



The Henry L. Ferguson Museum

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(631) 788-7239 • P.O. Box 554 Fishers Island, NY 06390 • fimuseum@fishersisland.net • www.fergusonmuseum.org

From the President

I don't know about you, but the first seventy degree days always have me itching for summer and the return to Fishers Island. I am particularly excited to get to Fishers this summer to see the Museum's newly renovated Second Floor. By adding a whole new level of public space, this renovation significantly increases the programs and offerings of the Museum. Our popular Wednesday afternoon children's programs will now be able to move indoors whenever the weather does not cooperate. The Second Floor will also be used for most of our adult lectures with AV equipment and blackout shades that ensure clear viewing of PowerPoint presentations. The Museum has already hosted several illustrated lectures this spring, and intends to offer regularly scheduled programs year round in the future. Please let Pierce know if there is a topic you are interested in. If you want to explore some subject on your own, there is an extensive reference library on the Second Floor, as well as the new Richard E. Riegel, Jr. Maritime Library. All winter, Pierce and Mary Linda have been tirelessly cataloguing books for these libraries. The Second Floor also provides wonderful new exhibit and gallery space. I hope your summer will include a visit to the Museum during which you can explore our new Second Floor. It is a community space for all of us; please come and enjoy it. We enthusiastically thank all who supported this important project!

As I mentioned in my letter last year, the Land Trust has moved into a phase of articulating conservation goals and developing management plans to achieve those goals. I am

pleased to announce that two graduate student interns from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies will spend the summer helping us. Our interns, Martin Becker and Alex Todorovic-Jones, have significant experience in this area, come highly recommended, and are eager to get to work. They will be coordinating with Land Trust committee members as they survey and collect data from the Land Trust properties. By the end of the summer, we should have a useful management plan that will guide our actions to achieve our conservation goals and provide benchmarks so that we can evaluate our progress.

There are several exciting new exhibits this year, including the 2016 Annual Exhibition: *Mansion House Hotel & Cottages*. Board member Terry McNamara, an educator with decades of experience teaching science and the natural sciences at the high school level, will once again be leading our Thursday afternoon nature walks. The Penni Sharp Nature Walk series continues with invited professionals sharing their ecological knowledge with participants out in the field.

For a full listing of all the activities this summer, see the "Speakers and Programs" section at the back of this newsletter, or click on the "Programs" heading at our web site: www.fergusonmuseum.org

Finally, please join us at the Museum for our opening reception on Saturday, June 25th, five to seven p.m. I hope to see you there!

—Elizabeth McCance, President



Mansion House Hotel, Fishers Island, NY, 1930s. Photo by A. T. LeGere. Museum Collection.



1st Floor Main Gallery:
Annual Exhibition: *Mansion House Hotel & Cottages*

1st Floor Foyer:
In Their Presence: Photographs of Hawks & Owls by Justine Kibbe (held over)

1st Floor Natural History Gallery:
Drawings of Birds by Ethan Kibbe

2nd Floor Main Gallery:
A Sampling from the Museum's Collections

2nd Floor Side Gallery:
19th Century Paintings of Fishers Island



The Henry L. Ferguson Museum 2016 Annual Exhibition
Mansion House Hotel & Cottages

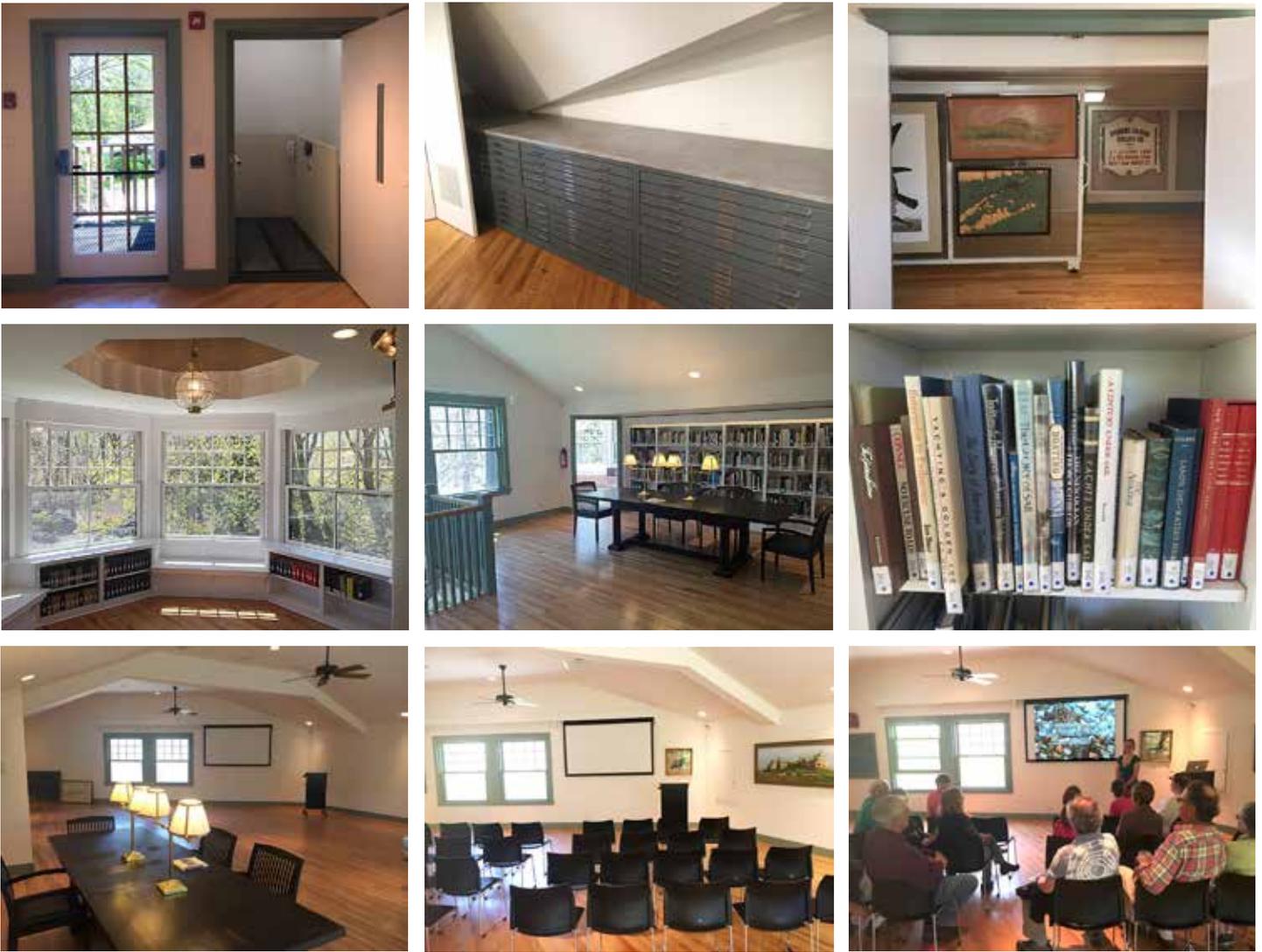
Exhibition sponsored by:



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Join us for the opening reception on Saturday, June 25th, 5 to 7 p.m. All welcome!



The Second Floor: A New Public Space

The Richard E. Riegel, Jr. Maritime Library, housed in the Tower Room, holds more than 500 maritime and nautical books and magazines, primarily from the library of the late Jerry Riegel, but supplemented by donations from the Burton G. Tremaine, Jr. family, Sandy Riegel, Tim Patterson, John Spofford, and others. Jerry's widow Barbie, and her family, thoughtfully donated Jerry's library in his memory.

The adjacent General Reference Library in the main room holds an additional 500 books that relate to the history, natural history and archaeology of our region. This collection includes many titles from the former libraries of H.L. Ferguson, Lee Ferguson, and Ed Horning, as well as books donated by individuals, and those purchased for the Museum in 2003 with a generous grant from Dan Gordon's Drumcliff Foundation. There are also separate, smaller collections, including books directly relating to Fishers Island, children's books, Fishers Island authors, and Fishers Island School yearbooks. Each collection is organized by Library of Congress call numbers

and is color coded on the spine labels to make refiling easier.

Please note that books from these libraries are for browsing and reference use on the Second Floor only and cannot be taken out.

Art racks for storage of signs and paintings and flat files for maps and prints are located in locked storage areas at the sides of the Second Floor galleries. There is a lift-style elevator for handicap access, and a new fire escape for emergency egress located on the west side of the Museum. There is also a storage room to keep stackable chairs out of the way when they are not in use on the main gallery floor during lectures.

The Second Floor Renovation Project and the new Maritime Library were made possible by generous donations from many individuals and foundations. The primary architect was Jacob Albert of Albert, Righter & Tittmann Architects, Inc., Boston, Mass. The general contractor was Z & S Contracting, Inc. We thank everyone who contributed to the creation of this wonderful new public space.

Nature Notes

*Excerpted from "Rocks, Plants, Birds and People of Fishers Island" [1999]
by the late Edwin Horning*

Birds No Longer Nesting or Decreasing

Barn Owl: This owl once nested in the old ice house on the shore of Middle Farm Pond. The last time that it nested there was in May 1955. Later, sometime in the 1960s, it nested in the Firestone boathouse. It now (1999) nests in rock piles on Block Island.

Broadwinged Hawk: This small buteo nested once in 1955.

Chipping Sparrow: This sparrow nested regularly in the 1960s. I once found several nests in a thicket along the shore in the Hungry Point Island area.

Common Tern: This tern once nested in Wicopessett and Wreck Islands on the rocky shore between Beach Pond and Block Island Sound. It last nested on Stony Beach, at the very tip. There were about 20 nests with 2-3 eggs in each nest. They now nest on Great Gull Island, which is a sanctuary.

Grasshopper Sparrow: This sparrow of the grassland nested during the years 1953-1967. Lee Ferguson discovered it on May 17, 1953. They nested in the grass on the former Parade Ground at Fort Wright where 12 pairs nested in 1961. They also nested at Middle Farms.

Harrier: Once called the Marsh Hawk, this bird once nested frequently. Will Sinclair, once manager of the Ferry District, remembered as a boy seeing their nests in the grassy field behind his home, which was across the road from the water works. The house in which he lived is now called Road View and the grassy field is now a woodland. The harrier last nested in 1978 near an elderberry clump near Beach Pond. There were five young hatched and fledged.

Horned Lark: This bird, now sometimes seen in winter on bare or almost bare ground at the airport has nested at least once. A nest was found in the parking area at the Airport in July 1976.

Hummingbird nests have been found rarely on the Island, in 1961 and in the 1980s, and most likely still nest. Nests are tiny, well hidden, and hard to find.

King Rail: On a summer day in 1969 while on a nature walk to Middle Farms and while driving along the dirt road along Middle Farm Pond, a lady exclaimed, "What is that little black bird crossing the road?" I thought starling, but stopped the car and we were surprised to see a small fluff of black making its way across the road and behind it a large brownish bird, unmistakably a king rail. Both disappeared in the high grass along the pond. During the Bird Atlas taken during the years



Eastern Screech Owl

1980-1985, none were seen in all of New York State. But on a foggy day in the late 1980s, I made my way through wet grass to the Movie Pond and there was surprised by a mother and two babies, still fluffy black.

Least Flycatcher: A pair nested in the Brick Yard in 1923.

Meadowlark: This bird of the grassland was once a common resident. Now it is seen in only the spring and in the fall as it migrates through the Island.

Nighthawk: In the early 1960s Lee Ferguson wrote, "There are not nearly as many nesting places as when the Island was all in pasture and the ever-increasing vegetation must account for the growing scarcity of nighthawks, but they are still common enough." As of 1999, I seldom see them.

Piping Plover: This pale shorebird regularly nested on the airport beach and near Beach Pond in the 1960s and 1970s. During the early 1980s the population plummeted and once one young was seen in 1980. They are now seldom seen. Most frequently a prospecting male is seen and then only in migration during late April or May. It is now endangered.

