

Cranberry Chronicle

NEWS OF CRANBERRY HOUSE AND GREAT CRANBERRY ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY • JANUARY 2024

Seaside Playhouse Memories

BY PHIL WHITNEY, Seaside Playhouse Host



Photo Credit: GCIHS

Cranberry House opened for operations way back, sixteen years ago. Part of the activities we developed included a small movie theater upstairs in the Arts Center. In the beginning, little did we realize just how many movies and other projected events we would be hosting in the upcoming years.

The name Seaside Playhouse to advertise the movies shown at Cranberry House was my idea. Although it sounded somewhat hokey, I thought it added to the atmosphere and character of a small-town movie theater located on an island. We added some old movie posters that I had collected from the old Park Theater in Southwest Harbor around 1970, and

a vintage-type concession stand to sell popcorn, sodas, lemonade and candies, and we were off and running!

Our premiere movie showing was held June 8th, 2008. I thought it fitting for the inaugural to show the MGM All Star musical documentary *That's Entertainment* from 1973. There were 17 attendees and audience reaction was very positive. We showed mostly older classic movies during that first summer, and shows were generally one per week. Over the years we gradually expanded to several showings weekly during mid-summer and broadened the selections to include newer releases, foreign films and family-oriented films to supplement the classics. Initially during the first years

the Arts Center was not open in the winter. We presented movies beginning in early April. However, the heating system was practically non-existent in those days. A decrepit 1940's era electric heat fan was placed on the floor, blowing heat to the front row seats. Audience members would enter wearing their coats and leave wearing their coats, never having taken them off. Nowadays, as everyone knows, we have a heat pump and a separate propane heater and remain open year-round. We also have air conditioning during the summer. We have come a long way toward making a comfortable environment for our customers.

Over the years we have shown

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GCIHS Museum Island Schools Display. Photo Credit: GCIHS Archive

Notes of Appreciation

Caron Murray: Thank you for hosting a very successful first season of yoga classes in the Arts Center and for donating all yoga session proceeds to Cranberry House.

Sarah Liebow Matloff: Thank you for donating many copies of books and postcards authored by your father, Dr. Paul Liebow, to the Cranberry House Museum for sale, with all proceeds given to the museum.

Douglas Cornman and Maine Seacoast Mission: Thank you for your on-going support and coordination for the Annual Beach Clean Up Day, Beano Night and Sunbeam transportation for Volunteer Appreciation Day.

Cranberry Island Realty Trust: Thank you for your cooperation and all your efforts to create and make affordable housing available on the islands, and also, for being a great neighbor.

Great Cranberry Island Historical Society

Great Cranberry Island Historical Society (GCIHS) collects, preserves and studies the history and genealogy of Great Cranberry Island and its neighboring islands, and presents diverse cultural and educational programs.

GCIHS promotes a strong sense of community through its museum, archives, café, and lively arts center in the Cranberry House.

The grounds also include 2 public trails to the shore, 3 gardens, Sammy Sanford's Cabin, Arts & Crafts Shop, Seawind 2nd Chance Shop and 2 Fish/Frog Ponds.

Every day during the summer a free shuttle carries visitors from the town dock down the length of the island and back.

MILESTONES

Passings

Alice Carter

October 14, 2023

Cory Alley

January 5, 2024

TRANSITIONS

New Arrivals

Dane, Jamie &

Ford Thompson

November Arrival

New CIRT House

Kevin, Jenna &

Theo Mann

December Arrival

New CIRT House

President's Report

PHIL WHITNEY



New CIRT houses arrive on the island. Photo credit: GCIHS Archive

Our last issue of the Cranberry Chronicle was finally published, somewhat later than normal, in July. At that time, we had experienced a mild winter with minimal snowfall. That all ended near the end of February as we experienced several snowstorms and plunging temperatures. There was one night where the temperature gauge hit -14* below, with a wind chill factor around -44* below zero. Heading into late March the snow and temperatures began to moderate, but unfortunately the unstable weather continued all the way into July. Although the museum and cafe opened as normal on Memorial Day Weekend, with the other shops and golf cart shuttle following suit in mid-June, there was consistent fog and rain nearly every day. No one could remember such a prolonged streak of bad weather. Consequently, business activity was way down at Cranberry House, a by-product of reduced tourist traffic to the MDI region, and Acadia National Park generally, along with

visitor reluctance to spend a sappy day traveling out on the ferries. The clouds mostly disappeared in mid-July and August but returned again in September and October. Business had recovered somewhat, but the season was no record-breaker.

There was a continued shortage of workers this season, which is becoming more exaggerated each year. Not only have the various Cranberry House operations been challenged, but other businesses and contractors in the region, as well as on the mainland, are all competing for scarce workers. Cezar worked alone at the cafe for much of the shoulder seasons. Grace joined him the end of June but family needs in Brazil caused an early departure in September. In spite of the continued workforce challenges, we hope to continue to run full seven-day schedules and we are always looking for, and grateful for, interested volunteers to support our museum reception and golf cart shuttle operations. I should mention, with

profound appreciation, the museum and shuttle driver support staff in 2023 who performed great service, often during rainy conditions, welcoming sometimes damp and bedraggled visitors to the island and the museum. The fireplace in the museum enjoyed considerable use this season, and many cafe customers enjoyed a warm lunch in front of the fire and informative conversations with the friendly staff.

Cranberry House continued to offer a varied potpourri of events and entertainment throughout the season. Many visitors, especially the kids, when the weather permitted, enjoyed walking around the ponds, watching the frogs and fish. The Smart Shack offered daily family activities, especially popular when raining. Ric Gaither presented several outdoor lobstering talks and demos, and Peter Buchsbaum valiantly continued his popular guided nature trail walks, dodging both raindrops and swampy trail conditions. Maine Seacoast Mission coordinated with GCIHS to

complete another successful annual beach clean-up, with approximately 25 volunteers participating. Adult Karaoke on Friday nights and Kids Karaoke on Sunday afternoons enjoyed good attendance.



Yoga at Cranberry House, Summer 2023.
Photo credit: GCIHS Archive

Caron Murray hosted the first season of adult yoga classes upstairs in the Arts Center new addition. Attendance was solid, and the space proved very popular. A Cranberry House Open House was hosted in July, which included a dedication ceremony to name the \$600,000, three-story new addition project in memory of founder, Bruce Komusin. There was also an all-day Historical Treasure Hunt with prizes, and a birthday party for several GCIHS volunteers. The Seaside Playhouse continued showing movies three nights weekly. Karin Whitney hosted tennis and soccer championships on the big screen upon request, which were well-attended by enthusiastic fans. The Maine Seacoast Mission hosted a Beano Night with prizes, and Regina Cocco hosted a Trivia Game Night. The Peter Buchsbaum family hosted an enjoyable evening of entertainment showing slides of their Antarctica trip adventure. Phil Whitney continued hosting the bi-monthly Cranberry Island Historical Slides Show. Mandy Bracy deserves special mention with her one-day photo exhibit and sales of her *“Aurora Borealis Night Sky Show Over*

Cranberry Island.” This never-before-seen display was a resounding success with a steady stream of visitors all day, resulting in nearly all photos sold. We hope she will return for another exhibit next year. Finally, the Annual Volunteer Appreciation Day, coordinated by Darlene Sumner, involved a trip up Somes Sound on a beautiful Sunday afternoon, courtesy of the Maine Seacoast Mission’s Sunbeam. Twenty-five volunteers enjoyed a relaxing time after a hectic Cranberry House season.

The property around Cranberry House never looked better, thanks to the efforts of landscaper and gardener Ric Gaither, who took great pride in his work. Cranberry Isles Realty Trust (CIRT) had major construction underway all season involving two new modular homes down behind the GCIHS property. The right-of-way driveway access down through the middle of the property was active with dump trucks and other construction vehicles, climaxing with the arrival by barge of four modular home sections plus a crane, all happening in one day. Everything went smoothly and GCIHS provided shuttle support services during times when the Spurling Cove parking was restricted, and folks needed alternative transportation around the island.

Speaking of golf carts, the fleet was reduced by half; the previously donated Wood golf cart was sold to a private entity, and the red handicap access golf cart was sold to Cezar for cafe-related work, hauling freight and occasional passenger transportation support. The semi-retired green Cranberry Explorer saw unexpected use, backing up the new silver Cranberry Explorer when traffic demands were exceedingly heavy, and providing many special

charter trips which brought in much appreciated extra donations. Overall, shuttle ridership was down this year due to the aforementioned bad weather, but total donations were up, making this a record-breaking shuttle season. A new initiative which helped the financial picture considerably was the implementation of a Venmo payment system, both on the shuttles and in the museum. It was noticed that increasing numbers of customers were no longer carrying cash, which had an adverse effect on in-person donations. Offering Venmo has enabled folks to make cashless donations and we have had a positive response from visitors and donors.

