

ISHRA Newsletter

Isles of Shoals Historical and Research Association

Volume 17 Issue 2

October 2008

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.

ISHRA NOVEMBER SPEAKER: BILL NICHOLS “THE FLORA & NATURAL COMMUNITIES OF THE ISLES OF SHOALS”

During the summer of 2006, Bill Nichols and his mother, Ginny, could be seen wandering each of the nine maritime islands of the Isles of Shoals. Their roaming was focused though, as they surveyed the Isles for vascular flora and natural communities.



Bill Nichols & his mother, Ginny, departing from the Isles of Shoals
Courtesy of Bill Nichols

Their work resulted in the documentation of 430 native or naturalized vascular plant taxa from 242 genera and 71 families. Bill can describe natural communities on the Shoals based on a combination of historical records dating back to 1614 and his comprehensive survey. A paper on this research was published last month in the botanical journal *Rhodora*.

At ISHRA's November 11th meeting, Bill will speak of their studies on the Isles of Shoals, and the extensive areas on the Isles where vegetation reflects natural processes associated with the surrounding maritime environment. He'll also talk about several rare plants

and natural communities he noted on the Shoals that aren't found elsewhere in New Hampshire and Maine.

Bill Nichols is an Ecologist/Botanist with the New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau, where he has worked since 1996 as an employee with The Nature Conservancy. He conducts natural area inventories and research on rare plants and natural communities throughout New Hampshire, and coordinates revisions to the state's endangered and threatened plant list.

Bill has also worked with the Audubon Society in Massachusetts and Rhode Island as a Plant Community Ecologist, Plant Inventory Specialist, and Refuge Manager. Earlier in his career, he worked as a master wooden boat builder at Lowell's Boat Shop in Massachusetts. Bill has a Master of Science Degree in Botany from the University of Rhode Island and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Marine Biology from the University of New England in Maine.

When he's not looking downward to the earth for plant species, Bill turns his gaze upward to the sky – he's also taught and lectured on astronomy, starlore, and the night sky. ISHRA is delighted to welcome Bill Nichols to speak of the flora at the Isles of Shoals during our November 11th meeting, 7:00pm, at the Seacoast Science Center in Rye, NH.

ISHRA Membership Meeting
Tuesday, November 11, 2008
Refreshments at 6:30pm, Meeting at 7:00pm
Seacoast Science Center, Rye, NH
Please Bring Refreshments!
Speaker: Bill Nichols

A NOTE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

It's an exciting time for ISHRA, with new projects nearing completion and changes on the horizon. Our website is up and running thanks to webmaster Cassie Durette. The Seacoast Science Center expects to have the ISHRA-sponsored exhibit about Isles of Shoals history in place for our November meeting. ISHRA has been invited to participate in an Isles of Shoals consortium along with other organizations operating on the Isles.

On the other hand, it's getting more difficult to operate as a viable organization. We need ISHRA members willing to step up and serve as Officers. We realize that members are busier than ever before and that it's difficult to commit to the responsibilities of being an Officer of an organization. The future of ISHRA, though, depends on having a full Board and a full complement of Officers. Please consider giving back to ISHRA by volunteering your time to serve our goals.

Ann Beattie
ISHRA President
abeattie@comcast.net



SHOALS BOOK REVIEW

Dances With Light: Isles of Shoals Poems
by Kate Leigh
AuthorHouse, April 7, 2008
Reviewed by Joann Snow Duncanson

In her new book, *Dances With Light*, Kate Leigh pulls back the curtain on her longtime love affair with the Isles of Shoals, as only a very caring and observant poet can. Beyond that curtain are images to which many of us relate but cannot put to paper so beautifully. No second hand accounts here; Leigh knows those islands from their physicality and history to the life-altering effects they have on all who go there.

In "Fitting Our Lives," she captures those laid-back feelings we have as we relax in one of Star's porch rockers, unwinding from life back on shore while feeling so grateful to be on Star at last.

