

Photograph of an oil painting, View from the Dock - 1992, by Alexander C. Pertzoff (1939 -1995)

This issue of The Thoroughfare is dedicated to the memory of Alexander C. Pertzoff, who passed away on February 4th 1995 from cancer in Northampton, Massachusetts. Alex was the son of Olga Monks Pertzoff, grandson of Olga E. Gardner Monks, and great grandson of George Augustus Gardner. He is survived by his daughters, Tanya Pertzoff-Wells and Anna Pertzoff; son, Dino Pertzoff; granddaughter, Rachel Wells; sister, Tanya Fischer; and, companion, Merry Nasser.

-ASf

ACTIVE MANAGEMENT OF AN UN-PARALLELED RESOURCE - WHAT IS TIER III ?

I have often been asked, "just what is Tier III?" My impish side whispers: tell them it is a laundry detergent, or a dog-food for more mature canines. Obviously, in the absence of a more structured definition, the idle mind revels in deviousness. This is why I was so glad that George Herrick asked the Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) to take as its first priority the coalescing of Tier III.

Tier III concerns itself with the 90% of Roque Island which is outside of the family compound. Its official title is Farm, Land, and Natural Resources Management. Its domain is the forests, fields, farm, beaches, trails and outer islands. Its activity is the decision making and budget setting process for managing and stewarding this precious resource.

Jennifer Donaldson and I worked with the original 13 members of Tier III to produce the broad definition above, in addition to outlining a process for future gov-

ernance. The Tier is roughly divided between those members who wish to be active and those who wish to be pro-active. While the whole Tier is involved with setting its program and budget each year, it is the proactive members who will perform the hands-on implementation and management of the program.

On Monday, March 13th, the core group of proactive members met for their first ever planning session. We reviewed a packed agenda which included such items as which stand of trees to harvest to stay under Tree Growth Act; what incentives there are to belong to Tier III; what further natural resource studies should we undertake; and, what sort of operation should the farm be? It became clear that the answers to many of these questions required further work. We devised a delegated process whereby certain individuals became responsible for coming up with a more definitive proposal, including budget, for the areas in

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INTO CLEANNESS LEAPING

Squire's Point

There are no early records of swimming at Roque Island but ocean bathing could have become a favored pastime anytime after the family regained control of the island in 1882 at a time when plunging into the cold sea was becoming a popular activity elsewhere on the New England coast.

The custom of swimming naked, which continues to this day at Roque, has precedents which reach back to classical times. *Non recte recipit haec nos rerum natura nisi nudos*, said Pliny, The Elder. "This element-water-does not properly receive us unless we are naked." Everyone swam naked until the popularity of bathing gathered momentum in the Victorian age. The coming of the bathing suit and with it an *esthetique vestimentaire* was seen as a betrayal by purists. It degraded the experience and introduced a carnival atmosphere to the geopolitics of the beach.

Something about swimming attracted great English and French poets and writers. There was the classical context first. A feeling for water runs through Roman life and poetry and for the Greeks there was some divine inspiration in that element. In the 19th century the ocean expressed the romantic age in many different ways. There was a strangeness and novelty to the swimming experience, which seemed to offer insight into untapped meaning and a heightened sensitivity to the promise of life. There was something so spontaneous about offering oneself to the embrace of the "swift whirl of the newbreaking wave." The cult of hygiene would follow: swimming as therapy to improve appetites, spirits, and strength. And still later, worship of the sun. For the French the myth *edenique*, the lost paradise, and the *robinsonade*, Crusee alone forever on an endless perfection of beach, held sway over literary imagination.

Swimming at Roque puts us at one with our island element, it lets us stand at a tangent to the universe, in some special, sacred place, it shapes our consciousness, renews our identity and strengthens our convictions. As leisure on a hot day, as respite from

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VISITING GROUPS

Currents

One of the policy issues that we need to address is where, when and what visiting groups we will allow on any of the islands within the archipelago. In the past, we have had a clear and firm general policy for visitors coming by boat, i.e.: access is permitted only to the north end of Great Beach. However, we have also said that exceptions may be made for those who put in a written request. There are certainly many good reasons to make occasional exceptions, for example: those that are involved in a scientific study, members of the coastal community with whom we want to maintain good relations, school groups, or groups that may have a particular association with a member(s) of the RIGHC. Regardless, our mission is to preserve and enhance all of the islands within the archipelago and we expect that visiting groups would also embrace this mission.

