

A History of Drakes Island

Drakes Island from 1630-1950

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In pleasant retrospect we see,
Its flower-starred swamps, its river clear,
Its shady nooks to us are dear.”*

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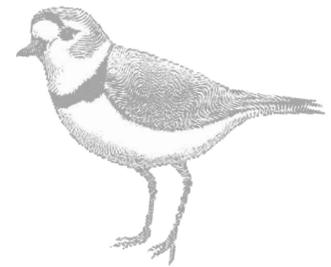
Prepared for distribution by
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Foreword

I wish to acknowledge the following sources for the accuracy of these records; Bourne's History; "Pioneers of Maine Rivers," by Spencer; The record of my relatives, the late H. C. Durrell, President of the New England Historical Society, for whom I collected some data. Our ancestor Phillip Durrell having settled that part of Wells later called Kennebunk about 1670, many facts were handed down in the family; The historical papers prepared by my father, Charles W. Kelley and also my Mother's Diary records. Counter checked at Kennebunk Library; the McArthur Library of Biddeford and Portland Libraries.

Part One

*Its golden sands, its sapphire sea,
In pleasant retrospect we see,
Its flower-starred swamps, its river clear,
Its shady nooks to us are dear.*



When you sit by your fireside in winter, thus you picture the Island today.

Far less peaceful were the early 1600's when history mentions Drakes Island, Wells, Province of Maine, Massachusetts, its inhabitants loyal subjects of King Charles II. Nature maintained all its grandeur, yet the woods were not trackless. It was the refuge of the Indians. No chapter in Maine history is more fascinating or none more repugnant, measured by standards of civilization than the story of the Maine Indian. The people of Wells then called Preston were harassed by the Indians and scarcely less annoyed by the jurisdiction of Massachusetts and their submission to England. After an attack on the settlement, several Indians distinctly seen from the highway were on Drakes Island. A company was mustered and hastened down. Thorough search did not reveal them and their apparent escape was a mystery. Later it was learned that seeing no means of escape they fled to the flag pond, laid don on their backs with mouths just out of the Water. They remained motionless throughout the long search, a feat which they learned from a species of ducks, which on being wounded will swim along with their bills just out of the water.

Wildlife was abundant. There were wolves, bear, beaver, and countless flocks of wild geese, duck and drakes from which fact some thought the Island derived its name.

An interesting brochure "Indians of New England" describing their traits and customs says, "Indians upon return from a raid, erect piles of stones or shells near their wigwams. So long as this pile remained they were at peace with the whites." Seemingly overjoyed that hostilities had ceased they came to the homes of their old friends radiant with joy, as though unmindful of the depredation and slaughter recently done. I remember several such piles of shells on the Island, the largest of which was on the site of the Foster Cottage.

Mr. Littlefield who built the present Bowdoin Cottage named it "Chabinocke", for the mighty Sagamore of Wells, who was believed to have lived nearby. From the proximity of this pile of shells to Chabinockes home it appears he was at peace with the whites when he bartered away his rights to the land on October 18, 1649. Stephen Batson, (his mark UU) was one of the witnesses.

Chabinocke's land, his heritage from the Great Father, reached from Neganquit to Cape Porpois (now Kennebunkport) and on down to the seaside and was called Preston. Stephen Batson built the first house in all this section on Drakes Island. Mr. Lester Eaton, now a permanent resident on the Island tells me that one of the boundaries in his deed reads, "From the cornerstone of Batson's cellar, etc." The depression of the cellar is still there, and the remains of a large oak, so often mentioned as a landmark. This old oak sprang up after the house was taken away. Mr. Joseph Eaton, grandfather of Lester and the last owner of the Island intact, often spoke of this location as the place where he would like to build a home.

On October 21, 1645, Yorkshire Court granted Stephen Batson ten acres of marsh on the western end of Drakes Island, bounded by the Sea and the Wells River.

The part of Wells River from Littlefield's sawmill to the Ocean was called Webhannet River by the Indians who lived on the Island. Descriptions of this river state, "On account of the winding river, open marshes, beaches and sand dunes, Wells is destined to become a leading Maine Summer Resort." How prophetic of today.

Stephen Batson who was a planter and a trader, had earlier started a First Settlement in Cape Porpoise, on a river which now bears his name. He might have been a man of importance but had the misfortune to have a wife who grossly abused him and mistreated their children. He was compelled to resort to legal procedure to curb her tongue and soften her unhallowed temper. The court awarded that Mrs. Batson should confess before the court and before the Town Meeting in Wells and Cape Porpoise.

When the wind moaned through the grove of oaks surrounding the site of the house it was said to be Mrs. Batson still scolding her children (family). So the solitude of the Island did not insure a happy one.

Mr. Batson died in Wells in 1676.

Origin of the Name

Thomas Drake, a trader and a voyager lived on a small island in Casco Bay, He sailed the Maine Coast from Yarmouth to Wells, establishing trading posts with the Indians. In 1645 history mentions Drake Island as named after this Thomas Drake. It does not state that he ever lived there, but the name "Drake" Island has been on Maps 304 years. Mention is made of Drake being on the Island in 1652.

John Cross also lived on Drakes Island about this time. Later, residing in another part of Wells. He was killed by the Indians in 1675.

Ten acres of meadow land which reached to Little River were granted him. His nephew, Captain Joseph Hill came into possession of this land, and built his house somewhere near Laudholm Farm.

The next owner of Drakes Island was John Wakefield, who bought the Island from Stephen Batson in 1652. Occupied it two or three years and then sold to Samuel Austin, who was a man of importance in the settlement, residing in Wells from 1641 to 1687.

In 1665 he was one of nineteen to acknowledge submission to Massachusetts. This fact caused much dissension and those who did not submit were prosecuted. To avoid this many left the town and settled elsewhere.

Austin was a selectman in 1670, and court when sitting at Wells was held at his house, the location of which was near Cole's Corner. As he was an innkeeper he was licensed to supply rum to the Jurors.

From 1675 to 1730 the French and Indian War occurred. Wells was the scene of carnage, massacre and burning of homes. A number were taken in captivity, some not returning from choice and others were held for years in captivity. Settlement after settlement in Maine were destroyed by the Indians until Wells was left the frontier town of the State.

