

SEAL ISLAND

1948

With a preliminary note on the career of Jerry F. Nickerson.

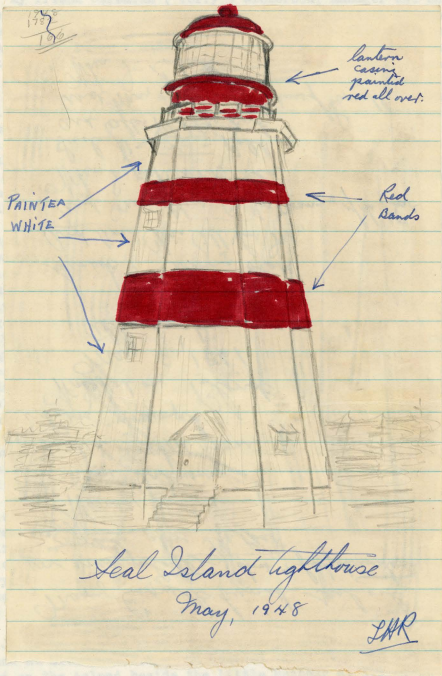
J.H.R.

SEAL ISLAND (fly sheet)

Clouds Red  
in 3  
See of 1948



May 1948



Chief shareholder in a  
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The lighthouse rapidly  
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to my business. Before long they decided to go into the processing, and bought  
a small plant and shed in Liverpool alongside the lighthouse and the existing plant of  
the North American Fishery Company, a corporation financed largely with American  
capital and managed by an American vessel skipper.  
The North American Fishery had a cold storage plant and the Wickson brothers  
and sons, and when the American company got into financial difficulties in the early  
1930s the Wicksons borrowed \$100,000 from their best Boston customer, three in  
their own savings accounts, and bought the North American plant. (Their reputation for  
honesty and enterprise was such that they simply wired \$300,000. The bank lent me  
\$100,000. The Boston bank wired a Liverpool bank the next morning placing that  
sum to their credit.)

May 1948

My friend Jeremiah ("Jerry") Nickerson, manager and chief shareholder in a prosperous cold storage and fish-processing plant in Liverpool, N.S., was born on Cape Sable Island near the West Head in 1887. When Jerry was 13 his father, a fisherman, died very suddenly, leaving a widow and seven children almost destitute. That year ~~XXXXXX~~ (1900) young Jerry went to Seal Island, lobster fishing with the regular seasonal migration from Cape Island, living in what was known as "the old Hardy house" at West Cove with 43 other men. All fishing then was done in small sloops and rowboats. Rum was fairly plentiful and the lobstermen were inclined to be uproarious whenever they had a supply. Young Jerry's career nearly ended off Seal Island near "Scratch All" one day when his two drunken companions let the little sloop broach-to in the ~~water~~. For sixteen years he continued to make the seasonal migration to Seal Island for the lobster fishery. The lobster season then was not so restricted as it is now, and he spent most of his year on the island or in small boats on the nearby lobster grounds.

Jerry was energetic and shrewd, and when he was old enough to ~~pick~~ choose his fishing partners he chose well, picking ~~men~~ men of sober and energetic habit like himself. He was progressive in thought, and in 1905 or 1906 had one of the first motor-boats employed in the lobster fishery at the Cape. The so-called "Cape Island boat", ~~designed for~~ especially designed for the lobster fishery, was steadily evolved year by year ~~in~~ the Cape Sable boat-builders, incorporating improvements suggested by the fishermen themselves out of experience in the heavy tide-rips. By 1916 it had taken its present form, with long smooth lines, a lift to the bows, a square stern; but it was somewhat smaller than those employed today (1948). Almost every year Jerry had a new boat built, incorporating the latest improvements in design and materials, ~~selling~~ as well as the latest engine. He usually managed to sell the old one at a good price, partly because he had a reputation for successful management, and partly because a boat twelve months old was comparatively new. But Jerry realized that the necessity of hauling out the boats on the slips at Seal Island, whenever there was a heavy sea on the shore, strained the hull to some extent. (Lobstermen today say that a motorboat used at Seal Island for seven years is "finished" -- worthless.)

By 1916 he had "made" and saved several thousand dollars. He was 29, and counted one of the best ~~in~~ fishermen at the Cape, with a reputation for enterprise and courage and supreme honesty. He and his younger brother Hubert had taken care of their mother ever since they started fishing, and in later years they looked after two of their sisters in poor circumstances with the same loyalty and generosity. Jerry married a girl from the east side of Cape Island, Lillian Penny, and the house was decorated with the only flowers available in profusion on Cape Island at that time -- apple blossoms from a small orchard on the west side.

In 1916 the First World War was in progress, fish prices were improving rapidly, and Jerry heard of a good opportunity to establish a fish buying business on Coffin's Island at Liverpool, N.S. He removed there with his wife and for several years lived on the island, beside the little harbour at its north end, buying fish and lobsters with such success that he sent for his brother Hubert to come and join him in the business. Before long they decided to go into fish processing, and bought a small wharf and shed in Liverpool alongside the large and too-ambitious plant of the North American Fishery Company, a corporation financed largely with American capital and managed by an American named Murphy.

The North American Company had a cold storage plant and the Nickerson brothers had none, and when the American company got into financial difficulties in the early 1920's the Nickersons borrowed \$10,000 from their best Boston customer, threw in their own savings entirely, and bought the North American plant. (Their reputation for honesty and enterprise was such that Jerry simply wired ~~him~~, "Can you lend me \$10,000?" and the Boston man wired a Liverpool bank the next morning placing that sum to their credit.)

\* see note on back

My friend Jeremiah ("Jerry") Nickerson, manager and chief shareholder in a  
progressive cold storage and fish-processing plant in Liverpool, N.S., was born on  
Cape Sable Island near the West Head in 1837. When Jerry was 13 his father,  
Richard, died very suddenly, leaving a widow and seven children almost destitute.  
The poor young Jerry went to Seal Island, lobster fishing with  
the regular seasonal migration from Cape Island, living in what was known as "the  
old Sable house" at West Cove with "3 other men. All 4 families had been in  
small shacks and huts. Jim was fairly plentiful and the lobstermen were inclined  
to be appreciative whenever they had a supply. Young Jerry's career nearly ended by  
Seal Island near "Sable" one day when his two drunken companions let the  
boat drift out to sea. It was a very narrow escape.

\* When Jerry removed from Cape Sable to Liverpool in 1916

she sent his wife on by train, & set off himself by sea in his  
motorboat loaded with all their movable household goods. It was a  
wretched days journey, made in rough weather & without a chink of any  
kind, & once or twice he thought it was all up with him.

By 1916 he had "made" and saved several thousand dollars. He was 83 and counted  
one of the best fish fishermen at the Cape, with a reputation for enterprise and  
courage and extreme honesty. He and his younger brothers had taken care of  
their mother ever since they started fishing, and in later years they looked after  
two of their sisters in poor circumstances with the same loyalty and generosity.  
Jerry married a girl from the east side of Cape Island, Miss Penny, and the  
house was decorated with the only pictures available in proportion on Cape Island at  
that time -- a couple of pictures from a small shop on the west side.  
In 1916 the first World War was in progress. Fish prices were falling rapidly,  
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\$10,000?" and the Boston man wired a Liverpool bank the next morning stating that  
was to their credit.

