

ISHRA Newsletter

Isles of Shoals Historical and Research Association

Volume 15 Issue 2

October 2006

Our mission is to locate, collect, organize, preserve, expand, and make available information and knowledge relating to the natural and human history of the Isles of Shoals.

◆ General Membership Meeting Tuesday, November 14, 2006, 7:00pm Seacoast Science Center, Rye, NH ◆

WINTER TIME ON STAR ISLAND

Alexandra de Steiguer is one of the heartiest modern Shoalers in existence. She's been the winter caretaker on Star Island for the past eight years. Alexandra will be speaking about her experiences at the November 14, 2006 ISHRA meeting at the Seacoast Science Center at 7:00pm.

When asked if she ever succumbs to the monotony of the bleak Shoals winter scene, Alexandra responds that, "each new moment presents its subtle differences, and I have come to realize that the sights never truly end, that being open to what is really here always reveals more than the expected."

The ability to capture the unexpected serves Alexandra well in her work as a fine art photographer. Her astonishingly beautiful winter portraits of the Shoals capture the essence of Nathaniel Hawthorne's description of the Isles as a "stern and lovely scene."



Alexandra de Steiguer on Star Island,
Courtesy of Alexandra de Steiguer

Alexandra's talent with maritime photography was honed by years of research and sailing school programs on tall ships in the Gulf of Maine and the Atlantic Sea. A recent show of her photographs of the Shoals at the

Nahcotta Gallery in Portsmouth demonstrated her ability to capture fine gradations of light reflected from the rocks and sea.

The photographer's spirit seems to reflect that of Celia Thaxter when she explains, "since as long as I can remember, my preference has been for the company of the natural world over what man has created. This is where I find peace, inner strength and wonder. Simple moments there are often the most special - wind in the trees, light playing across the water."

Alexandra currently lives in the woodlands of New Hampshire in a tiny, solar-powered timber-frame home for three seasons of the year. Winter, of course, finds her on Star Island, miles out to sea. There she has explored as much of the Shoals as possible, limited only by natural barriers like the odd nor'easter.

VOTE ON A BY-LAWS AMENDMENT

A vote will be taken at the November 14, 2006 meeting of the ISHRA membership to change the term of office for the ISHRA Board of Directors from two years to three years. Discussion among both past and current ISHRA Board members indicated that Directors felt that two years was too brief a time to realize all that they wished to accomplish for ISHRA. If passed, this amendment would apply to current and future Board members.

ISHRA's current Board of Directors is comprised of Ann Beattie (President), Kat Waters (Vice-President), Joann Duncanson (Secretary), John Payzant (Treasurer), Ursula Bondi, Ray Houtler, Barbara Mauer, Barbara Newell, Dave Reynolds, Deb Richards, Arnie Silverstone, Jean Stefanik and Dave MacEachran (ex-officio).

ISHRA IS AT A CROSSROADS

A Note from Your Presidents, Past and Present

Dave MacEachron, Past President

ISHRA is at a crossroads - or more accurately in need of a course change. Since Bob Tuttle brought us into existence we have had a history of successful endeavors, from programs and newsletters to an ever increasing membership. As President I was able to oversee our meeting programs, the fall conference and the many functions of our organization.

All of these efforts were supported by volunteers who served on the board and chaired committees. This spring we elected several new board members willing to further ISHRA's goals. It appears everything is in place and our 'ship' is running smoothly. But we are missing a key ingredient. We need passengers that are willing to lend a hand.

Simply stated, in order to keep ISHRA alive, quite literally, we must have support from you. Even with the energy of our new board we need help in several areas. The Newsletter cannot be published unless written. The Conferences cannot be held at Star without being organized and our Meeting Programs cannot be presented without being created. And ISHRA will not be able to continue as it was originally formed.

We will have to change what we can do with our limited resources. We will have to alter our programs, do without conferences, discontinue our newsletter, and suspend activities that support our mission. At our Fall meeting we will be asking you for help. Please consider becoming more active in some of the things that need to be done to keep us 'afloat'.

Ann Beattie, President

It's a privilege to serve as President of an organization dedicated to something that means so much to all of us - the Isles of Shoals. As Dave pointed out, though, we need to decide whether to continue and expand our current efforts or to curtail them.

