

# Vinalhaven Historical Society

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## 2019 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

### Island Buoys



You can't get near Vinalhaven without seeing hundreds of pot buoys. They form a sort of minefield around the island that lobster boats and ferries navigate daily. From the beginning, lobstermen have needed a marker for their traps and a way to distinguish their gear from everyone else. Each lobsterman has their own unique color combination and design - sometimes passing those combinations (or variations of) down to children and grandchildren. The feature exhibit this summer will pay tribute to past and present Vinalhaven lobstermen with a display of mini pot buoys.

Hand-carved wooden buoys, made from dry White Cedar with no knots, in various shapes and sizes, were the first markers used by lobstermen. The majority of lobstermen shaped their own buoys, taking great pride in the task and coining their own individual look. They were similar in shape to buoys used today - some more squat, bell-shaped, oblong, or pyramidal. The wood was readily available and it was easy to paint and maintain, but the buoy would eventually soak up the water it was placed in and would have to be rotated out to allow to dry. With changing times, fishermen moved to Styrofoam buoys, the standard material for decades now. Styrofoam doesn't hold water like the wooden buoys, is lighter, and will remain afloat even if damaged by a passing propeller. They still require yearly sanding and painting like their predecessor. More recently, some lobstermen have moved to plastic buoys. These also have their pros and cons; they are easy to maintain, but are hollow so they will sink if they become damaged.

Solids or stripes, one color, two colors, three colors, bright neon or black and white, or a variation on colors handed down for generations; Whatever the combination, and whatever the material, a lobsterman's buoy is as distinct as their boat name.

In 2015, we were inspired by an exhibit at the Marshall Point Lighthouse Museum in Port Clyde, ME, of their local buoys. We began trying to replicate their eye-catching display, buying small wooden buoys and lots of paint. The scale of the project became too much for one person and we have since been passing out the mini buoys for lobstermen to paint themselves. We appreciate all the help we have had from Fisherman's Friend and Island Lobster Supply to get buoys distributed and collected, and we are also grateful to the family members who have helped to preserve the colors of past island hard-working hands.

Lobster Landings:

2012:

Pounds - 10,119,587

Value - \$27,431,716

2017:

Pounds - 8,561,448

Value - \$36,349,597

Lobster License Holders:

2012:

Commercial: 276

Apprentice: 11

Non-Commercial: 11

2017:

Commercial: 250

Apprentice: 14

Non-Commercial: 16

Female License Holders:

2017: 28

Oldest License Holder:

(as of 2017)

Harold "Sonny" Warren (90)

Youngest License Holder:

(as of 2017)

Hunter Hamilton (10)

Trap Tags Issued:

2017: 141,918

Excerpts from 1880s

Vinalhaven newspapers:

*The Claytor brothers are catching lobsters at the rate of 200 per day.*

*Lobsters have tumbled to \$7.50 per barrel. At one time this season dealers paid as high as 23¢ apiece for lobsters. The present price is about 9¢.*

Traveling Buoys - Every once in a while a Vinalhaven buoy decides to venture off on it's own and let the sea take it wherever the wind may blow. In 1974, an island buoy traveled to Providenciales, an island in the Turks and Caicos. Barry Krane, a Portland fisherman, found the buoy on a beach on the north shore of the island. Krane was working on Providenciales as a fishing consultant, and immediately recognized the Maine buoy by it's wooden spindle - not common for local fishermen who were after spiny lobster and conch. When Krane got back to Maine he went to Augusta to see about tracking the license number stamped into the Styrofoam buoy. License number 3745 came back to, then, 69 year old Lyford Philbrook who had been fishing in Vinalhaven for "the biggest part" of his life, according to newspaper quotes.



