

Cranberry Chronicle

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



Birlem Family Letters

PHIL WHITNEY

The Birlem Family (Lynn and Charles) recently gave GCIHS a large collection of letters written between 1893-1904 by family members living on Cranberry Island. Most of the letters were written to Mary Frances 'Mamie' Spurling who, in the earlier years of the letters, was a sixteen-year-old student boarding away from home in the Boston / Holbrook, Massachusetts, area for the first time. Mamie would eventually marry Fred Birlem in 1906. Most of the letters were written by her mother, Emma Frances Bulger Spurling, and her favorite aunt, Ella Florence 'Aunt Flo' Bulger Joy. The letters offer interesting insights into the everyday lives of those living on Cranberry Island back then, and the living conditions and challenges they faced. They also help us realize how much easier in many respects, due to advances in technology, our lives are today on Cranberry Island compared to those earlier days. Yet, in retrospect, their lives were slower, simpler, with writing letters an important part of everyday life and often reflecting on aspects of that life. The letter writers made numerous references to religious activities on the island, such as church and Sunday school meetings, and encouraging Mamie and other young people to follow moral paths. Other notable observations included the prevalence of subsistence farming on the island and the produce grown. Transportation figured prominently among daily activities, much as it does today, but back then movement was predominantly along the coast, whereas today it is directed inland, such as to Ellsworth or Bangor. It should be noted the family was quite prosperous compared to some on the island, as noted by owning a store, owning sailing schooners in the coastal trade, owning Clifton Dock in Northeast Harbor, and taking trips to Bar Harbor and Boston, etc. We have taken excerpts from these many letters to

Charles Eaton Spurling House

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GREAT CRANBERRY ISLAND
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Notes of Appreciation

Dick Berggren

For his extensive gift of sailing books to the Sea Wind 2nd Chance Shop.

Jim Singerling

For his many volunteer hours devoted to driving the Cranberry Explorer and manning the Museum Reception Desk.

Cooper Sumner

For his extensive volunteer time devoted to driving the Cranberry Explorer.

Milestones

Passings

Arvard Savage
August 4, 2021

Barbara Stainton
October 14, 2021

Wesley “Junior” Bracy
November 14, 2021

Oscar Anderson
November 20, 2021

Transitions

Cameron Frothingham & Katie Truesdale
Home purchase in June 2021

Fred Nelson & Regina Coco
Home purchase in July 2021

Tyler & Lydia Johnson
Home purchase in August 2021

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 includes a public trail to the shore, three gardens, and Sammy Sanford’s Cabin.

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

President's Message

PHIL WHITNEY



*2021 Lecture Series:
Robin Wood on Rachel Field*



Morrie Newell Jewelry Class



Kids Art Show 2021

2021 was a memorable season for the Cranberry House team. Compared to 2020, which produced daily clear skies and drought conditions all summer, 2021 had unstable weather every month until late September, with torrential rains, thunder and lightning storms and fog. One dramatic comparison of differing weather conditions between the two seasons was at the Blue Heron Pond. Last year the pond would have run dry early if we had not maintained a water hose to keep it filled. This year the pond remained full all season with no need for water support. In 2020 the corona virus killed business until a sharp up-swing of tourism in August partially saved the season. In 2021, an outpouring of visitors, loosed from the previous restrictions, and with money to spend, were not about to let bad weather dampen their enthusiasm. Cranberry House operations set records across the board in attendance and donations received. Day trippers, Cranberry Isles summer residents and year-rounders all visited and contributed. It was clearly the busiest year in our fourteen-year history.

Hitty's Cafe shattered the proverbial ceiling as thousands of customers descended on the deck to sample Chef Cezar's cuisine. It suddenly became the iconic luncheon dining destination for Mount Desert Island summer residents who often traveled in groups in their private boats to enjoy an afternoon party on the deck. Chef Cezar reported routinely serving 200-250 meals daily between 10am and 4pm! This put incredible pressure on him and his staff, but they rose to the occasion. There was one memorable day when all 14 tables were filled simultaneously, and the waiting line stretched from the cafe counter out to the road. Chef Cezar hired and trained a great team of teenagers to take orders and process the desserts and drinks. The kids were friendly, professional, and kept things moving. The tip jar overflowed daily, and some small fortunes were taken home by the gang. Chef Cezar was totally burned out by season's end on Columbus Day and will get a well-deserved rest in Brazil this winter. His lovely girlfriend, Grace, plans to return with him next spring, finally escaping Brazilian corona virus travel restrictions after two years.

Both the museum and shuttle broke donation records. The shuttle especially overflowed with generous donations, bringing in \$7,191. This was \$2,910 more than the previous record. During the shoulder seasons in spring and fall, the shuttle was made available for special trips on request if drivers were available. This extra service proved very popular to tourists who otherwise would have been disappointed not to see the entire island. Karin Whitney's Sea Wind 2nd Chance Shop brought in \$6,500. That is more than double the previous season. All income was donated directly to Cranberry House operations.

College student Sophie Robinson was hired as a part-time Archivist, along with filling in when needed as Museum Receptionist and Cranberry Explorer Shuttle Driver. She performed valuable work helping to reduce a large backlog of items by entering



*Oil painting of Wini Smart,
as a young woman.*

*Donated to Cranberry House
by Gail Cleveland*

them into the digital archives and coordinating those entries with the regional History Trust program, permitting easy access by History Trust historical organizations and individual members to our historical library. She also helped edit some old video interviews for program presentation and transcribed some audio interviews with islanders.

