

Housing proposal divides islanders

A plan to build 20 homes on lots selling for up to \$1.5 million each in Islesboro is 'tearing the place apart.'

By TOM BELL
Staff Writer

A Wall Street investment firm's plan to develop a housing subdivision on Islesboro is spurring a contentious debate about the future of this island getaway for Hollywood celebrities and Fortune 500 executives.

Many islanders are alarmed by the size of the subdivision - 20 lots on a 76-acre parcel - and are organizing to stop it. But the project's supporters say it would provide jobs and boost the local economy, which revolves around taking care of wealthy summer visitors and their vacation homes.

"It's tearing the place apart," said Selectman Andrew "Pete" Anderson, who says he sees both the pros and cons of the proposed development.



'Pete' Anderson

In many ways, the issues would be familiar to anyone who attended a local planning board meeting: taxes, infrastructure, road access, water quality, property rights.

But Islesboro is no ordinary town. It is a retreat for the very rich, dotted with tastefully restored old farmhouses and mansions hidden behind the trees.

The town is occupied by stars like John Travolta and Kirstie Alley. Other property owners include John McCaw Jr., co-founder of McCaw Cellular Inc. and one of the 400 richest people in America, according to Forbes magazine. Then there's the Aldrich family, who are related to the Rockefellers, and the Dillon family, which includes the Duchess of Luxembourg, who visits every summer.

In poorer parts of the state, residents would support this kind

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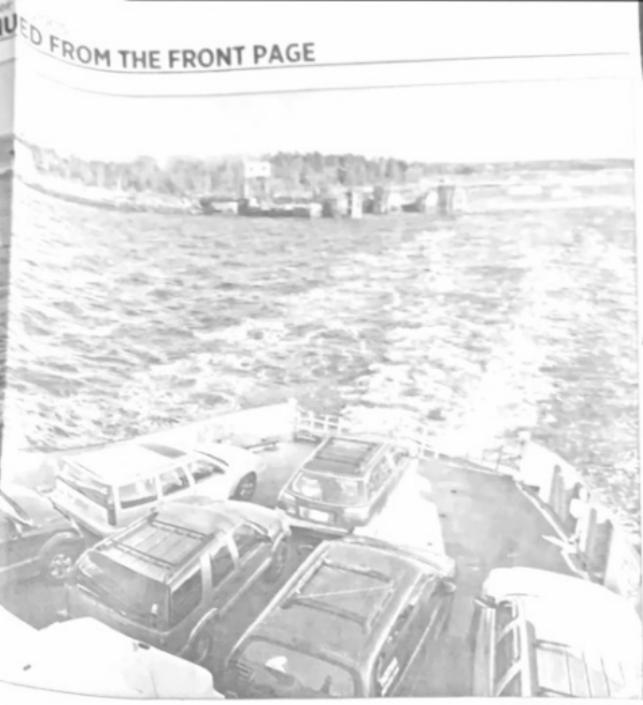
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Staff photo by Gregory Bell

Opponents of the Islesboro development say many as 70 cars line up for a ferry that holds 33

would put more pressure on the overcrowded ferry service. In the summer, as many as 70 cars line up for a ferry that holds 33. People sometimes have to wait for two or three trips before they can get on.

ISLAND

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of development because of the tax revenue it would generate, said Jim Trimble of Trimble Realty Group in Bangor.

"The only thing shaking things up is this is a blue-blood island," he said. "They don't want to see a change."

The company proposing the subdivision is no ordinary developer, either. Leucadia National Corp. is a holding company with headquarters on Park Avenue in New York City and has \$2 billion in assets.

It invests in numerous industries, including telecommunications, health care, real estate, banking, manufacturing and wineries in California's Napa Valley. It has put together deals with Berkshire Hathaway, the investment group led by Warren Buffett.

Its real estate projects in Florida and California have followed the "new-urbanist" planning philosophy, which uses traditional villages and neighborhoods as a model for new developments.

For its three Florida projects, it hired Duany Plater Zyberk & Company, famous for designing Seaside, a new-urbanist community on the state's panhandle.

For Islesboro, however, Leucadia plans to build a more conventional subdivision designed to fit in with the texture of the community, said Patrick Bienvenue, who heads Leucadia's real estate division. "We are very interested in respecting the context of Islesboro," he said.

The 11-mile-long island in Penobscot Bay consists of two large sections connected in the middle by a narrow strip of land. Near that strip, on a peninsula just north of Bounty Cove, is where Leucadia wants to build its subdivision. In August, the company bought the parcel for \$9 million.

It is a stunningly beautiful piece of the Maine coast and highly visible from the main road.

People are concerned that the company has enough money, staff and time to wear down the town's planning board and get what they want, said David Platt, editor of Working Waterfront, a newspaper published by the Island Institute.

"These are developers with very deep pockets," he said. "And they are prepared to wait anybody out."

Opponents have formed a group called Stop, Think, Plan. Their mission is to stop the project or at least scale it down, said Jack Knebel, who sits on the steering committee.

He said the parcel is ecologically sensitive and that new wells drilled near the shore could allow saltwater to contaminate the island's only aquifer.

Opponents also worry the project will bring more people to the island and overwhelm ferry service. Moreover, so many say the development will attract a new breed of millionaires, people who wouldn't appreciate



island's subtle charms but remake it into a busier and flashier destination.

Paula Mirk, also on the steering committee, said development on the island in the past has occurred incrementally and has involved existing families and people who have strong personal ties to the island.

These people treat the natural resources with care, said Cathy Blount, a longtime summer resident who has left the island because she believes it is being over-developed.

"Speculators aren't interested in that," she said. "They are interested in making a profit."

The island has about 600 year-round residents. But in the summer, when the population swells to 2,200, as many as 70 cars line up for a ferry that holds only 33 cars, said David Thibodeau, a teacher at the Islesboro Central School.

The ferry from Lincolnville runs seven times day, but people sometimes have to wait for two or three ferry trips to make the 15-minute trip, Thibodeau said. The development would put more pressure on the ferry system, he said, as well as accelerate the island's transformation from a bucolic retreat to crowded resort.

The Rockland-based Island Institute says that the arrival of Leucadia means national real estate firms have now discovered the moneymaking possibilities of developing Maine's islands. The

company's proposal serves as a wake-up call for the Institute and islands, said Rob Snyder, the institute's vice president of programs.

"This is a major setback for the future of these small communities if we can't find better ways to plan for the future," he said.

The project's supporters say the owners of vacation homes pay a lot in property taxes while demanding little in services. Many working people on the island support the project because it would create jobs, while the opponents are primarily wealthy retirees, said Arthur Ashley, who manages nearly two dozen of the island's large estates.

"They all have plenty of money but they don't want anybody else to have any from progress," he said.

Trimble, the real estate broker, said national companies have been investing in coastal Maine real estate for decades, and they usually arrive at the tail end of a real estate boom.

Many of the island's cottages were built a century ago by out-of-state speculators. The largest of these was the Islesboro Land and Improvement Co., formed by a Boston real estate broker and Philadelphia steamship owner. The company purchased about 1,500 acres of land and built summer houses for the East Coast elite, according to the 1989 book, "The Summer Cottages of Islesboro."

Andrew Hamilton, an attorney working for Leucadia, said the company will remove as few trees as possible and preserve a scenic meadow. The average lot size will be about three acres - twice as large as the minimum allowed under town zoning.

Hamilton would not say how much the lots would sell for, but real estate brokers familiar with the island say the lots would sell from \$500,000 to \$1.5 million each, depending on the water views and access.

Hamilton said the people who move into the homes will be the same kind of people who are now fighting the project.

"Who are we afraid of," he asked, "ourselves?"

Bienvenue said Leucadia hopes to host a town meeting style forum to hear from residents so they can be involved in the plan.

"We want to engage the citizens of the island," he said. "We are interested in talking about the issues they are concerned about. We don't want to be delayed and delayed and delayed so we can't get to some kind of meaningful dialogue."

Staff Writer Tom Bell can be contacted at 791-6369 or at tbell@pressherald.com

READER COMMENTS

HOW DO YOU feel about development plans on Islesboro? Tell us at MaineToday.com

Sewing group celebrates 150th

By Sandy Oliver

Islesboro's Baptist Sewing Circle has been "Keeping Islesboro in Stitches Since 1858"—at least that's what the banner they carried in the Fourth of July parade trumpeted. It is undoubtedly one of the nation's oldest continuously active sewing circles, according to President Suzanne Babbidge.

To celebrate they entered a quilt bedecked float in the parade while some marched wearing blue aprons with a new logo designed by Bill Rogers. The group also spruced up their building. All this plus getting ready for their annual summer fair held August 5.

The women gather Tuesday afternoons at 1 p.m., at a former school house not far from Dark Harbor pool to sew, knit, crochet, weave, embroider, and quilt, planning the holiday sale and summer fair which raise thousands of dollars for worthwhile community projects.

They also write cards of condolence and congratulation, wish each other and members of the community a happy birthday or to get well. Every new baby in town gets a handmade bib. At Christmas they distribute poinsettias to shut-ins or anyone needing a bit of cheer. They and their predecessors have been doing this for 150 years. One member described the group as a "warm circle of good friends" and a supportive group of women.

Each week, Babbidge posts needed sewing projects and members select ones they want to do, often taking them home or, in the case of weaving projects, arriving at the building off-hours to finish a certain number of inches each week.

The Circle Fair, a much-anticipated event, features, in addition to the needlework items, flowers, vegetables, baked goods and white elephants. The food table displays a big selection of pies, gorgeous French bread, and even freshly made kimchi.

The public begins lining up well before the opening and stands behind the rope strung across the Islesboro Historical Society's lawn, while inside the women make sure everything is priced, make room on tables for newly arriving pies, cakes, bread, and lay out donations of zucchini, green beans, and beets.

Despite its name the sewing circle is ecumenical and benefits not only the Second Baptist Church, but also most other organizations around town from the elder care home to a feral cat project. In fact, more money is distributed to town charities than the church. "It's a fun time when you decide how to distribute your largess," said treasurer Bonnie Hughes.

They also used their funds, to supplement memorial gifts, for improvements to their meeting house, a former two-room school house, adding in recent years, an entry ramp, an addition on the rear to house looms, a septic system and restroom, and off-the-road



Members of the Baptist Sewing Circle working on their latest projects. PHOTO: SANDY OLIVER

parking. The original sewing circle built the building two doors south of the church, which is now being renovated into the Islesboro Community Center.

While creating goods for sale, the circle has also kept alive artisanship. Years ago Eva Pendleton reintroduced quilt making, teaching some of the members how to assemble patchwork quilts and quilt them by hand. More recently Marcy Congdon introduced the hand weaving that has added rag rugs, woven place mats, and scarves to the list of circle products.

The circle sponsors Cabin Fever Relievers on winter Fridays so members or anyone else can work on their own projects with the ready advice of experienced needle workers and sewing machines available. They hold social luncheons marking Valentine's Day and a harvest time to promote fellowship. Maintaining circle membership faces the same problems that all volunteer-based endeavors do as more young women hold down jobs or pilot youngsters to the activities and joining the circle becomes a matter of the privilege of retirement or dedicating time.

