

Cranberry Chronicle

NEWS OF CRANBERRY HOUSE AND GREAT CRANBERRY ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JULY 2023

1950's Memories

By PHIL WHITNEY

We often talk about memories of Cranberry Island at the Historical Society. That is certainly not unusual, since we exist for that very purpose—to preserve and, in some respects, re-live the good old days on the island and the surrounding region. But rapidly we are losing those folks who have actual memories of the people and events which stretch back beyond 25 or 30 years ago. There is hardly anyone left who can appreciate, except through photographs, old films and archival documents, what life was like on the islands, and who can identify the people who made up the history and character of the region. So many folks have either passed away or moved away and been replaced by a new generation of individuals and families. Make no mistake, these newcomers are all good people. Many have provided invaluable support at Cranberry House and the Historical Society. But they have no way of knowing who a particular person was, or who they were related to, where they lived, what they did for work, and what stories and adventures they experienced. The newcomers are learning from scratch. Consequently, I am slowly becoming a unique entity among my GCIHS peers—someone who can remember what the island was like just several decades ago. It was not very long ago that there were many “old timers” around who could relate colorful anecdotes and memories; people like David Bunker, Lynn Colby, Junior Bracy, Polly Bunker, Wilfred Bunker, Tud Bunker and Mickey MacFarlan. In just the past three years we have lost 21 people with Cranberry Isles connections, both year-round and seasonal, most with long-term ties to the islands.



Sidney Hamer Bunker and Julia Bunker Spurling circa 1910

With these considerations in mind, I have decided to relate just a slice of life on the island for this issue of the Chronicle; the decade is the 1950's and the neighborhood covered is from Dog Point intersection down Cranberry Road to Mink Brook Road. The characters—people, all now long-gone, who lived in the houses along the road, some seasonally, most year-round. These were great years in my memory, involving wonderful people and activities only a little kid could truly appreciate. Unfortunately, I was only able to spend weekends, generally in the summer months, on the island during that decade. My grandparents were getting older, and I was getting older and becoming

somewhat of a mini-hellion, so Mom would never let me come out alone, as I could get into trouble too easily or just cause headaches for the elders.

I started coming out in 1949, the year I was born. My very first memory was being lifted down from the wharf into the arms of Wilfred Bunker on the “Bobcat” at night, returning to Southwest Harbor. My second memory was riding with Papa in his 1930 Model A dump truck which he used for several decades on construction projects as Road Commissioner. Nana and Papa (*known as Aunt Ella and Uncle Elwood to year-rounders, and Mr. and Mrs. Spurling to summer residents*) lived in the house next to the Bunker Cemetery where Karin

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Aerial of Great Cranberry Island by Robert Highlander, early 1970's

Notes of Appreciation

Tyler Johnson—For work on repairing the Wood Golf Cart, purchasing & installing a new intercom system, researching repairs to the teleconferencing device, and researching a sound system to the Arts Center Addition.

MILESTONES Passings

Dale Hadlock
(Islesford)
December 25, 2022

Rodman Ward
March 18, 2023

Robert Murch
April 10, 2023

TRANSITIONS New Arrivals

Heath Wedge & Family
Woodlands CIRT 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

It has been a long winter and short spring since the Chronicle was last published early in 2023. The weather was abnormally mild ending the old year and beginning the new year. But things turned rapidly sour in late February and early March. A 24-hour sudden and vicious cold snap sent island temps plummeting one night to -14* below zero with wind chill factors reaching to -45* below zero in high winds. Twenty years ago this would have been a dangerous situation for most islanders if the power failed and in-house temps rapidly plummeted.

But today most everyone has portable automatic generators which, when functioning properly, alleviate most concerns. Unfortunately, during the Christmas holiday weekend, the power had failed for nearly five days, and many generators ran out of fuel after running constantly. The gas pumps were shut down with no power. Those without stored reserve supplies of gas or propane in advance faced some challenges but this community came together, as it always does, to get through the crisis. Heading into mid-March the temps gradually moderated, but it has remained continuously cold, windy

and damp right thru April; a fairly typical situation for the past few years. Hopefully by the time you read this the temps will be above 60*, the winds will have moderated to less than 30 mph and the rains (*or snows*) will only occur several times per week.

Having winter activities at the Cranberry House helped offset the doldrums which can overtake many islanders in the quiet season. Karin Whitney hosted Adult Karaoke every Friday evening to enthusiastic warblers. She also hosted Kids Karaoke every other Sunday. Movies were shown



Road Clean Up



on Saturday nights in the winter and Tuesday and Saturday nights in the spring. There were also many meetings, either involving Cranberry House operations or organized by other organizations. "Big Screen" shows were hosted, including the Super Bowl, the Academy Awards Ceremonies and NCAA Basketball Championship.

The Events Committee has been meeting nearly every week since early March. They have already planned, and continue to book, a large potpourri of entertainment, with a heavy emphasis on family-oriented events. These will include the normal schedule of movies Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturday nights, with Thursday specially designated as Family Movie Night. Adult and Kids Karaoke will continue with the same schedule, Friday evenings and Sunday afternoons, respectively. Special Big Screen events will be held as called for. Kids Activities Director Darlene Sumner (*aka Mrs. Mom to island kids and young-at-heart adults*), is planning a full schedule of weekly kids' events at the Smart Shack and Preble Cove Beach, with occasional special programs inside the Cranberry House, including Beano and Pie Nights, and possible dance classes. Regina Cocco is also helping out by sponsoring family trivia and game nights for all ages on three Sunday nights in July and August. Check out the calendar on our website (gcihs.org) for details. The committee is also planning multiple trail walks with "Mr. Fish" (*aka Peter Buchsbaum*), lobstering talks and demonstrations with Ric "watch my muscles pop" Gaither, art exhibits, and lectures. Other special events are anticipated in the coming weeks. On Saturday, July 15th, Cranberry House will host an all-day Open House. Featured will be a short dedication ceremony naming the new three-story building addition to honor the late Bruce Komusin, founding member of Great Cranberry Island Historical Society and Cranberry House, and fondly remembered

philanthropist. Without his vision, dedication, and support Cranberry House would not exist. Also, on that same day, there will be a joint birthday party for Karin Whitney and Fred Nelson, and an all-day Historical Clues Hunt for adults and kids with valuable prizes for the winners (*according to Mrs. Mom*). The Historical Clues Hunt will be conducted in and around Cranberry House with the winners being drawn that same night at the movie showing. More details will be provided as the date approaches.

A considerable amount of time, effort, and expense was spent this winter and spring on various operations projects. Clearing the woods of blowdowns and brush, gardening and landscaping activities were nonstop. Several tree blowdowns at the Preble Cemetary caused significant damage to the fence. The Whistler Cove Trail had a number of trees blown down and are currently being cleared. A rowboat shed for the GCIHS antique rowboat collection was constructed behind Cranberry House by new island carpenter Jim MacPhee, with anonymous donor



Bruce Komusin

financial assistance. The Cranberry Explorer golf cart fleet was due for some intensive maintenance, including new tires and batteries. An internal intercom system, covering all three floors of Cranberry House and the Shaw Cabin was installed. Plans have been made for Maine Coast Heritage Trust to do some rehab work on the Whistler Cove Trail this spring with new and replacement bog bridging.



New Boat Shed



Road Clean Up Ice Cream Social

Finally, Cranberry Isles Realty Trust (CIRT) has begun construction of two new houses behind the existing two CIRT houses on the Komusin Lane right-of-way which runs through the Cranberry House parking lot. Clearing of the site has already been completed. The next phase in May involves digging the septic system and well. The third phase is the installation of the new modular homes in June and July. The construction, albeit for a very good cause, will involve increased traffic of heavy construction equipment through the parking lot all spring and summer—so please be extra aware of potential traffic hazards when visiting the GCIHS property this season.

The Cranberry House three-story construction addition project was finally 100% completed after four long years of challenges and delays. The \$600,000 plus project was pay-as-you-go, so GCIHS owed nothing towards the project at the finish. A new, larger

screen, new projector and upgraded sound system were installed in the existing Arts Center space. A second Arts Center room, towards the rear, will now allow either larger audience programs or simultaneous events separated by a sound-reduced partition.