In February 2008, John Higgins noticed a Vinalhaven buoy hanging in a restaurant in the Dominican Republic. He sent pictures to Phil Conkling of the Island Institute who passed them on to Kris Osgood, freelance writer for the Working Waterfront. Turns out the buoy, clearly labeled with a name and town, belonged to Kris's father-in-law, Lee Osgood. Lee was certain it was a buoy he had used in the winter of 2005 when lobstering about 40 miles off of Vinalhaven (he changed to different swivels the following year). The buoy had been found a few miles off the northern coast of the Dominican Republic by a fisherman. And just the year before this find, Lee's nephew's buoy was found in the Bahamas. Sam Rosen, who, at the time, was a Senior attending the Island School in Eleuthera, found David Osgood's buoy on the eastern side of the island.

A beach in Brest, France, has also herded quite a few Vinalhaven buoys, most recently Jake Thompson's in February 2019 (pictured) and Walt Day's in March 2019. Jason Day's and Randy Philbrook's have also been found on the same beach. We also hear that Foy Brown's buoy recently traveled from North Haven, Maine, to the Azores!



This summer's display at the Museum will feature the collected mini buoys from past and present island lobstermen, and wooden buoys in many shapes and sizes. Our hope is for this to become a permanent and ongoing exhibit by continuing to accumulate and keep record of buoys for many more lobstermen to come.

## OVERSEAS MEMORIAL

Quite often the Museum receives emails asking for information on family members who have lived on Vinalhaven. In August 2018, we received a request that was a little different. Mathieu Guillemant was looking for any material on Frederick Snowman. He had joined an association that honors gravesites of fallen American soldiers in the Normandy American Cemetery of Colleville sur Mer, near Omaha Beach, and he had “adopted” the name of Frederick Snowman.



Frederick Snowman was born on Vinalhaven November 30, 1925, to Guy Snowman and Leah May Dyer. He and his sister, Ruth, grew up on Vinalhaven before moving to Springfield, MA. On January 23, 1943 Fred enlisted in the United States Navy, moving up to rank of Motor Machinists Mate 3rd Class. He was stationed on the *USS Tide*, an Auk-class minesweeper lunched September 7, 1942. The *Tide* joined a unit assigned to the Utah Beach area of Normandy, France, and was engaged in sweeping channels for other support ships. At 9:40 am on the morning of June 7, 1944, the *Tide* struck a mine, blasting a large hole in the ship and destroying all bulkheads, causing immediate flooding. Nearby minesweepers *Threat*, *Pheasant*, and *Swift* all tried to aid the damaged *Tide*, picking up survivors. Frederick's body was never recovered. Although he doesn't have a grave marker, his name appears on the *Tablets of the Missing* (pictured below).

Mathieu Guillemant joined *Les Fleurs de la Memoire* about a year ago. When he first heard about the organization, it reminded him of his childhood when he would leave flowers at the WWI/WWII memorial in his town on Armistice Day (Veteran's Day). The association honors and remembers American soldiers (buried or missing) who were killed on D-Day and during the invasion of Normandy. Mathieu was first assigned Arthur Burrill Jr., from Springfield, MA. He became curious to know how many men from Springfield were buried in the cemetery. He found there were 14 men, and all but Frederick Snowman already had a caretaker. Coincidentally, Mathieu had already done some research and had been in contact with Frederick's family, who provided him with some pictures. In the meantime, he also contacted the Museum looking for anything else we could provide.



Mathieu has always been interested in WWI and WWII, watching a lot of documentaries and movies, and reading books. He has also started a collection of war memorabilia with ties to the servicemen whose graves he cares for. As a front office manager in a hotel, Mathieu likes to meet people and always suggests they visit the cemetery, which he says is a very emotional experience. With the help of the Veterans Office and the Museum of Springfield History, he has been able to research and write stories on each of “his” veterans. Mathieu says, “I have the feeling that the Fallen I have adopted are now part of my family, and I do my best to honor them.”



On December 1, 2018, Wreaths Across America sent 9,387 Maine-made Balsam wreathes to the Normandy American Cemetery. This was the first time the wreaths were placed on foreign soil. Charles Norman Shay, a member of the Penobscot Tribe from Maine, was present at the ceremony. Shay, an Army combat medic, landed on Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944, and reenlisted to serve in the Korean War.

## GALAMANDER

As of this writing, we know of three galamanders: One in the Franklin Historical Society Granite Park in Franklin, Maine; one at the Maine State Museum in Augusta, Maine; and one next to the 1895 band stand on East Main Street, Vinalhaven.