The 1920's were a hard and struggling time in Nova Scotia, but by shrewdness, fair dealing with the fishermen, and plain common sense, the Nickerson brothers put the combined cold storage and fish-processing plant on a paying basis. By this time they had taken their younger brother ~~XXXXXXXX~~ Roswell into the business as accountant and junior partner. About 1928 a zealous promoter named Boyd Snow of Halifax came to Liverpool and floated the Seven Seas Fisheries Company. Into it he put a good deal of money belonging to his wife (a daughter of ~~XXXXXXXX~~ Boutilier, the well known fish merchant of Halifax) and he persuaded a Norwegian trawler skipper named Gjerte Myrrhe (pronounced Gyert Myra), who had been very successful in operating Boutilier trawlers out of Halifax and had saved \$20,000 or \$30,000, to put his money into the business. With this combined fund he bought out the interests of the Nickerson Brothers but retained them at good salaries on his staff. Snow's experience had been chiefly in the sales end of the business in Quebec and Ontario; he had great schemes for shipping fillets in fancy packages to inland markets, buying trawlers to ensure a steady supply of fish, and so on. But he paid himself a large salary and a fat expense account, installed his brother on the staff at \$500 per month, and in various ways built up a heavy and non-productive overhead against the advice of the Nickersons and of Myrrhe. When the great slump came in 1930 the Seven Seas Fishery Company fell into serious difficulties and eventually into the liquidation. Myrrhe lost his entire savings, and most of Boyd Snow's wife's money vanished also. However not all the money was ill spent; amongst other things the cold storage machinery and capacity had been modernized and enlarged. When the company went into liquidation the Nickerson's promptly bought it from the receivers and went into business again on their own, this time with a larger and more modern plant. They cut out the frills, reduced the staff to a sensible size, and in two years had the business on a paying basis again, despite the depression.

During the war 1939-45 and for several years afterwards the demand for fish was very great, prices were high, and the Nickersons steadily increased their profits. By 1948 they were wealthy men. In that year Jerry was 61, a short, stocky, round-faced man with a ~~XXXXXXXX~~ snub nose, a pair of small twinkling blue eyes, speaking in the ~~XXXXXXXX~~ rapid dialect of Cape Sable Island. His health was beginning to fail, he was troubled with incipient diabetes and with high blood pressure and the doctors had begun to insist on strict diet and less activity. For some time past he had talked to me about his early days on Seal Island and his desire to "see the place again before I die". In May 1948 he decided to go and, knowing that I was interested in the island from a writer's viewpoint, asked me to go along. He had phoned his kinsman Dewey Nickerson, of Clark's Harbour, who had a lobster-fishing establishment on Seal Island, and Dewey urged him to come and bring "the writer fella" along.

We set out in my car at 7 A.M. on Sunday May 16th, a lovely sunny day after a long spell of rough easterly weather. I had previously looked up something of the history of the island. Briefly, this is it.

Samuel de Champlain, exploring the coast of Acadie in the spring of 1604 with De Monts, had this to say: (See quotation in Murdoch Vol.1 page 81).

"Cape Sable is very dangerous for certain rocks and reefs lying out a mile almost to sea. Thence one goes on the Isle aux Coromans (Isle of the Cormorants), a league distant, so called on account of the infinite number of these birds, with whose eggs we filled a cask; and from this island making westward about six leagues, crossing a bay which runs in two or three leagues to the northward, we meet several islands two or three leagues to sea. They are mostly dangerous for large vessels to come close to on account of the great tides, and rocks level with the water. These islands are filled with pine trees, firs, birches and aspens. In one there is so great a quantity of birds called tanguoux that they may be easily knocked down with a stick. In another there are seals. In two others there is such an abundance of birds of different kinds that without having seen them they could not be imagined, such as cormorants, ducks of three kinds, geese, marmettes, bustards, sea parrots, snipes, vultures and other birds of prey, mauves, sea larks of two or three different kinds,

*R. Stewart*

herons, auilants, <sup>the</sup> culews, sea gulls, <sup>41</sup>dives, kites, appoils, crows, cranes and other sorts which make their nests there. I gave them the name of the Seal Islands (~~IXIX~~ Iles aux Loups Marins). They are in Lat. 43 degrees 30 minutes North, distant from the mainland or Cape Sable about four or five leagues."

Crowell's "History of Barrington Township" has this to say:-  
" Seal Islands. These islands described by Champlain on his first voyage to these parts have occupied a large place in the annals of shipwrecks down to our own times. Assigned by some miscarriage of boundaries to Yarmouth County they belong to Barrington by every claim of settlement, kinship of people and business relations. Nature itself has pronounced upon this question, for the flood tide which provides safe and convenient landing at high water brings boats from Barrington as required, and the ebb carries them back home. As the ships passed more frequently by Cape Sable, disasters increased in proportion, until it became customary for the early settlers to vait the islands in the spring to search for wreckage and to bury the bodies of those who had perished. The name of a Yarmouth man, Mr. Cann, is remembered as a leader in this good work; he had buried 21 corpses. In 1823 Captain Richard Hichens moved to the island, and with him was Edmund Crowell and John Nickerson. These men and their wives were henceforth engaged in the work of rescue of the shipwrecked, and prevention of the miseries so bound up with the past history of the islands. Captain Hichens had been master of the ship Union which was wrecked at Hichens Cove, west side of Cape Sable Island, on Jan. 17, 1816. (But the list compiled by the receiver of wrecks shows the brig Friendship, Richard Hichens, master, with the date January 1817. <sup>Feb</sup>)

*Column  
Crown*

Captain Hichens remained in Barrington and in 1820 married Mary, daughter of the Rev. Thomas Crowell. She was greatly distressed by the ~~six~~ stories about the wrecks on Seal Island; and particularly that sometimes the corpses were found of those who had escaped from the wrecks only to die of cold and starvation ashore. One of these was found frozen while attempting to strike a spark with flint and steel. She urged her husband until he said "I was shipwrecked myself. I will build a hut there and live there to rescue the shipwrecked". She said, "I will go with you". Edmund Crowell went with them and made the island his home. When the ship Vivid was wrecked she ran up high on Race Point in the snowstorm in the night. All hands got ashore safely and into the woods for shelter, not knowing where they were. Some found a path along ~~the~~ which they crept until the light in Edmund Crowell's log hut was seen. When they reached the hut Crowell and Hichens went in search and found them all..

Urged by his wife, Captain Hichens wrote to the Governor, Sir James Kempt, a Waterloo veteran, about the importance of a lighthouse on Seal Island, ~~and~~ the Governor visited the island, and a lighthouse ~~was~~ built there in 1827. For keeping the light the government paid £30 a year, and the two men had it in turns of six months each during the 27 years that the Hichens family were on the island. Out of their salary they provided boats for the rescue, as well as their fishing business, though once the government advanced them one-half the annual salary on account of their building a boat. William and Richard Hichens, ~~the~~ sons of Captain Hichens, when grown up, <sup>built</sup> at their own expense, <sup>by</sup> George Stoddart a lifeboat with a 16-foot keel. They were presented with 7 inflatable life-preservers for the boat's crew by the Humane Society of England.

*the  
Vivid*

→ The first Cunard ship ever lost was wrecked there on July 2nd, 1843. No lives were lost. In fact there has been no loss of life in connection with the 95 wrecks at the island since Hichens and Crowell first occupied it. The last of this list was the S.S. Anchor in 1918, making one wreck a year on the average since the island was settled. Benjamin Hichens was in charge of the lifeboat in 1866 and was many times engaged in the work of rescue.

