

# Vinalhaven Historical Society

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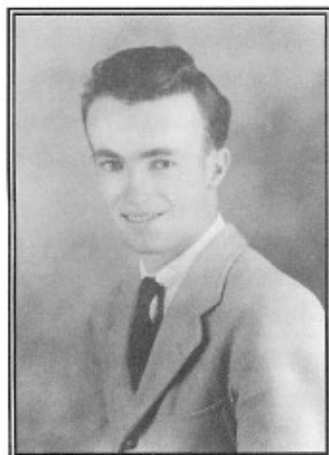
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## Annual Newsletter 2009

### Ernest "Brud" Clayter - His Life and Work (1924-1967)



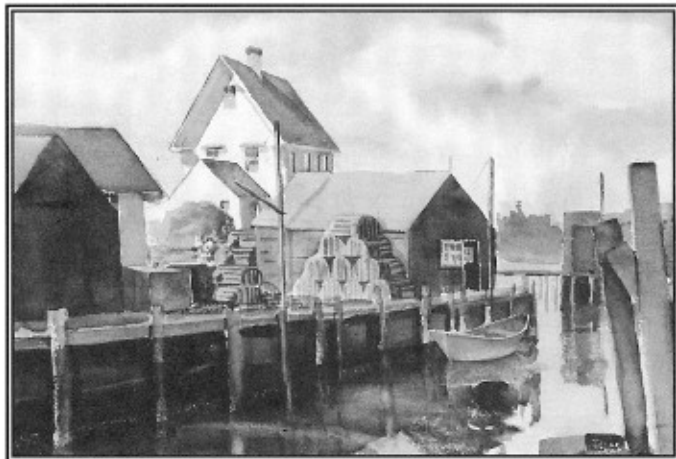
Beloved local artist, Ernest "Brud" Jones Clayter Jr., was born in Vinalhaven April 10, 1924 to Ernest and Augusta Clayter. He was educated in the Vinalhaven schools, but a diagnosis of tuberculosis at age 17 required a several months stay in a Boston sanitarium. Sadly, his life's dream of becoming a professional baseball pitcher was shattered.

One could say Brud was a multi-talented individual: not only did he excel in art and sports, he was an accomplished musician as well. During high school he played guitar in the Vinalhaven High School orchestra, and throughout his adult life continued to be part of many local groups, often playing at the Memorial Hall for the much loved and well-attended dances. At the time of his death at age 43, Brud was even jamming with a local kids group, which included Lawrence "Boongie" Oakes and Dale Conway.

Married to Carolyn Brown Wahlman in 1954, the couple had three daughters. Each inherited a talent from their father's creative gene pool. Ruth enjoys sports, Dawn shares her father's passion for music and Lisa is a creative journalist. All were born and raised here and attended Vinalhaven schools.

For a period of time Brud had a photography studio in town (upstairs in the Moose Hall, current site of Harrison Realty), where his specialty was portraits. From here he often sent images to Rockland to be published in the Courier Gazette. Mike Bunker Sr., his nephew, recalls a time when Brud had a small make-shift darkroom under the stairs of his home on East Boston Rd. With just enough space to turn around, Brud would enlist the help of his young nephew to develop negatives and make prints of his work.

Brud is also locally known for his inventive update of the branding iron already used by many Vinalhaven fishermen to stamp their license number or name on their gear. Previously the iron was heated in a woodstove until it became extremely hot, a slow and relatively dangerous practice. Brud devised a way to heat the iron electrically, a process much safer and more efficient.



All through his life Clayter drew and painted landscapes, seascapes, portraits and more, preferring watercolors to other mediums. Though never formally trained, Brud had a natural talent and worked tirelessly perfecting his art. When asked where her father's art studio was located, daughter Ruth replied, "The kitchen table." Each evening after supper, Brud got out his watercolors and sat at the kitchen table doing what he loved best. While watercolors were his favorite, he did try working with oils. An oil painting of his father was one of his favorite works, but an attempt to paint a portrait of his mother in oils was unsuccessful. He could not capture her likeness to his satisfaction.

Internationally known American social realist, Raphael Soyer, owned a summer home in Vinalhaven, and became a friend and mentor to Brud. Soyer offered help to the budding artist by giving suggestions and critiquing his work, all of which helped Brud improve and become more confident in his work. Soyer even suggested sending him to a Canadian art school, which Brud declined.

Much of Brud's work was given to friends and family, many pieces were bought locally, and some were taken by summer friends to Massachusetts to sell in their restaurant. The sale of one of his paintings always gave cause for the family to celebrate. Brud would pack up the family and drive them to the local restaurant, the Sea Breeze, for crab or lobster rolls, a big treat in those days. This year's summer exhibit pays tribute to Brud's life and work.

