

# The Society Pages:

News about the people and projects of  
the Mount Desert Island Historical Society



Top to bottom: Billy Helprin speaks at the Somesville Museum & Gardens opening; Jennifer Steen Booher installs *We Change With Them* in the Reel Pizza lobby; Raney Bench and Booher are joined by UMaine scientists Angela Mech and Allie Gardner on the back deck of Naturalist's Notebook.

## From the Executive Director, Raney Bench

Summer on MDI is always a highlight of the year. In addition to the natural beauty, seeing summer friends at interesting and engaging history events is something I always look forward to. The Society is offering our most ambitious series of programs ever, taking history “on the road” with an outdoor traveling exhibit, lecture series, and special events. We’ve reconnected with our members and met new friends, all while educating people about local history. There are many more events planned for the rest of the year, so mark your calendars!

While August is the heart of summer, it also heralds fall, with the first signs of leaves changing and twilight coming earlier in the evening. The Society will be using this time to think about our work as the island’s historical society, and we will be asking our members for your thoughts about how we can better serve the community, and share MDI history with broader audiences. I look forward to connecting with you at an event or in conversation as we plan for an exciting future.

## We Change With Them

Hundreds of people have now seen the traveling exhibit of Jennifer Steen Booher’s artwork, on display in the lobby at Reel Pizza, and popping up at the Jesup with A Climate To Thrive; the Somesville Museum & Gardens; MDI Biological Laboratory’s Family Science Night; and at Naturalist’s Notebook! We are grateful to our sponsors: Maine Humanities Council and Bar Harbor Bank & Trust.

There are still opportunities to see the exhibit:  
Machias Savings Bank lobby in Bar Harbor, August 10-24  
Landscape of Change with string quartet Halcyon:  
Schoolic Institute, August 27  
Catherine Schmitt at ArtWaves: September 29  
Exhibit closer: Jennifer’s studio, Bar Harbor Municipal  
Building, Date TBD

## Frederick Law Olmsted: Designing America

Laurence Cotton, writer, historian, and filmmaker, will present “Frederick Law Olmsted: Designing America,” a deep dive into Olmsted’s life and prolific career, at a special Mount Desert Island Historical Society event at College of the Atlantic’s Gates Auditorium on Thursday, August 18, from 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

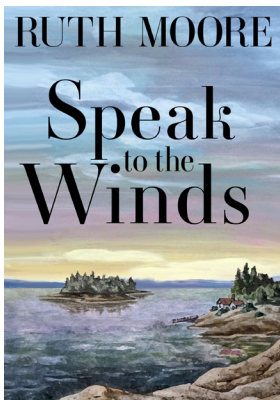
April 26, 2022 marked the 200th anniversary of Olmsted’s birth, and Cotton is spending the year touring the nation presenting on this Renaissance man - writer, philosopher, social reformer, advocate for the preservation of natural scenery, a founder of the field “landscape architecture,” and creator of some of the most beautiful public and private parks and gardens, as well as academic and institutional campuses across North America.

During this special program, Cotton will also give a visual tour of representative masterful landscapes designed by Olmsted, Senior, as well as his two sons and the Olmsted Bros. landscape architecture firm, as the footprint of their works literally stretch across the continent. He will include select Olmsted landscapes in northern New England, with a focus on Eastern Massachusetts and Maine, including the Maine State Capitol, Camden waterfront, University of Maine - Orono campus, and more.

### Book Club

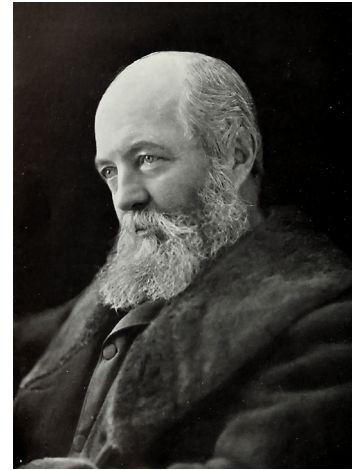
Our first two Book Club meetings were fantastic, and we now have over 30 club members! Members from across the country Zoomed in to learn more about the people and places of Mary Roberts Rinehart’s *The Wall* and Eleanor Mayo’s *Swan’s Harbor*.