Screech Owl: I have neither seen nor heard this bird on the Island. But H.L. Ferguson wrote, "A few breed. Two collected 11-14-1914, 12-17-1921. One killed in tree with axe 12-18-1925." And Lee Ferguson wrote, "In the 1930s these owls

were common in the maple woods on Fishers Island when they were year-round residents and nested in flicker holes. Only recent record: 12-20-1957.”

Sedge Wren: This is a small wren of the wet grassland. I discovered it nesting in the wet grasslands. In just such a place I discovered it nesting in 1975 during late July. It also nested in 1976 and 1977. I have not seen one since.

Nesting Birds that are Increasing

Barred Owl: This owl was considered to be very rare by Henry L. Ferguson. It is now quite common and even nests in a specially built owl nesting box at Greg and Anne-Marie Thibodeau's.

Cardinal: The first cardinal was seen October 10, 1945 and nested in 1955. Now very common.

Cedar Waxwing: Once rare, now common and seen even in winter.

Double-crested Cormorant: This cormorant was discovered by Noble Proctor on an April day in 1975. Noble landed in a helicopter on the Country Club Golf Course, made his way to the Hungry Point islands, waded out, and discovered about 15 nesting cormorants. There are now more than 300 pairs nesting there and they are seen everywhere.

Gadwall: This middle American duck was seen early in 1954 but was so rare that when seen again by Lee Ferguson in 1960 on Barley Field Pond considered so rare that he showed the duck to me. Since that time it has nested for several years.

Glossy Ibis: First seen in 1952, it is now quite common, arriving in April, visiting the ponds, and nesting on South Dumping Island.

Great Black-backed Gull: This gull was seen early in this century only in winter and only in small numbers. It began to nest on Long Island in 1942 and on Fishers Island in the sixties. It now nests on South Dumping Island and on Flat Hummock.

Great Crested Flycatcher: H.L. Ferguson never set eyes on



Tufted Titmouse

this flycatcher. If you visit the Brick Yard Woods in May you will hear its loud call, louder than any other bird. It once nested in the bird box near the Museum.

Great Egret: It first nested in 1952 and now nests on South Dumping Island.

Hairy Woodpecker: It is still an uncommon nester.

House Finch: In January of 1968, Yola Scagliotti called me on the phone and said that a banded bird was feeding at her window feeder. I saw the bird up close but could not find it in the Peterson Guide—for a good reason as it was not yet in it. They are now numerous but were recently victims of an eye disease.

Least Tern: It was uncommon in 1962, but now nests although still endangered.

Little Blue Heron: This is another species that has made its way up from the South and now nests in very small numbers on South Dumping Island. It has nested on the Island.

Mockingbird: In the early 1960s this bird was so rare that Lee Ferguson pointed it out to me perched atop the army barracks where the school now stands. Lee and Charlie listened to the songs of the bird and wrote the sequence down. For two years in a row, 1997 and 1998, the mockingbird has nested in a stack of lobster pots at Paul Tombari's place.

Mourning Dove: It began to nest in 1958. In the spring of 1999, Ricky Ahman, while working with his metal detector, found a nest with two eggs in the thicket near Mary Walter's garden.

Osprey: The first record of a nest was in 1946. In 1961, there were six nests and in 1999, seven. As of June 12 a young head was seen in two of the nests, at the transfer station and at the nest at the east end of Middle Farms.

Oystercatcher: The first one was seen in 1960, the first nest in 1976. There are now about eight pairs nesting on the Island.

Snowy Egret: Once rare. Now nests on South Dumping.

Mute Swan: This common swan, now seen in every pond, first nested in 1957.

Red-tailed Hawk: Now much more common—probably three or four pairs.

Tufted Titmouse: In the late 1970s Serge Doyen called me and said that he has a rare bird at his feeder. Indeed he did—a tufted titmouse. It now nests but only a very few.

Whip-poor-will: Henry Ferguson first heard this bird's call. It has since nested several times. Theresa Horn once showed me a nest and on the following year another.

Wood Duck: The fledged young of this duck were seen in the woods near the water works in 1993. Several nest boxes have been put out by Dick Baker and Ken Edwards.

Nature Notes

The Snakes of Fishers Island - Part 1

by Terry McNamara

When you walk on Fishers Island during the summer months, you're likely to encounter a snake or two in the fields or open woodlands. Turn over a few rocks, and you might find a few more. You'll probably get no more than the briefest glimpse of these reptiles, as they slither away quickly, but it's not hard to identify them. Be reassured: all four of the species on Fishers are harmless.

Our most striking serpentine resident (no pun intended) is the **Northern Black Racer** (*Coluber c. constrictor*). Adult individuals are a solid satiny black with a white chin, and they're usually three to four feet long—though specimens of up to six feet have been recorded. The young hatch at 11 inches and are markedly different in appearance from the adults; they have a gray to grayish-brown background color with a dorsal pattern of darker blotches edged in dark gray or black. These markings fade as they mature and begin to disappear by the time they're about 18 inches long.

Racers hunt during the day, and they're often observed moving through vegetation with head raised above the ground, though it's most likely that you'll glimpse a Racer moving rapidly away from you. They emerge from hibernation sometime in March and remain active through much of October. They are diurnal, so they remain under cover at night and come out to bask when the sun moves higher in the sky. When they've warmed up sufficiently, usually by about 9:00 am, they begin to hunt. Their activity on a given day is dictated by the regulation of their body temperature, which is dependent on the weather. A range in the low 90s is optimal, so in the spring they move about in the middle of the day, on cloudy days they do very little, and on hot summer days they're active in the morning and late afternoon. They're excellent climbers and swimmers; a Racer has been spotted swimming across Darby Cove.



Northern Black Racer juvenile

While the species prefers to hunt in lightly wooded areas and meadows, these beautiful snakes can often be found under large sheets of plywood, metal or piles of debris, which they use for cover overnight. The speed at which they disappear when discovered is startling (and a good indicator of how they earned their name). They've been clocked at 5.6 kilometers per hour—by comparison, a human walks at about 5 km/h. It has been reported that when the snake is cornered, it will coil, raise its head with mouth open, vibrate its tail much like a rattlesnake, and then attempt multiple strikes and bites. This predator-dissuading behavior has never, however, been reported on Fishers.