Part Two

The beginning of the 18th Century found the settlement still in a state of chaos. Aside from the terror of Indians, nature, as if in protest caused an upheaval which not only disturbed this entire section, but also was the wonder of scientists abroad. In the eastern side of Wells a large piece of clay ground was thrown, by mineral vapor over the tops of high trees, landing in the river and stopping the course thereof. Governor Winthrop sent men to view this wonder, considered an act of the Almighty, as no earthquake was reported. An excerpt from the governor's account reads; "I have sent a number of these clay pellets, which came from a depth of 40 yards to the Royal Society of England." Their return thanks states: "The Parcel, viz; the shell fish (called horsefoot); the Hummingbirds nest, with two eggs in it, yet whole; the bullets in the clay taken from the overturned hill were viewed with curiosity at our public meeting, The Hummingbird's nest was also showed His Majesty, who was as much pleased as the Society." The shellfish referred to are now called horse shoe crabs; and their shells, which they shed yearly could be found on the marshes back of the Eaton' farm, It would be interesting to know if these relics from Wells are still preserved by the Royal Society.

All this shows that the ocean is receding along our shore. The exact location of the overturned hill is a conjecture. One historian places it near Durrell's Bridge on Kennebunk River, another thinks it was Great Hill which we view to the east of Drakes Island. Certain it is that Great Hill, whether it be the mysterious hill, or a glacial moraine which pushed its way to the ocean's edge, still stands like a sentinel. Years ago, over twice its present height, crowned with a thick growth of timber, like a formidable fortress at the mouth of the Mousam River, the Indians living there, found it a vantage point to view the ocean.

The Indians had signed a peace pact with the whites in 1725, but the French induced them to violate the treaty. No one felt safe. Whole families deserted their homes to live at the various garrisons, scarcely venturing outside the stockades.

Drakes Island like all exposed places was completely deserted. Everywhere, houses fell to ruin, the land was untilled, and but few cattle survived. Indeed it was a sorry outlook, with the French holding Louisburg, the strongest fortress of the coast, and encouraging the Indians to resist the settlers. News came that the French fleet was off the Wells coast, and might land at any moment. Added to this panic, a transport bound for Louisburg with over 70 Wells men aboard was missing. The vessel was cast ashore on Mt. Desert Island in a blinding snow storm. Only four were known

to have been saved. One was John Wakefield, Jr., whose family once owned Drakes Island. The survivors suffered fearful hardships. There was no house on that Island, and no means of transportation. These Robinson Crusoes of Wells built a frail boat in which only one could embark, and reached the mainland for aid. When we think of beautiful Mt. Desert Island today, with Bar Harbor and other resorts and a population of about 10,000, we realize how desolate our coast was then. This brings us back to the fact that Wells was yet the frontier town of the state, and Maine still a province.

“The seige of Louisburg lasted 50 continuous days and nights before the stronghold fell in 1746,” wrote Sir William Pepperel, who was in charge of the Wells companies. We deplore war today and the high cost of food, but people then had to be courageous. With the men away at war, women living within the stockades, tended small gardens and raised a few sheep for the wool which they spun for clothes. Flour was Twenty Dollars per hundred pounds. Yet before the close of the century they were to face another war, that of 1775. No mention is made of anyone save Indians living on Drakes Island during this period. People were slowly leaving the Garrisons to return to their deserted homes. Fishing was considered the safest industry. No lurking Indians arrow could reach them as they sailed along Wells Bay which gave them a far reaching view of any approaching foe.

One very clear summer’s day, I stood in a fire warden’s observatory at the White Mountains scanning the landscape. I asked about a large indenture of the sea clearly to be seen. The warden said, “That is the nearest point of water, Wells Bay,” It placed before me Drakes Island as the centre point of this bay. The extreme eastern boundary, Cape Arundel outlined the sky. Boone Island Light eight miles from shore guards the entrance. Rugged Bald Head Cliffs form the western wall. Between these points, five rivers contribute their waters. The Kennebunk, Mousam, Little, Webhannet, and Ogunquit Rivers. Inland Mt. Agamenticus silhouettes the sky against a setting sun. When Captain Smith charted the entire eastern seaboard from Cape Cod to the Penobscot River in 1614, he styled this mount “The Three Turks Heads.” The poet, in verse, describes the romance of Aspinquid, the Indian Chief, whom tradition says ascended Mt. Agamenticus to take a last look at his vanishing domain, before taking his own life there, rather than surrender his rights to the whites.

*“Trimountain of the purple haze,
Mysterious mountain of the East,
Bold landmark of the plain and sea
Enduring symbol of the past-- and of eternity!
Beloved mount of Aspinquid-*

*On which at last he chose to die
In foliage forever hid,
Betwixt the earth and sky,
Memorial to one who sought
A higher level for his race;
Where, though his realm survive him not,
He still retains a place.
Fair mountain of the lights and shades
With peaceful grandeur in its height
As restful as the star which fades
At dusk on summer nights.”*

The Boston Tea Party took place in 1773. Living in York at this time was a family of Donnels--bold seamen, mostly engaged in fishing. A lot of tea was brought into York in a vessel commanded by Captain James Donnel, a supposed Loyalist. The people would not stand this affront to public sentiment. A Town Meeting was called. The tea was placed in storage but that evening a band of Pickwaket Indians broke into the store, and carried it away, so that no duty was paid by the people. This act placed the Donnel family in disfavor.

Whether by chance, or under pressure, the Donnels came to live on deserted Drakes Island and for many years the western end was called Donnels Island; the other houses at this end of the Island had long been abandoned and fallen to ruin.

With the, Revolutionary War in progress little heed was paid as to how they came into possession. Moreover no value was placed on sea-shore lands. Even many years later, my great uncle was offered, in payment of a debt, all of Lords' Point or some hay. He took the hay.

Father said in his boyhood, no building was on Kennebunk Beach, except a stable on the promontory between Wentworth and Boothby Beaches where the farmers stored sea weed lest it be washed away by another storm. Mystery always surrounds the lives of the Donnels, and they never seemed to have gained the confidence of Wells people. If I were writing romance instead of history, I could say it was hinted they always remained Loyalists; that when they built their home, the present Eaton farm, the cellar was almost a fortress used as a smugglers den. With the exception of the large western wing, added by Mr. Eaton, the main house remains the same as when built. In a small, forgotten graveyard back of the farm are three stones. One reads: Samuel Donnell died June

1856, age 69 years. Next is Hannah, his wife died April 1856, age 55 years. The last in memory of Sean a Hanson of Dover, New Hampshire died February 8, 1807, marks the grave of a sailor whose body washed ashore from a shipwreck. Little else is known of the Donnels.