The next meeting will be October 17 at 6:00 p.m., and features the newly reprinted novel, *Speak to the Winds* by



Ruth Moore. A 1956 Kirkus Review says, “A sturdy portrait of an island community, off the coast of Maine, a group of people held together by traditions and loyalty and the difficulty of survival once the only native industry goes by default, and a feud, started with a small incident and growing to proportions that split families and friends asunder,- such is the

Jenna Jandreau of the Historical Society will follow Cotton with a short talk on Olmsted’s landscaping project at George Vanderbilt’s Bar Harbor estate Point D’Acadie, and the work of Olmsted’s firm in creating some of the landscapes we love on Mount Desert Island today, such as the Park Loop Road in Acadia National Park.



This event is part of Olmsted 200, a nationwide bicentennial celebration. With a theme of “Parks for All People,” the Olmsted 200 national campaign engages a creative coalition of landscape architects, design professionals, city planners, public health professionals, conservationists, community leaders, historians and educators to explore the many ways in which Olmsted’s values can address today’s challenges.

This event is free and open to the public, through the generous support of Machias Savings Bank. Pre-register at [www.mdihistory.org/events/olmsted](http://www.mdihistory.org/events/olmsted) to guarantee your spot, or call (207) 276-9323.

material of which this story is built.”

Ruth Moore, born on Gotts Island, lived with partner Eleanor Mayo in a home they designed and constructed in Bass Harbor. She wrote fourteen novels, some while living on MDI, and is considered one of the most prominent writers of the mid-20th century.

Copies of *Speak to the Winds* are available online through Islandport Press; on hand at the Somesville Museum & Gardens (Wednesday through Sunday, 10am-4pm, until Labor Day); and as a Kindle version on Amazon.

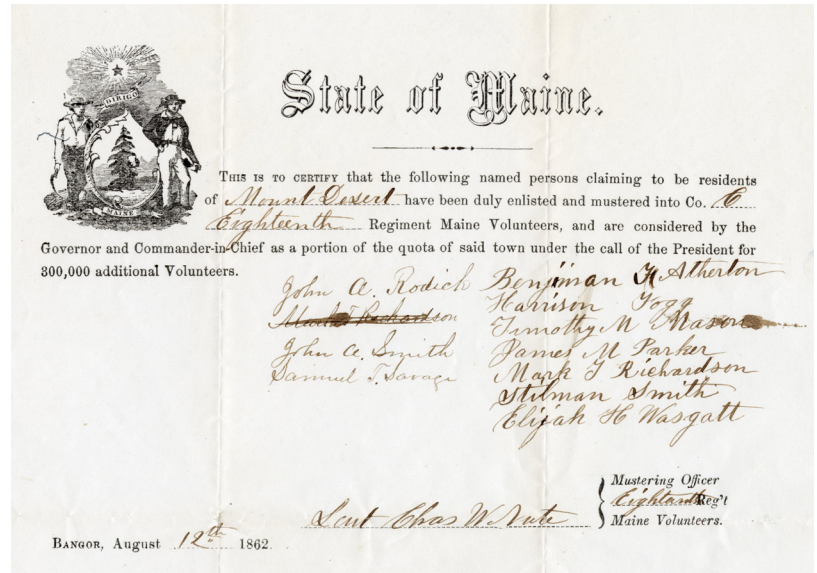
Finishing the novel isn’t required to attend meetings; we welcome readers whether they’re on page 12, 200, have finished the book, or haven’t had a chance to crack it open yet. To receive updates about Book Club, please email Jenna at [jenna.jandreau@mdihistory.org](mailto:jenna.jandreau@mdihistory.org) to be added to the mailing list.

