



## Isle au Haut Historical Society

Volume 1 Number 1

February 2019

### 2018 Annual Report

Some of Last season's highlights:

On 2 August, our very own Karen Wilson spoke on The Limnology of Long Pond followed by Harold Van Doren, our much beloved past president, who returned to the Island last summer and shared a deeply personal and moving account of his new life on Lopez Island in Washington State.



On 9 August, David Townsend, Professor of Oceanography at the University of Maine spoke on the history and oceanography of the Gulf of Maine as well as insights and recent observed changes that have taken place and their implications.

Both talks were very well attended.

The Great Cranberry Island Historical Society visited Isle au Haut in late August. About 25 of

their members arrived on the Sunbeam and attended a church service which was followed by a luncheon at the Town Hall. Thanks to the efforts of Allen Myers, Kendra Chubbuck, Mabel Ellis and many volunteers, their visit was a great success. GCIHS is a lively and thriving Historical Society and a source of inspiration for ours. Phil Whitney, their president, graciously extended an invitation for our Society to visit theirs. If you are interested in learning more about the Great Cranberry Island Historical Society, to

see what they have accomplished, please take a peek at their recent newsletter:

<http://www.gcihs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/GCIHS-Cranberry-Chronicle-Number-39-December-2018-FINAL-Single-Pages-12.4.18.pdf>

GCIHS's summer visit to Isle au Haut is described on pages 20-21.

Summer 2019 is looking equally exciting.

As of late February :

We are planning a preliminary visit to Great Cranberry Island Historical Society this

summer to prepare for a much larger contingent in 2020 when the Sunbeam is back in service.

Our Summer line up so far:

On August 8, Bob Gerber will speak about his new monograph, *Special Places Off-Trail of Acadia National Park on Isle au Haut*.

On August 15, Glen Mittlehauser, the executive director of Maine Natural History Observatory, will speak on *The Maine Bird Atlas - what we know and do not know about birds on Maine's larger offshore islands*.

<http://www.mainenaturalhistory.org/home>

Kathie Fiveash will show slides and share her experience as science coordinator at the IAH school. No date specified as yet.

Other possible evenings may include A Night of Island Stories with the Island school children, Jeff Runge on Oceanography and photographer Peter Ralston on his trip to the Pacific Northwest,

Your Society met several times during the summer and is working diligently to search for a permanent home for our collections. We are also trying our best to expand the awareness, importance and relevance of preserving our very unique past.

Please support your Historical Society and come to our summer talks.  
All are welcome.

Respectfully submitted,  
Tom Guglielmo, Acting President  
Kris Carlson-Lewis, Acting Secretary

## Reed Organs Galore!



I came to Isle au Haut in 2012 to fix some problems on the church's 1946 Estey reed organ. Little did I know that (1) I would find 13 other reed organs on the

Island, and (2) that I would become the Island's pastor. A visit to each of the Island's fourteen reed organs and a great deal of digging in the well-organized files of the IAH Historical Society and in papers turned over to the church by Harold van Doren has resulted in two articles about the instruments.

The first part of the two-part article has just been published: "The Reed Organs of Isle au Haut: Part I—The Island Church." *Reed Organ Society Quarterly* 37(3): 5 – 11 (2018).

There are copies of this journal in the town library as well as in the Historical Society's files. The article covers the five reed organs that have served the church over the last 134 years since about 1885. Four of these reed organs



exist on the island; the fifth is known only from an undated photograph of the church interior sometime prior to 1904. One of them, it turns out, was never used in the church proper, but has graced the parsonage probably since it was built (in 1915) for the then pastor/medical doctor Frank Snell and his wife Alice, to whom this organ belonged.

I have been unable to find written or photographic evidence of a reed organ in the church prior to 1885, although my research in

the archives documents a lively musical tradition associated with the church and island families going back to at least the founding of the church in 1857.

Documenting the history of a particular reed organ is not usually very easy: they are quite portable. Eight different manufacturers are represented on the Island, most from New England, but one from Ithaca, New York, and another from Washington, NJ. I identified the Carpenter (in Ted Hoskins's former residence) from an old photo of the church interior showing an organ with missing stop knobs—replaced at some point with sewing thread spools! Not the usual “diagnostic feature”!

In Part II, I will treat the privately-owned reed organs on the island, several of which have roots in old island families. I am currently restoring two of these. One, an ~1885 Worcester Organ Company reed organ, belonged at one time to Lillian Hamilton Robinson (grandmother of Jim Greenlaw), used in the Greenlaw family homestead at Robinson Cove. Jim remembers as a boy “fooling around” on this instrument during summer visits from Connecticut. Next summer, I plan to continue with the restoration of an E.P. Carpenter (1904) that was used in the church prior to the present reed organ.

The story of the Island's reed organs is a window on the musical life of the Island, as well as a microcosm of the reed organ industry in the late nineteenth century—its heyday. Although some of the organs on the island do not currently work, all are restorable to playing condition. And those that still work continue to provide music—without electricity.