The Board's efforts so far have yielded some fine results. An Isles of Shoals exhibit at the Seacoast Science Center will occupy a prominent spot overlooking the Isles (further news of the exhibit will be forthcoming in the spring newsletter.)

ISHRA is also now insured. This includes our two annual meetings, summer and fall conferences on Star Island and our summer day-trip to Appledore Island.

We also hope to deliver the newsletter electronically to those who wish to receive it this way along with

emailing notice of upcoming Shoals-related events to ISHRA members sign on for this service.

Thanks to Dennis Robinson of seacoastnh.com, we hope to expand ISHRA's website, making more Shoals information, such as the Gosport Records, accessible on-line.

The continuance or implementation of these exciting ventures, though, rests on finding members willing to serve in several positions that contribute to maintaining the traditional level of activity for ISHRA. A brief description of each of these positions follows.

The Board has pledged to continue the two annual meetings and complete Shoals exhibit at the SSC, but the newsletter and conferences can't continue without people to work on them. Please consider demonstrating your love for the Shoals by helping with these activities.



Open ISHRA Positions

Newsletter Chair: solicits and accepts articles for the twice-yearly newsletter, uses software to layout the newsletter (currently in Publisher, but could change), arranges printing and mailing of newsletter. Solicits and accepts committee members to help in this venture.

Treasurer: does ISHRA's accounting (currently in Quickbooks but could change) and renews ISHRA's registration yearly.

June Conference Chair: plans and manages the June ISHRA conference on Star Island. Designs programs, advertises, accepts payment for the conference and works with Conference Services on Star.

Conference Registrars: accept information and payment from conference participants for June or September conference, work with the Business Manager on Star Island.

Meeting Program Chair: solicits speakers for the twice-yearly meetings (a list of past and potential speakers exists.) Works with speaker and the refreshment committee. Solicits and accepts committee members to help in this venture.

Website Help: locate, solicit and transcribe material for ISHRA's website

SEAWEED PUDDING

Made and served by Amy Cook at ISHRA's June 2006 Conference on Star Island. Eaten by skeptical but eventually delighted Conferees & Pelicans on Star Island.

1/2 cup Irish moss (*Chondrus crispus*)
 1 quart Milk
 1/3 cup Honey
 1 Tbsp. Cocoa
 1 Chocolate candy bar
 1 tsp. Vanilla
 Pinch Salt

Rinse the Irish Moss several times in cold, fresh water; soak it for 10 minutes. Place it in a cheesecloth bag.

Bring the milk to a simmer over medium heat and add the bagged Irish Moss. Continue to simmer over low heat for 30 minutes. Occasionally press the bagged Irish Moss against the side of the pot with a spatula to release the thickening ingredient.

Remove the bagged Irish Moss and add the honey, chocolate, vanilla and salt. Pour into a bowl and chill until set.



Knotted Wrack (*Ascophyllum nodosum*)
 Pressed Seaweed Print by Amy Cook

NOTICES

Arcadia Publishing's "Images of America" series will be publishing a photographic history of the Isles of Shoals in 2007. The authors are seeking collectors who are willing to share their interesting or unusual photographs from circa 1850 – 1950. Please contact Gayle Kadlik, 603-585-9478, gayle@athom.com or Don Cann, 781-878-0060, Indgame@aol.com.

Childe Hassam's artistic vision will live on into the 21st century near the corner of Columbus Avenue and Dartmouth Street in the historic south end of Boston.

To join the effort to renovate and maintain the park call The Friends of Childe Hassam Park at 617-267-1882 or visit their website at www.childehassampark.com.

SHOALS EVENTS

Have you missed any of a dozen events featuring the Isles of Shoals over the past several months and wish you had known about them ahead of time? ISHRA has begun an email list to notify members about upcoming Shoals-related events around the Seacoast. If you would like to receive these emails, send an email to shoalsnews@comcast.net with the words "SUBSCRIBE EVENTS" in the subject line. Please send information about any new Shoals-related events to the same email address.

The ISHRA Shoals Event Notice email list is completely private. It is used only for its intended purpose and individual email addresses do not appear to other subscribers.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Jean Stefanik, Membership Chair & Board Member

Thanks to all those who have renewed their ISHRA membership over the summer. If there is a ***RENEW*** on the address label near your name, this may be your last issue of the newsletter! For clarification, dues are for the given calendar year, usually payable at or before the May meeting.