*W. R. G. G.  
Thomson  
Cath. Times*

It was soon learned that the young English captain (Hichens senior) was an expert navigator and many of the aspiring youth of Barrington went to Seal Island to be under his tuition, at one time bringing the number of his family to twenty-two. Among these were Solomon Kendrick, William Kenny and Isaiah Smith. Many fishermen have frequented the island for the line, net, and lobster fishing, and found shelter for their boats and facilities for lodging there. For the last half-century of more (i.e. presumably since about 1850) Corning Crowell, a brother of Mrs. Richard Hichens 1st, and his family have had charge of the light and whistle and other apparatus of the government.

They have extensive property interests on the island including a valuable sheep run. The scrub spruce are so dense ~~thick~~ as to form a complete shelter for those animals during the winter.

Walpy's Cove and Churchill's Cove are reminders of disasters long past. The Devil's Limb and the Limb's Limb are ledges on the west, while the famous Blonde Rock where HMS Blonde was lost in 1782 bears S. by W. 4 miles."

Archibald MacMechan in his sketch entitled "A Beacon Light", in "There Go The Ships", gives some more detail of Captain Hichens and his successors. ( It should be noted that there one two or three errors in the "History of Barrington Township" account.)

Haliburton, Vol. 2 pages 184 and 185, says: "Twelve or thirteen miles from the shore, and 21 miles W. by N. from Cape Sable lies the Seal Island, which is about two miles long. The southern part of it is elevated 30 feet above the sea and is covered with stunted birch trees. It is emphatically called the elbow of the Bay of Fundy. The American fishermen resort to it for wood and water; they obtain the former in abundance from drift and wreck timbers, and the latter from a large pond in the centre. Five low ragged islands lie between four and five miles to the north of it, and are sometimes called the North Seals, though more frequently the Mud Islands. Wild fowl and fish are here found in great abundance. They are chiefly remarkable as the resort of Mother Carey's Chickens, which hatch their young there. They burrow diagonally under the ground to the depth of three or four feet and set on one egg. These are known under the various appellations of Mother Carey's Chickens, stormy petrel, witch bird and devil's bird. Their appearance in the wake of vessels, and their peculiar animation during a storm, create a superstitious fear in the minds of mariners that they are the messengers or agents of tempests and danger. On the American coast they are called Mother Carey's Chickens after a celebrated New England witch of that name, and they are said to have derived their designation of petrels from St. Peter, on account of their singular habit of running upon the water. When they alight upon the sea they face the wind, and extending their long wings as a support are enabled, by the assistance of their webbed feet, to retain their position without sinking. Their flesh is fat, greasy and rancid."

(Note: There are no birch or hardwood trees of any kind on Seal Island, and it is doubtful if there ever were. Hardwood trees could not live in the spray-swept soil of the island. All the trees are spruce, stunted and twisted. T.H.R.)

*Here are* the facts about Seal Island, as far as I could learn from a study of the above authors, and of Clara Dennis ("Down in Nova Scotia" pages 309-326) who visited the island about the year 1933; and as far as I could ascertain from actual observation of the island during a three-day visit in May 1948, and from careful questioning of Mrs. Winnie Hamilton and others who have been closely associated with the island for years:-

*(copy in July '88, and in '89)*

Seal Island proper is shaped like a sausage that has been almost bitten through ~~about halfway~~ near the middle. It lies roughly north-and-south, and the "bite" on the west side forms Western (or Crowell's") Cove, while the deeper "bite" on the east side forms the Eastern Cove. The fishermen's houses are built chiefly at the West Cove, which is protected to some extent by two short breakwaters. There are no breakwaters at the East Cove, and the fishermen there must haul up their boats when there is any sea. The houses at East Cove actually are well to the south-east of the main inlet (which is separated from West Cove by a strip of shingle and sand and a salt pond; hence the men who live at West Cove refer to those across the island as "the South-siders" and to themselves as "the North-siders").

The two coves and the salt pond between them almost divide the island into halves. The strip between is partly composed of sand, on which in the low places a turf has formed; this strip is protected by natural barriers in the form of steep shingle beaches thrown up by the storms and composed of stones varying in size from that of a football to a duck egg, all polished as smooth as glass by sea action.



The island is largely covered with a growth of stunted spruce trees. (I could find no sign of hardwood or of other softwood trees.) These present an interesting example of tree survival in the face of strong and bitter salt winds blowing from every side in the course of the year but especially from the west and north. Near the edge of the shore bank in the most exposed places the tree growth clings to the ground, the trunks are more horizontal than vertical, putting forth a dense thicket of twigs and needles. The "lee" formed by the outer fringe enables the next rank to grow a little higher, and so on until thirty feet back from the shore one can find trees standing straight and reaching a height of twenty or twenty-five feet. I noticed one tree about this distance from the bank which had a butt about 18 inches thick at the ground, tapering rapidly to the tip at a height of not more than 20 feet. In many cases near the outer fringe we found trees growing to a height of about 5 or 6 feet and then spreading out a stiff circular table of branches which ~~might~~<sup>are</sup> ideal nesting and roosting places for the gulls.

Thus, viewed from the side, the tree growth presents the silhouette of a wedge sloping down to a few inches at the edge of the shore bank. The trunks and branches are gnarled and twisted and very knotty, and the mass of twigs is very dense, so that the whole mass presents a green shield against the sea winds tipped at an angle of perhaps 45 degrees. The island sheep thus find shelter by burrowing through the thickets into small natural openings 20 to 50 feet back from the shore. Sometimes, however, in heavy snowstorms they are trapped in these places and smothered or starved to death. In the course of a walk around the north half of the island, following the sheep paths close to the bank, I observed between 20 and 30 skeletons of sheep.

A disease of some sort seems to be killing many of the trees on the island. Looking down from the lighthouse at the south end I observed that many of the trees below seemed to be dying at the top; and there and elsewhere I noticed patches of trees entirely dead from top to root.

The island soil ~~soil~~ seems composed of a chocolate-coloured humus varying from 6 inches to a foot thick; beneath this is a hard clay impervious to water, with the result that in many places the rainfall and other precipitation lies in boggy pools or in patches of soggy swamp covered with coarse grass, reeds and the green swords of blue iris. The whole island is thickly studded with granite boulders of all sizes. The water in the fishermen's wells has a yellow tint, and the ~~wells~~ wells about West Cove especially have a faint brackish taste. As one fisherman put it, "You can drink this water all day long and still be thirsty."

The drainage from the island table-land seeps chiefly towards the east side, where there is a series of small ponds, separated from the sea by barriers of steep shingle beach. Originally these ponds were much larger, but the steady erosion of the island by the sea has caused the beaches to "move in". Similarly the edge of the bank around the island is eating away steadily year by year. Jerry Nickerson, who had not set foot on the island for 32 years, pointed out to me many places where the sea had eaten away the shore bank from ten to twenty feet since 1916; indeed in many places I saw patches of undermined and fallen turf, some of them ~~saxxax~~ in strips 3 or 4 feet wide, lying on the foreshore where they had fallen apparently during the spring storms of this year.

Originally the large pond at the head of West Cove had an ~~opening~~<sup>opening</sup> into the cove itself, so that the pond rose and fell with the tide and was actually salt. The fishermen in Jerry Nickerson's day kept their lobster "cars" in this pond, hence its name, Lobster Pond. And in the sandy flat at the head of the pond there were large numbers of clams. Apparently the building of the two breakwaters, one on the north side, the other on the south side of West Cove, has changed the "scour" of the sea, so that the entrance to the pond has filled up and disappeared. The pond water now is brackish, the clams have disappeared, and of course the fishermen can no longer use it for lobster storage.