In "Goin' To The Chapel," she takes us back to the 60s: "... High window seats, where we as youth / climbed and perched. They were / staged for the wild gyrations / of our caring selves, as we / danced our hearts' rhythmic dream / and wept our hearts' dilated angst, / all in public, even in chapel, the sixties rocked on."

There are poignant moments as well. In "Babies Died" she stands over the graves of the Beebes, "... three

young ones died of fever / another baby smothered in a cave." And in the last stanza: "... In the final moment / the merciful hand smoothed / each last struggle / tidied each brow / pressed a cold kiss / to a pale cheek."

The reader will find she has a whimsical side, too, as in her description of Haley House in a storm: "... It is stuck in the earth / Like a tooth in a gum."

Longtime Shoalers will identify with much in this book, and those who are not, will be inspired to go there to discover the magic for themselves.

Kate Leigh is a longtime ISHRA member, faithful worker for – and lover of – the Isles of Shoals. She lives and writes in Portsmouth, NH. Signed copies of her book will be available at our Fall ISHRA meeting.

ISHRA MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Annual membership in ISHRA begins June 1st and extends until the following May 30th. Please check the mailing label on this newsletter to see when your next yearly dues are owed. Benefits of ISHRA membership include this newsletter, opportunities to network with others at our meetings, programs, conferences, and daytrips. We encourage you to become actively involved!

Individual dues are \$10 annually; \$5 for Juniors, and \$25 for Families and Organizations. Lifetime memberships are available for \$100 per person. Dues can be paid at one of our meetings (checks preferred) or by sending a check (payable to ISHRA) to: ISHRA, P.O. Box 705, Portsmouth, NH 03802. Please include your address, telephone number, and email address. ISHRA does not use our members' contact information for any purpose except ISHRA business.

Jean Stefanik
ISHRA Membership Chair.

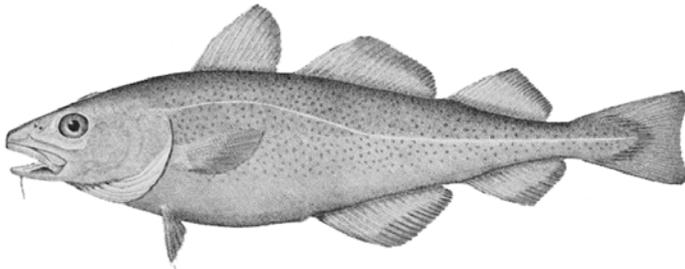
Thank You,
John Payzant

For Many
Years Of Service
As ISHRA's Treasurer

A CODFISHING PICTURE

by Lois Williams

Salt cod was just part of the ISHRA June 2008 conference session on cod fishing. Sarah O'Conner passed around cod fish hooks, talked about the cod fish bounty, and described hand lining from a dory. Then she said, in effect, "The movie, Captains Courageous, shows it all."



Atlantic Cod, drawn by H.L. Todd, 1872
Courtesy of NOAA

Once home, we ordered the 1937 movie from Netflix and watched Spencer Tracy in his Best Actor Oscar role of Manuel, a Portuguese fisherman on a Grand Banks schooner who pulls ten-year-old Harvey from the sea. Through Harvey's eyes we saw cod fishing – chopping bait, sitting in a dory lowered into the sea, rowing the dory away from the ship, dropping a line and pulling up cod hand over hand, rowing back to the ship, gaffing fish up to the deck, splitting and boning cod, and stowing fish in the well. Captains Courageous is a picture worth at least a thousand words.

ISLES VISITS CAPTIVATE IMAGINATIONS

ISHRA 2008 JUNE CONFERENCE

By Deborah McDermott, Portsmouth Herald

Reprinted from the Portsmouth Herald, July 13, 2008

They were an interesting lot, the two dozen or so folks who signed up for the four-day summer program offered by the Isles of Shoals Historical and Research Association in late June on Star Island.

