The Island Reader

Anthology of Maine Island Artists & Writers

Volume 18
Summer 2024

The Island Reader

Unbridged Islands Edition

Summer 2024

Cover image by
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Cliff Island

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Editorial Board

(Photo credit, Douglas Cornman)

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The Island Reader offers space for creative self-expression for island artists of all ages and experiences. For example, Islesford and Little Cranberry are two names for the same island. Both names are used interchangeably throughout this anthology. Using the island name submitted by each artist is just one way *The Island Reader* honors island identity and islander's self-expression.

John DeWitt
Isle au Haut

Letter from the Editors

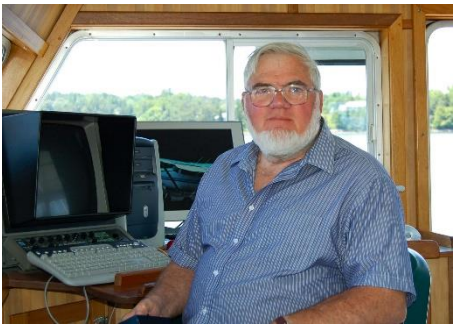
We welcome you to *The Island Reader, Volume 18,* "The Unbridged Edition," a summer anthology which features creative expression of artists from Maine's unbridged islands.

Here you will find prose, poetry, photography, artwork, fiction, and non-fiction that reveal the insights and imaginations of Maine's unbridged artists, artists who live and breathe the spirit and muse of being islanders.

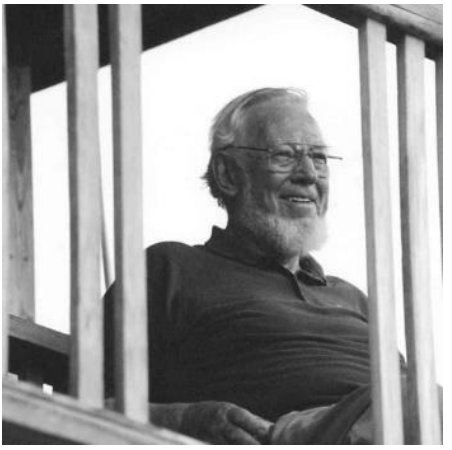
We extend our special gratitude to all the artists, writers, and the Maine Seacoast Mission for supporting this project since 2006.

Volume 18 is dedicated to two members of the *Sunbeam's* crew who are no longer with us.

Captain David Allen served as captain of both *Sunbeam IV* and *Sunbeam V* from 1971 until 2007.



Reverend Theodore "Ted" Hoskins served as Minister to the Outer Islands and Minister to Coastal Communities and Fisheries from 1993 until 2009.



(Photo credits, Maine Seacoast Archives)

In the winter

The waves are thrashing at night.
The clouds are moving by the wind going north.
The water is rumbling loudly and
The kelp is flowing excitingly.

Audrey Barter
Isle au Haut

Sarah Trafton
Swan's Island

Vinalhaven

I love the silenced quietness,
The Breath of the Oceans Bold Wind
The Salty Pine Scent
The beautifully strong elegance of the Island
. . . and it's like a community
So many people and places have come and gone
So many Family Generations
So many Memories
So many Emotions
So many …

Richard Flagg
Vinalhaven

Ingrid Gaither
Great Cranberry Island

February Fishing

we set out
wood stoves left burning on the drive to the shore
the temperature gauge in the pickup said -10
PD figured it was going to be a cold day
I was right

we hammered at the two inches of solid ice that
covered the deck
the boat broke up sea lee as we
backed out of the slip
the VHF forecast was "light and variable" it was
wrong

the wind northwest was
somewhere between 15 and 20 knots
white caps, instant freeze
but we were already there
slaves to our own boredom ashore with
only the warmth of dark coffee the three of
us, companioned captured

animated shadows in the deck lights
laughing at the cold
the black water around us the
shiver of breeze
as we said goodbye to the harbor

throttling forward into the soul of the sea past
the sleeping islands
the winking navigation buoys as the
seas build
and the wind increases we had
to run a deck hose
to thaw out the bait

after the twenty minutes
it took to thaw out the deck hose
we lurch and pound into
the unseen and the unknown
assured by other men's fears
gripping the wheel and watching the machines

some men drink coffee to give them energy
we drink coffee to calm our nerves
the sea will not intimidate us
though it snarls in distain
at our foolishness

the windows start to ice
obscuring visibility
until the next wave partially clears it
we look seaward hoping for the first shreds of light
anxious to find the first string
to start hauling the gear

you see it’s not the catch that’s important
it’s not a legacy, or a building of wealth
we know better than that
but it is the freedom to strive
the freedom to fight the elements the
freedom to struggle
the privilege of cold hard work that
leads us forward
into the dawn
out to sea

Jack Merrill
Islesford

If You Give Marcela a One Room Schoolhouse

If you give Marcela a hermit crab
that will remind her of tide pools,
she will take her class to explore Boom Beach,
and will most likely collect urchins, mussels, and fish,
and bring them back to the saltwater tank at school.
At low tide there, she will find and gather Irish moss,
make Irish moss pudding with the class
for neighbors and parents to try.
Eating the pudding will remind her of seaweed fertilizer,
and she would want to start a garden.

Marcela will ask for a wheelbarrow, shovels, trowels,
fencing, and a couple of extra hands and a hoop house,
she will dig posts, get donated wood chips, and hay,
the soil would be perfect for garlic that first Fall.
Her class will gather and work the soil to plant cloves,
then wait all Winter for the first signs of green sprouts.
The first of many crops that her class would sow,
transplant, amend, and water. The harvesting, cooking,
eating, and sharing from the school's garden
will remind her of summer farmer's markets in Vermont,
and she would want to start a farm stand.

Marcela will then ask for a tent, foldable tables, aprons, a
scale, parents, residents, and neighboring summer
volunteers, weeding and mostly playing with worms,
her students serve tea under the tent, give free cookies to
weekly loyal customers, Her students weigh and calculate
prices for pounds, bunches, ounces. Students tally money,
hurry to make change, and keep records of items sold.
The farm stand bursts with shapes and color. Variety
galore. Potatoes, carrots, tomatoes, squash, herbs, flowers,
and garlic. The students baked and cooked, dried and
sampled.

Focaccia, zucchini bread, pickles, muffins, preserves. The classroom lingered with sweet smells after long farm stand days, The latter will remind her of her grandparents' sugar house in Colombia, And she would want to tap maple trees in the Spring.

Marcela will ask for an evaporator pan, candy thermometer, taps, buckets, coolers, filters and fire bricks, a truck, a wood splitter and extra hands handling the wood. Lisa would keep track of the gallons of sap poured in for a boil, and the rate of evaporating 60 gallons to one. Finishing the syrup inside, in a cloud of sugary vapor, her class used a refractometer, hydrometer and watched how bubbling cloudy sap turns into a thick, dark syrup. The maple syrup bottles on display, will remind her of the commerce days in the Fall, and she would want to sell Isle au Haut maple syrup for charity.

Marcela will find organizations in need of monetary aid. Syrup sales and donations poured into the Bagaduce River Equine Rescue and The Healthy Island Project. Her students visited Kelly and her rescued horses and had tea and cookies with Barrett and his grateful Deer Isle - Stonington Salty Seniors. The school is grateful for all supporters near and far. Building a sense of community and having a local positive impact, will remind her that there are other problems to solve, and she would want to pick up trash, like many also do, on Isle au Haut.

Marcela will find volunteers, parents, park rangers, boat captains, children, gloves, buckets and bags, organize, mobilize and set up dates and times. The Rozalia Project, Hurricane Island and Bob Olney would take care of Kimball's Island, over the years and with much dedication, Alison, Ashley, Charlie, Dave, Joan, Donna, Alvah, Friends of Acadia, Gianna, Gabe, Gaby, Isabelle, Ocean, Holland, Audrey, Lisa, Alyssa, Josh, Lillian, Barrett and Isabel to

name a few of the many, have cleaned the shores, roads, beaches culverts, brooks and docks, they picked, untangled, sorted, counted, recorded, bagged and eventually shipped off pounds and pounds of trash. Walking on the beach and picking up debris, will remind her that other people were here first, on this land, she would want to take her class to experience a "*human-earth relationship"* in Temple, Maine. Marcela waits until May, packs gear, starts the adventure, drives the school van to Maine Local Living School, Chris and his learning center become our home for the week, rustic dwellings, shave horses, composting toilets, common areas and outdoor kitchens, open fires, acorn pancakes, wild edible salads, leather tanning, rope making and quiet spots, laying spruce boughs for bedding, identifying, journaling and sharing the outdoors, chores like splitting wood and tending to the goats gathering and helping with meal prepping, became pieces of a memorable experience.

If you give Marcela a one room schoolhouse, she will want to support a unique learning environment within it, and she hopes she did.

Marcela Carroll
Poem & Image
Isle au Haut

Once the Hen House

The guest room
was
once
filled with
broodies.
Once flighty fowl
found
refuge
under its
one-and-a-half-
sided roof.
Now
the grandchildren
and other
giggly guests
lay other eggs,
and roost
behind the lemon-lily
buoy-hung walls.
not at all
that different,
really!

Wes Staples
Poem & Image
Swan's Island

ISLAND EMERGENCY
(for Bonnie Alpert)

As they left in haste in the ambulance
that would bear her to the dock
and the boat that would cross
the stormy black water to another
ambulance and then to an ER,
the lights in their kitchen were left on.
Now they blare into the night
of no word about how she is,
about what is wrong,
as if searching for her,
our dear neighbor of 30 years,
and make the needling rain gleam.
Over hours those lit panes persist,
impatient as if with worry or fear,
for her to be moving about
among those beams
where she belongs.

Susan Deborah King
Great Cranberry Island

Rachel Deschamps
Matinicus

At the Store

The grocer's helper left off stacking six packs
and met me at the counter, where she ticked and tallied
my milk and bread, me there in my prodigal's clay shoes.
She said it wasn't a bad winter, just one death at its heart,
Ellie Smith who turned ninety five in the summer
now laid to rest up-island at the family plot;
meantime how's your mother? It only gets harder,
the old people in those old places, they don't ask for help
having been themselves so long they wouldn't ask anyway.
Mine was the same. On her own, like Ellie Smith, until
she left the stove on and Richie happened to stop,
pulled her from the smoke, my, she didn't know
how close she came to burning down the house;
goodness, thank goodness your mother has you with her –
well, as often as you can. It's hard. Want the receipt?
Tell her I said hello, she's still got credit on her account.

Liz Grisaru
Islesboro

Irv Williams
Peaks Island

Take a Walk

Some people make a point of hanging out their laundry,
ostensibly to dry, but also I think it's
meant to display to the world, virtue. To say
to passersby, "We didn't burn gas to do what a few minutes
of clothes-pinning and reeling in a catch of gulping
thrashing
finned creatures could do,
and as you now know, you, who walk by and admire
this striped canvas of sun-polished pearl tones, . . .
. . . as you now know, we smell better for it.