The island is between 2½ and 3 miles long and about ½ mile wide at its greatest width. The steady encroachment of the sea at the head of East Cove will eventually eat the island in two. The seals for which the island was named by Champlain have disappeared all but a few. They have been ruthlessly hunted from early times, and so have the great flocks of birds which at one time nested all over the island. Large numbers of herring gulls, mackerel gulls and terns still nest among the scrub trees and in the sand hills;

There are considerable numbers of guillemots and small birds like the sandpiper. The Mother Carey's Chickens (petrels) which at one time covered parts of the north end with their odorous burrows, have all but disappeared. (We found only two burrows.) The fishermen say the ~~maxix~~ petrels vanished within the past twenty years. Their ~~maxy~~ theory is that ship rats came ashore from the wreck of the Burpee L. Tucker (1927) and other craft, and killed the nesting birds in their burrows. It seems strange that this did not happen before, however, since most ships have rats and there have been wrecks for ~~nearly~~ nearly three centuries on the island.

Many of the sea birds were so tame that they could be killed with a stick in the nesting season, and for many generations the fishermen have shot the birds for sport. A favourite diversion was digging the petrels out of their burrows in the nesting season, and killing them with the cruelty of savages. (One man froze my blood by describing how, having heard that petrels have an inflammable fat in their bodies, he and some others, years ago, dug several birds out of the burrows, sprinkled them with kerosene, and set them afire. The birds "let out a squeak, flew a little way and fell in the sea.")

Most of the herring gulls nowadays nest on the north end of the island, in and beneath the scrub trees near Division Head but chiefly in what is called "the Burnt" -- a patch of woods once burnt off and now a series of small grassy clearings amongst the trees on the east side of the island between Cranberry Pond and High Bank. The fishermen still gather and eat a great many of the eggs. The nests are crude things composed chiefly of rank grass and bits of moss; but here and there some more fastidious gull has included a few tufts of sheep wool, with which the thickets are hung in places. They were nesting when I was there but I saw only two nests with eggs. The fishermen assured me that by the end of May every nest would have eggs. They told me that each gull usually lays three eggs. If these are removed she lays two more. If these are removed she lays one. After that she "quits". Until a few years ago most of the gulls nested in a patch of woods on the north-west side of the island near Division Head, known as "Gullborough"; but we found only a few nests there.

The Indians visited Seal Island from very early times, for flint arrowheads have been found in the soil on the north side of the West Cove. (Tom Nickerson had seen three dug up there, and had one of them in his home at Sherose Island, which he promised to send to me.) No doubt they came for the seal hunting primarily, but no doubt they were able to live easily on the great flocks of wild duck and sea fowl, and on clams dug at the head of Lobster Pond. They must have had to choose their time well, for this whole area is subject to the terrific "rips" created by the ebb and flow of the powerful Fundy tide, and exposed to every wind that blows. Probably they paddled their canoes from Pubnico, moving cautiously from island to island, or possibly from Tusket, following the chain of the Bald Tusquets seaward.

The Acadians of Pubnico and probably those who first settled about Barrington and on Cape Sable Island soon made their way to Seal Island for the fishery and the wild fowling and seal hunting. About the year 1900 some young fishermen noticed one or two sawn timbers protruding from the sand dunes near Scrag Pond ~~xxxxxxx~~ at the East Cove. They dug and found the remains of a small hut and the flat stones of a fireplace. There was no trace of a chimney and presumably the smoke had been permitted to escape through a hole in the ~~hax~~ roof. They found also several broken clay pipes of an ancient make, ~~xxxx~~ with small tilted bowls and very thick stems; also a large bottle or flagon of crudely blown dark glass. (The Widow of ~~xxxx~~ Hamilton, descendant of the early Crowells, who has lived on Seal Island nearly all her life, showed me these relics. She said her grandfather told her ~~that~~ there was a tradition that French sealers used to camp at that spot before the island was first settled by the Hichens and Crowells. This was probably in the 17th or possibly in the early 18th century.)

New England fishermen soon made a rendezvous of Seal Island to obtain fresh water and firewood. Probably its isolation made it safe from Indians except for the small groups who came there sealing and wild-fowling; and no doubt the Indians ceased to visit the island after the fishermen began to use it, for until 1755 there was war to the knife between the Micmacs and the Yankee fishermen who visited the coast of Nova Scotia.

However in the peaceful 19th century parties of Indians, raided the island to hunt seals and pick cranberries as late as the 1850's.

Arrowheads  
also the  
found at Seal Island

xxxx

Acadian fishermen continued to use the island for the fishery until very recent times. Apparently by mutual consent they built their huts on the north side of West Cove while the English-speaking fishermen built on the south side of it. Hence the term "French Side" for that part of the cove. Today (1948) no Acadians use it, but there is a large and substantial building, stripped of doors and windows and fast falling into decay, built within the past thirty years, which is called "the French house".

With the growth of sea traffic after the New England colonies became established there was an increasing number of wrecks upon Seal Island and its neighbouring reefs, for the island is truly "the elbow of the Bay of Fundy", it is the outlying part of Nova Scotia on the south, and ships rounding Cape Sable -- the chief landmark for ~~ix~~ vessels bound up Fundy Bay ~~ix~~ or to New England ports -- were very apt to fall upon "the Seals" in thick or stormy weather, or to be carried upon it by the powerful tides, especially in calm weather when they could not "claw off-shore".

New Englanders, and fishermen from Barrington, Woods Harbour, Cockerwit Passage and Yarmouth made a practice of landing on the island in the spring in order to salvage goods cast up by the winter's wrecks. Some of them, notably Calvin Cann, a lay preacher of Yarmouth, were moved by humane purposes and came to bury the dead. Cann himself buried 21 corpses. Others came merely to rob the dead and pick up any cast-up goods. This is a dark chapter in the story of Seal Island of which only tradition survives. According to one tradition, men from Yarmouth and Woods Harbour were not above murdering the living survivors for their poor possessions, and squabbling amongst themselves afterwards for the loot. According to ~~XXXX~~ Cape Island tradition (probably biased) this was the origin of a feud between Yarmouth and Woods Harbour men which survives to this day.

However Seal Island became a chief resort of Cape Island men going to the island for the fishery. The nature of the tides made it comparatively easy for them to sail to Seal Island, and land on the "flow"; while the "ebb" more or less carried them home. Their tales of the dead seamen found on the island each spring impressed the tender heart of young Mary Crowell, daughter of the Rev. Thomas Crowell, who lived at Barrington. One day there was a wreck closer to home. On January 17th 1817 the brig Friendship, laden with sugar from St. Lucia and bound for Halifax, struck on the west side of Cape Sable Island at a spot still known as Hichens Cove -- her master was a young Englishman, Captain Richard Hichens.

The shipwrecked crew came to Barrington and the Crowell girls saw them pass their father's house. Somebody said that the captain's name was Hichens, and Mary, seventeen, cried, "Oh, what a name!" Captain Hichens was invited to stay at the Crowell house. It was not long before he fell in love with Mary Crowell. She was, according to Mac<sup>echan</sup>, "the sort of ~~slight~~ short, slight woman who never weighs more than one hundred pounds, and she favoured the fair strain in the Crowells, having blue eyes and light hair inclined to be curly. She was musical and had a sweet, true voice. Though bred a Methodist she often aided in the services of the Anglican church, which had no organ, by 'setting the tune'." ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

The people of Barrington and Cape Island then and now marry young. It was not long before Captain Hichens and Mary Crowell were married. Mary became the mother of three sons and five daughters. She died at Wellfleet, Cape Cod, at the age of 86.

