

# Vinalhaven Historical Society

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## 2022 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

### LOCAL NEWS

GREETING. **Once more this world has traveled its three hundred sixty and five days' journey, and as eighteen hundred and eighty-four commences its pilgrimage, so does the WIND ; and through its columns we offer our friends and patrons, our kindly greeting for the New Year. We desire to make our little sheet worthy of home patronage, and give to our readers the best home news we can obtain.**

And so began Vinalhaven's first local newspaper, written, edited, and printed by O. P. Lyons and Charles Healey. The first issue, January 5, 1884, was a single 22" by 15" folded sheet of paper with news of the granite companies, schools, poems, advertisements, and "Little Cyclones," which seems to be the Facebook of 1884 reporting on who went to Rockland, when clubs were meeting, how many pounds of fish were brought into the Lane & Libby fish processing plant, and who was at home with a bad cold. There was also world news interspersed with quips like "What belongs to Frank Walls, yet is used by everyone more than himself? His name!" and "What is the largest room in S. G. Webster's new building? The room for improvements!" By April, Healey had moved on, and Lyons became the sole editor and proprietor.

This version of the Wind lasted until August of the same year, just 23 editions, due to financial reasons. Lyons wrapped up the final issue writing "The Wind has not been a paying investment and therefore to continue its publication any longer, we feel, would necessitate an outlay of labor and money which we can ill afford. ... Although not financially a success our little sheet has met the requirements of what a home paper should be."

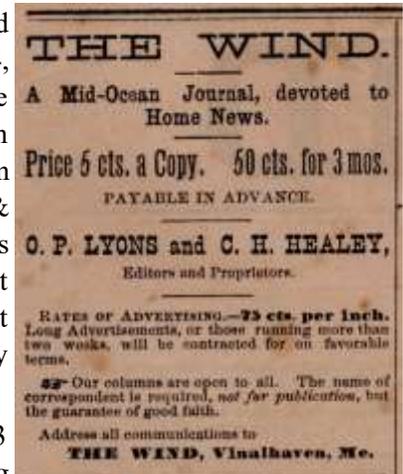
Several others tried to get a newspaper going including The Owl, The Wasp, and The Saturday Night, all rumored to have been in the works in 1894, but never made it to publication. Others were more successful: The Messenger (1885), The Vinalhaven Echo (1887-1889), The Islander (1900-1910), and the Vinalhaven Neighbor (1937-1939).

In 1974, Reverend Raymond Blaisdell, pastor of the Union Church, resurrected the Wind as a church newsletter; a one page flyer with church news, but also announcements, advertisements, and thank you notes. The paper quickly grew, increasing in paper size and also number of pages. Pictures of the graduating class of 1974 were the first photos to be printed in the Wind. That year, about 1200 copies were printed every week, and the paper was supported entirely by donations and volunteer work.



Fast forward nearly 50 years and the Wind is still going strong! The paper is still assembled by volunteers, meeting Tuesdays to mock-up the pages, and Thursdays to address and stamp those that are mailed out, and volunteers still deliver and distribute Winds to boxes and businesses around town. The Wind is available online through the Town's website (a change made during the pandemic), which did decrease subscriptions slightly, but roughly 1400 copies are printed weekly in the summer, with about 250 of those being mailed. Some of the largest issues have been 15 or 16 pages, but most average 8 or 9 pages. In addition to the classic content, the Wind now also includes trivia, pictures, jokes, restaurant hours, school news, business and personal advertisements, and so much more!

This summer we'll feature some original 1884 Winds as well as issues of other local newspapers, including those mentioned above. Thank you to all the volunteers who have kept the Wind blowing each week!



## DEEP WATERS

In August of 1947, 75 years ago, Hollywood was preparing to descend on Vinalhaven. 20th Century Fox was planning a film adaptation of Ruth Moore's novel *Spoonhandle*, and Vinalhaven was being considered as a location for production. The first mention in the *Courier Gazette* of this exciting event was only a small column, less than five inches of space, on page seven, titled *Making A Movie: Vinalhaven, Rockland, and Port Clyde Will Be Scene of Operations*. The article explains that Director Henry King, and his entourage, have spent a week surveying locations along the coast and have decided the majority of filming will be done on Vinalhaven. The entire job should only take about four weeks, and they are arranging housing for about 70 persons assigned to the picture. Over the next couple weeks, more headlines including



Crews and film equipment arrive aboard the Vinalhaven II

*Film Stars Coming* and *Movie Folks Arrive* appeared, but usually tucked in the back pages of the newspaper. September 12, 1947 it was reported that cast and crew will arrive in time to begin work by September 22nd, and although supposedly not cast at the time of the article, "Dana Andrews will probably play the lead with Ann Revere, Academy Award winner in 1946, playing opposite. Jean Peters and Cesar Romero have also been cast in major roles."