Many smaller scale events were hosted, avoiding larger crowds in confined conditions. Laurie Dobson did an excellent job of identifying potential programs and presenters and coordinating the actual shows. The Kids Recreation Smart Shack, under the supervision of Darlene Sumner, hosted numerous kids' programs between June and September. The Smart Shack building was kept open daily 10am to 4pm for any young people, with or without other family members, to enjoy artwork, games, or other related activities. It was a happy surprise that the Smart Shack saw constant usage, much more than even expected.

Ric Gaither worked all season landscaping the gardens and ponds. Ben Sumner kept the trails cleared. Their efforts made the property look more beautiful than ever. The Building Addition Construction Project progressed slowly but methodically. The contractor, along with many others in the region, continued having difficulties finding competent people to work. We anticipate finishing the entire project, including the Arts Center top floor, by Memorial Day weekend 2022. (See Separate Article.) Another unexpected major project developed earlier this summer when it was determined that the aging septic system located behind the GCIHS residences on Cranberry Road, which were inherited from Bruce Komusin, required replacement. A new septic system installation, costing upwards of \$40,000, should be completed by spring. Finally, while still discussing operational matters, plans are being made to transfer the old Cranberry House bulletin board sign, currently located behind the events day-boards, to a location more easily accessible and visible along the handicap access walkway near the cafe deck. This project should be completed by year's end.



*(L to R): Harold Wedge, Tud
Bunker, Elwood Spurling,
and Alton Bunker standing in
front of five deer hanging from
a rack. The house visible in the
background is now Cameron
& Nancy Wood's. The barn
was Elwood Spurling's but
is no longer there. The main
road separates the barn and
the house.*

The Finance Committee revised its membership renewal policy to simplify renewals for members. All memberships for 2022 take effect January 1, 2022, and can be renewed anytime from July 2021 onward. Reminder notifications have been mailed out to current members in October. This will be the case each year. We also welcomed Richard Beal and Jennifer Walls as new Trustees at the Annual Meeting.

I look forward to our upcoming 2022 season with great anticipation. We are doubling our floor space, with the environmentally controlled basement Archives Storage area, the additional Museum display area, and the expanded Arts Center permitting more and larger programs and events, including potential concerts and small theater production capabilities. We are working to raise additional funding for the top floor completion, as construction costs have steadily increased this past year beyond our previously reached initial fundraising goals. Several additional residents have expressed interest in volunteering support next year. Also, several new families have moved on the island, all stating their interest in helping to continue making Great Cranberry Island Historical Society and Cranberry House the exceptional entertainment and educational institution which serves Cranberry Island and the surrounding region.

I hope to see you soon at Cranberry House.

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/

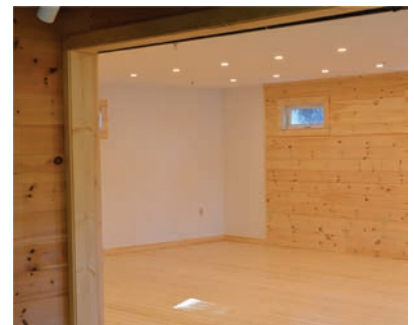
GCIHS Facebook page
www.facebook.com/CranberryHouseGCIHS/

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

Work is underway on the expansion of the museum and the wall has been removed to the Chris & Victoria Johnston Gallery. This is but one of several capital projects that have been completed this year or are in progress. These efforts are possible through the generosity of our donors and the resolute efforts of our volunteers and contractors. We have been in some stage of capital improvement since I assumed my role here in 2017 and our goal is to see these projects wrapped up successfully in 2022.

In addition to the completion of the Archives, this past year saw the replacement of the front deck of the museum, refitting of the office and storage area in the basement, and the expansion of the Shaw Cabin. Once the Johnston Gallery is complete, work can commence on the Arts Center expansion with the goal (as support allows) of having the entire Cranberry House ready for the 2022 season. A full septic system replacement has been contracted for both cabins at 300 Cranberry Road and the equity line used to renovate both residences in 2016 has been satisfied. Finally, we will be taking delivery of a new Cranberry Explorer in 2022 and the current 8-year-old shuttle will be retired to backup duty.

Having spent many volunteer hours over the last several years landscaping and maintaining the areas around the ponds and the Sanford Cabin, Ric Gaither assumed the contractual care of our three designated gardens: the Madera Garden, the Clay Taylor Garden, and the Betty Hartley Memorial Garden. A comprehensive review of our landscaping objectives is another area we hope to move forward on in the coming year. Your suggestions and ideas are welcome. Our many and varied initiatives can continue so long as there are dedicated individuals willing to commit to the effort and necessary support. We appreciate all those who are willing to plug in as they are able.



Hittys Café

CHEF CÉZAR FERREIRA

It was another exciting season at Hitty's Café. We did record-breaking business! Thank you to everyone who came out for our delicious food and a memorable island experience. Hitty's small but dedicated staff worked long hours and put in serious effort to make our success possible.

Cezar is back in Brazil with his family for the winter. He is kicking up his heels and recuperating from the marathon 2021 summer season. We look forward to his return in spring. We appreciate all our customers and supporters. We can't wait to see you all again in 2022. Until then please be safe and happy.

Moving to Great Cranberry

LYDIA JOHNSON

It's stuck!" I yelled up to Tyler as I watched the rear wheel of the U-Haul spin in the mud. We had been on the island for 20 minutes and this was not even our first hiccup. If someone told us one year ago that we would be moving to an island off the coast of Maine, I would have thought it could have only been a dream.



The Johnson family: Lydia, Tyler, Corwin, and Felicity purchased Bruce Komusin's Preble Cove cottage and plan to be year-round residents of Great Cranberry Island. Tyler works remotely and Lydia homeschools their children.