Recognizing the constant need for funding, especially for major repairs and capital improvement projects, we have started an aggressive grants application program. A former professional contract grants researcher and writer, Lindsay Hancock, who had worked with us in the past, was rehired, and is working with Sharon Morrell to identify applicable programs and prepare grant applications. One urgent initiative being addressed is the total renovation of the popular Kids Smart Shack, which needs some significant upgrades and repairs. Another priority is to replace our office and archiving computer systems. Donations towards these projects from interested supporters will be deeply appreciated.

We scraped together enough money this season to hire a summer Archivist Intern. Hannah Gower-Fox, a College of the Atlantic student, came to Great Cranberry and worked at Cranberry House for 10 weeks. She did an impressive job organizing the archives and conducting research.

There is much, much more to do, but she made great, morale-boosting progress in this area and we were very happy to have her help.

As we head into the quiet winter season most everything is closed down around Cranberry House. However,

the Arts Center and the Basement Archives remain open, as usual. Movies are shown on Saturday nights, Adult Karaoke on Friday nights, and Kids Karaoke on alternate Sunday afternoons. Occasional parties and Big Screen events will be occurring. Darlene Sumner already coordinated a rousing Kids Halloween Party, which had

15 kids and several adults enjoying a spooky good time. The “cackling witch,” which activated when you pressed her nose, had several youngsters continually looking over their shoulders. Everyone enjoyed games, lots of food, costume contest prizes, and a Charlie Brown Halloween movie.

For those of you on the island this

winter, feel free to drop by at one of the Historical Society’s winter events and break up the doldrums. For those of you away for the season, remember the good times hosted here in past years, and begin looking forward to another fun season next year for all ages.

Have a Great Winter,
Phil A. Whitney, GCIHS President

Adventures in Wildlife

BY SHARON MORRELL

Great Cranberry Island hosted a wildlife adventure this past November when Phil Whitney noticed a small owl floundering around on the side of the road. It had garnered the all-too-enthusiastic attention of a bunch of crows that were not so patiently monitoring its situation. Phil stopped and chased the crows away and then called upon the town’s rescue service—Cranberry Isles Rescue, aptly, although not entirely appropriately named for the occasion, to assist. Phil and island rescue member Sharon, returned to the scene of the would-be avian assault and managed to find the small, obviously injured and exhausted owl on the ground in the yard of the Depalmer residence. With advice from the amazing wildlife rehabilitator at Acadia Wildlife, and the help of a large towel and study box, the owl was captured quickly and with very little fight (*poor thing*) and gently placed into the box and taken indoors for safety. The poor little owl had a very serious wing injury and had felt very thin and tired, as if he or she had been fighting to survive for some time. Since the last boat had already run for the day, the owl was kept safe, warm and quiet indoors overnight and then taken off island first thing in the morning to the rehab center for treatment and (*although very unlikely*) rehab and re-release. The owl seemed a little perkier by morning



Short-eared owl found injured on GCI. Photo credit: GCIHS Archive

and, my gosh, was he ever beautiful! He looked right through you with his intense eyes.

Sadly, after evaluation at the Acadia Wildlife center it was determined that the poor dear was just too injured and weak. He was kept comfortable and sadly passed away that night.

Short-eared owls are a threatened species in Maine. They live in open terrains like prairies and marshes. They are not usually seen on the islands, although not unheard of. Like many species they are threatened by a loss of habitat. It was a sad ending but an honor just the same to have met this

little owl and had the chance to bring comfort to him in his last hours.

I wish the outcome had been different. (<https://www.owlresearchinstitute.org/short-eared-owl>)

Special thank you to Amanda Bracy for helping identify the rehab specialist and assisting with handling the bird and making him comfortable and to Ann Rivers at Acadia Wildlife Center for her advice and tender care of our little owl friend and for all the work she does with Acadia Wildlife.

General Manager's Report

SHARON MORRELL



Rosie takes a turn at the Museum Desk

2023 has been a year of evolving and learning. GCIHS seems to be in a better place at year's end than was anticipated but there is still apprehension about the future. The board continues to work at developing and redefining the roles and responsibilities of the organization and its leadership.

We are all settling into the newly created and remodeled spaces in the building and getting comfortable with the layout. It has been wonderful to see the new sections of the building finding immediate and productive use, as with the yoga sessions this summer, and several parties and events. The archives collection is being benevolently and thoughtfully cared for and curated in the new archives space thanks to our summer intern, Fox Gower, and our small but dedicated Archives Committee.

We have taken some tentative steps into the new century by setting up and offering a Venmo option for donations and payments and we have seen a positive response to this effort.

Sadly, but not unexpectedly, several of our stalwart members have had to

step back from their active roles at GCIHS. Life happens, as it will, and the remaining volunteers soldier on. A few fresh faces have become familiar around Cranberry House and they are very much appreciated.

The summer was unusual, almost bizarre. The weather was awful, then great, then awful again. Visitation and business followed the same pattern but overall, I believe, it was a win. Hard-won, but a win still.

Some projects currently in the works include a renewed effort to pursue grant funding for various projects around the facility, exploring options to make Cranberry House more energy efficient, and production and publication of the latest edition of the Cranberry Chronicle (*including a few special guest contributors!*).

We look forward to another year of community enrichment and service on Great Cranberry Island and we hope you will consider becoming involved and having a voice in the future of the organization.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sharon Morrell

For more information and updates on these projects during the winter and spring please visit:

GCIHS Events Page
www.gcihs.org/events/

GCIHS Facebook Page
www.facebook.com/CranberryHouseGCIHS/

Feel Free to contact me at manager@gcihs.org if you have any questions or suggestions.

New Trustees



Sarah (Liebow) Matloff lives in Manhattan Beach, CA with her husband Brandon and her daughters, Sadie and Stella. She is grateful to spend most of the summer months on GCI now due to remote work opportunities.

Sarah's family history dates back to the 1950's when her grandparents bought the Liebow home at the end of The Lane. Her family has been fortunate to be able to create a "glamp" site on the Backshore in the past few years, fulfilling her late father Paul's dream.

Sarah has a background in clinical social work, specializing in palliative care and hospice. She is a school district advocate for social emotional learning and wellness and is the director of a mindfulness program.

Sarah looks forward to nurturing the strong community connections on GCI as well as honoring the past and looking to the future. She is particularly interested in the preservation of cemeteries and creating opportunities for socializing between year round and seasonal residents.



Mike Todd is a seasoned legal professional with an extensive career spanning over two decades in various legal and educational roles. He is currently splitting his time between his most recent position in the Cleveland office at the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), and here on Great Cranberry Island. Prior to this, Mike served as a Supervisory Attorney in OCR's Denver office and as an Attorney in OCR's Cleveland office and he served as an instructor at a police academy where he advised cadets on ethical concerns and taught various law-related courses.

Mike has past experience in an elected position as a Medina Township Trustee, managing budgets, and supervising several community projects. Mike is a graduate of West Point Academy and spent time as an Intelligence Analyst and Transportation officer for the U.S. Army.

Mike places a high value on education and community service and tries to foster and encourage these values in those around him. Mike lives in both Parma, Ohio and Cranberry Isles, Maine, with his wife, Wendy, and two daughters, Eva and Giselle. He values his time on the island and enjoys the close-knit community of island residents.



Karin Whitney

I was born in Sweden and emigrated to the United States in 1994 when I married my husband, Phil Whitney.

I am pleased to be Great Cranberry Island Historical Society's newest trustee. I have been involved with Cranberry House/ Museum since the organization's start in 2008. I operated Hitty's Cafe for 4 years. I am more of a doer than an organizer.

GCIHS is always close to my heart, and I try to keep the best interests of the organization foremost in my thoughts and actions. My volunteering resume at the Museum and Cranberry House is long. Over the years I have driven the Shuttle Service when needed, set up and run the Second Chance Store, been a museum greeter, hosted Karaoke Nights, operated the concession sale at Movie Nights, cleaning all over Cranberry House, handled the bank deposits once a week in Southwest Harbor, registered the golf carts and generally handled what ever was needed where I noticed gaps requiring attention. I am also on the Archives Committee, the Events Committee, and the Operations Committee.

Hopefully, my knowledge, experience, and willingness to do what is best for the organization will allow me to be an asset to GCIHS for many more years to come.



Hannah Fox Gower and her friends

Archives Update

BY WENDY TODD

The Archives Committee made great strides this past summer with the hard work of Hannah Gower-Fox (known as “Fox”), our intern from the College of the Atlantic. She worked under the guidance of co-chairs Lydia Johnson and Wendy Todd. Over an amazingly productive ten weeks, Fox was able to upload and catalog many items into the digital archive system. She also created informational museum signage to enhance our museum displays and provide interesting and helpful information and context to our exhibits. Fox then returned in the autumn with some of her fellow students to share a presentation they created: Navigating Change in the Cranberry Isles.

The Archives Committee has important work to do as the stewards of the tangible representations of our shared island history. We are a small but dedicated group, and we would very much welcome new members to help us honor and fulfill this mission.

