

Bowditch and Friends Visit Baker Island, 1897

by Hugh L. Dwelley

The following excerpts are from the Islesford Journal of Dr. Vincent Y. Bowditch, who recorded lively commentaries while summering on Islesford most years from 1894 to 1928. He visited Baker Island on August 21, 1897. Dr. Bowditch died in Boston on December 20, 1929.

Hugh Dwelley has transcribed the Journal into four volumes, which are available from the Islesford Historical Society.

A Visit to Baker's Island

August 21, Saturday. Again after much fog and rain, a beautiful bright day with fresh S.W. breeze. Phippen sailed us to Baker's about 10 o'clock & we first called at the light house & saw Capt. Robbins who kindly told us to cook our coffee on his stove, which we proceeded to do & afterwards took our lunch on a small platform back of the light house. We bought milk at old Mr. Elisha Gilley whom I longed to make a snap-shot of; a curious angular old man, rather blind and deaf, brother of our good Mr. Sam Gilley & evidently equally frank! Later I took a snap-shot with my new Kodak of the little flower garden filled with gorgeous marigolds.

After lunch we all walked down to the superb red granite rocks on the shore. They lie like great ruins of Druidial temples, the relics of some titanic race. As the surf came rolling in, the delicious sea breeze filling our lungs with oxygen, mere existence seemed a delight. For a long time I lay flat on my back and let sun and air pour over me.



photo courtesy of Hugh Dwelley

Later good Capt. Robbins declined to take anything in payment. I persisted at first but when he said "Oh, no, it breaks the weary moments to see you all, so come again as often as you can". Lizzie said to him, "Capt. Robbins, think what we owe to you for your faithful service here so many years!" His face grew very serious as he said "I have been a sea captain & I know what a lighthouse

means to one at sea!"

Whenever I look from my window (at the Hotel Islesford) and see the bright flash across the water towards me, I think of the faithful watcher & feel grateful to him. How much we take for granted & how little we realize what such faithfulness means.

On our way back, I tried for a snap-shot of Mr. Gilley but he was taking a nap & begged to be excused.

Summer's Over

Tuesday, August 31st. In the P.M. Livy, May, "Ves" & I rowed over to Big Cranberry, said goodby to honest Bill Mayo & took a lovely walk about the island. We all felt rather depressed I fear. A lovely day but thoughts as to whether we should all be there together again would come up, inevitable at such times. In the morning I took snap shots of Mrs. Young at her spinning wheel, coyer then ever; later of dear old Phoebe Fernald who was sweet and dear as she sat at her lobster net tatting with her little grandson Irving Spurling at her side.

Wednesday Sept. 1st.: A lovely day. Goodbys to all the good people. Farewells to the Islesford, the good Capt., to Bryant the engineer and Edson Stanley. The "Mt. Desert" as usual, a beautiful sail through the Thoroughfare; Rockland, hotel supper, night train & home once more.

The Islesford Journals of Dr. Vincent Y. Bowditch (in four volumes) is published by the Islesford Historical Society.