Many conference-goers were ISHRA members, people on a permanent "roots" mission. Several had ancestors who walked on the islands hundreds of years ago, two sisters grew up going to Star Island to visit their grandmother. So taken was one woman that she wrote a book about the Isles of Shoals clergy and religious communities. But there were also folks who came just to explore an interest, a woman from the Lakes Region of New Hampshire who is a devotee of Celia Thaxter,

another, a yoga instructor, who came not only for the history, but for the peace and tranquility of island life.

ISHRA staff and volunteers put on these conferences twice a season, in the early summer and fall. The non-profit organization is dedicated to preserving and spreading the word about the history of the Isles of Shoals, and it does that in large part by these events.

Part history lesson, part hands-on experience, the conference included field trips to Appledore Island and Celia Thaxter's gardens and to Smuttynose Island, site of the famous Christensen murders. There's also enough free time so people can enjoy the quiet beauty of Star Island.

All the participants were engaged and engaging. This small group of islands matters to them greatly, and they were eager to share and learn all they could.

ISHRA SEPTEMBER 2008 FALL WEEKEND

By Jean Stefanik, September Weekend Chair

As you may recall, remnants of Hurricane Hanna threatened the ISHRA Weekend on Star Island early in September. Our adventure began with the knowledge that we would have no difficulty with the trip out to the Shoals but there was a possibility of our return to the mainland being delayed by a day. Our intrepid members were up for the challenge, and no one canceled!

Following the mandatory "Fire & Water" talk, we headed straight to Louise's Barn for our Social Hour. Louise's Barn has been recently refurbished, and was quite bright and welcoming. Friday and Saturday evenings we enjoyed Ann Beattie's talks on Shoals History and the Cod Fisheries, followed respectively by an ice cream social and chapel service, each shared with another conference group, Writers in the Round.

On Saturday some people read on the porch, others decorated the plastic raincoats in preparation for Hanna! We travelled to Appledore and headed for Celia's garden and the Loughton graveyard. Boats in Gosport had already headed to the safety of the mainland harbors. On our last day we awoke to brisk winds, clear skies, and crisp cool air. Our departure time changed several times, but we were finally able to leave the Isles later in the day on Sunday.

Thanks to all those who helped make the weekend a success - all the ISHRA folks who pitched in to help, Registrar Rose Schlegel, the Star Island and Shoals Marine Lab Staffs, whose flexibility was commendable. Smiles and cheers of "We will come back!" echoed as we left the Shoals.

A 1866 SHOALS VISITOR MEETS UP WITH REVEREND BEEBE

by Lois Williams

The digitization of out-of-copyright books by Google and others brings previously obscure sources of Isles of Shoals history into our homes. Putting “Benjamin Franklin DeCosta” + “Isles of Shoals” into a computer search engine yields the digitized book “Sketches of the Coast of Maine and Isles of Shoals” published in 1869. In the later 1800s Reverend DeCosta was a prolific historian of the discovery and settlement of New England as well as a travel writer

DeCosta sailed from Portsmouth to the Isles of Shoals on “the little yacht Celia.” Celia Thaxter’s poems were already famous, and in those pre-copyright times, DeCosta included the lengthy “The Wreck of the Pocahontas” in his book, explaining that the poem “appeared in the Atlantic from the pen of Mrs. Thaxter.” He also printed Thaxter’s “The Spaniards’ Graves at the Isles of Shoals” and “Rock Weeds.”

The DeCosta party landed on Appledore Island, and he admired the “broad, generous piazza” of the Appledore House, where he lodged for a few days. One day, he wrote, “We rowed to a number of different points” – Londoners, White Island (where the Light Keeper winched the boat up the ways), Star Island, and Haley’s Island.” DeCosta described Gosport as “presenting the most perfect picture of a fisherman’s village that I have seen on the New England coast.”

DeCosta’s group “threaded our way” to the old meeting house. “We found the minister there, with his coat off, trowel in hand, and hard at work making repairs.” The minister was Reverend George R. Beebe, who invited his visitors inside to see “the new floor he had laid down, the seats he had refitted, and the neat chairs that he had made for the pulpit.”