Hichens had resolved to settle at Barrington, making voyages from time to time, for he was a competent shipmaster, with an exact knowledge of the art of navigation unusual in those times. Mary was troubled by the stories ~~and~~ Seal Island. Often shipwrecked men got ashore there in the bitter winter weather, with no one to aid them, with no food or shelter, and their bodies were found in the woods above the shore. One spring the fishermen found a corpse in the woods, leaning against a tree, with the flint and steel still clasped in his hands where he had been trying to make a fire.

Mary persuaded her husband to go with her and make a home on Seal Island, to live there the year around. He could pursue the fishery there for his living, and in the stormy winter months their home could be a haven for shipwrecked mariners. He agreed and they went to Seal Island. No date is given for this momentous voyage, but it must have been about ~~the year~~ 1820, ~~XXXXXX~~ ~~Edmund~~ ~~Crowell~~ ~~and~~ ~~his~~ ~~wife~~ ~~settled~~ ~~on~~ ~~Seal~~ ~~Island~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~year~~ in which Richard and Mary were married. With them went Edmund Crowell and

his wife Jerusha. The Crowells built a hut, probably of wreck timber, on the north side of West Cove, close to what is now called "the French house". (Historian Crowell calls it a log hut; but the twisted and knotty trees of Seal Island are poor stuff for building purposes, and the beach then as now must have been littered with all sorts of ship timbers and planking, ideal for the purpose.) I was shown the site of the first Crowell hut.

The Hichens built their hut on the "South-side", i.e. on the south side of East Cove, on the other side of the island. Owing to the hour-glass shape of the island, the two homes were visible from each other. I was shown the site of the Hichens house. The foundation stones are still there. It was very small, not much more than 12 feet by 12 feet. Both families later built more substantial homes. The Crowells moved across West Cove and built a solid wooden house with a heavy stone chimney and fireplaces. The chimney was a landmark -- it is still marked "Crowell's Chimney" on the Admiralty charts, although the house was torn down in the 1920's and only the foundation stones remain. The fishermen still call it "the old Crowell house" or more often "the Bear's house". The latter is an amusing instance of the way a name may become attached to a place, and its original significance forgotten. The modern fishermen do not know what significance the name had, and think there "must have been a bear around there"; just as the remains of the big Dutch oven in the old Crowell chimney are nowadays said to have been "a place for the children to hide from Indians" -- although the Indians had long ceased to be hostile when Edmund Crowell went to Seal Island and it is problematical if they visited the island ~~before~~ after the white folk settled it permanently.

Mrs. Winnie (Crowell) Hamilton told me the simple fact. She is now 59 (born 1839) and her father and husband were light-keepers on the island. About the year 1900 she had a child's picture book illustrating the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. It contained a fanciful picture of the bears' house, which she loved. One day she went with her father to the West Cove and they looked at the old Crowell house, then about 75 years old and beginning to decay. Her father said, "This was the old home of the Crowells. Wasn't it a fine house?" And Winnie answered gravely, "It's not as nice as the bears' house." The fishermen were amused and ever afterwards called it the Bears' House.

Of the wrecks which happened before the Hichens settled on the island nothing is known except one -- but that one is notable. During the American Revolution a British frigate, HMS Blonde was very active against rebel privateers along the southern coast of Nova Scotia. ~~XXXXX~~ In the spring of 1778 she chased the French frigate Duc de Choiseul into the mouth of the harbour of Liverpool, N.S. and captured her when the French ship struck a reef, after a short fight. At this time France was not at war with Britain, although she had recognised the new American republic in January. When the Duc de Choiseul was found to be laden with arms and stores for the rebel army, consigned by the Congress agent in Paris, it was the first indication that France was giving active aid to the rebels. In 1782 HMS Blonde struck an uncharted ~~rock~~ <sup>island</sup> miles off the southern end of Seal Island -- known ever since as Blonde Rock. The captain and crew managed to get ashore on the island on the same day (May 10th) with the loss of only one man. They also managed to save a number of muskets, pistols, cutlasses, and (according to tradition preserved in the Crowell family) a number of bottles of spirits and the captain's money chest.

Seal Island was then uninhabited and the frigate's crew (probably 200 to 300 men) were in danger of starving when two American privateers anchored off the East Cove, no doubt to get wood and water. These vessels were the Lively, Captain Adams, and the Scammell, Captain Noah Stoddard. It was a piquant situation, for here were two of the very privateers which Blonde had been hunting so busily since '76. The captain of the Blonde negotiated with ~~them~~ Adams and Stoddard with a view to taking off himself and his crew and depositing them on the mainland. Apparently the Englishman had salvaged sufficient money to make it worthwhile, for the Americans agreed to take them off, first stipulating that the frigate's crew must get rid of their weapons under the eye of the American spokesman. The boat landing was a long rock protruding from the shore of East Cove, known as Brig Rock because a wrecked brig had once been found there. There was a straight face and deep water on the northerly side of this rock. Just behind the stony beach at the shore end of the rock lay a deep pond, known still as Brig Pond, or Brig Rock Pond.

While the American boat's crew watched carefully from the top of the rock, the castaways passed in file around the shore of the pond, each man throwing his weapon into the depths of it. The men were then taken off to the privateers and carried safely to the mainland. It is recorded that the Americans treated them well and even furnished them with "passes" against capture by other American privateers who were busy raiding the shore settlements along the Nova Scotia coast.

According to the Crowell family legend, the Englishmen buried some of their money and several bottles of spirits in the slope of the grassy hill above the pond. During the girlhood of Winnie (Crowell) Hamilton some of the young fishermen decided to dig pits in the slope in search of these things. They found no money but they did find several empty bottles of 18th century make, one of which Mrs. Hamilton still has, and which she showed to me. And during the 1920's a man probing the deep ooze on the pond bottom through the ice, in quest of eels, brought up on his eel-spear the badly rusted barrel of a musket.

The erosion of the island since 1782 has caused the stony beach to move back into Brig Pond, so that the pond nowadays is much smaller than it once was. ~~The~~ The Brig Rock remains unchanged except in one particular. A huge boulder weighing several tons, which for generations was perched on one side of Brig Rock was moved by a great sea in the 1930's to the other side of it -- a distance of 20 feet or more.

In the autumn of their third year on Seal Island (about 1823) Richard Hichens, desiring to earn some cash, left his wife and two babies (Richard junior and Mary Jane) and took command of a brig on a voyage to South America and back. He was gone six months, and on the return voyage made a landfall of his own house on Seal Island -- "a most wonderful thing and much talked of." In fact Hichens was such a consummate navigator that many young and ambitious seamen of Cape Island and the nearby settlements went to Seal Island to learn the art of navigation from him. ~~In fact~~ He ran a sort of marine school there for years, and at one time the Hichens house contained, including the family and the students, 21 people.

On one occasion, when Captain Hichens was making one of his voyages, he removed his wife and family to Barrington, leaving the Crowells alone on Seal Island. ~~##~~ On a fine November day in that year Edmund and Jerusha Crowell sailed for Barrington in their little sloop to get supplies, intending to return the next day. But a storm came up, then another, and another. Winter set in, and day after day passed, and week after week, when the winds were too strong or blowing in the wrong direction; and again and again when the winds died there was a terrific sea running which prevented the frantic parents from returning to the island. Meanwhile the three children maintained themselves in the lonely house at West Cove. The oldest was a girl, aged 13, the boys were aged 9 and 7. They had food -- probably dried fish -- and both the girl and the oldest boy could use a fowling-piece. They had a tinderbox, and there was seal oil for the lamp, and they had a few potatoes. With these and the wild duck and crows they killed they subsisted all through the stormy weeks until their parents got back.