Nathaniel Clark whose family came to Wells before 1700, built his homestead on the site of Laudholm Farm. He confined himself to agriculture, his farm being so extensive as to require all his time. Formerly all land lying between Little and Webhannet Rivers was called Drakes Island. Later, the large farm was known as the Theodore Clark homestead until 1884, when George C. Lord tells me his Grandfather Lord bought the Estate. The western end of the Island retained the name of Donnells Island. No particular designation had been given that part of Wells between Kennebunk and Mousam Rivers, but from 1717 the name. Kennebunk was applied to it. This section was rapidly growing with ship building on the two rivers, saw mills on Old Falls--Upper Nousam, brickyards and salt works, as industries, so she (Kennebunk) decided to separate from her mother town. In 1820, when Maine became a State, Kennebunk became a town, and the boundary between it and Wells was moved west to Branch Brook the present town line. In another chapter, we shall step from the romantic and tragic happenings of these early days to the actualities in remembrance of many living today.

So, may I bid my readers, historically minded, to visit the Brick Store Museum dedicated to the memory of William E. Barry who gave time and money to preserve the antiquities of "Ye Olde Wells," It was my pleasure to have the acquaintance of Mr. Barry through his friendship with my father, Charles W. Kelley, especially when they were co-chairmen of the historical exhibit and pageant of Old Home Week. Mr. Barry, author, an artist of unusual ability, a botanist and an ornithologist often visited us at Drakes Island. Through him I learned that the Island was one of the few nesting places of the Blue Heron; that the white egret and Arctic Owl made periodic visits; that the large blue bird with rosy breast seen on the marshes, was the almost extinct Mourning Dove; that the Hawk like bird my father found stripping feathers from a small bird was a Peregrine falcon, a stray English hunting bird which hunters chain to their wrist, and must have winged its way across the Atlantic; that the rarest orchids he had seen were to be found on the marshes.

A collection of Mr. Barry's historical writings are in the Museum Library. The wonderment with which the Royal Society of England viewed the bullets from our overturned hill, may in part, be explained when he writes: "Formerly cannon balls for safety, were buried in the earth. Men were sent to Saratoga Fort in 1755, and exhume 1114 large shot": or the possible reason why Wells could hold back countless invaders, and retain its frontier place, may be understood by his

description of the blockhouse thus described; "In the notable defense of Wells in King Williams War, 1692, defendants numbering 30 men maintained an intermittent attack for 48 hours, although outnumbered 14 to 1 by the savages and the French." Many bronze tablets set in granite slabs have been designed and erected by Mr. Barry at his own expense. Pursuant to our history a most notable one may be seen just beyond Old Garrison House on the Post Road, inscribed "To mark the defense of Storer's Garrison by Captain James Convers and Yeomen of Wells, whereby 400 French and Indians were resisted and Wells remained the Easternmost Town of the Province."

Part Three

Today Drakes Island is a State Game Preserve. In the early 1900's it was a natural wild life sanctuary, uninvaded except for the occasional farmer gathering sea weed, or a few clam diggers. It was at this time that I first heard about it. While visiting, during one of my school vacations, mother wrote; "Your father and I took a long ride today. Seeing a road which we knew must reach the ocean, we came to a place he said he hadn't seen since he was a boy riding horseback throughout this section." She described the wonderful beach. "Happy Thought" cottage was up on the point where Hart's now stands. At that time one could drive an ox cart between it and the high sandy cliff, where a set of stairs led down to the beach. Asking a little girl on the beach who owned the land, she vaguely waved her hand toward the village and said, "Mr. Eaton." As father thought the Donnell farm, the only place on the Island, they drove home with only the pleasant memory of the sea, the gulls, the sand-pipers, and flocks of birds that arose from the beach at the approach of strangers, for except during gunning season they were not disturbed.

Several months later they took me to see the beach which mother could not forget for she had a sea captains daughter's love of the ocean. Leaving home with a horse and surry, we passed through the center of Kennebunk, very quiet then. No paved streets, no autos, very few summer tourists. When we came to Wells turnpike we drove slowly for two miles with sand up over the hubs of the wheels. No one ever hurried their horses through there, and one had plenty of time to view the landscape, or get out and gather berries. When we came to the Lord farm road, father said, "This is where I used to ride to reach the Island, down past the Oakes' place." On we drove until we came to the head of Drakes Island road, which rose several feet higher than now from the Post road. On the western side stood the same house as is still there, but called the Hemmingway place, for a very old clergyman, noted as far away as Boston, once lived there. In those days no one ever mentioned a present owner's name; it always belonged to someone, a generation or so back, so you couldn't forget them.

On the crest of the hill you looked down upon a very narrow deeply rutted winding road and you surely had to stay inside those ruts, if you wished to keep your seat. Tufts of grass grew high enough between the ruts to touch the carriage. Then we crossed the Hemingway bridge, not quite so wide as now, for the road was little travelled. The next bridge was the Dyke bridge, with the green walls of the dyke, letting only a small amount of water through, and keeping Nancy's creek well in check. If it happened to be June the walls of the dyke and the approaches to the bridge were one tangled mass of wild roses; while the marshes showed much more color than since the dyke broke through, and the flood killed certain growths.

Passing through the next woods, we were surprised to see that the Adams and Gillis cottages were partly built. On each side down to the beach, thick undergrowth and high bush blueberries lined the road. Then there was the grove of scrub-pines, so unusually near the sea, which every one tried too preserve. It was then that I first saw Drakes Island, with its two mile stretch of beach, and decided mother's description fitted well.

Father met Mr. Joseph Eaton for the first time and at once, bought the land for our cottage. Mr. Eaton had owned the Island since 1883, and it truly was then an island. For many years his only approach to the town was to drive along back of the sand dunes, up across the hill past Lordholm Farm to the Post Road.

On the Eastern side of Drakes Island Road, Mr. Eaton had sold in 1895 to John Lord (familiarily called "Salt John" Lord) of Wells 6 1/2 acres with 130 1/2 foot ocean frontage and extending back to where the present Island Store stands. On the front of this lot Mr. Lord built in 1897 the first summer cottage on the Island.

Among the earliest built were the Littlefield, Gillis, Adams, Clogston, Spooner, Carroll, Woodman and Kelley cottages. On the waterfront were the Wadleigh's and Pease's. Mr. Eaton built Samoset (now Colcord's) and Happy Thought stood alone on the Point. The Erskine, Perkins, Clark, Small, Sargent, and Brown cottages were soon built.