We have been prompted to delve into this issue by two requests that have come in the past few months. They are very different in scope, and serve to point out some of the challenges one must consider before granting requests. The first request came from the Golden Eagle Medicine Society, which asked if we might allow a group of 6-12 adults camp for 9 days in a remote area, such as Great Spruce, during the month of August. This group is known and well-considered by one of our members. After some

discussion, we (the Board of Trustees) decided not to grant the request for the following reasons: length of visit, number of people, timing of stay, and most importantly, logistics. As with any group, logistical problems could be enormous (i.e. would they have their own boat? - a radar? - would they have communication with the mainland in case of an emergency? - where would they get water? - would fires be allowable? - what about trash?).

The second group was the Cruising Club of America, also well-known to several members of the family. The CCA requested to have a clambake on Great Beach on the afternoon of August 2nd. Again after much consideration, the Board turned down this request. The principle reasons behind this decision were the sheer number of people and the damage it would do to the Beach. But also, practical issues came to surface: who would arrange the clambake, how could you keep visitors in a specified area, who would deal with the garbage, and so on. We have communicated to the CCA that they are free to anchor off the Beach but that a celebration would be beyond the capacity of the Beach.

Both of these cases have forced us to define certain guidelines we have for visiting groups. For instance, any group that comes needs

Continued, page 4

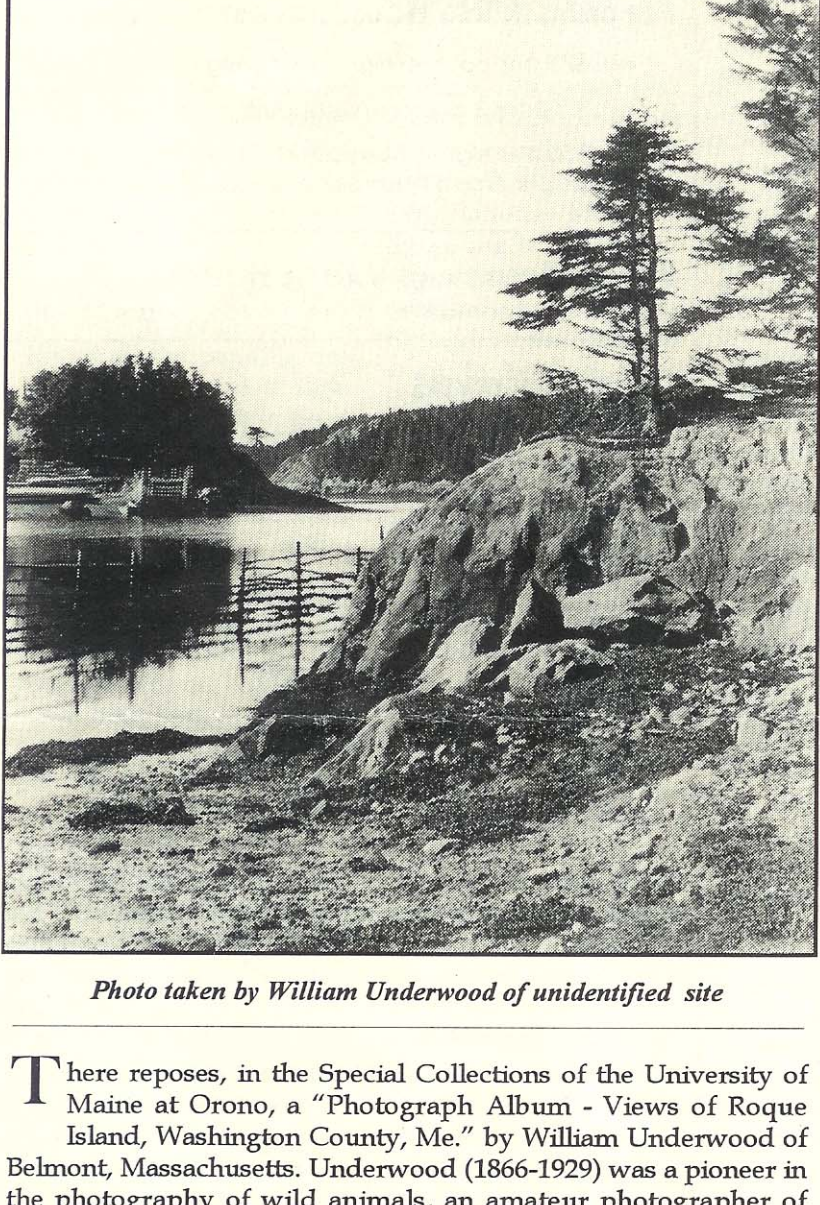


Photo taken by William Underwood of unidentified site

There reposes, in the Special Collections of the University of Maine at Orono, a "Photograph Album - Views of Roque Island, Washington County, Me." by William Underwood of Belmont, Massachusetts. Underwood (1866-1929) was a pioneer in the photography of wild animals, an amateur photographer of distinction and a naturalist who made frequent trips in pursuit of his hobbies to Maine, where he stayed in Jonesport with the Charles S. Hinckley family.