Northern black racers rely mostly on sight to locate and capture their prey. They have a widely varied diet of small mammals, snakes and snakes' eggs, frogs, salamanders, small turtles and their eggs, birds (and eggs), and insects, and at times they are cannibalistic. A racer can detect a cricket at over 50 yards away and is capable of seeing larger prey at greater distances. The snake crawls rapidly after its prey, seizes it in its mouth, and swallows it whole. Contrary to its specific name, *C. c. constrictor* does not constrict.

Racers on Fishers breed between May and June and lay clutches of eggs under stones, rotting logs and stumps, in mulch piles and shallow holes in the sand, and under leaf debris. The elliptically-shaped eggs are one and a quarter inches long and usually number about 12 per clutch. They have a pebbly granular surface, making them easy to identify even after the hatchlings are gone. They hatch in late summer and, because of their size, are subject to extensive predation from large birds, feral cats, dogs, and coyotes. The adults also fall victim to some of these predators, and automobiles and pesticides are further threats. Surviving all this, they live to an age of about 10 years in the wild. Little data is available about their captive life span, as these snakes don't make good pets. They are nasty and nervous and generally refuse any kind of food. It has been said that they refuse to eat anything but their keeper's hand.

The snake you're most likely to encounter when you're out walking on Fishers Island is the **Eastern Garter Snake** (*Thamnophis s. sirtalis*). They are present in every habitat on the island, from gardens to swamps to open woodlands. Their sedentary behavior makes these snakes easy to detect and ob-



Northern Black Racer adult

serve, and even when startled, they don't go far. If you wait a few moments, the slothful Garter will probably reappear. This is also the snake most likely to be spotted crossing the road at night. They're active from March through the beginning of November, and the young, which have the same marking as the adults, are born in August.

Garter snakes are medium sized and fairly heavy bodied. Their pattern consists of a medial stripe and two lateral stripes—all yellow—on a background that varies from dark green to olive brown to black. They are usually around 20 inches in length, though individuals more than four feet long have been collected. The tail is approximately one fifth of the total body length.

When you're lucky enough to have one living around your house or in your garden, it is apparent that a Garter follows a regular daily schedule. He begins the day basking to raise his body temperature, and then he goes on the hunt. Garter



Eastern Garter Snake

snakes have a range of up to two acres in diameter and move only short distances each day. They often leave snake skins near rough objects when they shed.

These snakes feed on frogs, worms, salamanders and insects. If you follow the distressed call of a frog near a pond, you can often find a garter snake attempting to swallow the unlucky anuran. These snakes in turn have many predators, one of which is the Northern Black Racer. Garter snakes are also hunted by cats, dogs, coyotes, owls, hawks, and raccoons, and they're often done in by automobiles. They are most vulnerable when they are neonates, just born, 7 to 9 inches in length. Barring predation, their life span is about eight years.

Breeding occurs in April, when they first emerge from hibernation, and the male follows a sex pheromone trail secreted by the female. When more than one male catches the scent and pursues the same female, the competition can result in a "ball" of snakes as they attempt to mate, which is reported to be quite a sight. At all times these snakes are communal, and turning over a rock will often reveal several individuals.

Though some garter snakes become motionless when they're discovered, most attempt to flee. If escape is impossible, they

may resort to aggressive behavior. The snake will flatten its head and body, flare its lips to show its teeth, and then strike violently. It will hold on and chew. Garter snakes do have a weak venom in their saliva, and a bite can cause a local reaction; swelling and edema have been reported at the site. This author has been bitten several times and never noticed any ill effects, but it's probably best to leave the snake alone and enjoy your observations from a respectful distance.

The Snakes of Fishers Island - Part 2, covering the **Eastern Ribbon Snake** (*Thamnophis s. sauritus*) and the **Northern Ring-necked Snake** (*Diadophis punctatus edwardsi*), will be published in a future issue of the HLFM Newsletter.

Sad News on HLFM's Tagged Ospreys

Osprey Charlie is Presumed Dead. Throughout early December 2015, the HLFM received cell-tower transmitter signals from tagged Osprey Charlie as he headed south through Cuba on his southern migration. He passed into the Dominican Republic on December 13th. The last transmitter signals from Charlie were received on December 19th. As the days stretched on with no new signals, ornithologist Rob Bierregaard reviewed the Google Earth maps of his last known location and concluded that Charlie had likely been shot at a fish farm after pausing for two days to hunt. Ironically, Charlie had survived the previous winter (2014/15) despite repeatedly crisscrossing a contested area of Columbia where FARC guerrillas were in active struggle with government troops. Poaching at a fish farm in the Dominican Republic ultimately proved more dangerous than intersecting with the longest running armed conflict in the western hemisphere.

Osprey Edwin is Confirmed Dead. After a migration that began on February 26, 2016 in Brazil, Edwin returned to Connecticut on March 23, 2016. He then returned to his peripatetic ways, making quick trips to Long Island and visiting his old fishing haunts along the Connecticut and Niantic rivers. Edwin's last data transmission was received on the morning of April 12th from Miller Pond in Waterford, Conn. About a week and a half later, we heard from ornithologist Rob Bierregaard that an officer of the Connecticut State Environmental Conservation Police had contacted him after finding a deceased raptor with an attached transmitter. The officer had been checking on some fishermen and just happened to see the body under some evergreen boughs far from any beaten path, but close to I-395. After the transmitter was returned, it was put in the sun to recharge. The recovered data confirms that we lost Osprey Edwin early in the morning of April 12th. Photos taken of the body and its severely broken wing led Rob Bierregaard to conclude that Edwin likely died after being hit by an automobile.

The transmitter is being returned to its manufacturer for a potential upgrade to new cell-tower technology. If upgraded successfully, we hope that it will be deployed on a new Fishers Island osprey either later this year or next. Please submit possible names to: fimuseum@fishersisland.net

Island History

The Role of Cottage Colonies in Shaping Fishers Island's Development

by *Pierce Rafferty*

In 1889, two brothers named Edmund and Walton Ferguson, both successful bankers, bought approximately nine-tenths of Fishers Island from the Fox family. The new owners immediately began to implement a plan to transform Fishers Island from a day excursion destination into a more elite resort capable of attracting families to the island on a seasonal basis.