For nearly a decade, Tyler and I have toyed with the idea of relocating to Maine, but it never seemed feasible. We spent the first half of our relationship moving around the states during Tyler's career in the Army. Once he was retired on disability, we took to civilian life in Cincinnati, Ohio, where we proceeded to live a cookie-cutter life with our two kids, two dogs, and cat. The dream to move to Maine continued to be out of reach. Each summer, we would visit my family in Midcoast Maine and dream about the day we could retire to our own spot in Maine. When the pandemic hit, our dream quickly became a reality and our timeline moved up by about 30 years.

During our annual visit to Maine, in the summer of 2020, we took a day trip to Acadia National Park and fell in love. We felt this was going to be our place in Maine, some day. In the meantime, we spoke with a realtor in the Midcoast area and made plans to work towards relocation over the next year. Tyler began interviewing for jobs and we started researching the best places to raise a family in Maine. Around Christmas we found out that Tyler could stay in his position and work remotely. The dream of moving to Maine was now becoming a possibility.

In March of 2021 we made the bold decision to jump into the Maine adventure with both feet. We packed up our house in Ohio, moved everything into a storage facility in Brunswick, ME and sold our home. We stayed at my parents' camp on Damariscotta Lake while we house-hunted in the intense real estate market. After countless showings and even a painful outbid, we stumbled upon a listing for a cottage on Great Cranberry Island. We knew nothing about the Cranberry Isles, so we researched the islands more and spoke to some of the seasonal and year-round residents online. Deciding it would be best to scout out the island before dragging our realtor along, we planned our first visit.

On a day trip to the islands at the beginning of April, it was cold, misty gray, and quiet; we LOVED it. The island spoke to us in indescribable ways, and we began to wonder, "could really be island people?" Knowing that moving to Maine would be a different pace than the life we had in Cincinnati, we had already made the decision to live with more purpose and raise our kids in a tight-knit community. We were

ready to leave behind the shallow life of convenience that we had, but was moving to a small Down-East island too extreme of a change? Tyler, the kids, and I spent four hours exploring the island in the off-season and chatted with a local at the store while we waited for the mailboat to take us back to Northeast Harbor. During this time the wheels began turning and we started to envision ourselves here.



A few weeks after our initial visit, we worked up the courage to set up a showing of the house. We learned the home was owned by the Cranberry Isles Realty Trust (CIRT) and began to research the original owner, Bruce Komusin. Once we saw the house in person, we knew it was exactly what we were looking for; that is when the real adventure began!

Moving to the island was more involved than our previous moves. Aligning U-Haul rentals with barge schedules, combined with prayer for good weather and cooperative tides added a level of complexity. Every time something would happen against plan, we would chalk it up to being an adventure. We were open to possibilities and accepted that there would be growing pains. We finally made it to the island in late July 2021. After a few challenges, like a stuck-in-the-mud U-Haul truck, a broken-down barge, and leaving keys in the wrong car three hours away, we finally began to settle in our new home.

The buzz of summer activity made it easy to dive into island life. Our kids quickly began exploring the island by any means possible. I began helping at Hitty's Café and the Museum as needed. Felicity, Corwin, and I helped at the Annual Ladies' Aid Fair in August. Our son Corwin even started giving tours of Preble Cove and started his own business selling rocks and sea glass. We knew there was still so much to navigate within our new island community but felt for the first time that our family belonged and was needed.

As the summer sizzle began to fade, we found ourselves ready to switch into hibernation mode. Tyler and I enjoyed participating in our first Harvest Supper and the kids dubbed their first Halloween on the island as "the best Halloween ever!" We have continued to have some challenges along the way but have welcomed them and learned from them. Making friends and finding support on the island has been much easier than in our previous communities. We are thankful for the warm welcome and are eager to see what the next year has in store.



Charles Eaton Spurling House

highlight the people and their activities and hopefully capture the flavor of the times which have, in large part, been forgotten by many over the decades. I have included, in parentheses, additional comments which may help clarify who someone was, who they were related to, where they lived, etc. These letters will be presented chronologically in several parts in future Cranberry Chronicles.

Letter dated 22 September 1893

To Mamie from Aunt Flo:

Went Cranberrying today. Viola (*daughter Viola Joy*) had her birthday party tonight. We had cranberries, baked mutton, potatoes, green peas, beans, cucumbers for dinner. Then little cakes frosted and candied.

Letter dated 24 September 1893

To Mamie from Mamma:

Brother (*Charles Samuel Spurling*), Viola and I just returned from Sabbath School. Twenty-two scholars attended. We dropped into Aunt Kate's (*Catherine Bulger Gilley*)

on the return home. Aunt Flo is to be pitied. It is one continual swash-swash from early morning to late at night. Lena Bryant is very sick with inflammation. Dr. Morrison (*SWH doctor*) visited yesterday. He does not have much hope for her recovery. The other night when I came in the house after the Store, Henry (*Henry Bunker, Gaile Colby's grandfather*) was playing the harp and Aunt Flo was accompanying him on the organ.

Letter dated 26 September 1893

To Mamie from Mamma:

There was quite a crowd at the Store tonight. (*The store with pillars was located at the top of the hill from the ferry dock on the curve. It is currently known as the Glaser House. Mamma and family lived next door in what is now the Carl Brooks house. Carl is descended from them. The Spurling Family owned and operated the store up until the early 1930's.*) Fred Bracy killed fourteen birds today.

Letter dated 3 October 1893

To Mamie from Mamma:



Mary Francis Spurling

Long waits for receiving letters from Mamie. (*No telephones existed yet on the island*) Last Monday went to SWH. Had all my teeth taken out. Dr. Phillips gave ether. Whitcomb (*dentist*) took out the teeth. My gums have pained very badly. So stiff and sore. Hard work to keep from starvation. He took out eighteen teeth. The dentist said they came out hard. Walter Joy has a sore mouth and throat. Baby Clarence Joy has a sore mouth. Tough week. Milley (*Millard Spurling*) came in and reported Alta (*Spurling*) wrote home and was homesick. (*Alta was also attending boarding school with Mamie*) Monday - Mouth does not feel any better. Pieces of bone sticking out in different places. Mr. Preble has taken charge of the Post Office today.

