

T H E T H O R O U G H F A R E



Notes from the Board

At the end of January, the Trustees met for the annual budget meeting in Boston. We are very pleased that we were able to decrease the 2018 budget by \$80,000 from last year's budget and, based on changes we made in 2017 and plan for this year, the island is running more efficiently.

Some highlights from the meeting include:

- Draw from the endowment for 2018 has been reduced another quarter percent (to 4.25%).
- An in-depth costing of the Farm vs. the Homestead was presented, from work by a sub-committee of the Finance Committee.
- The capital campaign has been quite successful to date, and includes a major donation of a portrait of Olga Eliza Gardner for the benefit of the farm operation by the Bob Monks family.
- Capital reserves have been increased to more accurately budget for annual repairs and maintenance.
- Deferred maintenance program is progressing, with major work scheduled on portions on the Main Barn and the Red House.
- Off-budget fundraising is in progress for restoring the historic waterfront buildings.

At the Annual Meeting this year we will be discussing the possibility of the farm and homestead being managed as separate, but interdependent, operations. It is vital to our unity as a family and future of the island that the operational model is both realistic and forward-thinking. It is critical that we debate and think through the possibilities.

- Should they be managed separately or stay as is?
- Could the farm be a viable stand-alone enterprise (e.g. active selling of lamb meat) or become an educational center under the aegis of the Maine Farmland Trust?
- Do we prefer a caretaker/farmer model?

It was a challenging winter with a skeleton crew; however, Jay and Stephanie successfully – with smiles on their faces – navigated through it. To that end, I would like to thank our committed staff and volunteers. We are indebted to them for the time and care they put into everything and, at times, under trying circumstances. Budget planning, project managing, legal work, editing, communicating, financial planning, and pioneering projects are just some of the things they do. Thank you again!

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News from the Island

by Jay Trayner and Stephanie Gardner

If any of you read the New York Times, you may have seen a recent story titled “Life on an Island: Silence, Beauty and a Long Wait for the Ferry.” Although this article was primarily based on the residents of Matinicus Island, we here on Roque, feel the same “frontier sensibility.”

We experienced the coldest January that we can remember with temps hovering in the negatives for over two weeks. It has been an extremely icy winter with relatively no snow. I think we only had one or two plowable snowstorms (so far). The bay did not freeze over completely but our mainland pier was surrounded by ice for a few weeks.

The fall and winter months have been spent interviewing new employees. As of today, we have a young couple from Pennsylvania, who are here for a trial basis. Yesterday was their first day and we spent it working together cutting ice and filling the ice house with 105, 17 inch thick blocks. It was a picture-perfect day with bright sun, temps in the high forties and finishing at dusk with a large moon. The day ended with everyone feeling excited for this accomplishment.

After several months of re-hab, we have officially moved to the house on the hill. Leaving the ISH available for a new couple. Ethan Gutt has eagerly accepted the cook position and we are still interviewing for a boatman/maintenance person.

Wood is being harvested for firewood and mill purposes and preparations are being made for several work projects ahead. The farmhouse is next on the project list to receive new counters and sinks along with a painted floor in the dining room and kitchen.

We are in new employee training mode, hoping to be fully staffed and ready to go for the upcoming season.

March has come in like a lion, wind gusts today over 50 mph from the Northeast, waves splashing over the pier.

Barnyard Buzz

by Stephanie Gardner

Spring is in the air, but the winds are howling from the Northeast. The greenhouse is empty of sawdust for the ice house and onions are planted and Brussel sprouts are transplanted. The farm has a new baby. Her name is Frannie and she is a jersey/angus cross born to our Ella. Both mom and babe are doing well. Lambing season will be next, starting any time mid-March through April. Baby chicks will be here in a couple of weeks followed by piglets in April. Soon we will have barnyard babies filling each space of the barns. Surely the sign of a busy season!

Trevor Bourgault has been hired as a farm intern. Trevor came to us through the WWOOF program after spending some time in Hawaii and Washington State. Originally from Saco Maine, Trevor is interested in learning as much about farming as he can in hopes of having his own homestead one day.

