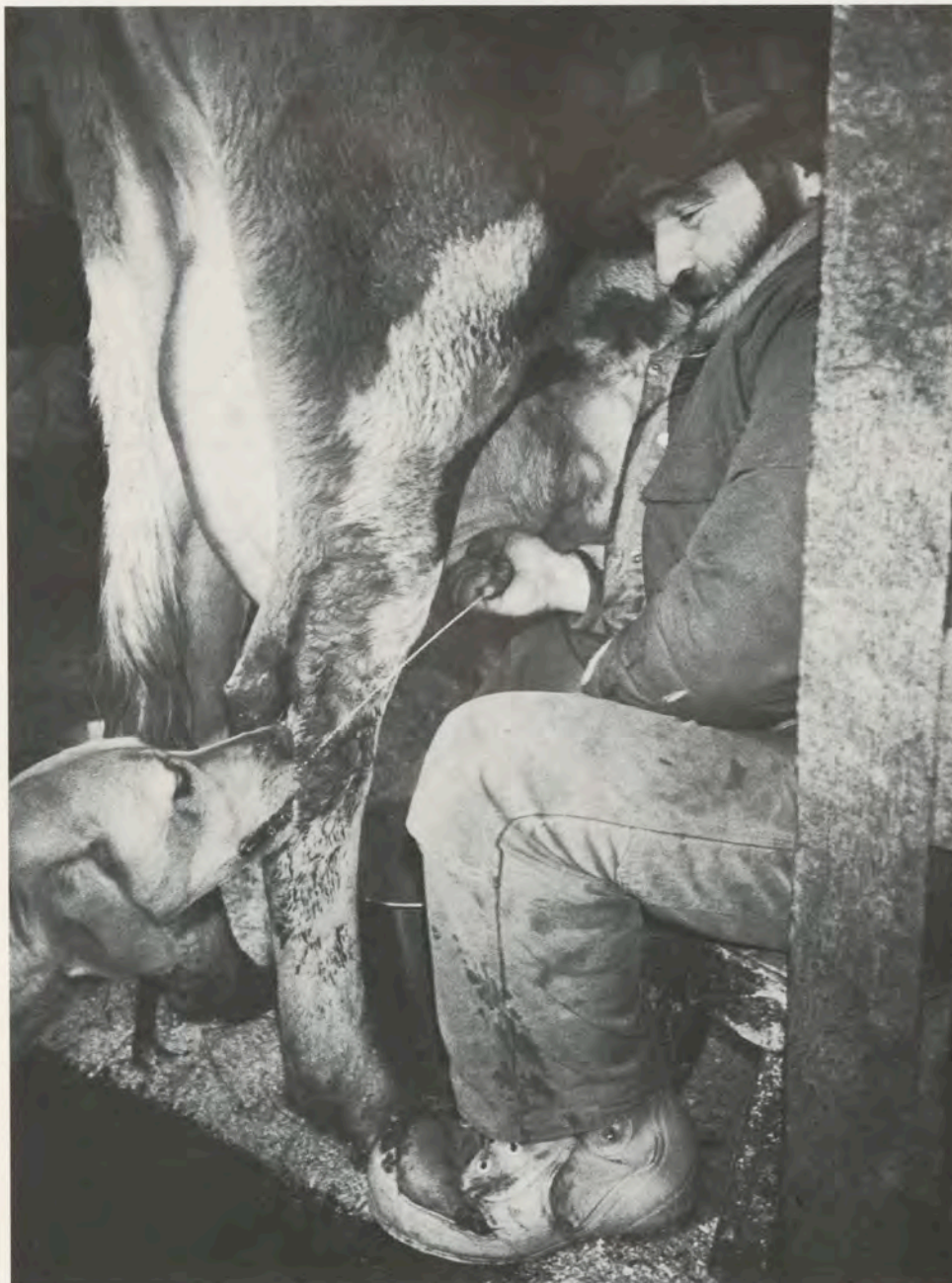
Not long after he became owner, Joseph Peabody sent John Shorey, a skilled shipwright, to operate the Roque shipyard. Shorey became well known in the Jonesboro area, not so much for his talent with an adz as with his tongue, which was used with all-too-frequent regularity to browbeat the citizens in town meetings and elsewhere concerning their political views. Shorey was a Whig in a community full of Democrats, so there was ample opportunity for him to hold forth. When Jonesport was carved from a section of Jonesboro in 1832, the bruised electorate gerrymandered their own town in an effort to rid themselves of Shorey, and gave up 35 islands—including Roque.

Self-made multimillionaire Joseph Peabody died in 1844 at the age of 87, leaving Roque to his children, Francis, George, and Catharine. Shorey continued to rent and operate the farm until he died in 1861, but his name lived on in son John, Jr., who rented the island until 1864, when Catharine and her husband, John Lowell Gardner, Sr., bought out the Peabody brothers' shares.

The only break in family ownership began in 1868, when the Gardners sold the island to Shorey and Gilbert Longfellow of Machias, the apparent reason being their displeasure with the way things were going at the island. Longfellow soon bought out Shorey—who left—and lived there for several years with his family. But the isolation of Roque, especially in winter, got under the skin of even a loner like Longfellow. By the time his children reached high-school age, he gave in and, as Monks so aptly puts it, "removed to worldly Machias."



Before he has breakfast, Ken Rich draws on a worn farm jacket and a battered pair of "Mickey Mouse" boots and trudges across the yard to the big red barn. He takes a deep breath of the sharp March air, one scented with a delicate blend of snowy barnyard,



Right out of the tap.



spruce trees, and salt air. Inside the barn, in the stall area, three milk cows, three riding horses, and two massive Belgian workhorses, Prince and Barney, give off enough heat to raise the temperature 15 degrees over that outside. Ken is joined by Jim Porter, a lean, low-key individual with flecks of gray in his beard. With practiced hands, they quickly milk the cows.

Sweet hay is forked down from the loft, where it is stored in great loose piles from the summer fields. Two calves and pigs in other sections of the barn get their breakfasts too before Ken and Jim cross to a smaller sheep barn, where curly-coated lambs bounce every-which-way among their more sedate elders.

Later in the morning, Barney and Prince are harnessed to a woods sled, and one can judge from their restlessness that they are eager to be going. The carcass of a sheep Ken was forced to put down earlier in the day because of birthing problems is loaded aboard. Ken clucks to his horses and the sled lurches forward as the big Belgians lean into the harness. The narrow, snow-covered road leads up a long hill between old rock maples already tapped for the spring sap run. As the sled creaks over the uneven road, one can look down across the field to a graceful colonial house, its yellow clapboards neatly set off by white trim. Beyond, the blue of the cove is several shades deeper than that of the sky.

Soon the road enters the woods and Ken sets the team into a trot, the sled rasping on rocks and swaying over the uneven track as the big animals plunge down the white floor of a black spruce tunnel. When the rig emerges from the woods into a small clearing at the southwest corner of the island, the

brilliance of the sun on the snow is almost blinding. Two ravens squawk into the air from the edge of the field where it drops down a steep bank to the rocky shore, followed by a hard-pumping immature bald eagle. Another well-picked sheep frame lies at the top of the bank; Ken tosses the morning's casualty beside it.

"By sundown it will be nothing but bones," he says, eyeing the circling ravens.



After 1872, the status of Roque was more or less in limbo with the departure of loner Longfellow to Machias, but his move was to be advantageous to the Gardner brothers, George A. and John L., Jr., who remembered the pleasant times on Roque

with increasing fondness and longed to have the magic island back in the family. Determined to make a bid Longfellow could not refuse, they offered \$10,000 for the repurchase of Roque, a sum just twice as much as their father had sold it for. Longfellow 'lowed as that was a fair price to him, so the island was deeded once and for all to the Peabody heirs. Once ownership was restored, the Gardners hired Herbert A. Long as caretaker, the first of a series of island guardians whose long terms of service were as impressive as their distinctive down-east Maine personalities.

At this point, too, was established a general operating policy (and, incidentally, a strong conservation ethic long before such



Barney and Prince.



Hauling spruce firewood.

considerations were fashionable) that was to continue, with considerable modification to suit the times, into the present. In fact, and by intention, Roque became a family haven, an escape hatch from the sophistication of Boston, to a fair extent a place frozen—at least in philosophy—in the 19th century, an island in the most romantic sense of the word, a place of unlimited freedom to roam and dream. As change became the dominant influence of the 20th century, more and more it became the duty of the island caretakers to maintain strong ties with the “simple life” of earlier times, when self-sufficiency was taken for granted. The owners were fortunate in finding caretakers able to provide the multiplicity of archaic skills needed, persons such as Long, Frank Smith, his son Sewell Smith, John Gray, and Alfred Beal. Melvin “Duke” Roberts, one of the crew for some 45 years through the middle years of this century, was a beloved island “fixture” to both owners and crew.



Ken Rich was employed as caretaker of Roque Island in 1976. In today’s world, general manager is more indicative of his role, since his job includes not only maintaining five major buildings, a wharf complex, and several outbuildings, but also managing a sizable budget, running a farm of several dozen animals, keeping a fleet of boats in shape, providing for scores of family visitors and guests, and seeing that a crew of four to six persons is content and busy. Total self-sufficiency of the permanent residents of the island long ago went by the board, yet much of the meat and produce eaten by crew and visitors is still grown on the island, while fish and shellfish are taken from the sea.

People today, including Mainers, are more or less specialists in one or two jobs and would be dismayed at the variety of demands an island manager must face. But to Rich, running Roque is a “fun job,” and he brings to the work about as eclectic a range of skills as the island owners could hope to find in one person.

Born in New London, New Hampshire, in 1934 of parents who still live there, he grew up on a small farm, worked for a summer

hotel run by his grandparents, helped an uncle with a maple-sugar operation each spring, spent much of his time at a neighbor’s dairy farm where horses rather than motor vehicles were used for transportation, earned his first real money cutting ice for the town, and did many other what he describes as “old-timey things.”

Schooling included civil engineering at the University of New Hampshire and then the “perfect series” of courses for his Roque job—forestry, welding, animal husbandry, poultry science, horticulture, and agronomy. Following graduation from UNH, he worked at a variety of jobs, including boat-building in Maine, and in 1972 was hired by the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School as maintenance man. He was four happy years into the latter work when the Roque position opened up; having seen the island, it was more than he could resist, and he applied and was hired on August 15, 1976. In his time as the island’s factotum, Rich has worked hard and successfully. Several family members credit him with restoring Roque to the status of a true saltwater farm; he is the “capable curator of a living museum,” was the comment of one.



The particular geography of its location and the owners’ low-profile use have served to keep Roque little known to the general public. This obscurity does not extend to yachtsmen, however. To many cruisers from west’rd, Roque Island Harbor is the ultima Thule, a status symbol of real merit and a goal worthy of the challenges presented by a rugged coast protected by fog, ledge, and sheer distance. Singly and in cruising-club armadas, yachtsmen have sailed east for Roque for a century, encouraged by the enthusiastic reports of those who have gone before and by the enticing descriptions in cruising guides. Today it is as popular as ever among the yachting set, but virtually all who go there respect the privacy of the owners, especially in regard to their use of the Great Beach.



George A. Gardner died on August 6, 1916, leaving Roque in equal shares to his

children: John L. Gardner 2nd, George Peabody Gardner, and Olga E. Monks. Today there are new Gardners and Monkses directing the fortunes of the island, and Ken Rich, the first professionally trained caretaker, has a firm grasp on the reins of both the island operation and his beloved Belgians, Prince and Barney.

In a time of intense and rapid change, what has gone on before remains the guiding philosophy of Roque Island. Some of the beautiful buildings John Shorey built nearly 175 years ago still house visitors; rough, deeply worn paths lead through stately forests of ancient spruce and birch; and always there is the sound of the sea whispering or thundering against the unyielding rock ramparts or sweeping across the brilliant sands of Great Beach.

Time, it seems, moves slowly at Roque Island—and that is the way all who have been there prefer it to be. ◆

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Great Beach.

An Act in Time? By David R. Getchell, Sr.

We noticed that Roque Island is formally incorporated in Maine under the Homestead Act. Curious about Maine's Homestead Act, we asked Dave Getchell to do a little background research on the law. What he found is intriguing enough to make us want to pry further into the meaning of this law.

The future of Roque Island was made more secure in 1940 when the families incorporated under a law that said, among other things: "When 7 or more persons desire to be incorporated . . . for the purpose of preserving and maintaining a family homestead and the rights of descendants and of the members of the family therein . . . they may apply in writing to any justice of the peace in the county." There was an impressive signing ceremony performed with a goose-quill pen, and when it was over, Joseph Peabody's island was perpetuated as an "agreeable resort" for his descend-

ants under the name of Roque Island Gardner Homestead Corporation.

The wording of the law was changed in 1975 for the purpose of broadening and updating its intent and would appear to be of interest to some island owners as a way of perpetuating their holdings. The law is entitled "Corporations Without Capital Stock" (Title 13, MRSA) and under the subtitle "Organization" (Sect. 901), it reads:

"When 3 or more persons desire to be incorporated for any literary, scientific, musical, charitable, educational, social, agricultural, environmental, moral, religious, civic, or other lawful and similarly benevolent or nonprofit-making purpose or for the purpose of fostering, encouraging, and assisting the physical location, settlement, or resettlement of industrial, manufacturing, fishing, agricultural, and other business enterprises and recreational projects in any locality within the state, as a corporation without capital stock, they

may do so by preparing and filing a certificate as set forth in Sect. 903, etc."

Of particular interest is the reason given for the bill (L.D. 1598) by its sponsor: "The purpose of this Act is to amend the laws relating to the formation of nonprofit corporations by removing the listing by name of organizations that may become nonprofit corporations and replace the list with a general description, to specifically include in the general description, corporations formed for environmental purposes, to remove the requirement that a justice of the peace warrant be obtained to organize such a corporation and to add the requirement that the incorporation certificate include the general purposes of the corporation and state its nonprofit nature."

Behind the smoke of this verbiage there may be a fire to warm the heart of an island owner—but it probably needs a lawyer to fan the sparks.



Fishing





Marion II steaming through Casco Passage.

JAN ZIMMERMANN

BEAUTIFUL BENEFACTORS

Sardine Carriers of the Maine Coast

By Mike Brown

No person with a nautical eye would dare detract from the grace and form of the Maine lobsterboat; yet, when fishermen and boat buffs gather to talk boats and their endless variations, just about everyone agrees that Maine's sardine carriers are most special. The carriers of the herring business have an extraordinary individuality to them, and their duties give them a coastwide recognition. Over the years, their crews have provided a kind of interisland maritime community no longer available by other means. As with so many other island institutions, the carriers are much reduced in number, reflecting sardine-plant closures all up and down the coast. Still, the few remaining regularly present themselves, coming out around a headland in the distance, raising our marine sentiments and pride of association with these parts of Maine and our maritime heritage.

Sardine carriers, never to be called boats, came into my life at an early age. They were the archangels, the St. Bernards, the salty saviors, and beautiful benefactors of my childhood boy fisherman years.

If ever a circus came to town for a fisherman dad and son back in those herring-weir days of the late 1930s and 1940s, it was the sardine carriers.

The months of weir building and waiting—especially the waiting—for the silvery herring to find our small Maine cove and to enter our birch and oak and ash hand-built trap, well, it was worth the hard toil and troubles when the first sardine carrier of the summer came around the Battery Point looking like an old high-topped work shoe pushing a ball of marshmallow seafoam straight to our fishing door.

Getting the carrier there was work and luck and favor, the three talismans of fisher-

men. There was work to build the fish trap, luck for the herring to swim into it, and favor granted by the sardine factory boss, for it seemed when we had herring, everybody had herring.

By the time the carrier had nudged along the bailing strip pocket stakes, the Old Man and me would have dried up the fish, leaving folds of twine draped over the pocket ribbons like so much Monday wash hanging on the line.

The carrier cap'n's hail always seemed to be, "How many you gut, Cap?" And the Old Man would say, if the talismans were working, "'Bout a trip, Cap."

The man who "went-with" the cap'n, and was always called just that, would start the donkey winch forward and then untie the large bailing—we never called it brailing—dipnet. And then the circus would begin.

As I grew older, I joined the taking-out-



COURTESY OF MIKE BROWN

Sardine carriers, Belfast Packing Company.

fish team. I was a salt bag buster. Fish are lightly brined when they come aboard a carrier with bulk salt shoveled from broken paper bags. It was 100-pound bags then. The cap'n was usually the salter. And the cap'n's I liked best would lift the bags and slam them on the deck, where they'd split open like ripe white melons. Other cap'n's would slide a bag from the pile and break it open with their broad scoop salt shovels.

At first, I couldn't lift the bags and Cap'n Bud of the *Edward M.* would always say that come next year he wanted me to pick up a 100-pounder all by myself. It was many, many more years, but I finally slammed one.

And then, almost too soon, the carrier's hold would be full or the herring emptied from the weir pocket, usually the latter. The man who went-with would go below into the mysterious engineroom and turn some valves to wash down the deck. I went down there a few times and didn't like it. We never had any engines around the weir. That carrier engine looked frightening, all Buddha-like, squatting in the semidarkness of the engineroom.

The best part then would come. All of us men would go below to the foc'sle for a mug-up of black coffee and buttermilk donuts made by the cap'n's wife. The molasses ones were best. There would be lots of fish talk of early and late runs and feed in the pokes. And I knew, I just knew, I belonged there, for the fish scales were beginning to dry into small round discs on my forearms. And every once in a while the Old Man would

reach across the galley table and flick a scale from my cheek. Oh yes, I was a performer in the sardine carrier circus, for sure, for sure.

It was only when we left the carrier, climbing back aboard that Spartan pocket frame of folded net and iridescent herring scales clinging to the heavy bailing strip, it was only then that the Old Man would ask, "How many we gut, Cap?" and the cap'n would always answer, no matter how full or empty, "A good trip, Cap."

The carrier would then leave our herring weir, a little settled and weary looking, an old work shoe headed for the factory sorting and cutting tables. But damn, she looked proud.

I remember one year the bay was full of fish. It happened sometimes, long ago, like that. The weirmen up and down and all around the shores had herring upon hundreds of bushels of herring corraled in miles of weir twine waiting for the carriers to come.

And every morning, the Old Man and me would walk to a neighbor's house and telephone the fish factory—could they come and get our fish soon, please? And the factory said call again in the morning. One morning the factory boss said maybe today if the island trip was not full.

We were on the weir pocket at noon, the Old Man and me, with our baloney sandwiches and Thermos of Red Rose tea. We watched and waited and played fish games guessing how many sardines times dollars. Every boat moving that day was our carrier

that did not come.

Then, in late afternoon, when the western fringe hills of Maine cheat the eastern bays of sun warmth, when the off-ocean wind arrives on schedule with its surface bite, when we thought the fish wait was over—we saw it! Coming around the point.

But the carrier *Grace L.* did not come into our cove. She passed by, her deck coamings awash and her gravelly diesel drone telling us there would be no stopping for our fish that day.

I can remember the Old Man as he looked down into the weir pocket, black and solid with probably the only money we would earn that year. I remember he looked at me for a long minute without a word. I knew what was coming.

Each taking a side, we walked the narrow pocket ribbon paths to the corner stakes where the bailing strip twine was made fast. We untied it and dropped the prisoner rim to the water. The herring knew, also, and for 10 minutes there was a black ribbon of fish like an indigo riverlet, pouring over the lip of their death chamber to return to their Odyssean life.

Sometimes the carriers didn't come.

In much later years, sardine carriers came back into my life again, long after the Old Man had left. I went-with on the carrier *Quickstep II* with Charlie Hooper. We carried fish for the Withams of Green Island Packing in Rockland.

The *Quickstep* was a leaker and Charlie was from Frenchboro, Long Island, and be-

twixt them both, they nearly picked my bones clean.

In the bulkhead between the fish hold and the fore hold under the foc'sle floor something had come unfastened, causing fish pickle to leak up under our living quarters. After a few days, the pickle became what could be called ripe, and after a few weeks, it became unbearable.

There was a deck bilge pump running to the forward hold and I worked that thing like a coal mine mule for seemingly hours a day, but the putrid pickle was impregnated into the timbers, shivver me be!

In the evenings, laying in one harbor or another while rustling up supper, I'd say to Charlie, "My God, Charlie, don't you smell that stuff?"

Charlie would answer, "What stuff?"

His nose was so infused with putrid pickle that we could have shipped a skunk in heat as crew and he'd never have known the difference. One time I made a beef stew, Charlie's favorite, and when I took him a bowl to the pilothouse as we steamed through the Fox Island Thorofare, I pulled Charlie's hat down over his eyes and asked him to tell me what he was having for supper. He smelled deep like fishermen do, shook his head like fishermen do, and grinned like fishermen do. Then he said, "By Jesus, you sure do know how to make a fish chowder."

After that, Spam or steak, meals were a snap to cook for Charlie.

When I shipped aboard *Quickstep*, it being a Rockland carrier, and me having a family, I thought I would see the mainland occasionally and mow my lawn on week-ends.

Charlie may have captained a Rockland carrier but he lived on Frenchboro. And fish or no fish, Charlie would say on Friday noon, "Why don't we just mosey over t' the east'ard 'n' see if we can pick up a trip of fish." It was a statement, not a question or consent query.

Come Friday night, *Quickstep* would be made springline-fast to the Frenchboro dock, Charlie would be home with his slippers on, smelling hot biscuits and baked beans, while I would be curled up in my dank bunk under an aroma quilt of putrid pickle.

But there were weekend rewards, too. I trod every pathway and columbine trail on Frenchboro, Long Island, and never walked a more beautiful place on earth. At evening, on the seaward shore, the rote sound is like no other as the ocean waves roll and catch polished rocks as they rattle and rasp to eternal sand. And as I walked home later through the meadow, the deer were as frolicsome and bold as red-headed leprechauns waving white bushy scarves in the firefly night.

The Frenchboro folks, probably like all island people, and certainly the natives of lands that the Old World conquered, knew the value of salt. And did the sardine carriers like *Quickstep* bring forth the salt! I gave away more salt, and ate more lobsters, in my carrier days than ever before or since. Grain



Packing herring steaks, Rockland.

BENJAMIN MENDLOWITZ

bags of lobsters were thrown on deck in the evening—grainbags full! How could I repay them, asked the humble went-with crew of a lowly, foul-smelling fish carrier? With salt, three bags full, Master, said the gift bearers who had played this rhyme before.

I don't think Charlie ever knew about my great salt giveaway. I never mentioned it, and island fishermen are known for their freemasonry.

It was sort of sad leaving *Quickstep* when I came ashore to work the mundane life. She, Charlie, and I had hauled tons of herring that summer to the whistling girl packers at the Green Island factory. When we walked through the cutting lines, the girls would always pat our bottoms and say we and *Quickstep* always brought them the real money fish—the 6s and 8s of can perfection and payday piecework.

The sardine carriers are slowly leaving us either for the graveyards of neglect or to don a spiffy suit for tourist pleasures. Alas, they now carry supercargo.

But they will always be there in memory for us who worked aboard them or watched as they carried away our summer's work in their salt-caked fish holds. They were built for a purpose and that purpose, sadly, is almost nevermore. ♦

Mike Brown has written and edited for many publications along Maine's mid-coast for 30 years. Currently Managing Editor of the *Belfast Republican Journal*, he maintains an extensive network of intelligent and wry concern over all manner of maritime and social issues. His recent book, *The Great Lobster Chase*, is reviewed in this issue of *ISLAND JOURNAL*.



Dark Shore by Carolyn Wyeth.

COURTESY OF BRANDYWINE RIVER MUSEUM

FIRE IN THE FOG

The Burning of Seal Island

By Joe Upton

Author's note: In 1977 and 1978 I operated a 71-foot, 1918-built sardine carrier from Vinalhaven Island, buying and selling herring for lobster bait. Much of our work was at night, taking on fish from the nets of the smaller boats or seiners that did the actual catching. We worked generally among the broad arc of inhabited and uninhabited islands stretching from Monhegan in the west to Isle au Haut in the east. Of all these, Seal Island, a sliver of rock and grass, perhaps a mile long by a hundred yards wide, some 10 miles southeast of Vinalhaven, was the most unusual, almost legendary.

It was the place the herring came to; there were fish there when sometimes nowhere else on the coast. The first time I went to Seal Island was in 1977, about a

week after I came to Vinalhaven. From my journal:

And so at last we left for Seal Island, in the fog and in the black, a couple of good stiff rum-and-Cokes under our belt, and the fleet around us only voices on the radio and images on the radar.

Of the island we saw nothing. It was lost in the wet and thick fog. We found bottom close to shore on the north side, dropped anchor, and waited. As soon as the engine was silent, we could hear the cries of the birds, swooping all around us in the fog—chasing insects, I suppose. It was an odd, spooky sound, almost like a newborn's strangled cry. (Later I learned it was the soft callings of storm-petrels, offshore birds that nest usually on Seal Island and other remote and wild places.)