Letter dated 5 October 1893

To Mamie from Mamma:

Caring for the children and tending Store. Cooking chickens for dinner and loaf of plum cake in the oven.

Letter dated 8 October 1893

To Mamie from Mamma:

Bert is out to Holbrook, MA. tonight. I heard his mother said he was going to try and get Alta (*Spurling*) to go to school again. (*This was apparently Warren Adelbert 'Bert' Spurling, brother of Alta Spurling. Their mother was Julia Bunker Spurling. They lived in the current Cameron & Nancy Wood house. Julia's sister, Sarah Alfreda Bunker, married Capt. Edward Brewer of Holbrook. They were apparently boarding Mamie and Alta while they attended school. Julia Bunker Spurling was Phil Whitney's Great Grandmother. Bert and Alta were the brother and sister of Phil Whitney's Grandfather, Elwood Spurling.*)

My gums are real sore now. There are a number of pieces of bone sticking out through the gums. Hoping to get some new teeth in (3-4) weeks, but afraid will have to wait longer.

Twenty scholars in Sunday School. Twenty cents collected.

George and Oscar have got their new boat. (*Oscar was probably Oscar Bulger, father of Marjorie Phippen and Hilda Spurling*)

Mamie, are you getting any harm by being away from us? If any thing happens to you they will all blame me. Gramma will sure. She seems to think I have done wrong. I hope and pray that you will be kept from the wrong and not led into temptations.

Flo & I together have got last week's ironing nearly done today. It is nothing but trot-trot from morning until night.

Addie Stanley had a new sailor hat. (*Addie Stanley Duren, who once lived in the current Ron Mountain house*)

Trade is not very rushing on hats. I sold ten pullets to John Gilley the other day. Got \$5 for them.

Brother (*Charles Samuel Spurling*) and your father (*Charles Eaton Spurling*) spend every evening out in the store. I do not think much of Brother being out there so much.

Lots of new candy came Saturday.

Rose Spurling (*Believe she was later Rose Wedge*) has moved into Capt. Richardson's (*formerly Richardson's*) house.

Letter dated 19 October 1893

To Mamie from Aunt Flo:

Grandpa (*maybe Samuel Newman Bulger*) went by Saturday morning (*sailing schooner*) and we think they will be here today or tomorrow. (*apparently delivering freight downeast*) Your Mamma may go over to Sullivan from Bar Harbor. (*She was there checking on the status of her new teeth and came home with the vessel from Sullivan*)

Uncle George (*Joy*) hauled my things down to the steamboat wharf (*SWH*) and I got Johnny Bunker to go up after them. They are all put in the house down to the shore. He has been on the island (2-3) times since and says he is going to make trouble if I don't go back but I shall not go. (*Aunt Flo had lived in NEH but was separating from George. They divorced shortly afterwards. Aunt Flo subsequently married Bert Spurling. Unknown whether George caused any trouble*)

Uncle Bill (*William H. Bulger, son of Michael Bulger*) got twenty-six birds day before yesterday. I am preserving pears today for Gramma. I will close. Have got to make some doughnuts and a custard pie.

Baby is crying. Bert has not got home yet. Fred Steele has got his cellar all dug and cemented. Ida Rice has a 10 lb boy. (*Believe this was Elton "Buster" Rice. Ida was married to Seth Rice. They lived on Suttons Island*) Dora Sanford is sick. Mrs. Preble is over there.

Letter dated 21 October 1893

To Mamie from Mamma:

Went from home (*GCI*) Wednesday to the Harbor (*SWH*). Came to Bar Harbor on the 'Frank Jones'. (*Maine Central Railroad steamboat built the previous year 1892 in Bath. The service ran from Manset - SWH - NEH - Seal Harbor - Bar Harbor - Sullivan - Railhead at Mount Desert Ferry in Hancock. Known as "The Round-the-Hills" service, it was discontinued Summer, 1925. It was apparently common for Cranberry Islanders to ride into SWH or NEH and pick up steamboat service for destinations up and down the coast.*) Went up to the dentist. Looked at my gums. They were not healed enough yet to wear teeth. Wait a month longer.

Went over to Sullivan (*probably by steamboat*) to look for "Jennie". (*"Jennie" was a schooner owned by the family*) Found Gramma and Grandpa. (*Grandpa Samuel Bulger. "Jennie" was named for Jennie Googins. Eventually owned by Charles Eaton Spurling*) Spent the evening visiting, then went on board the schooner. I thought I would go "down home" with them. The schooner got loaded the next forenoon but there wasn't water enough to go over the falls so could not go that day. Had to wait several days for the tides to be higher. I expected to be gone three days when I came away and I expect it will be nearer six days but I guess it will all go in life time.

Gramma and I went over to Anne's yesterday and she brought us back with their team. (*Horses and buckboard*)

New Letter - Undated:

To Mamie from Gramma:

Left Boston Friday morning at 5 AM. Got to anchor in Sullivan Saturday morning at 8 AM. Made the run in (21) hours. It was a big blow and storming when we came by Bakers Island and we came right by home. We got loaded Thursday morning and have been tide stranded ever since. But there has been a two-master (*schooner*) go down today and we are going down tomorrow morning. I am home sick.

Last night while we were eating supper Fred Steele and Johnny Bunker came on board. They came up here in the "Corquett" with a load of fish to sell.

