

WILSON MUSEUM BULLETIN

Spring 2021

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Friends of Kindred Spirit



Marian and Anita Harris with Ellenore W. Doudiet taken from *Snippets from the Wilson Family Home Movies*.

Our season-long celebration, marking the Wilson Museum's one hundred years, was kicked off on April 9—the 150th birthday anniversary of our founder John Howard Wilson. Though this kick-off was a virtual event, it was an event that many will remember for its uniqueness and charm. Drawing from the collection of Wilson family home movies, the attendees were given cherished moments with family and friends in Castine during the mid-1930s and 40s.

The Wilsons' home movies actually span two decades and include travels across our own country as well as abroad. As is typical of early film, short segments are spliced and subject matter is but fleeting. One might be watching a storm on Nautilus Island and seconds later viewing a St. Patrick's Day parade from the Wilsons' apartment in New York City; an Intertribal Round-up in Gallup, New Mexico; or seeing a market place in Netherlands. It is all very fascinating and though the evening showed a bit of this, the footage extracted and reassembled for this event focused on the Wilsons, a few friends, and the area which Dr. Wilson and his wife, Georgia, dearly loved...that is, their beloved Nautilus Island and Castine, Maine. One of the sweetest moments in this selection of footage was seeing Georgia and her daughter, Ellenore Wilson Doudiet, with their friends Anita and Marian Harris from Holbrook Island. Ellenore and Anita were of kindred spirit and we share with our readers Ellenore's writing of the Harrises: *In the 1890s Edward Kellerman Harris of Boston brought Holbrook Island, tore down the old farmhouse and built a summer home for his wife and daughters, Anita and Marian. A barn and caretaker's house were built near the wharf. Household help came with the family from Boston while the extensive farm and gardens were cared for by Brooksville men.*

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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Following the death of Mr. Harris, the family continued to spend summers on Holbrook Island, through Marian, especially, was often abroad. One summer, on receiving a telegram informing her that a friend abroad had an extra ticket to the Passion Play of Oberammergau, Marian sailed (this was before air flights) to join her friend, spent a day or two and returned home.

Mrs. Harris died in 1941, soon Anita closed the Boston apartment and moved to Holbrook Island, she was now often alone as Marian taught college in Illinois and, later, married. During WWII, the caretaker left and Anita moved into his house, help was scarce but a man did come over twice daily to care of the horses and cows. After the war Anita resumed her trips abroad, on several successive summers she went to Vienna to see the famous Lipizzaner horses perform.

Both Anita and Marian were fond of animals and interested in their welfare, for many years Anita dreamed of a wildlife refuge in Brooksville and bought land when possible. Two of the estates which she bought had buildings, buildings which were empty and vandalized and had become fire hazards. These Anita Harris had torn down – her caretaker was then Castine's first selectman. These circumstances, misunderstood, were related with no sensitivity in a poem appearing at the time, the name of the island was changed.

In 1971, Anita Harris gave 1,230 acres, Holbrook Island Sanctuary, to the State of Maine for a wildlife refuge. In 1986 following her death, Holbrook Island itself became part of the sanctuary.

Recollections from memory:

Anita and Marian Harris, when I first knew them, must have been in their late twenties. They lived with their mother and her sister, Miss Doran, spending summers on Holbrook Island, quite a large island, they thought about 100 acres, between Brooksville, Penobscot Bay and Nautilus Island where we summered. I never saw Mr. Harris but understood that he had lived in Russia in some diplomatic capacity. When we dined at the house on Holbrook Island, usually on a Sunday noon, the china used was from a set said to have been given Mr. Harris by the Czar. It was rumored that Mrs. Harris and Miss Doran were of a family of beautiful daughters who lived in Portland, Maine. Miss Doran was pleasant, quiet and seemed to wish to be unnoticed. There were also two maids who came with the family from the apartment in Boston.

The house, which Anita and Marian admitted was inconvenient, was designed by a relative. It was entered after crossing a smallish veranda and the entrance hall was also a small sitting room with a fireplace, at the back was a stairway, under which was a hall leading to the kitchen, on the right a door to the dining room, on the left were two small rooms. That at the front was almost part of the hall as there was no door, the room toward the back was even smaller, somewhat dark, with, as I remember, bookcases built along the walls. Upstairs there were two or three bedrooms and a bath and, over the kitchen two rooms for the maids. I think Miss Doran had a room on the third floor. Later Marian had a tiny washroom installed there which was then lighted by a flashlight with a timer so that the battery would not run down. The rest of the house still relied on kerosene lamps.

When we called we usually sat in the entrance hall, there were two comfortable chairs, one on each side of the fireplace and a bench, between the two rooms on the left, facing it. In the fall or winter it was very draughty as the air seemed to flow down or up the stairwell. At times, when Marian was actively gardening, we sat in the front room which she had somewhat arranged to show flowers. The dining room was a larger room with a table which could seat ten. The farmer and caretaker had a house near the wharf and barns. There were horses and cows, chickens and pigs on Holbrook Island, at least for many years and the vegetable and fruit



gardens were superb. There were, of course boats, the motor launch, similar to those made locally and owned by families who lived along the Brooksville shore facing Castine, was used every day for errands to Castine, groceries, mail, kerosene for lighting and to take the two maids to the small Catholic Church. Although the Harrises themselves were Catholic I think they did not, in the summer, attend church. Sometimes the motor launch, on its way to Castine, stopped at Nautilus and Mrs. Harris came to call, meeting the boat as it was on the way back.