It has been an icy winter for all the animals and they are quite happy the temps have risen, and the ice has melted. George enjoyed an entire winter outside his pen running with the pack.

As always, I look forward to another year filled with anticipation of “what this farming season will bring”.



Baby Frannie and Ella



From the Historical Records

The Shanks Brothers

This is taken from an article published in the Harper's Monthly of 1909, by Holman Day, entitled *The Queer Folk of the Maine Coast*

On Little Spruce Island I found three old men, brothers –William, Daniel, and Nehemiah Shanks they have lived there all their lives in a tumble-down little shelter. They are melancholy old men. They are contented, but the sea has brought to them a strange, brooding, wistful solemnity. William and Daniel never married. Nehemiah has had a poor little romance that broke his heart. When he was young he used to go with his father to Portland to sell their fare of fish. The only woman to whom he had ever spoken was his mother - for no one except the Shanks family has ever lived a Little Spruce. A woman of the waterside in Portland made him her prey for the sake of his little hoard of savings, married him, induced him to forge his father's name and draw the family savings from the bank - and then deserted him. He went home with his confession of wrongdoing.

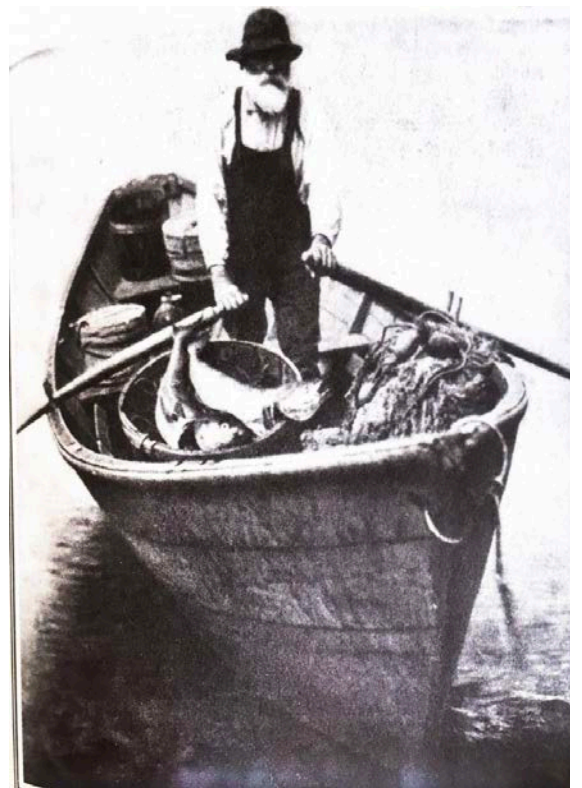
“Then you must look out for the boys after I'm dead” said his father, forgiving him. Nehemiah has spent his life “looking out for the boys,” who are now infirm old men.

“It is my duty in return for my father's pardon of my wrongdoing,” he told me, “and I've tried to do my best. I am the youngest, and I am best able to work.”

For more than twenty years William has never come out of the hut into the sunshine. He told me that he fears the sun might heat his brains and interfere with his life work which is the composition of poetry. There is a blanket hung across one end of the hut. William sits behind the blanket and fixes his eyes on the sunlight that enters through a knothole and “composes”. He states that now he is the author of 1000 pieces of poetry. He has committed nothing to paper. He has memorized all of them, he says.

While William idles, Nehemiah tills the little garden, catches fish, digs clams and cooks. He is cheerfully the burden of bearer, and with some pride says that he is the head of the family; for when his father imposed the trust on him he did so with a ceremony truly patriarchal: he gave into Nehemiah's hands the staff on which he had leaned for many years, saying that it should be the badge of Nehemiah's authority. Nehemiah describes the same to me, tears trickling down his wrinkled cheeks. Memory was only a partial spur to this grief.