DeCosta wrote, “This good and worthy man came here originally for the benefit of his health, and since has remained for the most of the time, serving the islanders, not only as their minister, but as physician, general adviser and friend.” Reverend Beebe served the Shoalers from 1857 to 1867 as a missionary of the Society for Propagating the Gospel Among Indians and Others in North America, although he spent two or three years off-island as a surgeon during the Civil War.

The picture of Reverend Beebe repairing the chapel should not surprise us. Beebe, himself extolled his value to the citizens of Gosport in one of his annual reports to the Society, reprinted by Frederick McGill in “Letters to Celia.” Beebe wrote, in part, “Amid these regular duties your missionary picks out time for a multitude of small jobs, such as putting on a new shingle; fastening a loose clapboard; setting a pane of glass;

mending a lock or hinge, either on the church or the parsonage or the school-house.”

MR. TYNG & REVEREND MORSE - IN YOUR HOME!

by Lois Williams

One of my favorite chapters of Isles of Shoals history stars Dudley A. Tyng and the Reverend Jedidiah Morse, who, more than 200 years ago, went to Gosport to reclaim Shoalers from their wretched state. As newly appointed collector of customs at Newburyport, Tyng knew the Shoals fishermen, and he contacted Morse, who came to the Shoals on behalf of Boston’s Society for Propagating the Gospel Among Indians and Others in North America. Famously, Morse brought books to the Shoalers, preached to them, and married unwed couples. Tyng and Morse raised money from “benevolent individuals;” Tyng oversaw construction of the stone meetinghouse, and Morse returned to Gosport to dedicate the church.

According to most references, Morse, already author of three “geographies,” then submitted an account of the Isles of Shoals to the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the organization published it in Volume 7 of its “Collections.” However, in his recent book, “The Isles of Shoals in the Age of Sail,” Russell A. Lawton credits Dudley A. Tyng as author of “A Description and Historical Account of the Isles of Shoals.”

I was curious about the discrepancy, and, since I live near Washington, D.C., I went to the Library of Congress. A set of the early volumes of the Massachusetts Collections is housed in the Rare Book Reading Room, with its extra level of security and special attention to the protection of its documents. It was a privilege to sit in the elegantly furnished, hushed room reading a book printed in 1801. And it was a surprise to find the “Description and Historical Account” attributed to neither Reverend Morse nor Mr. Tyng, and, indeed, to no author at all.

The bigger surprise, though, came back at home. In an effort to make an educated guess about the author, I entered a name from the document’s footnotes in Google’s search engine. Amazingly, the very document that I had just read in the rarified atmosphere of the Library of Congress popped up on my computer screen. [Go to Google Books, enter “A Description and Historical Account of the Isles of Shoals” and look for the “Collections of the MA Historical Society” published in 1846, p. 242.]

In the last few years, digitization of old books has made an extensive library of early New England histories including a fair amount of Shoals history easily available to all of us with an interest in those long-ago times.

LITERARY NAME DROPPING: CONNECTIONS FROM CELIA THAXTER'S PARLOR

By Ann Beattie

Celia Thaxter entertained many of the famous writers of her day at her cottage on Appledore Island in the second half of the 19th century (she also entertained many famous artists and musicians, but that's another story.) Most of Celia's literary visitors were acquainted with various other notables of the time, who, while interesting in their own right, did not necessarily visit the Isles of Shoals. So here is your titillating literary guide to who-knew-who and how and who did and did not visit the Shoals via their connection with Celia Thaxter.

When Celia's family's hotel, Appledore House, opened in 1848 the first visitor was John Weiss, a Harvard friend of Celia's husband-to-be, Levi Thaxter. Weiss was a minister, writer, abolitionist and an advocate of women's rights. He graduated from Harvard in the same 1837 class as the writer Richard Henry Dana (who did visit the Shoals) and Henry David Thoreau (who didn't).