After a while one of the seiners called us in to load, and we started up, steaming cautiously around to just off the sheer cliffs of the south side of the island. A target on the radar became a glow in the fog, then a boat all lit up, its net in the water beside it.

And now and again as we dipped our 30 tons of herring out of his net, I'd stop and step into the pilothouse for a moment, look into the radar, check our position. The bold south shore of the island was so close—just 50 yards away—that it merged right into the clutter in the middle of the screen. But around us, there was no sign of land, only the peculiar hollow echo of our exhaust off the high cliffs and the cry of the storm-petrels through the fog.

Just 90 minutes later, we lay at the wharf in Carver's Harbor [Vinalhaven]

again. There were lights in windows, faint music through the fog, the rattle of a pick-up truck along a potholed street.



The trip to Seal Island remained vivid in my mind. For all that time, from when we left the dock to when we returned again, we had been in thick fog, guided only by pale electronic images. Yet still, though I had never seen it up close, Seal Island made a powerful impression on me.

Vinalhaven, though 15 miles offshore and surrounded by the sea, was still, for all that, a place of the *land*. There were houses, gardens, phone poles, kids on bikes. Who would have thought that so close, little more than an hour out of the mouth of the harbor, would be a place so wild, so different, a place so much of the sea?

It was to be two more trips to the island before I was really to see it all. And even now, when I know the island intimately, almost every rock and hollow, the image of that first night still hangs in my mind as the truest one—black, foggy, a remote and dark place of the sea, and not of man or of the land at all.

One of my acquaintances on Vinalhaven repeated what his father had told him: that now and again, in a very severe winter storm—the ones that only happen once or twice in a lifetime—a huge sea would come right up over the great cliffs. It would break over the entire island, claim it again just for a moment as its own. My friend wasn't sure whether to believe it or not, but when he was 14, a wild December blow came with some big moon tides. He took his father's binoculars and went up to the top of the hill above town, got in the lee of the water tower, and watched and waited.

"And finally," he had told me, "when the cold was almost too much, when I was about to give it up and go in, just on the very top of the tide between squalls, I saw it. The whole island seemed to be blurred for a moment in the glasses, like it was covered with a white cloud, but I was sure it was water . . . and the next summer when I was lobstering around the island with my dad, I persuaded him to go ashore and we saw the big pieces of driftwood all rearranged on the very top of the island . . ."



July 23, 1978, came with a curious smoky haze around Carver's Harbor. I smelled it from my bunk in the pilothouse and got up on one elbow and looked out, but saw only the lobstermen rowing out to their boats in the dim 4:30 light. Stopping by the *Amarretto* to buy bait, each of them commented on it, looking around, wondering where it was coming from, what it was.

Finally, in the coffee shop, one of the herring fishermen told us: "Seal Island's burning. We saw it last night—little flickers along the shore. We thought it was campers; there was a skiff there."

And all day while we were selling our herring, unloading in all the little coves around Vinalhaven, we worked in a smoky haze that would never lift and let us see Seal Island. I wondered about the fire, about how

bad it was. Most of all I thought about the birds—for the island was always alive with them—if they still had chicks that couldn't fly, or if the young were grown and gone.

That evening came squally and threatening; we steamed the hour down to Seal Island and anchored in the usual spot. But the night was eerie—very black with a haze. We ran the last half hour with no running lights so as not to scare the herring. The phosphorescence in the water was firing heavily; mackerel would shoot away on both sides of the boat as we approached, bright arrows in the black, and our bow and stern waves shimmered as they disturbed the tiny organisms.

But oddest was seeing the grass fires through the fog, flickering eerily in five or six places. It gave the place an almost ghostly, unreal feeling.

The next night we stayed in; all our markets were full. I lay in the narrow pilot-house bunk, listening to the radio, wondering about the island. Was it still burning? Was anyone down there?

Then the radio spoke. It was David, a herring fisherman. There was anxiety in his usually calm voice. I sat up; he was down at Seal Island, calling another sardine carrier, the *Pauline*, to be ready to come get the fish out of his net:

"Henry, can you see us? We're over here in this smoke. I got one out, but it's getting pretty thick . . ." In the background I could clearly hear voices coughing, choking. "I'm not sure how long we can stay here. . . ."

"Yeah, I can see part of your mast through the smoke. We're in the clear out here, but it looks pretty thick in there."

A long while passed. The radio was silent.

Finally it spoke again: "You guys all right, David?" The carrier skipper's voice was worried.

"Yeah, the wind's shifted now. C'mon in quick as you can and let's get these fish out. We were getting red cinders on deck there for a while."

The next day the haze lifted and we could see Seal Island at last. There was a big pall of smoke over it, drifting slowly away to the south, dominating the sky, the whole southern horizon. And in the afternoon, volunteer gangs from the mainland and from the nearby Hurricane Island Outward Bound School went out to fight it; we heard the news on the radio.

But years before, Seal Island had been a bombing range. And just a few hours after the firefighters arrived, an unexploded bomb or old shell went off with a dull thud. Everyone quickly evacuated; the fire was left to burn itself out.

The next day and the one after came cloudless, hot; the fires burned unchecked. The island was covered with tinder-dry high grasses and bushes. All that fuel must have made the fires burn hot and close to the ground, for throughout the day we'd frequently stop what we were doing and look down the bay as another distant "whump" came across the water to us.

Seal Island again: night, fog, smoke. We were in close, waiting for David to set, and it was like a scene out of a war movie, for through the fog and the smoke could clearly be seen the orange glows of the fires, burning all over the island. The fire was much bigger now, burning in the thick grasses and undergrowth, in dozens of places at once, in the very ground itself.

The birds were wild, swooping at us, at the boats, angrily, like they never had before, and then back over the fires, in and out of the smoke. For all we knew, their nests were destroyed, their young killed. And yet we could do nothing; just being in so close made us nervous about the bombs and shells.

The radio spoke our name: "*Amarretto*, come on . . ."

David's boat was in next to the shore, his net set on the smooth bottom. The fire was very close. His boat and rigging were silhouetted against the flames and orange smoke.

"Quick as you can now, we're getting a lot of smoke here."

We slid in gingerly. On the faces of David and his crew were concerned, smudged looks. Hot ashes sifted down onto us. They took our lines quickly, tied off the corkline on our rail, and had us brailing faster than ever before.

But now and again the wind would shift, sweep the hot, gassy smoke down on top of us, and we'd stop, turn away, choking, trying to hold our breaths, hoping it would pass. A bomb exploded up at the other end of the island and everyone jumped.

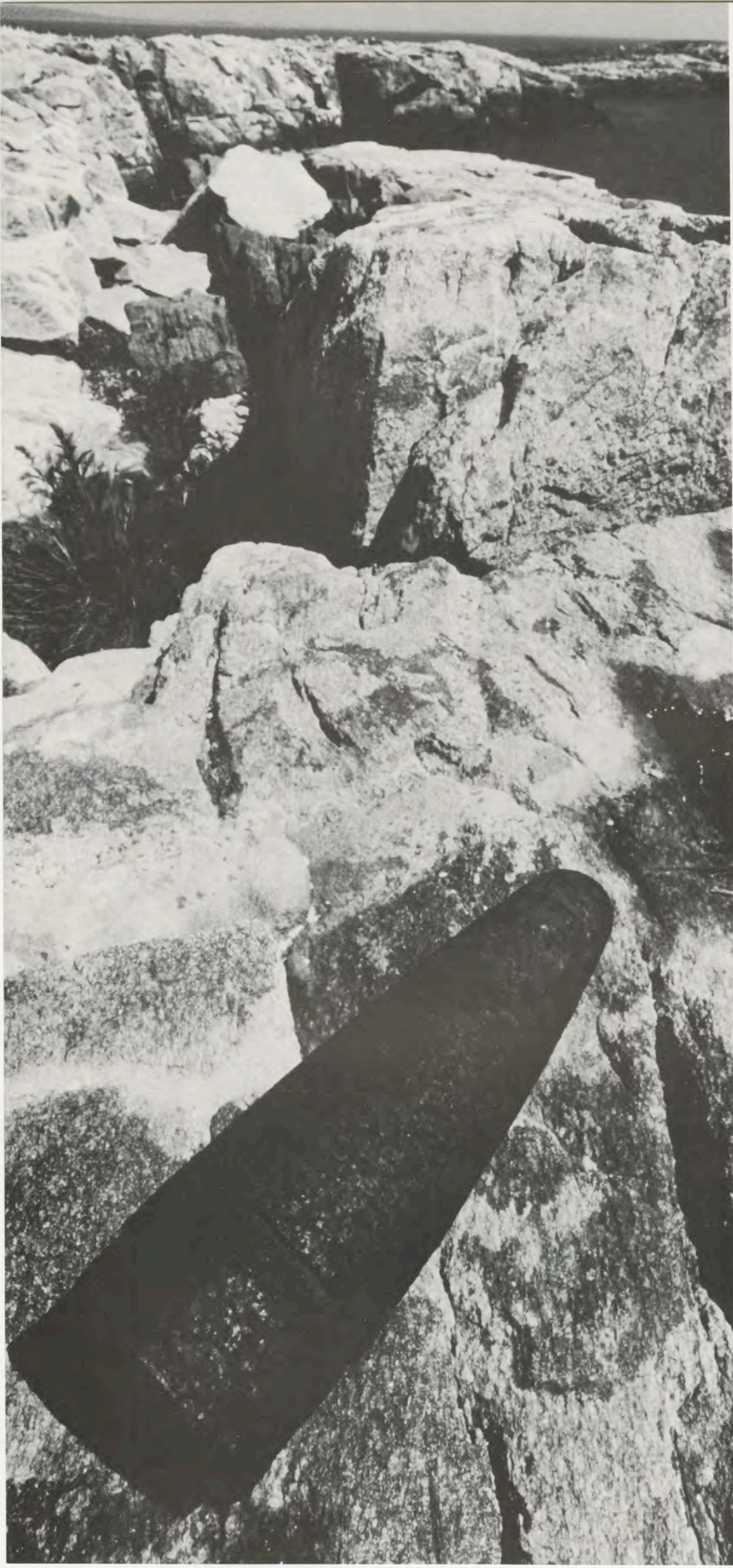
Finally we were done. "Let's get out of here," my deckhand yelled from the winch. Cornwallis the dog huddled in the door of the pilothouse, looking out at the strange scene, probably wishing he'd stayed in town. And then the lines were off, both of us running full bore away from the island, the bombs, the smoke, the fires.

"The birds," my deckhand said sadly, as we steamed north for Vinalhaven, "the poor birds."

And deep in the night I woke up twice—sweaty, startled from that odd hollow "whump" of long-hidden explosives triggered by the intense heat.

Finally, a week after the fire started, a good rain came, an all-day-and-all-night soaker, and the fire on Seal Island was out. The next night we waited off the island again, watching David's boat, a dimly seen shape and nothing more. He was in Sou'west Cove. There were fish there, but they were in the shallow water up at the very head of the cove, too shallow to set the net on. As we watched, David was a silent shadow, sliding in to the back of the cove, herding the fish slowly out like a cowboy with a bunch of skittish heifers, not crowding them, just easing them out until they were where he wanted them. Then quietly, precisely, he set his net around the fish. He made it seem effortless. I knew it wasn't.

He called us in. I hesitated, for the shore seemed right next to his boat. I didn't think we could physically fit. He sensed my hesita-



tion; the radio spoke:

"Aw, c'mon in, it's deeper than it looks."

Cautiously, I eased her in. My deckhand was up on the bow, shaking his head in amazement. The shore was but a few feet away; only the rising tide gave me courage—if we grounded, we would soon float free.

From where we brailed the fish out of David's net, I could literally have jumped ashore from the bow of the boat. We were in a little pool of water with steep rock on three sides. He had set his net like a hand into a glove.

But the silence, the smells were oppressive. Always before around the island had been the constant cries of the storm-petrels. Now there was only the slow wash of the sea against the rocks outside, and a faint, burnt, dead smell. The place I had enjoyed so much before gave me a strange, uneasy feeling.

"It was kids." David nodded over toward the island.

"How d'ya know?"

"There was a skiff there that first night we saw the fires. Even then it was burning in six or seven places. It wasn't an accident." He nodded over to his crew. "Some of the boys recognized the skiff . . . it was kids."

"But why?"

David shrugged. "Meanness, something to do, who knows?" He shook his head, "Pity, though, they should have done something else for their kicks." He waved to his men, the lines were untied, we slid apart, disappeared from each other into the black and the fog.

Three days later, in the early evening, I saw the island in daylight for the first time since the fire. An unfamiliar boat had called us over to take his load of fish. As we loaded, I looked around at Seal Island. Of the graceful place that I remembered, with grasses, and bushes, and wildflowers, there was nothing. It was brown, dead, scarred, silent, the water along the shore discolored from the mud and the ash. It could have been Atka, or Attu, one of a thousand bleak and rocky inlets that stretch across the Bering Sea between Alaska and Russia. But even on those grim rocks, there were flowers and bird life in the short summer.

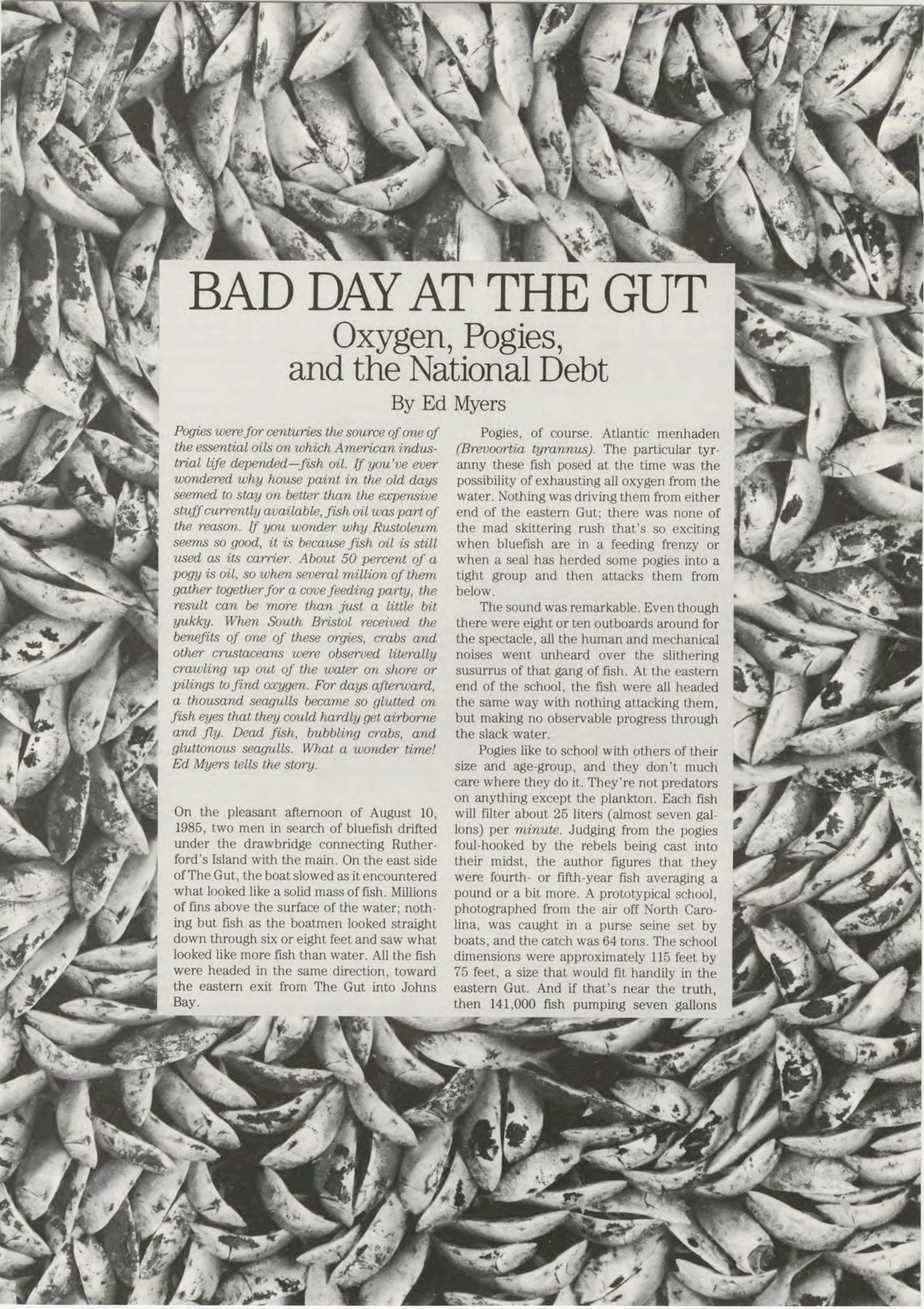
On Seal Island there was nothing. It was silent, dead.

But in the years after the fire, the grasses and the birds came back, seemingly in greater abundance and variety than ever before. And I wondered if somehow the fire, like the great seas that sometimes swept over it, hadn't somehow exorcised Seal Island, had cleansed it, burnt it, destroying all trace of man, and bombs, and war. ♦

*Joe Upton is a fisherman, writer, and photographer of considerable imagination and skill, living in Camden and Vinalhaven. His first book, *Alaska Blues*, about his experiences in the inshore salmon fisheries of the 49th state, is a model of its kind. A new book, *Seal Island*, from which this article is derived, will be published in the autumn of 1986 by International Marine Publishing Company.*

PETER RALSTON

Seal Island "sea shells."



BAD DAY AT THE GUT

Oxygen, Pogies, and the National Debt

By Ed Myers

Pogies were for centuries the source of one of the essential oils on which American industrial life depended—fish oil. If you've ever wondered why house paint in the old days seemed to stay on better than the expensive stuff currently available, fish oil was part of the reason. If you wonder why Rustoleum seems so good, it is because fish oil is still used as its carrier. About 50 percent of a pogy is oil, so when several million of them gather together for a cove feeding party, the result can be more than just a little bit yukky. When South Bristol received the benefits of one of these orgies, crabs and other crustaceans were observed literally crawling up out of the water on shore or pilings to find oxygen. For days afterward, a thousand seagulls became so gluttoned on fish eyes that they could hardly get airborne and fly. Dead fish, bubbling crabs, and gluttonous seagulls. What a wonder time! Ed Myers tells the story.

On the pleasant afternoon of August 10, 1985, two men in search of bluefish drifted under the drawbridge connecting Rutherford's Island with the main. On the east side of The Gut, the boat slowed as it encountered what looked like a solid mass of fish. Millions of fins above the surface of the water; nothing but fish as the boatmen looked straight down through six or eight feet and saw what looked like more fish than water. All the fish were headed in the same direction, toward the eastern exit from The Gut into Johns Bay.

Pogies, of course. Atlantic menhaden (*Brevoortia tyrannus*). The particular tyranny these fish posed at the time was the possibility of exhausting all oxygen from the water. Nothing was driving them from either end of the eastern Gut; there was none of the mad skittering rush that's so exciting when bluefish are in a feeding frenzy or when a seal has herded some pogies into a tight group and then attacks them from below.

The sound was remarkable. Even though there were eight or ten outboards around for the spectacle, all the human and mechanical noises went unheard over the slithering susurrus of that gang of fish. At the eastern end of the school, the fish were all headed the same way with nothing attacking them, but making no observable progress through the slack water.

Pogies like to school with others of their size and age-group, and they don't much care where they do it. They're not predators on anything except the plankton. Each fish will filter about 25 liters (almost seven gallons) per *minute*. Judging from the pogies foul-hooked by the rebels being cast into their midst, the author figures that they were fourth- or fifth-year fish averaging a pound or a bit more. A prototypical school, photographed from the air off North Carolina, was caught in a purse seine set by boats, and the catch was 64 tons. The school dimensions were approximately 115 feet by 75 feet, a size that would fit handily in the eastern Gut. And if that's near the truth, then 141,000 fish pumping seven gallons

apiece were filtering just about a million gallons every single minute. Other estimates in the daily press were from 2 to 4 million fish, but we'd rather err on the conservative side.

In any event, there were sufficient pogies to reduce the dissolved oxygen level to two parts per million, low enough to be totally lethal if it persisted for very long.

Enter Dennis Farrin, proprietor of Farrin's Store and Lobster Buying Station, a man with an acute sensitivity to natural events, for their own sake as well as the safety of the lobsters usually carried up off his dock. When he saw the pogies finning as far as the eye could see, he checked his lobsters and found them weakening and dying. Then he studied the bottom and observed a number of small lobsters belly up in the mud. This proved to Farrin that the problem was in the whole water column, as indeed it was.

So he crated up as many lobsters as he could, threaded the rope handles with a towline, grabbed an outboard left in his keeping, put it on the first skiff he came to, and set out to tow the lobsters through the bridge to the western Gut in order to get them into better water. (This desperate measure helped the lobsters but got Farrin arrested by the local warden for operating an unregistered motorboat. The warden's parting shot to Dennis was, "Have a nice day." Dennis's parting shot was, "It's too late.")

Including the crates fishermen had on their moorings, the South Bristol Co-op, and Farrin's, pretty close to 2,000 pounds of lobsters lost their lives to the mephitic atmosphere created by the pogies. Around the shore that morning you could pick up samples of other species that didn't do too well: flounders, sculpins, mackerel, smelt, eels, blennies, and tomcod. Green crabs and rock crabs were climbing the walls and pilings in search of some oxygen, dissolved or otherwise.

That was the event of August 10. On the evening high water, the dissolved oxygen count was still at one-third of normal. During the night, the school of fish took a notion to go elsewhere; by high water on August 11, the oxygen level was back up there, and the South Bristol Gut resumed the even tenor of its ways.

Now let us look for causes. The primary reference work, one that should be on the shelves of every economist, is Chapter 11 of *The House on Nauset Marsh* by the late Dr. Wyman Richardson. (Long out of print, the book has happily been reissued in paperback by the Chatham Press of Old Greenwich, Connecticut 06870, and just in time.) Dr. Richardson carefully develops his thesis that a decline in eelgrass can cause an economic depression: The complete disappearance of eelgrass on the Atlantic Coast by 1932 affected the black duck population, which usually feeds by stripping the thousands of hydrobiid snails living on the grass; migrating brant, which ordinarily live on eelgrass, and which abandoned the marshes entirely as a way station; hunters, who grumpily sought out other forms of recreation; the

hunting clubs, which shut down and caused unemployment; the unemployed, who couldn't keep up their payments on the Monitor-Top refrigerators, which lapse had its effect on retailers and wholesalers. The lack of nurturing and protecting eelgrass also raised hob with the clam and scallop sets. All these ripples of distress fanned outward to help upset the intricate and delicate balance of the U.S. food distribution system and then followed the Depression.

Now, 50 years later, *National Fisherman* for February 1986 had a banner headline, "Eelgrass Blight Spells Trouble for Fisheries," and documented the spreading die-offs. So if the recent headlong rise of the Dow-Jones average is paralleled by a complete disappearance of the eelgrass, you can expect another depression following right along, to the complete justification of Wyman Richardson.

He went about developing his theory inductively, proceeding from a marine grass to a national ailment. We now proceed deductively to establish a chain of causation from the federal deficit to the death of lobsters in a small fishing port in Maine.

The year 1985 was a triumphant one for the U.S.A. as the Dynasty of Debt. We became a debtor nation; all told, with "entitlements" and such, the tab got to \$5 trillion. (Franklin Roosevelt said, during the last dearth of eelgrass, that debt was no problem since we really only owed it to each other. So if you'll write me a check for \$22,222—which is the \$5 trillion divided by 225 million people—and I write you one for the same amount, everything is supposed to be OK, but somehow very few of us are convinced that this will do it.)

With the strong dollar—in some mysterious way staying up there because of the rest of the world's confidence that all those U.S.A. debt securities (offers) were good investments—it was a lot easier for foreign manufacturers to send goods to us and not at all easy for us to export goods to them. So among other things, the price of soybeans dropped out of sight as the volume of domestic soybeans became a bumper crop with no place to go overseas.

Since fish meal and soybean meal are roughly interchangeable in poultry feed, there was a further complication—Chile and Peru recovered from the disaster to their fish-meal production caused when El Niño, the ocean current that brings all the anchovies to the coasts of both these nations, moved offshore beyond reach or discovery of the fishing fleets. El Niño moved back inshore so that Fernando Terry in Peru and Augusto Pinochet in Chile could restore their fish-meal industries to private enterprise. This led to a 22 percent increase in fish-meal exports in 1984 and a 50 percent increase in 1985.

Exports from the two countries included some to the United States, but the real increases came from newer markets in Italy and The Netherlands, with the biggest buyer being Mainland China.

By now you can recognize the concatenation of events leading to the Great South

Bristol Lobster Kill of 1985: Because the demand for U.S. fish meal was down due to the glut of American soybean oil and South American fish meal, there was no price on pogies that would allow a seiner with dollar diesel and a \$3.45-an-hour minimum wage (about a day's wage in Peru) to profit from setting on the fish. More victims of our foreign trade imbalance and the growing federal deficit.