We are looking forward to another great summer of fun and activities at Cranberry House. Cezar has returned and is preparing to open for the season. Sharon Morrell has assumed the role of General Manager since February, taking over some of the duties previously handled by Ben Sumner, who continues as the organization's Bookkeeper. Sharon has done a fine job during the transition and will be seen around the property this summer as activity increases. All the other Cranberry House personnel, shops and activities - Laurie Wadsworth at the Whales Tale Gift Shop, Karin Whitney at the Sea Wind 2nd Chance Shop, Darlene Sumner at the Kids Smart Shack, will be opening soon, and Ric

Gaither will be lurking around the woods, ponds and gardens, making the property look ever more beautiful. The Whistler Cove and Preble Cove Trails will have been re-opened, and the Blue Heron and Samson Ponds revitalized for the season. Speaking of revitalized, the rainbow trout are jumping everywhere in the Blue Heron Pond. They are most active in late afternoon. Also, judging from all the frogs eggs, there will be large numbers of frogs again, hatching any day in both ponds.

The Cranberry

Explorer Golf Cart Shuttle hopes to resume scheduled service in mid-June. The Museum will reopen Memorial Day Weekend. We always need volunteer shuttle drivers and museum receptionists to ensure 10–4, daily service during the season. If you are able and interested in volunteering, contact Phil Whitney at 244-5933. We look forward as always to renewing old acquaintances and making new friends this season.

**Take time to
experience any
or all of our
entertaining
and educational
offerings.
Have a
Great Summer!**



General Manager's Report

SHARON MORRELL

I sat down to type a General Manager's Report for this edition of the Cranberry Chronicle and found myself stumped. I was not sure what to say but a couple things have been on my mind. First, I feel like I have no idea what I am doing. When Ben Sumner stepped back from the General Manager position it left a vacancy in a position that was nearly tailored made for him. He did an amazing job and continues to do so as the organization's bookkeeper, but I found myself stepping into a situation where I was going to have to redefine, figuratively and literally, the role I was to play. Second, the organization itself is at an inflection point. Circumstances, economic and societal conditions, and life generally, are pushing Cranberry House toward change. It is a scary thing to be sitting in the midst of this situation, where both my singular role and the organization's role are in flux.

I have lived on Great Cranberry for 5 years now and have seen Cranberry House grow, in physical size as well as relevance, with some stumbles along the way. Keeping up with this growth, from an administrative point of view, is going to be one of the biggest challenges, I believe, this organization will ever face. Still, I am hopeful that as we forge ahead, finding our footing, Cranberry House will evolve in a way that supports its longevity and usefulness to the

community at large.

Cranberry House is a non-profit organization. It is run primarily by volunteers and has offered services on the island, that have become synonymous with Great Cranberry Island as a whole; think, Cranberry Explorer Golf Cart. The ability to continue providing these services is a benefit to both Cranberry House and the whole island community. Cranberry House is struggling with the same workforce issues as the rest of the area, and this is compounded by the deterioration and evolution of the nature of volunteerism. The result is that these services may not be able to continue in their present form. Although that is sad, it is also a byproduct of the change that is happening everywhere and the necessity of the organizational evolution which must occur for any organization to remain sustainable.

I would ask everyone to think about this for a moment. People come to our little island and fall in love with its beauty, its people, its lifestyle and all the wonderful things that Great Cranberry Island has to offer. It is understood that we all have so many demands on our time, and it is acknowledged that it is very bold of any organization (and I am a member of many) to ask people to give up any more time. But all those things that make Cranberry Island a beautiful and happy place to live don't happen by magic. Someone, *someone*, steps up and makes them happen. Someone shows up and turns on the lights. Someone cleans the floors. Someone cooks the food. Someone writes the articles. Someone drives the shuttle. Someone keeps the records. Someone answers the phone.

Someone maintains the equipment. Someone finds the money. Someone tends the garden. Someone runs the errands. Someone finds the time.

I used to hear it said that if many do a little, then no one does it all. From Cranberry House to the library, to the fire department, to the community aid and beyond, when no one steps up, we lose all of those things that make life here so wonderful. Because when you get right down to it, yes, the ocean is beautiful, yes, the lupins are gorgeous, yes, the views are breathtaking, but it is the community that makes a place worth living in, and that is all I can say about that.

***"Individually, we are one drop.
Together, we are an ocean."***

—Ryunosuke Satoro

***"Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much."***

—Helen Keller

**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/](https://www.facebook.com/CranberryHouseGCIHS/)**

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

Hitty's Café

BY CHEF CEZAR



Hitty's Café is ready to open for another season. The tables and umbrellas are out on the deck and supplies have begun to arrive. We anticipate a great summer and look forward to seeing everyone's hungry, smiling faces. Like most places, we face staffing challenges, but you can be assured that we will do our best to serve you the delicious food you have come to expect here at Hitty's Café on Great Cranberry Island.

See you soon —Chef Cezar

Store Update

BY SHARON MORRELL

The Great Cranberry Island community was dealt quite a blow when the Cranberry General Store burnt to the ground last December 27th. It has been an adjustment, to put it mildly, for the residents and visitors on GCI to get used to living in a post-store world. I think it is safe to say, no one likes it. But the good news is that the store's owner is working diligently to rebuild and reopen a new Cranberry General Store. Anyone who has been down the path of building or remodeling will understand first-hand the frustration of the process. Delays, weather, and hoops that builders are required jumping through make every job take way longer than expected and hoped. Add to that the logistical challenges of being on an island and you have the recipe for a whole lot of hurry-up-and-wait. Things are moving along, however, and we hope that we can report on an epic grand opening in the near future. Stay tuned.

Archives Update

BY LYDIA JOHNSON & WENDY TODD

The Archives Committee has had a quiet season. Despite the challenges of winter, our dedicated volunteers, though limited in number, have managed to meet whenever their busy personal and work schedules allow. We are thrilled to report that the Museum is now open for the 2023 Season!

This spring we worked on redesigning the Wall of Fame. We have constructed new display shelves and are reassembling the arrangement. Additionally, we are actively working on securing the memorial plaques for the stones and gardens outside. Our goal is to find a secure display solution that eliminates the need for constant reattachment. If you have any ideas or past experience with similar projects, we would greatly appreciate your input.

An exciting new addition to the Museum is the Soundscapes project, generously provided by Nate Aldridge and Steve Roberts from the University of Maine. This incredible project captures the unique ambient audio of the Cranberries, both underwater and above, adding an immersive element to our visitors' exploration of the island's history and culture.

There is an abundance of work to be done in the archives department, and our Trustees have been actively seeking an intern for the summer season. This dedicated individual will help us catch up on pending projects and propel us forward. We are eagerly awaiting their arrival, as we believe it will be a mutually rewarding experience.

The museum thrives on the support of our community and volunteers. We invite you to consider contributing your valuable time to Cranberry House. Whether it's lending a helping hand or sharing your expertise, your involvement will make a meaningful difference. Feel free to reach out to anyone here at Cranberry House for more information. We look forward to seeing you this season!

Fundraising Update

RICHARD BEAL

As Jim Singerling wrote in his end-of-the-year financial wrap-up in the December 2022 Chronicle, the Great Cranberry Historical Society really does appreciate the support of all our financial contributors. You are instrumental in making the Historical Society not only a success but an integral part of the Great Cranberry Community. While many envisioned the museum, and its several thousand archival items (dating back nearly 350 years in some cases!), to be a remembrance of the past, GCIHS today produces a relevancy that affects nearly every single person living on the island or visiting the island.

Archival items provide the 5,300+ visitors each year with a perspective on what it was like living on Great Cranberry many decades ago. However, in order to enhance the experiences of visitors and residents on Great Cranberry Island, we provide other community services that many have come to depend upon and expect such as, a 10 passenger golf cart that takes people from the ferry boat to the eastern end of the island with an accompanying guide describing the history and people who have lived or now live in this small community. There are also demonstrations for lobstering and the construction and use of the early boats for which a new boat storage shed was built this past winter. There are also hiking trails with expert guides to take you on walks to the back shore of the island, while in the evenings on the second floor of the museum there are karaoke nights, movie classics and presentations by local leaders throughout the community.

These many programs and services are made possible by your support of the Great Cranberry Island Historical Society. Please consider supporting this wonderful community asset with your donation today. Thank you.

Part 4 of the Birlem Family Letters

PHIL WHITNEY



We continue in sequence excerpts from the Birlem Family Letters. The letters printed in the December 2022 Cranberry Chronicle were written between March 26, 1898 and May 31, 1900. We once again extend our appreciation to Birlem Family descendant Lynne Birlem of Southwest Harbor for helping transcribe and then donating the original letters to GCIHS.