Susan Goodman Cuetara
Peaks Island

Cindy Thomas
Islesford

My Treasured Serenity on Little Cranberry Island

Experience a serene and tranquil place, as l take you to an island called Little Cranberry. My hopes are that during this brief tour, you will treasure the beauty and serenity of this island as much as I do.

My journey begins at Northeast Harbor, on Mount Desert Island, in the state where America begins, in Maine. This is where I have to board the mail boat that will take me to my destination. This is the only form of transportation that takes visitors and islanders back and forth from this harbor. It takes about twenty minutes to get to the island from here.

As the ferry approaches Little Cranberry Island, my soul begins to light up from all the beauty: the sun shining on the crisp, clear water, mountains in the distance, fresh air, and nature that surrounds me. I am so overwhelmed with God's creation that l can hardly stand it. As I step off the ferry onto the weathered dock, I breathe in the fresh air, and smell the salt from the magnificent deep sea that encases me. I look around and see a lot of boats, most of which are lobster boats, for this is how the majority of the islanders make their living. Off in the distance I see glacier-carved mountains, with granite cliffs and dense evergreen, rising out from the sea. The mountains are a landmark for Acadia National Park which can be seen from every angle of the Island.

As I begin to walk up the weather-beaten ramp, to get to the top of the pier, my eyes immediately focus on all of the lobster traps that are piled up on each side of the dock. This quickly triggers my rumbling stomach for some delicious lobster. Looking around, I see two scoured shacks; the first one has a

sign on it that reads, "Fisherman's Co-op" and the other one reads, "The Island Dock Restaurant." My steps begin to increase in motion, for I know that soon I will get my hands and mouth on the delightful little creatures from the sea.

As I arrive at the restaurant door, I smell the lobsters cooking. My sense of smell makes my stomach growl even more. I can't wait to place my order so that I can relieve my hunger pains. Sitting down at the table, gazing out the large open windows at the Atlantic Ocean, the boats in the harbor and the mountains off in the distance, I instantly feel my soul fill with a sense of serenity. I think maybe I am in heaven here on earth. Waiting for my lunch doesn't seem to be a big concern anymore, for my thoughts are no longer on my stomach but on the beauty that encircles me. The sun is sparkling over the water and the seagulls are soaring over the waves, diving for their own scrumptious meal. While in this state of tranquility, the waitress interrupts me with my meal. My mouth begins to water for the delicious lobster that I am about to eat. I pick up the critter with both hands and began to break away the shell that holds the meat that I so quickly want to devour. With each portion of meat that I dip in the bowl of butter, I await the incredible burst of sensation that will soon satisfy my hunger. It doesn't take but only five or ten minutes before I consume the whole lobster. I now proceed on with my exciting journey on this island of serenity.

I decide to stroll down the main pier to glance around the gift shops. The first one that catches my attention is called "Winter's Work." As 1 slowly enter, I look around and am amazed by all the beautiful, homemade jewelry. Each piece is made out of sea glass and then polished to perfection. Wanting

to take this memory of the ocean with me, I purchase a necklace that would be treasured forever.

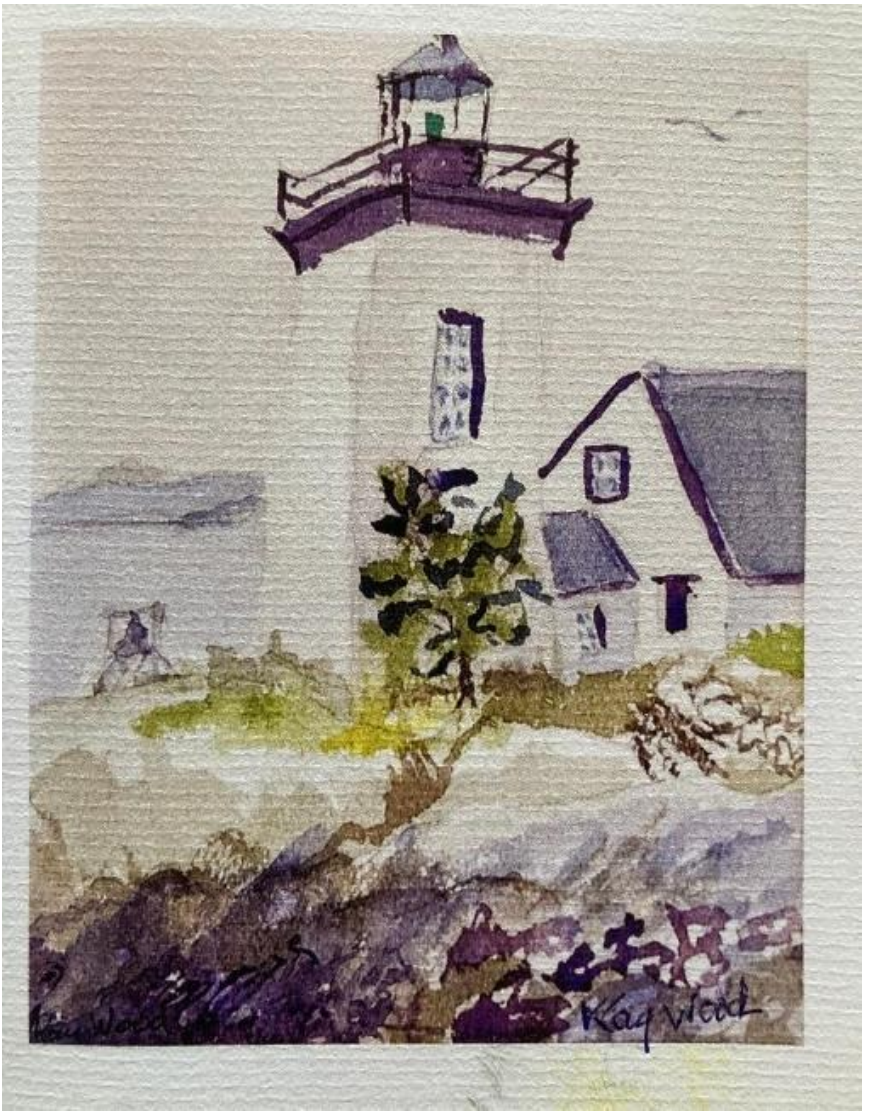
I continue my walk to the last shop that is called "The Resident Potter." This gift shop is filled with a diverse range of pottery. I am flabbergasted with all the unusual techniques that are used in making bowls, cups, plates. saucers and candle holders. The artwork is personalized with a simple signature found at the bottom of each individual piece. The artist details each sculpture with unique colors and designs. The colors vary from soft to subtle and the designs reflect their personality and emotions. Appreciating all the exceptional artistry, I want to buy a token of the beauty that inspires me. I decide to purchase an oddly shaped, bright, colored cup that I feel mirrors my personality. I want to spend an eternity visiting these two shops on the shoreline, but I know that I only have a couple of hours to tour the rest of Little Cranberry Island. I want to experience what this island has to offer, so I eagerly hike along the beach.

As I glance around, I take pleasure in all the wonders of nature. I see large rocks in the ocean with seaweed draping over them. l also observe wild flowers of all dissimilar colors, massive amounts of cranberry bushes that rest along the shore, and rocky sand for miles. I close my eyes and take a deep breath and encounter many scents. The lack of pollution allows me to smell the salty deep sea, the fresh cut grass and the evergreens that border the water's edge. I can also hear the waves gently crashing against the rocks on the seashore and the seagulls squawking over the water. As I open my eyes, I begin to feel a sense of gratitude for being able to enjoy such a wonderful and peaceful island.

Wandering on, I come across a couple of neat objects. The first one is a smooth, small rock that has a white circle around the entire circumference. While observing this rock, a local islander stops to see what I have found and explains that the circle symbolizes good luck. The second is a seashell that is beige on the outside and pink on the inside. I put it up to my ear to see if l could be able to hear the ocean, and I did! "How awesome," I thought. Knowing that these two objects are special, I put them in my backpack and continue onward.

Far away in the distance, I see a light house on the peninsula. Realizing it is too far to walk; I sit down on a piece of drift wood. With the sea breeze blowing through my hair, the sun shining over my body, and the temperature approximately seventy-five degrees, my mind begins to wonder. "Just how long has that light house been here?" I thought. "I sure wish it could talk, for I bet it would have some real interesting stories to share."' All of a sudden. I remember, I have to catch the boat for Northeast Harbor. I look at my watch and begin to frown, for it is only twenty minutes before l have to leave this wonderful place. I slowly stand up, embrace everything that I have encountered on my treasured island and walk back to the weathered dock, where all my serenity began, on Little Cranberry Island.

Karen Banning-Christie
Little Cranberry Island



Catherine Wood
Islesboro

Unbridged Lives

It is time I tell my story, not the story others want me to tell, not their story, but my own story. Who owns the truth when a story is shared? No one, because a story is not actually property or finite. A story is like an ocean, an accumulation of not only water, but of creatures and minerals, diatoms, plants, and beings that live on and in and interact with the ocean. A story, like an ocean, is moved with the tides and time, given affect by the pull of the moon and churned up by the wind, by movement, by the interruption of rivers and underwater landscapes and volcanic activity. A story, like an ocean, is an accumulation of molecules, and yet one giant body with moods, and grief and passion, full of motion that is as much a part of its soul as the hydrogen and oxygen and minerals that define it at its cellular level.

This story is about a woman and her island. A girl who was raised and cared for by an island. I am this island and she is me. We share the same body even as I exist on her back. Her rocks are my bones, her coves are my curves. I comb our seaweed hair and we lick each other's salty tears from our faces.

In the distance I can hear the voices of lobstermen skipping out over the water like stones flung by my son, seeming to travel as if by magic across the surface of the water.

We were raised in my family to think we were special. We come from a long line of "special" people. Mother's side, father's side. We tell stories and were made to recite the specialness of our family lineage like we were reciting the breeding history of a championship racehorse. The ordinary family members, the people who had failed to live "important" lives, were chewed over and spat out like so much gristle. My parents' lives were extraordinary, except

at the end of my mother's life, made ignominious by Alzheimer's. My father asked me after her death, "Do you think she ever loved me?" I remember my jaw clenching and then falling open, but I quickly realized that despite all the grand stories he had never actually known my mother as a person, she was just the elegant character in the story of the "important" people in our family. My mother, despite her beauty, her bravery, and adventurous character was still just a prop, an actor, a character, in the story of his life.

"You are *too* sensitive!" my sister says, drawing out the word "too" like it has at least 4 o's in it. I don't understand the sentence, it's like saying someone has too much good taste, is too smart, too talented, or too good looking. But I knew, instinctively, that it is not meant as a compliment. It is designed to bring my attention to a perceived failing—too sensitive as if there is a "just right" sensitive. It is not the first time I have heard one of these proclamations. I have been declared "too sensitive," "too emotional," "unable to get over it," and "high strung." It has taken the inevitable turn into "difficult," "crazy," "weak" and all the other outsider terms designed to place me in the corral with the other undesirable types.