Letter dated 30 October 1893

To Mamie from Mama:

Gramma is now writing to Grandpa. He arrived in New York last Saturday. Left here on Wednesday. Wasn't that quick? He sent a dispatch when he got there.

I have been to Lena Bryant funeral this afternoon. She was awful poor and did not look natural. She showed she had suffered terrible. There was a large crowd there. Well, we must all go sometime and we ought to be prepared. Walter Hadlock is building a new store along side his house and has it mostly done. It is not as large as Nettie's. (*Possibly Nettie Stanley?*) John Hamor is going to Bar Harbor tomorrow. (*John Hamor would eventually establish the Hamor Tea House in 1900 where Robert Murch now lives*) Cora Crosby & Baby are also going to Bar Harbor. (*Cora Crosby was married to Jim Crosby and owned Bayview Farm, currently known as "The Red House" Air B&B*)

Letter dated 31 October 1893

To Mamie from Aunt Flo:

Grammie asked me why I didn't go to Bar Harbor with Cora & John and get Baby's picture taken and my teeth out so I started off the next morning just as I was. John rowed us off in a skiff (*apparently to SWH*) and we took the "Mount Desert" (*steamboat*) to Bar Harbor. (*The "Mount Desert," nicknamed the "Old Mounty," was built in 1879 for the Eastern Steamship Lines. It ran from Rockland to Bar Harbor and on to Hancock Point / Mount Desert Ferry. It operated until 1904 when replaced by the J. T. Morse. The "Old Mounty" was the most famous and popular steamboat in the Penobscot Bay region. All steamship service in the Cranberry Isles area ended in April, 1934*)

Letter dated 13 November 1893

To Mamie from Mamma:

Mr. Alley is going to start a writing school tonight. It will be down the road. (*Unknown where. However, in the old days, it was common to refer "goin' up the road" in the direction of the ferry dock end of the island, and "goin' down the road" in the direction of Robert Murch residence end of the island. It should be noted there was no Town ferry dock or wharf in 1893*) Mary Ann Carroll is going to teach this year. School will begin a week from today. She inquired if she could board with me. I don't think I shall. (*Mary Ann Carroll wound up boarding there. She also taught in other years at Bakers and Duck Islands and also SWH which was her home. Her father was John Carroll who arrived in the area with Michael Bulger from Ireland around 1825. Bulger stayed on GCI and built many houses. Carroll moved to SWH and also built many houses. The Carroll name is still very prominent in SWH*)

Your father hasn't been gunning since he killed twenty-five birds. Gil Rosebrook and Les --- killed two wild geese today.

Melvina Bunker had a shock the other night and has been in bed for a number of days. Mr. Flemin is sick and is staying down to Filinias. The Town boards him there. (*Apparently a welfare case*) Arthur (*Filinias?*) says he would rather have three Mr. Flemings than one Mr. Pung. (*Unknown who Pung is. Mr. Flemings apparently ran a boarding house for town welfare cases*) Hen B (*Henry Bunker-Tud Bunker's father*) and Bert (*Bert Spurling?*) have come in here.

Letter dated 17 November 1893

To Mamie from Aunt Flo:

Been busy cleaning house and papering the porch chamber. Gramma stained the wood work with oak staining and the paper is real light. It is quite cold weather now, snowed some night before last and froze ice quite thick.

George Bulger has got a new horse. Got him from Uncle Al. Looks like John Bunker's horse and his name is "John". The children all stood to the corner today when he went by with his cart and they got their first ride.

Brother was down here today and finished sawing and splitting Gramma's wood. We have been having a --- out on lobsters lately. Al brought us down a bushel basket full.

You ought to be at home to go to school to Mary Ann Carroll. She is going to board at your Mother's.

Letter dated 19 November 1893

To Mamie from Gramma:

Florence, Viola (*Joy*) & Freddie (*Joy*) have gone to Sunday School. Walter (*Joy*) is up in the kitchen chamber to sleep. Clarence (*Joy*) is sitting on the floor on a quilt alongside of the stove in the sitting room. (*All were Aunt 'Flo's' children with George Joy. They were all apparently living on GCI after Aunt Flo separated from George Joy*) Dick (*possibly the family dog?*) is hanging up to the window next to the kitchen and the cat is laying in the big chair near the stove and Gramma is down to eat supper with us all.

How does Alma (*sister of Edward Brewer*) get along in her new business, and how is Mr. & Mrs. Brewer appear as a newly wedded couple. Tell them I wish them much joy and may they live long and be happy.

Uncle Bill is going to come up to Boston next Monday. (*When headed towards Boston it was referred as "going up",*

while heading eastward was referred as "going down", hence the term "Downeast.") Grandma is down to Aunt Mary Hamor's yet. Grandpa left New York the 14th for Savannah, GA. Mary Ann Carroll commenced school today and boards at your house.

Letter dated 25 November 1893

To Mamie from Mamma:

School has kept one week. Mary Ann (*teacher*) has a slight cold but she makes quite a touse over it. She did not go down to Sabbath School today as she was afraid she might get more and would not be able to teach tomorrow.

John Freeman has failed and his store is closed. (*This was the owner of Freeman's Store in SWH*) The report is that he is not worth a penny. His creditors are to meet tomorrow. It is bad for him but a very poor way to do business. He is in debt they say \$45,000 (*1893 dollars*). I don't see how he could let it get so bad as that.

Your Father and Brother have gone to bed. Mary Ann is reading. She is the last one to bed every night. She tuffs me out and I guess she will tonight.

Letter dated 26 November 1893

To Mamie from Mamma:

I have not got much done today but have been to work all day. I churned this forenoon and did the housework and got dinner and this afternoon I have had to be in the Store about all of the time. Your Father has been hawling freight for himself all day. Eben and Eugene Stanley have both been landing it. (*No wharf existed at that time*) George Bulger has been hawling with his new horse for Mrs. Push. Will Stanley has moved home today from Bakers Island.