Celia Thaxter's Parlor on Appledore
Courtesy of the Star Island Corporation

Another Harvard friend of Levi's, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, attended Celia & Levi's wedding at Appledore House. Higginson served as a colonel in the Civil War, and chronicled his experiences in "Army Life in a Black Regiment," which was the basis of the 1989 film, "Glory," starring Matthew Broderick (who hasn't visited the Shoals - yet.) Higginson also advised poet Emily Dickenson (who didn't visit the Shoals) and, late in life, founded a Socialist society with Upton Sinclair and Jack London (who didn't and didn't).

Both Weiss and Higginson were members of the "Transcendentalist Club" in Boston, along with Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne (didn't, didn't and did, before Celia was famous, along with his college roommate, Franklin

Pierce.) Hawthorne, Pierce and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow were all Bowdoin classmates, graduating in 1821 (and again, did, did and didn't). Weiss and Higginson also worked together as abolitionists with Fredrick Douglass (didn't).

Writer Richard Henry Dana, mentioned earlier, actually first visited the Shoals in 1843, staying with the Caswells on Star Island, meeting Celia's father, Thomas Loughton, and deploring the stench of fish. Dana later visited Celia specifically on Appledore. As a lawyer, Dana helped to prosecute Confederate President Jefferson Davis (didn't) at his trial following the Civil War. And of course, Richard Henry Dana's son married Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's daughter (didn't and didn't).

James Russell Lowell, editor of the Atlantic Monthly, was responsible for the first publication of Celia's work, the poem "Landlocked." He wrote a poem about Appledore and later visited Celia there. Lowell was appointed as emissary to Spain by President Rutherford B. Hayes (didn't) and when he died, Lowell was memorialized by the writer Henry James (didn't).

While Henry James, the author of "Turn of the Screw" never visited the Shoals, his brother William, the "Father of American Psychology," did. William James stayed at Appledore House in 1873, although regrettably, his letter to Henry from the island doesn't mention Celia but instead complains that he is depressed. Even though Ralph Waldo Emerson was his godfather (didn't). William James once studied painting under the tutelage of William Morris Hunt, the famous artist who died on Appledore, but James' father insisted on a more "practical" vocation for his son.

James Fields, another Atlantic Monthly editor, and his wife Annie Fields, both visited Celia on Appledore. The Fields were voracious Boston dinner hosts and entertained folks such as Thoreau, Longfellow and Hawthorne (didn't, didn't and did). One evening, Celia dined with Charles Dickens at the Fields' home. Dickens never visited the Shoals but he did have a dream about Celia after meeting her.

After her husband's death, Annie Fields lived in Boston with the writer Sarah Orne Jewett, unwittingly coining the term "Boston Marriage." While on Appledore visiting Celia, Sarah Orne Jewett helped Celia edit "An Island Garden," Celia's book published the year she died in 1884.

William Dean Howells, yet another Atlantic Monthly editor, had a house in Maine and visited Celia on Appledore. Howells travelled around New England with the proceeds of the sale of his campaign biography of Abraham Lincoln (didn't). He encouraged both Emily

Dickenson and Sarah Orne Jewett with their writing (didn't and did) and was friends with Henry James and Mark Twain (didn't and didn't).

Howells, along with Lowell, Fields, Dana, Hawthorne, John Greenleaf Whittier, Emerson, Longfellow and Thoreau, among others, were members of the "Saturday Club," a society of intellectuals and writers in Boston (did, did, did, did, did, did, didn't, didn't and didn't).

Lawrence Hutton, a literary editor of Harper's Magazine, started going to Appledore with his wife, who had been visiting the Island for years. Hutton was a sponsor of Helen Keller (didn't) and hobnobbed with Mark Twain (didn't). As he was on Appledore when Celia died, Hutton acted as a pallbearer at her funeral along with famous artists Childe Hassam and J. Appleton Brown (did and did).

Hutton had a hobby that was quite popular in the 19th century but seems a bit macabre today. He collected death masks, a wax or plaster cast of a person's features made after the person's death. With the aid of Olaf Brauner, another famous artist who was on Appledore when Celia died, Hutton had a death mask of Celia Thaxter made (with her relatives' permission.) Later, at Hutton's home in New York, Celia's death mask was passed around the dinner table on a silver platter, much to the melancholy of Hutton's dinner guests.