## From the Collections - by Patrick Callaway, Collections Coordinator

*Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll's a favorite read for historians. Much like *Wonderland*, history is a strange place that operates on its own logic and under the dictates of its own rules. Every historian has their own favorite story of examples from the past of how seemingly unconnected people or events are actually connected in some strange way. The process of archival research can be similar, and on occasion we find what we were not looking for in a place that we did not intend to find it. This is the case for the *From the Collections* column this month.

This month's selection dates to August 1862. It is a civil war muster roll for men enlisted into Company C, 18th Regiment of Maine Volunteers. On the surface this is a dry official document, but it raises a number of interesting questions and makes some surprising connections to other sources within our archive.

The ideas of "volunteer" and "quota" that we see in this document have an uneasy co-existence. The Militia Act of July 1862 allowed for a militia draft in states that did not meet their recruiting goals for volunteers. The formal military draft (AKA conscription) was not in place yet, but it is easy to imagine some of the social pressures that young men (especially those on the margins of society) faced to volunteer for the service. The numbers of men involved were vast for the day. The muster roll mentioned the goal of 300,000 volunteers; by comparison this equated to almost the entire population of Vermont or New Hampshire in 1860.



Fans of these Society Pages and the Society's Facebook page will recognize a familiar name on this list of volunteers. Over the past several months we have encountered the name Harrison Fogg before, and we have followed the experience of this family as they struggle with poverty, military service, and their connections to the community of Mt. Desert.

I had absolutely no intention of starting a series but by some strange fate of archive magic, sources on Fogg keep appearing even when I am looking for something else! There is a larger lesson here. Much like Alice in her adventures, when we enter into history and the archives there is no telling what we will find. But it will somehow always connect to a familiar story, and in time the connections make sense.

## Jennifer Heindel receives Ann Benson Award

We are proud to present the 2022 Ann Benson Award to Jennifer Heindel for her work scanning and digitizing slides and photographs by LaRue Spiker, and for her incredible work preparing our collections records to be added to the History Trust's Digital Archive.

Jen says, "I started volunteering about four or five years ago in response to an advertisement Jenna put in the MD Islander looking for volunteers. What motivated me to do it was part curiosity of what cool things or stories are lurking in the collections, and the need to feel useful in the off-season."

"One of those cool things was in the personal papers of the Spiker collection, documenting when LaRue was accused of being a communist and under investigation as part of the 'red scare' of Joseph McCarthy."



## Keep, Discover, & Celebrate

During the Historical Society's 92nd Annual Meeting, a special retrospective program - "Keep, Discover & Celebrate" - looked back on the organization's growth in the last ten years, under Bill Horner's presidency. Horner announced his retirement as board president, and Ben Pierce as his successor. Horner will stay on the board, and continue to serve on its Executive Committee.

Horner presented the recently published 2021-2022 Annual Report that includes, for the first time in many years, a donor list. He shared stories and watershed moments from the last 10+ years, such as his incredibly fulfilling teamwork with Tim Garrity (Executive Director, 2011-2020), identifying Chebacco as a flagship, focusing the journal and annual programs around a theme, and more.

Raney Bench and Ben Pierce also spoke about the last decade's progress, and how "Keep, Discover, & Celebrate" provided cohesion that propelled the Society forward. They expressed to Bill the Society's gratitude through the presentation of a sculpted granite sailboat, to be received and installed in the Somesville Museum gardens later this year.

Select favorite memories of MDI Historical Society in 2011-2021:

- Captain Hornerblower sailing into Pretty Marsh (pictured top right, courtesy of Bill Browder)
- The Champlain Society cruise that never took off from Frenchman Bay because it was fogged in (thanks for this one, Maureen Fournier!)
- The Somes Sound Cruise, complete with Samuel Champlain impersonator
- Board member Peter Collier remembers introducing his son, age six at the time, to the Society's work on the Landscape of Change project last summer at the Somesville Museum and Gardens. Peter says, "As he grows up in an ever changing world, I value all opportunities to open his eyes to what is changing all around us in our own backyard."

To view the 92nd Annual Meeting, please visit our YouTube channel or Facebook page. The 2021-2022 Annual Report may be viewed at [www.mdihistory.org/annual-reports](http://www.mdihistory.org/annual-reports).