I try to get him (*Brother*) to stay a little while from the Store and work on his arithmetic but it is hard work with all the rest of them out there. He thinks he must be. I wish the boys and young men would aim at something higher than talking of boats and lobsters. That is the general conversation and chew tobacco. I should think they would want a change.

Gramma and Aunt Flo and the children were here one day last week. I have invited them for Thanksgiving.

Letter dated 28 November 1893 - Sunday Evening

To Mamie from Mamma:

Blowing hard and quite cold. There was a four-master schooner in here yesterday. She went out in the afternoon. They hoisted their sails by steam.

I was writing in the kitchen. The teacher came out there with her feet in the hot closet and her hands in oven froze to death all the time. We are going to have chicken for dinner. It smells good. There was a lot of people in here (*Store*) last night. Nell and Eva, Hen, John, Dutchman, Peabody, Oscar, Birt and Aunt Cora after Sunday School.

Malvina is sick. They went after the doctor this forenoon. Monday Morning cold enough to freeze you. Will Mayo is building himself a barn. I have got to repair up my bobsled. Don't you wish you were here to slide down the hill?

Letter dated 29 November 1893:

To Mamie from Gramma:

I had a very pleasant birthday at home. Your Mother and Brother came down in the evening. (*Down the road - Up the road*) Your Mamma gave me a pair of worsted stockings and light calico for an apron. Brother gave me the navy blue calico apron - and Aunt Flo gave me a fancy lamp shade. Your Mamma brought a basket of grapes for a treat. Aunt Flo made a birthday cake.

I had a dispatch from Grandpa last night. He had put into Wilmington, NC leaking.

Capt. Birlem had a rough passage on his boat. He lost his boat and stove his rail and other damages. Melvina has had another shock. She is quite sick. The Doctor says she cannot have many more such ones. Charlie Spurling little Bobs son fell yesterday and was killed instantly. He was on board of a vessel laying at the fish wharf to Southwest Harbor helping to take out salt and the staging gave way and he and a Gilley fellow fell. The Gilley broke his leg.

Letter dated 29 November 1893

To Mamie from Aunt Flo:

The winter will soon be over. We have one cold snap and there won't be any more than a dozen (???). (*She seemed pretty optimistic about the winter soon being over?*) The children do not go to school as it is cold weather and there is no one to look out for them. We try to have them read some everyday. I think they will be better off at home. Nancy & Jimmy (*Stanley??*) have come up from Bakers Island to stay.

(They were Ralph Stanley's Great Aunt & Uncle. Jimmy's Point Road is named for him.)

Part II - Birlem Family Letters - will appear in the next issue of the Cranberry Chronicle.

Note: Many thanks to Lynn Birlem, granddaughter of Mamie Spurling and the late Meredith Rich Hutchins, for coordinating the translations of all the old handwritten letters into readable type. Lynn resides in Southwest Harbor.



Mary Francis Spurling

Back Together at Longfellow

LINDSAY EYSNOGLE

After two strange and disrupted school years, all of the K-8 students of the Cranberry Isles are together again at the Longfellow School on Great Cranberry Island. Like most schools around the country, the Cranberry Isles School went fully virtual at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020. As the pandemic evolved, the school committee decided to allow students to attend school in-person for the 2020-2021 school year, but enrolled students in the school on their home islands: Great Cranberry students attended the Longfellow School and Islesford students attended the Ashley Bryan School. After careful consideration, the school committee allowed all of the K-8 students to be reunited at the Longfellow School on Great Cranberry Island for the 2021-2022 school year.

In many ways school feels normal this year. Students are learning in-person, there are two full-time teachers, a full-time Ed. Tech. and in-person specials such as French, Art, Boatworks, Physical Education and Guidance. As usual, the students are split into two classes: Kindergarten-2nd grade is taught by Lindsay Eysnogle and 3rd-8th grade is taught by Allie Currie. Two preschool students join the K-2nd grade group three mornings a week. Local field trips to Acadia National Park and the Cranberry Isles Fisherman's COOP resumed this fall. Katelyn Damon is coaching a Lego Robotics Club after school once a week and Douglas Cornman from the Sea Coast Mission is teaching a Dance Club two afternoons a month.

But in some ways the pandemic continues to loom over the school year. Inter-Island Event and the TLC (Teaching and Learning Collaborative) field trips are virtual. All teachers and students are masking at all times indoors. All are doing their best to keep at least three feet of space between each other when indoors. Visitors are not allowed in the school. Families are asked to monitor their children for symptoms of COVID and to keep students home from school until symptoms are gone and they've tested negative for the virus. Many students and teachers volunteered to be part of a COVID testing pool. Every Monday morning the school nurse, Cathy Goebel, rides out to GCI and administers COVID tests to those people in the pool. If the pool tests positive, the nurse returns to the school and retests everyone to isolate the case and then works with the principal to contact trace within the school community. The person infected with COVID and anyone determined to be a close contact to the infected person quarantine at home for 10 days after the positive test/exposure. If the quarantined people feel well enough, they can attend school virtually or work on prepared materials from their teacher. These measures are in place to keep the school open and operating as normally and smoothly as possible.

Being back together after finishing the 2019-2020 school year virtually and spending the 2020-2021 school year in-person but on separate islands feels good. Everyone is looking forward to a full return to normal. When that will be is anyone's guess.

A Day in the Summer of a Student Lobsterman

CARMEN WALLS



A young student lobsterman living on Great Cranberry Island, has spent this past Summer of 2021 apprenticing under Stefanie Alley, a long-time lobsterman living on Islesford.