World and Midwest farm conditions suggest that this will continue to be so—and continue to be a menace to lobsters stored in crates and cars during August, when the sea-water temperature is at its peak, when the lobster catch is usually at its peak, and when the schooling of menhaden in Maine can be emphatically at *its* peak, although where they school may be whimsical and adventitious.

Besides Townsend Gut (where the pogies died by the thousands to make a real chore out of cleaning up) and the upper Kennebec between the Chops (where the exhaustion of oxygen killed many bluefish as well as their prey), there are any number of coves—the Basin opposite Cundys Harbor, Isle au Haut Thoroughfare, Webb Cove, Winter Harbor-Vinalhaven, for openers—where this could very well happen again in future summers with this prolific fish.

The four-year-old class, according to the National Marine Fisheries Service, increased 22-fold between 1960 and 1961. If that should happen again, before the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit-killer gets fully phased in in 1991, the Maine Coast could take a real beating from the pogies.

We can thank heaven that fish-reduction plants are sufficiently scattered from Cape Ann to Florida so that the pogy-boats can follow the fish both in the autumn and in the spring and still be within their steaming limit of 40 miles between school and plant. By the same token, we can't look for a revival of the 22 plants operating in Maine in 1875 (down to one in 1912) or hope that three out of the four fish-reduction factories in Maine that shut down in 1985 can be reopened.

There may be a way to prevent future die-offs. For example, pogies won't pass through a bubble curtain and can even be driven by one. It wouldn't be too much of a job for the state to rig a compressor and about 300 feet of perforated plastic pipe and have it available when needed so that two lobsterboats could use the equipment to drive the offending fish out of any cul-de-sac they might work themselves into. At the other extreme, there is on the market a complete fish-meal factory set on a barge for moving from place to place. Last time we checked, the price was down around \$5 million.

Or maybe the best thing to do is get rid of the deficit. Write any of your congresspeople who are not up for reelection this year. ♦

Ed Myers, Maine's best-known aquaculturist, is a keen observer of natural phenomena and an incorrigible commentator on the foibles of politicians.



Nature



KELP IS ON THE WAY

Sea Vegetables of the Surf Zone

By Larch Hanson



Besides dress and music, diet is one of the most public ways in which a culture expresses itself, especially in contemporary America, where we all seem these days to be much more prone to try new, previously foreign dishes. A couple of Asian wars, and many Oriental infusions through our economy have brought new ideas about diet into our gastronomy, not the least of which are seaweeds and seaweed-derived products. These new sea products, however, require a particularly gutsy sort of entrepreneur to provide supplies. But, here and there, individual divers with vision and determination are sallying forth with fins and goggles into the wavewash for seafoods seldom before considered in the West. Irish-moss gatherers have been among the island ledges for a couple of decades. There is a

new fellow among us, well on his way into our gustatorial future.

I chose my name, "Larch." It's the name of a tree that grows in Maine, also called a tamarack or a hackmatack. Eleven years ago when I left the city job market to carve my niche in the Maine woods beside the ocean, that was all I knew about the name. I liked its sound. The other thing I knew was that my rocky peninsula was a beautiful and harsh place to live, even for a larch tree.

I recycled a barn into a cabin, fertilized my garden with rockweed, and learned to build boats, thinking that I was destined to be a boatbuilder named Larch. I lived on a very small cash flow, taking up seasonal work in hopes of earning enough capital to start a boatshop. That means I cut wood, dug

clams, tilled gardens, sold fruits, vegetables, bread, and fish to summer people, picked apples, and sold Christmas trees. "Gettin' by" is the expression. "Gettin' by" is sometimes a scary place to be.

Today I run a small business to collect, process, and distribute the essences of many Atlantic sea plants in the bays off this larch-covered peninsula. I still like the essence of larch. I don't know which is scarier: getting caught in fog and choppy 40-degree seas with a string of loaded boats far from home, or marketing so-called "seaweed" to Americans who want food that is familiar, convenient, attractively packaged, and stamped with a seal of approval. Anyway, I'm doing it, all of it.

I first harvested sea vegetables with an amateur couple who used hip boots at low

tide. (If you want to harvest for your own table, this is about all the equipment you need. Buy a linoleum knife for cutting, and bring a few bushel baskets and feed sacks.) I started cooking with sea vegetables, valued them, and decided to add harvesting to my options for seasonal work.

I bought a wetsuit. I became an apprentice fish, watching the plants, their seasons, their pests, and my impact on them. I would swim for an hour, exploring the constantly changing conditions arising from the immense sea rollers playing on the boulders, niches, and basins of my bay. After an hour, I would crawl out of the frigid water, feeling "numb and dumb," and sun myself on a rock. I felt tired and blessed and clean.

Slowly I acquired a mental map of many square miles of wild underwater gardens. Three years later, with my senses opened and my body adapted to cold, I would harvest even in the dark and come home in the fog, using only wave direction and sound to find my way.

Next I built boats, learned about the sea and wind conditions above the plants, and then learned how to harvest from boats, working in the dangerous surf zone, and how to dry the plants as quickly as possible.

Each plant has its season, just as there is a progression of maturity in a land garden. I harvest the plants in their prime, starting with kelp in April.

A typical harvest day will begin before sunrise when I ready the boats. The harvest and hauling process will take six to eight hours, working at low tide with a string of boats. Fifteen hundred wet pounds cut and hauled into the boats in two hours is considered exceptionally good work. I harvested 60,000 wet pounds in 1985, yielding 3,000 dry pounds. Often the wind will breeze up on my way home just when my boats are most heavily loaded. Assuming I get home without mishap, the drying crew will have my "catch" of sea vegetables flapping in the spring breeze within three hours after I land.

On a good breezy day, the plants will be 80 to 90 percent dry by sunset, and they will be taken in to protect them from night dampness. The next day, they will be dried crunchy-crisp in the sun, or, if we have bad weather, I'll finish them indoors with wood heat.

To package a crisp plant, you place it in the morning dew until it is leathery, and then fold it to package size. Packaging has to be breathable paper so that the plants can let go of additional moisture. Ten pounds of kelp stored in paper will keep longer than a year in cool, dry conditions protected from sunlight, and it may shrink to 9 pounds. Plants harvested in their spring prime are often eaten the following winter. I have yet to see a retail package that meets the prerequisites of breathability and total protection from sunlight; they are compromises at best.

If you can do it year after year in harmony with the sea and your self, the best way is to harvest your own sea vegetables on the full moon tides of April (kelp), May (alaria), and June (dulse). The second-best



Kelp boat.

way is to shop for whole plants properly dried and packaged by an experienced harvester.

Here are the descriptions of three plants that I consider to be staples in my diet. Understand that I speak as a harvester and consumer, not as a diet consultant.

My first choice as a staple is *Laminaria longicruris*, marketed as "Atlantic Kelp," similar to Japanese kombu. Poetically, the phrase "the elders" comes to mind. I see wise elders holding silent counsel in a deep tidal flow. The plants *do* live for several years, there are a lot of them, and they have wonderful and wise adaptations. A kelp plant typically lives in 6 to 30 feet of water, where the tide flows steadily for four or five hours, then there is a period of calm, then the flow reverses for the same period, and so on. The kelp is anchored deeply and tenaciously to rocks and shells by a rubbery, tough, many-fingered holdfast. From this holdfast there rises a stem or stipe, cylindrical and solid near the holdfast, becoming expanded and hollow in the upper portion. This stipe can be 10 feet long so that the holdfast is in relatively deep and dark unturbulent flow, but the attached long, broad, flat blade, which is thick and tough, undulates in the sunlight and surface turbulence at low water.

These are the plants of depth. They occasionally tear loose in heavy storms, but generally they endure, and I affectionately refer to the oldest, toughest plants as "granddaddies." The plants are crisp in April and May. In late May and early June, they are softer and sweet with mannitol, and you will see a powdery white substance on dried plants taken at this time. Shortly after this occurs, the pesty snails come, as slugs to a New England garden, and I turn my attention to other plants.

But before leaving them, let me tell you that I once rowed for 10 hours munching on kelp and realized how much it helped my endurance. Macrobiotic cookbooks will help you learn to prepare it with cooked vegetables. It is compatible with grains, beans,

root crops, winter greens, and fish.

When I harvest kelp, I select mature plants using sight and touch. I leave many plants that are too young or too old and scarred, and the plants are handled carefully and individually right through to packaging. I think this is important. It's also important to be able to say, "Stop. Enough. The plants are past their prime. Find something else to do." It's much easier to do this if one lives without debt or mortgages.

The second plant I consider a staple is *Alaria esculenta*, similar to Japanese wakame. To be an alaria is to be a spore that somehow anchors on rocks in the pounding surf. Anchor high, and you will have a short life. The sun, surf, snails, and winter ice will take their toll. If you anchor deeper, you will be a parent plant for generations to come.

An alaria plant has a holdfast, a cylindrical stipe up to a foot long that then flattens to become the midrib of a very flexible frond. At the base of the frond are spore-bearing petals, a rich delicacy. The midrib tastes faintly like a salty carrot heart. The plant survives the daily pounding of the surf through the utter flexibility of this yellow midrib. Alaria is barely visible in the surf zone in April. By June, it is 8 to 12 feet long.

Before I harvest alaria, I do hatha yoga for an hour. The alaria zone of the surf is particularly turbulent. You will find it in places most exposed to the open sea. It's absolutely essential that I be clear and centered to work with heavy loads and boats in that zone. I am constantly tugged and slammed by surf and rocks, and to bring 15 to 20 bushels home is an exceptional day's work. Spring usually grants me 10 of those days during the plant's optimum season.

Once the major spring harvest is accomplished, I turn my attention to the third staple, dulse. Dulse is a red plant that grows above the alaria zone and below the rockweed zone. If you were dulse, you would find yourself on the shady side of rocks, mostly away from the open sea, although not always. Imagine hanging at low tide from your holdfast, about the size of a limp

hand, and the sea comes swirling up, over, and around your rock. When it does, you open like a red flower, turn in the tide, and close again. Twice in 24 hours you experience this exposure and turbulence, even surviving frost well into winter. You see the summer sun in shady crevices, and you taste of the sea, a little like fish. You have strength and tenacity like the people who settled along the waterways of Maine before there were roads, and you change your shape to fit the micro-conditions of your particular niche, staying in all weathers. You are not large or flashy, you are ruddy and strong, drying to deep red/purple/black. Before the days of potato chips, it was dulse chips, and dulse cooked with corn, oats, or fish. I'm absolutely certain dulse played its part in the hardiness of the New Englanders. A lot of people tell me their grandfathers ate dulse.

There are two other plants I might mention: laver and Irish moss. Laver is extremely

rare. Irish moss, used for gelatin, also has been used in folk remedies for healing distressed stomachs. I hope I won't need it for anything but dessert.

A word about nutrients. A sea vegetable's bacterial relationships change with the seasons, and thus the predominant vitamins may change. I harvest by my judgment of the vitality of the plant as a whole. I don't eat carrots after consulting a nutrients chart. I eat them, and feel their effects over time. We all know the difference between a Florida carrot and a New England carrot. Some day, you will know the difference between spring alaria and fall alaria.

There's no better expert than your own body, if you give it a chance. And your body will not need exactly what mine does. I munch a little while I harvest, and you should munch a little, too, whether you're harvesting or shopping. Munching in the surf zone helps me attune to the plant I'm look-

ing for. Munching in the drying process helps me understand the finished product.

My wife, Jan, and I are becoming more conscious caretakers of these wild sea gardens. We keep records of production yields in specific beds through the use of maps, and we constantly reevaluate regeneration of specific beds, based on our harvest impact as well as the impact of winter storms. We are becoming closer observers, and more careful selectors. We intend to work with these same beds for a long time. ♦

Larch Hanson is a "professional harvester" who farms seaweed beds off the Sally Islands near Milbridge, Maine. The author of the book *Edible Sea Vegetables of the New England Coast*, Hanson will send you a book for \$1.50 with an order for kelp, dulse, alaria, Irish moss, or nori. Mail inquiries to Larch Hanson, Steuben, Maine 04680; (207) 546-2875.



Larch Hanson with sea-vegetable harvest.



Leach's Storm-Petrels by John James Audubon.

ISLAND NIGHT BIRDS

Notes on Leach's Storm-Petrels

By Richard Harris Podolsky

Maine's Leach's storm-petrel almost defies understanding. With most birds, the more one learns about their life history, the easier it is to fathom how they survive from day to day. But the more one learns about storm-petrels, the more one wonders how they survive at all. Their ecological niche seems to have been constructed at best in haste and at worst by a devious hand. All other seabirds in Maine come and go from their colonies by day; storm-petrels come and go by night. Gulls and terns feed in close proximity to their nesting islands; storm-petrels feed far out to sea beyond the continental shelf. Petrels lead an austere existence and appear to have been dealt with severely through evolutionary time. They are truly a bird in exile, excluded from land by day and banished to feed far offshore in the open sea. Shrouded in mystery and folklore, storm-petrels have inspired mariners and baffled scientists. They are certainly one of Maine's most curious seabirds.

My first experience with storm-petrels was in the dark interior of a spruce forest on Kent Island in the Bay of Fundy. Sitting quietly, probing the darkness with the beam of a headlamp, I could just barely hear the feathered sounds of petrels rushing over the treetops. All around me was the almost mechanical muffled purring of a multitude of birds tucked into earthen burrows. The air was rich with the curiously musky odor typical of storm-petrels.

Listening to the purring of an especially close individual, I could hear how each purr gained in speed and volume and persisted uninterrupted until curiously stopping, only

to quickly restart at the beginning again. This purring call was punctuated by the slightly throaty "chuckle call" exclaimed by birds in flight above the trees. Checking my notes from that night, I find that I described the chuckle call as, "an almost absurd collection of slightly musical notes—as if composed by elves." After 10 years of listening to petrels and studying the functions of their two vocalizations, I can still live comfortably with that description. However, I invite you to venture into a petrel colony to listen and observe for yourself.

Soon that night petrels began to flutter and bounce down through the branches above my head in a most haphazard fashion and then half-run, half-walk, and mostly trip their way into nearby burrows. Training my beam on a less frantic individual and moving quickly, I was soon cupping a Leach's storm-petrel in my hand. I was immediately struck by their gentle nature and delicate construction. Their diminutive size for a seabird and seemingly frail construction would immediately capture the heart of the most dyed-in-the-wool cynic. Yet, realizing that here in my hand was a 4-ounce bird capable of dashing gracefully an inch above an 8-foot swell while making way flying headlong into a gale-force wind, made me understand that here was a hardy bird indeed.

Except for a white rump patch, storm-petrels are a dull ashy gray in color and have a curiously protruding forehead above their deeply hooked "tubenosed" bill. They are members of an ancient order of oceanic birds—the Procelariiformes, or tubenoses—which includes albatrosses, shearwaters,

and the smallest members of the group, the storm-petrels. Leach's storm-petrel is about the size of an American robin, but with a surprisingly long wingspan of 19 inches, nearly twice that of a robin.

Petrel Colonies in Maine are in Decline

Storm-petrels nest on the outermost islands of the Maine archipelago, and it is here on these wave- and wind-buffed "rocks" that they seek out their nesting chambers. They currently breed on only 17 islands off Maine's coast but historically were known to have nested on at least 26 Maine islands. Gull predation, floating plastic, and oil spills have brought about a drastic decline in petrels over the last century. Great black-backed and herring gulls, which have increased dramatically in this century, have the ability to pick off petrels as they return to their colonies by night. It is not unusual to find a pair of webbed petrel feet protruding from a gull pellet. Petrels are known to mistake floating bits of Styrofoam and plastic for food. How many petrels succumb due to the ingestion of plastic or by becoming fouled in oil spills is not known, but both add to the decline of this secretive bird. In spite of these declines, research by the National Audubon Society is resulting in the recolonization of several historical petrel colonies in Maine.

Wandering Storm-Petrels Far Outnumber Residents

A petrel banding study in Muscongus Bay has brought to light two curious facts about the movements of storm-petrels. First,

the number of wandering petrels visiting Maine islands far exceeds the number of resident breeders, and, second, the wanderers are visiting not only the 17 islands with active colonies but also a greater number of islands lacking active colonies.

Muscongus Bay, for example, has only four islands with petrel colonies, with a total population of a mere 200 breeding pairs, yet we have captured in mist nets and released with leg bands nearly 5,000 petrels in just four summers. We have banded these birds not only at the four islands with breeding petrels but at five additional islands currently lacking breeders. Curiously, breeders do not appear to be involved in this wandering. The vast majority of the wanderers are juvenile birds, indicated by their totally downy brood patches. The brood patches of breeders are typically bare and vascularized, which facilitates the efficient transfer of heat from adult to egg. This wandering behavior has been described for a variety of land and water birds and is thought to be juvenile birds "prospecting" for potential nest sites.

The question raised by these observations that most fascinated me was what is keeping these prospecting petrels from breeding at the numerous uncolonized islands they visited. I hypothesized that, given a choice, petrels would join existing colonies rather than colonize new sites. Furthermore, what better way for a petrel to predict the presence of an existing colony than by the presence of purring and chuckling petrels? Consequently, I predicted that the purring and chuckling calls that so impressed me on Kent Island might function as the key stimuli causing wandering petrels to settle on an island to breed. I felt that I could support this idea if storm-petrels could be enticed to recolonize an abandoned colony simply by broadcasting purr and chuckle calls.

The idea of using social attractants to lure birds is not new. Hunters have been "decoying in" birds for centuries. Recently, puffins, terns, and albatrosses have all been attracted back to former nest sites with wooden decoys used as social attractants. Why shouldn't storm-petrels be enticed to breed among broadcast recordings of purring and chuckling birds?

Petrels are Lured to a Former Colony

Old Hump Ledge in outer Muscongus Bay is an utterly inhospitable heap of jagged black granite topped by a tiny sloping meadow currently visited by prospecting storm-petrels. The ledge was known to have supported a small petrel colony, but for unknown reasons, the colony disbanded in the early 1950s. In 1979 we hand-dug in the meadow 36 burrows in two groups of 18. In the midst of one burrow group, we placed a single speaker that broadcast purring and chuckling calls. Because storm-petrels are nocturnal and because no one in their right mind would actually want to camp on Old Hump Ledge, we were faced with the task of automating the sound system. This was accomplished by playing endless-loop cassette

tapes of petrel calls from a car tape deck. The tape deck was driven by a 12-volt battery and the battery recharged on sunny days by a solar panel. A simple timer switch between the tape deck and the battery turned the system on at 10 at night and off at four in the morning, thus bracketing the time of maximum visitation by prospecting petrels.

By the end of the first summer, four of the 18 burrows surrounding the speaker contained a pair of petrels incubating their single white egg. The following summer, we stimulated all 36 burrows and raised the number of active burrows to eight. We have since expanded the attraction program to five islands in Muscongus Bay, with a total of 224 artificial burrows. The success has been similar to Old Hump Ledge: about 20 percent of the artificial burrows were colonized by petrels. However, the persistence of the other colonies falls short of Old Hump Ledge. Only on Old Hump Ledge have the same six to eight pairs of petrels consistently bred each summer since 1979.

Attraction Studies are Important to Endangered Seabirds

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of this work is in its application to endangered or threatened birds throughout the world. Currently 10 percent of all seabirds worldwide are rare or endangered because their island habitats are threatened. Islands are inherently vulnerable, and introduced predatory mammals, deforestation, and recreational development particularly threaten seabirds. Predator eradication is extremely difficult and costly, and it is often desirable to relocate a population to a safe nesting site to ensure its survival. An attraction program similar to that applied to storm-petrels in Maine could bring about the recovery of an endangered seabird, and attraction programs are now being planned for the endangered dark-rumped petrel in Hawaii and the short-tailed albatross in the Sea of Japan. ♦



Night-banding petrels, Eastern Egg Rock.

Richard Harris Podolsky, Research Director of the Island Institute, has studied island seabird colonies off the shores of Maine, Canada, and Hawaii. Starting with this issue of *ISLAND JOURNAL*, Podolsky will also serve as our Science Editor.

PETER RALSTON

Boats





Butter Island Beach by Eliot Porter.

QUIET COVES

Cruising among the Islands

By Roger Duncan

If you own a cruising boat and live south of Cape Elizabeth and north of New York City, part of you probably feels the seasonal tug of your mooring pennant on the foredeck cleat and dreams of casting off on a southwesterly breeze downwind to the east'ard. If you live anywhere else on the Maine coast and have a boat of any description, or know someone who does, it's still the same. Once you have spent the night anchored in a quiet cove somewhere along the 4,000-mile-

long Maine coast, listening to the sea slightly slapping its way along your hull and watching Polaris and the aurora rise and shimmer overhead, you might never be the same again. It could even ruin the rest of your life as you plan ever more (and more expensive) expeditions in search of those coves.

Roger Duncan has been cruising the Maine coast, usually with his wife, Mary, in Friendship sloops and other boats for over three decades. He has written and edited the

*Maine yachtsman's bible, **Cruising the New England Coast**, for almost as long. We asked Roger for a piece reflecting on the changing nature of yachting offshore.*

"If you own a boat, you own all the islands," they used to say. Before World War II, it was almost literally true. Most of the Maine islands east of Seguin were uninhabited and their owners seldom or never visited them. At one time pulp companies bought islands,

cut them over, and left, giving the deed to the now-worthless land to whoever wanted it, sometimes to the youngest member of the crew. Some of these people even forgot they still held ownership.

Islands with good harbors used to be inhabited but in the 1920s and 1930s were abandoned. When fishermen used to tend lobster traps and trawls in peapods, dories, and sloops, it was an advantage to live near the fishing grounds. Many islands once had sizable villages on them. Harbor Island, Cranberry Island, Bremen Long Island, and Friendship Island in Muscongus Bay are examples. Farther east, Ragged Island (Criehaven) and McGlathery Island supported fishing communities, and Dix, Hurricane, and Crotch islands had granite quarries. Isolation from the mainland was no problem because most transportation was by water, and in the late 19th century, steamers called regularly at island wharves, bringing freight and taking off barrels of fish and lobsters packed in ice for the Boston market. Mainland harbors were no better off, for they too depended upon schooners, smacks, and coastal steamers. The railroad was far back from the shore, and it was a day's work to take a horse and wagon over rough dirt roads to the depot.

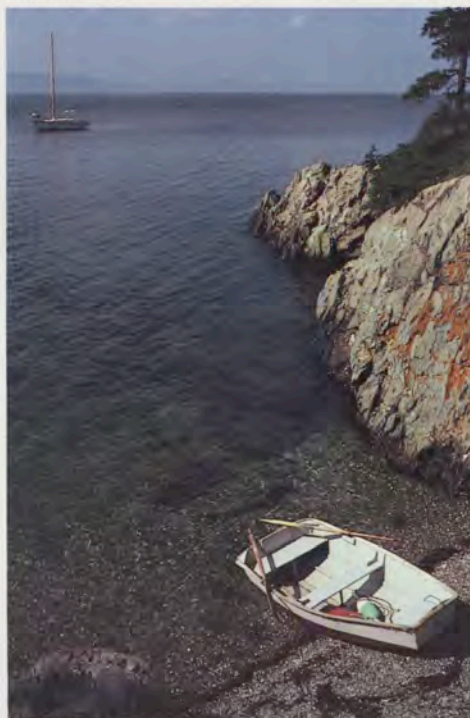
However, marine engines and automobiles changed this picture quickly. By the 1930s, a fisherman could live on the mainland, get to the fishing grounds and back again quickly in his powerboat, ship his fish by truck direct to the Boston market, drive his car to the railroad, the store, or the movies in an hour, and send his children to a bigger if not necessarily better school. The steamers no longer stopped at the shrinking island communities and by the mid-1930s had ceased to run altogether, leaving the island harbors deserted except for a few like Monhegan, Matinicus, Vinalhaven, Isle au Haut, Swans Island, and Frenchboro, which have maintained mailboat or ferry connections to the mainland to this day.

The yachtsman of yesteryear could cruise where he liked, picking up supplies at mainland ports and anchoring in protected island coves, often alone. At night he might see no lights except the stars, hear no sound but the light air in the spruce trees, the ripples alongside, and the "quawk" of a night heron. He shared the islands with sheep, crows, gulls, and terns, and only the occasional other yacht or fisherman. He dug clams where he wished—and there were plenty—and went fishing with confidence that he could catch a mackerel or pollock inshore or jig up a codfish on an offshore shoal. Anyone cruising east of Seguin was nearly monarch of all he surveyed, independent and unhampered by all but the simple necessity of considering others on the coast.

Of course this freedom carried obligations. If one caught fire, ran ashore, got lost in the fog, or was overpowered in squall or gale, he had to find his own way out of trouble. He had no radio on which to call "Mayday." Although in those distant days the Coast Guard still maintained many

watchful Lifesaving Stations, and lobstermen were glad to help out anyone in trouble if they were near enough to respond to a flare, a horn, or a burning cushion, cruising in Maine was for the capable seaman in a well-found yacht. Navigation was by clock and compass, by log, lead, and lookout.