Galamanders were used to transport large pieces of granite using teams of oxen or horses. These wagons were equipped with a boom and would carry the granite slung underneath the large rear wheels. According to Sidney Winslow's book *Fish Scales and Stone Chips*, the iron work was done by Charles Littlefield at the Bodwell Granite Company's job shop on Main Street. At the time of Winslow's

writing it had become the site of the Gem Theatre, which is now the Tidewater Motel. William H. Littlefield was the company wheelwright and former pastor at the Union Church, and was the one who gave the wagons their distinctive blue color, "Elder Littlefield Blue." Through photos we know there were several galamanders on Vinalhaven in varying sizes.

The granite industry thrived on Vinalhaven from the 1850s until the early 1900s, when concrete and steel surmounted granite as the preferred building material. Vinalhaven granite was sent all over the United States in all shapes and sizes - from rough foundation stones and paving blocks to large, polished columns and monuments to fine, decorative pieces. All of which would have been moved around the yards and wharves by galamanders. At some point, a mindful person placed a galamander in the band stand square where it sat, open to the elements, until its condition caught the attention of concerned citizens.

In 1966, the Town voted to appropriate \$500 towards restoring the aging galamander. Elliott Hall, Hollis Burgess Sr., and O.V. Drew formed a committee of three and began evaluating the galamander and raising money. At this time there was no protective covering over the galamander and it had succumbed to years of weathering and vandalism. In total, \$1900 was raised for the project. No one locally was willing to take on job, but as word spread Earle Bryant in Dresden, Maine, was interested enough to come to the island and look at the aging wagon. Bryant's bid was accepted and on January 6, 1968, the galamander was disassembled and taken to his backyard workshop.





Working by himself, or sometimes with an assistant, Bryant used pieces of the galamander as a pattern and old photos for reference. The 14 foot main timbers were replaced as well as the 12 foot rear axle, all new wheel spokes for the 9 foot wheels were cut, and new front wheel hubs were turned from a block of oak. The rear hubs were salvaged, along with the iron “tires,” but other iron work had to be replaced due to rust. Bryant had to set up his own blacksmith shop to duplicate the iron bolts.

The bright new galamander was returned to Vinalhaven just in time to be paraded down Main Street for the 4th of July festivities (1969), followed by a grand dedication ceremony. Chairman of the restoration committee, O.V. Drew, gave a speech thanking those who contributed to the project, especially thanking Mr. Bryant for his hard work and essentially building a whole new galamander. Not long after the galamander returned to its place of honor, a protective shelter was built and it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, July 1, 1970. The Franklin galamander was placed on the Register in 1992.



In the last 50 years, little has been done to maintain the precious landmark. It received a coat of paint in 2007, and in 2012 the shelter roof was shingled. The Selectmen are looking at options to once again repair the galamander. In 2016, Ron Harvey from Tuckerbrook Conservation came to assess the galamander. The weight of the attached granite block was taken off and jacks were placed to alleviate the pressure on the rear wheels and axle. At present, another conservator is set to come to view the galamander in April. We support the Selectmen in their endeavors to keep this historical treasure looking its best and preserved for many more generations.

## MILESTONES

135 Years of Island News - O. P. Lyons and Charles Healey, two active citizens, collaborated and conspired to print the island’s first newspaper. On January 5, 1884, the first issue of *The Vinalhaven Wind* was distributed. Sidney Winslow called Healey “a natural born columnist” and Lyons “the lovable captain of the enterprise,” and the two made a great team in compiling bits and pieces of island news to fill the single-page issues of *The Wind*. The *Messenger* (1885), the *Echo* (1887), the *Vinalhaven Review* (1895), and the *Islander* (early 1900s) followed, none lasting more than fourteen months, and none being printed on-island. Also in circulation were publications by John Gordon. His short stories were intermingled with advertisements and hand-carved wood block prints, with covers made of wallpaper samples, all done by Gordon himself. On the advice of Gordon, Sid Winslow took up his pen (typewriter) and produced and distributed 650 copies weekly, door-to-door, of *The Neighbor* (1938-39). After Winslow’s stint in journalism there was a long wait for another island paper. In May 1974, *The Wind* again began to blow around the island, headed by Reverend Raymond Blaisdell and printed by the Island Printers, Bill and Mary MacFee. The island paper included school news, tide calendar, want ads, book excerpts, and lawn sale notices. Today, *The Wind* distributes an average of 1125 copies weekly, fifty weeks a year. It is put together by volunteers in the vestry of the Union Church and is printed in Rockland.