Letter Dated **Jan. 8, 1899**

Cranberry Isles, ME

To Mamie (*Spurling*) Castine, ME
From Cousin Viola (*Joy*)

We have meetings every Friday Night. We have music pieces spoken then we have a debate on anything. Georgia is the President. We have only had one meeting and that was about the Philippine Islands whether we should annex them to the United States or not. We talked about that a spell, then we went home. We had a nice time. We were going up tonight, but it was so stormy that we gave it up. We were going to have a nice time, but we got plans all broken up. We were going to have a debate on how was it that the poor man's son gets along better than the rich man's son. It was a very good topic to talk about. Our meetings are called the High School Literary Society. (*It is believe Great Cranberry had a high school at this*

time.) It is a very good name, I think. Johnnie Steel was going to bring up his Fiddle and Ida Stover was going to play the Organ. They got Fan's Organ in the school house and Johnnie and Ida was going to have some music. Then Filmore, Willie, Roy and Percy (*Bunker*) and Frederick was going to speak a piece. It had six verses in it. The name of it was the Wrestler.

Pink Harding, Georgia, Brother, Lena, Ida and I and Johnnie was going to play the Organ and sing. The piece that we were going to sing was Under His Wing. We practiced it after school. Lena was going to speak a piece alone and Ida was going to speak a piece alone. The Teacher was going to speak a piece in Spanish and I expected that we were going to have some fun. We are having quite good weather to go to school. We have not missed one day.

Letter Dated **Aug. 31, 1899**

Cranberry Isles, ME

To Mamie (*Spurling*) • Castine, ME
From Gramma

The warships have gone byoff out here this forenoon on their way back west. I would have liked for you to have been here to spy them.

Brother (*Charles S. Spurling*) and I had peas for dinner, and we ate almost a whole blueberry pie. We ate in the kitchen and tried to see who could eat the most.

Addendum Letter—**Same Date**

Cranberry Isles, ME

To Mamie (*Spurling*) Castine, ME
From Mamma

Grammie, Brother and myself went over to Suttons to the entertainment and did not get back until 12 o'clock. The Launch was sent over for us. It was fine. They had a lot of scenes.



Mount Desert Steamship

Gramma was well pleased. I bought three tickets for \$1.50. Brother liked it. Brother took two bushels of cranberries over to A. I. Holmes (*Southwest Harbor*) today. They say they can buy all they want for \$1.50 per bushel. Brother told them they might stay on the ground and rot before he would pick them for that price. He got two nice mackerel today, \$0.25 each. We had one roasted for supper. He and I ate just half of it. We wished Mamie was here to finish it.

Letter Dated **Aug. 17, 1899**

Cranberry Isles, ME

To Mamie (*Spurling*) • Castine, ME
From Mamma

I have got my butter churned and dressed. Mr. Davie helped quite a lot in churning it and I have just got my dishes washed. You will soon be at Castine. A fine day for your trip instead of rain as we had thought.

The afternoon exercises went off well. It was fine in the evening. Wish you could have been here. Thursday - All the visitors have gone but Mr. Wittier. I got your letter last night. I am glad you had a smooth passage up. Annie has gone home. WE got along very well indeed. Mrs. Gilley and Mary Ann (Carroll - schoolteacher) I would rather have visit one day than a week.

Letter Dated **Sept. 17, 1899**

Cranberry Isles, ME • Sunday, 4:30 PM

To Mamie (*Spurling*) • Castine, ME
From Mamma

I am now left all alone. Mr. Davie (*Minister*) has just started for Islesford. He did not have any service this afternoon over there. Will have one this evening. He is not feeling very well lately. He is going away for two or three weeks rest. Going tomorrow on the "Mt. Desert" (*steamboat*). He said when he came back perhaps, he would try and manage it so to come on the "Jones" (*Frank Jones—Maine Central*

Railroad steamboat). Did I write you that a week ago last Sat. Night he was going to the Church on Islesford and was walking fast and ran into a post and knocked the wind out of him. It was real dark.

They had a business meeting and while he was standing up talking he fell over and upset the lamp. Smashed the lamp. The oil took fire and for a few minutes they had hot work. Mr. Morse pulled Mr. Davie out from the fire. The oil ran down through the cracks in the floor and caught fire underneath. Burned all of the cloth fixings they had there. Mr. Davie soon came out of it but he has not felt as well since his chest is sore where he struck the post.

(*Editor's Note: Sounds like Mr. Davie was a menace to himself and the community.*)

Mr. Wheelwright is going to give a memorial window for Mr. Harwood (*previous GCI Congregational Church Minister.*)

Will Russell is having a well dug. They had struck water. He is very fortunate to get water right out by the porch.

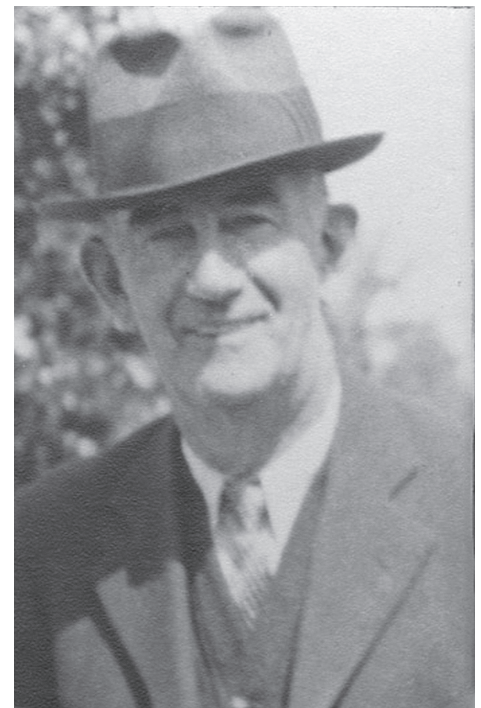
Grace (*teacher*) is out again. A Miss Loing is to teach our school (*District 1—currently Donald residence.*) She is from Harrington. Very plain. (???) They like the teacher down the road (*District 2 school—formerly located between Haydock's and the current gas pumps.*) Miss Guptill I hear, is to teach on Islesford.

Letter Dated **Oct. 1, 1899**

Cranberry Isles, ME • Afternoon

To Mamie (*Spurling*) • Castine, ME
From Frederick (*Joy*)

Last night (*afternoon*) about 3 o'clock the teacher came down and we went round the shore to see the water. We went to the club house (*Cranberry Club*) and looked in the windows. Then we watched the seas a while



Henry Bunker
(Courtesy GCIHS Digital Archive)

and walked around to the Red Rocks and then we came up the line/fence (*currently known as Mink Brook Road*) and followed it up and she came back and stayed until after supper.

Letter Dated **Oct. 3, 1899**

Cranberry Isles, ME

To Mamie (*Spurling*) • Castine, ME
From Aunt Flo

Alma (*Brewer*) and the teacher staid here all night Friday night. They and Hen & Alta (*Henry Bunker and Alta Spurling Bunker*), Leish (*Possibly Elisha Bunker?*) and Ernest (*Spurling*) came down to sing in the evening. They, the Brewers, are going tomorrow. Aunt Sidney (*Hamor Bunker*) came Thursday. (14) to that house now. (*Currently Cameron & Nancy Wood house.*) The teacher seems to be real nice.

Willis (*Bunker*) got a \$500 stock this last week. Got over \$150 himself.

Sunday evening. There is a sing and meeting to the church tonight. We did not go. Mr. & Mrs. Brewer and Alma took supper with us tonight.

Alma went to meeting. Aunt Mary is going to have a piece built on Julia's house (*Julia Bunker Spurling—currently Cameron & Nancy Wood*) for a bedroom off the room Alta used for a kitchen. Bert (*Spurling*) got the lumber. They have got the mason work done on Hen's (*Henry Bunker*) house (*currently Colleen Bunker*).

Letter Dated **Oct. 4, 1899**

Cranberry Isles, ME

To Mamie (*Spurling*) • Castine, ME
From Gramie

We had no meeting today as Mr. Davie is away. He's not very well. Hope he is not going to play out and be sick like Mr. Harwood (*Rev. Charles Harwood*).

Our school marm is real nice. The children like her very much. She says that Viola & Frederick (*Joy*) are very studious. She says she is very much pleased with her school. She had kept the grammar school in Calais one year.

Letter Dated **May 10, 1900**

Cranberry Isles, ME

To Mamie (*Spurling*) • Castine, ME
From Mamma

The ground froze last night so I expect my cucumbers are done. They were looking quite well before. Net (*Nettie Stanley?*) has lost hers before this cold wave.

Bert (*Spurling*) came in last night. Got 16 tubs. Bad, blowy weather all the time. We have a new bossy (*cow*), all black. I have 40 chicks now.