Now the situation is vastly different. Almost every island is owned by someone who has paid a high price for it, and often the owner has built a summer home there. His island home is a retreat, an escape hatch, and the last thing he wants is someone anchoring uninvited off his wharf, landing on his beach, and cooking lobsters on his rocks. The sailor must admit that the owner has every right to his privacy. No longer does a man who owns a boat own all the islands.



Landing party.

Not only are a great many islands now at least seasonally inhabited, but also there are many more yachts on the coast than there used to be. Fortunately for some of us, most of these boats follow a well-beaten course alongshore, calling at Boothbay and Camden and running east either by North Haven and Stonington or through Eggemoggin Reach to Northeast Harbor. They seem to have worn ruts in the water and have so crowded the popular harbors with marinas and moorings as to make anchoring virtually impossible. Pollution has become a problem.

In spite of the increased occupancy of islands and the growing number of other yachts, a modern sailor can still enjoy cruising among Maine islands. Many are now owned by The Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society, the Friends of Nature, or other conservation organizations. Some of these islands, like Damariscove, McGlathery, and Great Wass, have good harbors and no "facilities" whatever.

There are other island harbors thus far largely neglected by those hurrying on their way to somewhere else. Muscongus, Pleasant, Englishman, Chandler, Narraguagus,

and Machias bays afford many attractive anchorages. The islands of the Mussel Ridge Channel and of Eastern Bay between Great Wass Island and Head Harbor Island are each worth a week's exploration.

You can still sail offshore. The Atlantic Ocean is yours, for seldom does the crowd get outside the Seguin-Cuckolds-Allen Island-Two Bush-Vinalhaven-Isle au Haut line. It is 20 miles from Monhegan to Matinicus Rock, an easy, pleasant sail with America showing low on the horizon. You may see a whale, a pair of porpoises, the fin of a tuna or shark. A petrel may flutter delicately close to the wave crests or a shearwater may sweep breathtakingly near. A gannet may pass overhead.

Matinicus Rock Light, like most Maine lighthouses, is no longer a manned station. The towers and the granite house still stand, but no one is there to watch and wave except the occasional Audubon observer. Even if you can't land, you can sail around the Rock. You will almost certainly see arctic and common terns, puffins, and guillemots, which nest in the grassy meadow and among the boulders. You can remember as you sail gently by the eastern side that in one March gale, solid water swept over the Rock, breaking ¼-inch plate glass in the lantern 90 feet above high-water mark.

You can probably get a fisherman's mooring in Criehaven, once a busy town of 60 people with a school, a store, a post office, a community house, and a mailboat to Rockland. Now a few families come for the summer lobstering and most of the island is owned by a summer resident from New Jersey.

Sail by desolate Seal Island, bare white rock frosted with a little grass. The Navy used it for a firing range but made little impression on it. Duck Harbor on Isle au Haut is likely to be crowded, but few yachts go into Head Harbor or anchor behind York Island.

East of Schoodic, the coast is more rugged, harbors are fewer, marinas nonexistent, fogs thicker, and tides swifter; and not many yachts round Petit Manan. You can't get into the Mudhole on Great Wass except at half tide or higher, but once inside, you are perfectly protected and unlikely to have company other than an eagle, a great blue heron, or a seal. Bunker Cove on Roque Island may be crowded, but few will look into Starboard Cove in Machias Bay.

If you own a boat, no longer do you own the islands, and you may be crowded out of the more popular mainland harbors. But the observant mariner who will take his boat quietly out of the ruts worn by those in a hurry to "get somewhere" will find much to enjoy. The more he knows of the birds, the flowers, and the fish, the more history and geology he reads, the greater will be his enjoyment of what is still the best cruising ground on the Atlantic Coast. ♦

Roger Duncan lives in East Boothbay with his wife, Mary, and his Friendship sloop, *Eastward*. A new edition of *Cruising the New England Coast* is due out in November 1986.



1895 Deer Isle America's Cup crew.

PHOTOGRAPHS COLLECTION OF CLAYTON GROSS

DEER ISLE DEFENDERS

By Clayton Gross

In this age of high-tech and highly specialized managerial expertise, applied even to the heady world of yacht racing, it seems good medicine to recall a time when racing yachts were still large boats and required the services of all-around seamen, whose qualifications were a blend of good sea sense and strong backs. Many Maine island fishermen served aboard America's Cup defenders in the old days of the competition, but never so notoriously as when Deer Isle sent its best as a group to "stick it to the Brits" at the turn of the century.

For the first time in over a century the America's Cup, the most sought-after trophy in yachting, is gone from the New York Yacht Club. In 1983, the Cup was won by the Australians, and if the N.Y.Y.C. wants to win it back, it will have to go "down under" to do it.

The coast of Maine, where sailing had always been more work than sport, played an important part in several of the past

defenses, particularly around the turn of the century. In 1895 Deer Isle supplied the entire crew for the *Defender* and in 1899, that of *Columbia*. In 1937 the last J-boat to defend the Cup slid down the ways of Bath Iron Works, the only Cup defender ever built in Maine.

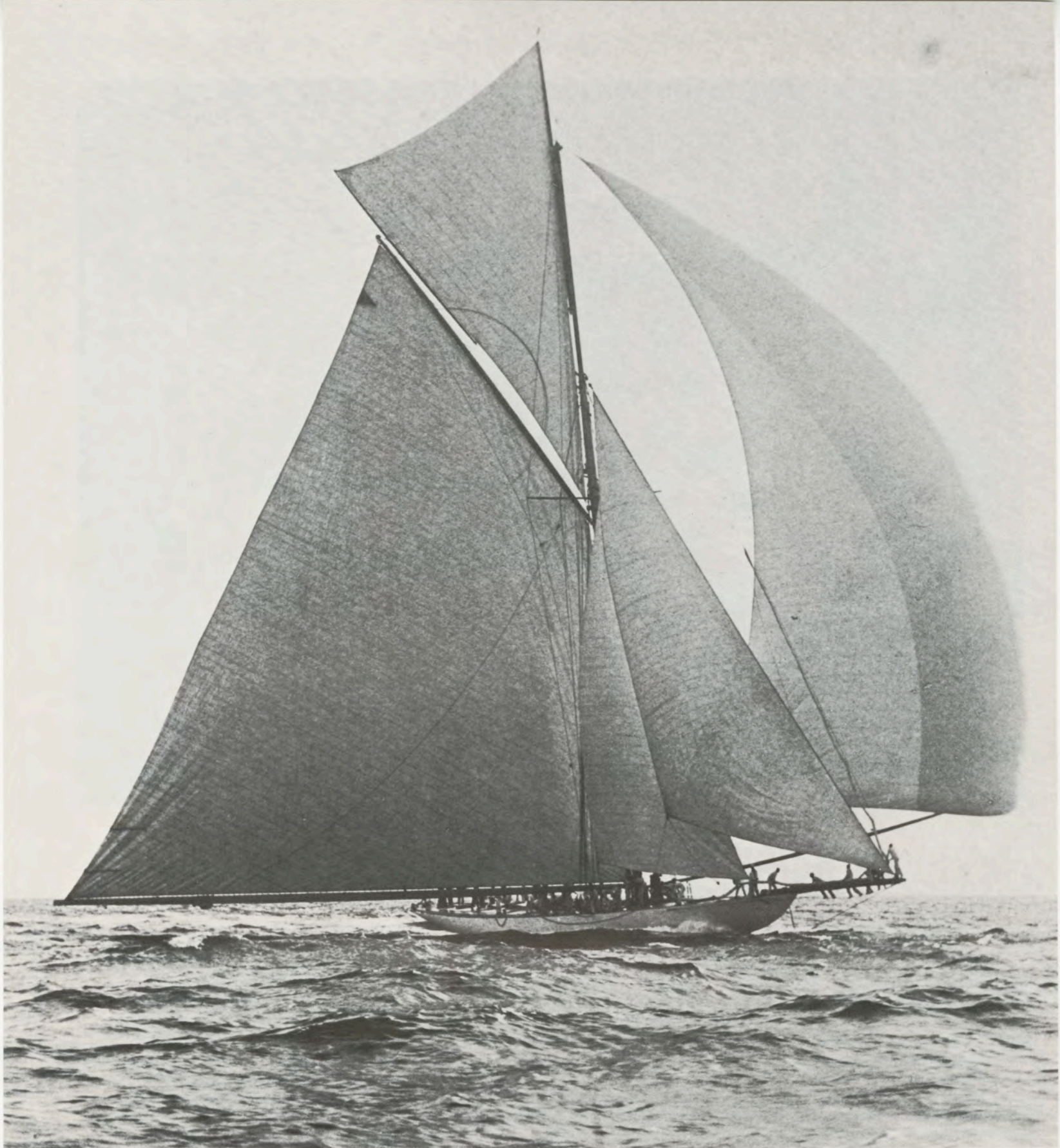
Deer Isle seamen had made up half of the crews of several defenders prior to 1895, the year the Earl of Dunraven challenged for the Cup. A syndicate headed by C. Oliver Iselin accepted the challenge and commissioned Nathanael Herreshoff to design and build a boat. The result was the *Defender*, one of the most formidable racing machines built in America up to that time.

The selection of the all-Deer Isle crew was entrusted to Captain Fred B. Weed of that island community. He interviewed all the applicants on town meeting day in Deer Isle, and 24 were selected. Chosen to command the *Defender* was Captain Hank Haff, while Iselin sailed on her during the races as manager.

One thing that happened to the crews of both *Defender* and *Columbia* was that they were treated as celebrities. The public was excited about Cup races 90 years ago. Photographs and drawings of the "Deer Isle boys" appeared in several major magazines and newspapers, and they enjoyed a status similar to that of professional athletes today.

The first race of the 1895 series took place on September 7. The contest was a close one all the way and was won by *Defender* by 8 minutes 48 seconds over a 30-mile course off Seabright, New Jersey.

It was then that an uproar began that almost destroyed the America's Cup races. Lord Dunraven lodged two protests with the race committee following the race. First, he charged that *Defender* had been rebalanced the night before the race, thus giving her an unfair advantage. Second, Dunraven felt that his yacht had been hampered by the large spectator fleet following the race. (The course was not patrolled by the Coast Guard as it is today.) He thought that the situation



Defender.

may have affected the outcome of the race and was a safety hazard to both contestants. As a result, the N.Y.C. made a better effort to police the course.

The next race was sailed over a triangular course from Sandy Hook Lightship, a total of 30 miles. At the starting line, the two yachts found themselves on a collision course with *Defender* to leeward, giving her the right of way. Dunraven's *Valkyrie* did not give way until it was too late. While luffing at close quarters, her main boom swept

Defender's deck, fetching up in the topmast shroud and carrying it away. Captain Haff carried on under a jury rig, which prevented the collapse of the topmast and the huge club topsail it was carrying. *Defender* lost by 47 seconds and protested at once. There was enough evidence to support Iselin's protest and the race was awarded to *Defender*. Dunraven refused Iselin's offer to resail the race, and that appeared to be the end of it.

In the next race, however, *Valkyrie*, after crossing the starting line, dropped her

racing flag, came about, and headed back for her anchorage. For the first and only time in Cup history, the challenger had quit and would not finish the series. The *Defender* sailed the entire course as the rules required, and thus the unhappy defense of 1895 came to a quiet but joyless end.

Dunraven was raked over the coals unmercifully by the American press. He, in turn, would not let go of the issue of the ballast, which finally had to be settled by a blue-ribbon committee whose investigation

exonerated the *Defender* and upheld the honor and integrity of her owners, captain, and crew. The Deer Isle boys would have to wait until another day to really prove their mettle as Cup defenders.

At the time it looked as if that day would never come, but soon the Royal Ulster Yacht Club of Belfast, Ireland, issued a challenge on behalf of one of its members, tea tycoon Sir Thomas Lipton, for the season of 1899. A gracious sportsman, "Lord Tea," as the Deer Isle men called him, succeeded in restoring the proper atmosphere to the races in which he was to be the dominant figure for the next 30 years.

A new syndicate was formed to defend the Cup, headed by J.P. Morgan. C. Oliver Iselin was again named managing owner, and Nat Herreshoff was to be the designer and builder. Captain Fred Weed of Deer Isle was asked to select the crew, as he had done so well by *Defender* in 1895.

The *Columbia* was launched on June 10, 1899. She measured 131 feet overall and 89 feet 8 inches on the waterline, with a 24-foot beam and a draft of 19 feet 3 inches. She carried 13,135 square feet of sail. Her crew was to be based at Bristol, Rhode Island, site of the Herreshoff Yacht Yard. Pay was \$60 a month for officers and \$45 a month for seamen, a very respectable wage for the times. All hands got \$5 for every race sailed, including trials.

All was not peace and harmony, however. The Deer Isle boys did not like Captain Charlie Barr, a Scot who had been in this country for 14 years and was a naturalized citizen. This bothered some purists, including his crew, who thought the Cup defender should be commanded by a "real" American. On July 20, 1899, the *New York Times* proclaimed, "*Columbia's* crew may strike. They object to his [Barr's] nationality—Mr. Iselin says he will be retained."

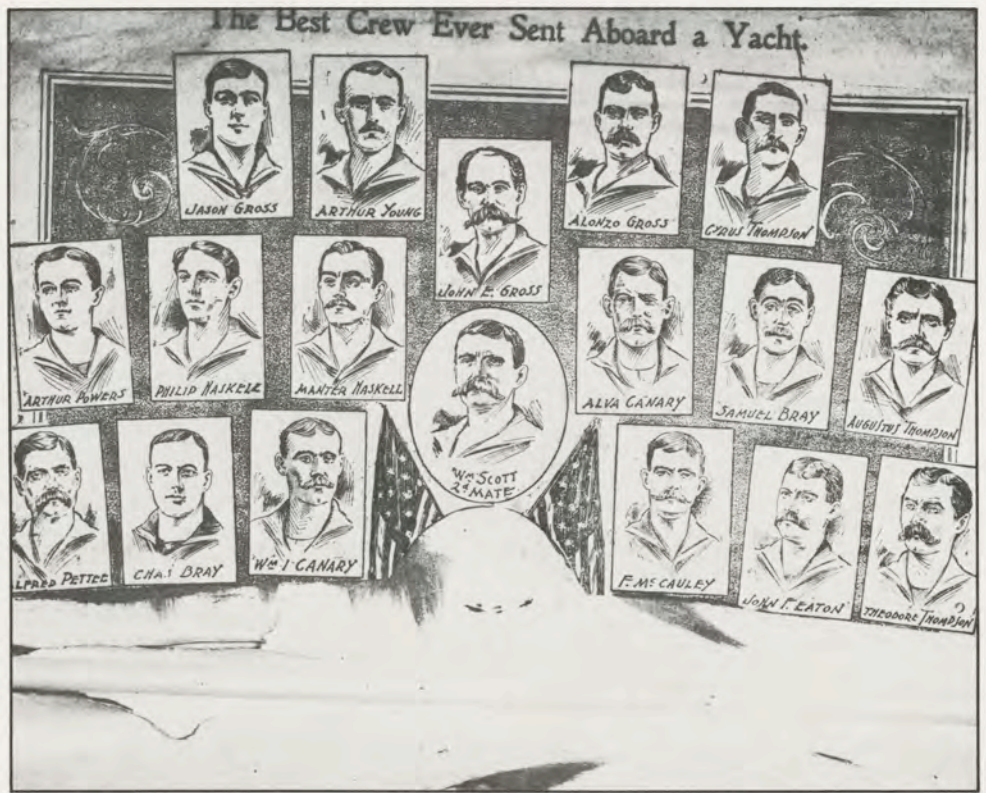
Iselin stuck to his guns and on October 16 the first race was held. *Shamrock* got off to a faster start, but she could not hold her lead. *Columbia* won by 10 minutes 8 seconds.

The race of October 17 was barely 10 minutes old when *Shamrock's* topmast and club topsail carried away. Abiding by a previously agreed-upon rule, *Columbia* completed the course and was declared the winner in 3 hours 37 minutes. This rule recognized that design and construction were as much a part of the competition as seamanship.

In the third race, *Columbia* beat *Shamrock* by 6 minutes 34 seconds. Barr's detractors were forced to eat humble pie. The Deer Isle boys had bested "Lord Tea."

The crew of *Columbia* was wined, dined, and congratulated by C. Oliver Iselin as "the world's finest crew." There were 38 men in the crew, the final pick from a field of 233 applicants.

In 1901, Lipton challenged again. A new defender, the *Constitution*, was designed and built by Herreshoff, and 24 Deer Isle boys were selected to man her. However, the *Constitution* did not qualify to defend the Cup, so *Columbia* became the first yacht



to defend successfully twice.

Thomas Lawson, who is perhaps better remembered for the ill-fated seven-masted schooner that bore his name, also fielded a Cup defender, called the *Independence*, in 1901. She had five Deer Isle men in her crew, but because of structural problems, *Independence* never was a serious contender.

With the defense of 1901, the era of Cup racing drew to a close on Deer Isle. Although yachting was to be a major factor in the island economy for another 40 years, no

more Deer Isle men were ever again to defend the Cup. The last professionals to race for the America's Cup did so in 1903, after which amateurs made up the crews, while Deer Isle sailors were called upon to man the increasingly motorized fleets of merchant traders and fishing vessels. ♦

Clayton Gross, author of the book *Island Chronicles* and regular contributor to *Deer Isle* and *Stonington's* newspaper, *Island Advantages*, is also the best-known historian of these two towns that share an island.



Islanders

THE ISLANDERS

By Philip Booth

Winters when we set our traps offshore,
we saw an island further out than ours,
miraged in midday haze, but lifting clear
at dawn, or late flat light, in cliffs that might
have been sheer ice. It seemed, then, so near,

that each man, turning home with his slim catch,
made promises beyond the limits of his gear
and boat. But mornings we cast off to watch
the memory blur as we attempted it,
and set and hauled on ledges we could fetch



and still come home. Summers, when we washed
inshore again, not one of us would say
the island's name, though none at anchor slosed
the gurry from his deck without one eye
on that magnetic course the ospreys fished.

Winters, then, we knew which way to steer
beyond marked charts, and saw the island, as
first islanders first saw it: who watched it blur
at noon, yet harbored knowing it was real;
and fished, like us, offshore, as if it were.



MATINICUS

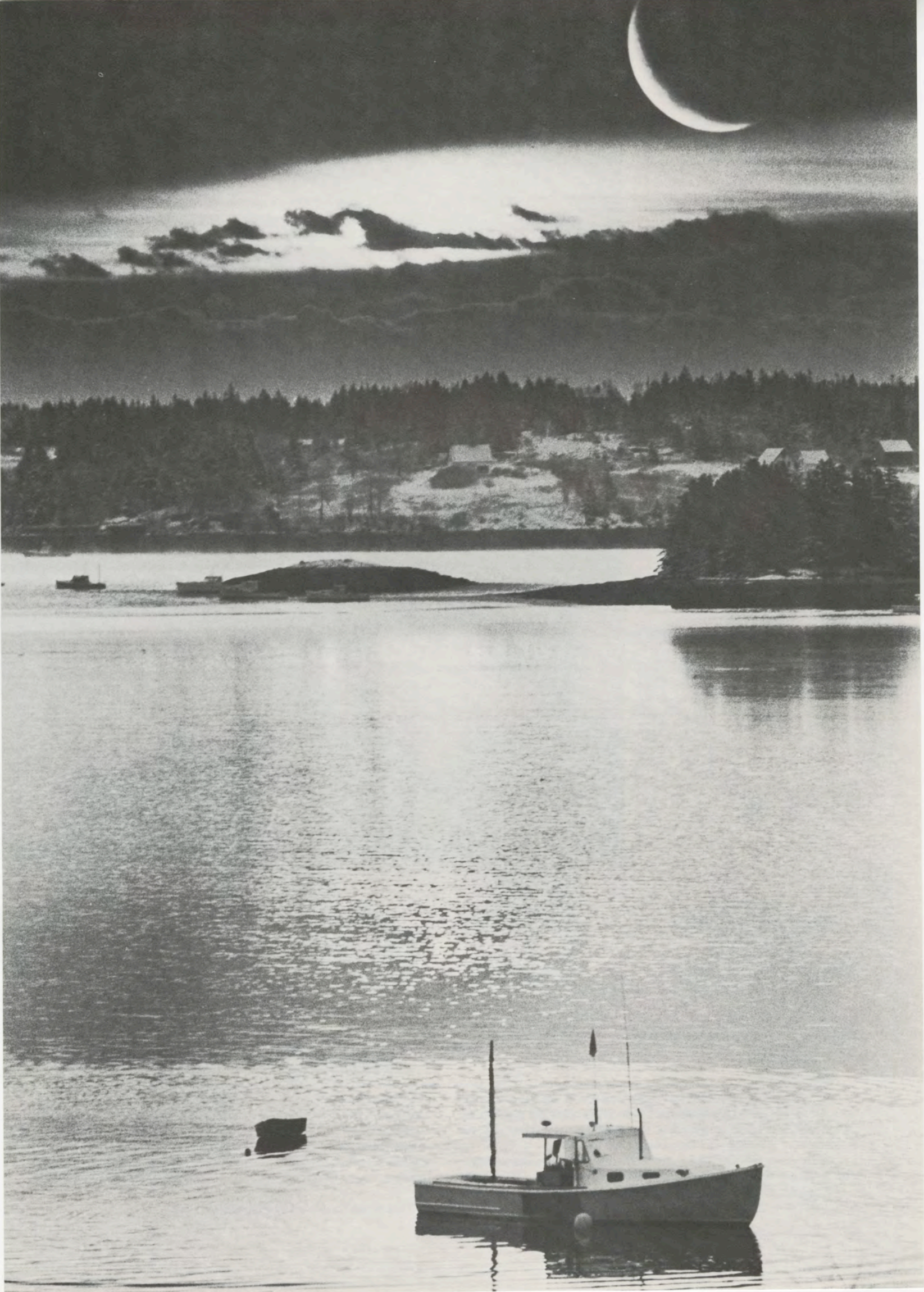
68°55'W — 43°52'N

By Philip Booth

Further out than a mainland eye
can see, it lies hull-down in the mind,
an island that you reach for, hazed
in the lightest airs, somewhere offshore
until it lifts across, and off,
the flat blue curve far out: a landfall
wavering more in time than distance.
No compass, no degrees and minutes,
can chart you back, who stand watch first
for No Man's Land, and a reef awash
where the swell breaks white like a whale.
The floodtide sets you, past the bell;
you remember now, and anchor close in,
in the hooked cove where fishhouses shine
in the new-paint sun. The shore is slant
granite slabs, blank windows looking out
from white clapboard, where the catwalks sag
seaward from door to front door; the plank
weathered, like bait tubs, or the thin pier
stilted back to black spruce. The churchspire,
high ashore, might be the landmark
for your bearing here. Or Matinicus Rock,
where (homing on the diaphone
or light) you might come to find puffin
after a two-reef windward beat.
But anchored now, with a lobsterboat
astern, and the whole sea behind you,
you recognize your holding ground
and know what deviation swung
your compass back: set out along
the catwalk windows' opened frames,
Matinicus geraniums,
as for the twenty summers you forgot,
blaze like light buoys, each in a tin-can pot.

*A longtime resident of coastal Maine and Professor of English at Syracuse University in New York, **Philip Booth** continues his career as a poet from atop the rocky prominence of Castine. A new volume of his collected poems will be published this summer by Viking Press, which kindly granted permission to print the two poems here. Booth and his wife, Margaret, helped form and continue to be involved with the Castine Conservation Trust.*

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THE LEGACY OF CYRUS RACKLIFF

By Amy Payson



Editor's Note: *One night several years ago, we met Amy Payson at the wooden boatbuilding school, The Rockport Apprenticeship, and we got talking islands. We only chatted for a couple of minutes, but I remember thinking that what Amy told me of her family's island roots was worth a story or two (or more) for ISLAND JOURNAL. So last fall we sat down with Amy, who told us pieces of a dozen or more stories about the Rackliff family. We are pleased to print this most singular account from among the many she recited.*

Ever since I was a little girl, I remember hearing stories about my family, but the story of my grandfather, Cyrus Rackliff, and his accident on Green Island was, to me, typical of life on the Maine coast at the time.

Although I don't remember my grandmother, Emily, who was Cyrus' wife, my mother and father (Archie and Edna Rackliff) lived with Emily at Cyrus' homestead all of their married life. My mother and Emily shared their thoughts and feelings while they did the mountains of washing and the cooking for the family.