There are many ways that you can volunteer with the Archives Committee whether you are on the island or not.

Please reach out and we can talk about ways that you can contribute.

Thank you to all those who help preserve the island’s history.

Thanks,
Wendy Todd

Hitty’s Adventures—Summer 2023

BY KARIN WHITNEY



Hitty and Me

One day, Vivian Nelson visited the Museum. The similarities between her and our big Hitty doll struck me, so we took a picture of both of them. Yes, Vivian really looks like a living Hitty doll. Vivian was a good sport and posed for the picture in the beautiful floral skirt she made all by herself! Great job, Vivian!

Hitty’s Café

BY CHEF CEZAR



Another season is in the books, and wow, 2023 was a mixed bag! There were struggles with uncooperative weather, workforce shortages, and continued



Hitty Doll Visitors , Autumn 2023

Then, later in the summer, some friendly women were visiting the Museum. They had brought their handmade Hitty Dolls with them. These ladies were big Hitty fans, and they had learned about GCIHS’s Hitty collection. They asked if they could take pictures of their Hitty Dolls with our Big Hitty doll and the Hitty Door. This picture commemorates the encounter.

supply chain issues, combined with wonderful memories of new visitors and old friends, great food, happy occasions and comradery and companionship amongst island folk. Overall, the season was a winner, but we definitely worked hard for it! I am back in Brazil for the winter, recuperating and enjoying time with family. I look forward to seeing you all next summer for more happy Cranberry Island times and great food.

—Chef Cezar

Part 5 of the Birlem Family Letters

PHIL WHITNEY



We continue in sequence excerpts from the Birlem Family Letters. The letters printed in this January 2024 Cranberry Chronicle were written between Sept. 12, 1899, and Feb. 8, 1900. We once again extend our appreciation to Birlem Family descendant Lynne Birlem of Southwest Harbor for helping transcribe and subsequently donating the original letters to GCIHS.

Letter Dated **Sept. 12, 1899**

Castine, ME

To (Brother) Charles S. Spurling

From (Sister) Mamie Spurling

(Editor Note: Mamie Spurling is studying at Castine Normal School (now Maine Maritime Academy.) Charles Spurling is a new student at Hebron Academy High School.)

I hope you got there (Hebron Academy) all right and have a pleasant room. You must have had a good night on the Jones (Steamboat Frank Jones, Maine Central Railroad).

I hope you enjoyed Mr. Woodbury's company on the boat, and did he help you about getting on the right train in Portland?

Try not to be homesick because you will get over it in a little while, after you get acquainted some and we will all write to you as often as we can.

Letter Dated **Sept. 17, 1899**

Castine, ME

To (Brother) Charles S. Spurling

From (Sister) Mamie Spurling

I wonder if you are doing the same thing this afternoon that I am and that is writing a letter. I got a letter from Mamma yesterday. Mamma said that Grandpa was digging potatoes and that they was getting along very well.

I expect you have been to church and Sunday school this morning. I suppose Sunday will seem quite long to you

but I can always find enough to do to fill up the time very easily. I usually go to church in the morning and write letters in the afternoon and sometimes go for a walk and some Sunday nights I go to church or, if I stay home, go to bed quite early. *(Editor Note: Life in those days seemed to center around attending church, school studies and writing letters.)*

I will tell you who I have written today. I suppose you would like to know I promised Maud Rice that I would write to her if I had time, so I have written to her this morning before I went to church. And before dinner, I wrote to Ada. Have not written to her before this term and since dinner I have written to Aunt Lucinda Stanley and began one to you. I wrote to Mamma yesterday. I guess I will not write many more after this is finished. I may write to Aunt Flo or Frank, and I guess that will be all.

You must try and be as good a boy as you can, because we all think a lot of you, and you ought to have pride enough for yourself to try and do right. I am not going to say any more about doing right because we can all trust you and feel sure that you will do the best you can.

I went up to the Fort a little while yesterday afternoon to a baseball game between the Normal School and

Camden boys.

Letter Dated **Jan. 21, 1900**

Cranberry Isles, ME

To (Brother) Charles S. Spurling

From (Sister) Mamie Spurling

J.C. Crosby is going to get up a Sociable next Thursday night. Going to have it down to Ed Stanley's. Ladies are requested to bring pie and cake. The money is to be used toward the new organ for the church.

Uncle Elwood (Spurling) is home today. He says that the vessel that is ashore down to Schoodic Island, hails from Calais. They are going to try to get her off, but if they cannot, will sell her.

Began to churn (butter) this morning and have been at it four ¼ hours and no sign of butter yet. I wish you were here to take a turn.

Letter Dated **Feb 5, 1900**

Cranberry Isles, ME

To (Brother) Charles S. Spurling

From (Sister) Mamie Spurling

Aunt Flo is quite poorly. They had Dr. Phillips (from SWH) again yesterday. He said she must lie in bed. She does not seem to get any better and if anything is worse. Her heart troubles her quite a lot, and her left arm and hand she cannot move. If she wants it moved, someone has to move it for her. I hope she will be better soon and if she escapes having Rheumatic Fever, she will be lucky.

There was a piece in the Maine State Press about the Hebron fire, and it said the boys on the roof got their hands, faces and hair burned. Mamma thinks probably you were up there. Were you? And did you get burned any? Mr. Davie (*minister*) says to tell you to look out and not get burned out or frozen to death. Do you think anyone set the fire or did it catch itself?

We had a little snow last week. It was fine sleighing on the main road we heard.

Last Friday Papa hauled Tom Stanley's wood and Saturday he got part of his out. He said it was pretty hard hauling over in the woods. Last night it began to rain, and it has not stopped yet, so all the sledding is ruined.

Bert Spurling (*Warren Adelbert Spurling, husband of Flo*) Ben Bunker (*Benjamin*) and Lewis Stanley are going up harbor tonight to take their 1st degree in the Odd Fellow Lodge (*located in SWH*). J.C. Crosby (*James Clement Crosby, husband of Cora Pressey, owner of Bay View Farm, current the Red House*), got about \$8.50 to his social the other night. He is after me now to help get up another, but I hardly think I will. Bert Spurling has just come and says Aunt Flo is better. She cannot move neither left hand or left foot. I guess she can move her right hand yet. He has gone out to help Papa grind axes, so I suppose that means he is going to chop a little wood.

Seth & Ida, Bert Rice and Annie were going to Ellsworth on a sleigh ride today if it had been pleasant but guess they will have to wait for some more snow. Do you go sleigh riding much? You ought to go every chance you can because you can't get many down here. Mr. Brewster has carried Papa's old sled home, so he (*Papa*) is using the

one he got at the harbor. It is painted blue and quite a bit lighter in weight than the old one.

They have got the "boiler" out of the Creek. (*aka The Pool*). J.C. Crosby says it would weigh about (8-9) tons. (*The "Boiler" was a huge underwater boulder near the entrance to the Pool. It was a navigational hazard. According to Ralph Stanley it took a great effort and several tries to finally succeed in moving it.*)

Letter Dated Feb 8, 1900

Cranberry Island

To (*Brother*) Charles S. Spurling
From (*Sister*) Mamie Spurling

I have not heard from Aunt Flo yet this morning, but yesterday she was a little better. Mamma has been there ever since last Sunday. She came home last Tuesday about 11 AM and went back about 3 PM.

Mr. Davie (*Minister*) went to Islesford last evening, he is going to have a meeting over to Sutton's tonight.

Papa and JCC (*Crosby*) have gone to SW Harbor to carry a case of eggs, so I am all alone. Eber (*Spurling*) is here now a little while; he has been trying to put the puzzle together but could not, so I tried and did it and then he tried it and said any fool could do it. (*Thomaston puzzle.*)

Warren Whitmore from Seal Harbor was out gunning in one of those sunken boats and he got upset and lost his gun. The man who was with him in another boat got him in. Whitmore is the one who keeps store over in Seal Harbor.

We began to churn last Thursday afternoon hoping to get the butter before Mamma went back down the road, but we churned from 1:15 until 5. Gave it up for that day and yesterday churned from 12:30 to 4 and we have not got the butter yet.

I don't know whether to churn it any more or not. I wish we could sent it to you.

I had quite a lot of callers yesterday. There were 16 people in here besides the 3 children up for dinner. (*3 Joy children of Flo: George, Frederick, Viola.*) George and Ada spent the evening, there were 3 people around canvassing, a man with lady's shoes, John Pung with a book about Moody's life and Ed Spurling's wife with ladies' skirts.

Rose Wedge is quite sick. They have gone after the doctor. She has those cramps quite bad.

There isn't hardly any sledding now. Gil Rosebrook is out gunning this morning. He and Oscar (*Bulger?*) got 23 birds a few days ago. Papa got 4 of them and sent them to Eugene Stanley.