The album contains 17 photographs taken in the early 1900's. There are four portraits of the Ingalls brothers, the Hermits of Little Spruce. Three of them correspond to the (unattributed) photographs in *Roque Island, A History* (1964), the fourth a new. There are also photographs of the potato patch on Little Spruce and of a curious mechanical contraption there. One photograph shows marine and dock activity at a site which needs to be identified. Lastly, there are some wildlife shots which attest to the Underwood oeuvre.

G.C.H.

From the Archives

Gilbert Longfellow, owner of Roque Island at the time, writes:

Machias, Me.; April 22nd 1876

Editor Forest and Stream: -

My post office address is as above written, but I live on Roque Island, in Englishman's Bay. This island contains about 1,400 acres. We have an abundance of game, except during two or three months a year in summer. At this writing we have black duck, shelldrakes, Canada geese and brant, water witches, herons, fish hawks, eagles, etc. In summer we have sandpipers in large flocks, Spruce partridges are tolerably plenty, with some woodcocks, and two years ago I put in some ruffed grouse, which are increasing. As there is a law prohibiting any one gunning on the island, I hope to be able to protect them until they become plenty. Occasionally, we have a flock of wild pigeons visit us. Of late years so much shooting has been done about the island that a part of the birds fly outside in pleasant weather; but when there is a strong out wind I am told that they are as plenty as ever. There are several nests of the bald eagle on the island, also ravens and fish-hawks. If anyone should want the young of either I can get them. Occasionally, a young seal is caught. The old ones are plenty at times.

Gilbert Longfellow

[Published in Letters from ornithologists, Forest and Stream 5(19) p.233, May 18, 1876]

This is a significant document in Roque Island history. It represents one of the first accounts of the Bald Eagle published in a scientific journal in Maine. It documents Roque Island's efforts to protect wildlife at an early date. It gives historical precedent for prohibition of hunting. And it adds the Passenger Pigeon to Roque's bird list. The Passenger Pigeon became extinct in September 1914. It was already a rare bird by the 1870's and it was never common in Maine. The last Passenger Pigeon nest in Maine was 1877. The last birds seen in the state were in the 1890's.

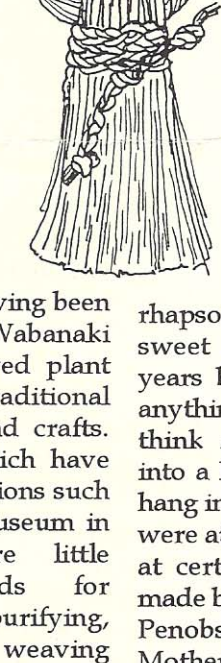
Thank you, Mr. Longfellow.