A quick bike ride down to the dock of Great Cranberry Island is all the distance between Carmen and the salt-water surrounding the Town of Cranberry Isles in the morning. She always tries to get there early; she will have a few minutes to wait on the dock for the ferry. Once it arrives, she will get aboard with a passing greeting to the crew and wait for them to set out toward Islesford.

As a student lobsterman and apprentice, Carmen often made this commute out to Islesford in the summer and early fall. She works with her sponsor, Stefanie Alley, on the boat Ashley 'n Lucy, named after Stefanie's mother and daughter. She also helps with other related tasks such as 'Lobster Talks' held in the town field or local church for the Vermont Bike Tour or the Country Walkers tour groups, or perhaps to get some practice working on repairing gear and traps.

Whatever the case, this trip was made most weekday mornings and some Saturdays. She would arrive at the Islesford dock at about 8 o'clock in the morning and meet up with Stefanie. Sometimes they headed out to Stefanie's lobster boat via outboard or would head to Stefanie's house to do gear work before a Lobster Talk presentation. Just about every Tuesday and Thursday morning at 10:30 they could be seen up in the town field (or local church, if there was bad weather) giving a lively talk and demonstration to tour groups. The talks were always different, each new audience having its own group dynamic. Some groups were loud and talkative, peppering the two women with rapid-fire questions. Others were quiet and let the guides, sponsor and student, talk without much interruption. The talks all had the same information, stories, and set up, well-seasoned with jokes and humor born of much practice with the material. They would use much of the same materials when giving boat tours.

Stefanie's boat tours would set out with up to six passengers and travel to her lobster traps in the waters around Islesford. The panorama view would surely set your eyes alight with wonder at the beauty of the Cranberry Islands, Mount Desert Island, the curious creatures before you in the onboard live tank, and eventually the lobsters that would come up in one of her traps. Carmen would often help with these tours, answering questions while filling bait-bags and giving explanations about regulations as she shows them how to measure and band the lobsters. The tours occurred at various times of day and days of the week as they were all unique and had to fit into both Stefanie's and the tourists' schedules. Some days they would take out multiple tours or have tours right after a "lobster talk."

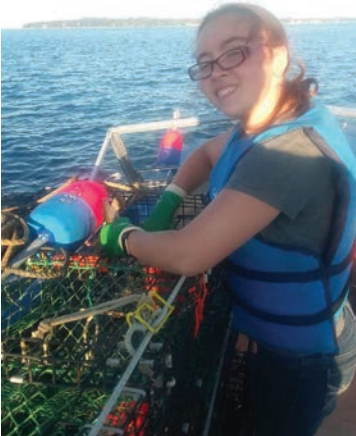
When a day was free of planned tours or lobster talks, Carmen would go out with Stefanie on her boat to haul up traps. Carmen's role on the boat was typical for a

deckhand on a lobster boat. While Stefanie navigated the boat to the traps due for hauling, Carmen would make sure a few bait bags were full and ready for use. As they start up the haul, Stefanie would steer up along to the buoy beginning her line of traps and gaff it, heave it aboard and slide the line into the hydraulic hauler. With a turn of the crank the rope would go taut and be quickly pulled up aboard. Fathoms of rope would pile up behind a panel of wood keeping the rope out from underfoot.

Soon the trap at the end of the rope would rise up to the surface and be swung up onto the rail. Often Stefanie would remove the lobsters and put them in separators, checking them for eggs or notches as she goes. While Carmen would swap the old bait bag with a newly filled one, remove any crabs, odd creatures, or excess seaweed from the trap before emptying the remains of the old bait bag. Before the trap was closed and latched Stefanie would already be moving the boat back to where the trap should be set.

With no time wasted, the trap would go back into the water only a few minutes after it was hauled up in the first place. As Stefanie set the trap and moved toward the next, Carmen would measure the lobsters and double check them for notches before banding them and placing the keepers in the live tank, using any spare time before the next trap is hauled to fill more bait bags.

Carmen found that one of the most wondrous parts of the process would be the surprise of what you might find. You might find a lobster with a claw as big as your hand, or you might find an interesting variety of sea creatures, such as: sea cucumbers, little sand eels, blood stars and other starfish, sculpins, lumpfish, and others. Every trap hauled has at least a slightly different catch.



At the end of a day on the water, after some much needed clean up, Stefanie would steer the Ashley 'n Lucy to the Little Cranberry Island Co-op where, after helping tie up, Carmen would help separate out lobsters into their proper crates to be weighed and sold. Usually ending the day in sync with the ferry schedule, Carmen would either be dropped off at the town dock, walk up from the co-op dock over to the town dock or, if they have time to spare, go with Stefanie to help moor the boat before heading in. Whatever the case, Carmen would be at the dock when the ferry got there.

Like most lobstermen, Carmen's day would end with the trip home. A steady crossing of water to the island of her residence and a bike-ride up the road taking her back to her house. Carmen would be ready to start the cycle again the next day with a smile on her face.

GCIHS Newsletter Memories

PHIL WHITNEY (AS RELATED BY DR. LEWIS BARRETT)



Lindon H. "Tud" Bunker
on Matinicus, ca. 1967



Elwood Spurling, 1942

This initiates a new series of anecdotal memories written by Dr. Louis Barrett and re-printed with the permission of Gail Grandgent, President of the Islesford Historical Society. The Society compiled a booklet entitled *Cranberry Isles Sketches*, edited by the late Hugh Dwelley, and published in 1997. The entire booklet is still published by the Islesford Historical Society and sold by both Islesford and Great Cranberry Historical Societies. We have included background excerpts about Dr. Barrett written affectionately by his daughter, Julie Barrett, as an introduction to his stories.