Mamma and Clarence are coming so I will tell you how Aunt Flo is this morning. She is a little better and can get her hand up to her nose and scratch it and thinks she is getting to be quite a somebody. I am glad she is better. She had had quite a hard time of it.

Cranberry Isles Sketches

PHIL WHITNEY (AS RELATED BY DR. LOUIS BARRETT)

This continues our series of Cranberry Isles Sketches, written by Dr. Louis Barrett, covering the years 1945-1951. We again express our appreciation to the Islesford Historical Society and their President, Gail Grandgent, for allowing us to reproduce these anecdotal stories in the Cranberry Chronicle.



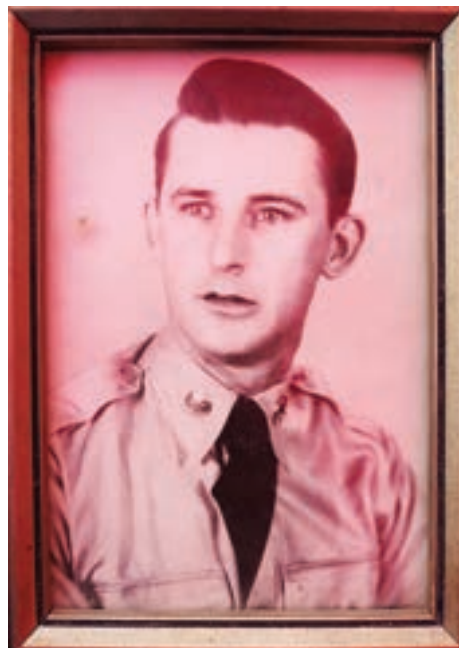
Dr. Louis Barrett

EDGAR

Elisha's son, Edgar, died in Korea. A splinter of shrapnel pierced his eye. Elisha dropped dead the day when his son's body arrived on the island for burial.

Edgar and I drove to the (*train*) station in Ellsworth together the day he bought his ticket. He said he felt sure he'd never be back. While a book might well be written on this lad's fine character, I'd like to merely give an example of a little of his kidding one day.

Edgar was an orthodox fatalist and I asked him a question about mental telepathy. His reply was: "My mother had a lot of magazines. She could raise a table off the floor so it would tip, just by laying her two hands on it. Once it came clear off the floor. In fact, I was sittin' on it and it took me and another boy, who was sittin' on it with me, right up off the floor, by her just havin' one finger touching it. She did this ag'in with a man hanging off each leg, as well. She was awful magnetic." This from a quiet, reliable fellow, who was never inclined to exaggerate.



Edgar Bunker

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Sometimes newcomers find difficulty in designating a person by name, the name by which others know him, that is "Tom Putty" for Tom Phippen. "Benny Ralph" (*pronounced Ben-nay*) is really Ralph Bulger. "Pink" is used in referring to Mrs. Oscar Bulger but also equally in referring to Mr. "Pink" Stanley whose real name is Charles.

Pink Stanley had a falling out with Carl Hardy many years ago over their common desire to run for town Health Officer. It became trying for everyone because Carl was the only milk supplier on the island; yet, if you once patronized Carl, you could never hope to get Pink to do a thing for you with his truck or in any other way, after that. If you once got Pink to haul something for you, say up from the landing on a rainy night, you need never hope to get milk or anything else from Carl.

CLAMS, SNAILS & SEAL'S LIVERS

When the herring season has passed and the pollock, butter-fish and mackerel can no longer be taken from the weir, when the food gets low and the frequent winter storms make trips to Southwest Harbor too tiresome, then comes the necessity to walk out onto the freezing, wind-swept clam flats. The clam chowders which follow taste pretty good; the fried clams, raw clams with a little vinegar, all these are a welcome change of diet. then at half-tide sea snails can be scraped off the rocks into a saucepan and put on the stove for a quick steaming. They are sweet and

delicious. Occasionally, my son would shoot a seal and we liked the livers much better than calves' liver; they had no fishy taste. Roast shoulder of seal was pretty good too, but much to the disgust of Messrs. Stanley and Phippen, who much preferred their lobsters. Once, while out wooding with Les Phippen in the Winter, I handed him a sandwich from my lunch. The meat in it was roast seal which looks like beef but tastes like mackerel. Les simply threw it on the ground.

One afternoon while rowing around the Pool entrance in a dinghy with my wife and child, we counted twenty-four seal playing around us. My son always kept some seal grease around for waterproofing shoes and softening for boot.



Codfish were usually given to the neighbor's cat, but a good haddock from out near Bakers Island whistling buoy usually made a holiday dinner. When the weir was operating, there would be as many as twenty or thirty big sea pollock laying around in our yard at times. We would cut out brick-size pieces for the deep freeze and utilize them when food was low in the Winter; but the flavor goes from them some. The women of the island generally get into more or less competition, informally, in the Winter, as to who can make the thickest meringue on a lemon pie, and then take it to a neighbor who has also been cooking and make an exchange. Most anyone may enter if they can bake a pie with meringue over five inches high; that's "sweet food" and islanders like it but not in a serious way; Les Phippen explained to me,

"Sweet food's all right but we eat mostly hearty food."

CAP'N LEW

As the season gets really rough, old Captain Lew Stanley would say, "Thunder, my cats haven't had a decent feed for months.; just that old codfish all the time. I don't think so much of it is good for them," and he'd take off for Southwest Harbor to buy a piece of corned hake for himself and a quart of fresh scallops for the cats.

Captain Lew was a short man and, when he finally agreed to the telephone company's urging to have a telephone installed in his house, to relieve the neighbors from taking calls all the time for his boat yard, they put the phone on the wall at the height of an average man, or else went by their instruction sheet rather than by Lew Stanley's height. It was always necessary for Lew to get a chair and climb up each time it rang. He soon wearied of those acrobatics, and as they would not change it, he ordered the phone removed. Finally, he refused to pay the telephone bill or to answer calls anymore. Whenever the phone would ring, he'd say, "Thunder, let it ring; I'm not going to risk my neck on that rickety old chair."

Lew was exceeding fond of sweets, in contrast to most of the other islanders. Always, when fall came, he'd have his barrel of sugar brought over to the island. If anyone gave him a two-pound box of candy, he would usually eat it all at one time. Doctors forewarned him of the dangers of this practice, but until his death, he continued to consume large quantities of sugar. He died of a heart attack at eighty-seven and was otherwise free of organic disease as far as I am able to learn.

Lew worked hard physically, splitting his wood for as long as he was able to carry it in his arms from the wood pile



Captain Lew Stanley.

at the house, which was at the age of eighty-seven to be exact. His last years were lonely, for he survived his wife by seven or eight years. They were as devoted to each other as childhood sweethearts; even to the last day when Mrs. Stanley died of a sudden stroke.

DEL

"Del" Hodgkins was a diabetic in his eighties who built boats; little boats or big ones. During his last year, he added twenty-five feet or so onto his large boat shop and laid a keel for a forty-five-foot vessel. "I'm going to build this one for myself," he said. "Another Winter, I'm going south," he added.

Especially did Del like to accept jobs which no one else on the island cared to attempt. He was an expert at caulking a troublesome seam just right, so that it would never give trouble again. He like to take a discarded, ratty, old, abandoned boat from behind one of the boat sheds of the island, and slowly, piece by piece, convert it into a fairly useful lobster boat with which to go lobstering or fishing. Del liked to tell

of the day that he was shingling a roof in the “thicka-fog”, so characteristic of early morning on the island. He kept looking up at how much further he had to shingle. But, before he realized it, he had shingled six feet beyond the ridge, so thick was that fog! Mossy as his stories were, he was a very hard worker.

UNCLE ELWOOD’S LUCK

Elwood Spurling was noted for his good luck. Whatever he undertook seemed always to turn to gold.

Elwood spent the day, occasionally, in Bangor, just “looking around” as he called it. On one such occasion he had, as usual, ended up at a restaurant. After his dinner, he was standing outside on the curbing. He noticed a Connecticut car in front of him because it was parked there with rifles and a lot of hunting gear in it, which always interested Elwood. Folks starting on a vacation, he guessed. Then, before his feet, but down in the gutter, lay a wallet; he picked it up. It contained a Connecticut driver’s license, several five hundred dollar bills, hundred dollar bills, twenties, tens, fives, etc. So, he put it in his pocket.

Three men came out of the restaurant. Jovially, they joked and jumped into their car. “Lost anything?” called Elwood.

“No, guess not,” the driver called back as he stepped on the starter.

“Sure?” called Elwood.

The driver felt his pockets, then became very excited.

Elwood passed him his wallet. “That’s all our vacation money,” said the fellow as he handed over a reward which amply expressed his appreciation to Elwood, who returned to the island with five or six extra twenties in his pocket. Whether it was gambling on a herring run, or building a weir, or simply selling a piece of old swamp land to a newcomer, Elwood always had good luck.

