

# WILSON MUSEUM BULLETIN

Autumn 2019

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## Holbrook Island Revisited



*Nights and days came and passed  
And summer and winter and the rain.  
And it was good to be a little Island.  
A part of the world and a world of its own  
All surrounded by the bright blue sea.*

— Margaret Wise Brown, *The Little Island*

The Wilson Museum enjoyed several connections with Holbrook Island this summer. For those who have not been there, it is now a State Park called Holbrook Island Sanctuary and contains, not only the island,

but over 1,000 acres of mainland in Brooksville. The property was donated to the State in 1971 by Anita Harris whose family had owned the island since 1891. She left a couple of stipulations, one important one being that the property must be maintained in its original state with minimal modern improvements.

To this end, no camping, among other things, is allowed. Thus, for decades, only a few people have enjoyed the natural wonder of sleeping on this island. However, this past August the Wilson Museum was able to offer a Women's Retreat for 8 fortunate participants to enjoy this "world of its own all surrounded by the bright blue sea." They arrived on the island thanks to the *Lil' Toot* and spent a rustic weekend enjoying nature and sleeping in the barn, the island's only remaining building from Anita's era. Here's what some of our attendees said about the trip:

*[Retreats] are such powerfully positive ways to gather, relax, replenish  
and break the rhythm of our daily lives*

*I came for nature and peace.*

## MISSION

*Building  
on the legacy of  
its founding family,  
the Wilson Museum  
uses its diverse  
collections and  
resources to provide  
learning experiences  
to stimulate  
exploration of the  
history and cultures of  
the Penobscot Bay  
region and world.*

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Over its long history, Holbrook Island has had many caretakers. One caretaker, Brainard Farnham, had a daughter, Reta, who loved visiting the island with her Dad in the 1930s and 1940s. As an adult, Reta Farnham Hunter (a Wilson Museum life member) would pull together photographs, diaries, and memories from as many sources as she could to create a book on the history of Holbrook Island entitled *Anita's Island* (available in the Museum Store).

One chapter of her book is about another family of Holbrook Island caretakers, Hal & Andrea Snow. Hal Snow began working on the Island in 1968 and by the early 1970s was the head caretaker. He married Andrea Smith in 1974 and together they made their home on Holbrook. Their two children, Joshua and Darcy, were born while the family lived on the Island and spent the early years of their lives there. After interviewing Andrea Snow, Reta recounted the following amusing anecdote.

*The Snow children, Joshua and Darcy, must have had very interesting times living on Holbrook Island. Andrea tells of Josh going out to work on the island with the men in his jeans and looking like a "real worker."* [See cover photo courtesy of Andrea Snow] *One of these times she couldn't locate him and was really concerned. Andrea knew he was somewhere on the island, but where could he be? She knew he wouldn't go near the water, but was still concerned of his whereabouts. Josh was finally located with his father, who thought Andrea knew where he was. After that Josh had to have a note in his pocket to say, "Mom knows where I am."*

We at the Wilson Museum know where Josh Snow, now an adult, was this summer – he was working as a docent on our campus. A teacher-in-training, Josh immersed himself in the many layers of history represented within the Wilson Museum and passed his learning along to our visitors. He did impromptu storytimes with groups of children and then led them, like the pied piper, to the exhibits displaying items mentioned in their storybook. Josh also enjoyed narrating boat tours around Castine Harbor and up the Bagaduce River, as well as (can you guess?) the boat tours to Holbrook Island! These tours were made possible through the support of Maine Maritime Academy, their launch and crew.

It's interesting to see how many people and places intersected this summer around Holbrook Island. Now think of all the artifacts and places represented in the Wilson Museum. It boggles the mind to consider the many connections that can be and are made each day through the collections and people involved with the Museum. With so many areas to explore, everyone is sure to find their favorite niche. Check out the center spread of this Bulletin to see our staff's favorite things.

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## Board Members Elected at 2019 Annual Meeting

On September 10, 2019, the Board of Trustees met for its Annual Meeting and election of officers and Board members (see side bar for complete list). Three Trustees were re-elected: Steve Brookman, Marianne Buchannan, and Barbara Jackson. Two new Trustees were elected: Hans Carlson and Donald Small each for a three-year term.

**Hans Carlson** - holds a PhD in History from the University of Maine and is the Executive Director of the Blue Hill Heritage Trust.

**Donald Small** - is retired from a 36-year engineering career, 30 years spent teaching at Maine Maritime Academy. He has served three previous terms on the Wilson Museum's Board from 2009 to 2018.

