

Cranberry Chronicle

NEWS OF CRANBERRY HOUSE AND GREAT CRANBERRY ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY • DECEMBER 2022

Cranberry General Store

By MICHAEL D. TODD



General Store photo credit: Hollie Stanley/Cranberry General Store Facebook page

At approximately 2:30 a.m. on December 27, 2022, Lobsterman and Volunteer Fire Chief Richard Howland and his crew set out to check on their fishing gear when they noticed an ominous glow emanating from the shores of Great Cranberry Island. Immediately, they knew something was very wrong as the power to the islands was out and they saw smoke rising. They jumped into action and signaled local fire departments to rush to the scene. As Great Cranberry and Islesford Fire Department crews started to arrive, their fears were confirmed; the general store was aflame. As shocking as this

was, their adrenaline took over and the crews did everything within their power to ensure that the fire did not spread to nearby woods, buildings (within less than 50 feet), or propane tanks. For more than five hours, in the bitter cold, our crews, with help from Mount Desert and Southwest Harbor fire departments, fought the fire and worked to protect the rest of our island, as a cherished town treasure burned to the ground.

As one would expect in a small community, word spread quickly of the tragedy and residents, stunned by shock and sadness, did what they could to offer support. Concern for the

store's dedicated and intrepid managers, Hollie and Patrick, and for the Murch family, who own the store, was keenly and immediately felt. The impact of the loss would be significant financially, emotionally, and socially. The store was more than just a building selling provisions, it was a social center for the island and a place where generations of town residents created memories with one another.

For Cranberry Islanders, the store is the meeting place for morning coffee and conversation. The front porch of the store was the scene for islanders telling fish-stories, discussing town business, catching up with the neighbors, and

GREAT CRANBERRY ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BOARD

OFFICERS

Phil Whitney
President

James Singerling
Vice President

Richard Beal
Treasurer

Lydia Johnson
Secretary

Nancy Wood
Corresponding Secretary

TRUSTEES

Jennifer Walls
Beverly Sanborn
Miriam Hinnant
Ingrid Gaither
R. T. Lyman
Earl Simpson
Wendy Todd
Regina Cocco

Darlene Sumner
Director of Kids' Activities

CRANBERRY CHRONICLE

Editor

Sharon Morrell

Design

Downeast Graphics

Printer

Downeast Graphics

CONTACT US

Great Cranberry Island
Historical Society
P.O. Box 12
Cranberry Isles, ME 04625
info@gcihs.org



Tyler Johnson on new golf cart.

Notes of Appreciation

to **Wendy Todd** for assuming the Archives Coordinator role and leading the subcommittee in reorganizing the extensive archives materials.

to **Mike Todd** for organizing a Fundraising Bike Ride which raised several hundred dollars in support of Cranberry House.

to **Lydia Johnson** for building decorative new museum store shelves and designing the store displays, resulting in 150% increase in sales.

to **Gail Cleveland** for the loan of six Wini Smart "Mailboat Series" paintings for museum display.

Milestones

Passings

Marilyn Peterson
August 3rd

Allison Bunker
August 19th

Gaile Colby
October 27th

Departures

Ben and Jenn Walls
Moving off island

Arrivals

Jordan Merchant
Rice House

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, Whales Tale Gift 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.

President's Report

PHIL WHITNEY

The 2022 Summer season brought many visitors to the island despite high inflation, record gas prices, and uncooperative weather. Springtime saw substantial rainy weather, while July and August bordered on drought conditions, before returning to wet weather in September and October.

Construction on the Building Addition Project is nearly completed, with all three floors now finished and only cosmetic work on the back stairwell and punch list items remaining to wrap-up the project this autumn. An audio-visual upgrade was installed in the Arts Center, with a larger movie screen, a new projector, and a completely new surround sound system. Programs in the Arts Center were restricted due to the on-going construction; however, smaller events were still presented upstairs as well as outside on the grounds. Three new wall television monitors were installed in the museum, along with one placed in the new Arts Center addition. The museum monitors allowed an enhanced sensory experience by continuously playing locally originated videos as visitors browsed through the museum. Visitor reactions to the remodeled museum were incredibly positive, with "Wow!" being the most common initial reaction. Although our Archivist resigned unexpectedly early in the season, the Archives Committee members, under the leadership of Wendy Todd and Lydia Johnson, pulled together and did a remarkable job putting a professional touch on the museum displays and tackling the daunting challenges of organizing the basement archives collection. The museum offered numerous and varied exhibits including island family histories, maritime-related displays,



Karin Whitney, Museum Receptionist

school artifacts, Beal & Bunker-related paintings and brochures, a Hitty Preble history corner and a 200-year-old tortoise shell from a South Seas 1825 whaling expedition. Lydia Johnson completely redesigned the Museum Store shelves and inventoried all publications. The eye-catching displays resulted in a dramatic 150% increase in sales. The Museum Receptionist team was especially capable this year,

greeting visitors, answering questions, and overseeing museum store sales. The Archives Committee also worked closely with the History Trust, a collection of local area museums and libraries working to facilitate the exchange of archival materials between the organizations and to improve public access to each organization's archives collections.



Frenchboro Volunteer Appreciation Day



Darlene Sumner, Director of Kids Activities



GCIHS golf carts



The brand new moon-glow-color golf cart was received in late spring and added to the Cranberry Explorer fleet where it performed flawlessly during the ensuing months. The public address system graciously installed by Tyler Johnson saved the voices of many a driver. The old golf cart, which logged approximately TWENTY-EIGHT THOUSAND miles on Cranberry Island roads over seven years, was relegated to back-up status. We were able to offer numerous special charters in addition to the regular schedule, resulting in a record-breaking \$7,156.00 total donations income. Other significant accomplishments around the property included: continued clearing and landscaping of the backwoods areas, re-stocking of 100 rainbow trout in the Blue Heron Pond, and constructing an additional billboard along the walkway entrance. The Operations Committee began researching the proposed construction of a storage shed in which to house our growing collection of historic rowboats, and the proposed installation of a portable stage in the Arts Center.

Darlene Sumner, Director of Kids Activities, continued planning and overseeing weekly programs during the summer including time at Preble Cove and activities at the Smart Shack, which is open daily from 10-4 for family use.