Uncle Ellwood (*Spurling?*) is going on the Mt. Desert (*Eastern Steamship Lines steamboat*) to the Station (*??*) where Edson is to be captain. He will not get home when vacation comes but will have to stay there. I expect it will come hard on him, and what do you suppose Aunt Cora (*Spurling?*)

will do. She can't go to the Station every Sunday. Uncle Asa is very low. He suffers a good deal. John Pung died last Thursday. Had a short sickness.

Mr. Davie says tell you he may be on the Bangor boat next Mon. Nothing sure. He is in the parlor. Still a parlor bird. I don't see to get rid of him much. He has been here since Sun. afternoon.

(*Editor's Note: Mr. Davie seems unpopular on both Islesford and GCI.*)



Alfred Ladd (Courtesy www.findagrave.com)

Letter Dated **Jan. 10, 1904**

Hebron, ME

To Mamie (*Spurling*)
Sutton Island, ME
From Alfred Ladd

After spending two very pleasant days in Portland, we took the train for Hebron, but did not get there until 5 o'clock Monday night, just in time for supper.

When we got here (*Hebron Academy*) we found everything just the same; with the exception of a few sad faces, on account of Miss Hodston's death; especially her sister; but the Professor is just the same; jolly good at heart; although his wife has been ill for some time.

This morning Percy (*Bunker?*) and I

went to meeting which was preached by Rev. Mr. Bang from Charleston, Maine. We had a beautiful meeting and enjoyed the speaking very much. From meeting we went to Sabbath School which was also very interesting and it always is in a place like this for there are so many to help and push the lessons along.

Letter Dated **Jan. 31, 1904**

Hebron, ME

To Miss Mamie Spurling
Suttons Island, Maine
From Alfred Ladd

When I left home last term you asked me to write; but I thought of course you were fooling, for I did not suppose you would want to hear from a kid like me especially, so I did not write, but when I found that you were in earnest, it was a different thing; But let me tell you this that if I could stand any chance of winning you, I would not write to another girl but you. With the exception of my relations. Even as it is now there is only one more that I am writing to except you, and of course you know who she is. Mamie as I sit here writing this letter I think of that night that I took you over to Islesford, my courage is better now, and I hope when I come home you will give me a chance to prove it, if you do, I will ask nothing more, Mamie. As I have got a great many more letters to write, I have got to write to Lena, Father, Grammie, Willie, Harry, Roy and Gertrude Spurling, so I will have to say goodbye. From Your Loving Friend, Alfred Ladd. (*Editor's Note: I wonder how Alfred Ladd would feel if he knew his love letter would be read by the public nearly 120 years later.*)

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

CAP'N PETER

Among Summer visitors there are always those who like to go fishing; feel compelled to do so. They usually mess up a spic-and-span boat, and cover the charts and compass with a lot of cut clams, or other bait and bloody fish parts, yet they never feel concerned for the litter they have left by the end of the day. They just look for a reputable skipper and good clean boat to hire for half a day or so.

Captain Peter Richardson was a gentleman, when sober, but after a little rum, he usually voiced his pent-up opinions of Summer folk in general, and often sailed his Friendship sloop right up to the Clifton Dock to say so. When home, in a painting mood, Peter once painted the word "KING" in three foot letters on the side of his launch, with red paint. Then he'd wander up to yell at old Captain Lew (*Stanley*) at the top of his voice, in profanity, that generally woke the children from their naps half a mile away on Jonathan's Cove. Captain Lew always looked after him and would merely say, "Thunder, Peter, them

Summer folk are not so bad: I don't think you ought to say the things you do about them."

Peter seldom shaved, always wore a cap and smoked a pipe. When it was far too rough for other boats to be out fishing, as in a late fall blow, Peter could be seen sailing his sloop to Southwest Harbor for lobsters, easy as could be, singing loudly. Because of the extreme profanity he used at times, he was both resented and patronized by the Summer visitors; yet, when he shouted there at the Clifton Dock, so it echoed off the hillsides, the officials and yacht owners would invite him to leave. One afternoon, he picked up a party of three ladies and a gentleman from the Clifton Dock, while the officials were busy with a large yacht calling in for ice and gas. Peter had been recommended for his certainty in always bringing

back flounder. The three ladies and the gentleman were soon heading for the Pool at Big Cranberry, with Captain Peter stoking up his pipe, knee over against the tiller.

When he found that none could bait a hook, Peter gladly offered assistance, carefully hooking a clam on each line, shell and all, unopened. Then he sat back to enjoy his pipe. After about an hour and a half while he, with a twinkle in his eye, sat watching the folks jigging the clams up and down in the water, he took a squint at the lowering sun, then interrupted their conversation, with his peculiar raucous voice somewhat



Peter Richardson circa late 1800's

lowered, suggesting: "There's some folks as thinks they do better to bait for flounder with the shell on: I don't know as it matters but thar's no harm a'tryin." One or two let him make the change from whole clams to shucked ones,

and soon the boat had twenty or thirty good-sized flounder aboard, flopping around the lady's ankles, and so Peter said there was no point in staying there any longer and hauled up the main's'l, and the party sailed happily, if innocently, back to Northeast Harbor.

GUM to the RESCUE

Winter had really set in; folks had finished coaling up from Southwest Harbor. Elmer Spurling and Tud (*Bunker*) were way out almost to Mount Desert Rock, some twenty miles off shore to the south'ard, taking in their last and disappointing set of trawl. It had commenced to blow hard, and soon they were in a snow storm, which drove directly against them as they struck for home. With care, they eased up over each huge wave, its top blowing off, white, with the wind. They were facing into it all. Less than half way to the island, a strong odor of gasoline suddenly came up from below along with the heat from the engine that had been so welcome thus far. That odor could mean sudden fire with death in a very cold rough sea at any second. Jumping down, Tud found a needle-size stream of gasoline squirting directly into the hot air from the engine coming up through the companionway.

Corrosion had eaten through the copper tubing conveying gasoline from the tanks. This leak just happened to spray outward toward the cockpit rather than down onto the hot manifold. Gasoline mist, mixed with air, explodes violently at the slightest spark; that's the principle of a carburetor. Half an hour back, Elmer had noticed a rainbow between where he stood at the wheel and the companionway. Tud thought he was seeing things and said so. Elmer had reached for the cigarettes but, as they were out, passed a packet of gum to Tud who, as he opened the packet, also saw the rainbow. They speculated about

this and the increasing odor of gasoline before the sudden significance of the combination dawned on them. So Tud had jumped below and discovered the leak. In a split second, he had taken the gum from his mouth and patched the leaking tube. There had been a certain amount of drip and the bilge already floated considerable gasoline.



Tud Bunker

They pumped out all that they could, tossing as they were in the raging snow storm. Tud had been saved at sea by a piece of broomstick off Savannah and, now, by a piece of chewing gum; or was it ingenuity with tools at hand and a certain alertness?

On another occasion, Tud was fishing off The Rock (*Mount Desert Rock*), when a gale came up that tore away the rail of a large Coast Guard buoy boat which had anchored to ride it out. To save his boat, Tud rode it with the gale by compass, he facing the stern to hold her from broaching-to. He was officially given up for lost. Next day, when he hauled out his boat to look things over, he kicked his foot against her garboards and two planks fell off; she was that old and rotten. He repaired her and went on fishing.

FISH for HARVEY'S Cat

After Winter really comes and all of these Summer folks are gone, there are days when it blows so hard that only the mail boat goes out. So few islanders call at Sadie Bulger's store, that one has to call at the house to get her from the

kitchen in order to buy a few items. By that time of year, Sadie's husband, Harvey, being caught up on his work a little, sometimes goes to the shore, and takes a punt out among the islands to catch a few fish for his cat. On one such day when the mail boat had returned from an afternoon freight trip, as the men wandered up from the landing toward their homes remarking on how rough it was, and how the chop seemed to be increasing all the time, one said, "Look, who can that be out in this stuff; way over there by Suttons Island? Can't imagine." After more careful scrutiny by three or four of them, they agreed that it was just Harvey Bulger out to catch some fish for his cat. Harvey can't swim but he can handle a punt.

A HARD BLOW

As is usual on an incoming tide, the wind, if blowing hard, increases until the tide is high; well, in that region, there's some fifteen feet less space between clouds and sea when the tide is in.