I have been busily updating a new database of membership and am working to include phone contact information as well as email addresses. An easy email contact for ISHRA membership now exists:

ISHRAmembers@aol.com. Please feel free to contact your Membership Chair using that email address, or phone (603) 647-1063, and be patient waiting for a response, usually within a few days or a week.

ISHRA meets at 7:00pm the second Tuesday of May & November. Please send membership dues to:

ISHRA Membership
 P.O. Box 705
 Portsmouth NH, 03802

Dues: \$10 Individual; \$5 Junior (≤ 18 yrs); \$25 Family, Group or Institution; \$100 Lifetime

Name _____

Address _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

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A NEW VISION & CONNECTION: SML AT CREEK FARM

Jean Ragonese

Connections! Visions! In the seventeenth century the Isles of Shoals acted as a base for the fishing industry that brought the inhabitants of the sea itself, reluctantly, to shores near and far. The strength of the fishing industry at the Shoals has varied over time since the first permanent fishing villages were established there.

When Thomas Loughton moved his family to White Island to be the Keeper of the Light in 1839, he had a vision of restoring the fishing industry at the Shoals. As is often the case, one vision led to another and he developed an island hotel industry instead.

As the nineteenth century came to a close, the hotels on the Isles of Shoals were not as profitable. Was it time for a new vision, a new connection? Enter the Education Era! Unitarian/Universalist/United Church of Christ Conferences had already begun in the hotel on Star Island.

In 1928 Professor C. Floyd Jackson, UNH zoologist, and his wife Alma, also a scientist, conducted a Summer School laboratory on Appledore, with the blessing of the island's owner, the Star Island Corporation. This vigorous summer school ran until 1941 when war forced the abandonment of the island.

Marine education continued once again with the vision of Cornell Botanist, Dr. John M Kingsbury. With much perseverance, he was able to establish the Shoals Marine Laboratory on Appledore in 1966 so that undergraduates could once again study the marine environment in the pristine waters of the Isles of Shoals. This island endeavor, even with the cooperation of UNH, has not been easy. Every director of SML has wished for a base in the Portsmouth vicinity to facilitate operations and to house staff and students.

This dream/vision has now been realized with a NEW CONNECTION! On May 31, 2006, Shoals Marine Lab signed a lease with The Society of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF) to use the Creek Farm cottage on Sagamore Creek for the next 50 years, with a provisional three year trial period to develop the implementation of its program.

In roughly the same era that poet Celia Thaxter, Thomas Loughton's daughter, was entertaining her literary, artistic and musical guests on Appledore, another migration was taking place - to the shores of New Hampshire. The wealthy and cultural elite were building summer cottages, many of them large and occupying considerable acreage of beautiful shoreline.

One of these cottages, and one of the last still in existence, was built by a descendent of the famously

wealthy John Jacob Astor, Arthur Astor Carey. Carey built his "cottage" on a thirty-five acre parcel of land on the shores of Sagamore Creek in Portsmouth in 1887.

The architect for this large, elegant, yet unpretentious cottage was Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow, a nephew of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who in turn was a friend of Celia Thaxter and her husband Levi. Connection/coincidence?

Now called "Creek Farm," the property was given to SPNHF by its last owner, Mrs. Lillian (Billie) Noel, who passed away in May 2004. Mrs. Noel wished that this beautiful shoreline and woodland property be enjoyed by people while being preserved from future development. She stipulated that SPNHF must find a suitable use for the "cottage building" by a partner compatible with SPNHF's goal of preserving land, or the building would be torn down in two years.



Creek Farm, Portsmouth
Courtesy of William Bemis

SPNHF recently chose the Shoals Marine Lab to lease the building. The Lab now has a "home" in Portsmouth that can be used to enhance the educational experience of college undergraduates exploring their future in Marine Sciences. SML staff will also have a place to lodge when necessary.

Funds will need to be raised to keep the building in good repair and renovate the inside of the cottage for SML's various needs. The cottage has a dock for access to the sea, which is vital to SML. SPNHF will maintain the remaining 30 acres of the property, develop trails and educational programs for the public and maintain an office in the cottage.

Dr. William Bemis, director of the Shoals Marine Lab, is very excited and full of visions and ideas for new connections that can take place between Appledore and Creek Farm that will further insure that "a whole new generation of students will study nature, not books." Dr. Bemis ("Willy") will join ISHRA at our May 8, 2007 meeting to discuss Creek Farm and his visions for SML's land base. Meanwhile, watch for an announcement of an Open House at Creek Farm this autumn.