Over the summer, Cranberry House continued to host movies and karaoke in the Arts Center, along with guided nature trail walks and lobstering talks outdoors. We provided support to a western Maine church group that conducted a beach clean-up on May 21st which included Spurling Cove, Preble Cove and Whistler Cove. Members of the Bunker Family from New Hampshire to Minnesota were hosted on September 10th. They enjoyed touring the island and receiving briefings on the history of the Bunker Family on the Cranberry Isles. Cranberry Isles Realty Trust (CIRT) held a community meeting on the cafe deck on August 8th. Three separate dedication ceremonies were held over the summer. The first was on July 20th to commemorate Archivist Anne Grulich and the new basement Climate-Controlled Archives Room. The second was held on July 28th to commemorate the new Chris and Victoria Johnston—Museum Floor Addition. The third was held on August 13th to commemorate the Wini Smart—Kids Smart Shack Recreation Center.

The annual Cranberry House Volunteers Appreciation Day was held on August 28th. The Maine Seacoast Mission's Sunbeam transported approximately 20 members to Frenchboro under cloudless skies for a memorable day touring the island, picnicking, a church service and visiting their beautiful museum. It was a wonderful way to end a successful summer season.

Our Annual Meeting was held on August 17th. Five new Trustees were formally elected to the Board—Lydia

Johnson, Wendy Todd, Earl Simpson, R.T. (Ronnie) Lyman and Regina Cocco. We are pleased and excited to have them on board. They have already contributed in significant ways to the Historical Society and its various operations. Supporting the Board of Trustees are five subcommittees: Operations, Programs, Publications, Finance and Archives. They do most of the routine legwork of the organization and are staffed both by Trustees and other volunteers.

Heading into winter, there is still much activity around Cranberry House. Although the museum, cafe, shops, ponds, and trails are closed, the Arts Center and the Basement Offices and Archives spaces remain open with regular use. Movies, Karaoke, and various meetings are held regularly in the Arts Center. There were also special events, such as a memorable 'spooktacular' Halloween Party coordinated by Darlene Sumner and Lydia Johnson. Other winter events planned include Christmas-related activities and decorating, a New Year's Eve Karaoke Party, and possible big screen sports events.

I look forward to seeing some of you this winter at the activities, and many of you who will return next summer. Have a safe and joyous holiday season.



Buchsbaum Trail Walk Group, 2022



Chris and Victoria Johnston



Anne Grulich



Smart Shack Dedication

General Manager's Report

BEN SUMNER

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.

The tireless efforts of many volunteers bring the Cranberry House to life throughout the year, and we are grateful for the donations acknowledging that helpfulness and hospitality. However, as the Income Statement below shows, our members are the driving force for keeping GCIHS and Cranberry House financially healthy. We currently have 113 active memberships. As we look towards 2023, we expect significant expense increases will continue to affect the maintenance of our current operation.

We have many current and past volunteers who, for one reason or another, are unable to contribute the time they once could to different programs. Please consider a new membership, upgrading a current membership, or gifting a membership. Your financial support allows the efforts of our current volunteers to be maximized. Activities at Cranberry House reverberate through the local economy and enhance the quality of life that many of us have come to enjoy. Please continue to support Cranberry House so that it remains a part of the Great Cranberry Island experience for years to come.

Income Statement for Twelve Months Ended November 10, 2022

OPERATIONS

Income

Donations—Memberships	\$28,665
Donations—Museum, Other	\$13,692
Events, Sales	\$2,597
Rents	\$16,675
Grants/Misc. Income	\$1,329
Total Operating Income	\$62,957

Expenses

Events	\$872
Admin & General	\$9,694
Prop Taxes & Insurances	\$11,544
Maintenance	\$18,162
Utilities	\$15,218
Misc.	\$0
Total Operating Expenses	\$55,490

Operating Bottom Line **\$7,467**

Personnel Expenses **\$21,647**

Offset by Campaign Staffing Reserve \$21,647

Net Income (incl. Personnel Expense) **(\$14,180)**

Remaining Campaign Staffing Reserve \$31,810
Est'd Months Available Staffing Reserve 18 months
(Calculated based upon previous 12 months)

Archives Update

BY LYDIA JOHNSON & WENDY TODD

This Summer season was a busy one for the Archives Committee. Early into our season, our Archivist resigned, leaving the Archives committee members to set up the remaining displays in the museum and create a workflow in the archives room. Under the leadership of Wendy Todd and Lydia Johnson, the committee has continued to meet a couple of times each month to answer community requests, accession items, organize the archives, and plan out future exhibits and interviews.

This transition has been successful in part because of the mentoring received from the History Trust, a regional alliance of independent organizations that partner to safeguard the historical collections of communities within Frenchman and Blue Hill Bay areas. Pauline Angione from the History Trust visited Great Cranberry in August to train committee members on using the Digital Archives software. She has identified and created resources for the committee to help us with our accessions, which now exceed over 2500 cataloged items. Our vast Digital Archive collection can be browsed online at gcihs.net.

Throughout the summer and into the fall, the committee has been taking inventory of the archives room, making sure that items on the shelves match items in the Digital Archives. The Archive Committee has several ongoing tasks for the winter and is planning some new exhibits for the 2023 Museum Season. One such task is finding a solution for the dedication plaques that have been falling off the rocks near the museum entrance. At this writing, the plaques have been moved inside for the winter and will be hung inside the museum until a better solution can be found.

The committee will be enthusiastically working throughout the winter season, and we look forward to reporting on our progress in the coming months.

Thank You Ben

BY PHIL WHITNEY

The Great Cranberry Island Historical Society is sad to announce that Ben Sumner has submitted his resignation as General Manager for Cranberry House operations effective November 30th. Ben has been our General Manager for the past five years, but recently he has accepted a new position with an area accounting firm. He has graciously agreed to continue as our Bookkeeper until December 31st, and possibly beyond, depending on circumstances with his new job.

Ben succeeded Jessi Duma in the General Manager position. During his tenure, the job requirements for the manager grew as GCI Historical Society and Cranberry House expanded and developed. Recently, Ben took up the daunting responsibility of being involved in construction supervision as the Cranberry House's major Building Addition Project evolved. The process took nearly four years to complete and there is not a single spot in the three-story addition where the mark of Ben's influence and involvement is not felt. The project involved close planning and coordination with various contractor firms and was intensive and often exhausting. The finished project is beautiful.

There have been many other changes, expansions, and improvements at Cranberry House during Ben's time as manager. The Board of Trustees has always had ambitious plans and ideas for a seemingly endless list of projects for Cranberry House and its grounds. Ben was their go-to guy and managed to keep up with all these demands and more. Ben spent most of his time on daily operations support such as attending board meetings, managing the website, daily and seasonal maintenance,



production work on our Chronicle Newsletter, and in-person support at the many Cranberry House events.