- G. G. Herrick

Sweet Grass

Sweet grass, or *Hierocole borealis*, is one of the natural treasures of Roque Island. Not only does it have a lovely shiny green-gold color but also its characteristic sweet scent, rivaling balsam and sage, with its ability to invoke memories and a sense of the sacred. In Europe it has a long history as a strewing herb called holy grass and was also used in a Scottish handfasting ceremony (*Baskets of the Downland People*, Abbe Museum Publications). It has an ancient regional history as well, having been valued by the Wabanaki peoples as a sacred plant and used in traditional basket making and crafts. Typical items which have survived in collections such as at the Abbe Museum in Bar Harbor are little "brooms," braids for scenting and purifying, small braids for weaving into brown ash baskets, or twined around rims of birch bark containers. A mic mac woman who visited our school several years ago demonstrated the making of small brooms to the children, another Passamaquoddy basketweaver taught at a workshop, at the Abbe, to braid the strands and

weave them into the sides and lid of a "fancy basket." Long a student of indigenous crafts and plant lore of Roque Island, I have been interested in sweet grass since shown where it grows probably twenty-five years ago by my Aunt Olga. We tromped down to the back of Patten Cove, plucked, sniffed, and cut a few handfuls, to be certain - ahhh, sweet grass. Once you have smelled it, you never forget. The ability to appreciate sweet grass is something I definitely have inherited from the distaff side of the family. Aunt Olga and my mother are not the only ones to



rhapsodize over the smell of sweet grass. It was many years before I tried to make anything out of it, though I think Aunt Olga braided it into a large braid, perhaps to hang in the closet. Such braids were at the time also available at certain Maine craft fairs, made by Passamaquoddy and Penobscot basketweavers. Mother bought the wares of several native basketweavers to sell in her craft shop on Exchange Street in Portland. We especially loved the ones woven with tiny long sweet grass braids. My grandmother, Kay, had such a one among her things when she died. In use as a sewing basket, it has faded to a lovely golden color with age.

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As you may already know, the only sour note that winter left was another change in staff. I guess the isolation of the island life doesn't agree with everyone in the dead of winter. Mike Morse is no longer with us. He and his wife, Nancy, left in the end of January. In his place is a young fellow by the name of Kevin Pinkham. Kevin has basically picked up where Mike left off. Candace Strout took Nancy's place, you may all remember her from last summer. Since Candace

worked with us last year, she knows what's got to happen in the houses and on the farm with little need for any explanations. Mike Segein, the young boatman, quit the day after Steve (Tex) and I returned from our vacation. He told us the "just did not want to be here anymore, that he was too young for this type of lifestyle." We have yet to replace him so Steve has been running the boat when necessary. Through it all, we have adjusted and are doing very well. Everything seems to be progressing smoothly.

Moving on to Steve's "Farm News" ... the laying hens really picked up their egg production. Surplus eggs are sold to the Feed Store and are in great demand. Meat bird and turkey chicks are scheduled for mid-April delivery, as is a rooster for the laying hens.

Piglets are due April 5th. Eight lambs have been born to date, leaving two ewes left to lamb. All mothers and babies are in excellent health.

Dawn, one of the Guernsey milk cows, is ready to calve. She now resides in a maternity stall, as this will be the first calf born since we've been here, it is more to calm our nerves than hers, as she doesn't seem very concerned.

The Belted Galloways have adjusted very well. They have a pen in the sheep barn, but only use it in inclement

weather. They can be seen coming in to the big barn along with Rambler, Amos and the Little Man each morning at daylight for their morning feeding.

The horses wintered very well with the exception of Rainy Star. His age is catching up with him. Twice he has fallen down and has been unable to get back up. The first time it took all four of us to get him on his feet. The second time, it took the tractor and a sling, as he made no effort to help.

The maple trees are tapped, but as of now little sap has been collected. The weather has been overcast, not letting temperatures drop low enough at night and get high enough during the day for the sap to run... still a few weeks to go.

Ice has been cut and stored in the ice house. The molder wintered with many storms sprinkled the ice with spruce sprills and cones. The best cakes were selected and are now covered in sawdust and shavings.

Firewood for the fireplaces and stoves is complete. Spruce continues on the work for the furnaces and the Farmhouse, soon to be completed.

That just about sums up the Roque news. See you soon!

- Steve & Barbie

PER DIEMS IN RED HOUSE HAVE BEEN LOWERED

- \$75 per couple/night during high season
- \$100 for 3 or more/night during high season
- \$50 per night off season, 10/15 through 5/31 (regardless of number of people)

BRYAN MONKS AND VALERIE HOLSCLOW were married in December of 1994 in Boston, Massachusetts.