The October 10, 1947 issue of the *Courier Gazette* featured a whole page on the filming action. Several photos accompany the article with subtitles like *Hollywood and Vinalhaven Meet*, *Donny and Johnny are Pals*, and *Movie Folks Help Home Folks* take up all of page eight. The lengthy article describes the cast and technicians attending dances at the Redmen's Hall, playing pool and bowling at Cascade Lanes, and beach-combing in between scenes. It also describes Dean Stockwell, who was just ten years old at the time of filming, alternating rapidly from acting to schooling during scene changes. Dean and his stand-in, John Bickford, became fast friends, often talking about lobstering, acting, fishing, rowing, and playing ball with other local kids. John appears in scenes



Above: Dean Stockwell and John Bickford

Lower: Les Dyer's boat, *Hazel R*, was used throughout the movie

where Dean's character, Donny, is rowing, because Dean hadn't learned yet! John wasn't the only islander to appear in the movie. Bert and Joe Dyer were part of several boat scenes, Clarence Conway was the newsboy, and Madeline Smith and Mora Thomas made minor appearances. It is stated over and over how much the entire crew enjoyed their stay and the friendships made in the Vinalhaven community. There are numerous pictures in the Museum's collection of the actors taking time to sit and talk with many in the community. One



Courier Gazette article featured a picture of Anne Revere helping Mrs. Edith Thomas with dinner dishes, while the Portland Press Herald featured a picture of her helping Mrs. Allston Roberts paper the walls of the Roberts home, where she stayed during filming. Snip-its in the social column tell of supporting actress, Miss Mae Marsh, attending bridge parties with Mrs. Frank Thomas, Mrs. Harry Coombs, Mrs. Max Conway, Mrs. Vera Johnson, and many others.

The Vinalhaven scenes were completed at the end of October, and

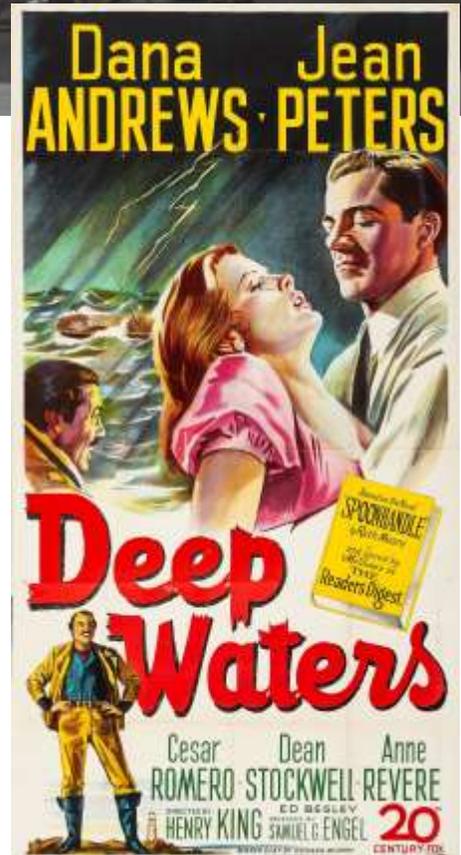


the troupe went on to Rockland to film scenes at the Knox County Courthouse, and at the Ridge Church in St. George.

After some more scenes in the studio in Hollywood, and then editing, *Deep Waters* debuted July 18, 1948. The Strand Theatre in Rockland was showing it four times on Sunday, and, at first, three times each day, Monday through Wednesday, but had to add an additional evening show due to the remarkable crowds. It was also shown at the Gem Theatre on Vinalhaven three times a day between the 18th and the 21st. John Bickford, accompanied by his mother, was invited to the premier showing at the Strand Theatre in Portland and to an interview broadcast over the radio.

In the end, the majority of the reviews were favorable, besides the few jabs at the storm scene, filmed on a Hollywood soundstage, and the beautiful scenery being shown in sepia and not in technicolor. Local lobstermen found the halibut scene rather fishy, noting that Cesar Romero should not be setting his lobster pots in the same location as he was fishing.