Cranberry House's role in supporting the community was a priority for Ben. With that in mind, he worked to equip us with ZOOM meeting capability so that Cranberry House could offer virtual meetings for anyone needing the service. A classic example of Ben's commitment to our organization and its mission occurred late one winter night during the height of a building construction project. It was discovered by miraculous chance, during a howling winter storm, that water was pouring down from the roof into the old basement archives/administrative offices area. Ben responded to a phone call and his quick actions taken outside in the storm helped avert a major flooding catastrophe.

Ben's calming, collaborative nature and affable attitude allowed him to work well with both outside contractors, paid employees and volunteer workers in the organization. His low-key, efficient approach, including his exceptional writing skills and problem-solving ability, were instrumental in keeping operations moving forward with minimal conflict or disruption. His presence as General Manager will be sorely missed. We wish him the very best in his new career endeavor.

Part 3 of the Birlem Family Letters

PHIL WHITNEY



We continue in sequence excerpts from the Birlem Family Letters. The letters printed in the August 2022 Cranberry Chronicle were written between December 3, 1893, and January 8, 1899. We again extend our appreciation to Birlem Family descendant Lynn Birlem of Southwest Harbor for helping transcribe and then donating the original letters to GCIHS

—Phil Whitney



Augustus Birlem (Courtesy Leslie Astbury)

Letter Dated 3/26/1898

Sunday Afternoon

To Mamma from Mamie Birlem
(*student at Castine Normal School*)

We are going to the Christian Endeavor at 6 PM and then to the Unitarian Church at 8 PM. I spoke in my last letter about the lecture that was to be given on Cuba and the Sufferers. It was quite interesting. A collection was taken up and they got \$54. I think that was quite a collection.

I got your letter on Saturday and one from Aunt Flo Friday night. I was very glad to get them. I'm glad Grampa got out of there all right. I hope nothing will happen to him on his voyage home, but I am afraid it sounds very much like war. (*Spanish American War of 1898*)

I hope we shall hear from Grandpa soon. I shall be glad when he gets out of the West Indies.

Letter Dated 8/8/1899

Castine, • ME Sunday Noon

To Mamma from Mamie Birlem

I suppose Mary Ann (Carroll) thought perhaps it would be better for the school to pass directly from her hands into mine. Why is she going to keep Baker's Island school this spring? I think perhaps Mr. Hadlock would give it to me if I should apply for it. Of course, it won't do for me to work very hard at first, and I might as well have that school as any as Papa thinks I shall never set the world on fire.

Letter Dated 10/11/1899

Hebron, ME • Weds, 11:15 AM

To Mamma from "Brother"
Charles S. Spurling
(*who was attending Hebron Academy*)

There isn't any news up here, only turnout in the morning, get some breakfast, go to prayers, have two lessons and come home, wait until M (?), get some dinner, loaf until 1:15 PM, go to your room until 2:15 then go to the hall and have English lessons and Algebra and Elocution two times a week, then dress for football, play until dark, go up to the gym, take a bath, get some supper, loaf around until study hours, study a little while and go to bed and turn out in the morning, and do the same over again. That is all the news I know. Quite exciting, I think.

Letter Dated 4/29/1900

Hebron, ME

To Mamma from Brother
(*Charles S. Spurling*)

I tried playing lawn tennis a little yesterday. I think I should like it fairly well after I got into it.

A crowd of boys went smelting last night somewhere between 20–40 and they only got 4 fish. We had some for dinner last week. I think they taste something like flounders in the summer but not quite as good. They are full of little bones, worse than herring.

Letter Dated 5/24/1903

Hebron, ME

To Mamma from Brother
(*Charles S. Spurling*)

There is nothing special for news here this week excepting fires. There was an old barn burned here last week and there are fires all around us. I believe there was a big one at Bemis last week. You could hardly see the sun here all day for smoke. It is getting horrid dry here. They say the hay crop is ruined now and everything that is planted is turning yellow. We haven't had any rain to speak of for over a month. Is everything dried up at home?

Letter Dated 6/7/1903

Hebron, ME • Sunday

To Mamma from Brother
(*Charles S. Spurling*)

Sam Elliott was here yesterday for a little while. He and another boy came over from Oxford. Sam was intending to stay over Sunday but there was a smash

up of a freight train on the Portland and Rumford Falls RR down near Mechanics Falls, so it made the train late and he decided to take the train home. I took him to West Minot.

It has been very smoky here this week. One can't see half a mile now, I don't believe. The worst was last Wednesday night I have seen. It was almost as bad as fog. One could hardly see the dorm.

Letter Dated 11/1/1899

Cranberry Isle

To Brother (*Charles S. Spurling*)
from Gramma

Grampa went out fishing yesterday in Uncle Hen's (*William H. Bulger, 1845-1927*) or (*his son Charles Henry Bulger, 1887-1938*) boat as he has let Uncle Bill and Uncle Hen have his boat to go up gunning in. He only got 40 fish.

Bert's (*Warren Adelbert Spurling, second husband of Aunt Flo*) old schooner was in the creek (*The Pool*) the other night and she dragged ashore up of Broad Point right abreast of his house (*currently the Cameron and Nancy Wood house*). Julie (*Julia Bunker Spurling*) got up in the morning, looked out, and saw her there, and says, "I guess Bert has been trying to put his schooner in his barn"—she did not hurt anything. Gid (*Gilbert?*) Stanley was on board asleep but had no boat. When she struck he got up and hollered but no one heard him, so he turned in again.

Our teacher took tea with us last night and then we all went to Endeavor meeting. She is a nice little lady. We all like her very much and think she is as good a teacher as Nellie. She is a member of the Baptist Church and has been ever since she was 13 years old. She is 23 now.

You will not see her as our school will be done and she will be home before you get home, but I guess she will be here next Spring, if nothing happens. As the colonel says that she is the best teacher

that we have had around here for a long while. He told George Bulger so.

Letter Dated 3/15/1900

Cranberry Isles

To Brother (*Charles S. Spurling*)
from Grammie

Your time is almost up for this term; I am counting the days for you. Hoping to see you here soon, well and lively. Mamie has left us and gone to her nasty old books again. I hope she can get through with this term and not injure her eyes any. The Doctor says she will always have to wear glasses.

Grandpa has left us, too. He went to Rockport on the Monday boat. He is going in the Schooner James Young, is to load ice in Rockport for St. Thomas, West Indies. He went away some pleased to think he was going to get aboard of an old vessel again.