But Winter was nearly here now and for three days and nights it had been blowing so hard the tips of the thick spruces, which line the shores, began splitting—at their forked outer tips that is. The tides were running several feet higher too. There were places where the seas were breaking fifty feet or more in onto the land from their usual line on the tops of the beaches. At the height of these tides, our house on the shore near the Pool, was entirely surrounded by water and the road was covered nearly six feet deep so that we had to stay there. Masses of beach rocks came across that year, broken lobster traps, bushels of starfish, heaps of debris of all sorts, huge timbers, boards, parts of wharfs, two bucksaws, a ladder, a bottle of ink, and gasoline cans. On the ledges before the living room windows, a launch from Islesford suddenly appeared, then lifted and fell, breaking into bits as it rolled over in the surf. The engine is still some two hundred feet from the house, half buried in the beach. It was



Pulling a Boat Across the Frozen Ocean

said to have been a serviceable launch when it broke mooring at Islesford that day. In some of the real storms, during mid-Winter, several boats at one time have sometimes broken their mooring chains and come ashore. Everyone then hurries out on the icy rocks, to save them if possible. If it is known in time how hard it is likely to blow, the men usually bring their boats around into the Pool, a sort of lagoon inside the island, although this cannot be entered below half tide. During some storms, even in the Pool, it has been necessary for the owner to stay aboard and keep the engine running to ease the strain enough so the mooring chains will not part, or damage occur to the boat. The last Winter that the sea froze from the islands clear to the mainland (1923), it became necessary to get a doctor from Southwest Harbor to deliver a baby. He refused to cross the ice to the island unless men would come for him in a boat of some sort. So, several men walked across the ice to the Harbor pulling a large dory after them on a sled. They loaded in the doctor. "He looked like a large brown bear sitting there, with his buffalo coat pulled up so his head hardly showed," said Tud Bunker who was in the party doing the pulling. They dragged him clear to the island, across the windswept ice that zero day.

UNCLE ELISHA

Elisha Bunker, Tud's uncle, was a man of such experience that everyone, at one time or another, who lives on

Great Cranberry Island, has had to seek information from him. He could always show you a rope splice for the occasion, or give you a sage tip on the weather, or otherwise come up with a solution to your problem, with ease generally.

During Elisha's last days, he made two trips every week, alone, to the city of Bangor, fifty miles away, to buy meat, grain, a stove or whatever any of us might need, for he kept a fine large store on the island. He'd load these in and out of his truck, and on and off from his boat, and again in and out of his island truck each time.

Elisha worked hard all his life. After his wife died, he spent a great deal of time scratching in her flower garden

which he kept to the beautiful condition she had loved. It seemed to give him comfort to do this. The pressure of folks arriving early in the evening for things at the store began to irk him now and then, although, if you decided on a bag of beets among other items, he'd often take one look at the beets he's brought all the way from Bangor, and say, "Hell, these are no damned good, wait a minute, and I'll fetch you some from my garden." They'd be large, perfect, really prize-specimens— same price or he'd sometimes insist on giving them to you.

Sometimes, if you were sitting with Elisha in his kitchen, with his four daughters, "relaxin' and havin' a "mug up" and folks were out there at the store waiting for him to come out and unlock it again that night (He always left the windows wide open!). He had been known to walk over to the stove, pick up the hot teakettle and heave it through the open kitchen window; then put on his cap and go out and let the folks into the store.

He could still sail a sloop to Florida, and did; he could still make quick knots in repairing a broken mast at sea, and reset the rigging in a few minutes time.



Elisha Bunker by his store

New Trustees

BY LYDIA JOHNSON



Regina Cocco

Regina first discovered Great Cranberry Island when she noticed a flyer displayed

on the Cranberry Cove ferry advertising Cranberry House, Hitty's café, and the nearby trails. She and her family were spending a month on Islesford, having found an Airbnb rental in which to pass their mandated home leave, or U.S. "reorientation" time, between overseas State Department posts. Both her own, and her husband Fred's parents, had downsized, and rather than spend the month cramped into a sewing room, Regina let Airbnb choose a house that fit four, allowed a cat, had no television, and was near the ocean. The experience was a revelation. Although they loved their time on Islesford, Great Cranberry had special appeal, and the family was smitten by its incredible opening views. From their first ride in that extra-long golf cart up Cranberry Road, past the General Store, the photogenic "Store", to Cranberry House, the family was hooked. When they first stayed on GCI, her kids would frequently bike up to Cranberry House to visit the museum or Smart Shack, or "check the sign" to report back the day's movie or event. As a trustee, Regina hopes to support the Historical Society's goals of preserving and presenting the history of a place to which she has no family connection, but which has come to feel like a second home.



Lydia Johnson

Lydia Johnson and her family relocated to Great Cranberry Island in July 2021, where

they now reside year-round. Since early childhood, Lydia has been fascinated by the history and culture of places. Becoming involved with the Great Cranberry Island Historical Society was a simple decision for her. In addition to being the Secretary for the Board of Trustees, Lydia chairs the Publications Committee, serves on the Archives Committee, and volunteers at the Museum reception desk. Her goal is to help preserve and protect the history of the community she now calls home.



Ronnie Lyman

2023 will mark the 70th anniversary of Ronny ("R. T.") Lyman's first visit to GCI.

In between visits, he has found time to go to college and get graduate degrees in business and architecture, and he has worked in banking and architecture in Boston, Washington and New York. He is particularly interested in historic preservation and traditional architecture, and loves the opportunity to read and commune with nature on GCI. He has two daughters who enjoy visiting Cranberry even if the plumbing is not working in the house their great great grandfather built!



Earl Simpson

Earl Simpson and his family first came to Great Cranberry Island in 1968 and

have returned to Maine many times since then. The island has been their primary home-away-from-home destination for the past few years. Originally from Texas, Earl has an MFA from the University of Iowa and taught literature and writing in the Virginia Community College System until his retirement. He volunteers driving the shuttle and takes his turn at the desk in the museum. Among other pleasures, he and his family especially enjoy the folksiness of the community, the July 4 celebrations are the most spirited he has ever seen.



Wendy Todd

As a registered nurse of nearly 30 years, telling a story and giving pertinent details comes

naturally, and this skill can be applied to a patient's story or an archived item's story. These stories bring people together and forge an understanding of island living and what it takes to sustain an island community. My involvement as a trustee with GCIHS is a way for me to give back to my community and engage with the people and the history that makes Great Cranberry Island so inviting.

Island Character Blair Colby

BY MICHAEL D. TODD

Island communities are like any other small town. A microcosm of larger society in general but what makes them so special is that, because of their remoteness and their absolute geographical separation from everyone else, they have evolved from some pretty salty, independent and self-sustaining folks. Nowadays, it is not as much of a hassle as it used to be to get bread and milk, replace supplies, see the doctor, and otherwise interact with the mainland, but the independent attitude and spirit of the islanders remains. Islanders tend to depend on themselves and learn to get by with the resources they have available. Everyone seems to have a role to fill and the process of island life running smoothly depends on everyone doing their part. Sometimes people seem to get pigeon-holed into a role but often it comes down to who is available and able when a need arises. Great Cranberry Island has its share of characters. Folks whose reputations and personas lead to some epic stories of heroism, hijinks and embarrassment. All that's needed is to get one of the old-timers started on a remember-



when.... and you can sit back and listen to some of the most entertaining stories you will ever hear, and one of the greatest sources of material has got to be Blair Colby.

I was on a boat on my way to Cranberry when I first heard about Blair Colby. A great hulking man with a vise-grip like handshake and chest the size of a whiskey barrel. He was described as throwback, a quintessential Mainer, with a voice so grand it could cascade



through the air startling unsuspecting visitors and commanding the attention of those nearby. I first met him early one morning at the General Store when a small cohort of islanders was sitting around the porch eating breakfast sandwiches, having a cup of coffee and discussing some fish-story or other. Blair stood out amongst the others. He launched into a tale about "some know-it-all" who got stuck on the water and how he had to get his boat to help them out, but I promise you these words do not do justice to his delivery. For his method of storytelling can only be described as bombastic, hyperbolic, hysterical and full of very specific detail. As is normal on Cranberry, this moment was short-lived as only a few minutes later the morning group disbanded and went about their day's work. Blair approached me and shook, or should I say squeezed, my hand and introduced himself. I had met the legend.

After moving fulltime to Great Cranberry Island, I started to get to know Blair much better. When I tried to discern what Blair did for a living it did not take long to realize the answer is "whatever is needed." He works on heavy machinery, he runs a water taxi,

he plows snow, he cuts down trees, works on the road—the list goes on and on. A jack of all trades and just one of the type of people that is needed to keep an island community functioning every day. There are very few places on the island that Blair left not his mark.

He is island born and bred, a true Cranberry Islander, he can tell you all the island history you wanted to know, and some you didn't. Blair is a wizard with machines and engines of all types from old Army trucks, fire trucks, cranes, and heavy machinery of all kinds, and he will gladly tell you that he learned all he knows at the school of hard-knocks. He loves to talk about



his fleet and can give you the history of every machine, all of its pluses and minuses, the projects on the island it has been a part of and what his plans are for its future.