Allen C. Myers

## **Theresa Damon and the Island**

Not long after we moved into our new seasonal home on Isle au Haut, I heard a knock on the door and to my delight, there stood Barbara Brown, IAH historian. She offered us a picture of the summer home of Theresa Damon, which formerly stood on our property fronted by the timeless stone wall. How thoughtful and considerate! Given my hobby of family genealogy and research coupled with a curious nature, I had to find out: who was Theresa Damon?

Theresa Damon was born 25 May 1851 Charlestown, Massachusetts, the daughter of John W. and Anita (Fales) Damon. Theresa's parents were apparently married in Havana, Cuba. John W. Damon was a lawyer and, before the days of refrigeration, a well-known ice merchant based in Havana. Theresa was one of four children. Her sister Catalina died in infancy, a brother John W. during childhood and her father when she was about 12 years old, leaving her mother Anita, sister Charlotte and Theresa. By the 1870 U.S. Census, they had relocated to Manhattan in New York City.

Theresa is on Park Avenue in New York for the 1880 and 1900 U.S. Census and also the 1915 New York State Census. Theresa appears in the 1910 local census as a summer resident of Isle au Haut. She traveled extensively abroad with her mother and sister and later with friends as surmised from international passenger lists [Ancestry.com].

Theresa's mother died in 1901 and about this time purchased the property of John Edwin and Margaret Helen Barter of Boston, Massachusetts on Isle au Haut along the thoroughfare. The Barters had owned the property since 1875. Theresa bought an additional tract of land containing about 2 ¼ acres (part of Lot 8) adjoining her original property from Charles H. Turner, guardian of

Abel Hamilton in 1910 and built a summer home.



The Isle au Haut property remained in Theresa's hands until her death on 1 Sep 1923. Theresa was buried with her parents and siblings at Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Theresa wrote her will 2 Jan 1922 and her estate was probated 19 Feb 1924. Her will bequeathed her property on Isle au Haut to her two nephews (children of her late sister, Charlotte), Julian Peabody [of Westbury, NY] and John D. Peabody [of Manhattan, NY] as well as niece, Anita Haddon [Cold Spring Harbor, NY]. Shortly thereafter, her property on Isle au Haut was sold by the same niece and nephews to Harlon F. Stone of New York City (the Stone Cottage!). Rumor suggests property on Merchant's Island is still in the hands of the Damon/Peabody family.

Theresa's life on Isle au Haut remains a mystery. If you have any knowledge of her life on the island, I would appreciate hearing from you.

[Further details on the life of Theresa Damon as well as source documentation can be found at the Isle au Haut Historical Society]

Kristen Carlson-Lewis  
IAH HS Member

## Lighthouse Restoration Coming this Summer

*NOTE: On February 25<sup>th</sup> 2019, The Lighthouse Committee conditionally chose a bid from Knowles Construction to carry out Phase One of the lighthouse restoration. The timeline calls for the contract to be signed on March 15<sup>th</sup>, pending approval from both parties and putting together funding. Construction is scheduled this summer from June 1 through August 21.*



In 1986 the Isle au Haut lighthouse became listed on the National Register of Historic Places. With that recognition, our flashing beacon at the harbor entrance came under the watchful eye of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act and the State of Maine Historic Preservation Office. In 1998, a decade later, the Town voted overwhelmingly to accept the ownership of the tower under the terms of the Maine Lights Bill of 1996. During these past twenty years the Town of Isle au Haut Lighthouse Committee has carried out a series of restoration and maintenance projects. The project includes restoration of some of the tower's most unique features which were destroyed in the 1940s and 50s.

We have raised the money - most of it - and selected a contractor to carry out Phase One. Scopes to be accomplished include the replacement of all structural steel components, including the fog bell support,

restoration of the interior brick wall that supports the steel framing, the installation of the twin fog bell doors on the water side, and the strengthening of the footbridge to the tower. Also - as a prelude to re-pointing the entire granite base during Phase Two - the contractor will be injecting strategically located pads of mortar in the base's joints to avoid any destabilization.

The Lighthouse Committee would like to invite the Historical Society to join with us in this crucial period. Rare is the opportunity to not only record and preserve the Islands legacy, but to actually restore some of the most important missing characteristics that gave identity to our past. Working with The State Historic Preservation Office and the professionals trained in these authentic techniques are tools that may well come in handy in future projects. We would most graciously accept any invitation to join you at your first Society gathering this July to give you a tour of the then-to-be active construction, and present a plan for your consideration on how the Society could support this historic project.

Keep the Light Shining,  
Jeff Burke, For the Town of Isle au Haut  
Lighthouse Committee.

### Photo Credits

1. P1 header. Merchants Cove. Mary Fennell
2. P1 Boom Beach. Mary Fennell
3. P2 E.P. Carpenter Reed Organ, Brattlebore, VT. Allen Myers
4. P2 Reed Organ Society Journal. Allen Myers
5. P4 Damon House. Kris Carlson-Lewis
6. P4 The Lighthouse. Mary Fennell
7. P6 Island Folks. Mary Fennell

**Some Island Folks from Head Harbor**



The Wilsons, Jim and Sharen.



Harold and Ellard



The Woollens, Ian, Jake and Sue.



The McBeans, Jean and Marshall