Hughes said that there is "a great deal of comfort women can take in sitting around in each other's company and doing something worthwhile." The circle exchanges news about community needs such as getting food to the sick, how to provide respite for caregivers, or to do what they can to overcome isolation.

Isolation is the last thing on anyone's mind during the Circle Fair. Thirty-five members clad in the blue aprons turned out to work at this year's fair. Summer residents and islanders meeting up for the first time this summer greeted each other with hugs, marveled at the growth of off-spring, and elbowed one another at the baked goods table. The circle will take a couple of weeks off, go on an outing together, then resume meetings at the end of the month. "We don't know exactly what day our anniversary is," said Babbidge. It hardly matters as the circle holds its regular weekly gatherings, prepares for the Christmas sale, and serves its island community. ▼

Islesboro, Isle au Haut postpone town meetings

Bill would encourage planning for sea level rise

By Tom Groening

ISLESBORO AND Isle au Haut have each postponed their annual town meetings.

In Islesboro, residents are considering an ambitious plan that would have the town build a broadband Internet network on the island. To do so, the proposal has the town borrowing \$3 million through a municipal bond.

Costs would include leasing the use of existing Central Maine Power poles and installing new, higher-speed cables. A 1,000-megabits-per-second (mbps)—1 gigabit—service is anticipated.

If approved, the town would contract with GWI of Biddeford to operate the service.

The proposed project would run fiber optic cable down all town roads on the island. Fiber optic cable offers more capacity for information, while also offering higher speeds to more users. It's akin to increasing the diameter of the pipe for a water system, while at the same time increasing water pressure.

The town meeting was postponed from May 9 to May 30 in part because town officials, who are supporting the project, wanted more time to disseminate information about the proposal to residents, and to refine their estimates on cost and other matters.

In Isle au Haut, the town meeting had been scheduled for March 30, but in a March 24 email to Stonington's *Island Ad-Vantages* newspaper, first selectman Landon DeWitt wrote that the town needed more time to prepare. As of that time, DeWitt expected the meeting to be held in mid-April.

Phone messages left with DeWitt by *The Working Waterfront* seeking more information were not returned. Island sources said that as of early May, the meeting had not been scheduled.

Several legislators gave updates at the May 8 meeting of the Maine Islands Coalition (MIC).

Rep. Lydia Blume, D-York, talked about her bill, LD 408, which would require coastal towns and cities adopting growth management plans "under the state's growth planning and land use laws" to include in their comprehensive plan "information on and a plan to address changes in sea level on buildings, transportation infrastructure, sewage treatment facilities and other relevant municipal, multimunicipal or privately held infrastructure or property," according to the bill summary.

Blume stressed that the law would not impose a mandate on towns nor does it

require any state funding.

Also reporting to the group was Rep. Mick Devin, D-Newcastle, who talked about the work done by the ocean acidification commission, a group created through a bill he sponsored. In particular, Devin stressed the concerns many have about the increasingly acidic waters effect on shellfish.

"Tourists do not come to the coast of Maine to eat a chicken sandwich," Devin quipped.

Another legislator attending the MIC meeting, Rep. Janice Cooper, D-Yarmouth, reported on her bill, LD 63, which aims to increase Medicare reimbursements by 15 percent to adult family care homes and residential care facilities in remote island locations. The idea is help islanders remain in their communities, a goal often thwarted by higher costs of care there.

Peaks Island will hire a police cadet for the summer, the island's MIC representative, Mary Ann Mitchell said. The island, part of Portland, sees about 675,000 visitors each year, and most come in the summer months to rent by

night, week or month or to visit for the day.

The police cadet will help direct cars and golf carts at the busy "Down Front" part of the island.

Another Casco Bay island, Cliff, got a boost from Portland when the city agreed to sell to Sustainable Cliff Island, an island nonprofit, a property seized for nonpayment of taxes. The 19,500-square-foot parcel on Fisherman's Cove includes a 1,040-square-foot house and a 400-square-foot structure that had been a store, as well as fuel depot and pier.

MIC representative Cheryl Crowley said the city forgave the \$53,500 in back taxes owed on the property.

Other updates from MIC representatives: Tara Hire of Monhegan reported that the island has seen two new year-round residents settle there with another due in June; Tom Powell of Great Cranberry Island reported that there were "just under 20 school-aged kids" on the island and that the affordable housing units were full. ▼

INTER

AND NEWS

“A General Amazement Among All Sorts of Animals”

Islesboro remembers its role in a 1780 solar eclipse



(photo: Bonnie L. Mowery-Oldham)

By Bonnie L. Mowery-Oldham

Tucked away on Islesboro is a modest historical marker. “First Eclipse of the Sun, 1780,” it states. The granite monument commemorates the first scientifically recorded solar eclipse on the North American continent. This testament to a little-known piece of history is located on the east side of Penobscot Bay at the Narrows, known in 1780 as Long Island, or Winslow. Oct. 27, 2005, marked the 225th anniversary of this event.

The solar eclipse monument sits prominently in the fields of the Trautmann property, which in 1780 would have been owned by Islesboro’s first settler, Shubael Williams. This section of the island physically resembles an hourglass, and is also known as Shubael’s Landing.

Trees obscure the bay on the shore side of the road, but in 1780 it would have afforded a clear view of Bounty Cove where in 1780 THE LINCOLN, an old row galley of about 250 tons, landed with a scientific team from the American Academy of Arts and Science and the University of Cambridge (Harvard) to observe the Oct. 27 total eclipse of the sun.

To commemorate the occasion, Islesboro middle school students from Sheila Coombs’s language arts classes gathered at the island site for a class-designed informal ceremony. Students prepared by researching primary sources, studying maps and discussing early science of the Revolutionary War era.

On the afternoon of Oct. 27, 2005, under a cloudy sky, those gathered together around the monument mused on what it would have been like in 1780, at the first recording. Students read excerpts from the publication, *Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, written by Rev. Samuel Williams, Hollis professor of Mathematics at Harvard College. Williams was the leader of a scientific team consisting of himself, three colleagues and six students who set up their instruments near the house of Shubael Williams.

Rev. Samuel Williams (no relation to Shubael) wrote that there were clear skies for the eclipse observations, and that the air was also clear, except for being a little hazy.

“From the beginning of the eclipse until the

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Eclipse *continued from page 10*

time of the greatest obscuration, the color and appearance of the sky was gradually changing from an azure blue to a more dusky color, until it bore the appearance and gloom of night," Rev. Williams wrote. "As the darkness increased, a chill and dampness was very sensibly felt. In one hour and nineteen minutes, when the light and heat of the sun were rapidly decreasing, there fell two-thirds as much dew as fell the night before or the night after the eclipse. To this we may add, so unusual a darkness, dampness and chill, in the midst of day, seemed to spread a general amazement among all sorts of animals. Nor could we ourselves observe such unusual phenomena without some disagreeable feelings."

The American Revolution was underway, and the American universities involved, along with the Massachusetts legislature, applied for special British consent to send an expedition of observers to the enemy territory. That consent was granted, but later restricted by a British commander, who instructed the scientific group to "have no communication with any of the inhabitants and to depart on the

Island the perfect spot to observe the center of the path of totality. As it turned out, Williams had miscalculated the center of the eclipse by about fifty miles too far to the southwest. If he had correctly predicted the center of the eclipse, Machias would have been an excellent choice for the observation.

Williams himself put the blame for the miscalculation on his maps. He said they placed Islesboro 30 miles farther north than it really was.

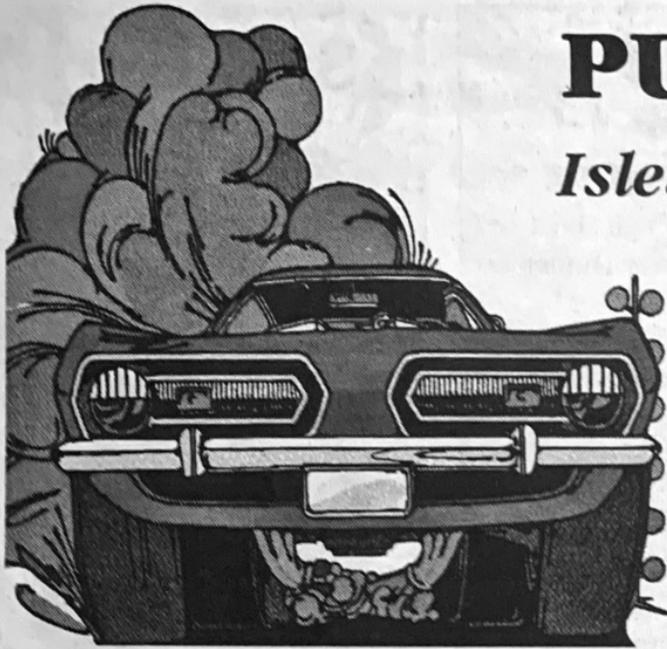
So the scientific team did not observe a total eclipse of the sun. At 12h-31m-18s into the eclipse it became apparent that they were not going to see totality. Their disappointment is not recorded for posterity, but Williams did make a new scientific discovery.

In Williams's description of the appearance of the sun at the time of maximum eclipse at 12:29 p.m., he discovered the phenomenon that 80 years later would be named "Baily's beads." In his words, "immediately after the last observation, the Sun's limbs became so small as to appear like a circular thread ... both the ends lost their acuteness, and seemed to break off in the form of small drops or stars..."

The 2005 ceremony that Islesboro stu-

PUMPED!

Islesboro's muscle cars invigorate their owners



By Randy Purinton

Peter Coombs is an Islesboro excavator who would prefer driving his 1968 Mustang Fastback on Sundays to hauling shale in his dump truck. The four-speed Fastback was originally from the South, brought north by a NAPA franchise owner in Wiscasset who was making a business of buying and selling Texas cars.

Coombs's Mustang is a "muscle car" — usually defined as an out-of-production sports coupe, decades old and powered by a V-8. Though car companies the world over manufacture stylish and beefy muscle cars today, by definition a muscle car on this island has to be a restored or well-maintained American classic.

Coombs bought his car in 1993 for \$4,000 in very good condition and with over 100,000 miles on it. Since then he's rebuilt the engine himself and is now painting the engine compartment while the Ford V-8 351 Windsor is bolted to

an engine stand in the garage. He had hoped to have the car restored by the Fourth of July but he realizes now that it will be a couple more months before the Fastback returns to the road. Meanwhile, he's spending a lot of time pushing it in and out of his garage.

Coombs has kept the original color: Meadowlark Yellow. A good finish makes a classic car a work of art, but a paint job is vulnerable and the Fastback has suffered from the occasional dings and scratches that are almost impossible to prevent. Soon after the got its most recent coat of Meadowlark Yellow, Coombs was working around it with a socket wrench in his hand. Accidentally, he hit the passenger door with the wrench and caused a dime-sized piece of yellow paint to flake off, revealing the primer beneath. A ding of that size and color and near a door handle is hard to ignore, but Coombs is begrudgingly beginning to accept it. After all, there's a lot of car there to be proud of.

Many classics of all types — not just muscle cars — come to Cliff Houle for restoration and alteration. He owns a late-1960s GMC ambulance, which served as his wedding limo. The ambulance is a symbol of Houle's role in Islesboro classic muscle car culture: he's a car doctor. Like the traditional country doctor he puts in more hours working than the hours he actually gets paid for. His latest muscle car patient is Crystal Fairfield's 1968 Camaro, in critical care.