A pop-up showing of *Deep Waters* will be held this summer. Watch the Wind and social media for more details.



## DIRIGO TREASURE HUNT

We've had numerous inquiries about three numbers on the cannon in town. At first we were very confused by the sudden interest, but were eventually clued in... get it? *clued* in!... to the Dirigo Treasure Hunt. A deck of cards with images from all across the state and a fold out brochure guide you through four levels of puzzles, to find the seven Dirigo Stones, ultimately leading you to \$20,000 hidden somewhere in the State of Maine! As of this writing, the treasure has not been found! If you'd like to try out your treasure hunting skills or for more information visit [dirigotreasuresmaine.com](http://dirigotreasuresmaine.com).

And speaking of treasure... The following article appeared in the Vinalhaven Neighbor December 15, 1937.

### THOSE MYSTERIOUS MARKINGS

The markings in the ledge at Coombs' Neck have been a source of wonderment and mystery to the towns-people from the time of their discovery up to the present and the mystery is still unsolved.

One of the marks is rectangular in shape; it is about sixteen inches long and tapers from four and a half inches to three and a half inches wide.

Chiseled into the rock about an inch deep on the edges of the marking it curves to the center making a convex surface.

There is a cluster of small cat spruces around the ledge which hides the markings from view and makes them hard to find unless one has been there before.

About one hundred yards northward of this first mark is another; this one is pear shaped with the small end pointing downward over the ledge in which it is cut. This mark is more than two inches deep, we should say for a guess.

In the Vinalhaven Echo (1888) editor Charles Healey made the following comment: "Two men shouldered their picks and shovels last week and hoofed it to the eastern end of the island to dig for Capt. Kidd's treasure. There has been enough work expended by men who hate work, and who couldn't be persuaded to dig up an onion bed at home, to cultivate a big Dakota farm and nobody has found the fruit of Capt. Kidd's piracies yet."

Well, treasure or no treasure, the guy that chiseled those marks in the ledge at Coombs' Neck surely chose a most romantic spot to do so.

To us the place has a strange lure and some day in the future we're going up there alone and hold a séance with a chap who may bear semblance to the fellow whose picture is at the beginning of this article, if we can induce his shade to come forth out of the unknown and forever lift the veil of mystery which so long has hovered over this spot.



## YEAR IN REVIEW



We seem to be pretty consistent with getting visitors from the entire eastern seaboard! Summer 2021 we saw 629 visitors from 36 states, France, Mexico, Malaysia, Netherlands, and Switzerland. We had a couple groups from Hurricane Island, and the annual group of incoming students from Bowdoin college. Later in the fall, a couple of those Bowdoin students returned to Vinalhaven to interview islanders and get some historical images for a film project on the fishing/lobstering industry titled *Change & Continuity: Vinalhaven*. It can be viewed on YouTube.

We answered over 70 emails for help with maps, boat shops, cemeteries, grange, slugs (that was a fun one!), granite and quarries, sailing tools, Odd Fellows, salt marshes and wetlands, fires, and farming, in addition to calls and emails for research into family history! We were contacted by Holyn Turner in Massachusetts, a high school senior taking a genealogy class who discovered a connection to Vinalhaven through the Dyer family she was never aware of. We enjoyed connecting her with Dyer relatives still on the island and helping her trace her roots! We also created a mini treasure hunt for the Class of 1981 reunion. And, while cleaning out some files, we were able to share a collection of newspapers with the Maine Historical Society and pictures of the Wilder Dam with the Blount County Historical Society, in Maryville, TN.

We would also like to send a special THANK YOU! to Joey and Norman Reidy for helping to transfer some of our VHS tapes to DVD, and scanning slides!

## TECHNOLOGY

When a box of old photos comes into the Museum, there is nothing more exciting than picking up each snap shot and seeing a baby picture, graduation picture, wedding photo, a house before it was renovated or torn down, old lobster boats, parades, birthday parties and celebrations, views of the harbor, Main Street, beaches, quarries, and so much more. Every new devise on the market makes those boxes and albums more rare and precious.