## RESTORATION PROJECT



If you ask just about anyone on Vinalhaven for directions, chances are it will include some form of navigation “at the Coke bottle.” In 1986, Bill Epton sculpted the Coke bottle Lady Liberty from the trunk of an elm tree at the intersection of Pequot Road and Round the Island Road. After many years of neglect, current property owners Lucian Burg and Marie Pollard decided to help Lady Liberty out. They contacted Ron Harvey from Tuckerbrook Conservation in Lincolnville, Maine. He spent the afternoon making a condition assessment and created a treatment proposal.

It was determined that the best plan of action was to cut the Coke bottle down at the base, treat the rotten wood, and use epoxy to fill the interior and to fasten a stainless steel rod which will later anchor the bottle to its base again.

Crowd-sourced fundraising began in the Fall of 2018 and the goal was reached by the end of December. Island carpenter, Dave Moyer, took the Coke bottle down in October and moved it to his shop to begin the restoration work.

If everything goes as planned, Lady Liberty will be returned to her post by late spring.

## YEAR IN REVIEW

2018 was a slightly slower year at the Museum, with guest book signatures totaling 978. This year eleven states were not accounted for, as opposed to eight and seven states in 2016 and 2017, respectively.

Despite the number of signatures in the guest book, we had a number of well attended programs thanks to Jeannette Lasansky, the Finnish Heritage House, the Vinalhaven Library, and the many Scandinavian descendants on Vinalhaven. Programs included a genealogy research session, Finnish baking demonstration and tasting, and a talk with Charlie Heino on Sauna traditions. Sadly, we learned of Charlie’s passing just four months after his visit to Vinalhaven. We send our sincere condolences to Charlie’s family and his friends at the Finnish Heritage House.

Donations rolled in all summer! We received a dance card from April 1884, given by Buddy Skoog; a collection of McKinley cartoons, given by Joan Wright; business papers of Joseph Black and a *Rumsey & Co.* catalog from which the Col. Libby hook and ladder cart was ordered, given by Robert and Dawn Bodnar Sutton; a wall hanging done by Abigail Simmons Smith, given by Phil Conklin and Paige Parker; a 1907 embroidered pillow top done by Sophronia Tolman, given by Peggy Burgess Quinlan; and a large hooked rug by Vera Johnson, given by George Lewis. Carol Kingsbury came through again with another scrapbook, more photos, and tin types from Thomas Lyons (brother of O.P. Lyons). Sally Thibault gave us a great collection of her mother’s Indian artifacts, and Jessica Farrelly gave us many wonderful items from her mother, Charlotte Goodhue, including several photo albums of her annual Easter Egg Hunt! We were also given books by local authors Sherry Bunin and Harry Gratwick.

Over the summer, volunteer Tullio Lasansky helped us photograph every headstone in Carver’s cemetery. This will greatly enhance our cemetery records! Other projects around the office include consolidating our compendium of obituaries onto the appropriate genealogy charts, and continuing to log the six boxes of Bodwell Granite Company script.

Richard Howard had to take a momentary step back from his photography project due to health issues. While running a half marathon in April 2018, Richard collapsed. With excellent care from nearby EMT’s, he was transported to the hospital, and after some recuperation time at home, he’s ready to resume taking pictures!