Fairfield bought her Corvette Bronze, black vinyl-top 1968 Camaro with white interior in 1983. After a disappointing search for a car in Lewiston one day, she saw the Camaro on a lift in a garage in Rockland and fell in love with it. She bought it the next day and brought to the island on the ferry GOVERNOR MUSKIE. She was 16 then and even now she vows that she would just as soon "rip the top off the car and let it rot" rather than sell.

A mainland mechanic repaired the Camaro after an accident damaged the rear end a couple winters after she bought it. Years went by and the car suffered a long period of decline. Fairfield became a mother and the Camaro — though never forgotten — simply had to move lower on her list of priorities.

Rust invaded the car in some of the worst places: over the windshield, in the firewall and along the base of the rear window. Fairfield covered the car with a tarp in a desperate attempt to slow the decay but the tarp itself trapped moisture under it, and the deterioration only accelerated. Only the decision to accept the cost of a long-term and major restoration saved the car, which must compete against other projects for Houle's time and for limited space in his garage.

When the restoration is complete, Fairfield's Camaro will not sport a vinyl top. It will be Huger Orange instead of the bronze color, which was not popular with her friends. It will not have the bumblebee stripe that wrapped

ound leading edge of the front end. Restoring the white vinyl interior is a prospect she can't even think about right now. The body has been thoroughly sanded, filled and primed. Loops of shiny, silver metallic beads hang from the rear-view mirror still, a relic of happier days but also a symbol of hope that this Islesboro classic muscle car will be reborn under Houle's care.

Some purists say a car is a muscle car because it was originally designed to look and perform like one. But some say that any car including a family sedan can be altered to become a muscle car. Charlie Pendleton has owned a 1966 Pontiac Catalina "since its conception," he says. Peter Coombs says that Charlie's Catalina is a muscle car but Charlie isn't sure.

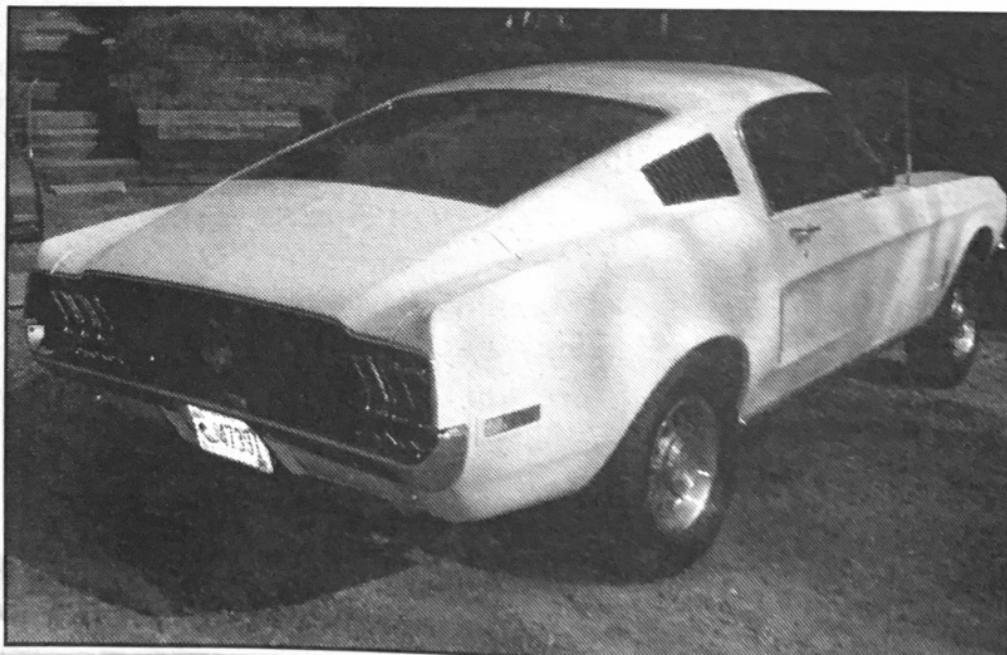
Pendleton bought the aqua-colored convertible coupe new in 1966 when he was living in Las Vegas and working at the Stardust Hotel. Before there were speed limits in western states, Pendleton would cruise, he says, at 100 mph on the open highway. The Catalina has a 389 V-8, which had a new block installed — bored for unleaded gas — soon after it passed 100,000 miles. The Catalina now has 160,000 miles on it. Pendleton uses premium gas exclusively. Otherwise, the engine will "ping like hell." The white ragtop and ball joints were replaced awhile back. Mike Durkee repainted the Catalina with a coat of the original aqua when he worked at Bob Leach's garage. No rust on the frame or body is evident, due to Pendleton's custom of storing the car during winter and cover-

ing it in a gray fabric Quonset-style tent during summer.

Though Charlie's Catalina might not have been conceived as a muscle car, it is a coupe, it has a big V-8, it was built in the 1960s and its styling suggests that by adding decorative embellishments like racing stripes even a purist might consent to call it a muscle car.

The place to showcase an Islesboro muscle car is the Fourth of July parade. Several enthusiasts hope to recruit enough muscle cars to make a decent showing next year. Until then, the owners of these Islesboro classics order the car parts they need from catalogs, scrape the money together to finish the work and visit the "Big Smokey Burnout" and "Muscle Car Calendar" websites to keep themselves pumped. ▼

*Peter Coombs's 1968 Mustang
(Randy Purinton photo)*

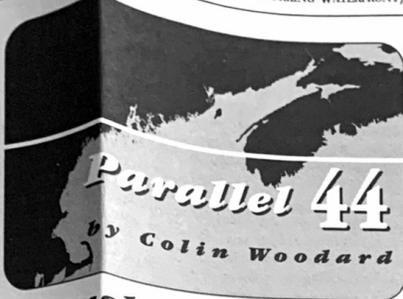


By Colin Woodard

As the airlines have become increasingly uncomfortable, unpleasant, and unreliable, I've been finding the SCOTIA PRINCE an increasingly soothing presence. Every night during the clement half of our year, she pulls out of Portland harbor, bedecked in lights, on her purposeful mission to deliver passengers and cargo to foreign lands across the waters. It reminds me of an earlier age, before I was born, when people crossed the ocean at a leisurely pace, with plenty of places to wander, dine, drink, gamble, read, walk, exercise, pee and sleep. The eleven-hour trip across the Gulf to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, is the nearest thing we have to the transatlantic passenger liners of yore, an ocean journey both pleasant and purposeful.

So I've been saddened to hear that the SCOTIA PRINCE's run could be coming to an end. If it does, the most likely candidate to replace her — a giant high-speed catamaran — evokes a Boeing 757, rather than the QUEEN ELIZABETH 2. We would be able to get across the gulf twice as fast — six hours instead of eleven — but for me, at least, half the fun will have been lost.

The 485-foot ship's owners, Scotia Prince



Rough seas for the SCOTIA PRINCE

Cruises don't like to share much information, but they've clearly had a difficult time since buying her in 2001. Passenger boardings have been in decline — by about 19 percent between 2003 and 2004 — in part because of a marked decline in the number of U.S. tourists visiting Nova Scotia. Mold and structural problems at the city-owned International Marine Terminal — PRINCE's Portland berth — forced passengers to board from tents as the structure was rehabilitated. A plan to run between Florida and Cuba in the off-season was nixed by the Bush administration, and, winter 2002 service from Tampa to the Yucatan was suspended because of navigational problems at the Mexican port of Morelos.

To make matters worse, the PRINCE has been facing stiff competition from the CAT, a 310-foot Australian-built

catamaran that can carry up to 900 passengers and 240 vehicles from Bar Harbor to Yarmouth at speeds of up to 50 miles an hour. The CAT's owners, Bay Ferries Ltd. of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, have expressed a keen interest in expanding fast ferry service to Portland or another port closer to Boston.

"There is a body of market out there that wants a product which is placed close to Boston, but also wants to get there quicker and not do it on the lines of a cruise model like the SCOTIA PRINCE," says Bay Ferries president Mark MacDonald, whose company is also looking at Portsmouth, Gloucester and Boston. "Portland is a beautiful city and a well developed port," he said, "but it's not the only place we can do business from."

Mark Hudson, Scotia Prince Cruises' spokesman and senior vice president, declined to be interviewed for this column or to answer most questions sent by e-mail. He did say his company believes the problems at the International Marine Terminal are the largest factor in the recent decline in passengers and that the situation would improve if and when Portland completes its proposed \$16 million Ocean Gateway Terminal. He confirmed that the ship will return to Portland for the 2005 season; last summer he told reporters that 2004 might be its last year.

Hudson would not comment on questions related to competition from the CAT or even general market conditions in Maine-to-Nova Scotia transportation. As a privately-held company incorporated in Bermuda, Scotia Prince Cruises doesn't have to provide much information about its business, and volunteers little. Port managers in Portland have to obtain passenger

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Tax Burden: A Grave Threat

The Casco Bay Forum is a group of residents from the Casco Bay Islands committed to sustaining and strengthening our communities. The tax burden is a grave threat to the rural nature of Maine islands and the affordable cost of living in these communities. We need public policy that supports and enhances traditional island communities. It is imperative that we safeguard our communities now because if we don't, in the future it won't matter: there will be nothing left to protect. We advocate for the following:

Expand the circuit breaker program by allocating larger dollar amounts, expanding income eligibility levels, adjusting for inflation annually, and establishing an incremental income phase out for participation in the program. Implement the increased household income eligibility levels and implement the maximum benefit as proposed in LD1 as soon as possible. Our communities cannot afford to wait until 2009 and 2011 as proposed in LD1. Reallocate money from the homestead exemption program to fund the

expanded circuit breaker program.

Review current spending at all levels of government, implementing a zero based budgeting approach, perhaps administered by a blue ribbon panel, with a target of review every five years. To identify cost saving opportunities, analysis of spending should include comparing service delivery costs to other comparable government units. Utilize spending caps only if deemed necessary after completing a zero based budgeting approach.

Avoid shifting the tax burden from the state to other levels of government. State government should not reduce expenditures to municipalities or establish unfunded mandates as a method for lowering its revenue requirement.

Implement 55 percent support for education funding immediately as decided by public vote in June of 2004. Do not gradually phase in increased education funding over time.

Make the school funding formula better reflect a community's ability to pay as measured by median household income to accompany the

essential programs and services funding mechanism now in place.

Establish a balanced taxation system by expanding the sales tax base and then adjust the sales tax rate, if necessary, to reduce Maine's overdependence on property taxes and income taxes. Raise the level of income at which the maximum income tax bracket takes effect.

Make L.D. 2 mandatory statewide so that it is not a patchwork solution. Improve L.D. 2 by including a provision that bases the property tax rate on the actual purchase price of the property. Base eligibility for the program on income and assets owned.

Reject the proposed property tax deferral program for property taxes in excess of 6% of household income.

Charles Enders, Peaks Island
Mark Greene, Long Island
Christine McDuffie, Long Island
Anne Pringle, Little Diamond Island
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INTER ISLAND NEWS

Fox Islands proceed with new cable, investigate alternative energy

By Wanda Curtis

The installation of a new \$3 million cable, which will connect Vinalhaven and North Haven residents to mainland electricity, is scheduled for March. The new cable will replace the existing cable, the deterioration of which has contributed to numerous power outages for these island residents during the last few years.