Officers elected for a one-year term:

President Robert Downes ♦ Vice President Temple Blackwood  
Treasurer Donald Small ♦ Secretary Kay Hightower



## Collections Conversations

Abby Dunham, Collections Manager/Curator

The John & Phebe Perkins House is a prominent part of the Wilson Museum's collection, and the Perkins family has been intertwined with the vibrant history of our area since the 1760s. This heritage was a large focus at the Museum this past summer with the opening of the Perkins Gallery and its new exhibits, a Perkins family reunion, and the commemoration of the Perkins House being listed on the National Register of Historic Places 50 years ago. While the house is itself an incredible historic resource, the history we tell of the Perkins family is so much richer when the context can be expanded through the objects, furnishings, letters, and more that we know came from the Perkins and their descendants. Many of these family artifacts have been given to the Wilson Museum collection over the



years, and they show various aspects of life in this area during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Recognizing the Museum's efforts to preserve the family home and artifacts, several descendants allowed us to share with our visitors a few heirlooms beyond our collection. Portraits of John Perkins and his daughter Lucy graced the walls in the parlor of the family home, and John's portrait will continue on exhibit here. We also were able to exhibit a ledger kept by John Perkins, the pages of which record transactions between John and many of the other early families, demonstrating his connections and place in the community. We extend our thanks for this generosity to Louise Bourne, Sarah Perkins Bourne, Elizabeth Ames Macdonald, and their families. Are you a descendant of the Perkins family? What history has come down to you?

## Perkins Family Reunion June 29, 2019

Descendants of John & Phebe Perkins spent a lovely day meeting relatives, touring the Perkins House, enjoying the ribbon-cutting ceremony to open the new Perkins Gallery & Museum Store, and cheering as the brass plaque was unveiled in recognition of the John & Phebe Perkins House being placed on the National Register of Historic Places in December 1969.



## A Gathering of Traditional Small Boats July 3, 2019

It was a glorious summer day for a gathering of small boats. Some folks came to learn about boats, some came to dream about boats, some came to hear speakers talk about boats, and some came to sample some great smoked fish and Museum outdoor cooking!







## We Love our Docents & Staff!



### Maira Vandiver

My favorite part of the Museum is the Perkins House. There is so much incredible history packed into this beautiful home and I believe it's both educational and exciting for people of any age. This portal back in time, so to speak, is home to thousands of exquisite antiques and a few fresh loaves of bread.

This fall I'm returning to Guilford College in North Carolina, where I will continue my studies in Theater, English, and Community Justice. My work at the Wilson Museum has given me a great background for performing in period plays, and I hope to be able to put that to use this year.



### Larry Martel

My favorite exhibit in the Museum is the history of the Wilson family. It's interesting to find out where they came from, where they were born, schooling, and, let's not forget, the tragedies which they went through. We are still benefitting from all their hard unselfish work done for future generations to learn how the world and man evolved.

Larry is a veteran and retired Postmaster. One day a few years ago he bumped into Patty at the Blue Hill Fair and she asked if he was quickly recruited to work at the Museum.



### Sophie Mitchell

One of my favorite artifacts in the Wilson Museum is the 1800s pump organ that is in the lower level of the Museum. It's really sweet to see people try and play songs out of the old *Songs Every Child Should Know* book and sometimes we get some really good piano players!

I'm about to start my second year of school at Newcastle University in Newcastle upon Tyne, England, where I study a combined degree of archaeology and film. In the summer I come back to Castine where I've worked at the Museum since 2016.



### Josh Snow

One of my favored artifacts is the helmet like ones worn by early colonial militias. During King Phillip's War (1675-77), many of the militia Captains were veterans of the English Civil War. Colonial militia were equipped similarly to the soldiers of the English Civil war. I feel it shows how much of our history is forgotten and how much American history was connected to Europe.

Josh, a retiree from the Air Force, is working toward a teacher's degree while employed at Ellsworth Elementary and Middle School as an Educational Technician during the Museum's off-season. He looks forward to returning next summer.



## Here's what they love in the Wilson Museum:



### Sebastian Blackwood

The Wilson Museum is a great place. My favorite is this season's special exhibit showing the art by Robert Kufrovich. His art is a great part of Castine history and a great use of driftwood showing that Castine has many undiscovered beauties.

While this may have been Sebastian's first season as docent, he is no stranger to the Wilson Museum. He has worked for several summers with his grandfather as he demonstrated woodturning in the Museum's Wood Shop. Sebastian is a freshman at John Bapst High School.



### Magnolia Vandiver

Oh, so hard to pick!!!!!! If I *had to*, I guess it would be the Balinese Rangdah mask, because it is so wild!

I am attending George Stevens Academy in Blue Hill as a junior. I will also continue taking classical harp lessons with Phoebe Durand-McDonnell. I may also appear in theatrical productions at New Surry Theatre. As with many other high school juniors, this fall marks the beginning of the "college hunt."