As part of their 1889 purchase, the Fergusons assumed control of the Fox-owned Mansion House, which had been operating as a hotel since 1877. A Colonial-era residence with a mid-19th century rear addition, it was located on an elevated rise beyond right field of today's ball field. The historic Mansion House residence, minus the rear addition, still stands on this site.

Two years later, in 1891, the Fergusons purchased a second Fishers Island hotel, the Lyles Beach, from its private syndicate owners. This establishment had been operating as a boisterous day-excursion "shore hotel" since 1882. Blessed with an expansive waterfront view, the Lyles Beach fronted Fishers Island Sound at the entrance to West Harbor, west of the present-day location of the Three Sisters Cottages. After a major renovation, it reopened in 1892 under Ferguson management as the more elegant Munnatawket Hotel.

The Mansion House, despite its inland location and lesser water view (West Harbor was visible only at a distance), quickly evolved into the uncontested social epicenter of the island, a vibrant hub for a growing summer community then based entirely at the west end. It featured adjacent membership clubs—first the Casino (1895) and then the Hay Harbor Club (1909). By the mid-1910s, the Mansion House had three large extensions, each four stories high, that dwarfed the original structure. Each extension was named for its ground floor function: the dining room extension, the ballroom extension, and the living, or drawing-room, extension.

Between 1891 and the mid-1910s, the Fergusons built a total of 23 Mansion House Cottages and a children's Diet Kitchen on the slopes of neighboring Bell Hill (today's Shingle Hill). The families who rented these cottages could eat and socialize at the hotel's central dining area, or they could have meals delivered directly to their homes. Not all of the cottages initially had kitchens. The cottages were usually rented for the full season, but in some instances they were let out for the half season.

During this period, as the Mansion House was expanding and flourishing, the Munnatawket Hotel took a parallel but opposite track. It was structurally reduced to a third of its size in 1905—*The Day* attributed the reduction to "poor business"—and then, surprisingly, it was rebuilt to its original size circa 1913. Whatever the size, however, it was by this time

considered the Fergusons' second-tier, or "medium-priced" hotel. By the early 1920s, the Munnatawket was leased to an outside hotel manager on a year-to-year basis at a bargain price. However, it sat unleased and empty for at least a year before it was finally razed in the mid-1920s.

This inglorious end to the once-proud Munnatawket raises the question: *Why did the new Ferguson owners make the Mansion House their premier hotel when the better situated, newly-renovated Munnatawket was also available?* In addition to its superior water views, the Munnatawket had an adjacent bath-



Munnatawket Hotel, circa 1895. Photo by James S. Casey. Museum Collection.

ing beach and a steamer pier within easy walking distance of the hotel's front door.

A review of all available historical texts relating to the establishment of hotels on Fishers Island—primarily newspaper clippings, advertisements and promotional brochures—provided considerable evidence that the primary reason the Mansion House was favored was because the Fergusons felt that neighboring Bell Hill offered the best site for an associated cottage colony. The Fergusons wanted to attract private home builders to the island, but they first had to provide places for people to spend extended time here; thus, a cottage colony was seen as a critical first step on the path to populating the island. The proximity of sheltered Hay Harbor for safe bathing, swimming and boating was an additional positive factor.

It is not surprising that the Fergusons were enamored with cottage colonies; they were already quite familiar with this method of resort living from personal exposure to other private resort enclaves, including the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club outside Johnstown, Pennsylvania (the record indicates as visitors, not members), and the newly established Jekyll Island Club in Georgia (initially as visitors, later members). In the last quarter of the 19th century, cottage colonies were widespread. Fishers Island had two such colonies established by the late-1870s, before the Fergusons first visited Fishers Island. There were the Bartlett Cottages that lined the road on Equestrian Avenue, stretching west from today's round house (near the Duck Pond) along the southern edge of Hay Harbor, up onto the bluff that today supports the Bacile residence and the Bonsal's adjacent "Anchorage." Today's Oswald, Guimaraes, Tapscott, Fowler, Cameron, and Bonsal



Mansion House Cottages on Bell Hill, circa 1913. Postcard published by Brown & Dawson. Museum Collection.

residences (both the “Anchorage” and “Seven Gables”) were all once part of the Bartlett cottage colony. They were built for upscale clientele and featured a common dining cottage. When the E.M. Ferguson family first visited the island in 1883, they stayed at a Bartlett Cottage. According to a family account, however, in this instance they rejected the shared dining experience, preferring instead to eat and socialize on their private steam yacht.

The other early Fishers Island cottage colony, the Hoffort Cottages, overlooked West Harbor on the waterside of Montauk Avenue, just past today’s Texaco Station as you head toward The Gloaming. Today the Lighthouse Works’ artists reside in one of these former Hoffort Cottages, and the adjacent Nigro and Gaillard residences were also part of the colony. The proprietors, Mr. and Mrs. J.P. Hoffort, formerly of Middletown, Conn., targeted a middle class clientele.

A *Hartford Courant* reporter noted the merits of cottage colony living on Fishers Island in an article published on July 7, 1891: “A convenient way of providing for visitors prevails all over the island. Groups of cottages are maintained around a dining-room, and meals are furnished there for all at reasonable rates, while the cottages are rented furnished and with all service. The rooms are cared for by servants hired by those from whom the cottages are rented and all that the lodgers have to do is to enjoy life relieved of every care of housekeeping.”

Perhaps the most important takeaway from the historical research is that the Fergusons didn’t just want a *single* cottage colony next to their favored Mansion House Hotel: they wanted people to form other cottage colonies throughout the entire island. The earliest known Ferguson-era promotional brochure, dating from circa 1891, stated this desire clearly:

“It is house-builders or those who would form a colony, with central clubhouse, that the proprietors of the island are especially anxious to attract at this time... The colony arrangement has become an attractive and convenient feature of modern resort life. By which is meant an arrangement whereby a number of families occupy houses at convenient distances from one another and are fed at a club house or casino near at hand. To people desiring to form such colonies, by building, we offer special attractions.”