Daniel, after more than 60 years of obedience has become a most amazing rebel. He had declared that another flood had been prophesied to him in a vision, and that he had been ordered to build an ark on Little Spruce. Little Spruce is owned by a Lady in Boston as part of an extensive holding of islands. The Shanks brothers have been permitted to remain as squatters on condition that they do not disturb the standing timber. Nehemiah gave this promise to the manager of the estate. Daniel, though three score and 10, took the family axe, handsaw, and hammer and proceeded to his labors on his ark. Nehemiah stood in front of the lordly spruce that Daniel was about to attack with the axe and in the name of the Shanks family forbade him to chop.



Nehemiah Shanks - Photo by Frederick Thompson



Daniel had the zeal of monomania and insisted. Then Nehemiah brandished the family staff and threatened to chastise the disobedient son of their father. Daniel, in a frenzy, made at his brother with the axe, routed him, captured the staff, chopped it up, and then began on the tree. He laid waste quite a section of woodland before Nehemiah got word to the agent. Then in high dudgeon, Daniel built a shack of his own. He lives in it and refuses to speak to his brothers. Nehemiah, tall, grave, dignified with the flowing white beard of a patriarch stood upon a knoll and pointed over to Daniel's hut and told me of the unfortunate affair, sorrowfully, without anger. Daniel realizing that his misdeeds were exposed to a stranger shook his fists from afar and leaped up and down in what was apparently ecstasy of rage. He waylaid me before I had left Little Spruce and informed me that after being bossed by his brother for more than 60 years he proposed to run his own affairs for the rest of his life. Nehemiah came in his turn to the shore after Daniel had trudged away to his hut cracking, his hard little fists above his head in his temper.

"I still hope to be able to meet father at the door of Heaven and tell him that I kept the Shanks family together and kept it decent as he would have liked to have me have keep it," said Nehemiah sadly. "Daniel was always hard to manage; father found him so. But I think he will come back to his home, for I am the only one in the family who can cook things as mother used to cook them."

Downeast Dispatch (1)

Letter from RBCC

Jay and Stephanie,

Some of the moon driven storm tides have been pushing across Jan's beach at a more frequent rate than years past. I've noticed the sand and gravel on the road and driftwood pushed back into the bare boned rose bushes on my occasional walks. The recent monsoon deluge accompanied by unusually warm temperatures bloated the Machias and Middle Rivers to their extremes. The quick freeze that followed left glistening ice chunks littered along the rivers edge giving these water bodies a surreal lake like quality.

These are some of the "off season" images that inspire awe and wonder. It is part of the raw beauty of the Bluffs and the Machias Valley and help to soften these harsh winter months.

Thank you for your generous contribution of \$50 to the Annual Appeal. These donations are the lifeblood of the Roque Bluffs Community Center. They help keep the doors open and by doing so provide an important social and cultural dimension to the community. Last year's proceeds have enabled RBCC to embark on overdue infrastructure projects. specifically insulating the building with blown-in cellulose (walls R13, ceiling R48), repairing weathered windowsills, chinking fiberglass around windows and installing double hung, simulated 6 over 6 double pane replacement windows and screens. The total cost for these upgrades was \$10,215. Our fund raising efforts plus a \$5000 draw from savings enabled us to cover these costs.

During the past year the Community Center, the Roque Bluffs Chapel and the Jonesboro/ Roque Bluffs Firefighters Auxiliary have continued to find ways to work together. The events included the Town-Wide Yard Sale, the popular chowder fest at the first annual Chinese Auction. In September the Center collaborated with the Chapel serving a delicious lobster/seafood casserole to raise money for the chapel belfry. The weekend before Thanksgiving our Roque Bluffs and Jonesboro neighbors were invited to a Roque Bluffs Chapel "Service of Thanksgiving". The occasion honoring our dedicated firefighters from both towns was followed by a pot luck supper in the firehouse with over 60 attendees.

This year's goal will be to paint the Center.

Thanks as always for your support.

David Downey

President

The Roque Bluffs Community Center, Inc.