I have never been accused of being poetic, passionate, brilliant, talented, sensitive (in a good way), or intuitive by my family. My sensitivities have always frightened my family. It was too uncontrollable, just like the wind. Acknowledging my differences would require them to see me in full daylight instead of only existing in their shadows. I was trained from birth to loathe myself. I sit here, the droning narrative repeating in my head. "You are too sensitive. Don't attention-get. Your body is out of control. Only common women have big breasts. You enjoy your food too much. Why do you always bring

cheese? You spend too much on gifts. You are too loud. You eat too much, drink too much, love too much."

I do love too much, think too much, feel joyously too much, give too much, work too hard and do too much, I consume life like I've known every day that one day I will die, and I want to make every minute of this life matter. I eat life with both my hands. But I don't think that that is shameful. I like people who value experience and other people too much. But these traits in me aren't celebrated by my family. The fact that I am known amongst my tribe of artist as gorgeous, generous, complex, deeply creative, intellectually expansive, as well as hard working is not acknowledged by my family. My family are desperate to have me be less than them. They want to contain me, erase me so I don't outshine or redirect any attention from them. I, as I am, am naturally without any affect and that terrifies my family. The fact that people easily like me angers them. And yet I have been trained since birth to despise my own true nature for their benefit.

"Don't make waves," I was taught, "don't rock the boat". I was given that advice over and over again by my father. It was gently but persistently pressed into me. It seemed like a horrendous crime, to disturb others, to upset, to cause the water to ripple. A crime. Rocking a boat, creating a ripple could cost someone their life, or so it seemed.

The fog moves in, slowly advancing and then for no know reason retreating, as if she has been caught trying to be unseen.

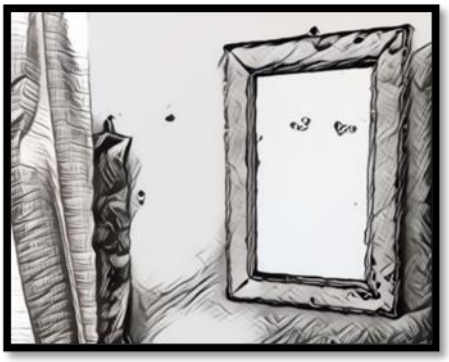
Charity Reynolds Appell
Vinalhaven

Brittany Box
Islesford

The Park Ranger: A Ghost Story from an Island in Maine

Islesford

An old mirror hung in a tiny office just off the entrance to the museum. The reflection was hazy since the glass was old and dappled, but it was all the park ranger had. One had to leave the museum and walk to the dock for a real bathroom and a better mirror. And carrying a better mirror in her backpack wasn't worth it to her. The way she looked in her ranger uniform didn't matter to her that much when she was mostly alone on the island.



Getting to the museum to open it required taking a boat. In the summer season, the Sea Princess left from Northeast Harbor in Maine to take two rangers, along with the tourists, to the island where the museum was. The first ranger narrated the tour while the other ranger enjoyed the

ride and watched the wildlife along with the tourists. Once the boat landed on the island, halfway through the tour, it was the other ranger's job to stay behind and operate the museum for the day.

Once the boat arrived, she had just enough time to unlock the clumsy museum door, raise the flag, and glance at her reflection in the mirror and make a minor adjustment before a handful of tourists followed from the same boat. It was awkward because the tourists were on her coat tails the minute she left the boat to see the museum first. Opening the museum didn't take a lot of work, but getting the door open was a challenge, especially by herself. The door was heavy, and it required a lot of pushing and twisting and turning the key and the knob in all directions to open it. She didn't like tourists watching her do this. That meant there wasn't much time to do much about how she looked even if she wanted to, so the mirror was hardly a help.

The museum was historical because it told the story of the islanders who lived there, the lives of lobstermen and their families, and the fishermen who came before them. It was founded by a man named William Sawtelle. He thought their way of life was unusual enough that it was worth preserving. He realized that over 100-years-ago, and not much has changed since. The lobstermen today lived largely the way the lobstermen did then, and the fishermen before that. Their way of life on the island was intact.

The museum opened in 1927 and was made of brick. It actually started around 1919 in a wooden building called The Blue Duck, but Sawtelle was afraid it would burn down, so he raised funds for a building that wouldn't burn. That's how important he thought the collection was. He found people who felt the same way, they provided funds, and a new museum was built. Three small rooms concisely painted a picture of their island world. The first room displayed the daily life of the residents: How they got their goods, made their living lobster fishing, and what it meant to be sometimes alone, and largely carefree at the same time. The room opposite that featured the local captains who provided pleasure excursions to the summer residents. It was the entry way that told the story of the museum founder and his family. William and Louise Sawtelle resided in a large city but spent summer's here.

The Sawtelle's, and two of their daughters were buried in back. All anyone had to do was walk around the museum to see their gravestones in the tumble of grass that grew around them. A dead tree had fallen in front of where they lay. There was no cemetery there, just the solitary remains of the Sawtelle's.

Only the pinprick of property where the museum and the

Blue Duck stood belonged to the National Park Service. The rest of the island belonged to those who lived there and its working docks. The museum sat on a grassy lawn in front of the ocean on Hadley Cove overlooking another island with a similar name, with the docks a short walk away. The boatbuilder, Boatworks, was housed in The Blue Duck; they leased the property next to the museum from the park service and conducted a boatbuilding summer school for young children. The children danced merrily on the lawn much of the day with the ocean behind them. Watching them made running the museum a happy experience for the ranger. At lunchtime she sat on the museum steps to eat and watch them play.

The museum was only open in the summertime. Even early May was still cold in Maine. No tourists came to visit outside that season here. Since the museum was small, only one ranger was needed to operate it daily. Her assignment was on a Tuesday.

The 1st Tuesday:

The door was opened, the lights turned on, the flag hoisted, and tourists were welcomed, however clumsy that first opening of the season was. The cruise came twice a day, in the morning and in the afternoon, and it was her job to deliver a ranger program at the museum for each group.

She chose to tell the tourists about the Maine Seacoast Mission. The mission was founded over 100-years ago by two brothers who were Congregational Ministers, Alexander and Angus MacDonald. They were determined to help the islanders in the ways they needed most. They delivered pastoral care including church services, care for the lonely and the elderly, and they performed weddings and funerals. Over time, The Mission expanded to include health care and other programs for the islanders, including a transition program for the kids when they left the island to attend high school. The Mission even brought Christmas gifts to kids. Even now the ranger could see flyers posted on the dock offering iPads to the islanders from The Mission.

The Mission's boat, the "Sunbeam" is docked in Northeast Harbor and still makes pilgrimages to the unabridged islands. She told the tourist to be on the lookout for the "Sunbeam" on their return trip. The ranger's program demonstrated what it was like to live on a tiny island when you needed almost anything, besides groceries, to survive. She shared the ways The Mission was there to help. After a while the morning cruise boat that brought the rangers to the island departed with the ranger who narrated the tour to find seals, porpoises and osprey nests much to the delight of the tourists. It was then that she was mostly alone. She would be there all day into the late afternoon when the museum closed. Only a visitor or two

trickled in when there was no cruise boat. It was then that the ranger had time to sit on the steps of the museum to watch the sea or watch the kids from the boatbuilders run and play out front.

A challenge by the park ranger's supervisor had been given to all the rangers assigned to run the museum: "Connect with the islanders when you take a break, on your lunch hour, or after the museum closes. Roam around the island and get to know people." So, she did.

She met Tony, the instructor at The Blue Duck. He ran the children's boat building program. She met Richard and his wife, Susan who ran the only gift shop on the island. It was in eyeshot of the museum on the dock. Marian was on the dock too. She was the potter who ran the little shop, Islesford Pottery. She met, Joy, the Postmaster and clerk. They were one and the same on a small island. She met Scott, a carpenter. She met Katy, who ran the Island Artists Gallery.

But there was someone that the ranger wanted to get to know most of all, the librarian. So, her very first lunch break she would go to the library and do just that. She glanced in the old mirror and made a slight adjustment to her appearance before she set out. On her way there she spoke with a few kids who had spread a blanket in the sunshine to sell sea glass and rocks they had found on the beach.

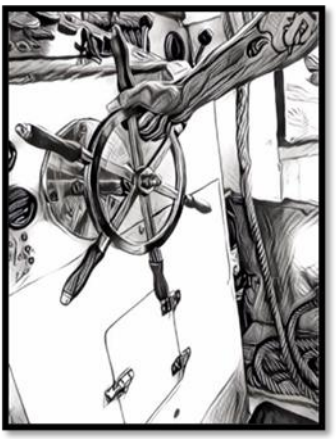
Yes, there was a small, yet fully stocked library on the island. No one was at the desk when she arrived, but when the ranger called out a "hello" after a minute or so, a woman called back from what sounded like several rooms away. After another minute she made an appearance. And she met Cindy, the librarian. Introductions and small talk took place. Cindy smiled about the traffic that came to the island when the summer residents arrived. "In the winter, I can take a walk and not see anyone. In the summer, there are times when three golf carts are parked in front of the post office," she said. "That's traffic on a small island," the ranger surmised. The ranger asked her to recommend a book about old-time island life; a book that was pure Maine. Cindy recommended "Noon at High Tide" by Elisabeth Ogilvie. The ranger left with the book.

On the island, everyone knew where to find you, so getting a library account meant that you only had to provide your name. In this case, it was Ranger Alison.

But that wasn't all that Ranger Alison walked away with. A basket contained free bookmarks, like almost every library does. But this one held a bookmark about the most famous island resident of all. The bookmark was of Ashely Bryan, a Black American artist whose talent was so vast he was able to create art in an array of mediums. He painted canvases in brilliant colors, he wrote and illustrated children's books, created imposing puppets from found objects on the beach, and fashioned stained-glass windows from found sea glass. Alison needed to see his work at the Storyteller Pavilion on the island, but for now she had secured a bookmark.

The afternoon cruise boat came. She delivered her program to the handful of tourists who came with it. And then it was quiet, and she was mostly alone again. At day's end she caught a different boat on the way back to Mount Desert

Island. It was the Mail Boat, called The Sea Queen. It was there that she met Scott, the carpenter. He took the Mail Boat home to Ellsworth every day. They struck up a conversation on the dock, where she learned that he liked to hike just like she did. Trails provided bountiful conversation and were a never-ending topic of discussion—where to start, end, how hard, how high, other challenges, views, and on and on. It was the start of a weekly Tuesday friendship.



Paul drove the Mail Boat and was happy to converse with the ranger and pepper the conversation. He was fully committed to helping out his fellow islanders—he'd caught the bug, the community vibe, and cared about the islanders. "This island raised me," he said. Gisselle was the deckhand. Just out of high school she was the hired hand to unload boxes and packages no matter how heavy or awkward. Her strength and speed were supersonic as she tossed boxes and moved them down the line from the boat to the dock to the mail room.