"The total cost of the cable and installation will be approximately \$6.8 million," said Dave Folce, the general manager of Fox Islands Electric Cooperative. "The cost of the cable [itself] is about \$3.2 million."

Folce recently explained that, unlike the existing cable, the new cable will be buried about 6 feet

deep in the seabed, which should prevent the abrasion that has destroyed the old cable while lying on top of the ocean floor.

"The [existing] cable has seen its useful life," commented Folce several weeks ago. "A lot of it's because of where it's located in the bay. There's been an abrasion problem. It's also been damaged by some things hooking onto it."

According to Folce, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has designated the section of the Penobscot Bay where the existing cable is located as a "restricted" area.

"The rule says that no one should anchor or drag in that area because they could get caught on the cables," stated Folce.

He added that the new 10-mile cable, which is made of multi-core cable with a copper conductor, could last indefinitely.

Despite promises that a new cable will be installed, alternative energy sources are already under investigation on the islands. Solar and wind power could supplement existing power while saving islanders money.

After submitting a proposal, Fox Islands Electric received a federal grant that is being used to install solar panels on some buildings on Vinalhaven and North Haven. An Owls Head-based company, Ascendant Energy, began working on that project last year. Company president Chris Straka confirmed in January that panels had already been installed on the Vinalhaven Land Trust building, the Vinalhaven school and the Fox Islands Electric services building. He added that solar panels were also to be installed on the Elder Home-stead building and the Medical Center on Vinalhaven, as well as on the North Haven Community School. Straka commented that solar energy has become popular worldwide because it is cost efficient. He noted that business owners in the U.S. who install solar panels may apply for a federal tax credit. The

executive director of the Vinalhaven Land Trust, Lucy McCarthy, reported that her organization's monthly electric bill decreased approximately 50 percent after solar panels were installed on the Land Trust building (facing south). The bill isn't high anyway, she said, because the Land Trust doesn't use a lot of electricity but the panels definitely made a difference. She added that the building is in a good location for island residents to see how the model system works.

"I think it's wonderful," said McCarthy. "I think there's a lot of potential for it out on the islands as they're beginning new construction."

Folce reported that a separate federal grant covered the cost of studying wind power as a potential source of energy on the islands last year. He said that some days the wind speeds were recorded at 30-40 mph, with peak performance of wind turbines noted at 26-27 mph. He said the annual average wind speed on the islands was 14 to 16 mph. Two wind turbine units could produce enough electricity to supply both islands when the wind is blowing right, he estimated. The units could help to supplement existing power sources.

"Whatever we can produce by wind, we wouldn't have to buy," said Folce.

Folce puts the cost of installing one wind turbine system at \$1.5 to \$2 million. So unless he's able to locate some grant funds, this project will be on hold for now. He still considers it to be a good alternative. "The wind will always be there — it's a non-polluting source of energy."



Kelsey Jones, a senior at North Haven Community School, at work on the school's whale re-articulation project (WWF Dec 04-Jan 05).

ISLESBORO ISLAND

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name -- Secession

H A V E N S

NEWS TIMES 10/20/09
DI

Let My Island Go

By JANE COSTELLO

IN many ways, the small town of Islesboro, Me., is a place divided. The thin, figure-eight-shaped island community in Penobscot Bay, a half-hour ferry ride off the Maine coast, is a summer getaway for wealthy second-home owners, some of whom arrive by private jet. Geographically, it's split by an area called the Narrows, with the summer people, who number about 1,400, drawn to the village of Dark Harbor, on Islesboro's southern end. Most of the 600 permanent residents live "up island," near Pripet, historically home to Islesboro natives.

But this fall, Islesboro's residents, full- and part-time, are united as never before behind one goal: seceding from mainland Waldo County, which they maintain is bleeding them dry with property taxes. Indeed, during the last few years, coast-

al homeowners in Maine have watched their tax bills soar, with most waterfront property owners paying at least twice as much as they did five years ago. Islesboro's share of county taxes, determined on the basis of property values, has increased 46 percent since 2002. "For years the figure didn't change much at all," said Marnie Diffin, a full-timer and Islesboro's town manager. "Then in the last four years, it went crackers."

And even if the "summer money" can afford the increase, many second-home owners say they don't want to overpay for the privilege of being part of a county they say supplies the island with minimal services. "Summer people pay a lot of taxes, and right now there's a perception that we're not getting our money's worth," said David Blanton, a Californian who has summered on Islesboro for the last 20

Continued on Page 8



Robert Spencer for The New York Times

SECESSIONIST Marnie Diffin, town manager of the island community of Islesboro, Me., wants to lower taxes by switching county allegiances.

homeowners are part-timers. some resi-

Middle Township officials argue that los-

ranked 33rd in the country

Let My Island Go: It's About Taxation

Continued From First Escapes Page

years. Mr. Blanton's taxes on his Seal Harbor home went up 30 percent this year. "We have our own school and our own fire department. We're pretty self-sufficient."

In January, residents established a five-person committee to study the issue. By the spring, a full-blown secession movement was under way. In September, Islesboro's board of selectmen voted 4 to 1 to secede from Waldo County, which relies heavily on the island to beef up its tax revenue, and join wealthier Knox County. Waldo is one of the poorer counties in Maine, with its residents making 11 percent less per capita than the state's average of \$19,533 a year. And while there are 27 towns in the county, taxes paid by the city of Belfast, Waldo's biggest municipality, and Islesboro account for 35 percent of the \$5.2 million budget. Inland towns, where property values remain relatively low, pay a much smaller share.

Knox County, by contrast, has affluent coastal towns, including Camden and Rockport, as well as the island of Vinalhaven, contributing to its tax base. Backers of Islesboro's secession movement claim that the island's county taxes would be cut nearly in half if it joined up with Knox, because other comparable towns would be helping to carry the tax burden. "We've got to do something," said Valli Durkee, the owner of



SPURNED
Waldo, Islesboro commissioner in
rent county.

the Bee's Knees Café in Dark Harbor. "A normal person can't afford to live here anymore."

ISLESBORO is only one of a growing number of vacation-home spots that are rethinking their allegiances. The secession movement is by and large a bit of unexpected fallout from the rising real estate market for second homes, which has driven up vacation area property values in a relatively short period of time. According to the National Association of Realtors, 2003 was a record year for second-home purchases, with sales increasing to 445,000 from 359,000 in 2001. Demand has pushed prices up, too, with taxes often following suit.

Now, a number of towns are saying they've had enough. In Killington, Vt., for example, where nearly 80 percent of the homeowners are part-timers, some residents made headlines earlier this year by suggesting the town secede from Vermont in favor of more tax-friendly New Hampshire. At issue is a state law that established two property tax rates to finance education, one for primary residences and a second, higher rate for vacation homes.

The secessionist movement isn't just a New England phenomenon. For the last four years, Avalon Manor, a tiny island off the coast of central New Jersey, has been struggling to de-annex itself from Middle Township and join Avalon, a bigger island connected to Avalon Manor by bridge. Manor residents claim Avalon is better equipped to provide fire and rescue services, and that the town's relationship with Middle Township exists only because of a 200-year-old statute that randomly assigned barrier islands to the townships. So far, Middle Township has prevailed in the courts, though Avalon Manor is planning an appeal to the New Jersey Supreme Court.

Determining what constitutes a fair share of taxes is at the center of many of these disputes, since second-home owners or the smattering of full-time residents in seasonal areas rarely get back in services what they pay in tax increases. Vacation-home owners mostly don't use the public schools, don't benefit from winter road clearing and don't need their trash picked up nine months of the year. Full-time residents of an island often feel neglected by a distant mainland government. "Municipalities look at these islands as cash cows," said Jim MacElree, a Pennsylvania county judge who owns property in Avalon Manor. "Our property taxes generate significant revenue but we get very little in return."



SCENIC Grindel Point Light in Islesboro, Me. Residents say seceding will lower taxes.

Middle Township officials argue that losing Avalon Manor's tax revenue, which is close to \$1 million, would be detrimental to the county as a whole, and say that the town is provided with adequate services. "They've been part of Middle Township for a couple of hundred years, and we want to keep it that way," said Jim Pickering, Middle Township's solicitor.

In most cases, the secessionists are in for a long and ultimately frustrating fight. For Islesboro's breakthrough to succeed, residents must find a representative willing to introduce the secession bill to the state legislature. All parties must agree on the outcome:

'Municipalities look
at these islands
as cash cows.'

Knox County must vote to accept Islesboro, Waldo County must vote to let Islesboro go, and the State Legislature must approve the deal. None of which seems very likely. "Secession isn't the answer; it's insupportable to have towns floating in and out of counties," said Carol Weston, the state senator from Waldo County. Not surprisingly, she has refused to sponsor the secession bill. "The issue is that Maine relies too heavily on property taxes to finance the schools; the state needs to shoulder more of the costs."

According to the Census Bureau, Maine is

ranked 33rd in the country in per capita income, but second — behind New York — when calculating the state and local tax burden as a percent of personal income. By state mandate, Maine communities are limited to using property taxes to pay for the vast majority of municipal services and for public education. The burden falls disproportionately on those who can least afford to pay it, said Senator Weston. "The tax system we have in place is now forcing people who've lived here for generations to either pay huge increases or to sell their property. It isn't sustainable."

John Hyk, a Waldo County commissioner, nevertheless is sympathetic to the island's complaints. "Islesboro keeps getting whacked because the land gets more valuable there every year," he said. "But Waldo doesn't want to let them go — they're the wealthiest town in the county." Mr. Hyk said that reluctance to redraw county lines extends to the state level, where representatives are loath to sponsor legislation that would encourage other wealthy waterfront towns to think about changing allegiances.

"The legislature is afraid that if they open the gate, every town will be shopping around for the best deal," he said. "Then the rich would get richer and the poor would get poorer."

But residents of other Maine islands have successfully seceded. Long Island, located in Casco Bay off Portland, seceded from the city in 1992 after a property revaluation that doubled, and in some cases, quadrupled property taxes. The most recent example involves tiny Frye Island, a 1,000-acre island in the heart of Sebago Lake, which successfully broke away from the neighboring town of Standish and established its independ-



The New York Times

ence on July 4, 1998.

Frye Island has about 400 summer cottages but no year-round residents. For years, homeowners paid taxes to the town of Standish, including money to support the regional school district. By 1995, it became apparent to Frye Islanders that they received almost no services in return for their tax money and that it would be more economical to set up their own town. Unlike other communities, which face an uphill battle trying to take back their tax dollars, Frye Island homeowners were able to persuade both Standish and the state legislature that secession made sense because of the island's remote location.

"It was unbelievably difficult for Standish to provide any services to us," said Joe Potts, who became the island's first selectman. "It took forever to get anyone out here to do road repairs or other things we needed done. For years and years, we paid Standish and got nothing."

But the secession was not a complete break. As part of the deal, Frye Island agreed to remain part of the regional school district, despite the fact that it sends no students to the public schools. Since the town incorporated in 1998, its share of the school tax has risen to \$900,000 from \$300,000 and homeowners are once again grumbling about paying disproportionate services for services they don't use.