I am going up (*Up the Road towards the dock as opposed to Down the Road towards the end of the island. Grammie, I believe, lived in the current Colleen Bunker house*) to see your Mamma tomorrow if it don't rain. Mr. Davie is gone so Papa and Mamma are all alone. I expect they feel like old folks, don't you? with all their children gone.

The lobster catchers are doing well since the big storm. Some of them have got as high as 60 to 70 lobsters at a time, and they are 23 cents apiece.

Letter Dated 11/15/1899

Cranberry Isles

To Brother (*Charles S. Spurling*)
from Mamma

They have got the measles on Islesford. One of the Fernald boys, Fritz, I think, was sick and broken out and they had Dr. Phillips (*J.D. Phillips*) and he said he was poisoned and doctored him for that. He is poorly now. Now there are 12 or more cases taken it from him. Fanny Morse was one of the first taken and they had Dr. Sawyer and he said at once she had measles. Mr. Phippen

has them. Cora Spurling, Clarence S., Gertie and Mr. Spofford. They thought George H. was coming down with them today. Ernest Spurling has got them. He has probably given them to quite a number here. Aunt Flo said her children were probably in for them. School closed down to the road Friday and on Sutton.

Letter Dated 5/31/1900

Cranberry Isles

To Brother (*Charles S. Spurling*)
from Mamma

Bert (*Warren Adelbert Spurling*) Spurling's schooner was dismasted last Sunday night just before dark. It was a squall but nothing to what they had been out in before, but the chainplates gave way and caused both masts to go out of her...the masts, rigging, mail sail boom. They tried to hold onto the boom and mainsail, but it was too much for them and they had to cut clear for fear it would make a hole in the stern. No one was hurt much. Dick Stanley was knocked down and stunned for a few minutes and Bert Spurling was hit in the head and made him crazy a little while. Bert Birlem was so scared and sick, he went below and turned in and Frank Wedge was frightened. Freeman (*Freeman Webster Stanley 1876-1955*), Perley Flanders and Ed Wedge were all right; they saved themselves holding onto the boom and sail.

Bert has bought the "Tamson" and is going to repair his vessel with her masts and rigging. They are working on her now. They rigged up low sails and got part way in. Will Trussell went out and towed them in to SWH. You ought to have seen her; she looked funny—a boat like Columbus's schooners they came over in. They were fortunate to get out of it as well as they did. It is hard on Bert. Perley isn't going any more but the others, or most of them are going to stay by.

Cranberry Isles Sketches

PHIL WHITNEY (AS RELATED BY DR. LEWIS 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.

Uncle Elwood

"Here comes Uncle Elwood (*Spurling*), wonder what he's a doin' over here this time of day," said Tud (*Bunker*). "Keeps that little ear button of his turned way down to save batteries, as it's damned hard to make him hear anything.— 'Whatcha doin' over here this time of day, Elwood, lost or somethin?'"

"Speak up, can't make out what you're sayin; guess I'll hev ta turn up this little 'radio' half a notch to bring ya' in," says Elwood, reaching under his coat, an old captain's blue serge uniform coat with corroded brass buttons of days gone by. "Want to get back to the island; anyone goin' that way you know of?"

"Kind of a bad time of day, Elwood, I said, but Del Hodgkins is up at the mill gettin' out a stern-post, for that boat he's building himself to go to Florida in this Winter, and Chris Swenson is taking him back around four; there's Eber's boy, maybe he's going pretty soon. Well, hell, I can't sit around here all afternoon. Got to drive the "madam" to Bangor, and be back in time to take her over to Seawall. They're having a lobster party at Mamie Rich's tonight."

"OK - so long, Tud. So long, Doc."

Pretty soon the put-put-put of Eber Spurling's old make-and-break engine could be heard rounding the point, and his little launch came in bringing the plumbers back from the island. I saw Elwood getting in, while I wandered off up the hill to Flye's Lunch, for a piece of Mrs. Flye's homemade apple pie.

The Fire Club

"Coming to the Fire Club tonight?" broke the silence as Wilfred (*Bunker*) collected a quarter from each passenger. Eber's boy, Erwin Spurling, was next to speak. Eber is eighty or so and a small

man while Erwin is a huge, unshaven, Charles Laughton or Victor McLaglen-like character. "Let's take the pumps down to Say-dah's well tonight; we pumped out Del's last week." Say-dah, Elzada Campbell (*Mrs. John Bunker Swenson*), was yanking at the lapel of a stranger coming to the island for the first time and saying, "I like the looks of you, young feller, even if you are a landlubber from up Boston way; where'd you hail from and whatcha doin' down on this rock anyway? I want you to know I'm a Bunker, even if I did marry old Chris, dear old Chris; you're not one of them commun-ists are ya?'"

This was Thursday evening and every Thursday night at eight o'clock the men of the island, almost without exception, gathered at the Fire Club. They had torn down an old boat house and built a fine club house with space for the fire truck at one end. While there hasn't been a fire on the island since years ago when Elwood's (*Spurling*) house was struck by lightning, the men had to have some

way to get clear of the women folks one night a week.

The women, however, saw to it that a huge table was covered with fresh pies, doughnuts, sandwiches and so on, every Thursday night. It was always in great excess to what could be consumed, so it became customary to auction the remainder, the returns going toward more fire equipment. Soon the club had the finest of pumps, a truck, ladders, plenty of hose, shovels, axes, chemicals, asbestos items; then the summer residents began contributing until what really was intended as a casual social with public dances now and then, etc., became quite a formal and well equipped firefighting organization.

Forrest And His Wheelbarrow

Nellie Spurling had several children, all of whom became valuable members of the island society, due to their strength, courage, co-operation, etc. A possible exception was Forrest, who had been injured at childbirth and, while a willing hard worker, he was a sort of dependent



Fire Club Meeting, January 1953



Ice Bound Spurling Cove, ca. 1930's



Forrest Spurlings

at times. Nell looked after him with every consideration, until he was in his forties, when she died.

Forrest was very strong and would work hard but was like a mule to get started. He was likely to get over-absorbed in his interest of the moment so that, if for example, you were painting the last coat of white on your boat in the cradle on the shore, Forrest was liable to want to help. He'd look around for paint, perhaps finding an old can of anti-fowling green, that had been abandoned along with its brush. Hearing brushstrokes on your boat, you might go around the other side to find it about half painted green and a very rough job at that.