The ranger was friendly, but she didn't interact with the locals who did the real work as lobstermen, or worked on the dock, or ran a home. They valued hard work here. They were busy and she knew it. She gave them space. On that first Tuesday, her back was turned while she stood on the dock at the end of the day, waiting for the Mail Boat to bring her back to the bigger island. A lobsterman passed by her and boarded a beat-up lobster boat called Sundog, with a sticker on it that read, "Attitude Makes All the Difference." The lobsterman said, "I thought you were going to give me a ticket," as he mistook her for law

enforcement from behind. Her ranger uniform, all in green, made her look guilty. She thought to respond with a droll quip, but he jumped aboard and motored off. She learned fast to give the real workers their space.

The 2nd Tuesday:

On the second Tuesday, after the first wave of tourists from the boat had left, she needed to use the restroom before her lunch break. She decided that it would be enough to just pull the heavy door shut and walk the short distance to the restroom on the Islesford Dock without locking it. Anyway, the door was so heavy and awkward to push open, it would

seem locked to anyone who tried to get in. She wouldn't be long, and there was no one in the museum. But when she returned just minutes later the door was open and two visitors, a couple, were in the lobby. She felt bad. She felt she hadn't done the right thing. She should have locked the door. But she decided that no harm had been done, so she welcomed them and told them to let her know if they had questions. "Oh," the woman replied, "we've already been welcomed."

"Already been welcomed? Is someone else here? Who would welcome them and how did three people, the couple, and another person, get inside so quickly?" she thought. "And that heavy door, it was hard to push open."

She knew some of the islanders at that point, but none of them had entered the museum while she was there, and no islanders had said anything to her about helping out at the museum. She walked away from the couple and rounded the corner to the Captain's Room. No one was there. She opened the door to the office and darted in. She worried that her backpack or the radio had been stolen. No. She rounded the corner, the donation box was there with the

same few bills in it as when she had arrived. “What in the world?” she thought to herself.

All this happened in a matter of seconds so the couple who was looking around were none the wiser. She approached them again, “You say someone inside the museum welcomed you here?” “Yes,” they said and seemed disinterested. They wanted to look around, not engage the ranger. “What did they look like?” she asked. “It was a woman in a long dress. That’s her,” said the woman pointing at a picture of the founder’s family in the entryway.

The ranger was too dumbstruck to speak. They were joking with her, or testing her, or giving her a hard time for not having been at the museum when they came in. It must have been one of those reasons. She thought to make a joke back at them, but they were looking around and speaking softly with each other. The moment had passed. Anyway, all seemed well at the museum, nothing was disturbed. She shouldn’t have left the door unlocked, she thought. She didn’t talk to them again.

When they left, and she was alone again, the ranger walked to the photo in the hallway the woman had pointed at. It was the founder’s wife, Louise Sawtelle. She just stared at her image. “Why weren’t the tourists alarmed that she saw a woman in an old-fashioned dress who looked just like an old photograph on the wall?” she wondered.

Then she remembered there was a basement. A group of rangers had been instructed by their supervisor to go down there together to clean it just before the season started. A round, brick stairway led to it, the kind of staircase you see in lighthouses. It was dark, but clean and well maintained by the park service. Still, it was an empty, cavernous

expanse. No one was upstairs. Could someone be downstairs? She wasn't going down there to find out.

At the end of the day, she watched the locals play softball when she went back to the dock to catch the Mail Boat to go home. Gulls sat atop the working dock and watched them too. Scott told her about a trail that would bring her to an airplane wreck on the bigger island. She hiked it on her day off.

The 3rd Tuesday:

By the third Tuesday, she'd finished the book, "High Tide at Noon" so lunch break meant returning it to the library. Cindy was in a back room busy creating a display of artifacts donated from somebody recently dead. "I wish I had more household items to display, Cindy said. "Everything that is saved is what men used," she said. "Isn't that the way," she and Alison agreed. Since they were on the topic, Cindy mentioned a few book titles that focused on the achievements of women where men had largely received the credit. One title was, "The Other Einstein" about Albert Einstein's brilliant first wife, another title was, "Rosalind Franklin: The Dark Lady of DNA." Two other books they discussed were "Rise of the Rocket Girls" and "The Fossil Hunter." They were all about women's unmentioned contributions in science.

Alison was interested and jotted some titles down, but she was more interested in Louise Sawtelle, who had been dead a long, long time. "Who was she?" she wondered and "Why did the tourist point at her photograph and say they had seen her?" When Cindy was done talking about book titles, Alison asked her, "What do you know about Louise Sawtelle, the museum founder's wife?"

Cindy's mood changed. She became more serious and paused. "Why do you ask that?" The ranger wasn't going to give anything away, especially how she had slipped out of the museum to take a restroom break, so she didn't provide a ready answer.

In an about turn Alison asked, "Are there any ghost stories on this island?" "Let's just say this, people around here say, the ones who walked among us, the ones who were us, are still with us," Cindy said solemnly.

That's creepy Alison thought. She grabbed another Maine title, "The Weir" by Ruth Moore and left.

The 4th Tuesday:

The most famous island summer resident was, without question, artist and author Ashley Bryan. The more Alison learned about Ashley Bryan, the more she wanted to see his work. A contemporary structure called The Storyteller Pavilion was erected by his home. That, and the museum, were the island highlights. It was open to the public and his friends' hosted visitors and shared stories of friendship and his artistry that happened over many decades.

It was also the reputation of Bryan that was revered. His kindness and the joy he spread came into every conversation the ranger had with anyone about him, sometimes even before anyone mentioned his talent as an artist. He was a positive force they all said. She felt as if she was somehow coming to know him too. And, she had seen his photos around the island. He even looked kind. He was loved here.

So, her lunch break was a walk to the Storyteller Pavilion. And she wasn't disappointed. The light, bright structure was the island high point. It was a joyful and reflective place at the same time.

The 5th Tuesday

In mid-summer, the island exploded in population from about 70 year-round residents to 350 summer residents mixed in. Alison watched tourism increase every week. And now that school was out, and July had arrived, there were more tourists than ever. Over 90 people came through the museum door that day. Upon arriving, she unlocked the door, she glanced in the mirror, she greeted the tourists, and she delivered her program. She did what she had to do, and then she counted down the time until her lunch break when they left.

Cindy had said a week or so before that she would be on vacation and that the library would be closed on a Tuesday, but Alison couldn't remember which Tuesday. She had finished her book so off she went. She passed the wildflowers and sun filled houses on her way there. She waved at the passing golf carts and the islanders waved

back. When she reached the library, the sign out front read OPEN, so she was in luck, the book would be returned on time.

As seemed customary with Cindy, she wasn't at the desk to greet her, she was in another room, up to something. Who knows what, working on a display, shelving books? Alison called out to her. No reply. She thought about taking another bookmark to add to her collection, so she wandered over to the basket and began to pick through it. Nothing there she wanted.

Maybe Cindy was on vacation. Maybe the community was so tiny and trustworthy they just left the library open when she was out of town. Alison wasn't sure she should just leave her book without handing it off to someone.

A man appeared out of nowhere. A black man with a gracious smile asked her, "Can I help you?" "Straight up, I'm surprised an island this size has two librarians," she joked. "I'm not a librarian, I'm an artist," he corrected her. "Cindy is out, on vacation to Philadelphia. I'm here to help." "Well, I have a book to return," Alison said. Suddenly she put it together in her mind, it was the famed Ashley Bryan. And he seemed as nice as he had been described to her. "I was expecting you," he said. "Expecting me" she thought? "Cindy said you might be coming to return a book, she said to keep an eye out for Ranger Alison." She felt humbled, she had been part of a

conversation that happened with Ashley Bryan, and she hadn't even been there. "Well, it's a pleasure to be helped by you," she stammered. "Oh," he replied "you're one of us. After all, the rangers tell our stories and care for our island." She smiled and lowered her eyes. Again, she was too humbled to say much. She handed off the book to him. There was no stopping the clock, she needed to return to the museum. She thanked him and left.

A few tourists floated in and out of the museum when the afternoon boat came with more people. She gave her program, cleaned her workstation and finished for the day. That afternoon, as she stood on the town dock, she told Scott she had spoken with Ashley Bryan at the library earlier in the day. "It must have been someone else," he said. "Ashley Bryan is gone."

"Gone, like not on the island right now," she asked? "Gone, like deceased," Scott said.

The 6th Tuesday:

The sixth Tuesday brought fog, "thick-a-fog" some say. The day turned dark and windy by the time the cruise boat arrived. Tony wasn't set up to build boats, and the kids weren't playing out front. But two men stood outside the museum waiting. It felt more like they were waiting for her than for the museum to open.

Every week the ranger who narrated the cruise announced that Alison was to be let off the boat first so that she could open the museum. That meant it wasn't tourists from the boat waiting out front. So what islanders were that anxious to get in at opening time? Whoever it was would have to wait because first she had to duck into the bathroom on the

dock. When she came out, no one was outside the museum. Instead, the two men looked like they were already inside the museum gazing out the window at her.

Then she looked behind her, the other ranger had gotten off the boat and was making her way up to the museum, followed by a wave of tourists. Alison struggled with the key, this way and that, and pushed and wretched the door open as it shuttered loudly. In plowed everyone awkwardly all at the same time. Duties were to throw on the lights, hoist the flag, and man the counter. The two men weren't in the window now. And, even if they were, she didn't have time to be scared. And she was surrounded by 30 tourists.

"That's a lot of people to haunt all at once," she thought as she readied the museum, and then she wasn't afraid anymore.

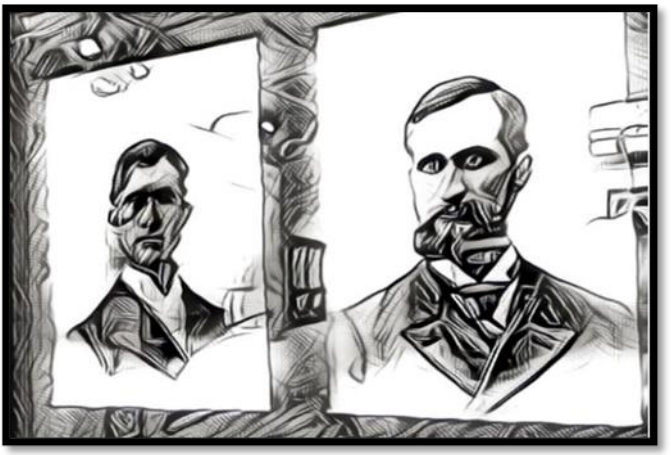
After a time, the fog began to burn off. The kids came out to play again. Alison sat outside on the front steps eating lunch. Then the church bells started. They didn't stop. Alison sat her lunch down and crossed the grass to peer up the street. She watched Tony leave The Blue Duck and head up the street. The men who worked on the Co-op Dock followed close behind him. "Where was everyone going," she wondered? Suddenly she realized--the church bells sounded the fire alarm. Fire. Something was on fire.