### Jess Morehouse

I am drawn to the shells in the Wilson Museum. I started collecting shells as a boy and later owned a shell shop in Cambria, CA. My shop, The Sand Castle Ocean and Nature Store, moved to Maine along with my personal collection of shells. Now retired from the store, I enjoy talking with Museum visitors from all over the world; and I continue to be fascinated with shells and corals, using them in arts & crafts



## Some Staff Picks

**Patty Hutchins** - the recent gift from Diana Page of a dried piranha looks very cute in this picture but is terrifying to look upon in our shell exhibit. I expect many young people will find it cool.



**Debbie Morehouse** - I love the Stonehenge diorama and follow the discussion about whether it may have had a roof at one time.

**Abby Dunham** - The small trilobite fossils are fascinating; one intriguing fact is that the lenses the eyes of these long-extinct creatures, unlike other animals, are made of calcite which fossilizes, and that has allowed scientists to "see" through the eyes of the trilobite.



**Haley Blake** - The thought that the Inca figurines could have been used as ceremonial offerings accompanying young women sacrificed to avert natural disasters evokes a feeling of compassion and reminds me to consider the concerns, rituals, and social dynamics of other cultures.



**Liz Solet** - The fibulae intrigue me—to see the forms of a tool devised so long ago echoed in the safety pin we use today illustrates how humans have been creating and using technology since our earliest history.



**Jocelyn Willis** - My pick is the percussion lock derringer pistol because it reminds me of the cricket from the first *Men in Black* movie.



## Leadership Transition at the Wilson Museum

Patricia Hutchins, Executive Director

It was with mixed emotions that I recently announced to the Board of Trustees that I will retire at the end of September 2021, following the Museum's 100th anniversary celebration. The Board and I felt this announcement should be made to you, our members, before officially extending the news to the general public.

My work at the Museum began as a volunteer in 1975, helping to prepare the John and Phebe Perkins House for the country's bicentennial summer. Ellenore Doudiet, daughter of Museum founder J. Howard Wilson, hired me to design and hand-sew costumes for the guides and blacksmith as well as to learn to spin, weave, and cook at the fireside for living history demonstrations. This was a time when interest in such crafts was just beginning to emerge. Over the next ten years, I oversaw the guides each summer and continued to demonstrate colonial living skills. In 1985 I became the full-time Curator and, in 2004, Executive Director.

During my tenure as Director, I have overseen strategic expansion of the Museum's spaces and programs, including the creation of the Hutchins Education Center and the movement of the Blacksmith Shop and Bagaduce Engine exhibit across Perkins Street to create a full campus experience. Working closely with Museum trustees, staff, and community members, we added a Wood Shop where woodturning demonstrations are held and more recently a Boatbuilding Shop and Antique Boats exhibit.

The newest addition to the campus is the Perkins Gallery and Museum Store, a handsomely renovated space in the basement of the historic Perkins House. The Perkins Gallery opened to the public this past summer featuring the exhibit *Building a Community in Township #3*, with tools, artifacts, archival material, and stories of the early settlement of the Township, also known as Majabigwaduce Plantation, and now the towns of Castine, Penobscot, and Brooksville. This new space also allowed for an expanded Museum Store.

As the Museum has grown, I have enjoyed creating new programs, researching and curating



exhibits, and managing staff. I especially enjoy engaging with visitors while demonstrating fireside and outdoor cooking, and leading tours of the Perkins House—bringing the spaces, tools, and practices of the past to life. One of the ongoing school programs I have developed and led is Maja Trivia, a popular *Jeopardy*-style quiz game focusing on local and Maine history, engaging 5th through 8th graders from Castine, Penobscot, and Brooksville during the school year, culminating with in-school competitions in May and a final

all-school tournament at the Museum.

During my time with the Museum, members of my family have also been closely involved with Museum activities. My husband, Sherman, worked with his father, Hoyt, on the dismantling, moving, and rebuilding of the Perkins House in the 1960s and 1970s. He has also been instrumental in the changes to the campus over the years, bringing his building and carpentry expertise to many Museum projects. Our daughter, Joyce Tarr, and granddaughters, Ellenore and Grace, have also been vital to the life and offerings of the Museum, from giving demonstrations and tours, to creating educational programs for children and adults, to preparing outstanding food for Museum events.

Over the next two years I plan to gradually transition some of my responsibilities to other staff members and to focus on key projects including a Perkins House cookbook, an updated history of the Wilson Museum, and plans for the Museum's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The Museum staff is amazing, and I have great confidence in their support toward this transition.

The Wilson Museum Board of Trustees has formed a leadership transition committee to start the process of searching for a new director, and will conduct a community survey to gather feedback about the Museum and what people would like to see in the Museum's future. This is a very exciting time and we value and encourage input from you, our members and friends. For me, I will continue to be surprised and fascinated with the offerings of the Wilson Museum.