Downeast Dispatch (2)

Stonington couple works to boost fisheries restoration

By Samuel Campbell

When driving east to Roque, one either comes the shore route, which takes you through Milbridge and over the estuary of the Narraguagus river; or the inland route (182) which brings you out to Route 1 in Cherryfield, a picturesque town with a river running through it, as Robert Redford would put it. Now known as the blueberry capital of the world, it used to be a prized destination for anglers who came to “kill” salmon.

The Narraguagus is 55 miles long, its source is Eagle Lake, and it was formerly well known for sport fly-fishing for Atlantic salmon. If a Stonington couple, Robin Alden and Ted Ames, have anything to say on the subject, the salmon could be back, if they can manage to restore the alewife and herring stocks by improving the accessibility of the river to these anadromous fish. This restoration could be duplicated in other major Maine rivers like the Penobscot, the Union at Ellsworth, and the mighty St. Croix at the New Brunswick border. And then maybe the cod and other ground fish in the ocean waters would also return. Ted Ames said "right now for the fish it's like going to a restaurant and there is nothing on the menu." Robin Alden says, "The Narraguagus has one major dam, just above Cherryfield, and it is there primarily for ice control to prevent downstream flooding, so dam removal is only one possible solution to improving fish passage and any solution must address flood risk. The dam does have a fish ladder, but it is imperfect and prevents access to more than 80% of the habitat in the watershed. Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) and the Downeast Salmon Federation are starting both the community conversations and eventually, the engineering studies to design safe alternatives."

Robin Alden and Ted Ames have had a profound impact on Maine fisheries over the last four decades. Co-founding the Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries (MCCF) has been the culmination of this personal and professional relationship. Robin was the founding Executive Director and Ted Ames was a founding board member and Senior Advisor for the organization. Robin, for reasons she hasn't completely explained to me, left Yale in 1971 and started writing for Stonington's weekly newspaper, which seems to have worked out pretty well! She also served as Angus King's Commissioner of Marine Resources in the mid 90's.

Ted grew up as commercial fisherman on Vinalhaven. He holds a Biochemistry M.S. from the University of Maine, and is a nationally recognized ecologist. He told me his lobster pots "are in the back yard." and "I am 78".

MCCF is the latest expression of their life-long mission to bridge the gap between fishermen, regulators and scientists and provide a basis for shared governance.

Squire's Point

Some Effects of Global Warming in Eastern Maine

By George Herrick

The Eastern Maine Conservation Initiative (EMCI) received 21 proposals, an unusually high number, for grants this year. Loud and clear was the concern for the already detectable signs of global warming on many of nature's bounties we have taken for granted at Roque Island. Herewith a few snippets from the scientists' reports.

Blue mussels, a keystone species, whose habitat once covered 2/3 of the intertidal zone in the Gulf of Maine, have declined by over 60% since the late 1970s. Today these mussels cover less than 15% of their historic territory, and clam landings have declined by 75%. Recent research suggests that warming water temperatures are contributing to ocean acidification and to the increased presence of invasive species. Aquatic acidification has also endangered Atlantic Salmon habitat in the rivers.

The Gulf of Maine is warming at a rate faster than 99% of the world's oceans. Rapid environmental change has implications for the ecological resilience of the Gulf. Kelp forests, which promote biodiversity and provide food and shelter



for hundreds of species are at risk. They require long term monitoring.

In the Gulf of Maine the present rate of sea level rise, coupled with storm action, is causing extremely severe ongoing coastal erosion and redistribution of marine sediment containing commercial biota. The general rule of thumb for recession of cliffs composed of soft glacial sediments, including sand and gravel, such as in Washington County at Cutler, is that for every inch of sea level rise the shoreline recedes 200 feet before stabilization.

EMCI is considering proposals to study and address all of those marine problems in addition to ones considering the decline of the Spruce Grouse population, the expansion of woody plant species in our area, and the decline of honey bee colonies with their importance for crop pollination.

For those of us with EMCI it is indeed exciting to be a part of the effort of the best scientists in the region to understand and address these problems of global climate change in Washington County and, indeed, right on our shores at Roque Island. We urge you to join our cause – and to take note of some of these changes on your visit to the island.