Please note that the casinos mentioned above were social and sports centers, not gambling establishments.

In subsequent promotional brochures published from the 1890s through the 1930s, the Fergusons continued to tout the many advantages of life in a cottage colony free from worry

and housekeeping and with easy access to dining, dancing, social events and sports activities. This appears to have been a successful advertising campaign; Mansion House cottagers did bond to each other, including in marriage, and they bonded to Fishers Island as well, with many renters returning year after year, often to the same cottage. Over time, a number of the families who were renting chose to build summer homes on the island, which was the key component of the Fergusons’ long term plan. The lithographic color advertising brochure published by E.M. & W. Ferguson in 1897 was simply titled: “An Island of Homes.” In a 1905 legal interview regarding the estate of his deceased brother, Walton Ferguson explicitly stated: “we have maintained them [the hotels] merely as a means of advertising.”

Although developers and individual home builders never responded to the call for establishing other cottage colonies across the island, E.M. & W. Ferguson’s original vision came to fruition on a grand scale when the second generation of Ferguson owners initiated the Olmsted Plan in the mid-1920s. This ambitious development project converted the eastern two-thirds of Fishers Island from farming pastureland into a residential colony with an associated golf course and clubhouse. Instead of rental houses clustered near a hotel, the east end development featured privately-built summer mansions set within an 1800-acre “park” whose occupants were socially joined at the hip to a new epicenter: the “Big Club.” Although the Crash of 1929 severely reduced the number of east end houses built, and the ensuing Great Depression nearly ruined the development, nonetheless, the younger Fergusons managed to bring into existence what their elder relations had sought from the very beginning: a private colony for individual home builders allied with a unifying clubhouse. The rest, as they say, is history...



Aerial of Fishers Island Club, date unknown. Courtesy of Jim Diaz.



The Board of Trustees would like to extend its heartfelt thanks to all who gave during 2015. We are grateful to each and every one of you!

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Fishers Island Lemonade and Fishers Island Oyster Farm Contribute to HLFM through 1% for the Planet

The Henry L. Ferguson Museum is pleased to announce that Bronya Shillo has chosen to donate one percent of the sales from her Fishers Island Lemonade company to the Henry L. Ferguson Museum. (This popular lemonade and alcohol “concoction” is packaged in a can that features an award-winning design.) The annual donation is received through the organization “1% for the Planet.” Accompanying Fishers Island Lemonade’s first donation check was a letter from Bronya that provided the context of her decision: “Throughout my youth I have always enjoyed participating in the Museum’s functions and admire the community coming together to donate their time and resources. From trail clearings, children’s activities, guest lectures and educational exhibits, the museum has been an integral part of educating and entertaining islanders. I’m proud to be able to align my business with the H.L. Ferguson Museum through 1% for the Planet and look forward to working together... Warm regards, Bronya G. Shillo.” Many thanks Bronya for your generosity and your thoughtful and kind words.

Steve and Sarah Malinowski’s Fishers Island Oyster Farm has been a 1% for the Planet contributor to the HLF Museum and other organizations for the past ten years. The concern and generosity demonstrated by the owners of both of these thriving local businesses is very much appreciated by the Museum and hopefully will be an inspiration for other businesses to join 1% for the Planet.

“1% for the Planet is an international organization whose members contribute at least one percent of their annual sales to environmental causes. Their mission is to ‘build, support and activate an alliance of businesses financially committed to creating a healthy planet.’ 1% for the Planet members assist nonprofit organizations that protect land, forests, rivers, oceans and also encourage sustainable methods of energy production.”

(Description from Wikipedia with quotes from onepercentfortheplanet.org)



Group posing on Isabella Beach, c.1913. Donated by Harry and Susie Ferguson.

A Sampling of Additions to the Museum’s Collection in 2015

Carol Avery. One booklet: *Adriaen Block: Navigator, Fur trader, Explorer, New York’s First Shipbuilder, 1611-14*, by W.M. Williamson.

Harry and Susie Ferguson. 243 original photographs documenting numerous subjects on Fishers Island, including buildings, people, boats, hotels, private clubs, farms, and landscapes. The dates range from the 1880s to the 1950s with a focus on the 1910s. Misc. Fishers Island-related ephemera, including Mansion House Hotel menus (1940s) and stationary (c.1940). Fishers Island Farms stationary (c.1963), and Fishers Island promotional brochures (c.1928 and c.1940). F.I. telephone directories (1940s), and a Fishers Island Club membership directory (1935).

Island Health Project. Two copies of the H.O.G. book for the Reference Library.

Tim Patterson. 14 volumes of *Nautical Quarterly*, misc. years, for the Maritime Library.

Vicki and Pierce Rafferty. Nine books for the Fishers Island Authors’ section of the Reference Library.

Greg Sharp. Misc. books for the 2nd Floor Reference Library from the collection of the late Penni C. Sharp, including: *New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*, (Three volumes). *Long Island Sound: An Atlas of Natural Resources*, Nov. 1977. U.S.D.A. guide: *Invasive Plants Field and Reference Guide*, July 2007. U.S. Dept. of Transportation guide: *Common Roadside Invasives*. No date.

Southold Historical Society. One book: *A World Unto Itself: The Remarkable History of Plum Island, New York*, by Bramson, Fleming and Folk.

Paul Vartanian. Two original pencil sketches by artist A.B. Frost, signed at lower left with notation: “Fishers Island, July 1905.” The first sketch depicts an unidentified cottage with street lamp and road in foreground. The second is a seaside landscape with a road and telephone poles running along coastline. Both sketches have been drawn on Mononotto Inn stationary.



People leaving Mansion House Hotel, c.1939. Donated by Harry and Susie Ferguson.