Marian and Anita were excellent horseback riders and, when I was growing up, played tennis with my brothers - both on the Harrises court and on ours. I don't know how good any of them were but they seemed to enjoy it though usually Anita did not much care for sports. Marian was more active, she had a very good friend, perhaps a college friend, who lived in Newburyport, and was an expert in snakes. When a snake was found to have entered the country as they sometimes did with a load of fruit, they would send for this young woman to take charge of the reptile. She also traveled quite a bit and one summer telegraphed Marian from Germany to say that she had an extra ticket to Oberammergau and to come and see it with her. As this was before air service across the Atlantic Marian went, but by boat, spending perhaps two or three nights in Europe and ten days en route. Anita was more content at home. It was not until the Second World War, Mrs. Harris and Miss Doran were no longer there and Marian was teaching some distance



away in a college, that life changed drastically for both Marian and Anita. As with many, the farmer left during the war years and Anita moved to the smaller house - and one easier to heat. Marian came for Christmas and Easter vacations but Anita lived alone on the island - took care of the milk and cream but refused to learn to milk. Someone had to come twice a day to milk and feed the large animals.

During these years, Anita rowed herself when necessary. There was no telephone and she seemed happy and able to do what had to be done. With the war over Anita and Marian traveled together, flying to Europe and to the south. Marian's marriage was a great shock to her sister - who would not meet her husband nor allow him on Holbrook. However Marian did visit and when Marian was ill in a hospital in Boston, Anita went down and was there when she died.

I remember Anita as being lively, vivacious, beautifully dressed, interested and pleasant - also opinionated, not timid in expressing her feelings and good company. She cared for animals as did her sister and she cared for the beauty of the area here and worked to save it and to provide a refuge for those animals whose home this was. I once took an English friend to call on Anita - by the time we got there a slight drizzle had begun - we stood on the porch some time after ringing the bell - at length Anita appeared, wearing a long gown, a long rope of pearls, beautiful jewelry and as charming as ever. On our way home my friend said "Way out in the sticks and dressed like a duchess!" She was a friend one would never forget.

To view the film: *Snippets from the Wilson Family's Home Movies*, please visit our website at www.wilsonmuseum.org

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.

Elaine Betts 1938 - 2021	Frances M. Bos 1931 - 2020	Sandra Dinsmore 1925 - 2021
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Pauline Hutchins 1938 - 2020	Joseph Meltreder 1923 - 2020
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Additionally, the Museum has received generous donations in memory of the following:

Tom Bartlett, Bob Downes, Dorothy Farnham, Fritz Foote, Pauline Hutchins, Harry Kaiserian, Barbara Mallonee, Joseph Meltreder, Donna Sawyer, Charlotte Snyder-Sholod, Alice Trowbridge, and Georgia Wilson.

WILSON MUSEUM





Collections Conversations

By Abby Dunham

One of the things that most surprises visitors their first time at the Wilson Museum is the great variety in our Collection. It represents the interests of founder John Howard Wilson, his family, and the local community. J. Howard was professionally trained as a geologist, had a deep scientific interest in archaeology and anthropology, and organized a committee collecting materials from local history. The influence of his family can be seen through the legacies of his three children in the Museum: his son Birkbeck, an anthropologist who studied Native American cultures; his son Sturgis, for whom a marine exhibit was endowed; and his daughter Ellenore, who brought about the preservation of the Perkins House, the creation of the Blacksmith Shop, and led collecting in a host of other areas. The Wilson Museum and its collection have grown through the years, the development a reflection of the Wilson family and the local community.

During archaeological trips to Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (including John Howard and Georgia Wilson's honeymoon), J.H. Wilson developed contacts at dig sites and museums. It was through these connections that the foundational exhibits of the European Stone, Bronze, and Iron Ages were created. His correspondence includes exchanges with some leading European archaeologists of the time that provide illumination on the early arrangement of the Wilson Museum's collections.



Dr. J. Howard Wilson with Dr. Carlotta Maury on a geological expedition.

Castine has long been a town inhabited by those who travel, for work and for pleasure. The Wilsons were certainly no exception. The family and other world travelers out of Castine have contributed historic and cultural material gathered during their trips. Perhaps especially notable are the materials that were given to Dr. Mary Cushman by the Umbundu who she worked with for many years in Chilesso, Angola.



Dr. Mary Cushman with Caesarian patient, In-da-li-na, her new baby and little girl. Courtesy of Trinitarian Church.

something from every continent.

Since inception, the collection of local history artifacts and archives has been an important facet of the Wilson Museum. This was greatly expanded under the direction of Ellenore Wilson Doudiet with the restoration of the Perkins House and the establishment of other new exhibit spaces dedicated to the story of the local area. Two areas of local collecting and exhibiting have recently come into a renewed focus to meet the needs of the community: the revival of collecting the works of local artists and expanding our maritime collection to include several locally-built watercraft. These collections capture some of the significant professions and pastimes of the area, historically and today.