SHOALS BOOK REVIEWS

Religion at the Isles of Shoals
 Anglicans, Puritans, Missionaries, UUs (Unitarian
 Universalists), and UCCs (United Church of Christ)
 By Lois Williams
 Peter E. Randall Publisher, LLC, 2006
 Illustrated by Bobby Williams
 Reviewed by Donna Marion Titus

A small book; a serious history. ISHRA readers will find many of our favorite Shoals stories here, but religion is the thread that weaves through the text. Especially interesting are the chapters on The Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Indians and Others in North America. Williams' sources are many, including Jenness, Rutledge, Thaxter and McGill, along with documents from the periods. The Rev. Brad Greeley says in the Foreword that her bibliography "includes a compendium of references that will gladden the heart of any students." From past centuries when government and religion were entwined, we note the gradual development into separation of church and state. Through the 19th century hotel era up to the modern conferences, Williams brings this history to a fitting close, describing an evening candlelight service in the 205 year old stone meetinghouse on Star Island. Available from: Star Island Bookstore or Star Island Corporation, 10 Vaughan Mall, Suite 8, Portsmouth, NH 03801; 603-430-6272.

Becoming Bone
 Poems on the Life of Celia Thaxter (1835 – 1894)
 By Annie Boutelle
 University of Arkansas Press, 2005
 Reviewed by Donna Marion Titus

Boutelle goes back in time with care and deep feeling, back into the 19th century. She imagines Celia reacting to her experience. "Land-Locked . . . She learns to lie, calls it her 'little poem.' They pay ten dollars . . ." The poetry captures the inner life, the dark side, the hidden agony, and it succeeds exquisitely. Here is the Victorian cover-up, heroically identified. ". . . loss is the companion of joy . . ." she writes in the piece titled Companions. The joy of life is barely touched on in this collection, but the poems are fascinating and thought provoking. The Notes at the end of the book will be much appreciated by island historians and Thaxter scholars. These are poems to keep reading and rediscovering over time. Available from: University of Arkansas Press, 201 Ozark Avenue, Fayetteville, AR 72701, 800-626-0090, www.uapress.com and many bookstores.

Island Light
 Isles of Shoals
 Blue Tree, LLC, 2006
 Reviewed by Ann Beattie

This lovely volume contains 38 color reproductions of artwork focusing on the Isles of Shoals. Almost a third of the paintings are historic and from private collections. The contemporary work is from a group of artists who displayed their paintings at The Banks Gallery in Portsmouth this summer. Led by Jamie LaFleur, the artists visited Star Island as a group in the spring, and returned on their own to develop their visions of the Shoals. Each image is accompanied by an excerpt from "Among the Isles of Shoals" by Celia Thaxter, and Annie Boutelle contributes an enchanting forward. Available from: Blue Tree, LLC, P.O. Box 148, Portsmouth, NH, 03802, 603-4360831 or 866-852-5357, www.bluetree.com

APPLEDORE FIELD TRIP

Jean Ragonese, Trip Organizer

On July 9, 2006, a picture-perfect day this summer, forty-two ISHRA members and guests filled the UNH RV Gulf Challenger for ISHRA's annual cruise to Appledore Island. Participants were excited to view the Shoals Marine Lab and Celia's garden at its peak. The gulls were docile and disinterested in our activities and various people fulfilled their visions of this trip to great enjoyment. Bill Nichols, a botanist who is updating the catalog of the Flora of the Isles of Shoals, and his assistant and mother, Ginny, had a productive day. Both those who had not been on the island for some time and 'first-timers' explored and absorbed the ambience of the whole scene. Two very appreciative high school students with Marine Science career goals were a delight to have along. All participants made this trip very worthwhile for its leaders. So, July 2007, here we come!

2007 CONFERENCES

If a conference chair and registrar for ISHRA's June 2007 conference on Star Island step forward, the conference will take place a week later in June than past conferences. The June 2007 conference will run from Saturday, June 23rd to Wednesday, June 27th. Other conferences running at the same time will be Natural History and Young Religious Unitarian Universalists.

Many thanks to Dave MacEachran, who will be chairing the September 2007 ISHRA conference. Following the last two years' themes of cultural and natural history, the 2007 conference theme will be the "Visual History of the Isles of Shoals." A registrar is needed in order for this conference to take place.