In this island community, that holds on tight to so much of its old identity while simultaneously courting the future and growth, it is refreshing to know there are still people who unapologetically march to the beat of their own drum. Characters who embody the spirit of community and individualism in the same breath. It is a necessary reminder that all of our lives are interconnected and each of these touch points has meaning.



*Ella and Elwood Spurling with Grandson
Deane Spurling Whitney, 1947*



Deane Whitney 1953



Mom and Deane



Mom with Papa's Model A Dump Truck

and I currently live. The house was built in the summer of 1928 after their house across the road burned flat in a chimney fire in the spring. My late brother, Deane Whitney, often joined me on the island, and occasionally my mother, Dorothy Spurling Whitney, would come down on the late afternoon ferry from Southwest Harbor. Nanna was a great cook, and she served some meals which linger in my memory through the years. She specialized in fried haddock, roasted chicken, scrambled hamburger & mashed potato. Her desserts included Jello, a special never-seen-again ginger bread, and blueberry pie (*with berries freshly picked in the field*). Papa was a lobsterman and would occasionally bring home lobsters for dinner. He also was an avid duck hunter, and these occasionally graced the table, but ducks were never my favorite. In those days, 1952–1977, there was no store on the island. People did their grocery shopping either personally on the mainland or ordered from Sawyers Market and the other four grocery stores in downtown Southwest Harbor. The Mailboat would bring the groceries on the midday run to the island, unload them at the wharf onto a Beal & Bunker old, disintegrating pickup truck, and deliver the food orders down the island. Clarence Beal, 'Snooks' Peterson and others, including local teenagers working summer jobs, would make the deliveries. On good weather days, Deane (*who was twelve years older*) would join me on

adventure walks down Mink Brook Road to the "backside." In those days the back shore was entirely undeveloped—no houses anywhere nearby. Mink Brook Road was just a field path where once wagons wheeled, and cows trod. Carl Hardy, Sr. used to keep a small herd of cows in a pasture at the end of the road. Deane would reminisce about seeing them herded down the road in the morning. They would spend the day "at the beach" grazing and mooing. Deane fondly remembered hearing the cow bells ringing, with the sound floating up across the woods from the shore. In the late afternoon, the cows would make the return trek up the road to home. I came along too late to see the cows. They had been taken off the island in the early 1950's. However, the remains of the electric fence could be seen decades after. Likewise, in the 1940's, some beavers took up residence around Mink Brook and began flooding the road. They were finally removed by wardens in the late 1940's. For these wildlife trips, Deane and I would each pack a hunting knife as Deane warned, "Just in case we run into a bear or wolf." For some reason we never ran into any. I guess we were just lucky... We both loved baseball and spent many happy hours across the street in the field hitting and catching fly balls. Other outdoor activities included clamming in the Pool, blueberry picking in the field, picking apples and raspberries. Small time farming was still quite common in the 1950's. Many islanders kept chickens and maintained small gardens. Deane would bring out his 7–10 hens from our home in Southwest Harbor for the summer. They were housed in an old chicken coop located at the edge of the field across the current Linc Lyman driveway from the blue garage owned by Ellen Paquin, Deane's daughter. I liked visiting the hens but one day, when I was about three years old, I tried to shake hands with one and got pecked pretty badly. I howled for hours. Deane also had a cultivated strawberry patch on the land between our driveway and the cemetery. I can still remember how large and juicy those strawberries were. One can still see the faint outlines where the garden was, even

after 65 years. Papa had an old barn from the old farm days in the field which adjoins our house this side of Depalmer's. An old hand-dug well from the farming days of cows and horses sat up the grade between the barn and the road. For some reason, that area was loaded with snakes, both big brown snappers that would lunge at you, and the smaller, less aggressive, green garden snakes. David Bunker, Lynne Colby and I used to enjoy



Carol Ann Pratt



Mary Elizabeth Pratt

going snake-hunting. We were always successful. David especially was a pro at snaking. I should also mention there were wild rabbits on the island in those days. Hunting them was very popular. Even the domestic cats enjoyed themselves. I woke up early one morning hearing a scream. I looked out the bathroom window and saw Papa's cat, Cuddles, tearing apart a rabbit on the lawn. Cuddles didn't live up to his name that day. The wild rabbits suddenly disappeared one winter in the mid-1960's. Probably some plague or virus caught up with them.

There were also many rainy day and nighttime activities. There was no television in the house until very late in the decade. There was no telephone until 1957. Prior to that, Nanna would write letters to Mom at Southwest Harbor. Karin and I moved onto the island permanently in 2001. We un-boarded the fireplace, which had never been used since construction in 1928, and found the original 1957 phone book inside the wooden panel. In those days the phones had become direct dial (*in 1956*) but were party line affairs. Initially, there were eight parties on the line, and it often seemed, when trying to have a conversation, that all eight were listening in and breathing heavily. The adults could often identify certain listeners by how they breathed—coughing, soft rapid, heavy, wheezing—you get the idea. One had to be very careful what was said. Within minutes the whole island would know about it. Deane grew up in the 1940's reading the Thornton Burgess Old Mother Nature books, and I succeeded him in reading these little novels. The stories of Blackie the Crow, Old Mr. Frog, the deer and the rabbits, and the dangerous but dumb Bowser the Hound, always gave us a great appreciation of the natural wonders around us on the island. We often played Monopoly, checkers, or card games. Papa and I liked to play cribbage and dominoes. Later in the evenings, Deane and I would go upstairs to the bedroom and turn on his "new" 1957 multi-band receiver radio. It was great fun at night to pick up foreign voices from Russia, France, Southeast Asia or just about anywhere from around the world, depending on weather conditions enabling reception. These



Mary Teel Pratt



Phil Whitney, School Photo, First Grade



Velma Teel

late night adventures on the airwaves stimulated my imagination which, many years later, influenced my career choice of joining the Diplomatic Security Service and would lead me to travel all over the world and actually experience these faraway places and people. One further radio memory; Deane enjoyed tuning in on Saturday nights to Station WWVA in Wheeling, West Virginia to the National Barn Dance, which had great old-time country music. It should be noted that, in the 1950s, radio programs were rapidly disappearing as a favored pastime generally. In January 1953, WABI-TV Channel 5 in Bangor came on the air. It was the first television station in Maine. Almost overnight, people stopped listening to the radio shows, stopped going to the movies, and tuned into their new televisions. On Cranberry Island, card parties at various peoples' homes, including the Spurling House, had been regular social events during the long, quiet winter months. Almost overnight, these ended as folks stopped coming, instead staying home to watch I Love Lucy or The Ed Sullivan Show or whatever. The social scene (*or lack of it*) has not changed much on the island since then.

Our neighbors were all good folks. Starting just on this side of Dog Point Road, the Wilfred Bunker Family lived in the current Joe Connell and Colleen Bunker house. Wilfred Bunker was born and spent most of his life in that house. He married Norma (*Stanley*), and they raised three kids: Mary Anne, Joyce and David. There was also a big black Newfoundland type dog named Queenie. His mother, Aunt Alta Spurling Bunker (*Papa's sister*) lived with them. She was born in the currently owned Cameron and Nancy Wood house, and moved a couple hundred feet down the road when she married Henry Bunker. "Pa Hen" passed away in 1941. Alta just stayed there with the family until her passing in 1969. She spent her entire life within a two-hundred-foot radius. She never seemed to have much personality or show much interest in this little kid. I guess the other three kids were enough for her. Norma took good care of her to the end. Wilfred was a natural mariner all his life. At various times he served in the

Merchant Marine during WWII and ran the mailboat. In 1950 he partnered with Clarence Beal to establish Beal & Bunker and the rest, as they say, is (*continuing*) history. Norma died tragically of cancer in 1979. Wilfred remarried and moved off island in the 1980's. Our families were quite close in those days and exchanged Christmas presents during the holiday season. It was not unusual to receive a thank-you card from David sometime around April for his Christmas present



John and Dorothy Towns Family Christmas



Herbert and Florence Towns



Ralph Bulger AKA Bennie Bulger

from me. I cannot even remember sending him thank-you notes, but probably did. Kids were kind of lazy about writing stuff until their mothers got tough.