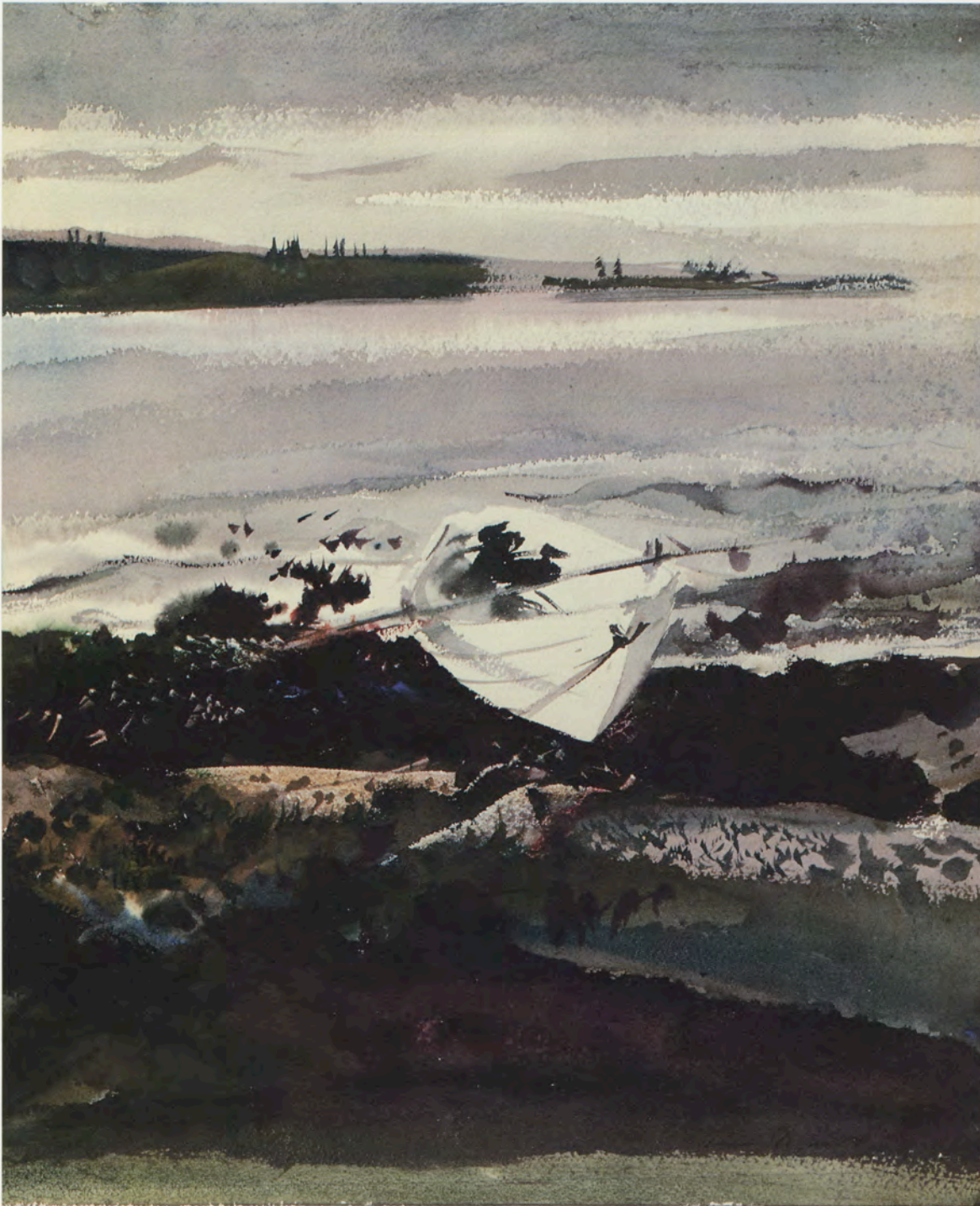
Emily described her early life on the islands, especially Metinic Island, where she had been a teenager. There she met Cyrus, who was living on Green Island (Metinic was within rowing distance of Green and also the closest piece of land). Emily Foster was a striking,

dark-haired beauty, a prize for any man, and Cyrus was "the boy next door." When they married in 1861, Emily moved to Green Island and lived with Cyrus and his mother, Lydia. Then Cyrus and Emily, with two children of their own, moved to Dix Island in the Mussel Ridge, where they ran a boarding home for the stonemasons working the quarry.

Because the story of Cyrus' accident meant a lot to me, I asked my mother to write it down. I kept this handwritten account safely with my choice possessions. One day I went to read the story again and couldn't find it. I kept looking in different places where I might have put it to keep it safe. Embarrassed that I might have lost my treasured story, I finally asked my mother to write it down again, but I didn't keep after her to see if she had done it. So, when she died, I badly regretted all that was lost, including Cyrus' story.

One day I was going through her things and came across a book, *Lighthouses of the Maine Coast*, which my oldest son, David, had bought for her. She told me that she wanted David to have this book back when she was "finished" with it. When I opened the book, out dropped a folded copy of "Cyrus' Story," handwritten in rough-draft form that my mother had done following my request!

This is the story my mother told of Cyrus' accident:



COURTESY OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

One particular day Cyrus and the boys were going seabird shooting on the ledges just outside Big Green Island. They wanted to be there to set their tollers before the birds came in about daylight to feed. In the morning when he woke, Cyrus told Emily that he didn't think he would go sea ducking, since he had had a dream during the night that he was breathing shot. He had awakened choking.

But a little later, it turned into such a nice morning that Cyrus decided he would go shooting anyway. As he got his leather boots out to grease them, an old clock on the shelf that had been silent for years struck. Cyrus' mother was very superstitious, and, fearing something terrible would happen, begged him not to go. But Cyrus was bound and determined to head out for the ledges.

He put his gun in the dory, but as he got in, the gun, which for some unknown reason was cocked, went off. The heavy load of bird-shot struck him below the knee. It was a bad wound, so Cyrus' relatives sailed and rowed him across Two Bush Channel and up the Mussel Ridge to Ash Point, where an uncle took him to a doctor in Rockland.

Cyrus' mother, Lydia, viewed the accident as an ill omen and told Emily, who was pregnant at the time with her first child, that the baby would probably be "marked" because Emily had to dress her husband's gunshot wound. Imagine the worry to a young bride

and the relief when her son, Elmer, was born without a blemish.

Cyrus kept on farming and hunting even with his bad leg, which Emily washed and dressed daily. Sometimes, when she changed the dressing, scraps of his old pants leg would appear, along with an occasional piece of lead shot.

After 20 years of suffering, Cyrus finally decided to have his leg amputated below the knee. Had he not had such a strong constitution, he wouldn't have survived. With a bottle of whiskey to kill the pain, the doctor took off the leg in the front parlor of the house where they lived. After this rough operation, Cyrus asked for a chopping block and performed an autopsy on the foot to see what had caused him such agony for those 20 years. I guess he expected to find sharp bone fragments that would account for the pain, but nothing was found to satisfy his curiosity. ♦

Amy Payson is a fisherman's daughter and a boatbuilder's (Harold "Dynamite" Payson's) wife. One of five children, she began her married life on isolated Metinic Island and proceeded to have five children (and seven grandchildren) of her own. Her quick and compelling personality radiates over a close family life and a love for hunting, fishing, the outdoors, and a large circle of fondly held friends.

CYRUS

By Wilbert Snow

The evening Asbury died I went to watch
Beside his coffin through the long, still night,
A mellow winter's night of melting snow,
And as I neared the house I felt the spell
That always filled our village when the dead
Were lingering among us in deep silence.
I turned the doorknob softly and stepped in
To find the table spread, the coffee pot
Beside the stovepipe on the kitchen stove,
Bubbling and spurting forth a steamy fragrance.
The parlor hanging lamp, not often lit,
Shed ruddy light against the household gloom.

Three neighbors greeted me in friendly tones:
The first one, Tom McKellar, village blacksmith,
Who read the Bible constantly and loved
To argue on its mysteries with the doctor
And other unbelievers in the town;
The second, Adam Kirk, a lanky Scot,
With mind as free as Tom's was Bible-bound,
Who broke each Sabbath tramping with a gun
Through deep spruce woods, or fished by smelting brooks,
His relaxations from another week
Of chipping ashlar in the barren stonesheds.
The third and last among the watchers, Cyrus,
Of massive frame and calm, hypnotic face,
With dappled freckles in his big gray eyes,



COURTESY OF AMY PAYSON

Stretched out full length upon a haircloth sofa
To ease the pain a wooden leg was kindling.
His voice held overtones from out-of-doors
Which stirred in me desire to learn the secret
That made him such a stout New England oak.

Without a sentence, Cyrus took the lamp
And led us to the damp, chill sitting room
Across whose corner Asbury lay at peace
In a long black casket trimmed with silver handles.
An evening wind just stirring as we entered
Swayed the white curtains of a lifted window,
Making a ghostly awe come down upon us
That hushed our voices to a reverent whisper.
We looked in every hour until twelve,
And passed the interim in random talk,
Now calling up details of Asbury's life,
Now mulling over gossip in the village.
From time to time a neighbor ventured in
To volunteer his service as a watch,
But finding four of us already there,
Would put his lantern down, stay long enough
To light his pipe, then say "Good night" and leave us.

At twelve we sat around the kitchen table
And talked until the barriers of day
Were down, and man to man we found ourselves

Strolling into each other's pastures, lingering
 In genuine communion such as happens
 But once or twice in any human lifetime.
 The talk quite simply turned to unseen forces
 Beyond the world of matter, Tom protesting
 That simple Bible faith was all sufficient
 To forge man's metal for the flint of death.
 The Scot reiterated his release
 From creeds and dogma, praised Bob Ingersoll,
 And pooh-poohed tales of Spiritland as traps
 Designed to frighten children, catch old women,
 And snare red-blooded workmen up like rabbits.

Expectantly we turned to look at Cyrus.
 He took his wooden leg off, placed it under
 The lounge, where it would not be gazing at us,
 And hesitated long before he spoke.

"I used to think as you do, Adam, once,
 But since this leg was shot off I feel different.
 And now I'll tell you things I almost never
 Say a word about. The night before
 My accident we all were going gunning:
 A raft of birds was feeding round The Stallion,
 And Two Bush Reef and Condor Ledge were black
 With scads of coots; and low tide served at sunrise.
 I reeved my tollers, cleaned my shooting iron,
 And went to bed round nine o'clock, I guess.
 At midnight I woke up and all was silent.
 Till father's clock, that hadn't struck for years,
 Up and struck one as plain as I am speaking.
 I soon dozed off to sleep and had a nightmare,
 Dreaming the air was full of little shot,
 Bird shot, number eight or nine, I reckon,
 And I was breathing them in throat and lungs;
 They tore my chest and racked me all to pieces,
 Till I woke up a lump of foggy sweat,
 Resolving then and there I wouldn't go
 To hunt for coots no matter what the day was.

"I woke up Emily and told what happened,
 And she allowed that I had had a warning
 And shouldn't go. Next morning bright and early
 The boys come over yelling, 'Wake up, Cyrus!'
 And I went down and told them I wa'n't going.
 They asked the reason why. I wouldn't answer.
 They teased and plagued me till I up and told them.
 They all yelled 'Booger-man!' and 'Superstitious!'
 Till I was plumb ashamed, went back upstairs,
 Hauled on my pants and said, 'Don't make a touse, boys,
 And I'll be with you,' for that very minute
 I'd 'ave faced the Devil himself and never flinched.

"It was a dandy morning to go gunning,
 The grass was brittle and the meadow frozen
 With thin shell ice that covered all the puddles;
 And when the sun rose up I thought how silly
 I was to give away to dreams and warnings;
 But I had not been in the boat an hour
 Before I saw a loon come up ahead
 Not fifty yards; I reached and grabbed the muzzle
 Of my old Parker laying there half-cocked
 And pulled her toward me. Something caught the hammer
 And off she went, my leg and half the gunnel
 Of my brand-new dory blowed to smithereens;
 And from that day to this when I've had warnings,
 Without a word I've just obeyed their whispers.

"The night the *Portland* went down I was going
 To row to Big Green Island; ducks and drakes
 Had struck in round the ledges by the thousands.
 (This leg off didn't cure me none of hunting;
 I'm old, but when I hear the rabbit hounds
 Go yelping through the alders in December,
 They make what my ear calls a sweeter music
 Than all the opera from here to Paris;
 And old-squaws' *ah-ah-link* around the kelp rocks
 Do more than rabbit hounds to get my blood up.)
 As I was saying, when the *Portland* went down,
 The calmest afternoon I ever saw,
 A voice behind me spoke up, 'Don't go, Cyrus.'
 I looked around for I was stacking tollers
 In the stern of my big wherry; not a sound
 Except the wash of waves along the beach,
 And not a soul in sight could I see stirring.
 I didn't feel right, walked up Jackson's field,
 And moseying along through cat-o'-nine-tails
 Beside the old deserted paving motion
 I heard that voice behind me, 'Don't go, Cyrus,'
 So I hauled up my boat.

A big northeaster,
 The biggest here for more than sixty winters,
 Came down that night and blowed great guns till morning.
 From my back door next day I looked and saw
 Five shipwrecks in plain sight, and one of them,
 A lumber Johnny, had four strapping men
 Stiff frozen in the rigging when we reached her.
 Two hundred people went down on the *Portland*
 And not a soul was left to tell the tale.
 When I went over to the Head next morning
 Dead birds were piled in windrows by the lighthouse.
 I tell you ropes and anchors counted little
 When that storm got rampaging down the coast;
 If it had struck me in my lobster boat
 I wouldn't be here now, and you all know it.

"At least I know that many spirits live
 And circulate among us at odd times;
 I don't know why they come; perhaps they are
 The bashful ones who hate to leave the earth
 Like folks we know that never leave the town
 Where they were born—and I incline to that;
 They tended children when we went away,
 And now I think they're taking care of us."

He roused himself as if he had forgot
 To do his duty by the darkened room,
 Put on his wooden leg in solemn silence,
 Apologized for talking of himself,
 Knocked out the ashes from his pipe and took
 Again the lamp and led us to the chamber.
 By this time family footsteps overhead
 And sunbeams playing on the silver handles
 Of the coffin brought us back from that dim world
 The speech of Cyrus had us living in.

Wilbert Snow was born on Whitehead Island in 1884. The author of five volumes of poetry, now all sadly out of print, Snow taught for many years at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, returning every summer to Maine's mid-coast to write among the fishermen, farmers, and quarriers with whom he had grown up.

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Lights



Our call to arms a few years ago has been joined by several thousand people, on all coasts and in a half-dozen organizations, to save and productively use America's lighthouses. The offhand and callous disregard for lighthouses by the government has stopped, and now, all who have concern for these wonderful places and legacies are poised to decide their future.

In the first place, lighthouses are fabulously useful, and no cost-benefit analysis can possibly determine the economic value inherent to a seaman's sighting of a lighthouse while at sea. The lights themselves must remain. Lighthouses and their associated buildings are in almost every case beautiful structures on gorgeous sites, and constitute a splendid national architectural legacy, eminently

deserving of universal regard and protection. And even if the lifeways of the old-time lighthouse keepers and their families must be considered obsolete, the unique qualities of lighthouse living remain of value to the nation.

We think of it all rather like we think of railroads. Anyone who has traveled in Europe knows for certain that you do not operate a state-run railroad to break even, let alone make a profit. You do it because it is a civilized thing to do, and it makes the national life better. All around our coasts there ought to be civilian people using and caring for lighthouses, not only because they are useful and beautiful and patrimonial, but also because the experiences that emerge from them improve us all.

THREE LIGHTS LIVED

Profile of Beulah Quinn

By Alicia Rouverol

Beulah Allen Quinn, a lighthouse keeper's daughter and the oldest of five children, was born in Lubec, Maine, in 1906 but grew up on islands off the Maine coast. In 1907, Beulah moved with her parents, Charles and Minnie Allen, to Boon Island Light, nine miles off the coast of Kittery. While the family was on Boon Island, Minnie Allen traveled on separate occasions to Lubec to deliver Viola and Ira, Beulah's younger sister and brother. Then in 1913, Beulah's father was promoted to head keeper and the family moved to Avery Rock Light, off Machias. Their next son, Crawford, was also born in Lubec, while the family stayed on Avery Rock. At the age of 12, Beulah moved with her family to Eagle Island, where her father tended the lighthouse from 1918 to 1931.

In 1931, Beulah's father was transferred to Doubling Point Light in the Kennebec River, and later to Port Clyde Light. Beulah remained on Eagle and at 21 married Erland Quinn, whose family had lived on the island since the 1700s. Beulah and Erland remained there to raise their family of four children—Evelyn, John, Arline, and Robert. The children attended the Eagle Island schoolhouse until they reached high school age. In 1941, when the family moved to Camden, Beulah resigned as island postmaster and from her unofficial positions as island doctor and relief skipper for the mailboat. Eagle had been her home year-round for 23 years.

For 22 years after Beulah and Erland moved to Connecticut in 1949, she did not visit Eagle Island. Now retired in Rockport, she returns to Eagle on holidays, where her youngest son and his wife, Bob and Helene Quinn of Stonington, spend most of the year. Beulah keeps in contact with the island via the shortwave radio in her living room. Even now, at 79 and living on the mainland, Beulah dreams of building her own house on Eagle. "I'd better put up my cottage soon, or I'm afraid it won't ever happen," she says, "but I'll keep dreaming."

The following excerpts are from interviews held with Beulah Quinn in March 1984. They are not verbatim; minor editorial changes were necessary for clarification.

Boon Island

BQ: That was the beginning—Boon Island. But I was born in Lubec, in 1906. I was about a year-and-a-half old when Dad went to Boon Island, and he was there for six years. I don't remember too much, but I remember one spring when they were painting up in the tower. That was the tallest tower on the Maine coast, and I went up and climbed those stairs to what they call the first landing. There was a trap door that they put down; my fingerprints was in the paint—that is how they knew I was up there. I was around three, I guess. There were three families there: first and second assistant, and the head keeper. My father was the second assistant, and then he moved up to first assistant.

IJ: Did you go ashore much when you were on Boon Island?

BQ: No, not too much, because Boon Island was so rough out there that you didn't get ashore. The fishermen would bring out the mail on the days that they could come out and do any fishing. That's a mighty rough place out there. There was no dock. They had what you call a boat slip. It's like two stringers of timber, and then you put the boat into that. And there's a winch up in the boathouse, and you hook the line onto the winch and winch 'em into the boathouse.

Menfolks had their chores to do: the painting and upkeep of the station. They had to stand watch every four hours. Kind of lonely up there in that tower for four hours. So my father sent and bought a cornet, and the instruction book come with it. He learned to play that while he was on watch. There was three keepers, so he was on every third shift.

That was a big light there at Boon Island. Inside the lens, where the light is, twelve men could stand right around inside there. And it was blinding. Every night birds would fly into it and kill themselves. We'd go out and pick them up at the base of the tower there. All kinds of birds.

Avery Rock

BQ: We were there at Boon Island for six years, till the lighthouse company boat moved us down to Avery Rock on Machias Bay. I remember on Boon Island when they were loading the furniture. I can remember them hoisting the piano up on the derrick there, swinging it out over the water, setting it on board the ship.

Of course, down on Avery Rock we'd get ashore quite often. When I was seven I boarded ashore and went to school, into Buck's Harbor. It was just two years that I went ashore for school. Then after that, when I was eight or nine, the state provided a teacher. They would come to the lighthouse and stay for a week or 10 days. And then they would assign lessons for the parents to carry on until they came back, which would be approximately two to three months, when they'd be back for another week to 10 days. And they'd go from station to station. So that was the schooling I had until we came to Eagle.

IJ: Was Avery Rock as sparse as Boon Island?

BQ: Just a bunch of rocks.

IJ: What sort of activities did you have on Avery?

BQ: That was where I used to talk with the boats during the war [WW I], semaphoring back and forth with them. Sometimes there'd be a whole fleet—Navy ships—at the head of the harbor there, anchored. I used to talk to all the boats that come by. It all started in June of one summer. There had been a thunderstorm. It cleared off and it was beautiful. At sundown there was a fleet of these patrol boats coming out, nine of them all together, one right behind the other just like they had towlines. And they were signaling from the head boat to the next one, and so on and so forth. When they got down to the last boat, he turned and signaled ashore. Dad, Mama, and all of us were standing out there, you know, watching the boats. And from that day till this, we don't know what was said. It fascinated me, so I went in and got the books there that they furnish at the lighthouses and I learned the letters, how to do it. Next time they come out, I was out there with my flags and got right in there. [Laughter.]

IJ: You had a real conversation with them then?

BQ: Yeah. Sometimes when they had nothing to do, they'd come down there and just lay-to and signal and talk with me.

IJ: How old were you?

BQ: I was about seven, eight. I also learned Morse code. I used to watch at nighttime; they'd be blinking back and forth, you know, with the lights in Morse code. I'd get a lot of inside information that nobody else knew anything about. [Laughter.] For instance, there was a tugboat and four barges. They were outside of Libby's Island, which was a station below Avery, and a German sub had sunk them. Blew 'em up.

IJ: Were there ever any problems with the lighthouse or the bell tower on Avery?

BQ: One time. My father had just been up and wound up the weights that made the bell strike during the fog. He'd just come downstairs and got into bed and—crash, bang—what a racket! The cable had broke. These weights were about two-and-a-half feet square and an inch-and-a-half thick. And they had a slot in one side over the cable, see, like you do weights on a scale. Then you have this winch that you wind 'em up to the top of the bell tower to run the bell. There's a clock on the bell and it will turn just so often so that bell will strike. And then it'll go a little more and strike again.

So my father had to go ashore the next day and notify the government that the bell had broke, and they had to send out machinists to repair it. Boy, I'm telling you, if he'd been up there, he would have been killed. Until it got fixed, he had to ring the bell by hand whenever the fog come in. So he tied a rope on the bell and brought it through the bedroom window and tied it to the bed there. And he had to guess just about when those 22 seconds was up and give it a pull to ring that bell.

IJ: For how long did he have to do that?

BQ: Well, at that spell it was about a week or more before they come to fix it. I forget just how many hours now; it was 200-some hours. After a while he'd begin to get so tired. This one night, why, he dropped off to sleep and then he woke up startled and grabbed that rope and gave it a pull. And then he looks out at the weather and it's all bright starlight. [Laughter.]

There was just once the whole time that we were there that the light fouled up and had gone out. This light flashing in my face woke me up. There was a ship coming up in. It had the searchlight on because the light was out in the tower and it woke me up. So I went to Dad's room and I said, "Dad, somebody shined a flashlight in my face." So he got up and went to see what was going on and they told him that the light was out. It was oil vapor light. It had a mantle, something like a Coleman light. The oil or something had fouled up on the wick, and it had to be cleaned. So he cleaned it and lit it again. That was the only time it ever happened and he'd had 12 years of service then. But it wasn't any fault of his; it was just a malfunction in the wick.

IJ: Did you have any bad storms on Avery Rock?

BQ: Oh, there were plenty of those. The water would wash right over the top of our house. Not so much on Boon Island, but on Avery it did an awful lot. We had these big 12-inch-by-12-inch hard-pine bulkheads at the back of the house. The seas would come up and hit on that and the spray would go right up over the house.

IJ: That must have been a strange feeling, to have a whole sea wash over your house.

BQ: It was a very nasty, rough place. We had big two-inch-thick shutters that we'd close so that it wouldn't break the windows in.

IJ: You mentioned you rescued your brother one time when he fell overboard.

BQ: That was at Avery Rock. My grandfather and grandmother had all been up visiting. And my uncle, he was a mischievous tyke, he took a lobster pot buoy with a line and a rock he tied on it and he threw it down in the gulch. My brother Crawford knew that it wasn't supposed to be there; he was only two or two-and-a-half, but he was going to see if he could get it. He had on a shoe which the stitching had let go in the leather. The leather was turning back and he must have tripped. Over he went into that gulch. And Ira, my other brother (he and Crawford were 11 months apart; they were almost like twins), came running back up to the house. He was crying and told us that Crawford was in the gulch, fallen overboard.

So I ran down there—my sister Viola right behind me. But I couldn't get at him there because there was about a 10-foot drop. So we had to go way up back across the bridge and down the other side. But I couldn't reach him there. So I told Viola to go up and reach the gaff up at the boathouse. She couldn't find the gaff, so she brought down a piece of sheathing that Dad put on the boat in the wintertime so that the ice wouldn't cut it. And there was a nail in the end of it. Of course that was awful flimsy. But I made two tries and the third time I caught that nail in his clothing. He was lying right there on his face in the water, the undertow surging him back and forth. The tide was coming in all the time, otherwise I would never have gotten him, because it would've taken him right out.

When I touched him with the sheathing, why he lifted his head up and he said, "That's Beulah." I get him in where I could get a hold of him and haul him up out of there. By this time the water was way up to my knees where I was. Then we had the high cliff there, probably 6 to 8 feet high, I had to get him up over. So I had Viola go up there and lay down on her stomach and I boost him up to get his arms. But she couldn't lift him. So then I went up and once I get a hold of him, then we got him up over there. We were so afraid we were going to hurt him, you know, trying not to handle him rough or anything. But I saw the rougher I handled him, the more water came



Beulah talking to the Navy from Avery Rock.