Edmund Crowell cut a path through the woods to Race Point at the north tip of the island, to facilitate travel on his frequent patrols in search of castaways. One night in a snowstorm the ship Vivid ran upon Race Point so hard and high that all hands managed to get out on the jib-boom and drop safely ashore. They did not know where they were and would have perished like many others before them; ~~and~~ but one or two exploring the woods found the path and followed it until they saw the light in Crowell's house. They managed to get around the West Cove and reached Crowell's door. Crowell ~~and Hichens~~ at once set out through the storm for Race Point, found the others and guided them to the shelter of ~~xxxxxxx~~ their homes.

The need for a ~~highway~~ was apparent to the Crowells and Hichens from the time they went to the island. Mary Hichens urged her husband to petition the government to build ~~xxxxxxx~~. Their request was laid before the Nova Scotia Legislature on March 2nd, 1827, and in April the necessary sum was granted. The wharf was built, probably at ~~xxxxxxx~~ East Cove. All trace of it has disappeared. It could not have lasted very long, for without a heavy breakwater the sea would soon destroy anything of this nature. Today (1948) the fishermen at West Cove use the two breakwaters for

wharves; but even here they are obliged to haul up their boats on the slips at the first sign of a heavy sea. At East Cove there is no breakwater at all.

Mary Hichens still was not satisfied. What the island really needed was a lighthouse. Again they petitioned the government, immediately following the granting of the wharf. The Lieutenant-Governor was Sir James Kempt, a Waterloo veteran; his idée fixe was a better system of communications in Nova Scotia, and he had started a program of better roads throughout the province, and travelled about the countryside in a carriage to see that it was carried out. In July 1827 he sailed from Halifax in the province brig Chebucto for a tour of the western Nova Scotia ports, and in consequence of the Hichens petition he went ashore at Seal Island to see things for himself. His interest in the good work of the Hichens and Crowells was aroused at once, and, backed by his personal recommendation, the petition for a lighthouse was granted. The Legislature voted £1,000 for the purpose.

The builder was a man named Cameron and the tower still stands in essentially its original form, although in more recent times it has been raised upon a cement foundation, and the tall iron lantern-casing has been erected for the modern lamp on top. It is a wooden octagonal structure, singled and painted white, with two broad red bands. The lantern casing at the top also is painted red. The beams are massive hewn timbers, mortised and pinned with hardwood trenails. There are three floors, and each floor is supported on hewn timber knees. It stands on a knoll that is 35 feet above sea level, and the present height of the lighthouse from the metal ball on top of the lantern casing to the ground is 85 feet. ~~The original structure was 60 feet high, and upon the top burned a seal-oil lamp.~~

The original structure was 60 feet high, and upon the top burned a seal-oil lamp. The lamp was a simple thing with a "drip" which was apt to catch fire, and so it stood upon a circular metal platform about 4 feet in diameter. This platform consisted of two ~~metal plates~~ iron plates, each making up half the circumference. One of these half-moon iron plates is still preserved on Seal Island -- the present lighthouse keeper uses it for a ground-step at the end of his piazza. (I took a photo of it.)

The present lamp in the lighthouse was made in Paris and according to a plate in the lantern casing was installed in 1906, when Lt. Col. F. Gourdeau was Deputy Minister of Marine. The lamp burns kerosene and the three lenses revolve about it on bearings of liquid mercury. The motor is a weight-operated machine, the weights sliding up and down a wooden shaft that goes down through the middle of the tower to the ground. When the light is in operation the lighthouse-keeper has to wind up the weights every three hours, using a hand-crank for the purpose. The revolving lenses create three flashes fifteen seconds apart in every revolution. The light is visible thirty miles by direct vision; but its sky reflection has been seen many miles further.

The lighthouse was completed in 1831 and the light was first lit on November 28th in that year. The government paid £30 a year for tending it, and Richard Hichens and Edmund Crowell each took turns, six months at a time. Out of this sum they provided boats for rescue work, although on one occasion the government allowed them £15 for building a lifeboat. When Richard and William Hichens came to manhood they built a 16-foot lifeboat, and the Royal Humane Society of Great Britain sent them seven inflatable life-preservers. (Today, 1948, there is a lifeboat preserved in a shed at East Cove. It is of the double-ended, self-bailing type. Nobody seems to know when it was built or even when the lifesaving service ~~was first established~~ officially came to an end. Probably it was about the time of the First World War, say 1914, when most of the fishermen had acquired motor-boats.)

After the passing of Captain Richard Hichens the keeping of the lighthouse on Seal Island became a Crowell family affair. Edmund Crowell passed the job on to his son, who passed it on to his son John Crowell. (John Crowell was the father of Mrs. Winnie Hamilton, who now lives on the island. She married Eldredge Hamilton, assistant to her father at the Seal Island light.)

John Crowell was a remarkable man. To begin with he owned the whole island except for the government sites of the lighthouse and fog-horn stations. It was he who laid down the system of rentals for seasonal fishermen which is still in effect. Today, 1948, a man operating a motorboat from Seal Island in the lobster fishery pays \$35 per year for the privilege. (In some cases this includes the rental of a house or shack.) A man

operating a sail or rowboat pays \$15 per year. ~~xxxxxemployaxx~~ A fisherman in either class who employs another or other men in the lobster fishery from the island pays \$10 per year per head for them. The rates are extremely reasonable in view of the profits made today by the fishermen. Jerry Nickerson told me that these rates were unchanged since 1916, when he left the island. The fishermen pay their rentals to Mrs. Winnie Hamilton. It is her sole source of income, and with the dwindling of the fishing population of Seal Island in the lobster season she gets barely \$700 a year nowadays. The privilege thus paid-for permits a fisherman to erect a house or hut on the island for his gang or family ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ if no other is available. Winnie owns two or three. The rest are owned by the fishermen-lessees.

John Crowell was literally king of Seal Island. He took a fierce pride in his possession, frowned on the bird-slaying, egg-stealing habits of the fishermen, and made things very hot for those who disobeyed his laws. They admired him and feared him -- and fear is an emotion somewhat strange to the Cape Islander. He cleared land and went in for farming near Green Head and at the head of the Lobster Pond, growing excellent cabbages and turnips and potatoes. He kept cattle and large numbers of sheep. The sheep were (and still are) left to forage all over the island, all the year round. They find shelter in the dense spruce thickets in winter, and subsist on kelp until the snow and ice are gone and the grass springs up once more. Seal Island mutton, and Seal Island wool became highly esteemed on the villages of the neighbouring mainland. He turned the sandy flat between Lobster Pond and Cranberry Pond into fairly good grass land, and mowed it every summer to feed his cows through the winter. All in all he was a most energetic and intelligent man, a worthy descendent of Edmund Crowell and inheritor of the Hichens tradition.

It is stated in "History of Barrington Township" (and repeated by MacMechan, Dennis and others) that there was no loss of life in the 95 wrecks which occurred between the time Hichens and Crowell first settled on the island and the year 1918. This is an error. There were many deaths from shipwreck on the island in that time. I think the historian ~~meant~~ meant that there were no lives lost from starvation or exposure after surviving shipwreck. Winnie Hamilton told me that there were twenty unmarked (and now lost) graves beside Ship Pond at the south tip of the island, all from a single wreck which came ashore there after the Hichens and Crowells settled on the island. The only marked graves on the island today are of four women whose bodies were washed up from wrecks. Mrs. Hamilton has maintained wooden headboards bearing epitaphs on their graves. One bears the date 1898, the others all came from a single wreck (the Triumph) in 1861.