## Other Local Artists

In the twentieth century, Vinalhaven became known among artists as an inspiring and nurturing place. It was not unusual for an artist to bring artist friends to Vinalhaven with some coming for a brief visit or an entire summer. Others laid down roots. In looking back we can reflect on the numbers of artists and on the range of work done. Nearly 150 have been identified to date and that list will continue to expand: painters primarily, but also photographers, printmakers, sculptors, fiber artists and other crafts persons. A series of notebooks on the artists and their work continues to grow at the Vinalhaven Historical Society.

## Finding History and Making Connections

For the past two summers, part-time resident and volunteer, Ken Reiss, has copied and organized hundreds of original period letters, transcribed by Jessica Martin. Following is a copy of a letter from Maine Senator Hannibal Hamlin, offering his assistance in contracting a lighthouse from the government. Hamlin later became Vice-President serving under Abraham Lincoln. Two years after this letter was written Heron Neck Light was built.

*Dear Sir-*

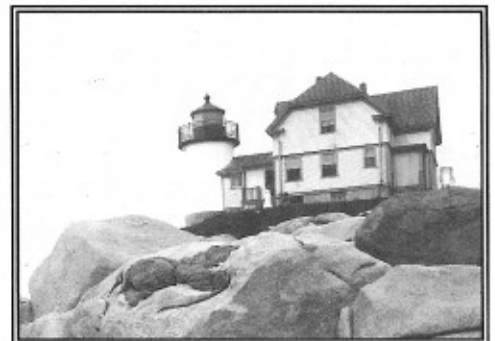
*Wash Mar 9, 1852*

*Your letter of the 5th came to house this morning. In answer I will say that I will endeavor to procure an appropriation of a Light House at the place you name, and I think I can be able to accomplish it.*

*At all events you say rely on my active exertion to do it. I am pleased to hear all is going along quietly in Maine – Matters are not very quiet here – I am in great haste and have not time to add more-*

*Yours truly,*

*H. Hamlin*



## Year in Review

During the fall of 2007, Cynthia Burns Martin, Professor of Business at New England College in Henniker, New Hampshire, was granted sabbatical leave to research hundreds of Bodwell Granite Company Store documents. These papers, donated to the museum by Bob Candage, had been stored on the third floor of the old hardware store, formerly I.W. Fifield's and more recently Port O' Call. As suspected, the enormity of the project is daunting and will require several years and significant funding to complete. Cynthia orchestrated a special summer exhibit entitled *The Bodwell Company Store 1858-1919*, and arranged an August program at the Smith Hokanson Auditorium which included a film produced by Army Armstrong and Cec Girz.

In the latest in the series of co-sponsored "Walks and Talks" Jim Boone, of the Vinalhaven Land Trust, discussed the granite history of Leadbetter's Island and Jeannette Lasansky told about historic farms and current land use in the Crockett's River area. We thank Jim and Jeannette for their time and effort in researching, planning and guiding these tours.

During the late spring, arrangements were made for all museum windows to be treated with UV filtering panels. The natural light brightens the exhibit areas and saves on our electricity.

Our year-round volunteers keep busy on various projects including updating genealogy charts and files, maintaining our webpage, and transcribing oral histories and letters. We are also duplicating our photo collection keeping a copy at the museum and the original in our vault. Summer resident and museum friend, Ken Reiss, researched and wrote an in-town walking tour, and brochures were placed in the Vinalhaven and Rockland ferry terminals, as well as at the museum. Shelley Andrews, local gardener, donated and planted a hydrangea and perennials in front of the building making the entranceway more attractive. Volunteers Lizzie and Joe Bickford attended a workshop in Waterville to learn video editing of 8mm and 16mm film. An anonymous donor supplied funding for this project.

We were fortunate to have high school senior, Chelsea Guptill, select the Vinalhaven Historical Society as her choice of community service. Chelsea volunteers several times each week and has worked tirelessly filing, organizing and copying materials, as well as working on various museum projects. She has been invaluable to us, and we wish her well as she pursues a career in the field of Equine Business in the fall.

Through the efforts of board member, Chandler Blackington, and many donors, an 1880s Vinalhaven Fire Company helmet and foreman's belt were acquired from an antique dealer in Massachusetts and brought home.

Once again we provided clues for the annual Fourth of July Treasure Hunt (see below). A considerable amount of local awareness helped the winning teams, often including an older knowledgeable islander to help with more difficult clues. All money raised from this event was donated to the museum.

Our summer visitors hailed from 40 states and 22 countries, including Belgium, South Africa, Chile, Venezuela and Niger. We had approximately 1600 visitors from June thru September.