When you are a ranger, you feel compelled to help. She wanted to. She locked the door and left her lunch. She followed at a great distance, but it was easy to follow the smoke. When she came to the house on fire, she could see the Cranberry Island Rescue Service and the volunteer firefighters were performing a centuries old tradition of neighbor-helping-neighbor. But they weren't the only ones there to help. There, in front of her, were the two men who had stood on the lawn in front of the museum that morning, and then maybe inside it. They worked side-by-side to hoist a ladder and held it in place for the firefighters to climb. Alison stood with the residents who watched. The operation was in full swing by people who knew what they were doing, so all she found to do was watch unless she was called upon.

Who were these two men? They didn't say anything. Not a word to anyone, not a word to each other. Alison stared at them. One turned to look at her, smiled, and nodded. Her mouth went agape, and she looked away. Were they really in the museum earlier?

The flames died down. To Alison, it seemed like the fire was under control. She hadn't been a help, but she had been there to be a help, so I guess that counted a little. Firefighters and locals moved about, and she realized the two men she had seen at the museum earlier were gone. Nowhere to be seen.

Alison steadied her nerves and turned to a woman who stood near her and asked, "there were two men holding a ladder in place for the firefighters. What happened to them," she asked? "Oh, Alex and Angus MacDonald. They appear to help our island families in time of need." She went on to say, "the ones who walked among us, the ones who were us, are still with us."



“Appear,” she thought to herself? The ranger knew those names from The Maine Seacoast Mission. They were long dead.

The 7th Tuesday:

The fire from the week before had been far worse than Alison had known. A woman had died. It was a severe loss on an island this size.

That day, a Memorial Flotilla for the woman took place. Almost all the boats assembled in front of the docks. They motored in single file out to sea where they circled around a location that meant something to the deceased. Later that morning, after the boats had gone out, Alison could hear the “last call” final salute from each boat horn.

Later that day, someone told her that a lobster trap containing the woman’s ashes, photos of her family, and a sweater she had knitted belonged to the ocean now. To Alison, it seemed a fitting end to an island life.

The Final Tuesday:

Instead of "thick-a-fog" the day brought "dungeon thick-a-fog" coupled with cold. Cold seemed odd in August, but after all, this was Maine. There wasn't any visibility on the cruise boat that morning, so the ranger that narrated the tour talked about Maine history and granite, instead of pointing out the rocky coastline and the peaks in Acadia. Alison listened but mostly she thought about opening the museum and being left alone there in stormy weather with its strange, ghostly inhabitants after the tourists left.

Low around 1:00 PM the skies grew darker. And then they got darker, and then the winds came. And then the winds churned. Alone in the museum, Alison closed the door and she waited. And then the rains came, and the sea churned uncontrollably. There wasn't anyone on the docks, and the boats rocked hard in the water. The storm continued and nothing changed hour after hour. Then the phone rang. It was her supervisor. High winds and rough seas meant ferries and the Mail Boat were cancelled. "This storm seems here to stay, we won't be able to get you off the island tonight," she told Alison. "This has never happened before, so I hate to tell you this, but you will be responsible for finding a place to sleep tonight. You've made connections on the island, so see if you can find someone to stay with. If worse comes to worse, you can sleep in the museum. Its sturdy and it isn't going anywhere," her supervisor said. "If anything changes, we will come and get you." she said.

"In the dark, in the storm, in the museum overnight" Alison thought? Before she could think of anything else, her mind went to fear. "And that basement? No way." Everything seemed so different than that first day when she watched the children from the boatbuilders dance merrily on the lawn in the sunshine.

Even though it wasn't nightfall yet, the museum felt different in the dark with the doors closed and the sounds of the whistling winds of the storm. She continued to wait hour after hour, and nothing changed. No one was coming to get her. She had to venture out.

The restaurant! That was nearby on the Islesford Dock. She could make it there. Yes, even if the waves were battering the dock, anything was better than staying in the museum, she thought to herself.

The minute she left the museum she was instantly soaked. She couldn't see much in front of her.

Into the storm, into the rain, into the wind, into the dark. Forward to the Islesford Dock to the restaurant. Maybe someone was there? The wind and the rain and the dark made progress next to impossible. She pushed forward surrounded by the noise of the wind. A light there perhaps? Closer, closer she got. Closer.

She thought she'd never make it and she never did. Maybe she was lost at sea, no one knows for sure.

That Wednesday:

Daybreak. Everything was calm again. Her supervisor had started calling the museum repeatedly at dawn to check for Alison. No answer.

The Wednesday rangers reported to the marina at Northeast Harbor in the morning and rode the cruise boat to the island like any other Wednesday. The museum ranger unlocked the door as he listened to the children from the boatbuilder's play and laugh on the lawn in the sunshine. There was no evidence of a storm from the night before. He didn't even know about Alison's misfortune. Not long after the cruise boat left, national park law enforcement, the Coast Guard and members of the Town Council came to the museum. The ranger was shaken to hear the news that Alison was missing. Everything in the museum was in order he said. The door was locked when he arrived, so she must have left the building. They searched the basement, they searched the docks, they searched the water, and they knocked on doors. Her body was never recovered.

Since then:

Since then, some islanders say they've seen her. She sits on the steps of the museum, or she walks to the galleries, the shops, the docks, the boatbuilders, the Storyteller Pavilion, the post office, the streets, and, of course, the library. She smiles and waves. She doesn't say much. Since she's in uniform she keeps moving. She must return to the museum before long. Her blonde hair dances in the wind and her eyes are covered with sunglasses. A smile and a wave are all you get, but the islanders know she is there, just ask any one of them if they are not too busy working.

If they have time, they will tell you, “Louise takes care of the fishermen, Ashley takes care of the children, Alex and Angus take care of our families and Alison? She takes care of our island. The storm kept her here to take care of us. And now we take care of her too. “She watches over us, and we, of her,” they will tell you. She is welcome everywhere, but instead she walks the island watching over us. And she is at the museum with the rest of them. Some nights you can hear her turning the key in the heavy door and banging back and forth to try and open it. Some nights you can look through the office window at the museum and see her gazing at her reflection in the mirror to ready herself for visitors.

Without a body there would be no gravestone. But the islanders said her spirit belongs to them now, so the Sawtelle’s are no longer alone, just go behind the museum and you will see. She’s there with them.

And, if you were to stop one of the men working on the dock, or a lobsterman long enough to ask about any of them, they won't say much. They simply say, "The ones who walked among us, the ones who were us, are still with us."

Ashley Bryan (1923-2022): Bryan was an American writer and illustrator of children's books. Most of his subjects are from the African American experience. He was the recipient of numerous awards. In 2009, he won the Children's Literature Legacy Award for his contribution to American children's literature. In 1946, while at the Skowhegan School of Art's inaugural summer program in Maine, Ashley visited Acadia National Park and saw the Cranberry Isles. This island community became his home and studio for the next 70+ years.

Maine Seacoast Mission: Since 1905, the Maine Seacoast Mission has supported Maine's unbridged island and Downeast coastal communities. Mission Statement today: Rooted in a history of compassionate service and mutual trust, the Mission seeks to strengthen coastal and island communities by educating youth, supporting families, and promoting good health.

Alexander and Angus McDonald: Maine Seacoast Mission was founded in 1905 by two brothers, Angus and Alexander McDonald, both congregational ministers. The McDonald brothers knew about the hardships that island fishing communities, lighthouse stations and lifesaving stations faced.

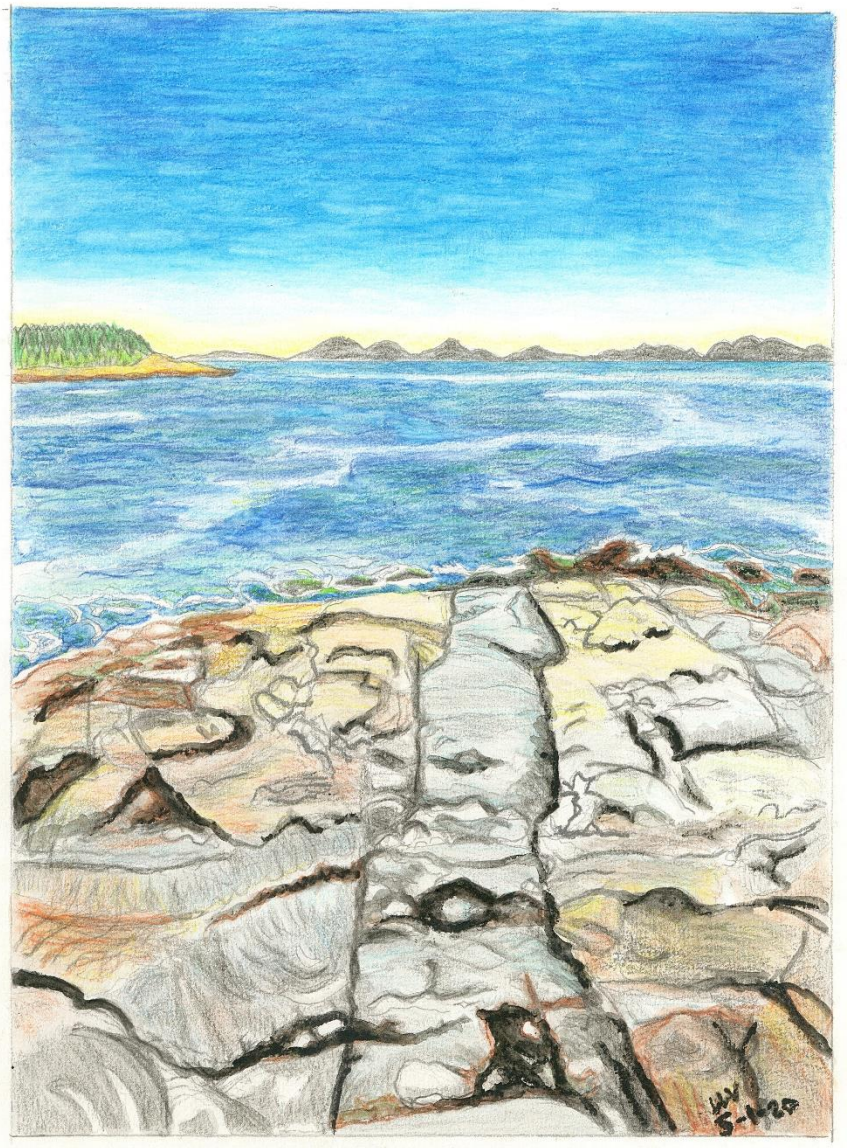
The Islesford Historical Museum: The museum was built in 1927 to house Dr. William O. Sawtelle's collection of materials and artifacts related to the history, people, and culture of life of Little Cranberry Island, where the museum

is located. In 1948, the museum and its collection of artifacts were donated to Acadia National Park. The museum is a short boat ride from Mount Desert Island, where most of Acadia National Park is located. From late May through September, the park offers the ranger-narrated Islesford Historical Cruise, which makes a 45-minute stop at the museum.

Louise Burpee Sawtell (1877-1941): Wife of William Sawtelle. Little is known about her to the author.

William Otis Sawtell (1847-1939): Founder of the Islesford Historical Museum on Little Cranberry Island. A native of Bangor, Maine, and professor of physics at Haverford College in Pennsylvania. He summered on Little Cranberry Island and became interested in regional history and accumulated collections related to the Islands.