COURTESY OF BEULAH QUINN

out of him. So I told her to sit down and I laid him across her legs and I kept pumping his arms. I had studied these pictures in the books at the lighthouse on lifesaving. And then I started and I see I was getting more water. So I did that for a while. He rallied enough that he knew us and he started to cry. So then we get him up to the house. Of course, with the shock of it all, he was having chills. It was in the summertime; it was July or August, I don't remember. But anyway I got him up there, piled the quilts on top of him and the hot water bottle and gave him hot checkerberry and everything I could think of. Mom and Dad had gone ashore to get the mail and groceries.

IJ: So you were the oldest one on the island. How old were you at that time?

BQ: Oh, I think I was around nine or ten years old.

IJ: Had your wits about you at nine or ten?

BQ: Some reason or other, I don't know why, I always did. I always had a level head during a crisis of anything. Afterward, then I'd start shaking. But anyway, they came back and they wanted to know what was wrong because we all four were just one right behind the other running down to the boathouse when the boat come. I didn't want to tell them till they got ashore. So after they got ashore and put the boat up, I told them. Of course, they were scared to death

then. They got up to the house and found that he was all right. We thought for sure we were going to get the dickens for it, but as it turned out, we didn't. Crawford, even though he was only two-and-a-half, he knew he wasn't supposed to be down there. But he said Daddy's lobster buoy was going adrift and he wanted to get it.

Eagle Island

BQ: When we moved from Avery to Eagle, the lighthouse company boat moved us. We laid in Jonesport that night and we come on up to Eagle the next day, which was January 17, 1918. I was 12 when I moved there.

It felt so funny to walk on soft ground! That first spring, we were almost scared to death to go out and get on soft ground. Why, you'd sink in a little bit where it's mossy. Oh, it was new to us. To have a garden and cows and hens and pigs! We were right in heaven there. The only dirt on Boon and Avery was soil that they brought out in boxes from the mainland so we could plant flower gardens. Eagle was paradise compared to those two places. When we got there, we thought we had gone to the city!

IJ: Was there a mailboat back then out on Eagle?

BQ: Yes, at Eagle there was a mailboat. Helene's grandfather, Edward Howard, he had the mail then. My father taught me how to run the boats we had around there. I always said to myself, if ever anything happened out there on the boat and I had to get myself back, I was wanting to know how.

One time I was going for the mail over to Deer Isle. When I came back across, the fog had closed in. And the wind came up southwest like it does out there, with that rolling chop. The compass was setting up there by the wheel, but it wasn't fastened down. So she'd go down one of those chops and that compass started sliding over. I had to hold the wheel, and I just caught my little finger in the corner of the box. So I thought, well, I'll go down below and steer down there. There was a wheel down below. I got down there and that wheel was unhooked. [Laughter.]

So I left the compass there and I ran back up and grabbed the wheel. I said to myself, I haven't got too much farther to go, I'm halfway across at least. So I went according to the chop on the water, and when I ran out of the fog and saw the lighthouse at Eagle, it was right straight ahead.

Another time I got in around Great Spruce Head up by Dirigo [Butter Island]. There was that ghostlike fog. You think you see something and you don't or you think you don't and you do. Pretty soon I looked over the side and there was shallow water. I hauled her out of gear and put her in reverse to stop the headway, slowed her

down, and set there for a minute, thinking: Am I supposed to go left or right or straight ahead? Finally I got sight of what they call the Sugar Loaf. You see, there's a bar that makes off from Dirigo to the Sugar Loaf, which is out of water partly at low tide. You can't cross it. The Barred Islands Bar beyond it was the one I wanted to go across. Anyway, I got back all right.

IJ: Was there a very active summer community on Eagle during those years?

BQ: Oh, yes. All the cottages were filled. And at the farmhouse there'd be 60 boarders at one time, besides the cottage people. During the summer I'd get up at 4 a.m., do ironing before breakfast, set the tables, and wash dishes. Then I'd go to the cottages and make up beds and do their dishes. And I'd get through, oh, between 8 and 9 o'clock at night, and I'd climb the stairs and fall into bed.

IJ: All summer?

BQ: All summer; that was the living. I went to work up there when I was 12 years old, waiting on tables.

IJ: So you were out there on Eagle from when you were 12 until you were 35?

BQ: Yes, it was '41 when we moved from Eagle. I never got a chance to go back out to Eagle [until 1971]. I was surprised to see the difference in the island. All those trees, how they'd grown up. It didn't seem possible.

IJ: Would you say that there's a difference between island people and other people?

BQ: Oh, yes. It's kind of hard to describe. If you want to go out and walk, you can go at your own pace. You don't have to worry about a car coming behind you and knocking you down. And it's quiet. I like to listen to the bell buoy down there at the farmhouse. In the nighttime when you get in bed and hear it, it's like music. Different tones it has. There's something about it that just puts you right to sleep.

The air is much different than it is ashore, more invigorating, I guess. No, I didn't mind living out there. A lot of people say, "I wouldn't want to live out there; there's nothing to do." But we always found plenty to do. I'd like to be there now and stay on Eagle. The girls [her daughters], they'll come over and they'll say, "Why don't you go somewhere?" There's really no place to go that I haven't been before and seen. Eagle's the only alluring thing. It's what you grew up with that sticks by you. ♦

Currently working at the Northeast Archives of Oral History and Folklore at the University of Maine, Alicia Rouverol is a freelance writer, with a special interest in oral history. She makes her home in Camden, Maine.



Beulah Quinn, 1986.

PETER RALSTON

GHOSTLY LIGHT

The Abandonment of Seguin Light

By Jennifer Wilder Logan



Seguin's last Boatswain Mate: Edward T. Brown with first-order Fresnel lens.

ROBERT MITCHELL

One by one, Maine's lighthouses have been abandoned to the reliable but uninteresting keeping of automatons. Among the latest to have its doors closed on the human element is Seguin, whose unblinking eye has shone down from bleak heights onto a sizable chunk of Maine history. It will be interesting to see how the robot lightkeepers of today get along with the very human ghosts that drift through the annals of this storm-swept rock.

For Lease: Haunted, two-family keeper's quarters 8 mi. from Boothbay Harbor, 3 mi. from Popham. \$8 million lens. Listed on National Register of Historic Places. Authorized by George Washington. Helicopter pad, boat-house on site. One of the best views in Maine. Contact: U.S. Coast Guard.

Seguin Light, the highest and second oldest beacon on Maine's coastline, was quietly automated last fall after 189 years of attended operation.

The light was slated for automation "on or about" September 4, according to a Coast

Guard mariners' notice, but work crews didn't complete the final installation of the bulletproof glass to protect the light's first-order lens until November 22.

Seguin's lens is the northernmost of its type on the eastern seaboard. Of all the major seacoast lights in the Coast Guard's First District, Seguin is the only one with a fixed rather than flashing characteristic, providing a steady beacon for mariners.

Without public fanfare, the last keeper of the light, 1st Class Boatswain Mate Edward T. Brown, was relieved of his one-year, nine-month, tour of duty on Seguin in a brief ceremony held at a Coast Guard Group Portland office on November 15. By Thanksgiving, this Philadelphia native was on his way to Bayville, Wisconsin, where his only contact with a lighthouse will be to shuttle maintenance crews out to the automated lights on Lake Superior.

Brown, 34, said he was sad to leave his rocky outpost. "I'd stand on my head to live on the island with my family," he once said while pushing a visitor-stuffed peapod off

the tramway at the island.

As the last person in the job, Brown is linked in history to the first keeper of the light, the ill-starred Major John Polersky of Pownalboro, Maine, who was commissioned Seguin's keeper on March 29, 1796, for \$200 a year as a reward for his military service in the American Revolution.

This colorful keeper left a wife and daughter behind in France after a run-in with a French army officer, which is not detailed in a 1907 *Bath Anvil* account of the keeper. Known in France as John Ladislas, Count Polerecky de Polerecka, he voyaged to the New World, served as Dresden's town clerk, and married Nancy Pochard of Dresden.

The keeper's brother Andrie succeeded to his title and visited him on Seguin. Napoleon invited Polersky to return to his title and possessions, but he declined.

The frame of the present keeper's quarters dates to 1795, when President George Washington authorized the lighthouse during his last term of office. One half of the

island was ceded to the federal government by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1794, the second half in 1797, the year the original tower was completed for \$6,300, according to historian Frank Beard of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

Seguin Light and attendant buildings were nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1976—one of the few stations to be nominated by the Coast Guard in the last decade.

When Polersky set foot on the island, he had none of the modern amenities that are there now: a buried power cable from Popham Beach, an emergency generator, fuel tanks, two furnaces, and regular back-up from the mainland.

He repeatedly appealed to his superiors for aid. Writing in May 12, 1796, to General Benjamin Lincoln, he detailed his troubles:

You know my dear General all the difficulties and expenses a light at Seguin is attended to and I dont want to have extravagant wagers, but should like to save myself. The first three years will cost me money out of my pocket which I can make you sensible of. There is no feed on the island, I must carry two cows for my family and keep them on hay, summer and winter, which I must purchase and carry on the island, with the greatest difficulty. I must keep also a horse on hay to haul or carry my oil, provisions, firewood, etc. etc. I must purchase a good boat, which cost me at list 100 dolar. I must purchase every individual necessity for my family till I can raise it. I must built some sort of a small barn for my cattle and hay. I must hire one man in case of sickness

When Polersky's plight was appealed to the Commissioner of Revenue, he agreed to

provide "a boat to fish in . . . for passing to the main," but nothing more. Buffeted by storms, poverty, and isolation, only death relieved Polersky of his lighthouse duties. He is buried in Pine Grove Cemetery in Dresden Mills.

The tower was rebuilt twice after Polersky's tenure. A \$2,500 stone tower replaced the original wooden structure in 1820. In 1857, the present 53-foot-high granite structure was erected for \$35,000, along with the boathouse, brick oil house, and fog signal building.

In 1857, the Lighthouse Board considered Seguin "as one of the most important positions on the eastern coast." The largest and most powerful lens available, a first-order Fresnel lens, was approved for Seguin.

Seguin's spectacular 12-foot-high lens was ordered and shipped from France. Its separate lead-crystal parts were carefully packed and numbered for reassembly. The lens cost \$5,000; the firm of Henri Lapaut of Paris estimates building the lens to the same specifications today would cost \$8 million, "and going up each year."

For a Maine island, Seguin has its share of legends. In addition to its colorful French count, it has numerous shipwrecks in the vicinity, rumors of buried treasure, and several ghost stories.

A fierce storm served to place Seguin in this country's earliest colonial history. The ill-fated Popham colonists, who some claim were America's first colonists, were hit by a gale off Seguin on their way to the Kennebec in 1607. Sailing on the *Gift of God* and the *Mary and John*, the settlers made their first camp on Stage Island, inshore of Seguin, before choosing a new location on the west side of the river.

The aftermath of another storm claimed a ship and her crew within a few miles of homeport. According to Maine Maritime

Museum historian Nathan R. Lipfert, 24 crewmen lost their lives in the wreck of the *Hanover* when she attempted the west entrance to the Kennebec River on November 9, 1849.

The ship-rigged vessel was on the last leg of a voyage from Cadiz, Spain, to her homeport of Bath. The seas were running high after a four-day easterly gale had subsided, and the Pond Island bar at the mouth of the Kennebec was a mass of breakers. The captain lay-to off the eastern mouth of the river, then approached the much more dangerous west entrance to the Kennebec. The tide was going out when the *Hanover* went broadside, rolled over, and broke in two. Nothing but small pieces were left five minutes after the ship was wrecked and smashed in the breakers.

Ghost stories abound, ranging from the keeper who took an axe to his piano-playing wife (piano music has been heard since then in the house) to the shipwrecked woman who walks the island searching for her family.

Keeper Brown didn't hear piano music, but he and other young Coast Guard crew members frequently heard furniture move upstairs or doors slam continuously while everybody on the island was seated in the same room.

In February 1936, to dispel rumors of buried treasure on the island, the Bureau of Lighthouses granted a license to Archie Lane of Northeast Harbor "to dig with hand tools, for buried treasure." Nine months later, Lane gave up.

◆◆◆

Approached from the mainland, Seguin lies like a beast on the horizon. Its dark green hump projects a strangely tropical presence in a calm sea, a look that dissipates like a mirage when one enters the tight north-facing cove.



Light station for lease.

Storms from the northeast are particularly destructive; waves pile into the cove, banning human entry or departure. A canoe and two boats were smashed within one year of the first keeper's arrival. A keeper's daughter recalls storms in the early part of this century that routinely took the chimney off the house, blew out upstairs windows, and lifted the outhouse onto the tramway.

The violent storms off Seguin and locally known tide rips off the mouth of the Kennebec may account for the popular interpretation of Seguin as "sea vomits," although that is not the conclusion reached by Fannie Hardy Eckstorm in her discussion of the name in the University of Maine at Orono's publication *Indian Place-Names of the Penobscot Valley and Maine Coast*.

She notes that Champlain had the name "La tortue," the word for tortoise, on his maps of 1607 and 1612. After further discussion, she concludes: "Until we know the Maliseet and Micmac equivalents for sigan, a 'hump,' it seems best to say that we have no satisfactory translation for Seguin."

As on most Maine islands, some things have not changed since the earliest human encounters. Seguin is one of the foggiest stations in Maine and has the records to prove it. In 1907, it broke a national record for the most hours sounding its foghorn—30 percent of the time.

Access remains difficult. At high tide, one clammers from a vessel on a single mooring into a rocking wooden peapod that is eased onto a slippery boat ramp landing. Reaching the station requires a long hike up a tramway that rises at a steep 30-degree angle from sea level.

The island's appeal to human visitors is also constant. Despite the challenging entry to the river, the history of the state of Maine has paddled past, sailed by, steamed around, and flown over Seguin for more than 400 years. Two years ago, when the Coast Guard crew had time to keep track before automation, 700 people set foot on the island in a three-month period.

Stationed at the mouth of the Kennebec, Maine's shipbuilding center for over a century, Seguin's keepers have watched much of Maine's history pass by. Explorers drawing the first tentative maps of Maine's coast, ship captains heading for Bath or Augusta, keepers' children skating in the rain sheds, summer sailors stopping for a picnic, Coast Guard men listening to ghosts—all stand together in a richly varied human record that has touched the island over the centuries.

What will be the fate of this island and its light?

Automation has exacted its toll: The entryways to the lighthouse from the keeper's quarters are bricked up on both sides of the duplex, an electronics room is buried in the lighthouse, and bulletproof glass surrounds the lens.

Humans are barred entry to the light that required a human eye and a human hand for close to two centuries.

Although the process is technical and cold, the men in charge of automation are thoughtful about the results. Electronics

engineer Harry Duvall from Needham summed it up on a boat to Seguin last fall. "Automation isn't a problem, it's the un-manning that's the problem." He spent the weekend at the campsite, his youngest son in tow, to "show and tell," he said. The man who routinely works on automations in the Coast Guard's First District said simply, with feeling, "Unmanning is very sad."

If the U.S. Coast Guard didn't have a "stag" or male-only policy for manned stations, Seguin's last keeper would have considered staying with his family.

The light itself is well protected on

paper, and visitors will surely continue to seek out Seguin after spying its mysterious hump on the horizon. The key now is to find people who will maintain the keeper's quarters, a "licensee," in Coast Guard terms.

Ironically, now that the last boatswain mate has left and automation is completed, a human presence is needed. ♦

Jennifer Wilder Logan, a freelance writer and reporter for the Boothbay Register, covered the frequently delayed decommissioning ceremony for ISLAND JOURNAL in November 1985.

Most Threatened Island Lights

Last October, the Island Institute cosponsored a lighthouse conference in Rockport that attracted 250 participants from all over New England, the Great Lakes, and the West Coast.

Maine still has 12 manned lighthouses—the highest number left in the country. By 1989, according to the Coast Guard, all of the manned stations will be automated. With the rapidly accelerating pace of automation and the abandonment of the buildings that once housed keepers, people are beginning to realize that lighthouses as we have known them are an endangered species.

The Island Institute will continue to serve as a clearinghouse for information for those interested in creative reuse of island lighthouse-keepers' buildings. (See ISLAND JOURNAL stories, 1984, 1985.) Maine Citizens for Historic Preservation (tel. (207) 775-3652) will serve as the primary contact organization for automated stations on the mainland. The Coast Guard will work closely with nonprofit groups like the Island Institute to lease abandoned buildings. Coast Guard Group Portland (tel. (207) 799-5531) is working with nonprofit groups for lighthouses south of Port Clyde, or Marshall Point. Coast Guard Group Southwest Harbor (tel. (207) 244-5517) is working with groups concerned with lighthouses east of Port Clyde.

The following is a summary of the orphaned island light stations and the Coast Guard schedule for automation:

The Island Orphans

Seguin Island Light	4 miles off the mouth of the Kennebec.
Whitehead Island Light	1 mile off Spruce Head at southern end of Mussel Ridge.
Heron Neck Light	South end of Greens Island, 2 miles off Vinalhaven.
Burnt Coat Harbor Light	South end of Swans Island.
Bear Island Light	1 mile off Northeast Harbor (proposed addition to Acadia National Park).
Egg Rock Light	Frenchman Bay (proposed addition to Acadia National Park).
Little River Light	In the mouth of Cutler Harbor.

Automation Schedule (Island and Mainland)

1986	
Wood Island	Saco Bay.
Isles of Shoals	Off Kittery.
Great Duck	Off Mount Desert Island.
Owls Head	Mainland; entrance to Rockland Harbor.
1987	
Cape Neddick	York.
West Quoddy Head	Mainland.
Fort Point	Stockton Springs.
(Fog Signal) Manana	Off Monhegan.
1988	
Browns Head	Vinalhaven; Fox Island Thorofare.
Burnt Island	Boothbay Harbor.
Kennebec River	At Doubling Point.
1989	
Goat Island	Cape Porpoise Harbor.
Portland Head	Mainland; Cape Elizabeth.

—Philip W. Conkling

Radio Waves

NEWS FROM OFFSHORE

The call went out for news of island activities and the response was like a spring tide, filling our editorial cove to overflowing. Here's a rundown on subjects ranging from Great Wass to solid waste. Keep in touch, Good Friends, because there are a lot of people waiting to hear from you. Switching to Channel 16 and standing by.



On location at Fifi's with Bruce and Kim.

WILLIAM THUSS

Vinalhaven

By Pat Crossman

It seems incredible that in a few short years we have seen the passing of the old-fashioned soda fountain, quickly followed by its revival as an expensive boutique in a suburban shopping mall. Along with soda fountains went the old-fashioned drugstore, the place where some fast-talking kid could get a hold of sulfur, saltpeter, and a test tube—a day or two before word about it filtered down (or up) to the folks. And nearly gone, too, are the real hardware stores. You know the ones—if you're old enough. They stocked forged tools in bins, nails by the keg, raw duck (canvas) by the roll, iron stove parts, and, somewhere in back, a box of buttonhooks, a rack of scythe snaths (what?!), and newel-post stops (which?). Not seldom would there be a large, round coal stove encircled by deeply polished chairs of assorted vintage, regularly occupied by the experienced and wise. Though the coal stove (and the spittoon) are gone, the rest of the ancient picture remains true to type at Fifi's Store, on Vinalhaven. Here, in an age of reproductions, originals hide in the inventory with the old trade secrets as to their care and use. Here are advice and history and a piece of mandatory candy. Pass by the store and your passing will be remarked. Pass into the store and you will be in a remarkable place. Pat Crossman lives across the street.

One morning last winter I was awakened in predawn darkness by the sound of whistling. I shoved my feet into my slippers and padded through the silent apartment to a front window overlooking Vinalhaven's Main Street.

Overhead the stars wheeled in their courses, cold and distant. Black water boiled under the Main Street Bridge, rushing into Carver's Pond from the sea. My indoor-outdoor thermometer told me it was 6 above, and my ship's clock struck 3 bells: 5:30 a.m.

As I watched and listened, a familiar figure stepped into the pool of light under a nearby telephone pole: Bruce Grindle, 86 years old and legally blind, was whistling himself to work at Fifi's Hardware Store, as he has every workday morning since 1946.

A handknit scarf fluttered behind him as he leaned into the wind, punctuating each step with a jaunty swing of his cane. And as he walked, he whistled.

Suddenly the cold morning seemed much warmer.

Diagonally across the street I could see the welcoming lights of the hardware store spreading a glow over the icy sidewalk. A few minutes earlier, Bruce's younger cousin and partner, Clinton "Kim" Smith, 71, had unlocked the front door to admit the first customer of the day, Louis Martin.

I watched until Bruce was safely inside, then crept back to the comfort of my bed. But I didn't sleep. I thought about that store, about the two men who ran it and how they came to be there. Fifi's has no affiliation with big-name hardware conglomerates. It is a bastion of a vanishing institution, the family-run emporium.

A liberal sprinkling of handmade posters adorns the two plate-glass show windows. A perusal of these announcements will keep the interested passerby current on most events in town. From the impressive front door with the store name in dignified gold, to the dim reaches of the windowless back room, every conceivable item an islander might need is stacked or hung.

The visiting summer artist is surprised to find aspiring local painters as well outfitted with brushes, oils, or watercolors as he is himself, courtesy of Fifi's. The gardener comes for potting soil, fertilizer, and advice from this town clearing house.

For everything from canning kettles to ice skates, breadboxes to picture hooks, customers old and new come to browse and buy, con-

fidest that owners Smith and Grindle will be holding court as usual.

From 1929 until 1946, their uncle, Irving "Babbin" Fifield, owned the store and operated it with an occasional assist from his sister-in-law. The war years were hard. Babbin was growing older, new merchandise was hard to come by, and he had no sons to follow in his footsteps.

True, there were nephews. His wife had two sisters, each of whom had a son. But they couldn't help. The elder, Bruce, was working in a defense-related electronics firm in Southbridge, Massachusetts, while Kim, who had worked for four years at the Bath shipyard, was drafted in 1943 and went overseas to Europe.

When the war ended, Kim found himself routed through Fort Devens on his way to civilian life and home. On impulse, he decided to detour to Southbridge to see Bruce before heading back to Vinalhaven. To his surprise, he found his cousin packing up, too. He had just given his notice at the electronics plant, with no particular plans for the future except to yield to the inner call to return to the island he loved. The two men, separated by 16 years but joined by their longing for home, returned together to find their uncle in failing health.

Bruce went into the store at once, and was joined by Kim a few months later. In June 1946, the two bought I.W. Fifield's store from Babbin's widow, and a Main Street Institution was born.

Alone and childless, the two men, different in temperament and personality, have gradually made the residents of the island community their family. Since 1963, Kim has been town clerk, his cramped office at the rear of the store a mecca for anyone researching a family genealogy or curious about local history. Customers know they may have to wait if Kim is "out back" issuing a hunting license or registering a birth.

While they wait, Bruce will extend the hospitality unique to Fifield's. From a cast-iron skillet he dispenses an assortment of candies, heavy on butterscotch drops and candy corn. If the wait is a long one, he may suggest that the customer pull up a chair and peruse the dozens of photo albums filled with Polaroid pictures of townspeople, summer residents, grandparents and children, babysitters and their charges, all in living color and all with a look of special pride at being included in Bruce's "Rogues Gallery."

The most current crop of snapshots is always displayed on a makeshift bulletin board just inside the front door. As each batch is

taken down, it goes into an album. Every one of these hundreds of pictures was taken inside the store.

From his customary chair (second from the right in a row of six that march down the right-hand aisle of the store), Bruce waits for the daily visits from dozens of island children. They come for a pat on the head or a hug, a new winter cap, warm mittens, or a bag of oranges, raisins, and pantry cookies, dispensed with heartfelt comments on the child's special nature and attributes.

The row of chairs, which effectively blocks any use of the right-hand aisle for shopping purposes, is referred to by Kim and Bruce as "the pecking order." A recognized forum has been established here for individual opinion, social exchange, and current information on any subject.

Except when the weather is foul, Bruce delivers cookies and candy to the clerks and secretaries working in Main Street businesses. If a storm keeps him in, he sends a younger man to deliver the tokens of his esteem.

Kim reads, watches TV, and putters in his workshop when he's home. The puttering led to a sideline he now pursues with enthusiasm: framing. Townspeople and summer people bring him their artwork, diplomas, cartoons, and mementos to be preserved.

Bruce used to play the saxophone; he was an avid reader and enjoyed discussing the nonfiction he preferred, but his loss of sight has made him turn outward for interest and stimulation. Daily he makes a morning visit to all the Main Street restaurants, for breakfast, or muffins, or just a cup of coffee.

Coming and going, he whistles. Everyone who passes him greets him by name. But his real joy is to be in the store, to meet people there and to wait for the children.

"Who's this?" he cries, as a mother urges a small child forward. "Who's this little darling?"

Someone asked Kim what has meant the most to him during these 40 years in business.

His answer required no thought.

"Why, just to be here; to be able to be here, at home." ♦

Pat Crossman continues her freelance writing career as an avocation, a call to wordsmithing in the midst of a busy life. Since her work last appeared in these pages, she has been published again in Good Housekeeping and the National Baptist Magazine. Currently Pat serves as chairman of the Vinalhaven Library.

Mount Desert to Matinicus

Aboard the *Sunbeam*

"Come with us in October to Matinicus," Tony said.