But even if Islesboro does eventually succeed in breaking away, it won't be a long — and pricey — fight. Judge Blanton of Avalon Manor, estimates that a secession-minded homeowner's battle over the last four years cost him a good lawyer, and is raising, he said. "Because it is certain: The town will be your own tax dollars ap-

Maps help Islesboro organize its information

By Shey Veditz

Islesboro - Island News 9/04

For the past three years, the Islesboro community has been learning and using geographic information systems (GIS). GIS is a digital means of organizing data based on place. A GIS arranges data (such as streets or parcels) into layers that can be overlapped and analyzed, providing a great deal of information about a certain place at once. This technology is used at Islesboro Central School to enhance curriculum with place-based education projects and in municipal functions through town committees and the assessor's office.

In the 2003-2004 school year, students used GIS to learn about their local community. Ninth and tenth grade biology students used the technology to map a local lobsterman's catch information from the 2003 fishing season. Students studied population dynamics and then applied that information to observe where lobsters were caught with relationship to bottom type and depth throughout the season. At the end of the project, students presented the maps and graphs they had created from the catch data to the lobsterman.

In addition, middle school social studies students mapped 15 local historical houses using GIS. After mapping the location of each building, the students took several months to research the history of each house by talking with residents and reading local history books. At the end of the project, students published a book of maps and historical narratives for each of the houses and created large format maps, which they presented to the Islesboro Historical Society.

Sheila Coombs, Islesboro's seventh and eighth grade social studies teacher, said, "This project was a great way to engage students in their community...they learned local history and new technology. Our students really got excited about what they were learning and the information they were able to give the historical society." Similar projects are planned for the upcoming school year.

The town of Islesboro is also using GIS and has created a formal GIS Governing Board to facilitate understanding, collection and sharing of GIS information throughout the community. Throughout the year, the governing board met to review ongoing GIS projects on the island.

GIS has been used at Planning Board meetings as a useful tool for visualizing lots under discussion. The assessor uses GIS to show information about tax parcels. The cemetery, harbor, and groundwater protection committees also use GIS to store information.

In the spring of 2004, the GIS Governing Board applied to the Maine Geolibary Board for a grant to digitize Islesboro's tax parcels. Islesboro's digital parcel data is becoming outdated. The parcel grant will allow Islesboro to increase the accuracy of its data and bring the information up to date. The grant was recently awarded to the board, which plans to have the updated parcel layer within a year.

Islesboro Selectman Grayson Hartley says, "We are proud of the progress that has been made in three years in the development and use of GIS on Islesboro."

The updated parcel layer is an important next step in incorporating GIS into further town functions, and continuing to grow these projects in the future. ▼

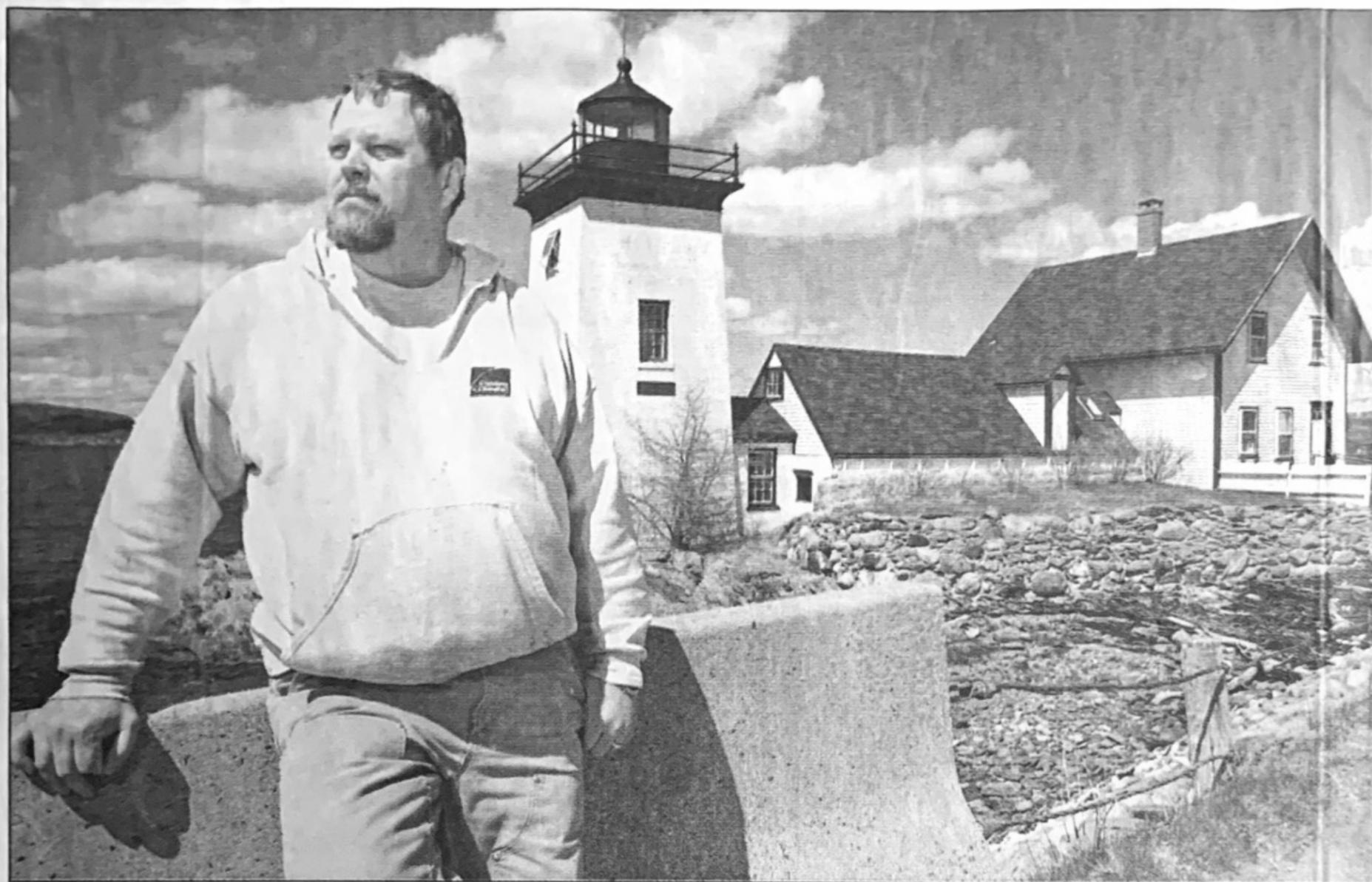
— A former Island Fellow, Shey Veditz is GIS manager at the Island Institute.

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5/2/04

THE SEEDS OF SECESSION

Plans for an \$18 million jail goaded Islesboro residents into revolt. The jail was voted down, but many people want out of Waldo County.



Peter Anderson, an Islesboro selectman, heads up the Secession Committee that is seeking tax relief by moving the town from Waldo County to Knox County.

Staff photos by John Ewing

Seething over taxes, Islesboro rebels court a new county



Secession supporter Amy Gallant dreams of buying a home in Islesboro, but worries high property taxes could force her to move to the mainland.



Sitting in the Island Market last week, Paul Nichter and his wife, Carole, say they favor joining Knox County, where Islesboro would no longer be the second-wealthiest town and pay a county tax bill to match. Islesboro's county tax bill has risen six times as fast as local property taxes over the past three years.

● Residents say they have much more in common with Knox County than they do with Waldo.

By **JOSIE HUANG**
Staff Writer

ISLESBORO — Stunning sunsets and isolated gravel beaches on this 14-mile-long ribbon of island are salve for the soul — vistas immortalized by artists, worshipped by summer colonists.

But working families in this Penobscot Bay community say recent years have been far from idyllic.

Demand for waterfront property in Maine has turned Waldo County's only island into its second most valuable town. Islesboro ends up paying the county's second highest tax bill — although it's among the smallest of 26 towns and uses fewer county services because of its far-flung location.

When Waldo County announced plans to build an \$18 million jail, many of the island's 600 year-round residents had had it.

Calls for secession were made, and even last November's defeat of the jail initiative could not derail a tax revolt. By a 101-12 vote, islanders last month authorized town leaders to pursue legislation that would sever Islesboro's 176-year-old ties with Waldo County.

They hope the Legislature will let them join wealthier Knox County to the south, where the tax burden would be spread more evenly among well-heeled coastal communities and islands.

"It's time to do it," said Peter Anderson, the general contractor and selectman who led the town's Secession Committee. "There's all this talk around the state about how high property taxes are. People need to start thinking about what to do."

Fighting tough odds

Islesboro's is the latest in a string of secession bids in Maine over the past 30 years — a few successful, most futile. But islanders say they must try; for them, it will be too long before the

Please see **REVOLT**
Back page this section

REVOLT

Continued from Page 1B

state fulfills its promise of property-tax relief, or fully implements either of the controversial tax-reform proposals up for consideration by Maine voters this year.

Still, a secession bill can't be introduced until the Legislature convenes in January, and months more may pass before lawmakers make a decision.

But the debate over Islesboro's quest for independence is already heating up. Across the bay in Lincolnville, from where the state-operated ferry makes 20-minute runs to Islesboro, Waldo County Commissioner Greg Boestch predicts rough times for poorer inland towns if the island leaves.

"(Islesboro is) one of the rich towns," Boestch said. Without its contribution, "the (burden) falling on Burnham or Jackson would be a hell of a load, if you will, to strap onto their shoulders."

Islanders counter they aren't wealthy like the estimated 2,000 out-of-towners who summer at Georgian-style mansions and well-appointed cottages curtained from winding, shoulderless roads by thick evergreens.

Rather, many are carpenters, housekeepers and groundskeepers for the likes of John Travolta and Kirstie Alley, seen grabbing pizza and sandwiches during quick breaks at the Island Market in the town center. They say the property tax bill for the average homeowner last year – about \$2,300 – is wearing wallets thin.

Mainland migration

Amy Gallant, an island native who works in the kitchen of summer residents, supports secession. She worries that high property taxes will make buying a home even more prohibitive, forcing her to move with her boyfriend and 3-year-old son, Donnie, to the mainland – a migration pattern increasingly common in Maine.

In Islesboro, one family's departure can take a huge toll on the island's only school. Islesboro Central School has seen a precipitous drop in students, from 106 in 2000 to 83 this year. Numbers would be even lower if the school didn't enroll 10 "magnet" students from the mainland whose parents want them in small classes.

Teachers worry about staff cuts, taking on children from more grade levels, even having enough students to run a class activity or form a sports team.

"If we could go to 100 students, it would be great," said Superintendent Donald Kanicki. "We wouldn't have to



Don Kanicki, Islesboro's school superintendent, looks in on an island school classroom. The Islesboro Central School currently has 83 students enrolled, a number that has been steadily dropping as islanders leave for the mainland. "If we could go to 100 students, it would be great," he said.

Staff photo by John Ewing

increase staff and we'd have a more diverse and well-rounded student body."

Gallant, 26, said she would like Donnie to attend her old school, a turn-of-the-century mansion of blasted stone on a bluff overlooking the Penobscot.

"But," Gallant said, "who knows what taxes are going to be like 10, 12, 15 years down the line?"

With young families struggling, it galls residents that county taxes have risen six times as fast as local property taxes in the past three years, costing the town about \$531,000 in 2003 – more than a 10th of the county tax burden.