Alison Leonard
Islesford



Laura Venger
Frenchboro

Some Reflections on Coaching

Fixed seat rowing, also called open water rowing, is a misfit high school sport. In the US there are relatively few racing programs. There is no Olympic gold. It is unlikely that high school students will be able to continue the sport in college. It is also a great sport for a tiny island school. In New England the schools that participate generally field co-ed teams. This is critical for North Haven because it doubles our candidate pool. Additionally North Haven has typically made grades 7-12 eligible. This works far better in rowing than it would in most other sports. In running, basketball, or soccer the idea of putting a 7th grader up against a senior would usually be laughable. In six oared pilot gigs all the athletes are collaborating to move the boat. Occasionally some of the physically smaller students possess the seamanship and judgment to be coxswains.

North Haven also has the resources to run a fixed seat rowing program: the ocean and, thanks to some great work in the late 1990s, a boat. Our home waters are not ideally suited to sliding seat crew rowing. Additionally many, many schools in New England run crew programs at a very high level. Many varsity crew teams won't have an athlete under six feet tall.

So how do we prepare coed islanders ages 12 to 18 to compete against high school teams from Vermont, The Bronx, Connecticut, etc.? Probably any good scholastic coach struggles with how hard to push the kids placed in their charge. As a coach I do not want to injure my athletes. I myself have lifelong tendonitis in my forearms from my own days as a teen athlete. I do, however, want to provide students with all the tools they need to feel confident and successful in what can be a stressful setting. How hard should you push kids in a sport that likely will not be part of their adult lives? This is an especially big deal for island

kids. The island can be such a safe environment to grow up in that it can lead to a real nervousness about the greater world. Leaving the island and leaving Maine to compete against students who have other life experiences can be intimidating.

All this was at the forefront of my mind heading down to the Icebreaker in Hull, Massachusetts. 150 rowers divided into three ability levels and two vessel types, all competing within easy sight of the Boston skyline. We row six oared pilot gigs. This vessel type has more horsepower and requires more discipline as well as better communication skills than the smaller coxed-fours. We placed ourselves in the novice division. While North Haven has a long rowing history this is only our second year back after the Covid pandemic; it's also only my second year of coaching and our first regional meet in that time.

The wind was blowing 13 kts across the dock and the water was dotted with whitecaps. The pilot gigs were docked on the leeward side of the dock and coxed fours were docked to windward. For some inexplicable reason the first gig we were assigned to, Crouching Lion, was docked on the windward side with the fours. At this race each team was assigned to different boats for each heat to eliminate any advantage from boat design and construction.

Team North Haven had to extricate an unfamiliar 30' boat from behind two coxed fours and row away to windward just to get to the starting line. This under the eyes of hundreds of strangers while dock volunteers from the host organization helped handle lines and gave conflicting instructions.

We have been practicing for two months. One half of our rowers had not rowed a gig before mid-September of this year. But we practice. We work together. We learn to give

clear commands and to receive them. Our coxswains are learning to read the wind and the currents. Our rowers all know port from starboard without hesitation. To me it is amazing every morning, before the sun rises, to see middle and high schoolers show up and be ready to get on the water and work. For me the practices are the best. But the focus of the practices is the race, so we leave our island, our home waters, and our boat to strike out for higher risk and higher rewards. We all hope not to embarrass ourselves. I fervently hope I've helped them to develop the skills they need to feel successful.

Their seamanship proved to be competent and sufficient to the task in front of them. Maneuvering in the wind, winning their heats, and treating each other kindly within a rigid command structure were the elements of this story.

We proved to have the fastest combined time in the quarter mile sprints of any of the novice teams after all had raced in three heats. Taking long efficient strokes, synchronizing movements, being attentive to crew mates, and good seamanship matter more than raw strength and size.

Morten Hansen
North Haven

Sharon Whitham
Great Cranberry Island

When I ride horses

I groom Lars a stable horse
His fur is smooth and coarse,
He gives a soft little bay
That smells like sweet hay,
I put on his saddle
Lars waits quietly as I mount on his back,
I squeeze my legs gently
He lumbers forward,
We head to the arena
Lars strains his neck eager to trot,
I grip the reins tighter
I am ready

Holland Carroll
Poem & Image
Isles au Haut

Pigeons

eleven pigeons parked on two wire tiers
their cooing and calling carrying over rooftops
over bay waters, through winter skies,
across meandering snow drifts
where scattered paths of stone and leaves suddenly swirl,
as if this were prelude --
opening bars to the first movement of a full fury
that is only now tuning up.
in their firm stance they apprehend before prediction.

three tiers now, thirty-two birds flocking,
one who takes the top line
the others congregate in stalwart balance,
shoulders squared.

as if on cue, tail feathers fan, wings unfurl
they rise so rapidly
their startling is a sprung shade flapping
brash and sudden—though
no more in knowledge of a shade's clatter, they
than i know of flight.

Jacqueline Gryphon
Peaks Island

Jane Banquer
Peaks Island

winter taxi

in the winter darkness i come up the slip from the ferry
one large canvas bag of groceries slung over my good shoulder
too heavy to carry at my side
though i wished that wasn't so

i almost walked by the waiting taxi thinking i could do the twenty minute walk home
it wasn't that cold and i had a coffee at three that still pushed me along the icy sidewalk
but i gave in to the temptation as the taxi driver smiled and popped open the hatch to take my canvas bag

my foot hurt was one excuse
my shoulder had just cost me at least a case of wine in therapy visits
so i just got in the front seat with a sigh

i felt like the '62 chevy nova i had driven into extinction going along the back roads of maine hearing a part or two dropping off
clanking and bouncing and watching in the rear view mirror as they disappeared into the ditch

tap the brakes wiggle the steering wheel nothing bad seems to happen

so i guess i can do without that

whatever *that* was

is my body doing the same i wonder

i watch the deckhand push the wheelchair up the ramp and towards our taxi

she’s sitting cradling an oxygen tank

he is using two canes to shuffle behind

momentary confusion about if we will all fit in the taxi for one trip or not
but we do

we take off into the island darkness
headlights shining down narrow snow covered lanes until we reach the darkened house
a wooden ramp extending to the edge of the drive
i’m the only one who is strong enough to extricate the wheelchair from the back of the van

watching him struggle to get the chair through the ice and onto the ramp i take over
pushing her through the darkness over the narrow ramp to the front door of the quiet house
warmth spills out as i open the door that is never locked
no one does so on this island it seems

someone shuffles ahead and turns on the lights

inside the cottage is waiting
looking like it probably has for the past thirty years
i only have a moment to glance in and have to turn away quickly not wanting to invade their privacy

the driver and i turn and leave the small house behind us
the winter night stretching ahead illuminated by the headlights and little else

Irv Williams
Peaks Island

Donna Cundy
Monhegan

the woman

the woman walked down the street with anxiety
perched upon her head
an owl
white and snowy
reflecting
the first real snowstorm

as she walked, the wind began to pick up
and she wondered
do people see the owl i am carrying?

blowing away in pieces
first the eyes
now the beak
now the few black spots

ghost rider

then the feathers
one by one
trailing
along the snow covered road

Kat Farrin
Peaks Island

Jack Merrill
Islesford

Tom McVey
Long Island

Half Mile Walk

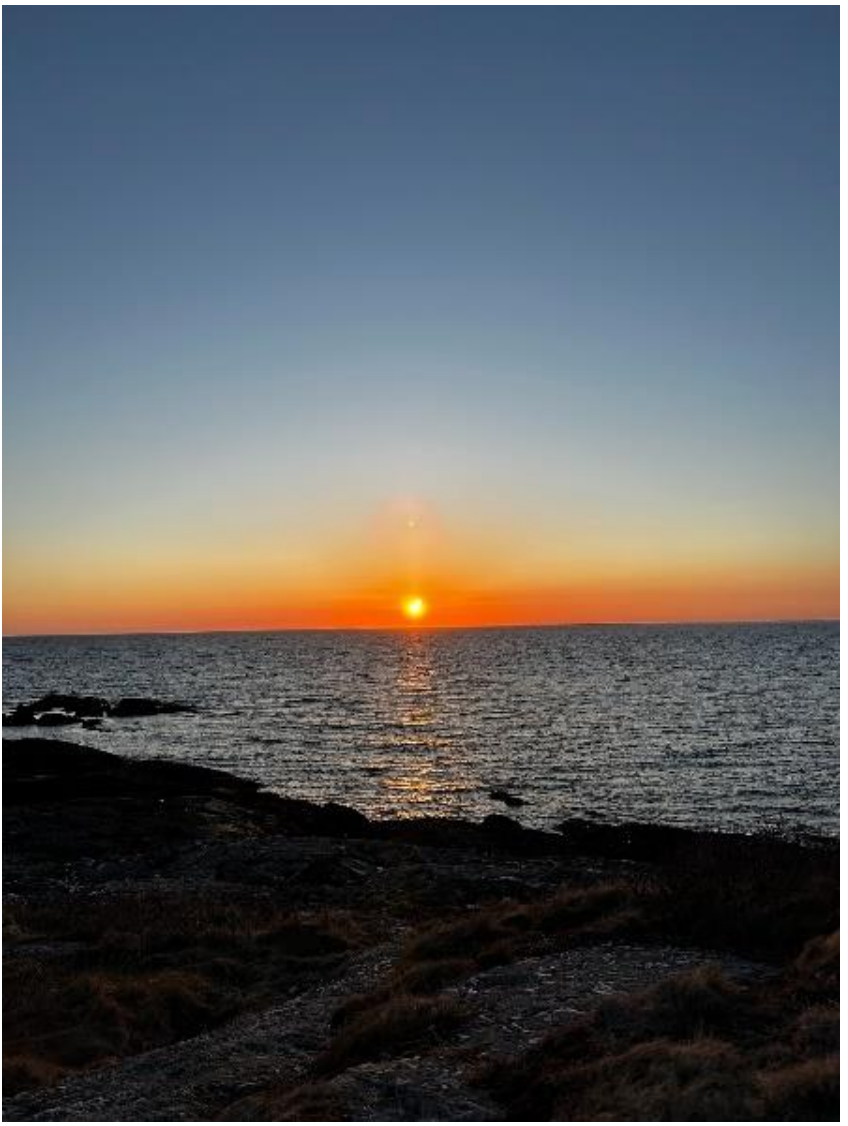
Southward,
From home to work
And back,
Not long,
Not far,
But introspective
And perceptive times.
Of a roadwalker's thoughts
About what the roadside tells.
From nearby trees
The ravens and crows,
Their raucous voices
And black wings
Crying and flying.
Like the walker
Moving with natural pace,
Joining the urgent, walking message
In fateful unison,
Theirs the echoes of the roadside
Written alongside asphalt paving
Spread for human travel
Where speed and urgency reign,
Faces intent behind the wheel,
Tires and engines roar,
Fumes and carbon hover, rise,
Vapors and particles
Buffeting the walker's pathway,
Their noxious noises
Echoed by the roadway's edge,
Where beer caps, other remnants,
Tell of tossed disposal,
Wasted, crushed.
And there are carcasses there
Reckless, roadkill
Where small creatures

Tried to cross,
Unable to finish, their intentions
East to meet the sunrise
Or west to reach the sunset,
Lives ended at the margin
Where roadside soil and asphalt meet,
A combative margin,
Where wooly bears' and amphibians' lives
And red-bellied and garter snakes',
Hoping for more longevity, ended.
The walker's pained eyes saw this,
Saddened, heartfelt,
Along the way to work,
Eyes, ears, lungs, heart
Feeling the observations,
Knowing the reasons,
But still the relentless traffic,
Unknowing, unfeeling,
Intermittently predacious,
Streams in gusts, noise,
Thoughtlessly.
And the walker observes,
Wishing otherwise,
And knowing,
Painfully, the messages repeat
On the return
Headed back, north,
Roadside detritus there, too,
With printed messages
On metal, plastic, glass
Where the excavated ditch runs
Draining north to the stream,
Headed to the sea,
Carrying its outcast bits and pieces,
North and then abruptly west.
Every week, all year,
All the years of half mile trips

The messages speak.
Nature's creatures travel east and west,
Human machines north and south,
But there is no conversation there,
Just their untranslated disconnect
Of the half mile walk,
All four seasons,
And the wishful thoughts
Of a half mile walker
For resolution.