Coming up the hill, the next house across the street belonged to Wyman (*Sawtelle*) and Velma (*Stanley*) Teel. They were old-timers of my grandparents' generation, and we were close friends with them. Sawtelle, originally from Frenchboro, was a portly man, his shape rather similar to a bushel bait barrel. He was very friendly and jovial, often smoked a pipe, and spoke with a gravelly voice. He also was a lifelong mariner and held a heavy tonnage ship captain's license. He had also served in the Merchant Marine in WWII. In later years he was a lobsterman and caretaker on GCI and Suttons Island. He was heartbroken when Papa died suddenly in 1960, and always seemed somewhat lonely when we went visiting with him until his death in 1967. Velma was a longtime schoolteacher on Cranberry, nearly thirty years. She never had the outgoing personality that Sawtelle had, at least when I was around, probably because she was tired of dealing with obnoxious school kids and I was probably an added potential headache. During the 1930's-1940's she had run a small restaurant and boarding house out of their home, which was apparently quite popular. I have no direct memory of it but do remember the small dock located in the Pool in front of their house, where occasionally visiting guests would tie up at higher tides. Their daughter, Mary Teel Pratt, was Mom's best friend growing up. Mary eventually took a Secretarial position with an influential businessman in the Washington, DC area. The businessman was friends with President Franklin Roosevelt, and Mary often accompanied him on meetings with the President at the White House, who greeted her as "Mary." I last saw Mary in late 1997, when I coordinated a visit with her and Mom back to Cranberry. Mary had not been back in decades, and Mom was failing with dementia. They had a wonderful time, wandering the island and re-living old memories. The next year, Mom passed away in May 1998, just prior to my departure for Cambodia. I called Mary to let her know of Mom's

passing. She broke down over the phone. That was my last conversation with her. The following November, when home on leave, we dropped by her house in the Augusta area. No one was around. We made some inquiries and were told she passed away some months previously in her sleep. I have always felt she never got over losing Mom. Mary had two daughters, Mary Elizabeth and Carol Ann, who were near my age. They would often visit the island in the 1950's and, along with Molly Vaux (*currently the Lincoln Lyman cottage*) and several other island kids, we would have a great time playing around the fields and woods, activities which still are in the heart and mind from long ago summer afternoons.

Next up the road on the same side of the street was the house currently owned by Cameron and Nancy Wood. In the 1950's it was owned by Louise Lobkowicz, later Strandberg. It was always known in our family as "Nanny's House," in reference to Julia Bunker Spurling, my grandfather's mother, who died there in 1919. It was then sold to Blanche Atkinson. That house will merit a future article by itself since so much island history was made in the house and by the people who were born there. I have few direct memories about that house from my early years. I can remember that Louise had two black Labrador Retrievers that often ran loose, and they would terrorize any other dogs in the area, including ours. The house was only occupied in the summer months. It was eventually sold to Burton Jones in the 1960's and later to Robert and Sally Bloom in the 1970's.

Directly across from our house was the home of Winslow and Rosie Bunker. The house is currently owned, since 1982, by Richard and Ann Sullivan. The house was built in the 1870's, I believe by Winslow's Grandfather, Willis Bunker. He was a sea captain and was fairly prosperous, owning his own schooner. He and his wife Rena lived there for some years. He died in 1913 when Winslow was only one year old. Aunt Rena was reportedly a big fan of Rudy Vallee who had a top-rated national radio program in the 1930's. Rena would get all dressed up in the evening and sit by the radio, thoroughly



Norma Bunker age 18

enjoying his program. She passed away in 1940. Winslow's father was Percy Bunker. Percy was married to Gertrude. They lived in the house when their only offspring, Winslow, was young. The family also owned the current Michael Richman cottage on the Pool. Who lived where and when, between the two houses, during the ensuing 1920's, 1930's, and 1940's is unclear to me. Winslow and Rosie were living across the street in the 1950's. The Richmans bought the house on the Pool in 1954, shortly after Gertrude died. Percy Bunker then moved over to Islesford for caretaking work. Winslow was a lobsterman. Rosie was an elementary school teacher in the Brewer school system. They would usually move off island in the winter months while she was teaching. Winslow and Mom had grown up together on the island. The families always stayed close. I was very fond of both. Rosie especially was a large (*plump*) woman with a broad smile and hearty laugh. I can still see (*and hear*) her calling out to me from the doorway as I walked by, "Hello-o-o, Phil Allen!" It's interesting how certain individual memories stay with us through the years. Rosie developed cancer and died in 1967. It was devastating for Winslow. They had no children. He lived in the house basically alone for the next 15 years. He told me shortly after her passing he would stay in the house until all his pets had died. He was then going to move away. His parakeet went first, then his big sloppy dog, Gus, and finally 15 years later his money cat, Smoky. He sold the house immediately and moved over to Islesford.



Ruth Haydock

He died there in 1992. It appeared to be a lonely existence for him during those last years on Cranberry without Rosie. At that time, his was the last winter-occupied residence down the road. He increasingly drank too much, and could be belligerent when drunk, although I never, personally, had a problem when visiting him. It was a sad ending when he left the island.

Right next door to Winslow Bunker, and supposedly living in a very small cabin, was Ralph "Benny Ralph" Bulger. I say supposedly because I never once ever saw him—not in the 1950's, and not later. The family, and especially Deane, always talked about Benny Ralph. Deane was especially enthusiastic about him. Apparently, he was a nice, but somewhat shy guy, who lived alone. I just couldn't figure out why I never saw the neighbor who lived across the street. I was always suspicious that Deane was pulling my leg and that Bennie Ralph didn't really exist—except that Nanna also claimed he existed. After his passing the little cabin was purchased by Peter Comiskey and gradually expanded. Today his son, Mike Comiskey and family, have it.

Slightly beyond and across the road again was the Town Gravel Pit. Prior to 1957, Papa had owned all seven acres which he developed into a gravel pit. In the old days it was all farmland, owned by Arno Stanley, grandfather to Ralph Stanley, the later famous wooden boat builder in Southwest Harbor. Arno went crazy in the late 1930's and died in 1938. Papa bought the property, eventually selling it to the Town in 1957. In the interim, as Town Road Commissioner, he dug huge amounts of gravel from the property for road projects. Deane and I had set up a small baseball field on the north end of the property, where no digging was



Percy Bunker



*Old Town Garage Storage Shed
at the Gravel Pit*



Polly Bunker and Louise Strandberg



Winslow Bunker

occurring. There was also a hugely tall evergreen tree located about where the Sumner CIRT house is currently. We used to climb that tree and enjoy a great view of the ocean out across the Heath. Being only five or six, it was pretty risky for me, even with Deane climbing with me, to climb way up. It got even riskier when Deane decided to play games and climb down, leaving me there to get down by myself. Luckily no accidents occurred, but I howled a lot. (*Deane howled a lot after I got home and told the grandparents what he did!*) In June 1958 Deane and I went happily down to the gravel pit via our path through the back woods. It was a complete shock to find that the Town (*without our knowledge or permission, but the new owners of the land*) had cut down our massive, tall spruce tree. It was just lying there forlornly, a treasured pastime destroyed. Gradually, as Deane and I grew older, we played ball less and less, until one day we never came back to that little field. Over the years the gravel removal, now done by the Town, expanded and eventually swallowed up the entire field. But the memories of tree climbing and ball playing still linger whenever I visit the town dump.

Ruth Haydock was a summer resident who lived in the gray house next down the road beyond the gravel pit. I should mention that, in between the pit and the house was where the old District 2 Schoolhouse sat. In the 1950's there was nothing there but an old overgrown basement in the bushes, similar to today. I have no memory of the school, and never knew it existed, or where, until later years. I do know that Nanna taught there for her first teaching assignment on GCI before moving to the new Longfellow School in 1905. I have no significant memories of the Haydock residence, other than Mrs. Haydock had beautiful flower gardens and was also a friendly acquaintance of my grandparents.

The last house on our little trip down memorable Cranberry Road was the "Red House." It was bought by Herbert and Florence Towns of Massachusetts from Jim Crosby in 1938. It had been an operating farm known as "Bayview

Farm." The Towns became very good friends with my grandparents. They always remained seasonal people, returning home in the winter. I do not recall meeting them personally. After they passed on, the property was inherited by their son and daughter in-law, John and Dorothy "Dot" Towns. They opened a successful bed and breakfast on the property. In more recent years Chong and Judi (*Towns*) Lim inherited the business, which has served hundreds of happy visitors over the years.