Louis G. Barrett was born in Keene, New Hampshire in 1900. He graduated from Harvard Dental School ca. 1920. He first came to Great Cranberry Island in the 1930's and subsequently purchased property and a house there (Jimmy's Point). Dr. Barrett and his family lived on the island from 1945 to 1951. My own memories of many of the people and events in the *Cranberry Isles Sketches* that follow are still vivid. Reading them again is a pleasant reminder of the wonderful adventures of a very unique childhood. Reading between the lines, readers may rightfully conclude that Dr. Barrett was a bit of an eccentric. He was also a man who, at age 50, indulged his daughter's determination to build a boat from an orange crate, who made certain that the lobster trap she insisted he help her with, always had a lobster in it (thanks to Harold Alley) and who made his own costume to accompany her on Halloween. His gifts to me of spontaneity, creativity, and endless curiosity and a dash of eccentricity are priceless. - **Julie Barrett, Minneapolis, MN. June 1997**

Introduction to Cranberry Isles Sketches by Editor Hugh Dwelley:

The tales told here were either of the direct experiences by the author, who lived for five years continuously on Great Cranberry Island, or were received, mostly first-hand, from those participating. The episodes which follow are but incidents in the regular daily lives of the characters. However, like all events, when they are gone, they are gone forever, only a few traces such as these sketches remaining.

Unkie

Unkie (Leroy Alley) was fifteen years and nine months old when he finished the repairs on his boat so he could go outside fishing. He came to the shore (Spurling Cove) every morning and worked on it alongside the other men who were on the shore and around the landing. He was nearly ready to make a trial trip, but there remained the matter of a battery, which one of the men gladly let him take. Day by day the weather had been getting more Fall-like; gusty winds, blowing always a little harder, the air cool, the big chop running ever higher in the harbor. Unkie, like most of the island men, had never learned to swim, due to keeping out of the cold water all that they could - "out of plain common sense."

About four o'clock one afternoon (October) Unkie got the battery from Buster's boat on the beach, put it in Buster's punt and rowed out to his own boat, newly lying there on the mooring. He wore the old skipper's cap which his father had given him, slightly too small, and giving him an old-world look. The last man had stopped work and gone up the road toward home, as "Unkie" rowed out in the gathering dusk. The top of the chop flipped over into the boat now and then; but Unkie could row well, and although some water had come in, he was most out to his boat.

About five-thirty, Buster Rice came to the shore and, looking around for his punt, discovered it down the beach, in the water, bottom up. He knew at once that Unkie had turned over, presumably having made the mistake of standing up in the punt while lifting the battery, rather than boarding the larger boat and then reaching down for it. How well I recall Unkie's father, Andrew (Alley), standing there on the shore, completely silent, watching, as Elwood Spurling and all the others rowed in parallel and criss-cross, combing the bottom of the cove with grapnels. Finally, a skipper's cap was hooked; and later Unkie was brought to his father. A big bruise on his forehead confirmed the suspicions as to what had happened, it being an exact imprint of the rail of Unkie's boat.

Those of us who have walked up the road with Unkie so many times at the end of a day, quietly exchanging experiences, plans, or ideas of the weather, as we have with old Eber Spurling, with old Captain Lew Stanley and Chris Swenson, and all the others, become impressed with the brevity of these life events; the uniqueness of these characters. So, with apology for the many necessary omissions, the author here yields to the reader a few little samples from life on Maine's Cranberry Islands in the 1940's.

Husband Hunting

Tud Bunker and I had come over to Northeast Harbor at about the same time that afternoon. It was June and the sun was very warm, so after he tied in next to my boat at the Sea Street dock, he came over and sat down on the rail beside me. Flicker Flye was in his boat across the way, getting ready to take a fishing party out, and Erwin (Spurling) who had just come in from his traps, could be heard yelling at him, "Why didn't he get himself a diesel like he had?"

At that point, our attention was turned to an attractively dressed girl in her late teens, coming down the steps onto the slip, like she was bent on business. She came directly over to us, and asked if we knew where she could get a man around here; then sat down on the edge of the boat between us. There was a Bardot-like sensuality about her feminine vigor. We asked where she hailed from and she replied, "Boston, but I work at Abel's Lobster Pound; I'm a waitress there. I've been coming here Summers, but I am sick of being alone." Tud said, You shouldn't have any trouble finding yourself a boy friend around here." "I don't want any boy friend. I want to find a man to marry."

Just then, Jack Rosebrook came around the point in Katherine Brengle's launch of which he was skipper during the Summer. He wore a white cap and a blue uniform, and kept the boat spotless with new varnish polished so it sparkled. Jack had been pretty unhappy since Winter, when about all of his traps were lost in a storm, and his wife had left the islands and Jack. He came in across the head of the wharf, to see if his party was ready.

"There's your man now, name's Jack, hell of a fine lad; why don't you ask him if he'd like to marry you?" , said Tud. So, our new acquaintance walked over to Jack's boat, became engaged in conversation, was seen to take Jack's hand and step into the boat, and off they went around the point. That Winter, Tud and I were among the two hundred or

so who gave Dot and Jack a night in the public hall on Little Cranberry Island. Dorothy sat in the center of the large room, opening all her wedding gifts, while Captain Archie Spurling sang "Far Away Places," and everyone danced.

Uncle Elwood (Phil Whitney's Grandfather)

"Here comes Uncle Elwood, wonder what he's doin' over here this time of day," said Tud. Keeps that little ear button of his turned way down to save batteries, so 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 next Cranberry Chronicle will contain more memories of Cranberry Isles people and activities, as related by Dr. Barrett.)

Phil Whitney

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Sunrise over The Pool, Great Cranberry Island

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