HLFM Acquisitions in 2015

Objects include: Hand-colored lithograph of a Ferguson warrior from *The Clans of the Scottish Highlands, Illustrated by Appropriate Figures, displaying their Dress, Tartans, Arms, Armorial Insignia, and Social Occupations*, published in London, Ackermann and Co. Strand 1845/47. Five wood-cut engravings by R.F. Zogbaum documenting naval maneuvers near Fishers Island, NY (from *Harper's Weekly*, August 5, 1891 issue). Watch fob: Fort H.G. Wright 13th Coast Artillery Corps, 1912. Membership pin: Fort Terry Social Club, 1910. "Second Floor Plan of the Fishers Island Club, Fishers Island, N.Y.," with room numbers marked, 1930s.

Photographs include: Real photo postcard: "Non Com Quarters & Old Quartermaster & Engineer Dept.," Fort Terry, NY, c.1910s. News photo: "West Point Cadets Man Coast Defense Guns at Fort Wright," *Wide World News*, June 18, 1926.

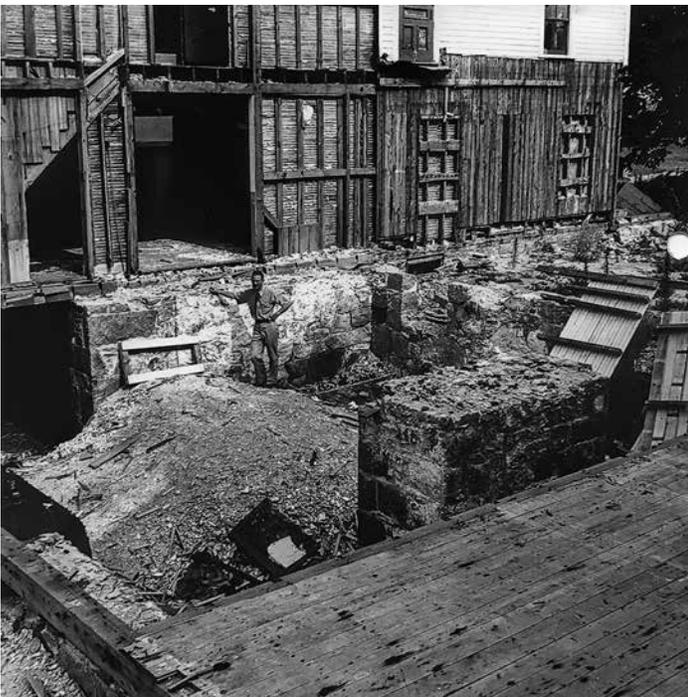
Books include: *The Duke's Province: A Study of New York Politics and Society, 1664-1691*, by Robert C. Ritchie. *Merritt-Chapman & Scott Corporation: Section 1 Industrial Plants and Buildings*, published c.1940 by Merritt-Chapman & Scott Corp. *A Path Less Traveled: The Memoirs of Charlie Ferguson*, by Charles B. Ferguson, 2014. *Horse Raising in Colonial New England*, by Deane Phillips, 1922. *Slavery before Race: Europeans, Africans, and Indians at Long Island's Sylvester Manor Plantation, 1651-1884*, by Katherine Howlett Hayes. *Boundaries of Connecticut*, by Roland Mather Hooker, published 1933.



Woman photographing dog sitting on barrel, South Beach, c. 1910s. Donated by Harry and Susie Ferguson.



QA-class sailboats, c.1950. Donated by Harry and Susie Ferguson.



Demolition of Mansion House Hotel additions, August 14, 1947. Donated by Harry and Susie Ferguson.



Yale School of Forestry Graduate Students to Assist Land Trust

Martin Becker and Alex Todorovic-Jones, graduate students from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, will be on Fishers Island during the months of June and July, 2016. They are helping the Museum's Land Trust to develop a management plan that will articulate conservation goals and outline proper management strategies for its various properties and habitat types. Please welcome them if you see them around the island or out in the field.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of The Henry L. Ferguson Museum is the collection, preservation and exhibition of items of Pre-History, History and Natural History of Fishers Island and, through its Land Trust, the preservation in perpetuity of undeveloped property in its natural state. It is organized for the education and enjoyment of the Island's community and visitors and for the protection of habitat for the Island's flora and fauna.

Museum Speakers and Programs 2016



"Captain T.A. Scott" on July 3rd.

Captain T.A. Scott: Legendary Master Diver, Builder and Wrecker. This illustrated lecture by HLFM Director Pierce Rafferty examines the full sweep of Captain Scott's extraordinary career both as an undersea contractor—he was the builder of Race Rock Lighthouse—and as a salvager of countless wrecks during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. **Sunday, July 3, 2016.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor.



"Animals! Animals!" on July 6th.

Animals! Animals! Meet a variety of live animals and discover similarities and differences between them. Are they covered in feathers or fur? How do they move? Where do they live? What do they eat? Answer these questions and more as you explore the wild animal kingdom. A Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center (DPNC) family program for ages 5 and up. **Wednesday, July 6, 2016.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: The Museum. *Suggested donation: \$5.00.*

Preserving Plum Island for Future Generations: The Latest News. Chris Cryder, Special Projects Coordinator for Save the Sound, and the Outreach Coordinator of the Preserve Plum Island Coalition, will present a "virtual tour" of Plum Island while updating the talk that he gave on Fishers Island last August. Come learn about the latest efforts to protect our



"Preserving Plum Island" on July 10th.

close neighbor. **Sunday, July 10, 2016.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor.

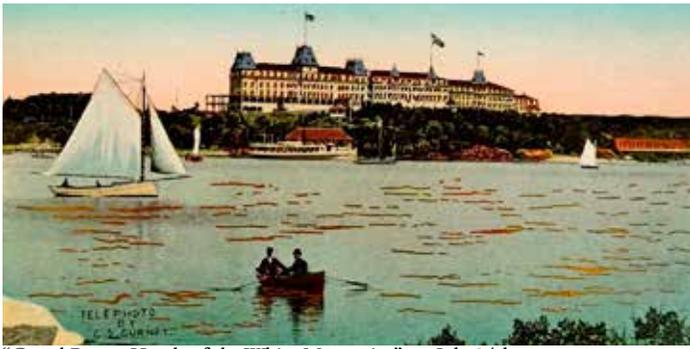
Our Pollinating Partners. Learn about the special relationship between plants and their pollinators: insects, butterflies, birds and many other animals! A DPNC family program for ages 5 and up. **Wednesday, July 13, 2016.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: The Museum. *Suggested donation: \$5.00.*



"Fishers Island Oyster Farm" on July 17th.