"I'd love to," I replied, but in the back of my mind I thought—I'll never be able to get away. I've got a husband, a two-year-old son, responsibilities.

But there I was on the morning of October 15 in the pilothouse of the *Sunbeam* with Captain David Allen and Sherdy Carr, the engineer. Tony Burkhart, the missionary-pastor for the Maine Seacoast Mission, had invited me to come along for the trip. He was down below, talking with David's wife, Betty, the crew's cook.

Betty is really something. Before we'd even lost sight of Northeast Harbor, she was already making spaghetti sauce to freeze for the next trip. She was working when I went aboard, and, as far as I could see, her hands never stopped moving during our three days out. When she wasn't fixing a meal or washing dishes, she was working on the crafts she sells and gives away to people on the islands and back on the mainland.

Just off Placentia, David cut the engine so Tony could row ashore and visit the woman who lives there, just as the Mission minister has done for the past 37 years. The family's only form of transportation—an old wooden dory—lay weathering on the pebbly beach. After an hour or so, Tony was back and we were on our way again.

By late afternoon we had reached North Haven. Here we picked up a load of rummage for the Recyclamobile, the Mission's redesigned school bus that delivers clothing, shoes, and other things to the needy in Washington County.

David Stillman, the island minister, ate supper with us that night. After supper, Betty taught me to play cribbage, a *Sunbeam* tradition. Once I got the hang of it, Sherdy joined us, and we played until bedtime while David read in the pilothouse. We spent the night

By Peggy Bryant Wentworth

at North Haven, planning to get to Matinicus on the high tide in the morning so we could tide out at the dock.

The next morning Betty fed us pancakes and sausage before we got underway. It was a gorgeous sail across Penobscot Bay. The sea and sky were different shades of the same deep blue, and the islands sparkled on the horizon.

We found a quiet waterfront at Matinicus—not a face in sight. After a while, Albert Bunker and some of the other men came down, two women came aboard to see Betty, and Tony went ashore to make a few calls. David and Sherdy went off with Albert Bunker to the airport, and I headed out to explore.

I found a sand beach just beyond the breakwater. As I walked the shore, I thought of the beach in Seal Harbor, back on Mount Desert. I'd grown up on that beach and considered it one of the most beautiful spots anywhere. The last time I was there, though, I had to clear away two potato-chip bags, half a dozen squashed cans, and a Pamper before I could spread my blanket. Here the only litter was some potwarp and a rubber glove.

In his travels, Tony stopped at the school and invited the youngsters to come aboard the boat and make Halloween masks with Betty. In the early afternoon they arrived, some on bicycles and others on foot.

"Tony saved us," one of the older boys told Betty. "We were just getting ready to have science."

Though excited to be set free, the kids had not forgotten their manners. They were friendly and polite, not only with Betty and me, but with each other. There seemed to be an unusual camaraderie among the children—part of living on a small island together, I suppose. I've honestly never seen a nicer bunch of kids.

After having some cookies and soda, the children dug into a box of blank Halloween masks, paints, colored pipe cleaners, and fake hair for making scary faces. They did a great job; each mask turned out to look quite different from the others. When they were done and had begun to get restless, the young people thanked Betty and headed home with Suzanne, their teacher.

On the way home, I got to thinking. I had always figured the *Sunbeam*, being a mission boat, was loaded with religion, and that its mission was to spread the word of God among the lonely islanders. Although Tony did go ashore to make pastoral visits, no one ever mentioned religion while I was aboard, and I began to realize that Christianity for the Seacoast Mission was much broader than I had imagined. It seems to be based on humble caring for the island people rather than on evangelism. And it seems that the *Sunbeam* is a welcome sight to the islanders because it's a diversion, a link with the outside world. The people who came down to the dock came to say hello to the crew like old friends keeping in touch. And to the schoolchildren, the arrival of the *Sunbeam* means an afternoon off, a chance to go aboard and do something fun with Betty.

Morning brought another sunny day and a breakfast of bacon, eggs, and home fries. We weren't to leave for home until around 11

a.m., so I went off to check out the far end of the island.

On the way I took a side trip to see the airport. I walked down a dirt road until I came to a grassy clearing, where I found one small plane, a shack about the size of a bus-stop shelter, and a dirt landing strip running down to the shore. That was it. No lights, no dispatcher, no tarred runway. The only thing to illuminate the landing strip was a pair of red reflectors driven into the ground on either side of the strip. As I stood on that gravel runway I felt a great deal of respect for the people of Matinicus. Their needs are pared down to the bare essentials. Though I'm sure it's a hard life, I couldn't help but envy them a little.

When I got back, the *Sunbeam* was ready to depart, but I wasn't. I could have stayed another week. Then Tony invited me to come back with them in February. I hope I do manage to get away again to visit this place most people will never have the good fortune to discover. ♦

Peggy Bryant Wentworth and her family raised sheep and other livestock on Bartlett Island off Pretty Marsh on Mount Desert Island. Now a resident of the mainland island, Mrs. Wentworth raises, among other creatures, children.



TOM HINDMAN

Swans Island town meeting. A break for lunch is called, and all go downstairs in the Odd Fellows Hall for beans and brown bread. The lunch is put on by the Rebekahs, and all the school kids come and eat also. In days gone by, a dance was held after town meeting, allowing everyone to get back on talking terms, as town meetings can get pretty heated at times.

Beals and Great Wass

By Brenda T. Dodge

Great Wass Island, the larger of the two islands that make up the town of Beals Island, has been my home for the past decade. At this writing, I am sitting in the kitchen of a house my husband and I started building 10 years ago. A warm fire burns in the woodstove, while outside a soft snowfall blankets the lawn and settles itself gently on the outstretched branches of birch, fir, and spruce. Perhaps tonight a rabbit will leave a crisscross trail on the lawn, but for now the wind is still and the snow lies undisturbed where it falls.

The scene the snowfall creates is almost magical. The landscape is a wonderland outlined in white. The gray of the sky and sea blend, broken only by a line of pure white where the sea meets the shoreline. The Ram Islands in the distance wear skirts of white. It has become a familiar winter scene over the years, but I never cease to marvel at its beauty.

Our house nestles in a cove on the western shore of the southern portion of Great Wass. The sunsets as seen from my vantage point are spectacular. I have no close neighbors. There are no houses even within shouting distance. My ocean neighbors are gulls, loons, and a wide variety of ducks. Among my forest neighbors are squirrels, mice, rabbits, and whitetail deer. I respect them. They were here first. I have built my house in the midst of them, and we exist together peacefully.

I consider myself very fortunate to live here, for Great Wass Island is said to be one of Maine's most ecologically diverse coastal islands. In 1978 the Maine Chapter of The Nature Conservancy purchased a tract of about 1,500 acres, taking in much of the southern half of Great Wass Island. Conservation easements were obtained on nearly 140 acres of privately owned land adjoining the

preserve.

The preserve includes several large and unusual peat bogs, the largest stand of jack pine in Maine, and a spectacular thunderhole where rushing water is trapped in a crevice and then roars into the air with a great burst of spray. Ospreys and eagles, as well as thick-billed murres and razor-billed auks, inhabit the island. The bogs contain edible crowberries and baked-apple berries.

Great Wass is linked to Beals by a causeway known as the Flying Place, and Beals has been moored securely to the mainland by a bridge since 1958. Most of the population of the town is concentrated on Beals Island and on the Alley's Bay portion of Great Wass. The population thins out as you travel the Black Duck Cove Road to the Nature Conservancy Preserve. It begins to seem more remote and islandlike, and here you can almost forget that a bridge links the

North Haven

North Haven Island in Penobscot Bay is known for its picturesque harbors, its summer colony, and its marine heritage. Home of the oldest continuously raced class of sailboats in North America, the North Haven Dinghy, and a line of handsome and sturdy lobsterboats from the venerable J.O. Brown & Son Boatyard, North Haven also enjoys a reputation as a peaceful community. Accessible only by ferry, private boat, or small airplane, the island, with its year-round population of 350, has assiduously avoided tourism and development and prides itself on being a place of traditional values and an unhurried pace of life.

But in the spring and early summer of 1985, rumors spread of major expansion plans for the island's "other" boatyard, Edwin Thayer's Y-Knot shop, plans that would bring both growth and change to the little island town.

Those rumors became fact last August with the arrival of a brand-new 25-ton Travelift and a hydraulic crane bound for the Thayer yard. Since then, activity at the Southern Harbor yard has increased. The largest single slab of concrete in North Haven's history was poured in late October as a foundation for what must be the island's largest frame structure. That building will form the core of an enterprise that has become both a test case and a vanguard of growth and change on North Haven.

People here are watching the progress with great interest. The prospect—the very idea—of a major yacht yard on the island triggers unsolicited comment and sparks heated debate. Everyone has an opinion. Some believe it will do well; others do not.

One who believes is Frank Kibbe, the central figure in the unfolding drama. Kibbe was, until June 1985, the general manager of the Hinckley Company in Southwest Harbor, and before that, president of Bass Harbor Marine, where he took a three-employee, part-time boatyard and turned it into a 30-employee, full-service marine facility with an annual budget of over \$2 million.

Then last July, Frank and Ellen loaded their children, dogs, and belongings aboard their flag-green Hinckley Competition 41 and sailed west to new challenges on North Haven.

Frank is not alone in his optimism for the expanded yard. His partner, Edwin "Bud" Thayer, founder of Y-Knot Enterprises, has been in the business for over 20 years and himself transformed a sideline boat-hauling service from a hobby to a full-time operation with more than 200 boats. "My business has been headed in this direction for years," Bud emphasizes, "but until Frank came along, I just wasn't sure how I was going to do it."

Frank first "came along" in the early spring of 1982, when he was the guest speaker at a North Haven Future meeting. Frank had been invited by Future Group consultant Jim Haskell to talk on the boatyard business in Maine and to analyze North Haven's potential for an expanded boat-service industry. Kibbe was struck not only by the location and beauty of the island but also by what he sensed was the positive outlook of the community.

Monhegan

There are two seasons on Monhegan Island: lobster fishing and tourists. What you can get away with in the winter with only 75 residents

island to the mainland.

It is encouraging, though, to note that progress can come to an island, but at the same time the island's uniqueness can be preserved. It is the best of both worlds, and this is what makes Beals and Great Wass islands so special. The Great Wass Island Preserve ensures the continuation of a diversity of special plants and animals that may be enjoyed by many generations to come.

The snowfall has ended, and it is time to prepare the evening meal. A full moon rises over the tops of the snow-laden trees illuminating the wintry scene outside. It will be a perfect night for a walk on my island. ♦

Brenda Dodge is one of the few residents of Great Wass Island off Beals. Married to one of the island's well-known boatbuilders, Mrs. Dodge is a freelance correspondent for the Bangor Daily News.

By Barney Hallowell

There were, of course, other factors. The national economic recovery and the resurgent rediscovery of the down-east cruising grounds had placed an enormous burden on existing yacht yards along the Maine coast. The few major yards that were doing quality work were overwhelmed. A North Haven study found that more than 30 local boats of 30 feet or more were being hauled and stored off-island. "That represents a substantial loss to this island," Kibbe says. "I'm gambling that if we can provide quality service for these boats, they'll stay here."

The work to transform the yard has already begun. In addition to the Travelift, which is capable of hauling boats up to 50 feet, and the 10-ton hydraulic crane for masts and rigging, substantial construction and organizational projects will change both the face and the inner workings of the sprawling Y-Knot facility. The 60-foot-by-90-foot multipurpose building incorporates an insulated two-story work bay with a carpenter's shop, paint shop, office, stockroom, laundry, showers, and ship's store. Approval for the construction of a 170-foot-by-35-foot granite-sided pier and a dredged channel has been granted by the DEP and is expected to be completed by this summer.

Bud Thayer has been working on boats for as long as he can remember. "My father did. My grandfather did. It was natural to me." He has built everything from intricately crafted boat models to 35-foot lobsterboats.

Kibbe echoes Bud's love of boats, although he came to the business by a more circuitous route. Born and raised the son of a doctor in Lincolnville, Maine, Frank embarked on a career as a city planner after graduating from the Rhode Island School of Design with a degree in architecture. In 1971, after five years in the Tufts New England Medical Center planning office, he left Boston and returned to Maine to go to work for the Hinckley Company, starting as a hull polisher and working up to general manager.

Frank's wife, Ellen, and Bud's wife, Ruthie, will be full partners in the new business. "Right now, Ruthie and I are sharing the bookkeeping responsibilities," Ellen says, "and I hope, as we get additional help, I will be able to find some time to work in the yard—scraping, painting, that sort of thing. This move to North Haven was both a business and a personal decision for Frank and me. We love the island. We already feel at home here. And we feel it's going to be a good place to raise our sons. I have no doubt that this will fly. Once we guarantee our work and guarantee delivery, we'll have no trouble attracting boats. That kind of detail, that's what we'll emphasize, and we can do it." ♦

Barney Hallowell is a very active high school teacher on North Haven. He is co-owner of the Pulpit Harbor Inn and a vigorous participant in the island's newspaper, and the development corporation. His special concerns these days revolve around the place and role of island school systems in the future of islands.

By Jeanne G. Rollins

won't always agree with the summer community. That is, even if she is cute and affectionate and has yet to reach her first birthday.

I'm talking about my pet pig, Sheila. She was given to me to satisfy my pressing desire to have a puppy. My husband figured that raising a pig for one year would be much easier than committing 12 years to caring for a dog. Looking back, I can see that there was a lot that we didn't know about adopting a piglet.

We bought her in October and shipped her out to Monhegan in a lobster trap. Finding it nearly impossible to keep her contained in our makeshift pen, we let her run loose for most of the fall. She was small and harmless and she made friends very quickly. Regardless of where she was in the daytime, she always came home at night.

She often kept company with the island fishermen who spent the fall in the fields rigging their lobster gear for winter fishing. She liked to play with their buoys or rope, picking them up and shaking them violently. No harm done, she frequently shared a candy bar or sandwich before wandering on.

Another favorite jaunt as a piglet was to the wharf at boat time. There was always plenty of action at the wharf, and, more importantly, there were many victims for her favorite trick, untying shoes. Many visitors never could figure out why their shoes were untied when they returned home, but I'm willing to bet that almost everyone fell prey to her expertise at one time or another.

By Christmas her days of freedom were over. We were reluctantly shaken into realizing that our piglet had grown up. We had been so in awe of the creature that we neglected to consider that she could be frightening to small children.

One day she sighted a balloon, the likes of which she had never seen before and naturally she wanted. With all her porcine charm, she chased the balloon, little girl and all, up Horn's Hill. Predictably, the girl's mother, her face bright pink, paid us a visit, waving a hammer. I wasn't quite sure whether she wanted to butcher me or my pig. From that day on, Sheila was tethered to an apple tree.

Sheila's real trial came in the summer months. By this time we had grown accustomed to taking a walk a few times a week, but with so many tourists around, I was reluctant to take her in public. She was very strong, and it wouldn't be difficult for her to knock over an enamored tourist. Too, she now weighed in excess of 250 pounds, and the warm weather was no treat for her. So we settled on avoiding the crowds and the heat by walking early in the morning.

Sheila loved her walks. Once out of range of her tether, she always became frisky and would dance in circles around the yard before skipping lightly down the hill. To this day I maintain that grace is not monopolized by those with sleek physiques!

Most often we'd walk to the beach, where she could root in the soft sand and chew on tasty pieces of rockweed. Wherever we went, though, she always drew a crowd, and we were very apt to spend most of our outing with Sheila lying in the soft grass with four or five people rubbing her belly.

One midsummer night, most of the island community was participating in a common way of letting off steam: partying until one could barely walk home. Since CUI (crawling under the influence) causes no harm, parties can go on until the early morning hours. Determined not to nurse the aspirin bottle the next day, I went home early and went to bed.

Hours later, a neighbor was merrily finding his way home without a flashlight, using the old step-and-feel method of advance. With a strong step and a heavy tack, he made his way down his right-of-way, where our oversize pet had stretched to the end of her tether and was sleeping across the path. With no warning to either party, he stepped square onto Sheila's torso. The squeals and screams that erupted from the path petrified the neighborhood. At least one bad habit was solved that night: Sheila was less apt to sleep in the path after that.

Over the course of the summer there would be other rum-reeking victims lying in Sheila's pen, and we even found shreds of strange clothing lining her nest of hay. These were telltale signs of her less fortunate visitors.

Many people liked to feed Sheila. Summer and permanent residents would take great pleasure in saving scraps of garbage for her. After all, there is something very rewarding about seeing one of your least popular meals get wolfed down with so much gratitude. However, this activity had its casualties too, when incautious gift-bearers mixed their fingers in with her food and then pulled their hands back, needing stitches. We were blessed then to have a doctor on the island.

Besides the many incidents, there was the matter of odor. Personally, I like the smell of a farm, but in close quarters and with a warm summer breeze, cottagers in the area voiced a preference for the smell of seaweed baking in the sun. I had to admit they had a good point.

Even the antagonistic letters we received, along with the all-American threat of a lawsuit, didn't take away the pain when we knew that she was ready for butchering. I had promised to keep her for one year only, and when the time was due, my husband made arrangements to send her inshore on the mailboat to have someone else deal with her. It was a very sad time for us. Not only had we fallen in love with her, but we will always feel a strong kinship for her innocent personality. In her one short year, she added much to the community.

A week after Sheila departed the island, I was presented with a six-week-old puppy so that we would never have to own another pig! ♦

Jeanne Rollins raises puppies on Monhegan, where she lives year-round with her lobsterman husband, Stevie, and family. Jeanne's work recently appeared in the National Fisherman.

Casco Bay Islands

Trash at the Urban Edge

Many of us don't think twice when we toss a magazine or an empty paint can into the garbage. A garbage truck generally comes to pick it up, or we haul it to the dump ourselves. But the disposal of solid waste is quickly becoming a critical issue for towns and cities in Maine and an increasingly serious problem for islanders.

Portland's small island communities in Casco Bay are facing a solid-waste problem, but they are luckier than most. Linked to an urban center, they have access to money, advice, and assistance. But the islands pose a special challenge to city government. Isolated, with few permanent residents, they have not always received the attention their problems warranted, and the cost of servicing them has been disproportionately high.

Thanks in part to an unfortunate crisis at the landfills on Peaks and Long islands in 1984, attention was focused on their solid-waste problems. The city, helped by citizen groups and private organizations, is seeking a comprehensive solution, an effort vital to maintaining the special quality of island life.

"Solid wastes" consist of everything from newspapers, glass bottles, cans, food scraps, and grass clippings to old tires, rugs, washing machines, automobile oil, household chemicals, and construction materials. Residents on each of the five Portland islands dispose of these wastes in different ways.

By Elaine Tietjen

Cliff Island had no city waste-disposal service until the fall of 1984. Its 50 winter and 300 summer residents simply burned paper and plastics, buried cans and bottles, and dumped organic garbage into the ocean.

On Great and Little Diamond islands, the seasonal fluctuation in generated waste is greater. The 20 winter residents store their wastes in a trailer-packer, but there is no capacity to spare if the winter population were to grow.

Up until 1984, town dumps, later replaced by landfills, were located on the two larger islands, Peaks and Long. On Long Island (with 175 people in winter and 1,200 to 1,500 in summer), the city collects wastes weekly for disposal in the landfill, which is located on one of the island's sand and gravel deposits. On Peaks (with 1,450 in winter and 4,500 to 6,000 in summer), the city provides weekly pickup and operated a landfill on the site of an abandoned quarry until the fall of 1984. The site now serves as a transfer/recycling facility.

In summer 1984, the state Department of Environmental Protection, investigating the landfill sites, found violations of state regulations at each of them. Pools of orange-colored leachate were observed at the Long Island landfill, which is situated over one of the primary freshwater aquifers. At the Peaks Island landfill, after a few

weeks with no supervision due to a personnel shortage, large piles of refuse and decaying organic garbage were left uncovered.

The summer crisis at these landfills helped increase citizen awareness of the solid-waste problem and spurred cooperation among several groups to search for answers. The Sustainable Technology and Applied Research Foundation (STAR) had already started a Solid Waste Awareness Project to provide information to interested parties. The Maine Solid Waste Management and Recovery Association (MSWMRA), a nonprofit organization established to promote professional solid-waste management standards and practices in Maine, provided technical assistance. The Casco Bay Islands Development Association (CBIDA) cosponsored a slide presentation and panel discussion for the public. And many island residents joined to create the Citizens' Task Force on Solid Waste.

If waste is viewed as the resource it is, less of it might end up in landfills and less money might be spent handling it. Conservation of all kinds of materials and products can greatly reduce the volume of the solid waste. For instance, food scraps can be separated and composted (STAR operates a community compost pile on Peaks Island to produce humus for gardens); cloth towels and napkins and china plates can be used in place of paper products; and goods with less packaging can be bought in preference to those layered in cardboard and plastic.

Recycling of many materials is the next step in combating the waste problem, and it makes sense in economic as well as environmental terms. Glass sells for \$20 per ton on local markets, newspaper and cardboard for \$32.50 per ton, and aluminum cans for \$24 per pound. Recycling, in fact, earned the town of Harpswell over \$5,400 in 1983 alone.

After recycling, the next step is to convert the wastes to energy. The Portland area is planning to build a waste-to-energy incinerator in the near future to take care of much of the region's solid wastes.

Casco Bay Islands

Offshore Parking

Casco Bay's islands have long been recognized as one of Maine's premier recreational assets, providing an ideal setting for picnicking, swimming, nature study, or a leisurely cruise within sight and sound of Maine's major metropolitan area.

More than two hundred of the state's publicly owned islands—some with colorful names like White Bull, Uncle Zeke, Two-Bush, Dog's Head, and Junk of Pork—lie within Casco Bay, but most are little more than bare rocks often lacking both soil and vegetation and of recreational importance only to the occasional waterfowler. About 50 of these islands are leased by the Department of Conservation's Bureau of Public Lands to the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for management as wildlife habitat.

The Bureau of Parks and Recreation—also a part of Maine's Conservation Department—owns five major Casco Bay island properties: Eagle, Bangs, Jewell, and Little Chebeague islands, and Andrews Beach on Long Island. The Bureau also holds a conservation easement, without a public access provision, to 100-acre Whaleboat Island, west of the Harpswell peninsula. Seventeen-acre Eagle Island, site of Admiral Peary's former summer home, was given to the state in 1966 by the famed arctic explorer's family. Located about three miles off Harpswell, the wooded island was the first major state acquisition in Casco Bay. Each summer, about 6,000 people visit the island, which in the past was called Sawungun. Equipped with a dock and mooring, Eagle is a pleasant picnic spot for those who come in private boats or aboard a water taxi from Harpswell or Portland.

Eagle Island is staffed by three seasonal employees from mid-June until mid-September. Using Eagle as a base, park rangers periodically check other Bureau-owned island properties.

Bangs Island, approximately two miles northwest of Eagle, is leased to the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for management as a waterfowl nesting site. Acquired in 1974, 55-acre Bangs Island is one of the largest uninhabited islands in the bay, but the topography and thin soils make it suitable only for low-density recreational use.

Seaward of Bangs and roughly 2¼ miles south lies 186-acre Jewell Island. The island's Cocktail Cove is a widely known small-

boat anchorage. Legend has it that Jewell's thick woods and hidden coves attracted pirates and smugglers, although no one is known to have found buried treasure.

For small islands, of course, such a facility would be impractical. But incineration can serve another purpose on some islands by greatly reducing waste volume and by stabilizing it in ash form so that infrequent pickups for disposal will not cause health or storage problems. In order to have a clearer idea of the range of solutions available, Portland commissioned the Council of Governments to investigate solid-waste management alternatives for the Casco Bay islands. The council's report, published in the spring of 1984, recommended that existing island landfills be closed and recognized that off-island transport would be the best solution for island waste disposal. The report also took a hard look at financial constraints, and recommended that modular incinerators be built on Peaks and possibly Long Island to stabilize wastes and reduce their volume (incinerators can reduce waste volume by 85 percent). Wastes from Cliff Island and Great and Little Diamond islands could then be transported to Peaks rather than to the mainland, again reducing costs.

Meanwhile, the city is determining whether it will be possible to remove all refuse (except wood and brush) from the island and whether an incineration/recycling facility is feasible (island residents have voiced concern about the potential for health and safety risks from an incinerator).

With sufficient economic and political support, the Casco Bay islands solid-waste management plan could serve as a model of cooperative problemsolving among state, city, and private organizations. ♦

Elaine Tietjen is Administrative Assistant to Bowdoin College's Environmental Studies Program. As a freelance writer, her articles have appeared in Maine Audubon's Habitat and Down East. This column is adapted from a study sponsored by Peaks Island's STAR Foundation, owner of a large undeveloped tract on the island where coastal gun batteries once protected Portland Harbor.

By Marshall Wiebe

boat anchorage. Legend has it that Jewell's thick woods and hidden coves attracted pirates and smugglers, although no one is known to have found buried treasure.