Strangely enough Mrs Hamilton has not provided a lettered headboard for the grave of her own maternal grandfather Richard Thomas, which lies in a patch of scrub woods south of West Cove a few hundred yards from the "Bears' House" and immediately ~~opposite~~ opposite the tide-rip known as Scratch All. It is marked with a chunk of flat field-stone at head and foot. Beside it is another grave not marked with stones at all. This is the grave of a Boston man named Hill who, according to Mrs. Hamilton, came to seek buried treasure on Outer Bald Tusket Island about the year 1875. He had a map given to him by a dying sailor. He found no treasure, and being destitute himself Hill eventually cast himself upon the hospitality of Richard Thomas, then living at West Cove, Seal Island. He was an elderly man, and during the winter he died and was buried in the edge of the woods. Mr. Thomas died not long afterwards and was buried at the same spot.

Of all the dead buried on Seal Island, these four women and two men have the only known graves. Many of the early burials were made in shallow graves along the bank above the shore, which has since washed away. From time to time skulls and bones have been found on the beach, presumably from such graves. Old John Crowell used to pick them up and keep them on a shelf in the lower story of the lighthouse.

Captain Richard Hichens kept a record of the wrecks on Seal Island and its neighbouring reefs and ledges during his lifetime. This record has been lost, but the names and dates of some are in the record of Yarmouth shipping compiled by Lawson. Thus the brig William Henry was lost "on the Seals" Nov. 18, 1831 (ten days before the first lighthouse was lit); the fishing schooner Friendship struck on the South Breaker on the night of June 26, 1832 and sank at once; the barque Kent struck on the ledges of north-east point in a thick snowstorm on Dec. 26, ~~1835~~ 1835; the American brig Mexico, in ballast, was wrecked near Seal Island May 13, 1836. Other ships lost in more recent times were

the Morning Light, White Cloud, Virgin Mary, Triumph, Pride of the Port, the American fishing schooner Oliver Wendell Holmes, the steamer Assaye which foundered on Blonde Rock, the schooner Henry Burnham, wrecked on the west side of the island, and the Canadian government steamer Aberdeen, engaged in lighthouse supply work, which struck the wreck of the Snipe on the reef called Limb's Limb and piled up on the reef itself <sup>about 1743</sup> the steamer Orinoco, which <sup>1837</sup> struck on the Scratch All shoal, the Bessie Wells, which struck on Gravelly Beach, the three-masted schooner Burpee L. Tucker, which struck between Scratch All and West Cove in January 1927. During the 1914-1918 war a German submarine sank three fishing schooners whose crews rowed to shore on Seal Island. The Blonde Rock commemorates the British frigate of that name, and the Loch Skey Shoal commemorates a big square-rigger which foundered upon it many years ago. Amongst the unknown wrecks was a burning hulk laden with coal which fetched up on Ship Pond Point in the early part of the 19th century. The first steamer wrecked on "the Seals" was the Columbia, which struck on Black Ledge about the year 1843.

*Loch Skey*

Old John Crowell was proud of his collection of souvenirs -- a chair, a table, various pieces of chinaware and earthenware and cutlery, a flag, and so on, each from a different ship. One of the fishermen's houses at West Cove, a rough unpainted shingled building, has a floor of teak from one of the old wrecks, and nearly all the houses and sheds have some wreck timber in their composition. The fine Lunenburg schooner George M. Cook was wrecked on the west side in 1924. In the following winter a huge sea washed the hulk up over the beach on to the greensward near Division Head, where the fishermen set fire to it in order to get the bolts. The charred timbers are still there, with grass growing all about them. Probably the most curious shipwreck was that of the barquentine Kingdom, which went aground on neighbouring Mud Island about the year 1914. Her passengers and crew were a queer American religious sect who called themselves "The Holy Ghost and Us Society". They believed the earth to be ~~fallen~~ <sup>fallen</sup> in sin and decided to spend their lives ~~in it~~. The Kingdom got off Mud Island but subsequently was wrecked on the coast of Africa. One of the luckiest was the Norwegian steamer Sanstad, which just missed the Loch ~~Skey~~ <sup>Skey</sup> Shoal and grounded on the west side of the island in the 1920's. The sea remained calm, and the crew lowered their boats and set out two kedge anchors to seaward. When the tide flowed the skipper heaved with his winches on the kedge warps and went full speed astern, got his ship off, cut away the anchors and steamed off to Halifax, where it was found that twenty-seven plates had to be replaced.

The most suspicious wrecks were those of the Burpee L. Tucker in 1927, and the small steamer Peryneas, which struck on neighbouring Noddy Island <sup>1935</sup> in about ten years ~~later~~. Both were owned by Wallace Ogilvie, an ingenious, restless and completely unscrupulous shipmaster from Farrisborough, whose exploits in the rum-running trade and in mysterious and shady ship deals and ship sinkings remain part of the folk-lore of the coast. The Burpee L. Tucker, a tern schooner, was run ashore <sup>on a beach</sup> in January 1927 near Scratch All. It was done so neatly that the crew were able to drop from the jib-boom end to shore. The fishermen from West Cove sheltered the crew and salvaged the sails and other material from the wreck, while Ogilvie struck up an acquaintance with the daughter of the light-keeper and within an hour seduced her. Eventually he went off to the mainland in one of the fishermen's boats, swindled the fishermen out of their salvage money, and left the girl to bear a child as a souvenir of his visit. (The boy grew up at Clerk's Harbour, <sup>in the summer of 1938</sup> ~~emigrated in the Canadian Army at the age of 16,~~ and was killed in battle in the closing stages of the Second World War. He bore the name of Ogilvie.)

*in 1930*

With the insurance money from this wreck Ogilvie went into other enterprises. One day in Cristobal, at the Atlantic end of the Panama Canal, where he was engaged in some rum-running enterprise, he noticed a German steamer of about 1200 tons lying idle. She had very slender lines, with her machinery, bridge and deck structures aft, like a Great Lake boat. In fact her hull originally had been part of a German destroyer, left unfinished on the stocks in Bremerhaven when the old war ended in ~~1918~~ <sup>1918</sup>, and taken over and completed as a small tramp freighter in the early 1920's. The German shipping company had gone bankrupt just as the Peryneas entered the first lock of the Panama Canal, which automatically made her liable for the entire canal dues, and now the Canal authorities ~~have~~ had seized her for the payment of the dues. Ogilvie scented his opportunity and paid the dues, raised a scratch crew, and brought the Peryneas north <sup>to</sup> ~~to~~ Liverpool, N.S. There he and his chief engineer tinkered with her engines, installing new boiler, ~~etc.~~ <sup>etc.</sup>

*dry*



during a whole winter; and in the spring of 1931 he chartered her in the pulpwood trade, carrying wood from Cape Breton to the Mersey Paper Company's mill at Liverpool. His reputation with the marine insurance companies was such that he had to form a dummy company to "own" the ship, and to hire a qualified (but tractable) shipmaster as her ostensible captain; but he sailed with her and was the master in every real respect.

For ~~three or four~~ years Ogilvie was content with honest freighting, spiced with petty swindles in the way of ship supplies and repairs. Then one day in ~~1927~~ '35 <sup>or '36</sup> coming down the Bay of Fundy and ~~occasionally~~ about to round the cape towards Liverpool, the Peryneas suddenly appeared off the west side of Seal Island heading north. The weather was obscure, with ~~visibility of fog~~ <sup>visibility of fog</sup>, and the fishermen on the island saw her head straight for Noddy Island, turn, describe a wide circle, and then go straight in upon it. *Ogilvie* had the effrontery to land his crew on Seal Island and take refuge with the very men he had swindled in 1927. He had a lively offhand manner and "got away with it". However the fishermen plied Ogilvie's navigator with rum and drew from him the interesting admission that the ship had been deliberately cast away, that on the first "run in" he had been unsure of the exact spot to beach her, but that on the second he went straight on to the Noddy shore. (The fishermen still relate all this with gusto.)