The Fishers Island Oyster Farm. Steve Malinowski will present an illustrated lecture on the day-to-day operations of the Fishers Island Oyster Farm, a thriving family-owned business that he co-founded in 1981—35 years ago!—with his wife Sarah. **Sunday, July 17, 2016.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor.

Water World. Take a close look at how water shapes and changes the earth, and how humans impact the water cycle. Hands-on activities include chemical water testing (pH & Nitrates), adding pollutants to the 3D Enviroscape, and becoming a drop of water in the water cycle game! A DPNC family program for ages 5 and up. **Wednesday, July 20, 2016.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: The Museum. *Suggested donation: \$5.00.*



"Grand Resort Hotels of the White Mountains" on July 24th.

Grand Resort Hotels of the White Mountains. Author Bryant F. Tolles will give an illustrated lecture on the history and architecture of grand resort hotels in New Hampshire's White Mountains as seen within the broader context of hospitality tourism in the New England region. **Sunday, July 24, 2016.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor.

Come Meet the Plants. Flowers, grasses, shrubs and trees are all very important parts of a healthy ecosystem. Learn the basic plant parts with a 3D plant model, discover what they provide to animals, and learn how their amazing life cycles work. A DPNC family program for ages 5 and up. **Wednesday, July 27, 2016.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: The Museum. *Suggested donation: \$5.00.*

Life Cycles. Did you know that a dragonfly starts its life crawling around the mucky floor of the pond? Many plants and animals go through various stages throughout their life. Explore and compare life cycles of frogs, turtles, butterflies, dragonflies and more. A DPNC family program for ages 5 and up. **Wednesday August 3, 2016.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: The Museum. *Suggested donation: \$5.00.*



"Restore the Call: Loon Restoration" on August 7th.

Restore the Call: A Five Year Plan to Restore Loon Populations Across America. Lee Attix, a Loon Conservationist Specialist with the Biodiversity Research Initiative, Portland, ME, will present an illustrated lecture that documents the efforts of a team of biologists working to restore loon populations nationwide. He will also examine the fascinating life history of the loon. **Sunday, August 7, 2016.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor. The 2016 Smith Vaughan Lecture.

Owl Prowl. Get up close and personal with a live owl and learn about owls' unique adaptations for nocturnal life. A popular DPNC family program for ages 5 and up. **Wednesday,**

August 10, 2016. Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: The Museum. *Suggested donation: \$5.00.*



"The Coming GreenWave: Ocean Farming" on August 14th.

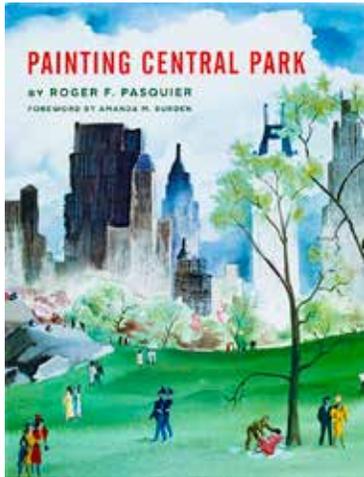
The Coming GreenWave: Ocean Farming in the Era of Climate Change. Bren Smith, owner of Thimble Island Ocean Farm and executive director of GreenWave, will present an illustrated lecture on a pioneering method of 3D ocean farming that is designed to restore ocean ecosystems, mitigate climate change, and create blue-green jobs for fishermen—while also ensuring healthy, local food for communities. In 2013, Smith was chosen as one of six "Ocean Heroes" by Oceana and as Future of Fish's "Ocean Entrepreneur" of the year. In 2015, he was the winner of the Buckminster Fuller Prize for ecological design and the Clinton Global Initiative's award for ocean innovation. **Sunday, August 14, 2016.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor.

Animal Senses. Investigate the keen senses of a wide array of different animals. Meet live snakes, turtles, frogs and owls and investigate how they use their senses to survive in the wild. A DPNC family program for ages 5 and up. **Wednesday, August 17, 2016.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: The Museum. *Suggested donation: \$5.00.*



"The Rise and Fall of Hotels on Fishers Island" on August 21st.

The Rise and Fall of Hotels on Fishers Island. This illustrated lecture by HLFM Director Pierce Rafferty documents the life histories of Fishers Island's hotels, chronicling their expansive rise to a peak of more than 300 available rooms, followed by their precipitous decline, with a few bumps along the way, to today's count of zero. **Sunday, August 21, 2016.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor.



“Painting Central Park” on August 23rd.

“**Painting Central Park.**” Central Park has inspired many of America’s greatest artists. This illustrated lecture by author Roger Pasquier takes us on a virtual walking tour of the park utilizing a variety of period and contemporary paintings and writings about the park. **Tuesday, August 23, 2016.** Time: 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor. A joint HLFM and F.I. Library program.

Rocks and Minerals. After learning about the basic groups of rocks—sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic—investigate their mineral composition by close observation, touch and testing. Then get moving with the Rock Cycle Ruckus game! A DPNC family program for ages 7 and up. **Wednesday, August 24, 2016.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: The Museum. *Suggested donation: \$5.00.*



“Tern Discoveries on Great Gull Island” on August 28th.

Tern Discoveries on Great Gull Island. Helen Hays, project director of the Great Gull Island Project since 1969, will present an illustrated lecture about the ongoing study of Common and Roseate Terns on neighboring Great Gull Island. **Sunday, August 28, 2016.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor.

Nature Walks: During July and August, Nature Walks will start at the Museum on Thursdays at 2 p.m. unless changes have been posted. Terry McNamara will lead the walks.

Museum Hours: Sunday, June 26th to Labor Day: Tuesday through Friday: 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; Sunday 11 a.m. to 12 noon. Closed Mondays.

Off Season Hours: To be posted. For special appointments: Please call Museum Director Pierce Rafferty at the Museum.

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