ELWOOD’S FISH WEIR

Seiners had been closing off herring in Jonathan’s Cove for several years but had been a little slack about paying the percentage due the shore owners, on whose land they tied the ends of their lines. One Spring morning, just before the expected time of anchoring a dory in the cove to indicate that they intended to seine it that year, Elwood appeared on the shore with several men



whom he had hired. They began to construct a fish weir. He cut big spruce spiles from the woods nearby and built a leader which ran out from the shore about three hundred feet. After driving the spiles, they joined them together with two rows of planks, one row above the other, establishing a sort of fence. Then they cut a great many truckloads of brush, mostly birch from around the island, wherever they were able to find it. They nailed this brush vertically to the two rows of planks; thus, water readily flowed through, but fish were discouraged and followed the long leader out to the catch pound. This was circular, built the same, but hung with weighted nets from above water to the bottom of the cove. A gateway was left from this area to another similar circular area, known as the keeping pound, storage for the masses of herring let in from the catching pound. The twine nets, that cost many hundreds of dollars, were freshly tarred to preserve them, and if not salted when out of water, tended to generate heat, and to

also become subject to rats, etc. Seals, caught in the nets with the herring, would sometimes bite their way through the nets, only to be followed out by the entire catch of herring, if the leak were large enough.

Building a weir, it is necessary to work with the tide, so the hard work takes place at all sorts of hours of day and night. Storms and rough seas had often swept away or damaged previous attempts to build a weir in Jonathan’s Cove. This time Elwood was successful, and the weir was finally completed. It was on a Saturday. That night Elwood could be heard as he walked the beach trying to avoid clattering the beach rocks.

The next day was clear and sunny, and Elwood went down to the cove to see if his weir had caught any herring. There, out beside the pound, lay a dozen or more large herring boats or sardine carriers, gulls were flying and calling loudly over the pounds, and word had already reached the sardine plants that there were herring to be had in Jonathan’s Cove, as the boats had been sent out to buy them at once. Huge scoops were swung out over the pound and lowered, dipping out a hoghead at a time of these slashing little fish. A few islanders rowed out to help themselves to enough for breakfast. Elwood kept count as the machinery clattered, doing a little better than \$4000 (1940’s dollars) on that Sunday morning’s haul.

There he stood, paying off his men, still wearing his old soiled blue serge sea captain’s coat, with the corroded brass buttons, bought many years ago, when he ran along the coast in sailing vessels. “Did pretty well last night,” he called as he passed by. (*Editor’s Note: The blue serge suit with corroded brass buttons still exists and is in the museum archives.*)

Cranberry Island Memories of Polly Bunker

BY LESLIE WATSON

Pauline Bunker, affectionately known as Polly or Pops, was born on Great Cranberry Island on May 29th, 1927, and lived there all her life. She was one of four sisters—Ada, Leona, Pauline, and Charlene. Polly had a brother, Edgar, who was fatally wounded in the Korean War. Anyone who knew Edgar, knows that his tractor still sits, now buried, where he left it, and his “promises to get back to it.”

Polly would reminisce about “Daddy’s” store next to the Bunker house. She told many tales of the Native Americans sailing into the Pool and harvesting the sweet grass to make baskets. There was more commerce then, including three stores for the hundreds of islanders.



Polly began to hostess at the Asticou Inn in Northeast Harbor at the young age of 16. She would commute to and from the island daily. In the mornings she could be found supervising table settings, making sure white china was always used to best display the food. She would help Mim Savage with the baking and always made sure to sample it all! As a hostess with the most-est, Polly would seat all the wonderful guests at the Asticou, making sure to familiarize herself with

the vacationers, their families, and the local Northeast families. After she retired, Polly loved to tell stories about her time at the Asticou. One of those stories included the magical evenings with the lights down low and waiters marching with flaming Baked Alaskas to each table. She loved the Grand Performance. And she especially loved to tell the story about the woman falling asleep with her boob in her soup! The waiter would ask Polly what to do because she was in charge. She had a great sense of humor, so much so, these guests would later all become her customers at the Whale’s Rib.

In 1952 Polly married Tud Bunker, a favorite island personality. He was a friend to all and could play the harmonica like no other! A cocktail party was not a cocktail party without singing along with Tud and his harmonica which he carried in his pocket. At the end of the day, or before a storm, Tud would always go to the town dock to check on the row boats. He would always make sure they were well tied and all in a row no matter what.

In 1970 the commute to and from work became too much for Polly. Around that time her sisters, Ada and Leona, were opening up the Cranberry Cove Restaurant that their husbands, Red and Charles, helped build. Polly decided, with the encouragement of her friend Leah, to come home. It was then she opened her now well-known gift shop, the Whale’s Rib.

The Whale’s Rib sat next to the Cranberry Cove Restaurant, which was also next to a small lily pad pond. It was named the Whale’s Rib in honor of Tud’s finding an actual whale’s rib on the back shore. They placed the rib right over the door



of the shop. Tud would take Polly to the Prudential Center in Boston, where she used her impeccable taste for selecting items to bring back for her shop. Polly’s bestsellers though tended to be those that were handmade by locals. Many of these items were made by her own family and friends. Leah’s quilted seals with whiskers and hand-made quilts made by Blanche Atkinson, Arlene Spurling, Dot Sanborn, Beverly Sanborn, Ruth Westphal and Ada Rice were all hung from the rafters of Polly’s shop. From quilts to potholders, you could find many local artists’ designs at the Whale’s Rib. I am still the proud owner of Arlene’s 500th made potholder. Polly’s niece, Lisa Hall, made and sold beautiful sea glass jewelry which Martha Stewart herself endorsed! Polly put in long hours as her best customers were the diners leaving the Cranberry Cove Restaurant after a long evening dinner. Paintings were a big seller, including the exceptional artwork of year-round islander, Carl Nelson,

and the breathtaking creations of Wini Smart, who had returned to GCI to help establish the museum. Winnie Smart sold her work in Polly's shop as well as in the Smart Studio in Northeast Harbor. "Waddy" Wadsworth's lithographs had a special place in the Whale's Rib. His chickadees on the bait bag were a favorite. Geoff Wadsworth sold photographs of the island.

Emilene Ott's photograph notecards were a favorite of everyone. Junior Bracey carved decoys that were proudly displayed on the hearth of her shop's wood stove.

It was Polly's enthusiasm, though, that made the Whale's Rib really take off. She was always dressed so fashionably, with the majority of her ensembles coming directly from her shop. Children were always made to feel safe walking or riding their bikes to her store. To her, children were cunning and dear. There was always something small that they could purchase—a lobster pop, a candy ring, or a postcard. Occasionally, she would gift them these small items. The adults were enthralled with her style and grand tales. She would often tell her customers to "just try it on in our dressing room"



which consisted of a mirror behind the front door. Needless to say, everyone that came into the shop left with a bag. As her good friend Mary would say, "Polly could sell snow to the Eskimos!"

To thank her customers, Polly hosted several afternoon parties at the shop. With her enthusiastic personality and humor, everyone had a joyful time! Carl Nelson, her special friend and one of the island artists, wore his white dinner jacket and Lily Pulitzer pants. Polly wore a floral dress. Carl even brought his home baked angel food cake with sugared violets on top.



Polly later moved her shop to the yard next to her home where she could be closer to Tud and her beloved pets, Micaela, Patsy, and Baby Cat. The Cranberry Club Ladies would be spotted in their all-white ensembles, coming to say hello to Polly and shopping at the Whale's Rib. Still known to throw parties at this new location, she would offer her guests ham "sliced so thin" (by the minister), rolls, salads, cookies, cake, and ice cream. Iced tea and lemonade would be served as well as "wine in a box" which amazed Rod Ward! He had never had his wine poured from a box. Customers loved the walk to the center of the island to shop, but most of all to visit Polly.

It was from this central location Polly launched her now nationally known custom t-shirt and hat designs. The school of fish on the front and the small fish on the back became her trademark. They can be seen today from California

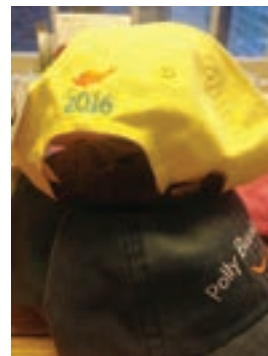
to Florida and back to Maine!



Polly held several fashion shows. Typically dressed in style, she would often use locals as her models, always pushing the fashionista envelope! One of her shows was held in Northeast Harbor at the Neighborhood House for the benefit of the GCI Historical Society and Museum.

As Fall approached each year, Will Body would clean up Bob Murch's beautiful gardens, putting them to rest. He cut all the dahlias off and brought the good ones that were left to Polly. It became a much-appreciated ritual and she always put them in the small holes of her Whale's Rib screen door. She loved them and it was a sight for all to see and became a great tradition.