I now come to the end of this particular journey. This sentimental decade and the life of poignant memories it represented ended suddenly for me on Wednesday, August 9, 1960, at 11:30 in the morning. Papa had just finished lunch and lay down on the living room sofa. He never got up. Nanna moved off island that day and never spent another night on the island. She lived with us in Southwest Harbor for the next 19 years and passed away in 1979 at the age of 102. The happy weekend visits with them were no more. Everyone has seminal moments in life when significant events happen. They cause new directions to be taken into the future. The old adventures and people known and loved become fading memories. For me, it was part of growing up, not gradually, but suddenly. Still, in late afternoons or early evenings, when I am out walking down the road with the "Old Dawg" Toby, I relive some of these moments in time.

These were the wonder years, full of memories of a simple life, long vanished along with the people encountered along the way. I hope you, the reader, can more fully appreciate, after reading this, the importance and value inherent in learning and understanding our history and its people. There just aren't many folks left who can remember.

Photo credit: GCIHS Archives

Cranberry Isles Realty Trust (CIRT)

BY MICHAEL D. TODD AND KEN SCHMIDT

Springtime is full of promise, amazing sights and re-imaginings. Animals awakening from hibernation will stretch, yawn and open their eyes to the world as if they are seeing the beauty of nature all around for the first time. Then they move forward with life. Springtime on the Cranberry Islands reminds me of this and is indeed an amazing and beautiful time of promise. As the summer residents begin to trickle in, and the tourist season kicks into gear it is easy to overlook, or forget, that the beauty and promise that draws people to our islands doesn't just happen by magic. There is a lot going on behind the scenes, that awakens and re-imagines, so that life can move forward.

The Town of Cranberry Isles is home to approximately 120 year-round residents on its 5 islands. They are what keep the islands alive and functioning even when the bitter winds of winter tear through the islands and the gulf rages preventing boats from accessing the mainland. These residents persevere through the harsh winters together to help ensure that the island's year-round community survives. Economic factors driven by the social changes of passing years have made it more difficult to sustain year-round life on Cranberry Isles. Employment, infrastructure, and one of the biggest barriers, affordable housing, hinder younger generations from establishing themselves and living their lives on the Islands. The reality is that housing on the islands is limited, the cost of new construction can be out of reach for working class families, and the houses

that are available can be prohibitively expensive because of their desirability to seasonal families.

About 30 years ago, the Cranberry Isles Realty Trust (CIRT), was established to nurture and sustain a vibrant island community by providing year-round housing opportunities for working families. The mission was in response to the obvious and detrimental effects caused by lack of available housing on the community which had been on a steady decline. With fewer residents, the Cranberry Island School was closed due to lack of students.

In around 1999, CIRT bought the GCI property locally known as the Rice House in order to provide an affordable year-round rental opportunity. At the same time, CIRT built the Maple Avenue house on Islesford which launched a number of year-round, wonderful, long-term community members on Islesford, including Margaret Blank, Jim and Melissa Amuso, Cory Duggan, and Kaitlyn Miller.

Then around 2000, Cap and Annie Kane generously donated Chuck Liebow's old house on GCI, which CIRT then moved to land leased from the Town by the transfer station. Ben and Darlene Sumner and their family have lived there since 2014, both of whom are very committed and engaged in the community, school and other organizations. In 2009, CIRT provided significant financial support to help Cory and Kaitlyn Duggan (now Miller) buy their Main Street house with the provision through CIRT's recorded Covenants, that the

house must remain forever a year-round, affordable house. Kaitlyn now has her house on the market, making a great opportunity for another year-round family.

Around 2010, land donated to CIRT by Bruce Komusin on GCI was used to develop two modular homes, along with the financial support of community donors and the Maine Housing Authority. These two homes have been continuously occupied by great year-round island families since 2014. One of these families, Ric and Ingrid Gaither, work on the islands in multiple roles and are involved in many community organizations, including the GCI Library, the GCI Historical Society, the Futures Group, the Fitness Center, and the Transfer Station. Not to mention that Ric recently just got his lobster license and has begun to run his own boat, as well as the great job he does as CIRT property caretaker on GCI. Another family that had lived in the modular homes, Ben and Jen Walls, just recently left GCI to move to Ellsworth, but they were stalwarts of the community while they lived on the island. Ben still returns to GCI periodically to work on the island.

However, as the old saying goes "when one door closes, another door opens," and when the Walls family moved off the island, it created an opportunity for another family to move onto GCI. In April of this year, Heath and Aubrey Wedge and their four children moved to the island where Heath grew up. Now the Wedge children can go to the same school that Heath and many prior

generations of his family attended.

In 2017, Bruce Komusin also bequeathed to CIRT his Preble Cove house and 14 acres of land. It was rented out as a summer home for several years until, in 2021, Tyler and Lydia Johnson and their two children bought Preble Cove house along with five acres. They turned that summer house into a year-round home and have been an asset to the community, becoming involved in multiple organizations, including the Historical Society.

In 2020, CIRT provided very modest financial support to Jeff and Barbara Pease in order to help them obtain Veterans Administration financing to buy a home on Islesford, again, with CIRT's Covenants that require the house only ever be used for an affordable, year-round residency. And in 2022 Jordan Merchant bought the 175-year-old Rice House from CIRT as part of CIRT's restructuring of assets, to enable new building projects. Jordan is from an old Mount Desert Island family and has settled into island life easily. He is a most welcome member of the year-round community.

What's next for CIRT? Proceeds from the sales of the Preble Cove house and the Rice House are now being used by CIRT to help develop more, much-needed, affordable, year-round rental housing on both Islesford and Great Cranberry. On Islesford, plans are still being completed for 4 new, year-round rental units, with renovations to begin this winter. On Great Cranberry Island, CIRT is building two three-bedroom, highly insulated and energy efficient rental homes. It is expected that they will be ready for occupancy this Fall.

CIRT, being made up of year-round and seasonal islanders, understands

and appreciates the value of this community. They made sure that local community members were a part of the project. CIRT used local contractors and labor, including Blair Colby, Joe Connell, and Ric Gaither in the GCI project and their quality work is greatly appreciated. Likewise, on Islesford, year-round contractors will also be involved in renovating the houses. Big thanks to Ben Sumner for keeping our books and records in excellent order. CIRT also acknowledges and appreciates the patience of island residents during construction, as many heavy-duty vehicles traverse the island this spring and summer.

CIRT is providing \$400,000 from the sale of the Rice and Preble Cove houses and Maine Housing will be providing over \$1.2 million in funding. However, to complete the project, CIRT needs to raise about \$600,000 more from the community for its Welcome Home! Campaign.

For further information or to support the project, you can contact:

Campaign Co-Chair Frank Reece on Islesford (Freece45@gmail.com)

Campaign Co-Chair Jim Kehoe on Great Cranberry (jim@belrad.com)

CIRT President Ken Schmidt, on Great Cranberry (kenschmidt12@gmail.com)

CIRT Vice President Judith Timyan, on Islesford, (jtimyan@gmail.com)

In addition to doubling its current, year-round affordable rental homes on the islands from 4 to 10, CIRT also has a new program to help working families buy their own island homes. Last summer Cranberry Isles Realty Trust created the Cranberry Homes Assistance Program, CHAP, which can supply up to \$50,000 in financial assistance to eligible applicants toward

the down payment to enable them to buy their own year-round island homes. See cranberryislesrealtytrust.org for details.

Cranberry Isles Realty Trust has been instrumental in the growth of the island community. The reality is that it takes a community and significant commitment to make the islands work. There is magic on these islands. Do not doubt that for one minute. There is a reason tourists come from thousands of miles away to enjoy these shores. There is a reason the islands are a desirable getaway for seasonal residents. It is the people who live here, who call the islands home, year-round, that are the magicians, the workers behind the scenes. Without them, there is no community. Without them, there is no magic. This winter, when the world goes back into hibernation, and you are having Cranberry Dreams, remember those dreams come true because we are still here.

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 May 2023

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Elsa Comiskey

John French

Gail Grandgent

Steven L. Herrick

Carter Kristoff

Maurice Joseph Marshall

Eileen Mcginty

Eileen Richards

Ruth Westphal

Family Friends

Stephen Bradley

Carl Brooks

Joyce Curtis

Charles and Nelia Dunbar

Robin Freeman

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Chong and Judith Lim

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Susan Newman

Darlene Robbins

Beverly Sanborn

Anne L. Welles

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Dr. Allan Alson

Lynne Birlem

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Michael and Kathleen Glaser

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John I. Kuczynski IV

Hugh McCall and Gary Freeman

Janet McClelland

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Town of Cranberry Isles



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

Photo courtesy of GCIHS Archives

Order & Membership Form Instructions

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PO Box 12, Cranberry Isles, ME 04625

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

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



Photo courtesy of GCIHS Archives

Friends of Cranberry House Membership *Renewal for 1 year*

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