Forrest generally "drove" a wheelbarrow. It would be red one day and green the next, according to the paint being used on the shore that day.

Sometimes it carried dolls with Forrest running fast; at other times trash, with Forrest scuffing along slowly. He had been told to go dump it, and this he did, often at unbecoming places.

One day Forrest was perplexed and kept standing around in everyone's way at the town landing; folks began asking him what was the matter. Meanwhile a very well-dressed lady and a gentleman sailed in and tied a beautiful large sloop to the float. The lady was remarking to her escort as they came up onto the landing, "I've got no idea where this place is but perhaps this gentleman can direct us." Approaching Forrest, she asked, "Sir, can you direct us to the home of Mr. & Mrs. Gilbert Hathorne?"

Forrest slowly protruded his tongue, then began a series of "D-d-d-d-dedus, I, I, I'll be d-d-d-d-dammed."

The couple turned and asked others for a taxi, and soon Snooks (*Hazel Peterson*), who had been waiting for a fare for the past couple of hours, tore off up the road with the couple sitting on the bare seat boards, the upholstery and springs long since having gone into the sea, along with other worn-out parts.

Forrest then wandered the island, still in a daze about where his wheelbarrow could be. For the next few days, he seemed to beg a cup of coffee from about everyone's home, during which period he would gently, but lengthily, ask for some meat, preferably a beefsteak, ending up with the inquiry as to whether they'd seen his wheelbarrow. No one had news of it to report, for no one had seen it.

As the days passed, islanders began asking other islanders if they had seen Forrest's wheelbarrow; his disturbance was beginning to concern everyone; it just had to be settled, somehow.

Nell finally sent to Bangor for a new wheelbarrow. When it arrived on the mail boat, the passengers passed it up to the landing, and helped set it up, for it came dismantled. It had a large balloon tire, which innovation caused Forrest to say, "Deedus" in admiration, or perhaps anxiety. That afternoon, one of the fishermen on his way home, along the path by the old May-Tom place, came upon Forrest's former wheelbarrow, partially burned. Forrest had never been known to touch matches and is as afraid

of fire as he is of being tied, the threat of which will always panic him. The mystery of the burned wheelbarrow has never been solved.

Forrest is very strong, and he is a great help working with the men in winter when a boat breaks its mooring in a storm and comes ashore. If he becomes too aggressive, one has but to push him a little and he will go tumbling over on his back. Showing him a piece of rope and saying, "Behave or I'll tie you to a tree," sends him on the run for home. The islanders accept Forrest as a fact of nature, just like any other living being on the island and, while they do not make him an object to pick on for fun, they still do not exclude him from their fun making.

I have returned from Southwest Harbor around 2 AM with a driving rain sweeping the island, and for a more sheltered way home, have taken one of the paths through the spruces. I never use a light; the paths are too familiar.

On one occasion, I became aware of someone's presence as I went through a certain mossy place, although I could not see a thing in the thick woods that night. I spoke a "hello," getting back a "H-h-h-h-hell, hello." There was Forrest, sitting on the edge of his wheelbarrow, only a man's suitcoat, which someone had given to him the day of the fair, was between him and the weather that night. There was no explanation; he seemed happy enough and spoke of the weather.

Hitty's Cafe



After an incredibly busy and successful season at Hitty's Café, Chef Cezar and Grace are now jet-setting their way back toward Brazil for the winter.

The café was fortunate this year to have an amazing group of exceptional workers throughout the season and of course Grace, ever-present, helping Cezar keep things moving along.

Unfortunately, amid the pre-travel kerfluffle, Chef Cezar was unable to leave a recommended recipe to tide us over until the Spring. We will have to console ourselves and our appetites with memories of magnificent lunches from the 2022 summer season.

Safe travels, Cezar and Grace, we will see you again soon!



Library

BY MICHAEL D. TODD

Stephen King said, “books are uniquely portable magic.” From kindergarten through 3rd grade, I stayed with my grandparents during the week, where my grandmother was my school’s crossing guard. At least twice a week she took my sister and me to George Mason Regional Library after school where I remember, she would let me read for hours in the reading rooms. There, I would be spellbound in the many stories I read. Transfixed by far off magical lands, chivalrous knights and brave pioneers who forged our current existence. For me the library has always been a happy place full of promise and designed to give hope and support to all who entered.

When I was preparing to move with my family to Great Cranberry Island, we heard there was an island library and initially we assumed that it must be rather limited in scope. However, upon arrival any concerns I may have had were dispelled the first moment I walked into the library. The Great Cranberry Library is conveniently located in the middle of the island alongside the Longfellow Elementary School. When entering the library, the sheer number of volumes on the bookshelves is startling. Overall, there are more than 2,300 unique items available for check-out in GCI’s library collection, including books, music, and movies. There are also comfortable seating areas in the library designed for quiet reading or hosting library events. Some of the events include kid’s story or activity time, book groups, knitting groups, and really any other idea the creative minds of GCI can come up with. In the summer, the library is open six days a week to accommodate the larger population. During the shoulder

season it is open three days, and in the off season, two days a week.

What makes this even more impressive is that the library is a private institution. It is not part of the larger Maine State Library System and therefore it is predominately funded by island residents through donations, fundraisers, and annual giving. Ingrid Gaither, librarian and one of the principal library employees, says she often tells visitors about how the library is funded and that they respond “wow, this island must really care about its library!” Ingrid said the fact the library is privately funded is a particular source of pride. Despite GCI’s library’s independence, it has a number of cooperative relationships throughout the state. For example, it gets discounted internet through the Maine State Library system and has access to inter-library loan service with other libraries throughout the state. Additionally, the library works with and supports the libraries on the other unbridged islands. The GCI library and its board, which recently elected Emily Newell Howell as the new board President, has done a Herculean job in ensuring GCI stays connected to the outside world.

The Longfellow School’s proximity to the library serves as a learning laboratory for island children. Children can conduct research, learn about how books are cataloged and dare to dream. Much like my time as a child dreaming in George Mason Regional Library, Island children need only take the approximately ten-foot covered walk from school to the library to enter their own portable magical universe. Island students can read all the age-appropriate classic books and satiate their curiosity for the wide world, near and far from our home here on the Gulf of Maine.

Karaoke Nights at Cranberry House

BY KARIN WHITNEY

What's That Racket Coming from Cranberry House?



Karaoke Nights began with my vision to establish “Open Mic Nights” at Cranberry House. Initially, there was little interest shown.