The island is being used for picnics and to a lesser extent for camping, although no developed facilities for either are available and open fires are prohibited.

In 1972, the Bureau acquired Andrews Beach on three-mile-long Long Island. This high-quality, 930-foot sand beach draws some 6,000 visitors annually from the islands' summer population of 2,000 and from the mainland. A park ranger maintains the beach and provides assistance to visitors from June to Labor Day. Aside from vault toilets, there are no developed facilities on the 16-acre site and no fees are charged for its use.

Little Chebeague Island, with its 2,000-foot sand beach, was also purchased in 1972. The 81-acre island lies just off Great Chebeague and is connected to it by a sand bar at low tide. Deepwater anchorage, shady groves, and a fine beach make the island a destination for youth groups looking for adventures close to home and boaters seeking a place to stretch their legs and picnic.

Little Chebeague and Jewell islands are the centerpiece of a Bureau of Parks and Recreation conceptual plan for the development of the Casco Bay Islands State Park. Little Chebeague may someday become a first-rate day-use facility. Jewell, which is larger, heavily wooded, and more remote, has the potential to provide a more primitive island experience with campsites and a trail network.

Herb Hartman, Director of the Bureau of Parks and Recreation, recently said: "We have succeeded in protecting these beautiful islands from commercial development and they are, in effect, in the bank. I have no doubt they will someday be developed into important recreation facilities available to many more people. In the meantime, it is the Bureau's task to protect the resources from overuse and misuse. However, we have a very small staff and budget. Because of that, we need the help and understanding of everyone who presently is using the islands." ♦

Marshall Wiebe is Director of Public Information for the Bureau of Parks and Recreation in Maine's Department of Conservation.

Island Bookshelf

Lobstering and the Maine Coast, by Kenneth R. Martin and Nathan R. Lipfert. Maine Maritime Museum, Bath, Maine, 1985, \$16.95.

For most of this century, lobstering has been so intimately associated with Maine island life that it is useful every once in a while to look back and try to sort out just how lobsters and islands got so completely wound up in the same warp. *Lobstering and the Maine Coast* is a beautifully illustrated, well-researched, and carefully written history of the Maine lobster fishery from its early stirrings in the 1820s to the controversies of the 1980s. The narrative is thickly permeated by interviews and pictures from island lobster communities, so lobstermen and their families from Vinalhaven, Isle au Haut, Monhegan, Big Green, Stonington, Swans, Criehaven, Matinicus, and Beals will recognize many of the individuals and the stories presented here, often for the first time in print.

The book is such a skillful blend of careful research and lucid prose by its two authors that one wonders why collaborations aren't more often so successful. The collection of black-and-white photographs of the lobster fishery printed in the book is itself worth the price of admission. Particularly memorable are some of the photos from John C. Turner's collection of glass plates of lobstering on Isle au Haut from the 1870s and 1880s, and a similar collection from Monhegan. I don't think I'll ever forget Turner's photo (supplied by Stanley French) of the massive pile of lobsters on a cannery wharf that captures in a single image the stupendous abundance of, and our voracious appetite for, Maine lobsters. Douglas Alvord's fine pencil drawings and Diana Esterly's design both contribute to the pleasing quality of the book.

As in all good histories, there are some big surprises. To the extent that we have any appreciation of the history of lobstering, it's been commonly accepted that this fishery began just before the turn of the century as an alternative for old men and boys too old or inexperienced to go into offshore groundfishing. But the book traces the rise of "industrial" lobster canneries from their beginnings in the 1840s and 1850s to their peak in the 1880s, when 23 Maine canneries (including many owned by Burnham and Morrill of baked bean fame) processed 9.5 million pounds of lobsters, mostly for the European market. Write the authors: "It is a measure of [the lobster's] reputation among gourmets that it was one of the first items canned commercially in the United States."

With the development of methods of shipping and handling live lobsters, demand surged in this country, beginning around the turn of the century, and has continued to grow except for brief interruption during the World Wars. Perhaps the single most sobering fact to emerge from the book is that in 1900 approximately 17 million



George F. Lewis, partner, Isle au Haut Lobster Cannery.

COURTESY OF REVERE MEMORIAL LIBRARY AND STANLEY G. FRENCH

pounds of lobsters were caught by 3,100 lobstermen fishing 156,000 traps. In 1985, approximately 18 million pounds of lobsters were caught by 9,000 lobstermen fishing 2 million traps. Although the price of lobsters increased during this time, it is apparent that a lobsterman's average income has fallen significantly while his expenses continue to rise dramatically.

Lobstering and the Maine Coast is actually the catalog for the Maine Maritime Museum's bold, new lobstering exhibit in Bath. In this exhibit, Maine's lobstering history, culture, sights, and texture are beautifully presented in their subtlety and complexity. If you are to understand what is happening on the Maine coast and what is at stake in our future, you *must* see this exhibit and read the book. What is certain is that this once-local museum has come of age.

—Philip W. Conkling

The Great Lobster Chase: The Real Story of Maine Lobsters and the Men Who Catch Them, by Mike Brown. Illustrations by Jim Sollers.

International Marine Publishing Co., Camden, Maine, 1985, \$22.95.

This is not a trade book. It is literature in the best sense; neither hoity-toity nor textbooky and "educational," in the sense of such designations. The only other volume in the same subject area and quality league might be *Beautiful Swimmers*, by William Warner, and that one won the Pulitzer Prize.

Many readers of ISLAND JOURNAL will also be familiar with *National Fisherman*, the trade journal published in Camden. These readers will be pleased to know that Mike Brown has for more than 20 years written the wise and witty Cap'n Perc Sane column, Saturday Cove's indomitable journal of record, doing battle with stupidity everywhere. These days the managing editor of the Belfast *Republican Journal*, and over the years a writer and editor for many publications along Maine's mid-coast, Mike Brown describes himself first as a lifelong fisherman—a lobsterman for over half a century. For a decade, Brown was the skipper of Maine's fisheries research boat, working on a daily basis with scientists, scholars, engineers, and students on every aspect of the Gulf of Maine fisheries. And Brown possesses the wherewithal to express the story of lobstering with candor. He has a marvelous command of the

language (both of English and "coastalese"). In effect, he may well be the only person with all of the qualifications to write the definitive volume on Maine lobstering, and he actually did it.

The lobsterman, the gear, the boat, the lobster, the buyers, the scientists, the government, the community, the eating, and the future each get their complete and exclusive chapters, in that order. At the outset, such a rational and comprehensive list would portend dryness, more nearly like an academic thesis or government report. And to be sure, all the relevant facts are included, one of the author's and publisher's goals indeed being to create a basic reference book for the industry.

But shot through this book is the humanity of the business, from start to finish. Even in the most technical portions of the book, Perc Sane is there, making up for all those years that he never talked about himself, discussing his feelings as a participant in one of the last great American inshore fisheries. Dialect infuses elegant narrative. And so the book reads smoothly and easily—almost too easily.

In fact, two of this reviewer's lobstering friends read the book in one sitting. In addition to remarking on how this fellow sure got it

right, they lamented that it ended too soon and that they'd like to get their own copies so they could get back to it whenever they wanted. There is no higher praise for a book.

And I am serious in comparing *The Great Lobster Chase* to *Beautiful Swimmers*, for, like the Chesapeake-oriented book, the whole style and cast of this work is such that it transcends its ostensible subject, becoming much broader in its appeal and sensibility.

Certainly all lobster catchers of the Northeast have got to get their hands on it, and fishermen of all stripes everywhere will find a great deal of understanding and even sympathy in these pages. Beyond that, this is simply a damned good read for anyone who likes

the growing literary genre that combines natural history, sociology, and economics to present a way of life.

There is drama here, ambition, politics, character flaws, stupidity, hard work, sacrifice, enormous ability, and pathos. Moreover, there is intelligence and discernment. An inveterate columnist, Mike Brown has opinions and speaks them, but always in the context of actual situations, real events, existing persons, and rendered decisions. This is not a hype, nor an elegy for the business. It is *the* book on the lobster industry and its lifeways and will be for a long, long time. It deserves to be. Librarians, take note. ♦

—George Putz

The Country of the Pointed Firs, by Sarah Orne Jewett. W.W. Norton & Co., New York, 1982, \$7.95.

If you believe that living in Maine is synonymous with independence and isolation, or that the Maine seafaring tradition produced men who were stoic individualists and women who were strong willed and resourceful, Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* and related stories—"A Dunnet Shepherdess," "The Foreigner," "The Queen's Twin," and "William's Wedding"—will, on the surface, confirm your belief. At the same time, Jewett will introduce you to a different dimension, a different perception of 19th-century coastal Maine life.

The narrator (we assume it is Jewett) arrives in Dunnet Landing after a "brief visit 2 or 3 summers before in the course of a yachting cruise," to spend the summer at the home of Mrs. Almira Todd. The narrator tells us she has sought the seclusion of this coastal village in order to complete a long piece of writing. However, it is the gradual integration into the predominantly feminine society of Mrs. Todd's family and neighbors that consumes most of her summer.

Through Mrs. Todd, we are gradually introduced to a potpourri of characters—villagers, inlanders, and islanders—while she serves as a catalyst, allowing her summer visitor to meet the many individuals who are or have been a part of her life. She is an archetypal Maine woman: tall, massive, "grand and architectural"; an herbalist, a healer, a sensitive and eloquent storyteller, and a mainlander.

A pervading theme throughout the novel and subsequent stories is the deep, intangible connection between Mrs. Todd and her mother, Mrs. Blackett. The latter and her son William live in the family homestead on an outer island far seaward from the Landing. The family connection is not diminished by the distance between the mainland and the island but rather is amplified by the richness of their separate existences. Mrs. Todd is surrounded by a community of people interdependent with one another, responding to the tradition and exposure afforded seafaring towns by the constant travel to foreign lands. Mrs. Blackett's world is a smaller community, no less

interdependent, but proscribed and isolated by the ocean; a microcosm of nature and humanity.

Jewett returns to this theme over and over—of isolation, separateness from the whole, resiliency and resourcefulness in adversity and loneliness. She uses a seemingly commonplace event—a funeral, a boating trip, a wild summer storm, a fishing trip, or a family reunion—to create a metaphor for the strong, powerful women of this late-19th-century community. It is the life stories of these wonderful women that make this book such a rich experience.

Jewett is most adept at describing the inner landscapes of her characters, personal histories that invariably portray love, loss, acceptance, and resolution. She celebrates the human spirit making do with what life has presented, transcending the impulse to become bitter or resentful and finding ways to remain productive and giving. She creates characters such as Joanna Todd, self-exiled to a small barren island whose "sorrow made too lonely to brave the sight of men, too timid to front the simple world she knew, yet valiant enough to live alone with . . . the calms and passions of the sea and sky"; and Esther Hight, a shepherdess, tending her flock single-handedly summer and winter, in "a most solitary place to live—a place where one might think that a life could hide itself"; or Mrs. Captain Tolland, a French-born widow of a local sea captain, ". . . she come a foreigner and she went a foreigner, and never was anything but a stranger among our folks."

As idealized as the stories are, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* offers enduring insights into the lives and motivations of simple people in a complex and often threatening environment. The philosophy Jewett espouses has meaning for anyone who has or will experience loneliness and isolation, whether in a big city or on an island. There is much to cherish in this lovely book, much to experience and reexperience. ♦

—Julie G. Levett

The Tide Trilogy. Vol. I: High Tide at Noon; Vol. II: Storm Tide; Vol. III: Ebbing Tide, by Elisabeth Ogilvie. Down East Books, Camden, Maine, \$8.95 each.

If you have a long memory or are lucky enough to know someone with a good library—the kind you find in a summer home where guests are encouraged to settle in during a fog mull or an unseasonal gale—you may already know about Elisabeth Ogilvie's novels. If not, you might never have heard about Ogilvie's three-novel series, *The Tide Trilogy*, if Down East Books had not decided recently to publish them.

Set on Maine's outermost island, Criehaven, which was a year-round community until 1943, the novels chronicle in rich and insightful detail the triumphs and despair of a tenuous life in a small island lobstering community. (See *ISLAND JOURNAL*, 1985, for a capsule history of Criehaven and a profile of Elisabeth Ogilvie.) Each of the three volumes details a different period in the island's history, called Bennett's Island in the books, but the central figure tying the trilogy together is Joanna Bennett.

Elisabeth Ogilvie, who now lives seasonally on Gay Island in Muscongus Bay, says, "Criehaven was my first Maine island, from the age of 2. I first wrote about it when I was 15. The Bennetts were taking shape by the time I was 19 and . . . figured in the first short story I ever sold . . . I guess you could say I wanted to write a love song to my first love among islands, and I did."

Although the three novels, *High Tide at Noon*, *Storm Tide*, and *Ebbing Tide*, were originally published in the 1940s during what

might be called the Romantic Era of Maine literature, there is nothing to make contemporary readers blush upon discovering the series four decades later. As with the island novels of Ruth Moore, Mary Ellen Chase, and Gerald Warner Brace, the passions that stir through Ogilvie's pages seem simple, direct, and real. The family history of the Bennetts and the islanders is recorded with seismic sensitivity in keeping with the intensity of Ogilvie's description of the natural moods of the island itself.

When Joanna Bennett returns to the island in the spring as Nils Sorenson's wife to try to re-create the community that had been abandoned eight years earlier following a disastrous fire and drowning, the mood is set with appealing clarity:

On the ledges between Bennett's and the Rock, there was no play of surf this morning. Close to the island, on Goose Cove Ledge and Green Ledge, the gulls were at peace with the world. Her gaze dropped to the shimmer of Goose Cove, so still the woods were mirrored darkly in it. Three gulls paddled lazily on the surface, nothing whiter than their breasts above their shimmering white reflections. Two seals dived and tumbled in the water close to the shore, unabashed by Nils. They popped their sleek dripping heads out and looked at him, and then went back to their game, catching a glint of sunlight on their wet hides. Over in the shadow of the point,

among the rockweed-covered boulders, black ducks were feeding. They too were unafraid. It was strange how quickly an island went back to the wild things when it was left alone, she thought.

Ogilvie writes with unaffected passion about the theme of which all islanders are aware: the almost crazed energy it takes to keep an island going. At the end of *High Tide at Noon*, Nils says:

“Jo, the people who came out here and settled when there wasn’t anything here—your grandfather and mine and the other old-timers—they were like the folks who settled this country. They wanted to make something big out of it, so they put everything they had into it. That was why the island meant so much to them. That was why my grandfather couldn’t leave it, and that was why your father couldn’t live away from it. The others, they came afterward when they

began to hear about the Island. They came for what they could get, they took it, they didn’t give anything back, and then they walked out on it.”

And Joanna Bennett is at the center of most of this passionate intensity. Occasionally, however, her intensity is misplaced. Beneath the struggle of the islanders to keep Bennett’s going in *Storm Tide* is Joanna’s struggle for an identity at once fiercely independent from and supportive of her husband. That Joanna’s search is incompletely resolved at the end of the book is peculiar in novels of the time and reminds us that feminism as an individual search, rather than a movement, is as old as human nature.

There is a great deal else to recommend these novels, not the least of which is the view of island kitchen and fish house culture that is a valuable reminder of the informal institutions that have dominated island life for generations. ♦

—Philip W. Conkling

Ruth Moore Bibliography, as reviewed by Gary Lawless.

Compiled from data in OCLC (On-Line Computer Library Center) and the Bangor Public Library’s **Bibliography of the State of Maine** (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1962):

The Weir. New York: W. Morrow and Co., © 1943.

Spoonhandle. New York: W. Morrow and Co., © 1946. Also: Pocket Books (under title **Deep Waters**), 1948.

The Fire Balloon. New York: W. Morrow, © 1948.

Candlemas Bay. New York: W. Morrow, © 1950.

Jeb Ellis of Candlemas Bay. Illustrated by William N. Wilson. New York: Morrow, 1952.

A Fair Wind Home. New York: Morrow, © 1953.

Speak to the Winds. New York: Morrow, © 1956.

Cold as a Dog and the Wind Northeast: Ballads. Illustrated by Doug Anderson. New York: Morrow, © 1958.

The Walk Down Main Street. New York: Morrow, © 1960.

Second Growth. New York: Morrow, © 1962.

The Sea Flower. New York: W. Morrow, © 1964.

The Gold and Silver Hooks. New York: Morrow, © 1969.

Lizzie and Caroline. New York: Morrow, © 1972.

Time’s Web. Poems. New York: Morrow, © 1972.

The Dinosaur Bite. New York: Morrow, © 1976.

Sarah Walked Over the Mountain. New York: Morrow, © 1979.

Ruth Moore’s first published novel, *The Weir* (1943), begins with the quote, “That was the place that you were homesick for, even when you were there.” That is how I feel about her work. I frequently return to the world that still exists in her stories, most of which are located in small coastal or island communities. They are accurate pictures of a certain way of life now fast disappearing. To read one of her books is to be living in a vibrant community. I am always reluctant to leave, to read the last page, to close the book.

I do not mean to imply that there is no sadness, no pain in her work. Rather, we find a portrayal of the life of a community in all of its facets. We see small disagreements blown up completely out of proportion to their importance because of the smallness and tightness of the community. Her central characters are usually strong, independent, and well portrayed, male and female.

I’m using the word *community* and feeling that this is what she creates for me—a strong sense of community, and a sense of my own longing to belong to that community. I would like to live among her characters and talk with them. These are the places I am homesick for.

As an example of her descriptive powers, I quote from *Speak to the Winds* (1956), from a passage describing an island swamp:

The swamp flowered all summer, no matter how dry the season. Above it, the granite crisped its lichens in the sun, baked as fiercely dry as if the heat had struck outward from its furnace fires within. But the growth around the pool stayed brilliant electric green. Alders grew thick as a man’s thigh, and some of the old swamp birches were three feet through at the base. Tall trees and the hill kept away the wind, so that the air hung hot and still, full of jungle rich smells of mud and moss and lush, sunny leaves. Squirrels lived in the swamp, and deer and mink and beaver and muskrat. Hermit thrushes sang there all spring long. The trees were full of wing-flash and flutter and the four or five clear notes, repeated a thousand times, of a white-throated sparrow. Ducks gathered in the pond; at fall dusk it might be brimful of them, floating side by side. To these inhabitants, at any time of the year, the swamp offered shelter, either of shade or snow.

Not only do I enjoy her descriptive passages, but also the natural way her characters speak. There is a language that rings true, one that doesn’t turn Maine dialect into a parody for out-of-state readers. Her conversations sound real, and I am at home in the comfort and ease of the words spoken.

Ruth Moore was born on July 21, 1903, on Gotts Island, off

Mount Desert. She attended high school in Ellsworth and then left Maine to attend college in New York. After college she worked in both New York and California as a teacher, a secretary, and as an associate editor for the *Reader’s Digest*.

In 1947 she returned to Maine, where her second novel, *Spoonhandle*, was being made into a movie, *Deep Waters*, by Twentieth Century-Fox, in and around Rockland and Vinalhaven. She has remained in Maine. With her friend Eleanor Mayo, she built a home in McKinley, beachcombing for some of the wood, using wood from older structures, and doing all of the work but the wiring and plumbing.

Ruth Moore’s first novel, *The Weir*, which appeared in 1943, is the hardest to locate of her published work. Since 1943, she has produced a dozen novels, both historical and contemporary. She has also published a children’s novel, *Jeb Ellis of Candlemas Bay*; a book of poetry, *Time’s Web*; and her book of ballads, *Cold as a Dog and the Wind Northeast*.

One reviewer in the 1940s called her “a major writer, one of the finest fiction talents to write of Maine for many decades.” I would agree and add to it my hope that her work will remain accessible to the public for many years to come. Her books were published as hardcovers; few ever became paperbacks. *Books In Print* lists a few of her titles, but most are to be found only in used-book shops or libraries. I hope that some publisher will reissue a selection of her works, since they are of importance to any reader interested in coastal life. If a New York publisher is uninterested, perhaps Maine publishers like Down East or Thorndike can be persuaded if they hear from enough readers.

Look for her books, read them, urge your libraries to carry them, write to publishers to reprint them. Don’t let them disappear. Ruth Moore’s books are a part of our cultural heritage, and I thank her for preserving a way of life in such a wonderful body of work. ♦

Gary Lawless is one of those doggedly determined idealists without whom no region can call itself civilized. In this era of bottomline thinking, Lawless has the temerity not only to write poetry, but to run a bookstore devoted to poetry and other distinctly unprofitable book-trade topics, such as small press publications, eco-politics, native American culture, and paranormal phenomena. He publishes as well. Current projects include a book on southern Labrador; a work by Elizabeth Coatsworth; two poetry volumes by Coatsworth’s daughter, Kate Barnes; as well as a book of Ruth Moore’s work, including previously unpublished material. The Gulf of Maine Bookstore is in Brunswick: (207) 729-5083.

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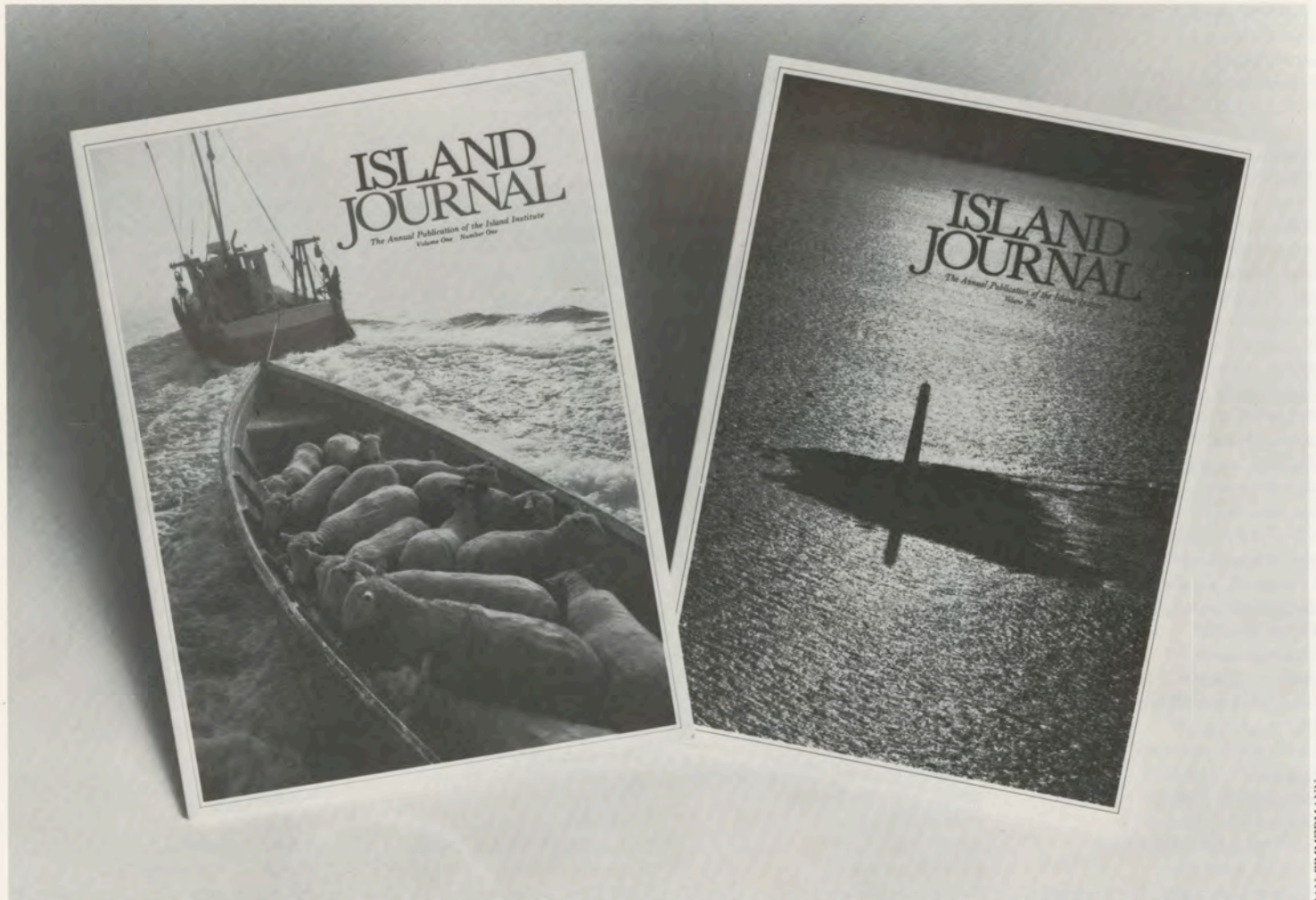
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JOE UPTON

In a little cove, the sun was on the pale granite where you bathed, and the shadow was in the rocks. Before the mist came stealing, you went home through the ripening oats, the glare of the sea fading from the high air as the fog-horn started to moo on the other island. And then the sea-fog went, it was autumn, the oat-sheaves lying prone, the great moon, another island, rose golden out of the sea, and rising higher, the world of the sea was white.

D.H. Lawrence
The Man Who Loved Islands, 1922