With the majority of us on some sort of social media, photos can be shared instantly and across the world. How many of us actually print even a fraction of the hundreds of photos on our smart phones? With technology changing and advancing daily, will that external hard drive full of images still be readable by newer computers? Will cloud-based storage be assessable 50 years from now? Now, don't get us wrong—we are not against technology or digital images! Having digital images is extremely space saving, and locating an image can be a few clicks away versus hunting through boxes. But with these images being essentially locked in personal accounts, what does that mean for archives such as ours? Remember sitting down with your parents or grandparents and looking at old photo albums? What will that be like with future generations? There are so many questions we just don't have the answer to.

We value each conversation we have with someone who emails or calls looking for information on their family. Helping someone find where a relative lived, where they're buried, or a picture brings us great satisfaction, and may bring in a needed donation to the museum. With websites like Ancestry, FamilySearch, and Findagrave, you can view all this information without talking to anyone or leaving your couch.

With developing technology there have also been great advances in the quality of prints now. Even a home printer can make a nice quality print, and services like Snapfish.com or Shutterfly.com make it very easy to upload, crop, and edit, all your pictures, selecting the best ones for print. When taking pictures now, you can instantly see when an image is dark, blurry, or someone had their eyes closed, instead of finding out when that roll of film comes back in a few weeks, and you don't have to worry about running out of film in the middle of that amazing sunset or your child's first baseball game.

So what does all this mean for museums like ours in the future? Well, we have no idea! We hope that there are still some who enjoy flipping through tangible prints and continue to have them made, and maybe someday there will be someone more tech-savvy than us that can create a digital storage archive where images can be uploaded, tagged with names, dates, locations, and the story to go with them so the history and people of Vinalhaven can be shared and remembered often and fondly.

### ANNUAL APPEAL

The Vinalhaven Historical Society is a non-profit organization. We do not receive annual operating funds from the Town of Vinalhaven. We exist solely because of your donations!

This year was one for the history books! We had a few visitors at the museum, but totals were far from where they would be typically.

Most items on our list this year are structural needs. The Boy Scout Hall needs clapboards repaired and replaced, and the Museum needs paint. It is not easy to maintain one building, let alone two, so there have been discussions on how to reduce or manage our collection to fit into only the Museum space and relinquish our lease of the Boy Scout Hall.

Without visitors, donations, and memberships we are unable to purchase archival materials, upkeep exhibits, create new displays, and maintain the building. Even if you are unable to visit the Museum, please consider supporting our efforts.

The Museum building, built in 1838 in Rockland, was transported to Vinalhaven in 1875. The Historical Society began use of the space over 50 years ago. Not only does the building itself have a fascinating history, but what is contained within its walls is more valuable still.

We appreciate any donation, and value your continued support!

William Chillies,  
President

Amy Lear,  
Vice President

Lucy Bickford,  
Treasurer

Lorraine Bunker,  
Secretary

Elizabeth Bunker,  
Director

#### Board of Directors

Niall Conlan

Alan Lazaro

I. Torry Pratt

Susan Radley

Priscilla Rosen

Marion Tolman

Roger Young

## MILESTONES

**1832** One hundred and ninety years ago Jeremiah Berry of Thomaston was awarded the contract to build a lighthouse at Brown's Head in Vinalhaven. The land, owned by Cyril Brown, was sold to the government for \$350, and a keepers house and light tower were built for \$1800. In August 1832, it was reported that the Brown's Head Lighthouse was "completed, fitted up and ready for lighting."



Just a few months later, there were reports that the lenses were faulty. Contractors who submitted the lowest bid were usually selected for the construction of lighthouses, and therefore cheaper material was used. The wicks and whale oil used in the light caused a great deal of smoke and the contractors had failed to properly ventilate the tower so the reflectors became dirty and ineffective. Measures were taken to remedy this problem, but twenty-five years later (1857) the entire house and light tower would be replaced, due to the same cheap construction. It was during this renovation that a covered walkway was built between the house and tower for easier access, and the whale-oil lamps were replaced with a fifth-order Fresnel lens. Other upgrades along the way have included a boat-house and slip, added in 1895; the intensity of the light was increased in 1901; an oil house was built and cast-iron stairs in the light tower installed in 1903; and a tower with a fog bell was added in 1908. The bell was used until 1969 and is now property of the Museum.

The first keeper to live in the house was David Wooster of North Haven, followed by sixteen other keepers, ending with Charles Lawson. Brown's Head Lighthouse was automated in 1987, ending 155 years as a manned light station.

**1922** One hundred years ago Harold Vinal's first book of poetry, *White April*, was published. Born on Vinalhaven in 1891, Harold was the son of George and Evie (Lane) Vinal and the fourth-great-grandson of John Vinal, for whom Vinalhaven is named.