In 2016 Polly was honored by The Great



Cranberry Island Historical Society during a special celebration during which they spotlight one of the island's noble citizens. This day was

known as "Polly Bunker Day!" There was a reception, fashion show, lunch, and slideshow as a tribute to her. Special edition Polly Bunker Day hats were worn by most attendees in her honor. That was one of Polly's happiest days! If you were there, remember her that way. If not, remember her sitting at her shop saying, "I can't remember what I forgot." You cannot forget her; she is one to remember!



Barbie Movie Night at Seaside Playhouse Photo Credit: GCIHS

approximately 1,400 movies (including many repeat showings) and received over \$7,000 in donations. Currently three movies are shown weekly in the summer (Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays), two movies in the shoulder seasons (Tuesdays and Saturdays) and one movie in the winter (on Saturdays). Special requests by loyal island resident movie buffs are honored, usually on Islanders' Choice Movie Nights, held on separate Sunday nights in the summer, but sometimes also in the off season.

Audience numbers have varied. Summer months obviously get the biggest crowds. Winter months showings sometimes have no attendance. The largest audience ever was 38 for the *Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) with Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland. That was a memorable night with the crowd clapping and cheering for this great Technicolor adventure. Other memorable showings over the years included *King Kong* (1933), *Casablanca* (1942), *American Graffiti* (1973). Singing

in the Rain (1952), *Doctor Zhivago* (1964), *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *The Thief of Baghdad* (1940), *Flame Over India* (1960), *Shane* (1953), *Swiss Family Robinson* (1960), *The Shaggy Dog* (1959), *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1951), and *King Solomon's Mines* (1950). Individual audience members have their all-time personal favorites. My own favorite, topping hundreds of movies viewed, is *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946). I know there are at least two other fans who agree with me. I have shown it several times over the years and continue receiving requests to show it again.

Some individual movie memories stay forever in my mind; the late Stu Silvers, sitting in the front row of the crowded theater with his grand kids, rooting and cheering along with the kids during the thrills of *King Kong* (1933). Afterwards, the normally reticent Silvers approached me, wiping the sweat from his face and, totally out of character, exclaiming

loudly "Wow! What a great movie!!" Crowds of young people sat on the floor in front rapturously watching Humphrey Bogart & Ingrid Bergman in *Casablanca* (1942) and laughed at the music and comedy of *American Graffiti* (1973). Some moviegoers had personal memories relating to the actors on the screen. Virginia Murray, after viewing Gene Kelly in *An American in Paris*, (1951) gushed that Gene Kelly had once kissed her. She looked and acted like a teenager with an enduring crush. Everett Shorey, after watching *Top Hat* (1935) with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, quietly asked me if I knew about Fred and his sister, Adele. They had been the top vaudeville act in America, playing at theaters in New York and London prior to the advent of talking pictures. I was aware they had split up the act around 1932 so Adele could get married. I was blown away when Ev related that it was his uncle, Arthur Cavendish, a Duke in the British aristocracy, whom Adele had married; and the rest of the story, as they say, is history. Fred Astaire went into movie fame. Ric Gaither, part-time movie actor, has worked making films with George Clooney and Mickey Rooney. I have been lucky enough, (from the perspective of a small-town kid who grew up watching his movies) to have been bodyguard for Clint Eastwood, done as a personal favor, I got to know him over several days during his publicity tour for the Stockholm movie premiere of *Unforgiven* (1992). Carroll Spinney, who was Big Bird on Sesame Street for decades, never attended a movie here, but was an enthusiastic fan of our overall kids' programs at Cranberry House and, during his last visit, had discussed plans to perform a show here. He passed away before it could happen. But we played the movie documentary



Photo credit: GCIHS Archive

on his life, *I Am Big Bird*, posthumously. There have been many other anecdotes, too numerous to mention here, from our moviegoers. But there has been nothing more gratifying than watching a good-size audience cheering, laughing or even crying during or after a movie.

Occasionally there have also been some good post-show discussions among attendees about aspects of the movie. One can really enjoy the social pleasures of people watching (*and experiencing*) a memorable movie together. Over the years fans have come and gone. Traditions have been established and trends have developed. Bruce Komusin was the most loyal movie-goer, attending nearly every show, even in declining health. In October 2014 he quietly got up and left during the middle of a show. He never returned to see another movie. He passed away shortly after in February 2015 of cancer.

It has become routine to show

Christmas movies between Thanksgiving and New Years. A special favorite, always requested by Kariah Sumner, is *White Christmas* (1954) with Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye. This has become an annual event.

Several trends have been noticed in recent years which do not bode well. Many can remember when television first arrived in Eastern Maine in the early 1950's. Overnight movie attendance around the state dropped precipitously, and many small-town theaters closed down. Advancing technology has now enabled folks to affordably set up home movie theaters with large screens and high-quality sound systems in their homes. In addition, streaming a choice of movies from off the television has caused many to stay home with their easy chairs and drinks. Summer attendance has held up, but winter attendance is dropping. We managed to offset this somewhat in 2022 by upgrading our

movie showing experience; installing a giant projection screen, new state-of-the-art projector, and Sensurround sound system.

During the summer season we see a good mix of adults and kids, both summer and winter folks, with occasional good dogs welcomed. There is a somewhat bizarre anecdote from an event that occurred in 2008 concerning the third movie ever shown at the Seaside Playhouse. The movie was *City Lights* (1931) starring Charlie Chaplin. It was the last feature-length silent movie ever made. The heroine was a little-known actress named Virginia Cherrill. Keep in mind this cinema classic was made 77 years previous to 2008. During lunchtime prior to the movie performance that evening, I happened to walk out on the cafe deck. Two elderly ladies from Northeast Harbor were sitting having their lunch. I greeted them and they commented about the movie. I asked them if they had seen it. They answered in the affirmative. One of the ladies then remarked she was friends with Virginia Cherrill and had visited her several times at her home in Pasadena, California. I have often wondered since that discussion what the odds were of meeting these ladies on the deck by chance and learning about their movie connection from seven decades ago. Life can be exceedingly strange, but very often fascinating too. Running the Seaside Playhouse movies was (and always has been), as Humphrey Bogart and Claude Rains remarked in *Casablanca*, "the beginning of a great relationship."

I encourage you all to check out our list of scheduled films as we begin the 2024 season—and get out of the house! Donations are greatly appreciated.

My Reflections on Cranberry Island

By MORRIE NEWELL

When Phil Whitney asked me if I'd be interested in contributing to the GCIHS newsletter with my reflections of growing up on Cranberry I thought what a great opportunity to revisit my childhood. I'm not sure that what I have to offer is particularly newsworthy, but it might be interesting to others because—surprise, surprise—I've been coming to Cranberry for more than 70 years and I probably saw some things that others didn't.

I remember going to Betty Hartley and Bob Cummings' party that was held on Fish Point. They were celebrating 60 years on Cranberry, and I thought "Wow, imagine being that old?" And I recall Carl Nelson telling me that he climbed on his roof to celebrate making it to 75. Well, I'm at the same threshold as those wonderful forebearers of this great tradition of traveling, every year, hundreds or thousands of miles to come to this little island off the coast of Maine. In my case I've commuted from Cleveland, Boston, Chicago and now Tucson.

I hope as you read this article it will trigger some thoughts that have been buried deep in your memory—some you almost forgot about but were precious, nonetheless. Nearly every place I walk on Cranberry brings back memories, like the time I fell out of the backseat of our 1948 Plymouth on Harding Point Road (right in front of the Day's house). Back then, the car door handles pushed down to open the door, a clear safety hazard. Or when I walk past Polly Storey's house (now owned by Bill Bancroft and Alice Murphy) and I remember my brother going to a party there, falling off the porch, breaking his leg and suffering through the night. My grandmother wouldn't hear of disturbing Wilfred at night. Hal survived.

Whenever I walk by Carl Nelson's house (now owned by the Corsons) I can see Carl walking down from his garden

with an armful of lettuce, cucumbers, radishes and carrots. He'd be wearing his favorite pair of Lilly Pulitzer slacks that featured images of lions, one of his favorite animals. Or when I walk along the shore in front of the Wilsons' house, I remember meeting Captain Harold Stanley after he returned from a day on the water as the captain for a family in Seal Harbor.

He had a wonderful small shed at the top of the beach. I can still smell its musty, salty scent inside. He would fire up a small engine that he would use to tow his rowboat up the beach at low tide. I thought his Bunker & Ellis yacht was the most handsome of them all. It had an extended steering shelter with huge sliding glass windows that brought a unique elegance to this marvelous class of power yachts. Unfortunately, I have not seen that boat since my childhood. It must be used elsewhere on the Maine coast (I hope).

Before any more reminiscences some history is in order. My grandparents, Sterling and Evelyn Newell, first came to Cranberry Island after WWII to visit their friend and business associate, Maynard Murch, and his wife, Leah. Mr. Murch was also a Clevelander although by heritage, a state-of-Mainer. Back then, the Murch property contained several cottages that are not standing today. Pax Morris was the name of one of them. Anyway, my grandparents stayed there several summers and as the story goes, Maynard turned to Sterling one day and said "Sterling, it's time you buy your own place."