TRUSTEE OBSERVERS

- Sandy P. M. Bowers
- Jason N. R. Herrick

CORRECTION

The phone number printed in the *Directory of Members* was wrong for the family line, the correct number is:

207.255.3699

Currents, continued from page 2

to be independent of the staff or facilities of Roque Island. Second, any group that comes must keep the impact of their visit to a minimum. It is hard to establish a set of firm and fast rules, so for the moment we will continue to consider each case individually, keeping in mind the precedents we are beginning to set. As a formality, we have drawn up a waiver and George Herrick has created a list of recommendations for low impact, ("leave no trace") use, similar to that of the Nature Conservancy and NOLS' (National Outdoor Leadership School) guidelines.

- Nina Herrick

Squire's Point, continued from page 2

hard work, as cleansing or reenergizing therapy or ash shock of recognition, leaping into cleanliness and purity of the Maine water is part of the Roque ethos to which generations of the family, naked by principle, although perhaps wearing a motley assortment of rubber footwear for stony beaches, have returned.

- G. G. Herrick

A MILD ONE

News from Roque

Well, hello everyone! Another winter seems to be behind us and thank heavens it seemed to be a very mild one for us.

The houses fared very well this winter. We just made a list of all the painting and minor repairs and it looks as if we are in better shape this year than we have been in years past. Work should begin soon to everything ready for the spring arrivals.

Through the winter we did the "Spring Cleaning" of the Farmhouse. We're not sure how long it will last once spring and summer arrive and all efforts are put into the other houses, grounds, and garden, but for the time being the house looks very clean and bright. We also painted and wallpapered the bathroom (you would never believe it was the same room!).

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- Steve & Barbie

Tier III, continued from page 1

question. So, for example, Tanya Fischer is to come up with a proposed plan for the farm, John Higgins for wood-cutting, etc.

These mini-plans are to be reviewed and compiled into a final, single draft to be submitted to all Tier III members, with the aim for final approval by the spring members meeting.

It is the goal of Tier III to have fun with a program which is also vitally important to the long-range viability of the Island. It is the sincere hope of all members of Tier III to have others join us. Unlike

"The goal of Tier III is to have fun while ensuring the long-range viability of the Island."

Tier II which benefits from exclusivity, Tier III benefits from inclusivity. We regard the money we spend as an investment in the Island's future. The single greatest incentive for belonging to Tier III is to participate in the active management of an unparalleled natural resource. It is rare in life to have such opportunity and rarer still to be organized to do something about it.

- Nicholas Higgins

Sweet Grass, continued from page 4

We know that native basketmakers ple the tourist trade in the summers and even visited Roque in their canoes filled with baskets, this within the memory of my mother, Ellen. Whether Grandma's weaving basket dates from those days, or more recently, it is still treasured as an exquisitely made artifact and repository of memories and the bits and pieces of daily life.

slender, very shiny, soft to touch and silky, and has translucent warm green color. Pick a blade - bend, roll and scrunch it in your fingers and smell - ahhh, sweet grass!

Sweet grass must be harvested carefully, a small handful at a time. The natives pull it out by the roots and comb and hang it up to dry. But, careful of our precious resources, I prefer to cut it with a knife, near the bottom, then tie a bunch with a blade of grass. I carry it back to the house, spread it on newspaper in a single layer and let it dry. It can be used immediately, but the moisture content causes quite a bit of shrinking and whatever you make will be loose. It works well just letting it dry for a day, it will still be flexible and green and absolutely delightful to work with. I can think of no happier occupation than sitting on the porch

of the house at Roque Island in the sun for a few hours and making things out of sweet grass. I have made up a little doll form I call a sweet grass maiden, or fairy, some with wings. They somehow embody the essence of Roque with their scent and their presence. But a simple braid will keep us well. The grass may be saved indefinitely, but will need to be soaked in hot water before it will be pliable enough to use. The mic mac ladies told me they boil it to soften it and also add a bit of oil - even baby oil - to help preserve the scent.

- Jennifer D. H. Donaldson

Deadline for the next issue of The Thoroughfare is:

5 June 1995