For a good many years the colony did not increase much. It was like one large family. For your day's supply of drinking water, one walked to the well at the Oaks. By this time, the Goodwin, Thomas and Ben Eaton's camp were there. From the large amount of driftwood on the beach a huge bonfire was kindled for most week end gatherings. There were no electric lights. The glow of the bonfire or your lantern guided you home.

On black nights there were myriads of animalcules that shone like phosphorous in the ocean, and turned the waves to shining rows of fire chasing along the shore.

There was a group of old-youngsters on the Island. First, I think of Moses Bragdon who, single handed built the Clogston cottage, even descending a ladder from the roof, to retrieve the nails he dropped. He was a short man wore his hair long to his shoulders. His broadbrimmed G.A.R. hat atop. He carried a staff which he grasped part way down. He looked like a patriarch of old, or a Pilgrim father just landing, as he looked over the sea for weather signs--quoting,

*“A storm on the flood is
Only a skud
A storm on the ebb,
might As well go to bed.”*

He always thought in terms of the Civil War, and although he had no purple heart, he highly prized a bullet which had passed through his body nearly causing death.

Then Mr. Spooner, another G.A.R. man who built “Morning-side” cottage for himself and one for Miss Abbie, whom we must now greet as the grand old lady of Drakes, in her nineties.

Lorenzo Littlefield who was a cousin of everyone in Wells, from him I learned of every fence viewer in town. Mr. Gillis who in his late eighties climbed on the roof, and slipped off with nothing more than a good shaking up. Pledging secrecy, I wrote the letters for him that opened the Masonic Lodge in Manchester.

Mr. Erskine, lumber man, who also built cottages. Mr. Eaton, a former selectman and State Representative, had a strong predilection to politics, local and state. All these men were well over eighty and father, born Civil War times, listened with interest to their discussions. Once Mr. Eaton had a two day encampment of his few remaining Civil War comrades, Co. 1, 1st Maine Regiment of Cavalry For character of its men and quality of horses, this regiment was fairly superior to any in the service. They had a Bean Bake, with beans baked deep in the earth, as on the battlefield. In the evening we were invited to the campfire, where the comrades sat around the fire, relating tales of other comrades and events.

Very touching were the stories of those who languished in either Anderson or Libby prisons.

A visit to the farm was always interesting. There you would find Mr. and Mrs. Eaton (who signed her letters Aunt Peggy). Both spent the long winters reading, and were well versed on all subjects.

The youngest son, Alanson was still in school and Mr. Eaton's blind brother, whom everyone called Uncle John, lived there. It was always a source of wonderment to me to see him lightly trace his finger over the raised letters of his Bible, and read in a low voice. It was he who always remembered what date the mackerel came up the river or when the honking of the first wild goose was heard. The other members of the family made summer visits home. Nor do we forget John Emmet, hired man, the German who took an Irish name to escape conscription in the German army. He always had a word of wisdom.

In 1910, when mother had her astronomy class down for a wide angle view of the heavens and Halley's comet, which will not appear in view for another 76 years, he remarked, "He couldn't see why everyone talked so much about that comic!"

About this time a form of self-government was taken on at the Island. I still have some letter heads., "Drakes Island Improvement Society, Incorporated 1912." Mr. Gillis was the first President and father I believe the second, while Miss Abbie Spooner acted as clerk. I remember many interesting meetings held at our cottage.

The most important were the discussions of 1915. All summer long after the dyke wall broke, the bridge was like a turn table at every high tide, sometimes turning a half way round. With a few inches of water over the flooring, you never knew whether you could step on it or take a dive to Davy Jones. The town placarded it unsafe, so no one crossed at high tide.

John Hill had just built and opened the first store, now Damons cottage, which added greatly to the comfort of the marooned. The marsh owners wished the town to rebuild the dyke, but that fall, I attended a special town meeting and heard father make a plea for a strong tide water bridge. Mr. N. P. M. Jacobs of Sparhawk Hall called for a unanimous vote for the acceptance of a plan for the bridge we have today.

The Ladies Auxiliary of the Society were active in raising money for the cement walk that runs west from the four corners. An annual fair was held on the lawns and grove from Adams to our cottage. Highly decorated tables and navy novelties attracted much outside attention. Buckboard parties from York and other beaches drove in.

Once father garbed in real oriental robes and turban, read fortunes from a crystal sphere (which happened to be a glass fish net float, under which he snapped on an electric bulb at the right moment). So active was his imagination and so real his prophecies, that there was a waiting line outside his tent. After making several passes over his glove, he went into a trance, but always with

one eye open, to see if he knew the person. He had a swinging incense burner, from which he passed out small candy hearts as love filters. One young lady from York went in for a second sitting. Not noticing, he gave her a different version. He collected a lot of money and it was such a success that they offered him a sum of money to repeat at a fashionable York Harbor Bazaar but he said he wouldn't talk himself hoarse, for anything except Drakes Island.

Then on certain Sundays, the Island ministers conducted services in the grove. Most often, Rev. Mr. McBree or Rev. Hanson. This was back to nature, for the groves were God's first temples.

Many noted people were attracted to the rustic beauty of the Island. I've seen Woodbury, the Artist from Ogunquit, with his easel and palette, painting the ocean at its wildest. He always sat facing west. It looks like this very painting now hanging at Sparhawk. Then Abbott Graves came over from the Port. He always faced East. Each faced the home of his ideals and both admired the wild loneliness of the Island. Mrs. Jack Gardiner deserted the grandeur of her Fenway palace and museum for a few days quiet at "Happy Thought."

Those truly were the horse and buggy days. A few autos were curiosities to be seen passing through town. Then about 1908, Mr. Symonds, father's friend, bought a new Stanley Steamer. It was bright red and you sat very high, with the seats back to back. He had the audacity to navigate down through those ruts to visit us, and this was the first auto ever on Drakes Island. A few years later, the ruts were leveled off, but the road still sandy, when Mr. Wadleigh owned the first car on the Island.

Part Four

In the early nineteen hundreds road conditions at Drakes Island were a problem. The long sandy road was difficult to travel. For several years Mr. Wadleigh was the only person to travel by auto. People came by train.