Then I remembered how popular karaoke was in Cambodia when Phil and I lived there for three years. So, the idea was formed to possibly have Karaoke Nights here. We started out slowly with karaoke for the kids. Then one night, Ric Gaither was passing by and casually dropped in to see what all the noise was about—and he never left. Ric became our first karaoke fanatic. He assumed the title of “Master of Ceremonies” for future events. We saw a musical star born in Audrey Sumner. It was delightful to hear and watch all the performers; Melanie and Jessica Sanborn, together with Carmen

Walls, Hallie and Kariah Sumner. Sometimes we even had Samson Gaither, Cooper Sumner and Xander Amuso appearing and performing some Taylor Swift songs.

Gradually during the first year the parents started joining the fun, so much so that it became necessary to have special Adults Karaoke Nights and separate Youth and Family Nights. Over the previous two winters a regular group of 8-10 karaoke fans would come every Friday evening for some rousing fun. I was later told that these Karaoke Nights saved their sanity during the long, cold, quiet winters. Singing is so easy—no instruments to learn or carry around—just belting out your favorite songs.

We have since discovered many previously unknown talents: a Loretta

Lynn impersonator in Ingrid Gaither, romantic singer Phil Whitney (*who also does “Bad Guy” by special request*) and the great country music warbler Bob Hudson. Ben Walls does an amazing soprano rendition of Radio Heads “Creep” that leaves the crowd gasping in awe (*and laughing*). Jenn Walls, normally mild-mannered, has become the Songbird of the North Atlantic, belting out specialty pop and rock tunes while occasionally performing some interesting gyrations. More recently, the enthusiastic Todd Family—Mike, Wendy, and Giselle—have been appearing regularly. All three have shown notable talent and unique styles. For sheer exuberance with talent to match, Mike Todd is fascinating to watch (*and hear*), especially singing the Mavericks and George Strait songs. Finally, no evening is complete without our musclebound hero Ric Gaither singing (*and performing*) “I’m So Sexy” followed by the Big Bopper classic “Chantilly Lace.” Gaither is actually better than the original performers. If you are then in a ‘walkin’ and ‘wigglin’ mood, I enjoy performing “I Wanna Be Loved by You” while dancing, which seems to be an audience favorite, (*judging from the laughter.*) Sometimes we have group dancing, especially when Phil sings the Beach Boys’ “Barbara Ann.” We even had a Conga line dancing several weeks ago when Ingrid wailed out “Copacabana.” People get lost in the fun and carried away.

I guess you get the idea. Cranberry House Karaoke Nights are crazy fun. I feel incredibly pleased that my little idea became so popular.

Holidays on the Island

BY LYDIA JOHNSON

As we face the start of another island winter, Auld Lang Syne comes to mind. At this writing, many of us are in the thick of winter holiday celebrations, a time which can be equally joyous and difficult as we remember the islanders who will not be with us this year. Although it is bittersweet, we honor the memory of those we have lost by continuing to uphold island traditions as best we can and allow ourselves to experience the joy of the season.

Holidays on the island are so much more than just Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the New Year. The types of celebrations and locations have changed over the years, but we still find reasons to celebrate and robust ways to make each holiday count.

Here is a glimpse of some of the ways that holidays are celebrated in the Cranberry Isles:



Photo credit: Karin Whitney

New Year's—Most recently, islanders have rung in the New Year by singing karaoke and watching the ball drop on the big screen at the Cranberry House New Year's party.

Spring/St. Patrick's Day—The Ladies' Aid hosted a community gathering to welcome Spring and celebrate St. Patrick's with food, music and bonfire into the night.

Easter—For many generations, the Congregational Church has hosted an Easter church service by various visiting pastors. In recent years, residents of all ages have taken part in an Easter Egg hunt in the ball field behind the church.



Memorial Day—The Ladies' Aid hosts a community supper. Residents place flags around the island cemeteries to honor those who lost their lives in service to the country.

School graduation—An open-to-the-public event, often a parade or party, to celebrate and commemorate the eighth graders who have completed their primary school education.



Easter Egg Hunt. Photo credit: Katie Tuesdale

Ladies Aid Fair—This event has been happening each summer for more than 100 years. Patrons from far and wide flock to the island to take part in the field-games, share a meal, and purchase antiques, crafts, and baked goods to support the Aid. This is by far the biggest event on the island.

Full Moon/Equinox—The Ladies' Aid again hosted a change-of-season community celebration.

Independence Day—The 4th of July is a busy time on the island. Many of the summer residents are here. Islanders join in the celebrations by watching or taking part in the Parade, which runs from the transfer station to the town dock and back up to the Ladies Aid where a cookout and live music entertain for hours. In recent years, Chef Cezar has grilled burgers at Hitty's Cafe. After dark, a fireworks display draws a large crowd to the town dock.



Fair Day 1958



Fair Day 1930s



Photo credit: Lydia Johnson



Photo credit: Katie Truesdale



Photo credit: Katie Truesdale



Photo credit: Katie Truesdale



Photo credit: Katie Truesdale



Photo credit: Wendy Todd

Halloween—Island children gather in their costumes at the General Store where they load together into a pickup truck and are driven up and down Cranberry Road to Trick-or-Treat. Islanders make this a special celebration for the kids by decorating their houses, wearing costumes, and passing out more than a fair share of treats. Cranberry House has also hosted a Halloween party for the past several years.

Thanksgiving—The Ladies' Aid generally hosts either a community Thanksgiving Meal or a day-after gathering.

Ladies Aid Holiday Craft Fair—This spectacular craft fair is typically in early December. It is an occasion for islanders to shop for locally made crafts and baked goods, just in time for the holiday season.



Photo credit: Darlene Sumner

Christmas—December is a magical time on the island. The days are short, but the lights are bright. Islanders celebrate Christmas and other winter holidays by decorating everywhere, caroling with their neighbors, attending a Christmas Eve service and candle lighting ceremony at the Church, led by various ministers. Other holiday celebrations include a party and donations from the Maine Seacoast Mission, holiday movies and karaoke throughout the month of December, and a Christmas party at Cranberry House with a special visit from Santa



Photo credit: Karin Whitney

Wherever you are and however you celebrate your holidays, we wish you all a joyous and healthy New Year.



cultivating the community's oral history. Moreover, the store served as the island's "Yellow Pages;" it was a place for residents to find contractors, electricians, the good barber on the mainland, or any other services you might need. The store became a de facto visitors center as the first place that people saw as they wandered down the dock. Tourists would often be heard to say things like "oh, this is the island with the cute general store on it." Cranberry General was a part of the island's identity.