In Memoriam Norman Famous (1948-2018) by George Herrick

Norman C. Famous, Roque Island's Senior Naturalist for 28 years, passed away on 28 January, 2018. A Naturalist's naturalist and a double-barreled botanist and ornithologist, Norm laid the foundation for RIGHC's conservation plan and for the Eastern Maine Conservation Initiative (EMCI) putting Roque Island years ahead of other private conservation organizations in Eastern Maine. He was hired in 1989, initially for some years with his wife Marcia Spencer Famous, "to identify ecologically sensitive areas, prepare a map of wetlands, undertake a flora of principal vascular plants and bryophytes, determine the status of breeding birds and establish a natural resource management plan," objectives he never stopped refining. He left a completed Flora of Roque Island, a Natural Resources Inventory, an Annotated Bird List of 300 species and much wisdom about the natural state of Roque and how to look after it. He was also instrumental in bringing dozens of leading environmental scientists to visit Roque and share their insights. Norm's bird watching skills were almost legendary: he could identify birds in night migration by their overhead call notes. He added about forty new species to Roque's list, bringing it to the magical number of 300. Never one to stay on the beaten path, Norm was once stranded up to his waist in water in a bog somewhere near Bangor needing rescue by helicopter. Always cheerful and friendly, Norm was a familiar sight for many years on Roque. He was born and grew up in a small town near Philadelphia, graduated in Earth and Space Sciences from a small local college and moved on to the University of Maine at Orono to take an

M.A. degree in Plant Systematics, later moving to Machiasport where he lived for many years, practicing as an environmental consultant, specializing in wetlands ecology. Norm requested that his ashes be spread on the Machias River mudflats so the sandpipers might carry him all over the world. *A rara avis* indeed.





The crew L. to R.: Ethan Gutt, Jane Herbert, Stephanie Gardner, Jay Treyner, Clayton Herbert, Virginia Nolan, Mike Netwig, Trevor Bourgault. Photos by Ethan Gutt



**Ice Harvest
February 26, 2018**





Flotsam

George Herrick will be celebrating his 80th birthday on April 8.

Maitland (Sandy) Alexander died in early February. He was the father of Benjamin and Sarah. He was born in Sewickley, PA, but spent his adult life in Maine, first in Portland and Bath, and then for the last 20 years on Islesboro, where his family had spent many summers. He was a man of many talents and was known for always jumping in to help those in need. On one trip to Roque Island by sailboat he enthusiastically stepped in to help Tex deliver a breached calf! Nothing in his life matched the love he had for his two grandchildren Laughlin (7) and Maitland (2).

From the Kitchen Cupboard

Maple Caramelized Brussels Sprouts and Bacon

By Ethan Gutt

It's been a busy winter here on the Island. New people, new routines and even a new arrival. Our winter stores have kept us all well fed. In the root cellar we even have a few nice stalks of brussels sprouts left from last year's harvest. So, with the sap running and spring on its way, I thought I'd share with you a great easy recipe and a surefire way to get the picky eaters in your life to eat their vegetables.

Ingredients

1 pound of Brussels sprouts
 4 slices of Bacon
 3 Tablespoons of Maple syrup
 Salt and Pepper to taste

Directions

Cook the bacon in a cast iron pan until a good amount of the fat has rendered, and the bacon is just beginning to get crispy. Set the bacon aside.

Now reduce the heat to medium/low and sauté the Brussels sprouts in the bacon fat for about ten minutes, turning occasionally. In the meantime, chop the bacon into bite sized bits.

Add the maple syrup and bacon to the skillet, then cook for another ten minutes, turning frequently. It's done when the maple syrup thickens and the brussels sprouts become fork tender.

Season lightly with salt and pepper and enjoy



We want your articles and photographs!

To submit an article or photograph for the next Thoroughfare, please contact the editor, Nina Herrick.

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Henceforth we will be publishing online. Let her know if you would prefer a paper copy.

Please consider the horses!

Our four footed friends are now retired.

Do remember the years of service and joy they have given us!

Their upkeep adds up to \$4200 year.

Help defray the costs by signing up

or continuing your membership in the "Horse Club"