Henry Eaton with his faithful old white horse and surrey conveyed them to and from the station. Henry was always willing to encourage old "Lydia" to a greater speed when he heard a train whistle. Once hearing a lady exclaiming from the back seat, he urged the horse on, and dashed up to the platform just as the train arrived. The lady's bonnet had blown off some distance back. Henry said "Never mind, I got you here on time, anyway," About this time, father bought our "Autocar." It was dark green with brass fittings and a detachable tonneau, with a door opening at the back. It was steered by a lever, instead of a wheel, and had the uncomfortable habit of sidling off to one side of

the road. All one had to do, then to obtain a license was to drive 100 miles. Father took his first 90 miles on his ride up from Boston. He decided to take his next 10 miles on the Island.

A salesman drove us over. After cranking the car, it shook from side to side for several minutes before giving one horrible leap forward at full speed. Next morning, father started his practice. He drove around the corner and knocked down some ornamental deadeyes on Littlefield's lawn. Continuing up over the hill, he ran into a series' of sand-dunes that stretches from Drakes Island Road to Samoset Cottage (now Colcords). He was just successfully backing out, when Mr. Wadleigh's chauffeur rushed out. Supposing they had the only car on the Island, he thought someone was stealing it. He complimented father on the neat way he was maneuvering through the sands, but he came home with that "never again" look in his eyes, and told mother she could get the pony and cart she had always wanted. Of course it was discouraging with that lever and all the sand to misguide one.

A big step in the progress of transportation was the installation of Atlantic Shore Trolley which would pass Drakes Island Road. Already a line had been completed between Sanford and Cape Porpoise. Quoting from Kennebunk Star interesting items on the procedure of work 1907.

"The 18 miles connecting link of Atlantic Shore Line will not be completed June 1st as planned. The rails have been laid in Wells for some distance past Ogunquit. About 9 miles have been laid but there is delay in the arrival of cedar poles. Date for completion now set for July 1st."

June 28, 1907 notes. "The rails of Atlantic Shore Line between Kennebunk and York are laid with the exception of a short stretch between Mousam River Bridge and shoe shop corner. The work of ballasting the track and putting up high tension and trolley wires is progressing finely, and in a short time, the road will be running. Date for 1st car to run set for July 20, 1907." One amusing delay is described thus: - "Because wiremen for Atlantic Shore Line were to cut a limb from a tree on her property, a Wells lady wrapped the tree in U.S. colors and draped a flag from the limb to be sacrificed. Then stood under the tree for several hours one day and held at bay a force of wiremen defying them to pull down the flag." She had no objection to rails of the trolley line passing in front of her house but when the wiremen started to trim a small elm, she protested. Finally a compromise between her and Engineer Taylor was effected and the company settled for damages done her tree." Final item reads: New trolley line between Kennebunk, Wells and York was opened to the public on Sunday, July 20, 1907.

A large number have taken the trip this week and pronounce the ride a most enjoyable one.

With few changes a person could now take a trolley ride to Boston. The line operated for a number of seasons, then it was rumored that due to the necessity of widening roads for increasing auto traffic, the service would be abandoned.

It was with regret we learned that on March 21, 1924, by vote of the Directors of the York Utilities Company the line between Kennebunk and York was to be discontinued at the end of the month.

One of the most interesting and famous persons to visit Drakes Island was Mr. Eaton's cousin, Miss Kate Furbish of Brunswick, Maine. To one versed in botany her name is still pre-eminent as a pioneer in botanical exploration of our state, and her life-like and accurate paintings of the wild flowers of Maine, stands as her memorial. From Prof. Steenmitz of the U. of M., Department of Botany, I received a Bulletin of the Josselyn Botanical Society of Maine, of which Miss Furbish was a founder. The issue is dedicated to her memory and describes her work. In field work she took county by county in Maine listing the plant life. A meeting of the society held in York County in 1936 quotes these items. "At Drakes Island, Wells, 'arenaria peploides' still flourishes where it has been known to occur for half a century." (In common terms this flower belongs to the Pink Family, a variety of Sandwort, found in only four counties of Maine.) Item 11. Baptisia tinctoria, a plant entered in Maine flora, without comment in 1862, and known by a definite specimen collected at Wells by Miss Kate Furbish many years ago, was re-discovered in Alfred in 1936, where it occurs in considerable quantity. It is believed to have been introduced with other medicinal plants by the Shakers who settled at this place. (This plant is found only in York County). While visiting on the Eaton Farm, Miss Furbish spent much time out on the marshes collecting specimen or painting in water color, the four stages; the embryo, the bud, the flower and fruit and the seed pod.

I was much interested to watch her work for I belonged to a botany club conducted by a Professor of Columbia University.

She was pleased to see I had mounted in my herbarium, Baptisia tinctoria yellow false indigo- (described above in Item 11) which she said Harvard College had doubted found in our locality. She said if I would find another specimen she would send it to Harvard to be listed in my name. I was much elated, but unfortunately told someone who sent in ahead, so when my specimen arrived Harvard replied they had just received one from our locality.

Miss Furbish said she intended to present her collection to Bowdoin College. Remembering this, I wrote to Bowdoin, receiving a courteous reply from President Sills, who states "The Collection of painted flowers given by Miss Kate Furbish is one of our proud possessions and is now in the

Library of the College.” For detail, he referred me to Professor A. H. Gustafson, Department of Biology of the college who wrote:--”The collection is housed in a cabinet built especially for them, with this label--The Flora of Maine, a Gift to Bowdoin College, 1908, Still quoting, “There are 16 large folios, 114 contain illustrations of higher plant life (evergreen and deciduous). The flowering plant illustrations indicate the name of the specimen date collected and locality. All are very fine and accurately done. The librarian informs me that he has seen in print that there were 500 illustrations of the fungi (toadstools and mushrooms).

In notes on Miss Kate Furbish and the Josselyn (botanical society of Maine) I find she presented about 4,000 to the New England Botanical Club. She so presented a collection, to Harvard College, but since the New England Botanical Club is housed at Gray Herbarium, Harvard, this probably refers to the same collection.”

It is interesting to know so much of the Maine flora was found on Drakes Island and that while working at Van Buren in Aroostook County she discovered the tall wood betony which botanists named “Pedicularis Furbishiae”-in her honor. She died in Brunswick in 1931 at the age of 97 years and had given so much of her long life to the interests of Maine.