Thruston Martin
Islesboro

Janet Moynihan
Matinicus



Vincenza Deschamps
Matinicus

Kat Farrin
Peaks Island

Ahni Kruger
Cranberry Isles

Landlubbers and the Sea

On the wall of my mother's summer home on Vinalhaven were two antique-style plaques.

One-read, "Relatives – After three days like fish, they begin to stink" (Ben Franklin), and

"A Boat—a hole in the water that you pour money into." These stories will be a conglomeration of our family's history of boating in Maine.

First, the Sea gods must look kindly on our family as they spared many of our loved ones a much-deserved heartache by not being sent to Davy's locker. Just because the Flagg family summered on Vinalhaven since 1937 the family's men thought they were "Men of the Sea" and not the landlubbers that they really were.

Uncle Joe was the first parental unit to purchase a boat for Vinalhaven. He dragged his craft up from the landlocked village of Gaithersburg, Maryland. After 12 hours of driving and a 2-hour ferry ride, he came off the ferry dragging his boat to her new port. His '65 continental lugged his enormous (to me) 16-foot woody boat with a 40-horsepower Evinrude motor and a white canvas top. He drove by the Ferry's crowd; on his head was a captain's hat, with gold piping. (I thought it was a law that all boat owners bought a captain's hat). With a wry smile, Uncle Joe pulled his pipe from his mouth and said to me, "Hey Bub." A fisherman from behind me murmured, "Hey that's a lake boat."

After our hellos and welcomes, we took the vessel to Gus Skoog's wharf. Gus was one of the few master boat builders left on the Island and he had a dock that Uncle Joe was granted permission to tie up to. That night Uncle Joe

got a phone call from a fisherman (in a New England accent)" Joe, your boats a hangin'." A Phrase that would follow us through our childhood vacations. We jumped into the family cars and dashed through town to Gus's dock. There it was, Joe's 16-foot woody hanging askew, some 4 feet off the water's surface. Immediately the parents berated all available cousins for this debacle." What!" Another in a series of guilts, the parents would impose on us for their boating misadventures. This boat had a short lifespan, however: the next day the brain trust of parents decided to put the engine on the boat. Freshly and correctly tied to the dock, and at optimum low tide (not), the men decided to lower the engine hand over fist through the webbing of the dock. You might ask yourself, why didn't they just pull the boat up on shore and do this work? …Well, they didn't! Suddenly as the 6 men manhandled the engine to the deck of the boat, a scream cried out. "Watch out below." As I stood on the dock, I witnessed the engine cartwheel through the air crashing through the boat hull, with a slight gurgle, gurgle, gurgle. Uncle Joe's first 16-foot woody with a white canvas top lake boat sunk under the waves of the mighty Atlantic. Immediately all the cousins scrambled before they were berated by the demoralized brain trust. We then, as a family, dragged the SS Neversails carcass from the murky depths to shore, Uncle Joe pulled his pipe from his lips, his Captain's hat from his head and said, "We'll let her dry out, patch her up, and add a coat of Marine spar varnish; she'll be good as new." That was not in her cards, however, as she sat up on blocks in Skoogs Boatyard till the following summer, when someone took pity on her and dragged her off behind the big house. Many, many years later with little fanfare, Uncle Joe's first family boat was taken to her final resting place … the dump.

Richard Flagg
Vinalhaven

Jon Rich
Chebeague

Lost Fish House

It is gone now; like it was never there.

I remember it. I don't know how long it had been there. I doubt anyone asked permission to build it there.

It was one of four or five, but the others had disappeared over the years. They either fell down or were knocked down; abandoned, victims of a changing world. They all served the same purpose, but each was different. His was always in the best shape; the only one I ever saw being used.

The fish house was not very big. It was grey, made with weather-beaten boards, all sorts of lengths and widths. It was made by hand, no power tools. It had windows and a door; tar paper roof. It was built on a crib. You stepped up into it. There was no insulation.

My guess is that it started out on the banking, but as the years went by and the high-water mark kept inching up, the bank receded until, finally, it was on the edge of sand and land.

The fish house belonged to Ernest. Like him, it was old, sturdy; able to stand up to the weather. When I knew him, he seemed old. He was short, thin and wiry. He was tough; he had seen it all. He wore glasses. He had an oval face, lots of weather-beaten wrinkles. He was bald and always wore a baseball cap. In summer, he wore one flannel shirt; in winter, two. He was a fisherman; in summer he lobstered.

Ernest mended his traps at the fish house, unfiltered cigarette dangling out of his mouth. He'd be lightly hammering an oak lath, knitting a head or working on the

trap, talking all the while. The door to the fish house was always open, there was no lock; I don't think anybody ever took anything, but then again, every piece of metal was rusted.

He had various tools and other artifacts hanging on the walls. Hammers, saws and nails to repair traps with oak lathes. Unfinished projects laid on the bench. It was remarkedly clean. In winter, lobster traps were piled up on the banking next to the fish house.

I remember trawls, long coils of rope in barrels with big hooks used for fishing outside, long lining; before the days of monofilament. They smelled like they had been in the water for a long time, which they had.

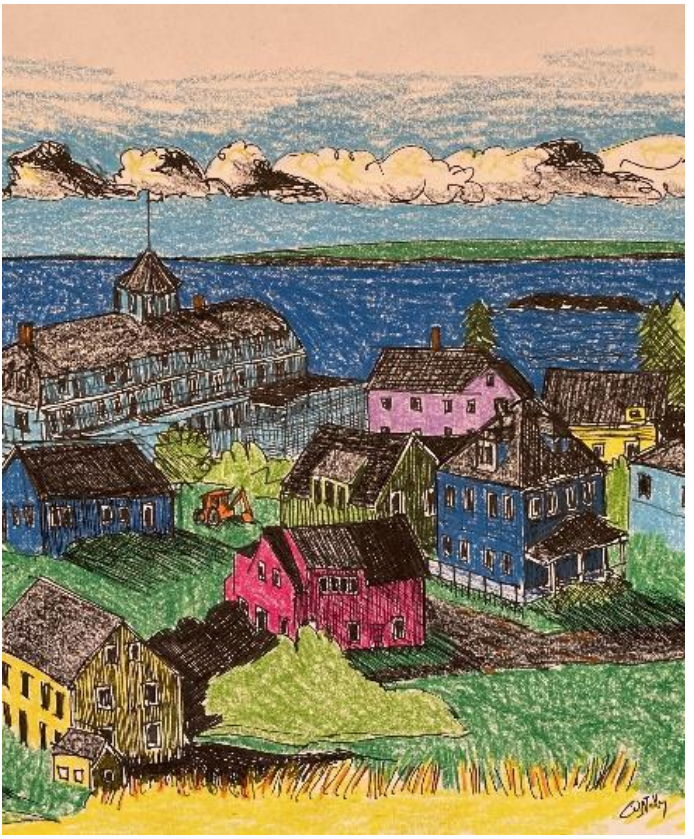
In the winter, he used to haul his boat up next to the fish house, so he could work on it. The fish house didn't have electricity, so he ran extensions cords down from the house so he had power to work on his boat.

After Earnest died, Ernie, his grandson inherited it. He might store things in it or under it, but he never mended traps there. He hauled his traps up at the Stone Wharf and then used a truck to transport them back to his house, where he had electricity. Over the years, the fish house was battered by storms and fell into disrepair. Every year more of it would disappear. After a few years, the walls went, but the truss, cut all those years ago for the framing, remained standing. Then the front wall went with the roof, resting on the sand, the ridge pole pointing up because the back wall was still there

The world had changed and fish houses were things of the past. Traps were no longer stored on the shore. And those that were slowly became part of the earth; everyone now had metal traps.

After a while, all that remained was the cribbing that it had been built on. Then the last major storm hit. I walked down to where it had been and looked around; I was shocked. Green grass and sand where there had been cribbing. There was nothing left of Ernest or the fish house. How could it be: more than 70 years of history just gone?

Peter M. Rice
Chebeague Island



Donna Cundy
Monhegan

(Quilt designed and made by Beverly Sanborn
and quilted by Lily Sweeney of the Batty Quilter
in Bar Harbor)

Beverly Sanborn
Great Cranberry Island

Lost on Land

Now I been fishin for most of my life
Cost me a couple of boats
And a pretty good wife

Seen all the changes
As time sailed by

Faced all the dangers
And seen some good men die

Now I just sold my last old trawler
For just ten cents on the dollar

But you know that the seas are getting taller
But the catch is a whole lot smaller

Most of you will never understand
That a man like me
Is lost on the land

It's just not right for a sailor like me
To win the land and lose the sea

So now my friends please understand
That a man like me is lost on the land

Maybe it's time for me to be
With my shipmates beneath the sea

Then I'll know the wonders of the deep
When I join my brothers in our eternal
Sleep

Capt. Joe Litchfield
Peaks Island

Lavendier Myers
Peaks Island

A Stretch of the Imagination

"Why, Blanchard, if everyone on this island had what he thinks he's got we'd stretch from here to the Azores." My father is listening to Bill Stilphen, a seasoned mariner who makes his headquarters at Leonard's, the Chebeague Island general store. George Leonard, the grocer, has granted Bill an unrestricted public platform at the store. Bill lives next door, entertains and at times shocks with his wry, inciteful observations of human foibles. He gets to the point when it comes to greed and social pretensions.

It's still early in the day. Bill has stepped outside into the morning sunshine, down the steps to have a one-on-one aside with my father. I'm seven-years-old, enjoying the warm dirt road under my feet, listening in, but impatient to get across the road to ice cream at Mansfield's Spa. The year is 1951.