### 4th of July Treasure Hunt 2008

What started as a fund raiser for the 4th of July Committee has now become an annual event bringing together teams of friends and family. Each team hunts for clues written by the Vinalhaven Historical Society and placed in historic locations around town. Following are clues from the 2008 Treasure Hunt: (Answers on page 5)

*Clue 1: When Vinalhaven's water pipes were laid, my pumps supplied the town's first water.*

*Clue 2: The Over-Crosters played baseball here for a while.*

## What Story Does a Picture Tell?



While copying, filing and cataloging hundreds of photos that come into the museum, we often come across unidentified images. With the help of a few of our older residents, we are able to determine the identity of some. The story behind the photograph is sometimes a mystery and often unsolvable. We recently found this image, and as so often happens, neither the place nor names of the individuals were known. Though most people were later identified, the reason and the location for the gathering have not been determined. The men in the photo seemingly have no common interests. There are fishermen, quarrymen, a boat captain, store owners and a boat builder, to name a few. Yet the men have a sense of camaraderie, and appear to be celebrating an event. But what occasion could have brought this diverse group together? Even though we many never know the story behind this picture, the image gives a genuine sense of coming together in the true spirit of Vinalhaven.

## Gifts to the Museum

We always appreciate gifts and loans of Vinalhaven related items and encourage everyone to think of us when cleaning attics and closets. We happily accept artifacts, photos, diaries, letters and documents. We can make copies and return your originals.

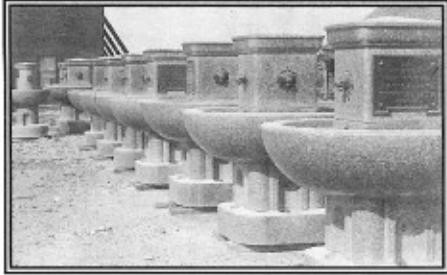
Following is a partial list of gifts received: from Marion Woodcock, photos, skates, post cards and an old large framed painting; Michelle Wiley-Arey, copies of old band music; Ethelyn Day, her father's WWII uniform and photo; Bob Candage, Bodwell Granite Company ledgers, correspondence, newspaper clippings and advertising; Wes Reed, Bodwell & Webster Co. ledger; John Beckman, model of the schooner Frederick Billings, built by Captain Frank Rossiter, restored by Chandler Blackington, (see photo at right); Arlene Roderick and Rick Morgan, photos, newspaper clippings, kitchenware, Bibles and genealogy notes from the Bertha Winslow home; from Ellen Hopkins, Booth Brother's and Hurricane Island Granite Company records; and Valerie Morton, her collection of cemetery records.

One gift of particular interest in 2008 was a large spear point recently unearthed on the island. Initial information suggests that it was likely used on a ceremonial spear some 4000 years ago by the "Red Paint" people. We are pleased the person who found the point realized the importance of keeping it on the island where it will remain forever in our keep. We will display this unique artifact this summer, so stop in and see it.



## Preserving Historic Sites

The Vinalhaven Historical Society is interested in the preservation of various historical sites around the island, such as the galamander, horse watering troughs and band stand. In 2007 the galamander, which sits on the village green, was painted and while it appears to be in sound condition, two wheels show signs of deterioration, and soon will need costly repairs.



At the turn of the 20th century at least 70 granite fountains, such as ours, were placed in 48 states, Mexico and Washington D.C. The donation of these fountains was made possible through the establishment and endowment of the National Humane Alliance by Herman Lee Ensign of New York City. Each fountain weighs five tons, has a six foot bowl from which horses and birds could drink, and smaller water bowls at the base for cats and dogs. Cities applied for and received consideration based on certain criteria, including the promise of using a first class water connection, guaranteeing an ample and continuous water supply and providing proper permanent care.

Last summer a few local residents worked tirelessly to restore our two granite watering troughs. The original connection to our two fountains allowed water to run freely, but updated reconfiguration circulates and conserves water. We are researching the granite fountains to see how many were actually made by the Bodwell Granite Company here in Vinalhaven.

Plans were discussed to renovate the band stand. Local artists and craftsmen were consulted and work will commence this spring. These projects (the galamander, watering trough and band stand), thus far, have been completed by volunteer labor and we have been fortunate to have many materials for these projects donated by interested individuals. However, further renovations and upkeep will be costly. Your interest and support for any of these projects will be greatly appreciated.



### Vinalhaven Historical Society's Mission Statement and Annual Appeal

*"The purpose of our organization is to collect, identify, preserve, exhibit, interpret and make available for education and research, information and artifacts which illuminate the history of Vinalhaven and its families from its beginning to the present."*

Each year the Historical Society asks you, as do many worthy organizations, to donate money. In these difficult economic times, many of you must choose carefully as to which cause(s) you will donate. Remember your donation makes it possible for us to fulfill our mission statement goals, thus preserving Vinalhaven's history for many generations. We now have an account number for those who wish to give gifts of stock. Please help by becoming a member or making a donation.

*Answers: Clue 1 – Folly Pond  
Clue 2 – The Big Green, City Point*