When the news hit social media, people began to share stories of what the store meant to them. Tarnya Sanborn shared photos and stories about running the store with her mother. She reminisced on looking through ledgers, spending time at the Seawich Café with Scott Brown, and listening to a teacher play the ukulele on the porch. Eileen Colby Richards shared a photo from when she worked in the store. Town Selectman and Great Cranberry Island resident Joe Connell shared a beautiful message of hope with the community. Lesley Horvath shared a story about how the store served as cupid's workshop as she met her future husband while working as an island nanny. Aaron Buchsbaum shared a story about dumping chicken carcasses near the burn rock while working at the store with Renee and Eileen. Richard Beal talked about the time he could have/might have briefly

"owned" the general store. This is just a sampling of the many stories that were told after the store burned down. There is no doubt every person who has any connection with Great Cranberry Island has a similar story to tell about our beloved store.

However, there is hope in the future. The owner, Janice Smith Murch, immediately committed to rebuilding the store. Although plans were put in the works within days and the site was cleared of most of the major debris by January 3, 2023, only time will tell what the new store will look like. This unfortunate event has shaken every Islander, but some things don't



change. Islanders won't whimper in the corner and complain about what they don't have. Just as they always do, they will pick themselves back up, dust themselves off, roll up their sleeves, and get to work – TOGETHER. While this tragedy will undoubtedly have a lasting impact on the island, the grit and perseverance of island residents will ultimately serve as a testament to the resilience and toughness of those who call the Cranberry Isles home.



Fire photos credit: Amanda Bracy

Year-End Wrap-up by Finance Committee

JIM SINGERLING

As another remarkable year comes to a close, the Great Cranberry Island Historical Society extends our sincerest appreciation to the island community, both near and far. Your continued generous support is the reason for our success.

Over the winter, the Archives Committee is continuing its work developing displays in the new Chris and Victoria Johnston Gallery on the museum's main floor in Cranberry House.

The new Cranberry Shuttle buggy is resting safely in its winter shelter after getting quite a workout during its first year in service.

Hitty's Cafe is all tucked-in after a record year of visitors to the front porch of Cranberry House. Chef Cezar and Grace are on their way to Brazil for a much-deserved rest. We look forward to their springtime return.

Karin Whitney's Sea Wind Second Chance Shop, now closed for the season, was graced with a steady stream of customers. All the sales at Sea Wind go to support Cranberry House.

The now quiet Smart Shack Kids' Recreation Center hosted children's events and programs throughout the summer and was well-used by the island's young folks.

These many programs and services are made possible by your support of the Great Cranberry Island Historical Society. Please remember GCIHS when you are considering your end of the year gifting.

Molly and I hope you and your families have an enjoyable holiday season and a wonderful new year.

Updated Powerlines on GCI

BY MICHAEL D. TODD

As the winter winds begin to whip the pine trees and the saltwater waves pound the rocky shores, long nights begin to set in and the islands' connection to the outside world becomes increasingly dependent on electricity. For nearly 80 years the power lines on Great Cranberry Island have helped drive a year-round economy and give comfort to the families that call GCI home. However, time takes its toll on all things and the poles securing GCI's autonomy have slowly deteriorated.

Thankfully, the skillful team from Sargent Electric Company worked throughout September and October replacing and updating electricity poles and powerlines on GCI. They transported the required heavy vehicles, large wooden power poles, and spools of electrical wire by barge to the island.

Most amazingly, they caused minimal disruption to the power grid and traffic on the island while completing their work, thereby allowing the island to continue with business as usual. The workers put in long hours and made sure the work was done with the well-being of island residents in mind.

Although they spent weeks away from their families while working on the island, it seemed they enjoyed their time here, with several workers commenting that GCI was serene, beautiful, and an island paradise. Because of their efforts, GCI's future is more secure with a dependable electrical infrastructure that allows for a continued year-round community and the beauty of our island may be enjoyed by generations of island families to come.

Thank you, Sargent Electric Company.



Photo credit: Katie Truesdale

Support Cranberry House

Become a Friend of Great Cranberry Island Historical Society

Friends: \$25

Family Friends: \$50

Donors: \$100

Supporters: \$250

Patrons: \$500

Benefactors: \$1000

Support Special Projects through your extra special contribution.

Donate in Honor of a Loved One.

Fill the Donation Jars at the museum and on the shuttle, or at the movies, lectures and other events.

Whatever you can afford, we will sincerely appreciate it.

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit institution, contributions are tax deductible.

Donate through the Amazon Smile program. Select the Cranberry Island Historical Society as your charity of choice.

Remember—one forward-thinking person began the process with a single donation.

Memberships as of November 15, 2022

Friends

Mary Abbott
Nancy Brooks
Wendy & Stanley Butler
Elsa Comiskey
Jean Fernald
Julie Fernald
John French
Gail Grandgent
Steven L. Herrick
Frances Johnson
Rona Kinsley
Carter Kristoff
Maurice Joseph Marshall
Armen & Fulvia Marsoobian
Eileen Mcginty
Eileen Richards
Jennifer Walls
Anne L. Welles
Ruth Westphal

Family Friends

Ruth Ferril Baldwin
Stephen Bradley
Allison & Mary Anne Bunker
Gaile Colby
Joyce Curtis
Kelly Dickson
Charles & Nelia Dunbar
Robin Freeman
Richard & JoAnne Fuerst
Sheldon Goldthwait
Linda & Thomas Holland
Chong & Judith Lim
Kathe McCoy
Naomi McShea
Lisa Meagher
Walter & Cheryl Moore
Ronald P. Mountain
Susan Newman
Larry Phillipps & Wanda Getchell

Lisa & Jay Pierrepont
Henryetta A. Ponczek
Henry A. Raup
Darlene Robbins
Abigail Rome
Beverly Sanborn
Susan Spangler

Donors

Dr. Allan Alson
Katherine Muhlfeld Bell
Lynne Birlem
James Bradley
James N. III & Julianne R. Brawner
Carl Brooks
Elaine & Peter Buchsbaum
Vicki Bunker
Charles Butt
Cranberry Club
Douglas Constant
Susan Dunn
Michael & Kathleen Glaser
Richard Haydock
Nancy & Steve Homer
John I. Kuczynski IV
Hugh McCall and Gary Freeman
Janet McClelland
Emily W. Neilson
Morrison & Johnna Newell
Annette Page
Laurie Payne
Nathan Rome & Bonnie Alpert
Kenneth Schmidt
Charles Sheppard
Sid Sidner
Earl & Bonnie Simpson
Wayne & Nelva Te Brake
Judy Templeton
Jean-Marie Trivedi
John & Veronica Tyrrell
Andrew Vail