## IN MEMORIUM

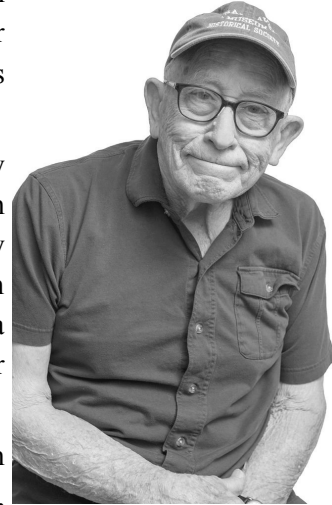
About 45 years ago, serendipity brought Roy Heisler and Peter Goodwin together at a campaign meeting in Philadelphia. At the time, Peter owned Bridgeside Inn and invited Roy and Esther to come visit. And, as they say, the rest is history. For Roy, that was especially true.

A true history buff, Roy became involved with the Historical Society very shortly after he and Esther moved to the island. In 1978, when Curtis Webster stepped down, Roy became President of the Society simply because no one else wanted the job. Roy knew little Vinalhaven history at first, but he worked behind the scenes getting the Museum a tax ID number, and 501(c)(3) status. At the same time, he and Esther were running The Haven Restaurant.

After retirement from the restaurant business, Roy was at the museum daily. He learned everything there was to know about Vinalhaven, backwards and forwards. Just a few of his significant accomplishments were getting over 500 glass plate negatives by William Merrithew developed and printed; writing and assembling the book *Vinalhaven Island*, part of the Images of America series by Acadia Publishing; and organizing an exhibit at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City about its eight columns that were quarried, carved, and polished on Vinalhaven.

Roy served 11 years as President of the Museum, and 27 years on the Board of Directors. His knowledge of the in's and out's of the Museum and Vinalhaven history were invaluable. It was due to Roy's vast network of friends, and friends of friends, that he got the museum the publicity it needed. He and Esther formed a long mailing list for the annual newsletter, begun in 1995, which continued to garner notice for the museum.

Roy passed away in November, 2018. His contributions to the museum were, and still are, invaluable! We can not adequately express our gratitude to him, and Esther, for their work in making the museum what it is today. He will be missed tremendously. *Photo Credit: Richard Howard Photography 2018*



### ANNUAL APPEAL

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

A technician from Seacoast Security has assessed our system and strongly recommends a whole new alarm panel and sensors. The current system is over 20 years old. This will require new wiring, new smoke detectors, and a whole new panel in the office with connection to the Boy Scout Hall. We will also need to rent equipment to reach the 20' ceilings in the exhibit space.

A quote from Seacoast Security estimates the project at \$4,900.00, not including rental equipment.

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

We appreciate any donation, and value your continued support and membership!

Amy Lear  
Vice President  
Lucy Bickford,  
Treasurer

Lorraine Bunker,  
Secretary  
Elizabeth  
Bunker, Director

William Chillles,  
President

Dallas Anthony  
Niall Conlan  
Alan Lazaro  
Torry Pratt

Susan Radley  
Priscilla Rosen  
Marion Tolman  
Roger Young

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## **SUMMER HOURS**

June 17 - September 27  
Monday - Friday 11-4pm  
(Also open Saturday in July and August)

**SPECIAL COLLECTIONS** - What do you collect? Are you a philatelist (stamps), deltiologist (postcards), arctophile (teddy bears), or maybe an oologist (birds eggs)? We wondered what things islanders might collect, or what collections visitors to the museum might find intriguing. So, we asked a few people if they'd be willing to display their treasures for a couple weeks over the summer, creating a rotating special collection display. Watch the *Wind*, Facebook, and our web site for more information on what collections we'll have for viewing this summer!

**REMEMBER WHEN** - The second edition of collected oral histories will be available this summer! Thirty-seven previously unpublished interviews with island community members full of wonderful memories and pictures. A re-release of Remember When, Volume 1, with updated layout and corrections, is also planned. Release date will be advertised in the *Wind*, Facebook, and on our web site.

**ISLAND BASEBALL MEMORIES** - Island native Walt White has written a book on the history of Vinalhaven baseball with personal memories of what it was like to grow up in a baseball family. Filled with many team photos, statistics, and newspaper articles chronicling great moments in island sports.