The Professor then invites me to Bowdoin to examine this collection, as the college is happy to encourage anyone interested in botany. He asked if the orchids are still to be found on the marshes. To which I reply that since the water broke through the dyke, the marshes were flooded and much small plant life destroyed.

Friends knowing I was anxious to accept the professor’s invitation to see is Maine Flora at the College, drove me to Brunswick on May 27, 1950. A student assigned to be our guide met us at the Library. First, he took us to a room whose fittings were taken piece by piece from a New York mansion and replaced there. Leather covered Deluxe editions line the walls and a large oil portrait of Longfellow hangs over the fireplace. We next met Professor Gustafson who unlocked the glass covered cabinet which held the collection. It was very thrilling to me to see the large folio opened at the very plate of “Baptisia Tinctoria” which I had watched Miss Furbish painting many years before at Eaton Farm, Drakes Island and to know it was our special York County contribution. It would take a great deal of time to look over all her work. Other cases nearby showed letters written by Longfellow declining the offer of professorship at the College. Also one written by Nathaniel Hawthorne, while a student, bewailing his financial plight, fearing he would not be able to pay all his tuition. The professor mentioned that President Sills was interested to read in Drakes Island History Part I about the bullets found in our over turned hill which had been sent

to the Royal Society of England.

Thus Drakes Island contributes to science and the wild life of Maine,

Part Five

Drakes Island, like all our Maine resorts grew, as visitors who came to the cottages became enthusiastic and came back another year, either as tenants or cottage owners. A large Lowell colony was formed in this way. With these developments the extreme rustic simplicity of the Island changed gradually. The Atlantic Shore Trolley Line had already brought outsider contacts. So by the summer of 1914, with the Drakes Island Improvement Society, and a very active Ladies Auxiliary in full swing, many improvements were made.

Notes of the July 24, 1914, Annual Fair states, "The yearly bill for lighting the streets, and an additional light on the hill overlooking Wells River, was paid by funds from the Ladies Auxiliary. This light also served as a guide on small craft entering the river, and a lantern need no longer be hung on the spindle to mark the river channels.

The Eastern Steamship line--Boston to Bangor--via Portland, also used it a landmark, and their lights could plainly be seen at night.

The summer of 1914 marked the famous Bull Moose campaign. Theodore Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson running in competition. It was rumored that the Roosevelt train coming into Maine, August 18, 1914, would not stop at Wells. However, a few of us from Drakes Island, decided to take a chance and walk the three miles to Wells Beach Station. We were well rewarded when the train made a stop for a passenger to alight. Although it was not on his schedule, Roosevelt, with his broad smile, came out on the back platform and gave us each a personal greeting. Most of the Islanders had gone to Kennebunk where such a crowd was at the station, one could hardly get a glimpse of him. I still have the Dull Moose pin as a memento.

That fall while attending a State Teachers Convention in Portland, President Taft was invited to address the 6000 Maine teachers in City Hall. Each teacher was given a small flag, and when President Taft, his wife, daughter and a large Military Staff were seated on the platform, it was very impressive. He was a very pleasing impromptu speaker. Still later I heard Woodrow Wilson address a Boston audience. My father was much amused at my conflicting emotions regarding the candidates.

From 1895, the Mousam Water Company, privately owned, had served Kennebunk and Kennebunkport. In 1910, although their contract did not call for it, they took over part of the town of Wells. Some thought this would overtax the system, but at Drakes Island our high hill gave an added advantage to gravity and the pressure was very strong. In 1915, the 20-year contract the town of Kennebunk held with the company expired. Many legislative meetings were held in Augusta. For some years the private company continued to operate under the name of York County Water Company. In 1922 the three towns bought out the water privileges from the Company and it became the Kennebunk-Kennebunkport and Wells Water District we have today.

For fire protection, the Improvement Society purchased a reel and some lengths of used hose. The first hydrant was set in front of Gillis Pine cottage; the second at the corner of Grove Street. Once, children playing with matches set a fire in Littlefield garage, and one small boy was quite badly burned.

It was then decided that women should have a fire drill as no one knew how to open the hydrant that afternoon. With Mr. Woodman to advise, Bertha Kindred manned the hydrant. The hose was coupled on, but no one had uncoiled it. Bertha gave one tug, opening the hydrant. The force of water turned and twisted the hose, which now looked like a huge serpent ready to strike. And strike it did! Every time anyone attempted to pick it up they were knocked over. The admiring line of children were served likewise. Bertha bravely kept the hydrant wide open, although it would have been better closed. Finally the water reached a weak place in the old hose, burst out sidewise drenching all the women. Very little water ever reached the nozzle. However, it was an afternoon well spent in preparedness.

In the fall of 1914, Mr. Eaton moved "Happy Thought" cottage (one of the oldest landmarks) from its site on the crest of the hill to the present location. This was the first cottage on the Island, built by two young men to be used as a gunners camp. It came into Mr. Eaton's possession after several seasons when they failed to appear. The barn was moved a little forward on the lot and remodeled into the Hart cottage of today.

By the summer of 1915 a great many overnight cabins had been built on the Post road. These added greatly to our daily beach population.

Improvements now could be listed as Electric lights, city water, a store, a new board walk, with as fine a beach as any on the coast. The board walk covered the sandy stretch from Ocean Avenue corner to the beach and is now replaced by a cement walk.

The stranger usually questioned, "Why do they call this an Island?" Many years ago, a large creek connected Webhannet and Little Rivers, but the dyke was built which decreased the flow of water, so that at Little River, it became a mere brook. But, alas, 1915 was the very year that the dyke walls gave way, and once more, for a while it became virtually an island again. We have previously mentioned how this destroyed the flora on the marshes, and changed the beauty of the wayside to one of an ordinary country road.

From the wonders of the marshes let us turn toward the sea. So many times I've walked the whole two miles of beach after a storm, hoping to find that piece of ambergris, which they say, "always pays the mortgage on father's farm?" but the sperm whale doesn't often spout our way. You may see small bottle nose whales spouting—a 16 foot one was once washed ashore near Lobster rocks porpoises turning and frolicking off shore, or seals swirling along in the breakers, curiously watching the bathers. They were once so plentiful that the State paid a bounty on each nose tip brought in, but some of our Maine Indians ingeniously devised wooden tips covered with seal skin, and most depleted the, state funds before it was discovered.

Once near the mouth of the river I saw gulls in large numbers, making unusual eerie noises, darting repeatedly at a dark object floating in the water. The next tide, left on the beach an enormous skate, which had swallowed a gull --all but his protruding legs.