Jerry Valenta
Richard Valenta
Chris White
Jeffrey White
Phil & Karin Whitney
Thomas Williams

Supporters

Kristen Cummings
Alice Dunn and Gordon Hardy
Great Cranberry Island Trust 2007
Miriam D. Hinnant
Jim & Cathy Ingham
Linda Mahlie
Dwight Merriam
Richard & Ann Sullivan
John David Wissler

Patrons

Anne W. Brown
George & Linda Carroll
Alan & Linda Cowles
Lincoln & Ruth Lyman
Constance Mathews
Dan Michael
Jack Whitelaw

Benefactors

AWARE Foundation
Richard Beal
Gail Cleveland-Smart Studio
Samuel & Tania Flood
Holly Hartley
Mr. & Mrs. Orton P. Jackson, Jr.
John W. Goodwin, Jr. Construction
Alex Johnston & Kate Valenta
Ronald Lyman
David Milliken
Dr. Richard N. Pierson, Jr.
Read Roberts & Monique Castiaux
Town of Cranberry Isles
Cameron & Nancy Wood

The Great Cranberry Island Historical Society
P.O. Box 12
Cranberry Isles, Maine 04625

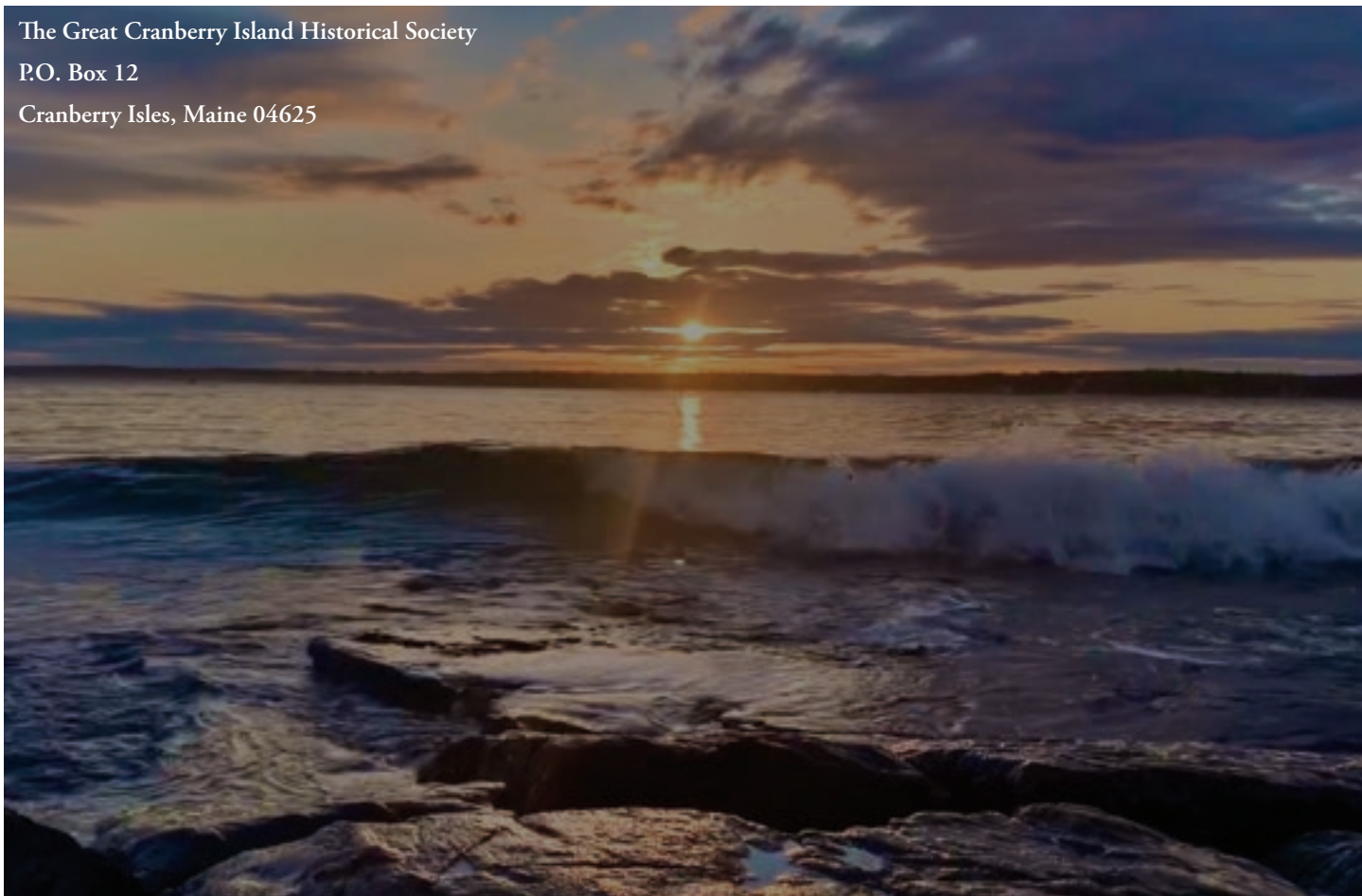


Photo credit: Darlene Sumner

Order & Membership Form Instructions

1. Copy this page, including your address mailing label, right.
2. Add the desired giving level of your Friends Membership.
3. Indicate Newsletters by Email if you prefer digital copy.
4. Make check payable to GCIHS for grand total.
5. Mail using the enclosed pre-addressed envelope.

Website: gcihs.org **Email:** info@gcihs.org

Go to gcihs.org/support/ and click on "Donate" to contribute through PayPal.

Friends of Cranberry House Membership *Renewal for 1 year*

Indicate amount corresponding to the various giving levels.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend (\$25 to \$49) | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter (\$250 to \$499) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Friend (\$50 to \$99) | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron (\$500 to \$999) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donor (\$100 to \$249) | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor (\$1000+) |

2022 Membership Year, if not already paid: \$ _____

2023 Membership Year: \$ _____

Grand total \$ _____

Please Send Future Newsletters as:

- ☐ Email only. Email: _____
- ☐ Printed copy

Change of Address

Please complete if your name or address has changed from the printed label:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Other notes: _____



Photo courtesy of GCIHS Archives