Although the Knox County Board of Commissioners welcomes Islesboro, it can't guarantee that its budget won't also spike in coming years. Chairwoman Anne Beebe-Center said there may be upgrades to the regional airport at Owl's Head to meet new federal regulations, and space added to the county jail to house growing numbers of women and people with mental illness.

But a tax bill from Knox County would be more palatable to islanders, because Islesboro would drop to the fifth- or sixth-highest paying town. This year, Islesboro residents could have saved close to \$156,000 if the island were part of Knox County, according to the Secession Committee.

That translates into savings of about \$128 for the owner of an average home in Islesboro assessed at \$185,000, according to the town's assessor, Vern Ziegler. Owners of multimillion-dollar estates would see far greater savings.

In a close-knit town where passers-by always wave to one another, and children attend class with their cousins and second cousins, residents doubt that people's savings would sit idle in the bank.

Paul Nichter, a house remodeler who voted for secession, predicts that savings would trickle down to projects intended to improve island life, such as a community center and a community fund for residents facing financial hardships.

"With less pressure with taxes, people have got more available money to donate to an organization," said Nichter, 52, who is raising money for an assisted living center.

Shared ties to the south

For some residents, however, money is not the driving force behind secession. Rather, it's Islesboro's strong ties to Knox County.

Residents point out that calls to the Knox County town of Camden are free, but not those to neighboring Lincolnville in Waldo County. Islesboro Central School, meanwhile, sends several students to Mid-Coast School of Technology in Rockland, which is in Knox County. And doctors supervising the physician assistants at the town's health center are from Rockport, also in Knox County.

Knox County is even more attractive because it includes four other Penobscot Bay islands with year-round residents: Vinalhaven, North Haven, Matinicus and Isle au Haut.

Grayson Hartley, chairman of the Islesboro Board of Selectmen and a retired school superintendent from Jay, hopes the islands can form political clout to advocate for their unique interests.

Islands, for instance, do not have regular police patrols. A sheriff's deputy makes daily visits to Islesboro only during the summer and is gone by the last evening ferry.

"By having the island communities together, we might get more police coverage or we might get more recognition politically," Hartley said.

Islesboro's state representative,

Walter Ash, said islanders "get kind of a raw deal," and that he will sponsor legislation if asked. But Ash – a Democrat from Belfast, Waldo County's largest city and biggest taxpayer – added he wouldn't support his own bill.

He worries that Islesboro's movement will catch on with other coastal communities fed up with high property taxes.

"I think we'll really be opening up a big can of worms if we start doing this," Ash said. "You'd be looking right up the line – Lincolnville will want to do it, then Northport, then why not Belfast? I just see a chain reaction thing that could happen here."

Other lawmakers might feel the same. While Long and Frye islands seceded from Portland and Standish, respectively, and Otisfield broke from Cumberland County to join Oxford County, the list of failed secession attempts is longer. Peaks, Great Diamond, Little Diamond and Cushing – islands that wanted to leave Portland – and several oceanfront neighborhoods that tried to break from Biddeford, never got the needed state support.

In a worrisome sign to Islesboro secessionists, the Legislature last month rejected the town of Atkinson's bid to deorganize itself as a way to cut taxes. Opponents of the move worried it would open the door for other disgruntled towns.

Anderson, head of the Secession Committee, is unfazed by the challenges ahead.

"Even if we don't have the support," he said, "I think we'd go up ourselves and speak to the lawmakers in Augusta."

Staff Writer Josie Huang can be contacted at 791-6364 or at:

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JOURNAL OF AN ISLAND KITCHEN

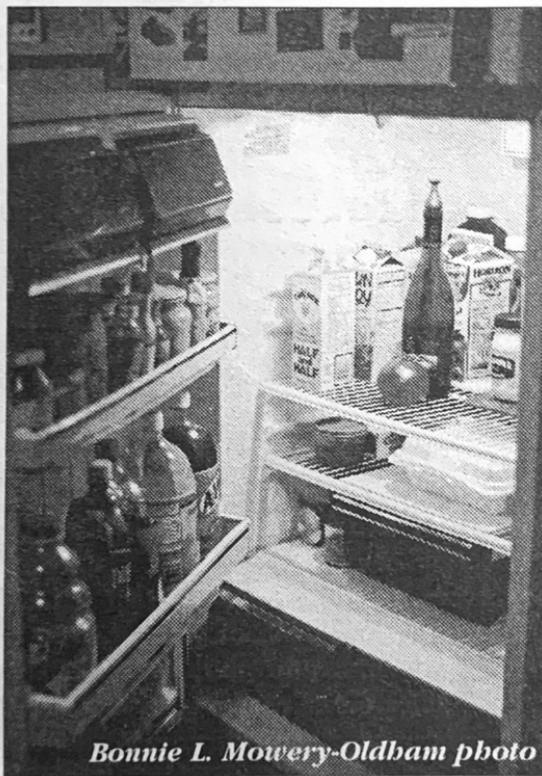
by Sandy Oliver

The social refrigerator

My friend Sharon called up one day and asked me if I had some canned water chestnuts on hand. I didn't, but she was in the midst of making a Chinese dinner and found she was out of this particular ingredient and the store was closed. Sharon went to the social refrigerator looking for what she needed.

I didn't invent this term. An anthropologist friend told me about social refrigerators. She spoke mostly about the past when people raised much of their own food, and guaranteed a continuous supply of fresh beef, pork, mutton, lamb, and veal by taking turns at butchering and distributing among those with whom they shared a social refrigerator. You can see evidence of this in account books and diaries from the 1700s and 1800s when people write such things as "borrowed a quarter of lamb of Mr. So-and-So." Or "sent a loin of pork to our son and family." Well, Mr. So-and-So didn't get back the same quarter of lamb as he lent, at least I hope not. He did receive an equal weight or value of some fresh meat when his neighbor killed an animal. A nice gesture in hot weather when one could roast a whole leg of lamb fresh out of the social refrigerator and eat it without worrying about it spoiling.

I have thought different times how our community has a few social refrigerators running, as probably do other communities. For example, there were four moose permits on Islesboro last year. But many more households



Bonnie L. Mowery-Oldham photo

benefited from those permits when the hunters returned laden with meat and shared it around. Same with deer meat. If you shoot as many deer or moose as you can, you might end up with more meat than you want, even frozen. You can trace connections of friendship

and family by seeing where the meat goes.

There are eggs, fruits, and vegetables in our social refrigerators, sometimes even whole dinners, when someone cooks up a little more than they need to take to someone who is sick or shut-in, a naturally-occurring meals-on-wheels. There are leftovers in the social fridge, too. When the golf club restaurant closed at the end of the season, odds and ends of very useful stuff ended up at the Baptist Church Thursday Mission lunches. So did some extra lasagna from a fund-raiser.

So far this year I pulled a bag full of ripe plum tomatoes out of the social fridge and I put in some pickles. I will return carrots for some Delicata squashes I "borrowed" and we've traded some deer meat for permission to forage on our property for it. I needed a couple cups of sugar when I was making jam last month and when I tried to return it, my neighbor said, "No, don't give it back to me, because some time I will want to borrow something from you." It's a way of keeping something in the fridge, but never worrying about whether it will spoil. ▼

Sandy Oliver cooks and writes on Islesboro.

Maryanne Curran Grant
INTER: Island News
Nov 2003



Booming real estate threatens Islesboro community

By Nakomis Nelson

Rising property values on Islesboro are changing the dynamics of the island community and threatening its year round population. According to Islesboro's 2002 comprehensive plan, Islesboro has one of the oldest populations in the state with a median age of 46 years compared to a state average of 38.5 years. Property costs on Islesboro are out-pricing would-be island residents. Young families cannot afford to live on the island; even some schoolteachers are now being forced to commute from the mainland on a daily basis due to the high property costs and lack of affordable rents.

Islesboro's year-round population saw an increase of 4 percent between 1990 and 2000 compared to a conservative estimate stating nearly a 25 percent gain in seasonal residents. Furthermore, between 1990 and 2000 there was a 23 percent reduction in people age 18 to 44 living on the island.

Steve Miller, Executive Director of Islesboro Island Trust, jokingly said, "Islands are unique; Islesboro has only 7,000 acres and they are not making any more." Miller shares in a growing concern over the sustainability of the

island community.

The threat to islands is not new. "Many islands are suffering and struggling to maintain year round populations," Miller says. Their resolution, he believes, is crucial to the sustainability of the island community. "You can't have somebody commute to put out fires or plow roads in the middle of the night," he said.

One community-based organization, Islesboro Affordable Housing (IAP), is working to help alleviate housing concerns for low and moderate-income families. IAP was conceived in the late 1980s after the island's first comprehensive plan found a great need within the community for affordable housing. Today, IAP provides eight homes to low and moderate-income families and plans to have a ninth building completed by next fall.

David Thibodeau, an island-schoolteacher for 18 years and an IAP board member, believes that there are many young families with children who would like to live on Islesboro but are unable to do so because of property costs. "Island housing is beyond the reach of most people with a moderate income," he says. He's concerned about decreasing school enrollment.

"The horse is already out of the barn" said Billy Boardman, a longtime island resident who echoes the concerns of other island community members. Rising property values on the coast of Maine are a way of life, but the island residents have nowhere to go.

"After the last ferry, you are either on or off the island," said Boardman, who sees town services being adapted to fit the ferry schedule. "You can't even check your mail after the last ferry, now that we no longer have a resident postmaster."

Miller credits much of the success of IAP to the foresight of the 1985 comprehensive plan and to the dedicated volunteers behind IAP. "Volunteerism on Islesboro is huge — there are many local organizations and none would work without a year round population. It makes the town go round," he remarked. ▼

Nakomis Nelson lives on Islesboro.

By Nakomis Nelson

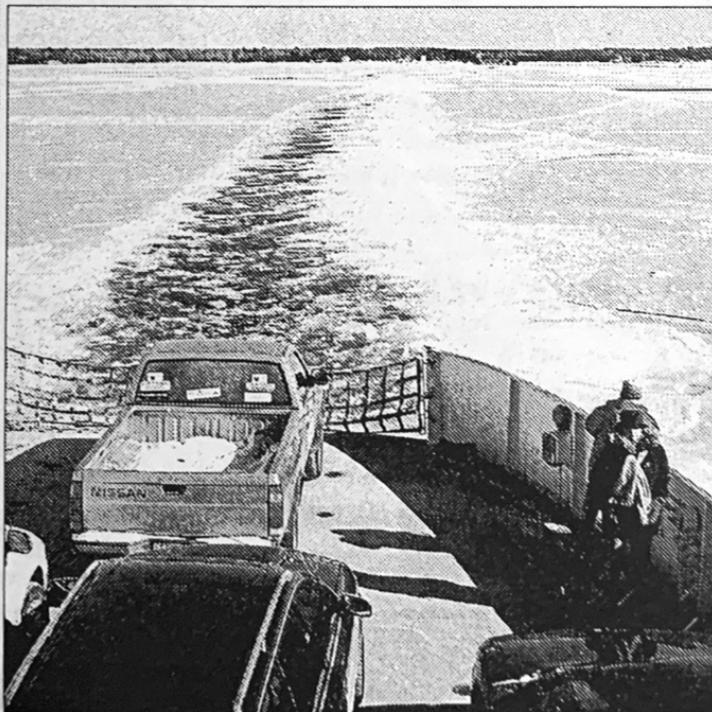
The 2002-2003 winter was hardly a record-setter in the books of the National Weather Service, but for seasoned island residents it brought forth many memories. The most ice seen in nearly a generation quickly built in upper Penobscot Bay towards the end of February after two months of sustained cold.