So, he and my grandmother bought two houses at the base of Long Ledge for \$10,000. One house is currently owned by Emily and Robert Howell and Philip and Kelly Newell, and the Stanley cottage is owned by my sister, Molly Singerling, and her husband Jim. These houses were owned by Howard Bacon, a bachelor

and, I think, a minister from Cincinnati, Ohio. Mr. Bacon had willed his houses to the church when he died so the purchase deed is between my grandmother and The Cranberry Island Congregational Church.

Every July, my brother and I would hop in the back of my father's 1954 green Buick convertible along with my parents and drive the 1,000 miles from Cleveland to Southwest Harbor. We just sat and looked at the scenery. My sister Nancy was already on Cranberry, having been driven out by my Uncle John who delivered and picked up my grandmother each spring and fall in her yearly visits to the island. My sister Molly wasn't born yet. These trips were right at the time the turnpike system was opening. I remember various exits on the New York Thruway; the Batavia Turf Farms being one, and the Beechnut Baby food factory at Canajoharie, NY.

I remember seeing the Mass Turnpike under construction, with sparkling new green signs sporting the Pilgrim's hat. Maine's contribution to the system was spectacular. As it is today, mile after mile of unspoiled spruce and pine, with no billboards or other unsightly distractions. I suspect in some early commutes we probably took a lot of two-lane roads to reach Southwest Harbor, turning a three-day trip into four. I have very distinct memories of crossing the bridge in Kittery and for the first time smelling the ocean. I knew we wouldn't be on Cranberry that night, but we would be in our home the next day. We always stayed in the Pinecone Motel in Kittery. I think it's still there.

When we arrived in Southwest Harbor, we stopped by Southwest Motors (home to the post office now, along with various restaurants and shops) and picked up one of the mechanics. They would drive us down to the pier next to the Coast Guard station, where usually the Bobcat was waiting for us with either Wilfred

Bunker or Clarence Beal as captain. We would all unload and then the mechanic would take the car back to Southwest Motors where it would be garaged for the summer. Each trip off the island included a call to them to bring the car down.

Usually, our 1948 Plymouth would be at the dock on Cranberry, having been brought down by Carl Hardy, our caretaker. He lived in the house across from what is now the tennis court, but of course, the tennis court at that time was across from the Seimer house. Carl was one of the foundational characters on the island like Wilfred and Clarence, and he had a cow in the back yard.

I couldn't wait to get to our house. But before we put everything away, my brother Hal and I would race around to visit our old friends: Hilda Spurling and her mother Pinky Bulger (the Keegan house), Marjorie and Leslie Phippen (house no longer standing), and Lena and Harold Stanley (where the Days live). It was the most loving and comforting return to our old friends, who were delighted to hear our stories about life in Ohio. The tiny Phippen house, in which they raised six kids, was where I remember hearing *Heartbreak Hotel* by Elvis for the first time. That house, which is no longer standing, was on the same plot of land that contains the guest house next to Sarah Zimmerman's main house.

There was nothing like the first night on the island. We slept with the windows wide open so we could hear the ocean. If we were lucky, a sardine seiner would be anchored in our cove, and we could hear our island neighbors out on the boat talking throughout the night and pulling in vast catches of sardines. My sister, Nancy, and her friends, Robin Richman, Holly Hartley and Christy McDonald, went out for a tour one night to visit the seiners, but Robin fell overboard which closed off any chance I had of a future visit.

The next morning it was a quick breakfast and then off to the Beal and Bunker dock. That was the focus of island activity as well as an anchor to my neighborhood. As I look back on it, despite the island being only a little more than two miles long, there were neighborhoods. Mine

stretched from Nick Murray's house on Jimmy's Point to the Beal and Bunker dock. I enjoyed reading Phil Whitney's recollections of his neighborhood, but our paths never crossed. Same is true of the Storey family. They all lived in different neighborhoods. In fact, walking to the end of the island to play golf at Maynard Murch's little putt-putt course was a major undertaking.

So, on to the Beal and Bunker Dock. There was so much to see and do there. For openers, today's Post Office was a freezer for tuna. Right next to it was the only car gas pump on the island. At that point, the Post Office was in Kevin Wedge's house. His grandmother Rose was postmistress. It was always intriguing when fishermen came in with a new catch and the freezer was open for us to see. Nearly every lobster boat had a pulpit on the bow with all the attendant harpoons. In the freezer, all these long sleek bodies were hanging from hooks, frozen solid. Imagine how many would have made their way to Japan if the supply chain existed back then.

The next building was the bait shed. As children, we always held our noses and ran through this long shed that contained scores of open barrels of salted herring. When you made it through there, then you encountered the sweet smell of pastries being baked by Clyde and Dot Sanborn and beyond that was the Port Hole restaurant where a tasty meal could be had; it was even open on the evenings that the movie boat ran.

I remember Clarence Beal behind the counter at the Port Hole who grilled me a hot dog one night and said, "That's worth a lot more than the quarter we're charging." It was delicious. The movie boat was a real treat. Nick Murray, Gracy Hartley and I, along with others, jumped aboard the Bobcat or the Malesca, which landed at the lower Southwest Harbor dock. We walked into town and saw whatever was playing. I think I could manage the entire evening for about \$1 including a fudgesicle. Then back to the boat, over to the Porthole for a late-night snack and home in bed before 10.

Beyond the Port Hole restaurant was the office of Beal and Bunker. Don

Allen, husband of Charlene Allen, ran the enterprise, selling boat and car gas, buying lobsters, selling lobsters, and dispatching special boats, which if I remember correctly could be had for \$5. I think B&B had three or four boats of varying sizes that were running all day long. There was always chatter on the VHF radios as Don dispatched boats wherever they were needed to pick up people or freight. Firewood was brought over by hand, log-by-log on a World War II landing craft.

At the end of the dock were some chairs where my old friend, Les Rice, was always sitting. I would greet him each morning and he would invariably ask me, with a chuckle, if I'd like one of his cigars. I knew he was teasing, and I'd decline. We just sat there throughout the day watching all the boats come and go. I think at that time, most of the local lobstermen sold their catch to B&B. The co-op on Islesford was many years in the future. Whenever the spirit moved us, a gang of us kids would bring our hand reels (yellow plastic with green cord and hook) down to the lobster carts and fish for pollock, which I took home to Mrs. Bulger so she could feed her cat. One summer, I was standing too close to an open lobster cart, a lobster boat roared by—and I fell in. Terrifying!

Other early memories included stopping by Sadie Bulger's house (the Dalton house now) where she had a little store where you could get an ice cream cone and penny candies. I also recall as a youngster having a meal at Sawtelle and Velma Teel's house (now owned by the Bunker family). I think many families in the 30's, 40's and 50's took their meals at her house, and perhaps others on the island. I was a toddler and sitting on the floor at the Teel's. For some reason I had a hammer and started pounding nails that were already well situated in the floorboards. Gail Colby appeared from the kitchen and told me to cut it out, walking off with my hammer.

Betty Hartley told me that during their early summers on the island they took all their meals at the building behind Eva Bracy's House (Mountain View Inn) before it was moved up the street. It now houses the Historical Society.

Like today, getting groceries took some planning because at that point, Elisha Bunker's store was no longer in business. There were five grocery stores in Southwest Harbor. We tended to trade mostly with Sawyers. Mrs. Worcester, who owned the store with her husband, Don, was an expert at taking down your order. You could talk pretty fast... and it was always accurate.

Then an Amazon-like process would kick into high gear. Sawyers delivered the grocery boxes to the Beal and Bunker boat, which was solely devoted to groceries; there was no allowance for passengers although occasionally you could catch a ride if there was room. Snooks Peterson, who with her husband Philmore lived in the house across from the church, met the boat on the island side. With the help of some teenagers, including my brother Hal, she would load up the groceries and begin local deliveries. I think the delivery service cost a quarter.

Other clear memories involve the Murch's boats. They had a large sailboat, the Sudrun, and of course the Hushai. Their captain, Paul, invited me each summer to spend the night on the sailboat where he would fix me a cooked breakfast in the morning. I think Captain Paul lived on the Sudrun all summer; his preference over the "stink boat," Hushai. I used to row out to see Captain Paul in Tud Bunker's fiberglass punt. I don't know what I was thinking but I have a very clear memory of Tud's displeasure at having to row out in someone else's rowboat to collect his own. I can still see the look on his face!

Every time I walk past that beautiful boat, the Hushai, tied up to the town float, I look at the bow seat where I enjoyed many cruises to Bar Harbor. I remember sitting up there with the travel reporter for the Cleveland Plain Dealer, who was profiling the Murch family and beautiful Acadia.