BLOOMING JUNE CONFERENCE

Jean Stefanik, Conference Chair

Plants were the focus of the June 20 – 24, 2006 conference on Star Island. ISHRA members combined with the Field Meeting of the northeastern section of the Botanical Society of America this year for lectures, field walks, and of course traditional Shoals activities, including chapel and socials. This year the trip to Appledore had some morning visitors, others for the afternoon and some all day visitors, which worked well. We located some rare plants not previously documented on Star Island, and relocated others not seen in some cases for over 100 years. Coordinating with Appledore Island, the Seacoast Science Center, and NH state officials, as well as the naturalists and leadership of Star, this was an exciting venture.

Thanks to speakers who included Bill Nichols from the NH Heritage Program, Elizabeth Kneiper on lichens, Prof. Janet Sullivan from UNH, Mary Smith on Celia's garden, and conference Registrar Amy Cook on algae on Appledore. Pelican Melissa Saggerer and Sally Sapienza worked together to present historical botanical art, including resources from Vaughn Cottage. Dave MacEachran expertly shared some tips on photographing plants, as well as working with Laury Bussey to organize the evening chapels. Thanks also to Felice Fullam who helped with the socials and to [then] incoming ISHRA President Ann Beattie who stepped up whenever needed, including some last minute arrangements. Behind the scenes, John Payzant accurately kept our financial affairs in order. Arts Conference leadership were a pleasure to work with this year as well as Joe Watts and Star Island staff, which made my role easier as well - thank you all!

This is the third year ISHRA has organized a June conference, the first one focusing on lighthouses, and last year on graveyards. Volunteers are needed for the 2007 conference, including a conference chair. Is it your time to step up and help make something exciting happen?



June 2006 ISHRA Conferees



September 2006 ISHRA Conferees

ROCKING SEPTEMBER CONFERENCE

Donna Marion Titus, Conference Registrar

Forty-three delighted people attended the September 9 - 10 ISHRA fall conference on Star Island this year. Our Friday Happy Hour was held by the turnstile on "Vaughn Lawn" in the warm evening sun.

New friendships were started and old friendships renewed. Later, Geologist Chris Gerbi gave us a slide show and introductory overview of the glacier-formed Isles of Shoals. Saturday morning he took us on a "Field Trip" to the far reaches of Star's southern cliff for more rock study. That afternoon we went on a trip across to Appledore via the Kingsbury to explore the largest of the nine islands, to visit Shoals Marine Lab; to feel echoes of the Loughton family great hotel and Celia Thaxter's re-established garden - past its summer glory but still interesting.

David MacEachran, ISHRA Fall Conference Chair, was happy to introduce folk singer, John Perrault, the star of the evening's program. We all enjoyed his story-telling music and poetry, and especially his dramatic Ballad of the Smuttynose Murder! The wind shifted, and Sunday morning dawned cold with a strong wind blowing. Our last day . . . Check the chalkboard for the schedule. Time to pack, pay up, and once more say goodbye to the island and dear friends. At 2:30 the Captain's Lady took us back to Rye Harbor.

IS THIS THE LAST ISSUE?

Thank you to all of the contributors to the newsletter! Four members of ISHRA's Board of Directors also deserve our thanks for stepping in temporarily to create this issue of the Newsletter: Arnie Silverstone, Deb Richards, Barbara Mauer and Ann Beattie.

An Editor of the Newsletter is truly needed - please consider offering your services - there is plenty of news to print!.

HISTORIC REFERENCES TO FLORA AT THE ISLES OF SHOALS

Part I of II

Melissa Saggerer

Vaughn Cottage Curator, Star Island, 2005 and 2006

The Isles of Shoals have a rich and intriguing history, which is reflected in the island's current landscapes. The archipelago became famous as rich fishing grounds, attracting explorers and pirates, turning into a fishing village, changing to a home for resort hotels and altering once more to a religious and educational conference center and school facility. As the human settlement evolved, so did the landscape. Examining soil deposits and plant species helps us to better understand the island history. Study of references to flora in historic records also increases our knowledge of the growth and impact of humans on the Isles of Shoals.