Ferry trips were delayed and water taxi service to and from Islesboro was canceled for nearly a week at the end of February. Local fishermen were unable to check their boats, left to the mercy of the ice. In Friendship Harbor the Coast Guard was called in to break out nearly 50 fishing boats that became endangered by the movement of a large ice sheet.

Executive Petty Officer James Taylor of the Coast Guard Cutter *WMEC-905* said, "All of the local Coast Guard icebreaking boats were busy round the clock, seven days a week during the most extreme periods of cold in January and February. The ferries needed help almost every day." Taylor, although only in his first season of icebreaking, has heard through the ranks that this was an exceptional winter. Ice in the open bay between Islesboro and the main-

Coastal ice scrapes bottoms, hampers travel

Islesboro resident Lars Nelson by 10-foot pile of ice created by strong winds and sub-zero temperatures. Below: Ferry navigates thick ice headed towards Islesboro (Nakomis Nelson photos).



land, he reported, was between four and six inches thick.



Although strong northwesterly winds kept the ice from developing during much of February, there were mornings where the ice skimmed over from mainland to island, an event not common for many years. A century ago, the only way off Islesboro in the winter was across the ice.

Nick Lobkowicz of the Maine

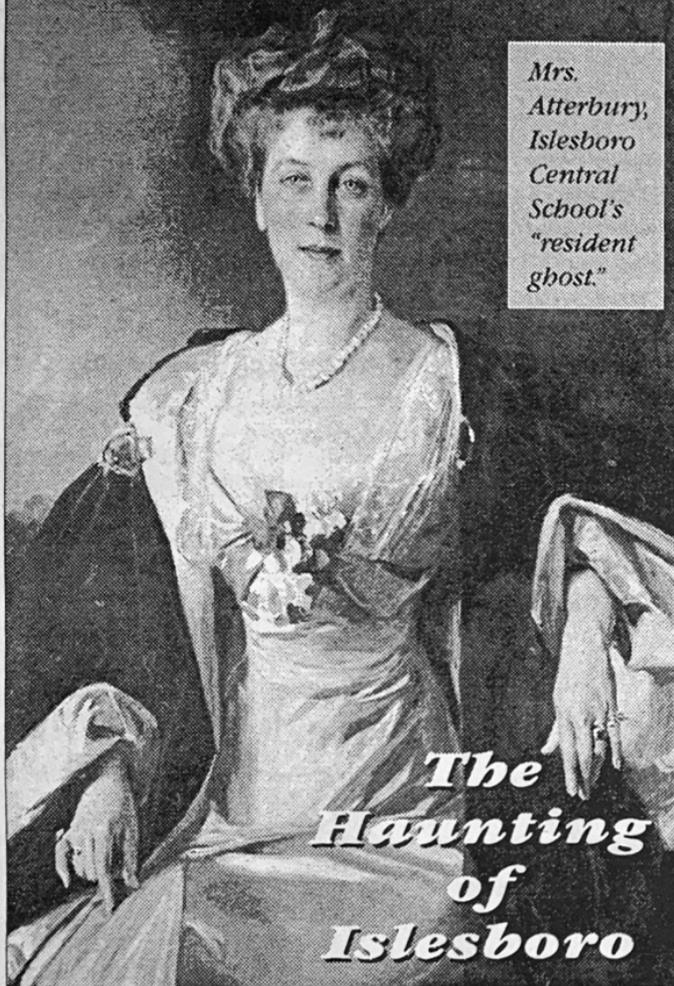
State Ferry Service reported that no serious damage was done to any of the ferryboats as a result of the ice. However, he fears, the ice may have scraped a fair amount of the antifouling paint off their bottoms.

The ice was less kind to local island pier owners. Numerous docks were damaged on Islesboro alone, most when the ice began to break up and move down the bay. Some lobsterman also reported damage to and loss of their bait floats. Tom Daley, owner and operator of the QUICKSILVER, Islesboro's water taxi, lost a week's worth of revenue when his boat was frozen in at the dock.

Both January and February averaged more than five degrees below normal. The National Weather Service said it was the coldest winter in over a decade, but more significant was the consistent cold. Instead of having multiple cold and warm periods, the thermometer only made it above freezing twice in February.

In September, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center forecast a warmer-than-normal winter for the Northeast. Now it is predicting a warmer-than-normal summer. ▼

Not Alone



Mrs. Atterbury, Islesboro Central School's "resident ghost."

The Haunting of Islesboro

By Bonnie L. Mowery-Oldham

Perhaps due to their remoteness and resultant romantic allure, islands possess an air of mystery that's always made me suspect that islanders must have scores of stories to tell of haunted

houses and other paranormal phenomena. Islesboro, for instance, has no shortage of intriguing tales of ghostly presences and mysterious places where, on nightly strolls, one finds oneself walking very quickly indeed. Unexplained floating lights, spectral apparitions, tangibly unsettling atmosphere and eerie echoes are but a few of the sights, sounds and sensations that more than one islander has experienced over the years.

Some of Islesboro's spirits associate themselves strongly with certain places, such as Stephen's Field, with its Headless

Horseman legend. For generations, young people have walked there at night with trepidation, dreading to hear the sound of horses' hooves echoing across the Narrows. Filmy figures have been spotted taking an evening stroll through the up-island cemetery, and the Bluff (supposedly the site of an ancient Indian burial

ground) is said to be visited by mysterious groupings of red lights hovering over houses, visible from the water. Many islanders also report seeing floating red lights frequently in the woods.

Often when opening up summer cottages, island caretakers and housekeepers have noticed hard-to-explain phenomena. Many island women have gotten into the habit of announcing their presence upon entering a cottage with a cheery "I'm here! It's just little ole' me ... I'll do my job and be gone in a jiffy." They still report a certain creepy "hair-standing-on-end" feeling, hearing footsteps and thumps, doors slamming, toilets flushing by themselves.

Most have learned to accept these ghostly manifestations as part of the territory. Some caretakers "feel" the presence of someone following them around as they check out the house, sometimes actually catching sight of ghostly figures out of the corner of an eye. While chopping wood one evening, one caretaker felt a presence in the woods intently watching him and glanced up in time to see an apparition dressed in a long, black coat. The specter promptly vanished into thin air, causing the caretaker to call it quits for the day.

Certain houses on Islesboro have been the scene of consistent sightings of ghosts. These hauntings can sometimes affect the physical environment, causing doors and cupboards to be opened by them-

selves, furniture to be moved about and objects to disappear and reappear in different locations. The Grindle Point lighthouse ghost is famous for "apports" (objects transported by unknown means) moving from one room to another. At one Hewes Point cottage, several renters have seen a pair of mischievous children giggling about the place. At another rental home, a little girl with a large bow in her hair has been sighted repeatedly, happily swinging on a tire swing in a tree. One up-island summer cottage ghost seems to be partial to music, judging by the radios that seem to turn themselves on in various parts of the house. At this particular cottage, a nanny was awakened early one morning by the sound of music mingled with her charge's baby voice delightedly talking to an unseen presence.

Sifting through stories of Islesboro hauntings, one island residence stands out as having seen over 50 years of unexplained phenomena — the former Rock Ledge cottage, now the Islesboro Central School building, which is reputed to be haunted by its former owner, Mrs. John T. Atterbury.

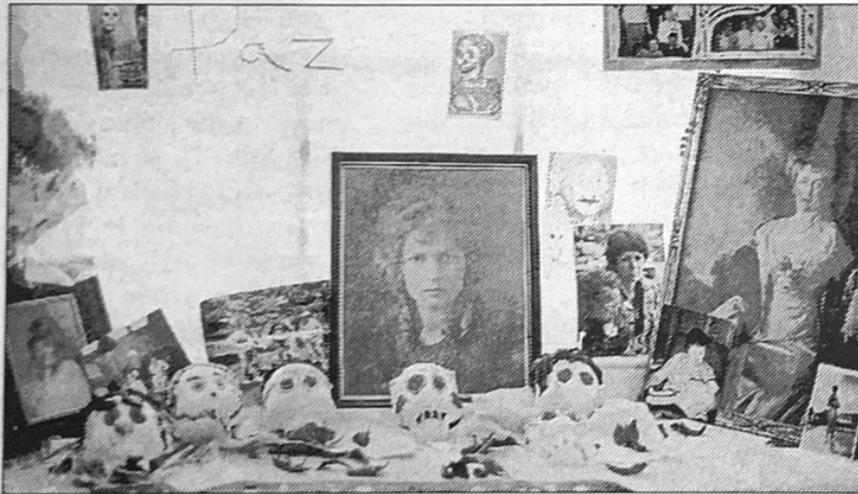
In 1926, Mrs. Atterbury built the last major Islesboro summer cottage of the pre-Depression era, according to "The Summer Cottages of Islesboro" by Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. She had an eclectic, stone, English-style house built, with a large cross gable dividing the main house from the service wing.

The walls are constructed of on-site ledge stone, generated by blasting for the building's foundation, which is where the cottage got the name "Stone Ledge." A later owner, Mrs. Lillian S. Whitmarsh, donated Rock Ledge cottage to the town of Islesboro in 1952, to be remodeled and used as a consolidated school. On Dec. 26 of that year, island residents voted to accept this gift as "the most wonderful Christmas gift we ever had."

Anna Robins Atterbury was born in New York City in 1865 and married New York broker John Turner (her second husband) in 1903. He passed away in 1912, but Mrs. Atterbury remained a prominent figure in New York and Dark Harbor social circles until her death in 1939. According to Lisa Satschfield, whose daughter's great grandmother, Maybelle Boardman, worked for Mrs. Atterbury as a laundress, Mrs. Atterbury was a kind and generous person, especially to children. Anna Robins' father was one of Islesboro's first summer residents, and among her descendents are pre-



Above: Islesboro's "haunted" schoolhouse. Below: ICS teacher Dan Gray recently introduced his Spanish students to the Mexican "Day of the Dead" holiday, encouraging them to place photos of deceased loved ones in a shrine with Mexican-style sugar skulls. Prominently featured, of course, was a picture of the school's "resident ghost," Mrs. Atterbury (Bonnie L. Mowery-Oldham photos).



sent summer residents the Ladds, the Gillies and the Bradleys.

Almost as soon as Rock Ledge cottage began to be used as a school, staff, students and community members began to notice a resident Islesboro Central School ghost, reputed right from the start to be Mrs. Atterbury. Former students tell of paintings that were frequently

moved around, footsteps heard in the attic, and lights turned on and off when no one was around.

One alumnus, a high school student during the 1970s, recalls that her crowd would often return home from dinner at the harbor hamburger shop by way of a slight detour by the school, just to scare each other. Although they never tried to enter the building, they would on occasion see dim lights moving from window to window. Since no cars were visible in the parking lot at those times, the students would get thoroughly spooked, running as fast as they could down the back slope of the school to get away. On a particularly eerie night, they swear they saw a ghostly manifestation in the

school's French door window. Was it Mrs. Atterbury watching them, or just the reflection of night clouds in a full moon?