"Blanchard, time for you to talk with folks. There's a fight on about that clothesline they've staked out across the stonewall. They've got their sheets drying where they ought not to be. It's heating up, Blanchard, I'm telling you. Next you know we'll be at war."

"But what are the Azores?" I'm wondering. "And why would anyone climb across a stonewall to stake out their washing pole? How would you climb up each time and balance on the rocks to get your clothespins into and out of the line?"

Fortified with maple walnut ice cream, we head home. I'm full of questions. "Wait 'til we get home for the Azores. They are islands like ours. Every Chebeague mariner knows where they are. You should too." Instead, we talk about the clothesline. As we make our way through the fields and into the woods there's the calming fragrance of

checkerberry leaves and juniper. We stop to pick and chew some leaves; my father points out stonewalls and tells me about the old property lines they trace through the fields and woods. “They don’t always match up with deeds, but people remember them. Seems to me someone has raised a flag of defiance with those sheets fluttering over that stonewall.”

Once home my grandmother takes on the groceries, releasing us to go to the bookcase. Dad pulls out a large heavy atlas from the bottom shelf. He flips it open, right to the centerfold where there is a blue expanse, the Maine coast on the left with Chebeague no more than a dot. He puts my finger there and draws his way out to the right to islands across the centerfold in the Atlantic. “Here are the Azores. They’re part of Portugal.”

I imagine Chebeague’s rocky ledges studded with pine trees and its pebbly coves stretching out like Silly Putty from my finger to merge with Dad’s at the Azores. “Remember Portugal each time you’re down at Uncle William’s beach and looking out beyond Halfway Rock. Head straight out and you’ll end up there, not in England.”

Bill saw it coming. It’s 2023. Chebeague’s shoreline is contracting as the sea rises. No stretch is left, not of the shore, not of the imagination. Everywhere property lines flutter with surveyor ribbons. Still people keep thinking, “they’ve got more than they’ve got.” I dig my toes into the sand down at the beach, look out beyond Halfway Rock and think of Bill.

Leila T. Bisharat
Chebeague Island

Eva Kabouchy
Matinicus

One Day at the Islesford Transfer Station

When I got here this morning,
To open the gate,
It was just the right time,
Not early or late.

But, as I rounded the corner,
It was surprising to find,
Some folks were here early,
And waiting in line.

Sometimes they come early,
To look on the shelf.
They check out the old things,
They might want for themselves.

It may be dishes,
Or puzzles that abound.
Sometimes an instrument,
That makes a fine sound.

But, now let me tell you,
What just happened here.
It seems that keys,
Can just disappear.

A lady drove in,
And parked in a spot.
She was fairly old,
So, I helped her a lot.

Hauled her cans for recycling,
Her bags to the bin.
She thanked me profusely,
With a cute little grin.

In a minute she came back,
Said, “My keys I can’t find!
Would you help me look,
If you’d be so kind?”

So, I jumped in the compactor,
With both hands and feet.
I emptied the bin,
And that’s not very neat.

The keys were not in there,
As I dug about.
She asked if I’d find them:
I thought, “This I doubt”.

Then to the Metal Bin,
She directed my search.
So, up in the side rail,
I jumped with a lurch.

She thought she had seen them,
But said with alarm,
That I couldn’t get to them,
Without doing self-harm.

Well, her being a lady,
I did what I must.
I hung head-first down in there,
In the muck, dirt, and rust.

The keys, they weren’t in there,
So, I came up from the slop.
What she’d seen was the tab,
From a beer can pull-top.

By now folks were backed up,
And my search hadn't worked.
I hadn't helped the lady,
Felt like my duty I'd shirked.

Was hauling returnables,
Beer, whiskey, and gin,
When again through the gate,
The lady walked in.

She'd brought back her husband,
To help search some more.
By the look on his face,
I thought he'd done this before.

They went to the compactor,
And tried to look in.
But I'd crushed things already,
So, they just couldn't win.

He looked very dismayed,
As to the Metal Bin he went.
I told him the story,
Of how head-first I went.

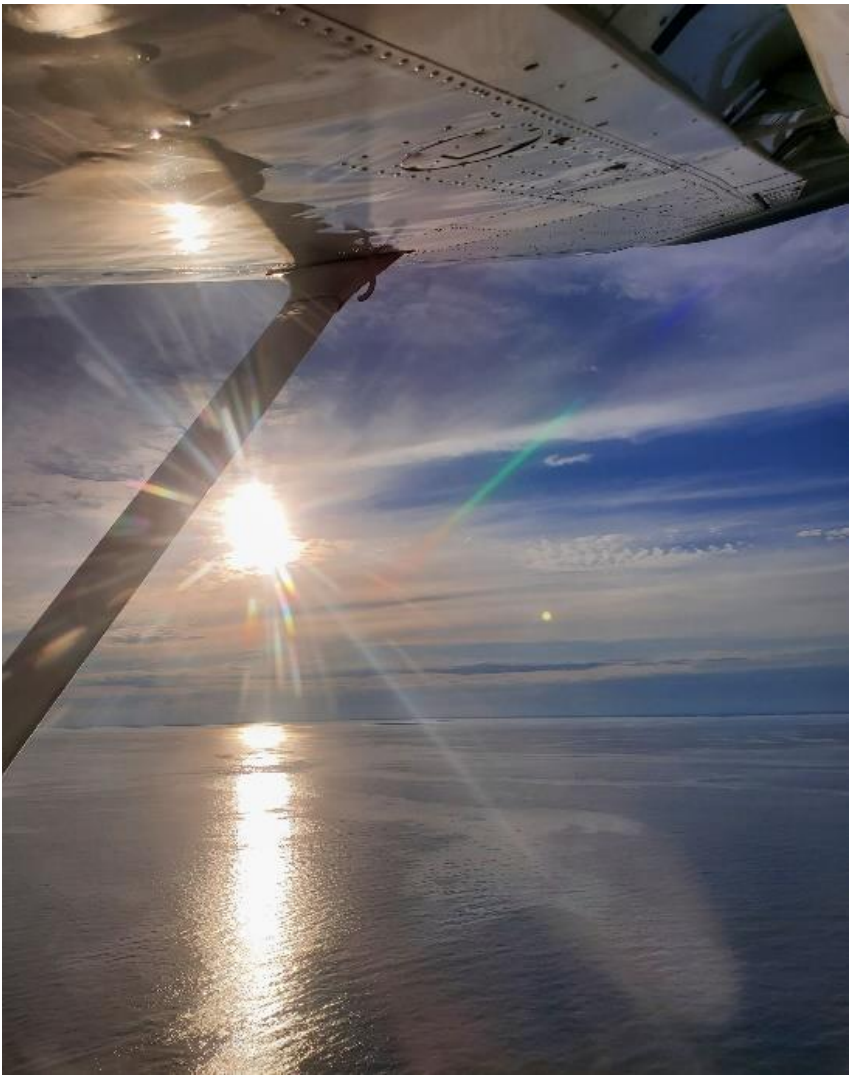
He looked at me sadly,
Knowing not what to do.
Then from out by the gate,
We heard a "Woo Hoo!"

The lady, we learned,
Had just found her keys.
They were there on the console,
Right by her knee.

I looked at the man,
And he looked in my eyes.
You see, we're both married:
We just let out two sighs.

Jack Miller
Little Cranberry Island

Jessica George
Peaks Island



Bernadette Deschamps
Matinicus

Laurie Easton Parker
Swan's Island

The Blue Duck

My great aunt Lou lived in The Blue Duck when I was about ten. I'd follow the sound from her little black-and-white television past the clutter of historical artifacts lining the small hallway, the pieces that didn't find a home in the museum across the lawn. She smelled of baby powder and there was always a twinkle in her eye as though she had a secret to share just with me. I loved visiting her there, pretending I liked tea so I could listen to the stories she told me about her father, my great-grandfather, William Otis Sawtelle, bought The Blue Duck in 1912.

The Blue Duck became a storage unit in the nineties
a place to leave the unwanted, the forgotten, and the not needed. The doors stayed locked and the windows boarded up. The paint started to peel and the building felt lost. There was no one there to look after it, no one going in, no one living there except the history that lay abandoned in the dust. The broken, rotting pieces were covered in cobwebs in the attic.

The mid-two thousands brought a chance.
A chance for a new life, a new start for the building.
A chance to welcome it back into the fold of the island.
A chance for it to have a new purpose, a new beginning, a new look, and to once again become a part of the museum started by my great-grandfather.

I find myself walking the wooden floors of The Blue Duck as I imagined William Otis did over one hundred years ago. I look out of the new windows, painstakingly restored old windows, at the same harbor. The people I know and see on this island are from the same families he knew. Islesford Boatworks has renewed this beautiful Blue Duck, this small island. There is warmth and acceptance, a feeling of belonging, and contributing. Early morning coffee with

Anna, story hours with long-time residents, boats being built as tourists and residents come by to say hello. People are eager to teach, eager to learn, eager to be accepted, and eager to just be.

If I listen hard enough, at that moment between classes when there's no one in the shop and before the Sea Princess brings more tourists, if I close my eyes and listen, I think I can hear it. I think I can hear the collective sigh of William Otis and Aunt Lou and The Blue Duck, happy to be a part of Islesford once again.

Kate Savidge
Islesford

Ripples for You

(In loving memory of Betsy (Waller) Bilodeau)

Sitting, head tilted back
A gentle southerly breeze whisks through your hair
Mid afternoon sunshine kisses your cheeks
Warm dry sand scooped up falls between your toes
Sunlight gleams like gems from gently moving shore bound ripples
The ones You know...
Those creating its mirror image in the tidal sands below
Etched in our souls to never be forgotten
Close our eyes and feel this place
We know we'll never be alone

Jon Rich
Poem & Image
Chebeague

Jessica George
Peaks Island

Tom Kilmartin
Peaks Island

Island Writers & Artists

(photo credit, Gary Rainford, Swan's Island)

You are invited to contribute your work to

The Island Reader
Volume 19
Summer 2025

Island Time Edition

Submission deadline:
JANUARY 15, 2023

For complete details visit
www.seacoastmission.org/islandreader

About Maine Seacoast Mission

In 1905, two Mount Desert Island pastors and brothers, Alexander and Angus MacDonald, sailed a small sloop named Hope to islands along the coast of Maine. This trip became the first of many such trips for Maine Seacoast Mission, the nonprofit they founded.

Today, the organization serves the people who live on the rugged islands and Downeast coast of Maine. From its flagship 74-foot vessel the Sunbeam and its Downeast campus in Cherryfield, the Mission offers healthcare, education, and community outreach programming. Maine Seacoast Mission is thankful to the communities it works alongside.

To learn more, please visit: www.seacoastmission.org.

(Photo credit, Douglas Cornman)

Chebeague
Cliff Island
Frenchboro
Great Cranberry Island
Isle au Haut
Islesboro
Islesford (Little Cranberry)
Long Island
Matinicus
Monhegan
North Haven
Peaks Island
Swan’s Island
Vinalhaven

Maine Seacoast Mission