So many people have wondered about the piling and spindle near the bar of the Webhannet River, that I began making inquiries. Her neighbor, Captain Fred Phillips, over forty years a sea captain along New England shores and who was in the government coastal survey during the war advised me to write New England division Army Engineering Corps, who were pleased to furnish this information: The earliest record November 2, 1871, Wells Harbor, Maine. This harbor is formed by a small estuary known as Webhannet River, about 1 1/2 miles long, 200 yards wide, having 2 small branches, situated about 7 miles to westward of Goat Island light, off Cape Porpoise. A wide sandy beach extends along the coast for several miles either side of the entrance, causing a bar about five hundred feet in width, with only two and one-half feet of water at mean low tide. The harbor is surrounded by low marshy ground, except at its head, where it is nearly dry at low water. From which fact, although vessels may at high tide, cross the bar, they cannot reach the waves at the head of the harbor, this survey was provided for by the river and harbor bill of March 3, 1871, with a view to improvement of navigation. Several years later a crib-wood ballasted with stone was built by the U. S. Government at the entrance to the harbor on the northern side, for the purpose of contracting its width and increasing its depth over the bar. This crib work although somewhat injured by action of tides, with some repairs, will serve the purpose for which it was

intended. Its length is about 250 yards which is believed to be sufficient, as the effect of increasing it would, only be to throw the bar farther outward, as apparently has already been done, if indeed the crib-work could withstand the violence of the storms to which on its extension, it would be in a much greater degree exposed."

The next record of 1874 follows:--"Wells Harbor. The improvements projected for this harbor consists in repairs of an old Government pier at the mouth of Webhannet River. This pier was built from 30 to 40 years ago (1834 or 1844) for the purpose of straightening and deepening the channel over the bar. It was made of crib-wood ballasted with stone and was about 250 yards in length. By act of June 10, 1872, Five Thousand was appropriated for the work. The projected repairs were commenced with hired labor in the latter part of September 1872, and were completed on the 30th of June 1873, and in September 1873, they were entirely finished."

I was wondering how much work of this kind would cost today. So asked a person well versed on this sort of work. He said at that time hired labor was about One Dollar a day or less. For the nine months project today the estimated cost to the Government would be at least \$50,000 or \$75,000, so we now can reckon potential basic outlay of that amount at the mouth of the river, but when we view the decaying piling, and the bulkhead with spindle to which the lantern was attached, washed away it may be fortunate that large vessels no longer need cross the bar.

The U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey of Washington, in their topographical survey in 1869, mention a large spindle, probably a post light at the seaward end of a feature labelled "Old Bulkhead." Mrs. Nancy Eaton Wagner remarks that she felt sorry to see that old beacon light disappear beneath the waves. The Washington survey also gives as references - Coast Pilot for Atlantic Seaboard; Gulf of Maine from Eastport to Boston. Wells Harbor was listed in the Gulf of Maine. So there were days when ships were built in Wells and the Webhannet River and Wells Harbor were busy places when "they crossed the Bar."

As I am closing this writing, I received word of the death of Miss Abbie Spooner, on Sunday the 25th of February at her home in Charlestown, New Hampshire, in her 93rd year. She was for some years secretary of the Improvement Society. Although her advancing years did not permit her visits to the Island, she took great interest in all the happenings. From time to time, I've received long, interesting, witty letters from her, evincing much pleasure in recalling the events recounted in these papers. And now I understand "Aunt Abbie" peacefully "crossed the bar" as she passed away in her sleep.

Part Six

We natives of the Maine coast look back with pride to our ship building forefathers. All coastal towns could boast of long lists of sea captains, many of whom sailed the seven seas bringing back silks and vases from the Orient, samovars, carved ivories, and all the riches of the East. In our section, we had Captain Dan Dudley, whom Booth Tarkington immortalized in "Mirthful Haven." Anyone fortunate enough to gain the captains favor could see a veritable museum collection in his home.

Among names famous in Maine Maritime history were the Pennells of Brunswick, the Colcords of Searsport, with their deluxe finished cabins, and the five masted Palmer fleet.

In Wells they built mostly schooners. One of the last of these was the Alice S. Wentworth, built in 1905, 73 feet long, 23 feet wide, 68 gross ton. How many times a group of Drakes Islanders, seeing the Alice S. standing off out side, have rushed to Webhannet River to watch her cross the bar on a full tide, laden with coal. We all cheered and the crew waved at us. Several days later, we again rushed to see her sail out, lumber laden to the waters edge. She is still afloat after a varied career. Lester Eaton has seen her plying the Taunton River Captain Phillips informs me she was later owned in Vinalhaven and Ellsworth, Maine, carrying pulpwood. She is now owned by F. B. Guild of Castine, Maine, and used for Maine Coast cruises, sailing from Falmouth Foreside.

Drakes Island has not been without its wrecks and tragedies of the sea, Mr. Eaton related that early one cold winter morning, he was surprised to see smoke coming from the chimney of Happy Thought Cottage. When he reached the cottage he found the captain and crew of "The Rising Sun" eating breakfast there. She had struck during the night but they managed to get ashore. The little lime schooner lay a wreck on the beach. True to her name, with the rising of the sun, she was already breaking apart and washing out to sea.

Walking the beach early one Labor Day morning after a September equinoctial gale, we saw a small cat-boat almost wedged among the rocks in front of Wadleigh cottage. She had been abandoned and was being lifted a little higher upon the rocks with each wave, This seemed a mystery until we learned that she was owned by a bride and groom members of the Winthrop Yacht Club. A few days earlier they had taken a wedding trip to Portland where their boat became disabled and was left there for repairs. They were off Old Orchard Beach on their return trip when the hurricane struck them. All night long they battled the storm, taking turns at the wheel and bailing, for she again had sprung a leak. Finally completely exhausted and with eyes blood shot from the rain and

lashing wind, and their mast blown off, they gave up. Soon they heard the roaring of breakers and knew they were near shore. After getting on our beach, they walked from cottage to cottage until they aroused someone at Littlefield's about 3 A.M. The strangest part was that the young man had become an agnostic, but that morning when he saw his boat among the rocks, he said he felt some Divine Power must have guided them, and he later burned to be a devout Catholic.