Among present school personnel, opinions, experiences and sightings run the gamut from skepticism to nervous belief. One teacher says it's an interesting myth, but that he, personally, despite being there every

hour of the day and night, has never seen, heard or felt anything in all the years he's worked at the school. Several other staff members, however, report actual sightings of Mrs. Atterbury in the "flesh."

There are many consistent features to these close encounters with Mrs. Atterbury. Almost all of them have occurred between the hours of 8:30 and 10:30 pm. Personnel alone in the building at night frequently feel strongly that they're not alone, accompanied by that "hair-standing-on-end" feeling. Footsteps can be heard in the attic and up the stairs, along with isolated pockets of extreme cold, banging, closing and opening of doors, and lights being turned on and off by themselves in the school's hallways. The rattling of lockers is another common manifestation. Less common occurrences include a basketball mysteriously bouncing by itself across the gymnasium floor, and a ghostly tap on the shoulder.

Most everyone who enters the building at night (after unlocking the door and punching in a code, as required by the school's new security system) sheepishly admits to talking to Mrs. Atterbury, reassuring her that they "won't be but a moment," or "just coming in to do a little work, you don't mind, do you?"

Apparently, Mrs. Atterbury sometimes likes to do a little research herself, on several occasions having turned on computers when no one else was there. Even with these

Continued on page 17



“Hooker” restores fiber art for Islesboro’s floors

By Bonnie L. Mowery-Oldham

Cozily situated in a quiet corner off Islesboro’s beaten path lives Bobby Pendleton, the island’s premiere “hooker.” Perhaps some clarification is in order here: Bobby is a fiber artist whose specialty is restoring damaged, vintage hooked rugs, as well as creating new rugs from her own designs, or those of customers. A native Californian, she has been living on Islesboro for eight years and has been hooking rugs for more than a decade.

Her introduction to hooking rugs came about when she wanted to find something to do with the yarn left over from her spinning. She taught herself how to do it by reading extensively on the craft, and by studying the work of an experienced hooker who was

working the summer fair circuit. Many years’ experience as a felter and decorative artist — painting design work on floors, walls and furniture — also helped Bobby to master the skills needed in rug hooking.

Bobby’s reputation as a rug restorer/designer spread on Islesboro after she donated a rug she’d created to the island’s sewing circle to sell at one of their events. Since then, she’s worked on restoring family heirlooms from some of Islesboro’s bigger summer cottages. Her largest repair job to date was an intricate 18-by-20-foot geometric rug. The cost of restoring such rugs can be substantial, but the emotional attachment many people feel for these family heirlooms more than makes up for the cost of repair. There aren’t many rug restorers in the area, and Islesboro residents were gratified

to discover the exquisite quality of Bobby’s work,

Rug designer/restorer Bobby Pendleton with one of her original designs (Bonnie L. Mowery-Oldham photo)

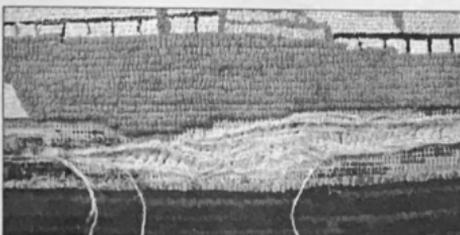
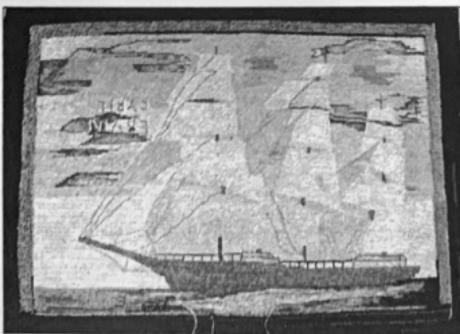
so that they wouldn’t have to ship their rugs off to New York to be repaired.

Old rugs can be made of cotton or wool, and may need either yarn or fabric strips to repair, depending on the nature of the deterioration. Bobby often rummages through Goodwill stores in search of old fabric and faded cloth to match a damaged section of a rug on which she’s working. She finds an old jacket or shirt that matches perfectly, and then shreds or cuts the garment into strips to rehook a damaged area to blend into the rest of the rug. Old rugs were generally hooked on a foundation of burlap or gunny sacks, but today’s hookers use monk’s cloth or linen.

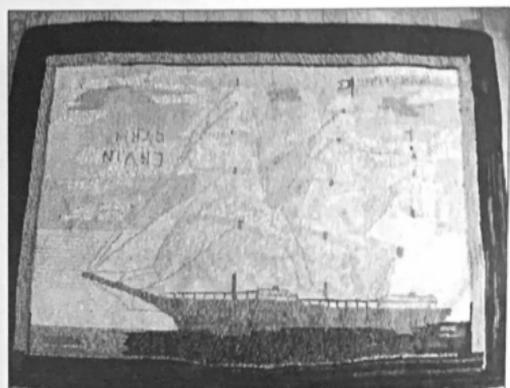
When Pendleton creates a new rug, it’s often at the request of someone who wants a special design or scene. She uses a computer to generate her design, enlarging it so she can work the design precisely as she envisions it at the size the customer has requested. Pendleton has created many animal rugs featuring scenes of favorite pet cats and dogs, specific houses, light-houses and mermaids. One particularly striking rug features vivid red cherries on a white background. Her graceful, detailed work results in a rug of great and lasting beauty, a true work of art on which one might understandably hesitate to wipe one’s feet.

Pendleton has shown her new creations at Islesboro’s Double Door Gallery. She has taught two adult education classes on the island, and had a whole class of hookers, including the minister’s wife, hard at work learning the craft. She plans to teach another class on hooking rugs beginning in November through Islesboro’s adult education department.

For more information on having Bobby restore a hooked rug — or design one especially for your home — call her at 734-2003, or drop a line to Hooked Rug Restoration, 134 Marshall Cove Road, Islesboro, 04848. ▼



Left: Deteriorated rug, with detail showing area of worst damage. Below: The same rug, after it has been extensively restored (Bobby Pendleton photos).



ISLESBORO

THE ORB (CHWA)
SEPT 3, 1836

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Oxford, Co. ISAAC STRICKLAND,
JONATHAN SWIFT.

Somerset Co. JOHN H. SMITH,
MARSHALL H. WHITNEY.

Penobscot, JONATHAN BURR,
EBENEZER HIGGINS.

Hancock West, JOHN R. REDMAN.

Waldo Co. JOSIAH STAPLES,
BENJAMIN CARR.

For County Treasurers.

York Co. SAMUEL BURBANK.

Cumberland, MARK HARRIS.

Kennebec, ISAAC GAGE.

Somerset, JOSEPH PHILBRICK.

Washington, DAVID G. WILSON.

Penobscot, LEVI BRADLEY.

Waldo, FRYE HALL.

For Register of Deeds.

Kennebec, BENJAMIN WALES.

Waldo, FRYE HALL.

We are requested to give notice that a meeting of the Democratic Republicans of this town will be holden at **THE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE,** on Saturday the third day of September next, at 4 o'clock P. M., for the purpose of nominating a candidate for TOWN REPRESENTATIVE, to be supported at the approaching election.

From some cause to us unknown, the Belfast Journal of last week was not forwarded to this place, which is our apology for not replying to any "matters and things" which the same may contain in reference to the important question which has so unhappily disturbed the harmony of this Congressional District. Whether that paper had "set down ought in malice" which it wished to conceal from us and publish to others, (which we would charitably hope is not the fact) or that it has fallen into the hands of lawless plunderers, we have not the means of knowing—but having written to a friend requesting him to send us a copy; peradventure it may arrive before our paper goes to press; if so,

grant.
No man can say he has ever manifested a wish to obtain the avails of the industry of others without rendering an equivalent; no one can accuse him of a participation of the habits of the idle or indolent, nor of receiving support from the emoluments of office.

Such fellow citizens is an honest description of the character of the gentleman, that has been nominated agreeably to the usages of the party, to the office of Representative to Congress for Waldo District.

But an opposition to this nomination is originated and carried on by Mr. Anderson and those who are called his friends.

Some of the reasons why Mr. Anderson should not be supported are the following to wit:—Mr A. has already, and has had for ten or eleven years, an office, worth at least \$1500 annually. In the next place the influence that pushes him forward, is not the free unbiased wish of any portion of the people, properly so called, but that of a few men in Belfast who assume to command some, persuade and wheedle others, and thus constitute an influence, which they would unblushingly convert to their own aggrandizement.

One gentleman wishes to obtain the office of Clerk of the Courts, which Mr. Anderson now holds, another wishes to obtain the office of Register of Probate, another and another wish for the influence of Mr. A. at Washington in procuring their appointment to offices, unnecessary now to mention. Let these gentlemen cease operations whose interests are to be so peculiarly promoted and how much support would Mr. A receive in opposition to the regular Candidate? none. The people left to themselves would go right.

Let the people speak their own minds and they will tell you they do not want Mr. Anderson, and why should they? He is above the people distinct from them, and having no feelings in common with them, knows nothing of the cares of labor and industry, has for a long time been fattening upon the fees of office, and no one better shows his keeping; haughty and distant in his appearance, and in reality, never once thinking of wasting words in

ation and in favor of himself and said Journal is entirely and exclusively devoted to his views and interests, and if Mr. Anderson does not advise and dictate its course and has not written the editorials charged upon him, why not come out and deny it over his own signature and at the same time decline being a candidate in opposition to the regular nomination? BELFAST.

For the Orb.

The citizens of this town were not a little surprised to see in the published list of Delegates to the Knox Convention, the name of Dexter Farrow, who is a Minor and of course not chosen a Delegate at any Meeting held in this place or by any authority conferred on the duly elected Delegates. Report says that the said Dexter Farrow was elected in Lawyer Lowney's Office in Belfast and his name there inserted into the Islesboro' certificate of Delegates.

It is said that the two properly elected Delegates there present, expressed doubts as to the propriety of this proceeding, but said Farrow having made known his intention to vote for Mr. Anderson, Lawyer Lowney thought it would be legal to elect him in this way and as to said Farrow being a Minor it would not be known at the Convention. Now we do not deny or dispute the right of Mr. Anderson or Lawyer Lowney to send Isaac Allard or any one else to enlighten us here on the Island as to who we ought to choose for Delegates but we Island Democrats never will quietly submit to have our right so far trampled upon as to be represented in our Conventions by a Minor Delegate chosen in a Lawyer's Office in Belfast. ISLESBORO.

For the Orb.

A writer over the signature of Northport in the Journal, but who is a certain fib telling Pettifogger in Belfast, charges Col. Shaw with having taken the oath, of allegiance to the British King when in the Province of New Brunswick, some time after the close of the last War. The Slander in the Journal of the preceeding week towards this gentleman, and probably from the same source, has been shown to be a base and malicious falsehood and the writer of this pledges himself to prove it to be such, whenever the Slanderer dares to make known his name; What Lie next Slanderers. NORTHPORT.

One day last week, Mr. Mordocai Noah, of Clinton, Maine, aged 102 years, walked seven miles without much apparent fatigue. His health is