The diversity of the collection is a wonderful opportunity. It creates so many avenues for programs, can tie in to a broad range of school curricula, and brings the world to our peninsula in an experiential Museum and its collection have been and remain a worldwide resource for this community and beyond.



The Umbundu flute has eight tones - eight more tones can be made by increasing the intensity of air.

Celebrating J. Howard Wilson's geology background, the collection of rocks, minerals, and fossils provide an understanding of the natural world. The Museum even has a rock from Antarctica, showing the effects of wind erosion. This, along with the collection of shells, allows us to boast we have

A hearty thank you is extended to Bangor Savings Bank for sponsoring the Wilson Museum's 100th Anniversary Season.

Visit the website for upcoming programs and activities. AND, be sure to join in on the fun with Collecting Castine 2021.

The format is different from other years.

COLLECTING CASTINE 2021

July 26 through August 2: View the Exhibit in the Hutchins Education Center and cast your vote for the People's Choice!

Weekdays (10 a.m. to 5 p.m.); Weekends (2 to 5 p.m.)

- Individual membership allows for one vote
- Family membership allows for two votes
- Not a member? Purchase a catalogue and you can vote.

Exhibit will also be made available online

August 2 (6 p.m.): The People's Choice will be announced

August 2 (6 p.m.) through August 5 (6 p.m.):

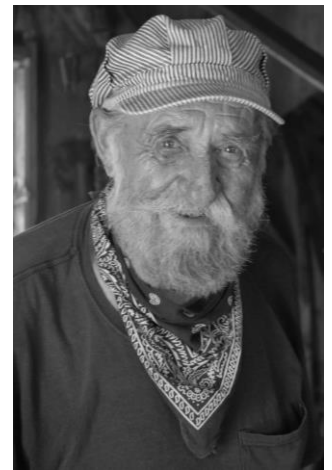
The Online Auction will be activated once The People's Choice is selected; take your chances and bid on this summer's amazing pieces representing Castine inspired art.



Collecting Castine 2021 is honoring the Wilson Family artists of the past. Wilson artwork will be shown throughout the summer in the Main Hall of the Wilson Museum.

The Wilson Museum is saddened to announce the passing of two long-time colleagues. We will be forever grateful to them for their dedication and friendship.

Joe Meltreder was a favorite among the staff and he brightened anyone's day who had the pleasure of talking to him. A refugee of the Hungarian Revolution, he came to the United States in 1957 after apprenticing as a blacksmith in his home country. Since 2002, he was the welcoming face at the Museum's Village Blacksmith. Joe encouraged children and adults alike to help him out by pumping the bellows while he fashioned an iron hook. Once finished, he would pass the tongs holding the hot hook to the helper to plunge into the water for the final stage of cooling and tempering. Joe would then surprise the helpers by offering them to take the hook home. One father shared with us that over time his family had collected 34 hooks fashioned by Joe. Joe was particularly fond of the demonstration days when the Perkins House hearth was busy turning out loaves of bread and donuts; this brought back memories of his days as a youth in the old country when his mother baked bread in a similar oven. Joe loved to leave the smithy with a loaf of bread tucked under his arm for the next day. He will be deeply missed in this community.



Pauline Hutchins was a life member of the Wilson Museum, served on the Board of Trustees, and worked for twenty-five seasons at the Museum's front desk. From May 27 through September 30, Polly worked every day but Monday, missing only one day throughout her years of service. She and her husband Hoyt were very good friends with Ellenore Doudiet and both were devoted to the Museum's expanding mission – the John Perkins House, the Blacksmith Shop, and associated programming. Polly was a wonderful cook and hostess for many occasions with the Museum – but, there was one visitor she just did not want to play host to – a baby porcupine came through the front door one day when she wasn't looking and settled under an upright Victrola playing 1920s music. Her scream drew the docent from the lower floor believing that Polly was being accosted. This was a story she would often retell with a little humorous hysteria.

WILSON MUSEUM
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WILSON MUSEUM
BAGADUCE ENGINE CO.
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Weekdays 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Weekends 2-5 p.m.
May 27-September 30

JOHN & PHEBE PERKINS HOUSE

Half-hour tours beginning at 2 p.m.
Wednesdays & Sundays
July & August

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH
WOOD SHOP DEMONSTRATIONS

Wednesdays & Sundays 2-5 p.m.
July & August

A Jack of All Trades
William Henry Clark
(1881-1959)

was a lifelong resident of Castine and a man of many talents. He did everything from finish work on schooners to building houses to beekeeping.



Willie could do it all but he was most proud to have supervised the construction of the Wilson Museum. Several years ago, in researching their family genealogy, Willie's granddaughters Carolyn Corey, Sandra Dubovy, and Christine Bates, contacted the Wilson Museum. It was with great excitement they learned of Willie's intimate connection with the Museum. Since then, these enthusiasts have logged an enormous amount of volunteer hours with the Museum – working on our cemetery project and arranging and cataloguing the archival collection of Mark Honey.