For a time, Harold lived in Boston and New York where he taught classes in poetry and gave piano lessons. He also operated a book store.

In 1921, Harold founded *Voices: A Journal of Poetry*, a quarterly publication that he was editor of until his death in 1965. In 1922, *White April* was published by Yale University Press as part of their Yale Series of Younger Poets, a contest for poets who have not previously published a book. Harold Vinal was just the 11th winner of the contest that continues to this day.

After moving back to Vinalhaven, Harold was proprietor of "The Moors," a bed and breakfast (and his home) on Lanes Island.

Harold developed glaucoma and moved to a smaller home on Round the Mountain Road. He died March 9, 1965 and is buried in Carver's Cemetery.

### QUERY

I am bound by twilight,  
I am chained by snow,  
I am held a captive  
To winds that blow.

But the careless people  
Laugh as they go by  
Blind to all the wonder  
Of the earth and sky;

Deaf to all the music  
Falling over me;  
Is it they are captive—  
And that I am free?

### LITTLE SONG

Put a fence about my house  
It matters not to me,  
If from the highest window  
I cannot watch the sea.

Scent the rooms with flowers,  
You may leave them bare  
If no salty sea wind  
Wanders there.

Leave tall candles burning,  
A house can be a grave—  
**If it's far from water**  
And a breaking wave.

## VETERAN'S PHOTO PROJECT



Toivo J. Wahlman, locally known as “Teke,” was the son of Finnish emigrants. He was born in Vinalhaven on November 21, 1914, and served in the US Navy in WWII.

In the 1930's Teke played his fiddle with the Pine State Ramblers, an island based “cowboy” band, and was much applauded for inspired renditions of ancient Finnish folk melodies.

On September 26, 1957, Teke was piloting the *Trapper* home from Rockland when an unexpected wind squall overturned the heavily loaded bait boat. The wreck of the *Trapper* were later found with no trace of its 42-year-old pilot.

Roger Young has been diligently collecting photos and histories of Vinalhaven veterans for the American Legion Post 18 and the Historical Society. If you have any stories you would like to share he can be reached at: Roger Young, 221 Old Harbor Road, Vinalhaven, ME, 04863.

## IN MEMORIAM

Our dear friend and long-time volunteer Emily Dean passed away in November, 2021. Emily spent countless days and hours organizing and cataloging in our storage rooms and we will be forever grateful for her skills and guidance.

A board member since 2003, and involved with the Museum long before that, Dallas Anthony, passed away at his home on Vinalhaven in October, 2021. Known locally as Delly, he had a wonderful memory for Vinalhaven history and we will truly miss his smile and stories.



## HISTORIC SITE RESTORATIONS

A lot of progress has been made since last years' newsletter when we reported that the 4th of July Committee was undertaking a fund raising effort to save the town's Bandstand. The roof, being in good condition, was removed Veteran's Day weekend, and placed off to one side, and the rest of the bandstand was moved over to the adjacent field. A cement pad was poured to give the structure a sturdy foundation. It was determined pretty quickly that the base was in very bad shape and couldn't be repaired. By the middle of December a new base had been constructed using the same design as the previous structure, and by the end of December the roof was hoisted back into place! This spring, new shingles were put on, new wiring will be going in, and new spindles are being turned to match the originals. What a fantastic job by the 4th of July Committee and all the volunteers!

The Main Street fountain is running! Thanks to Kelly Oxtan, FIEC, Mike and Loren Bunker, Merry Boone, and many others for their encouragement and support in getting the water flowing again!



Vinalhaven Historical Society  
PO Box 339  
Vinalhaven, ME 04863

## SUMMER HOURS

June 20 - September 16  
Monday-Thursday, 9-3 & Friday, 1-4

### Summer Events

**Pop-up Film Festival** featuring movies filmed on Vinalhaven—Dates and Location TBD. Watch the Wind and social media for more info.

**The Stone Gives and Takes** A film by Swedish documentarian Kjell Andersson about the emigration of Swedes to Vinalhaven and New England. Originally in Swedish, we were able to have subtitles added with the help of our generous donors. The film will be showing in the museum daily.

*We ask that visitors follow all State and Town recommendations regarding wearing a face mask and be courteous of others. Updates will be posted. The Museum runs ONLY on contributions from its members and visitors. We appreciate your patience and support!*