## Advancement Notes

Liz Solet, Advancement Coordinator

In my first year in the newly created position of Advancement Coordinator, I've enjoyed learning about all that the Museum offers and getting to know the Museum and Castine communities. We had another successful season this year, thanks to the curiosity and generosity of our visitors, members, volunteers, donors, and friends. Thank you to all who made it great!

As you know, the Museum is filled with wonderful things to learn about, see, and do. We are working to get the word out more widely and tell the stories of what people can find at this unique place by increasing publicity efforts locally and regionally, and expanding the Museum's social media presence.

Our popular summer fundraiser, *Collecting Castine*, was a success again this year with 30 artists participating and nearly 100 attendees. Event sponsorships were expanded this year through the generosity of individuals, businesses, and our local banks. Bar Harbor Bank & Trust was Lead Sponsor, Camden National Bank was Patron Sponsor, and Bangor Savings Bank and Furbush Roberts Printing were Community Sponsors. Two Benefactor Sponsors generously supported the event: Paul Davis, MD, in honor of Faith Baker Davis, and an

anonymous sponsor. Additional sponsors were Marianne and Bill Buchanan, the Castine Inn, The Honorable Philip Freedman, and Kay Hightower. The People's Choice Award—attendees' opportunity to choose one piece to be purchased by the Museum and added to the permanent collection—went to Helen Modesett's photograph, *Kenny Eaton Fall 2018*.

Your membership and gifts help the Museum connect children and adults with traditional tools and crafts, cultures from around the world, local history, and prehistoric artifacts. In this digital and high-tech age, we need more than ever to stay in touch with real objects, tools made and used by human hands, and living history. Your support keeps these connections alive for the thousands of adults and children who visit the Museum and take part in Museum programs and events each year. Thank you!

Your support has also aided the creation of new exhibit space through the renovation of an unused basement beneath the Perkins House. The Perkins Gallery and Museum Store, featuring the exhibit *Building a Community in Township #3*, opened this past summer to rave reviews.

The next big project on the horizon is re-designing and updating the Museum's collections storage system to protect our collections in the decades to come and to make items more available to visitors including researchers and scholars. Stay tuned for more details in the months to come.

### IN MEMORIAM

We remember the following members of the Wilson Museum who believed in the Museum's mission and gave of themselves to further its outreach.

*Their legacy will live on.*

**John D. Curtin, Jr.**

**1932-2019**

**Nancy Curtin**

**1935-2019**

**Michael I.D. Morrison**

**1929-2019**

**Robert R. Sebelist**

**1945-2018**

Additionally, the Museum has received generous donations in memory of the following:

Harold Hatch

Harry Kaiserian

Wendy Knickerbocker

## Education Happenings

Haley Blake, Education Coordinator

Escapees of the 1800s Escape Room left with smiles and praise saying "This was awesome! Really engaging," "We loved this Escape Room. Really brilliant and loads of fun," "The Escape Room was fun, challenging, and educational. A Castine must do!" Be sure to experience the fun next summer when the Escape Room returns with some new challenges.

September and October were busy months with the staff welcoming 168 students from local schools to our campus. By request, some visits were customized to include tours of the John and Phebe Perkins House, blacksmithing with the smithy, and visits to the Rock Room.

This fall brings the return of the popular *Home & Away* monthly homeschooling program, as well as a chance to take programs to local schools. I look forward to learning from my colleagues at the New England Museum Association Conference so that I may build more relationships with the community through relevant, collaborative programs.



**WILSON MUSEUM**  
P.O. Box 196  
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**WILSON MUSEUM**  
**BAGADUCE ENGINE CO.**  
**ANTIQUÉ BOAT EXHIBIT**  
**PERKINS GALLERY & MUSEUM STORE**  
Weekdays 10 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Saturdays & Sundays 2-5 p.m.  
May 27-September 30

**JOHN & PHEBE PERKINS HOUSE**  
Hour-long tours at 2, 3 & 4 p.m.  
Wednesdays & Sundays  
July & August

**THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH**  
**WOOD SHOP DEMONSTRATIONS**  
Wednesdays & Sundays 2-5 p.m.  
July & August

**Michael Morrison (1929-2019)**

We were saddened to learn that long-time Finance Committee member and friend, Michael Morrison, passed away only 5 weeks after learning he had an inoperable brain tumor.



Mike Morrison joined the Finance Committee of the Castine Scientific Society, also known as the Wilson Museum, in 2005 shortly after the death of Ellenore Doudiet. He and his fellow Committee members at that time were instrumental in setting up the Museum's investments and finances with a view to the future and long-term sustainability. He continued as an active Committee member even after his move to Topsham in 2018. His vision and acumen were greatly appreciated and will be missed.