Several years prior to that somewhat absurd occasion, Lawrence Hutton was picked up from Appledore on a steam yacht by Edwin Booth, the famous actor and brother of Abraham Lincoln's assassin. They voyaged along with writer Thomas Bailey Aldrich, who had boarded the yacht in Boston (did, did and did.) Aldrich was friends with poet Walt Whitman (didn't) and Mark Twain attended his memorial at the Portsmouth Music Hall (didn't).

Other famous literary visitors to Celia's salon for whom there is a dearth of interesting gossip include John Greenleaf Whittier, the Quaker poet and abolitionist, and Lucy Larcom, the Lowell mill girl who wrote "A New England Girlhood." They were friends, but then again, wasn't Whittier was friends with everyone?

Visit ISHRA's Website:

www.ishra.org

Shoals Resources

Visiting the Shoals

Member's Corner

ARCHEAOLOGICAL TREASURES OF SMUTTYNOSE ISLAND

By Laury Bussy

Blackbeard is rumored to have buried gold, silver and precious gems on Smuttynose Island in the early eighteenth-century, but aside from the three or four bars of silver uncovered by Capt. Samuel Haley sometime before 1820, no items of real value have been unearthed ... until now.



1811 Shipwreck of Spanish Sailors near Smuttynose

This summer, archaeologists from the University of Southern Maine discovered exciting cultural remains from the island's rich soil, which speaks to the incredibly colorful and diverse lives of hundreds and perhaps thousands of occupants of the island now inhabited by gulls, muskrats, terns, the Smuttynose Stewards, visitors from Star Conferences, day trippers from the mainland, Dave and Rosie (sheep), and the occasional orange and black migratory cloud of monarch butterflies.

This summer, under the inspired leadership of Dr. Nathan Hamilton (USM), two test pits were excavated, resulting in nearly unbridled enthusiasm for the fascinating and diverse story just beginning to unfold. Unveiling the cultural history of Smuttynose didn't seriously commence until Dr. Faith Harrington, under Dr. Hamilton's tutelage, was motivated to investigate what lay beneath the soil twenty-six years earlier.

Seeking conclusive evidence of one popular report, Faith obtained permission from the State of Maine to open the graves of the Spanish Sailors who died in January, 1811, as a result of the tragic shipwreck of the Sagunto, on the northeast side of the island. Hoping to conduct a series of forensic studies and perhaps trace genealogical connections, a trench was laid out running perpendicular to the head and foot stones, and the first spade of earth was overturned. A few hours later, much to the amazement and dismay of the team, absolutely no trace of human bones was uncovered. What happened? Was the story bogus? Was there never a shipwreck in the first place? If not, what was Capt. Haley's motivation for reporting it?

Well, there are no conclusive answers, but conjecture is within our purview. Yes, the ship wrecked on Smuttynose Island in the middle of that January blizzard, and some men were able to clamor up the slippery rocks to solid ground. Yes, they must have stumbled about the shore, disoriented, soaking wet and freezing, probably unable to move arms or legs without enormous effort, and one of them may have spotted a glow, perhaps, in the distance. Was it the candle Capt. Haley reputed to have kept in the upper window for the singular purpose of attracting shipwrecked sailors to a place of refuge? If so, shouts of “ligero, ligero” (“light” in Spanish), may have resounded over the roar of the breakers and howling of the skin-piercing winds.

As the stricken sailors dragged their nearly rigid bodies in that direction, seeking shelter and safety, the effort was just too exhausting, and one by one the men collapsed into the snow ... never to awaken again. At daybreak, observing that the storm had abated, Haley sighted a strange object or two draped across the easterly stone wall a few hundred yards beyond the house. Farther out, lay the remaining lifeless forms.