Trees during the Early Explorer Era

John Smith noted during his 1614 voyage through New England that the Islands were "without wither grasse or wood except for the three or four short shrubby old cedars" (Snow, 1). The sighting of these trees on what came to be known as Cedar Island is the earliest record of vegetation on the Isles of Shoals. In 1623 the English explorer Christopher Levett landed at the Isles of Shoals. There he found "not one good timber tree, nor so much ground as to make a garden" (Farrell, 1). Even if there had been trees, they would have quickly been stripped by fishermen since wood was in such high demand. In fact, at one point the scarcity of wood on Star Island led the villagers to dismantle their wooden chapel for firewood.

Soil

As a part of his contract, Reverend Tucke was given a garden spot and was allowed to keep a cow. Most islanders had a house, a garden, and a fish house. These would be in separate locations, and all animals were beyond the turnstile to prevent contamination of the well water on the other side of the island. The "peat" soil of this pasture area was burned for fuel, depleting the soil on Star Island. In Reverend Jedediah Morse's journal from 1800 he says "All the trees, and the bushes even, have been consumed, and they have cut up, dried and burned many acres of the sward [soil], leaving only naked rocks where formerly there was the finest pasturage for cows" (Thaxter, 25). The soil became so thin on Star Island that fishermen sought alternate burials (at sea), some were sent into town to be buried, and others recycled suitable burial grounds, such as both Caswell and Beebe Cemeteries.

Soil does reflect the rather extensive cultivation of Appledore Island. There is the obvious recreation of Celia Thaxter's garden. There were also extensive gardens to supply the Appledore Hotel with food, and there are many sunken foundations marking the previous habitation. Smuttynose Island is said to have the deepest soil of all the islands. This is where Sam Haley grew wheat and corn and had a cherry orchard. While humans have reduced the islands' soils, actions such as burials and compost have augmented soil. Muskrat and seagull feces have also increased soil.

Cultivated Species during Fishing Village Era

The flora of the Isles of Shoals is very similar island to island. The Reverend Morse commented on this in an article written in August of 1800. According to Morse exceptions were a few small gardens and the mowing ground on Star Island. This mowing ground yielded between three and six tons of hay each summer. One woman hand cut on average a half-ton of hay every summer. She used to feed her two cows throughout the winter months (Randall, 65-66).

In addition to cultivating hay and general gardening, fishing village inhabitants planted a variety of trees on island. At the time of the Morse article the only trees on the Isles of Shoals were Lombardy Poplars and a few willows, which were planted by the inhabitants of the islands. Whortle-berries, choke-plums, and cranberries were also cultivated on Hog (Appledore Island) and Haley's (Smuttynose Island) (Randall, 65-66).

Samuel Haley, for which Smuttynose Island was temporarily named, altered both the ecology and economy of the island. He found four bars of silver that he used to build the breakwater between Smuttynose and Malaga islands, erect salt-works, install wind mills to grind the corn and wheat he raised on his land, planted a cherry orchard, and also built a bakery, brewery and distillery (Moore, 535).

The Lightons and their hotel on Appledore largely influenced the flora there.

"In front of the hotel, between it and the wharf, is the stump of an elm planted by Oscar's father in 1848. At the south end of the hotel and back of it was the family garden and had rich land. The Lightons harvested as many as two barrels of cranberries in a season...Near the graves [At the Lighton cemetery] are the sumacs ten feet tall which Oscar thought were such 'giant trees'" (Rutledge, 54).

To Be Continued

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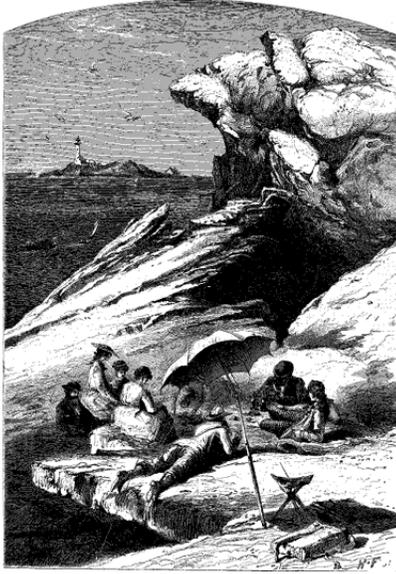


Illustration from "New England Coast Scenes," Appletons' journal: a magazine of general literature, Volume 2, Issue 28, Oct 9, 1869.

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ISHRA
Isles of Shoals Historical
& Research Association
P.O. Box 705
Portsmouth, NH 03802

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