When the little herring boats came into Webhannet River, it was interesting to watch them make their haul of fish. Two small boats were stationed on opposite banks of the river the net stretched between them. Slowly they moved down stream gradually drawing toward the centre. When they lifted the net it shone like silver and gold in the early morning sun light. This process was repeated until the turn of the tide completed that catch. But one morning the little boat caught fire and became useless. Mr. Ben Eaton bought the hulk and it lay among the reeds in the creek near Eaton farm and made a picturesque photographic background for some years.

The Watts Bros. shipbuilders of Rockland, Maine, built 22 great "Fore and Afts" between 1887 and 1904. The largest of these was the Washington B. Thomas, named for the sugar magnate. In 1905 on her first voyage, carrying 4000 tons of coal, she was wrecked on Stratton Island, 4 miles off Old Orchard Beach. Freeing herself, she struck the pier, partly damaging that. The larger part of her huge hull of new timber, washed ashore on Drakes Island, and supplied firewood for several years.

The real tragedy of the Island began about July 17, 1915. For days the waves had been mountainous, thundering along the shore, but on that date, the water was covered with oil, not that it "calmed the troubled waters." The body of a dog, chair, and other wreckage washed ashore, so we knew there must be a wreck somewhere off shore. Then all was quiet until the night of August 4th, when a terrible storm raged all night. On the morning of August 5th, my birthday, I was aroused not by the song "Happy Birthday," but by the shout "There's a wreck on the beach!"

Hastily reaching the beach, I found Mr. and Mrs. Clogston the only other early risers. We started toward Little River, the East wind blowing sand in our faces, until it cut like a knife. It was still raining and foggy. When we reached a place near Lobster Rocks a cabin top, 18' by 25' with the sides crushed in lay on the beach, A man's body was lashed to the cabin door, with only his hands showing above the sand. We turned away with a shudder. On our way back, we met wreckers coming to exhume the body. From the wreckage I had a small piece of the hand-made cabin fittings.

In the shipping news, father read of the missing Mary E. Pennell bound from Perth Amboy, New

Jersey to Lubec, Maine laden with coal. Last spotted off Vinalhaven, July 5th, built fifty years before at Machias, Maine. From the handmade piece which I held, father judged that to be her age, and so it was, for on August 10th, 1915, young Captain Frye came from Machias, and recognized the body as that of his uncle, Captain Edwin Frye. When I placed in his hand the only piece of the Mary E. Pennell he would ever have, he slowly shook his head and told that his father and two uncles had been lost in another wreck on that same boat, but that would not deter him from a life on the sea.

This reminds one of the verse on the tombstone of a sailor wrecked 2000 years ago on the coast of Asia. "A shipwrecked sailor on this coast, bids you set sail. Full many a gallant ship ere we were lost, weathered the gale,"

But the mystery of the oldest wreck is still unsolved. Very near the piling is a moss covered skeleton of a schooner, seen only at very low tide. Recently after his lecture in Kennebunk I met Edward Rowe Snow, the Flying Santa Claus of our New England Lighthouses, I told him about this wreck and he promised to try and look it up. Since then I have a letter from him, stating he was in Worcester looking up old nautical news for the book he is writing and should he learn about this wreck he would send word on.

With the death of Mr. Joseph Eaton in 1916, came the multiple divisions of the island to the sons and daughters. Each somewhat adding to the development as a whole, yet the feeling that one almost owned a whole Island has gone with the growth of from three to nearly a hundred cottages.

With the flocks of wild birds deserting the beach and wild life ever retreating from the roadside, only the saucy fire-winged black bird stays on the marshes and defies one as you near his nest. Many times, twice daily on my way to and from school, I've walked the 1 1/8 mile of Drakes Island road, and before colonization overtook us, saw much of wild life in its native state.

For several years there was a large golden eagle, which regularly at 5 A.M. stood perched on a dead branch of an oak overhanging the road, ready to pounce on the rabbit, woodchuck or squirrel out looking for an early breakfast too, but thinking himself concealed by the tall grass between the ruts. Not so, when the eagle's eye caught sight. I once witnessed the struggle between the eagle and a large hare, the victorious eagle soaring to the heights with his prey.

At the dyke the blue heron silently stood on his stilts, while the king fishers noisily darted above each intent on the same fish. Occasionally a muskrat slid off the bank, Pheasants whirred

up from the roadside with as much commotion as the partridge. The fawn leaped back to the underbrush, after having eyed you a moment. Once a raccoon with his ringed tail bobbing up between the ruts walked leisurely ahead of me until he turned off to his retreat.

Often I've walked the whole distance to Kennebunk or from Wells Corner to the Beach, but walking is inherent in my race. Back in 1703, one of my grandmothers walked a captive to the Indians, from Wells to Pickwacket (now Fryeburg, Maine) fully 75 miles. Her two daughters taken captive at this time never returned. One married a French nobleman. Kenneth Roberts mentions this in "Treading into Maine," He says what concerns him most is how Mrs. Darrell intrigued the Indians so they - not only released her, but that one Indian should carry her infant in his arms back to the Stone Fort in Saco, This son lived to be my ancestor. I suggest that perhaps she knew the Indian tongue, for Wawa, the chief had sat many times as friend by her fireside. The Indians had always been friendly with the family but wished the site of land for a look out. It was on a high bluff at the bend of Kennebunk River. This hill has since slid off into the river and was the conjectured site of our overturned hill which aroused the English scientists.

Again on October 26th, 1726, Mrs. Durrell was taken captive. This time carrying a large family Bible, she marched on and on till she stumbled and dropped the Bible, and the Indians knowing they were pursued, massacred her, her daughter and her grandson. A son John, 12 years old, marched on with fear of an upraised tomahawk overshadowing each footstep--a tomahawk I have today, which his father found on that fateful October 1726 eve, lying near the body of his mother beside Duck Brook, Arundel--but the Bible lay under a winters snow before found. On and on John Durrell marched to Canada and lived 30 years a captive before he escaped to come back to Wells.

After all their raids, the Indians always went into hiding on Drakes Island, but with seven members of our family either captives or massacred people became aroused and forever drove them from their hiding place on the Island, So that the very history of Wells and Drakes Island Indians seems written in blood in my father's family.

Sam Downing now, one of the milk dealers at Drakes Island, has a deed of his ancestral farm, Arundel, (now North Kennebunkport) which names Duck Brook on his land as the scene of the Durrell massacre. I have seen Drakes Island colony grow from the one cottage to the group we have today. The beach and the sea will ever look the same but the approaches to them will change always for the best, we hope.

The End