Once again, we can only surmise that what the captain reported was accurate ... however, the facts do not corroborate the story. January? Digging deeply enough into the frozen earth to bury and cover a body using just hand tools? Not one grave, but eight? Hmmm, a bit improbable, don't you think? Nevertheless, Haley journeyed to the mainland to report the wreck, and his success burying the bodies. Why make that report to the authorities?

One reason ... remuneration. Local statutes offered money to those who interred the dead, and Haley was not oblivious to that opportunity. Well, whether or not that was his motivation, we'll never be assured. Regardless, it's just part of the intrigue of the Island.

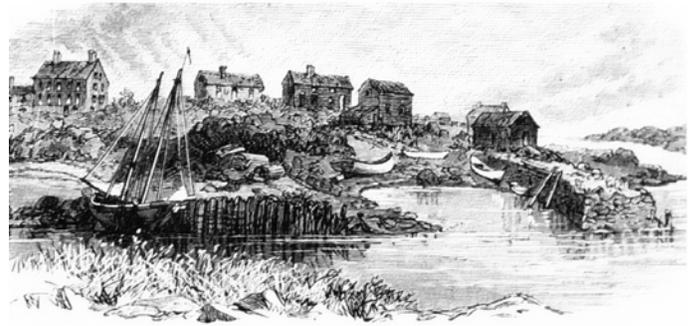
But the archaeological evidence is there, everywhere, and it tells the real story! Harrington's main interest was to study daily life at the earliest fishing stations during the 17th century, in order to better understand the formation of New England, and her findings on Smuttynose are but a small yet perfectly fitting piece of the large picture that is the very foundation of the New World.

Where there was smoke, there are dates. Although actively discouraged by King James, smoking had become a pervasive pastime ever since John Rolfe in 1617 began exporting tobacco raised in Virginia to England. As addiction dramatically increased, pipe-makers were suddenly in high demand, and clay pipes by the hundreds of thousands were produced in England, mostly, and exported to the Colonies. Pipe stems tell the whole (hole) story. Not only can the era of fabrication be identified by the bore diameter of the stem, but maker's marks appear regularly on bowl bottoms.

On Smuttynose, so far, the predominance of pipe remnants are of English manufacturer, although redware (probably American, and a spinoff of brick-making) shows up regularly.

After having just ‘scratched the surface’, a broad, diverse and highly colorful canvas of life on the island over time has already begun to emerge. Ceramics such as creamware, yellow and dotted slipware, English white saltglazed stoneware, and many other types, speak to a life of comfortable necessities; but little evidence of the refined flatwares or teawares found in upperclass neighborhoods.

As witness to daily life on Smuttynose in the 19th century, the archaeologists have unearthed a whalebone toothbrush, the bottom of a chamber pot and a key, possible a room key from the Mid-Ocean House of Entertainment.



Smuttynose Island from Malaga Island, 1873

From other excavations, we know that cows, sheep, goats and pigs were common on the islands. Fish bones from cod, haddock, pollock, tomcod, striped bass, longhorn sculpin, cunners and flounders abound. Bird remains include the great auk (extinct by 1844), gulls, shearwater, ducks, geese and others. Farming on all the islands supplemented family diets.

Smuttynose Island is a treasure in every sense of the word. As the rich cultural heritage of the island comes to light with the excavation of each new shard of glass and fragment of North Devon gravel-free ware, each spade-full after the next continues to unearth the rich story of human occupation on these “rocks in the sea”

In ensuing seasons, Nathan Hamilton, along with his students and volunteers (yes, Virginia, there IS a volunteer slot for you ...) will continue to illuminate the lives of those enduring men, women and children who called Smuttynose Island and the Isles of Shoals ... “home”!

Just in case any of you have ‘souvenirs’ you’ve picked up from the islands over the years, bring them with you to the ISHRA meeting on the 11th. Dr. Hamilton plans to be in attendance, and we’ll have our very own ISHRA Antiques Roadshow! No, they won’t be confiscated!

ISHRA Newsletter

Volume 17, Issue 2
October, 2008



Shoaler Fish House from "The Isles of Shoals: An Historical Sketch," John Scribner Jenness, 1873.

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