I must mention the special visits to Carl Nelson's house—both summer and

winter. Carl summered and then lived full time in Tosh Park, as I mentioned earlier, the house now owned by the Corsons just north of Polly and Tud Bunker's house. They were his favorite neighbors. Most mornings Carl would walk up the street to their house for coffee. Our visits to Carl's house were a highlight of the summer; I had never met an artist before.



Christmas 1976 Postcard from Carl Nelson

When we walked back from the Murch's, Carl would invite us in for a cold drink and a visit. He would invariably bring out the paintings he had completed that summer and invite our reaction. Carl would become one of the most important people in my life. My son John is named John Nelson Newell. Carl spent his final years with his niece, Elaine, in Elmhurst, Illinois. As fortune would have it, I had just moved to Chicago for a new job. Before we bought a house in Lake Bluff, Illinois, I was living in a hotel. I would have Carl over for dinner. He was most impressed by the room service and ice cream for dessert, of course.

When I lived in Boston in the 1970s, I would make at least one visit a winter to stay with Carl. As many will remember, Carl had the whole island over for Christmas dinner in two consecutive nights. What a feast he put on. We were fortunate to have our own special weekend with him during which he would have Tud and Polly, Polly Storey and Mickey MacFarlane over for grilled lamb chops.

He would build a roaring fire in his cook stove, then take off the grates so the open flames were exposed, and it was there that he would grill luscious, thick loin lamb chops from Sawyers. His table would be aglow with perhaps a dozen brass candlesticks he had collected over the years from his time in both New York and Boston. Carl would finish up dinner with crepes Suzettes, from a recipe I still use. Waking up in one of Carl's cozy upstairs bedrooms, I could smell the fire along with bacon cooking and the aroma of some of the delicious coffee I used to bring him from Cambridge Tea & Coffee. He made the strongest coffee I've ever had. Waiting for us when we came down were always plates of homemade schnecken—as they say in the movie, *The Birdcage*, "the schnecken beckons."

During some winter visits I remember going with Carl and most of the island over to Islesford for an evening of the card game Whist. It was a wonderful community event during the

darkest days of the winter. It also brought back many summer memories of playing the board game Beano (Bingo) at the Fire House. I can still hear Junior's booming voice calling out "B 4."

Many of my contemporaries on the island will have vivid memories of Thursday choir practice at the church. My grandmother, Evelyn, along with Leah Murch, were instrumental in putting the church on a good financial footing. She was deeply involved in all aspects of the church and cracked into shape all of us teenagers. Today, when I walk by the maroon robes still hanging in the back

of the church it brings back memories of those sticky Thursday mornings when 20 teenagers marched around in our robes—usually dripping with perspiration—practicing hymns for the Sunday services soon to follow.

In later summers, I came to live alone in the Stanley cottage next to my grandmother. After I got home from working at Southwest Boat where I was a painter, I would fix dinner for both of us.

And on Saturdays we'd sit down to watch The Lawrence Welk Show together. My late teen years were another wonderful chapter of living on the island. In a leaky 15-foot riddle skiff with an ancient Evinrude outboard, I took Vicky Hartley Johnston over to the mainland when she

was in labor and about to deliver Meg. I had no phone, so Chris, her husband, had to pedal over on his bike to rouse me. We hit a gigantic wave as we came into Southwest Harbor, and soaked Vicky's slacks and blouse, which is how she entered the delivery room.

I also had great adventures with Junior Bracy scuba diving. Each Sunday, Lorraine, Junior and I would jump into his lobster boat, the Lorilynn, I think, and pick up members of the Bangor Scuba Club. We usually dove off Ironbound Island in Frenchman Bay. Occasionally, we would make a trip out to Mt. Desert Rock, and even dove off the west end of Sutton Island one night. One afternoon, I remember

diving somewhere between Cranberry and Islesford and finding this vast field of granite posts and curbs—it looked like a fallen city. Obviously, it was the site of a shipwreck many years ago.

I could go on and on with memories of this wonderful island. But let me leave you here. I hope you've enjoyed reading about some island activities before your time and that you will share with me, my wife Johnna, and our family your own wonderful memories, and the good fortune that someone led you to Cranberry Island. Had my grandfather, Sterling Newell, not crossed paths with Maynard Murch, my life would have been much poorer for it.

Tuna Fishing on the Cranberry Isles

BY NATHAN ROME

In the late 1950's to early 1960's there often were tuna in the waters offshore from Great Cranberry and Islesford during the summer. These were large tuna weighing anywhere from 300 to 600 pounds. They often swam just below the surface of the water with only their dorsal fin showing.

The three Alley brothers — Harry, Harold, and Chuddy — were sons of Andrew Alley and they grew up in the house where Beverly Sanborn now lives on Great Cranberry. By the late 1950's, Harry (father of Mark Alley) was the only one of the brothers still living on Great Cranberry. Chuddy had moved to Islesford and Harold to Southwest Harbor.

I used to hang out a lot on the Beal & Bunker dock listening to the fishermen sitting around chatting. One day, the fellow who had been going tuna fishing with Harold was not available, and Harold asked me if I would like to go with him. I jumped at the opportunity and ended up going with Harold for two or three summers.

We only went out looking for tuna on calm days when one would be able to see the dorsal fin cutting through the waters a few inches above the surface. Tuna fishing required two people on the boat — one to steer and the other to be on the lookout for the tuna and then to harpoon the tuna when we got close enough to do that.

Andrew Alley, who went out with his son Harry, performed the same role (steering) that I did for Harold. Chuddy had a fellow from Islesford who went out with him. The three Alley brothers always went out tuna fishing at the same time, each in his own boat, with an assistant to steer. The brothers were the best tuna fishermen in the area.

August generally was the best month for tuna fishing, since that was when the tuna were in the waters offshore from the Cranberry Isles. We usually looked for (and often

found) tuna between Bakers Island and the Duck Islands. The three boats spread out over the water and were in radio communication with one another about where they were and what they were seeing.

Once we were out in this area, Harold would turn the wheel over to me to steer the boat, and he would go sit on top of





the cabin from where he had the best view of the surrounding waters and the best chance of spotting a tuna if it was in the area.

The boats used for tuna fishing were lobstering boats fitted out with a parapet that projected out 6 to 8 feet beyond the bow of the boat. The parapet was a plank 12 to 14 feet long, the aft end of which was secured to the foredeck. It had steel railings on the sides and forward end.

The harpoon was a wooden pole about 8 to 10 feet long. Projecting from the forward end was a one-quarter inch diameter steel rod to which a brass dart was loosely attached. The overall length of the dart was about 4 to 5 inches. A rope of about 100 feet in length was attached at the midpoint of the dart, so that any tension on the rope would cause the dart to dig into the flesh of the tuna and not pull out. A wooden barrel with a flagpole was attached to the other end of the rope.

When Harold spotted the fin of a tuna cutting through the water, he would come down from atop the cabin and go out to the end of the parapet. When we still were a few hundred feet from the tuna, he would have me slow the boat down and continue at constant speed, as any change in engine speed/noise would cause the tuna to dive out of sight.

As we got closer, he would take the harpoon in his hands and use it as pointer

for the direction I should steer. By his handling of the harpoon, I could see when he was about to throw it and plant the dart in the flesh of the tuna. which would kill it or at least tire the tuna out. If he had a hit on the tuna, Harold would come aft and throw the barrel, line, and flag overboard. Hit or miss, we would always retrieve the harpoon from the water to use again.

We would then keep track of where the barrel and flag were. If it wasn't getting too late in the afternoon, we would continue looking for more tuna to harpoon. As the afternoon got later, we would round up our catch by going to each of our barrels and flags to haul in our catch. Depending on how good a hit Harold had gotten earlier in the day, the tuna might or might not still be alive. We would pull alongside each barrel and start hauling in the line.

If the tuna was no longer alive, getting it on board the boat would be relatively easy. Harold would put a large hook into the tuna's mouth, The hook was attached to the same winch used for hauling lobster traps, with the tuna's mouth end winched as high as it would go alongside the boat. We would put a rope around the tail, and then flip the tail end into the boat, and then lower the rest of the tuna into the boat. If the tuna were still alive, there would be some thrashing about until the tuna was on the floor of

the boat.

Depending on the size of the tuna, they could weigh anywhere between 300 to 600 pounds. Sometimes when Harold got small tuna (less than 300 pounds) he would cut it up, giving parts to his family and friends. On days when things were slow out on the water, the three brothers would rendezvous their boats at lunch time, just to chat. The most tuna we got in one day was five. Of course, there were days when we did not get any.

When we got back to the Beal & Bunker dock at the end of the afternoon, our catch was hauled out onto the dock and put in the icehouse. To get a picture in your mind of what the Beal & Bunker dock looked like back then, think of the Lobstermen's Coop on Islesford. From the icehouse, Beal & Bunker would take the tuna to Southwest Harbor where they were put on refrigerated trucks that delivered them to markets across the Northeast.

What was then the icehouse on the Beal & Bunker dock is now the Cranberry Island post office, which I say is probably the best-insulated post office in the United States!

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