Ogilvie collected his insurance and then went after bigger game. In conjunction with Senator Duff of Lunenburg he managed to purchase one of the Canadian Government Marine Merchant steamers at a price which, according to the parliamentary investigation, was far below its actual value on the market, and sold it at a fat profit in England within three weeks. He then acquired another, which he loaded with scrap iron and sailed to Italy, where he sold ship and cargo at a time when Mussolini was threatening war and in fact invading Abyssinia. He then acquired a third, loaded it with scrap, sailed it to Japan and sold it in Kobe -- at a time when the Japs were pressing their invasion of China and openly planning to seize the whole of the Far East. The fourth he hung on to, for the Second World War was about to break. This ship, he and his associates operated through a dummy company in the early years of the war. Eventually she was torpedoed and the "company" collected the war insurance. Ogilvie openly boasted in Liverpool in 1940 that he "could sell out now for a clear profit of \$250,000". Soon after this he removed with his fortune to Nassau in the Bahamas, where he purchased an estate called "Trade Winds", purchased a schooner yacht, hired a negro crew, and ~~with one~~ summer cruised north to Nova Scotia to escape the summer heat of the West Indies.

The nomenclature of Seal Island is interesting and revealing. The north tip is known as Race Point, for here the ebb and flow of the Fundy Tide creates a fierce rip on Hospital Shoal. Passing down along the east shore one ~~sees~~ <sup>walks on the top of</sup> a green bank known as High Bank. Then you enter a patchy growth of scrub spruce and with small clearings where ~~the~~ <sup>in</sup> May the herring gulls are busy nesting, mostly on the ground but some in the stunted trees. ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ Once this was a wide clearing created by a fire, and it is still known to the fishermen as "the Burnt". Then you come to a series of small ponds between the beach and the trees, the chief of which is Cranberry Pond. Old John Crowell used to cultivate the cranberries here and picked a considerable crop each year; but now the beach has moved in, the tree growth has crept forward, and only a small patch of cranberry vines survives. You now come to East Cove, a wide gap in the general line of the island's eastern shore, completely exposed to easterly winds. There was an easterly gale blowing on the second day of my visit, and the surf in East Cove was magnificent. Now you come to the neck of the hour-glass, a strip of low sand dunes ("the Sand Hills") lying behind the steep shingle beach of East Cove, and sloping down to a grassy flat by the shore of Lobster Pond.

Once John Crowell grew fat turnips in ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> half-sand, half-humus at the north-east end of Lobster Pond, and mowed the grass for hay. We found his old horse-drawn mowing machine partly buried in the sand. Keeping on along the east beach you pass Scrag Pond (now a mere puddle) and Brig Pond with its adjacent Brig Rock. You now approach the cluster of houses, sheds and a church which form the eastern hamlet, or in island parlance "the home of the South-siders". In the scrub woods just to the west you see the roof of Mrs. Winnie Hamilton's lone house peering from the trees. We called on one or two of the South-siders, including a pleasant old character named Nathaniel ("Then") Penny and

his wife. These houses, like those of the "North side", are simple, small structures of two stories with peaked roofs, all shingled, unpainted and weatherbeaten; each with its adjacent storehouse, its piles of lobster traps and brightly painted buoys. Every lobster fisherman has his distinctive method of buoy-painting; some are red, some yellow, most are white; and upon this background are painted contrasting black or white rings, patches, crosses, round spots and so on. A Seal Islander can walk along the beach pointing out the buoys cast up by a storm and name the owner without fail if he is a Cape Island man; the others he will point out as belonging to Woods Harbour, Cockerwit or Pubnico. Altogether there are hundreds of distinctive marks, all registered in a mental filing cabinet by each fisherman in the Cape area.

Here, too, are the pole boat-slips, greased with fish gurry and rotten kelp, where the boats are hauled up before a storm. At the head of each slip is a small ~~xxxxxx~~ capstan operated by a gasoline engine, and housed in a small shed. Hauling up the boats is a cooperative affair. All the fishermen gather together at the slip. Each boat owner in turn goes off to his boat in a dory, starts his engine and runs the boat straight into the slip at a speed which runs the bow right up on it. The fishermen gather on both sides, heaving to keep the boat on an even keel while the capstan drags it up high and dry. The boat is then chocked upright with empty lobster crates.

The men run to two types -- the short and stocky and the tall and lean. ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ But there are many between these types, short, slim wiry men. All are strong and active as cats, even the old, and their hands are large and powerful, bitten with the scars of hooks or of the frequent salt-water boils which afflict them. The chafing of oilskin (or the more usual rubber waterproof) jackets at the wrists produces small boils known as "Pinjinnets" -- probably a corruption of an Acadian word. To avoid these, some wear woolen wristlets or merely a wool thread bound about the ~~wix~~ wrist for a dozen turns or so; others wear a thin brass chain on each wrist, which they say prevents the boils.

Most of them have brown or black hair and grey or blue eyes. Their faces are rugged and weatherbeaten, even the young men have sun-wrinkles at the eye corners. They wear thick woolen underwear and frieze breeches or trousers, heavy sweaters or windbreakers, caps with long peaks, and their perpetual footwear is the long rubber boot, reaching to the thigh but ordinarily folded down below the knee.

Their women are short, with slim active figures when young but inclined to fat in middle age. They marry very young (at 17 or 18 frequently) and are inclined to be pallid, for Cape Island retains the old New England tradition of its forbears -- that woman's place is in the home. Like their men, the women work very hard; but unlike the men they have no easy summer, for the work of the household goes on just the same, while the lobstermen have nothing to do during the closed season (May 31 to Nov. 30) except to make new lobster pots and buoys, repair their boats and overhaul the engines, etc. The lobstermen are a distinct caste who seldom engage in ordinary fishing. With the present high prices for lobsters and an insatiable market in the United States they average \$2500 a year clear of expense. Some make as much as \$5,000. Just now all are grumbling about income tax, for they are being compelled to file tax papers for the first time in their lives. They ~~xxxxxx~~ maintain plain homes on Cape Sable Island, with few ~~xxxx~~ bathrooms, but all have a good radio (on which they depend for weather reports) and many have installed refrigerators and electric washing machines during the past five years of prosperity. On the whole they are frugal, although some have fine cars, and nearly all are fond of strong drink.

Their speech is rugged; even ~~the~~ young women swear frequently but without passion or even thought -- it is simply a part of the language. There are strong traces of the Yankee twang of their forefathers. The frequent "Look, yeou" for instance. Seal Island is pronounced ~~xxxxxxxx~~ "S'l-Oyland" with the emphasis on the "oy". Lobster is pronounced "lawpster". They talk rapidly ~~when speaking~~, but are given to long silences especially in the presence of strangers. Their manner and expression are lively, keen, humorous, shrewd. Over all there is an air of rugged independence. I think I never met men so completely alive in thought and deed, for with them to think is to act; and everything they do is done with vigour and skill. They maintain three churches on Cape Sable Island -- most of them profess the Baptist faith -- and the church at Clark's Harbour is a sturdy and unique structure built of cement and beach stones, with all

plenty of men  
→

its windows -- even in the basement story -- of stained glass, presented by various families in honour of fathers, mothers and so on. ~~XXXXXXXX~~ It cost \$70,000 when it was erected shortly after the First German War. But having built churches they are not so purposeful about maintaining a minister. The present lone Baptist parson on Cape Sable Island, young Lawrence Atkinson, is there in a sort of missionary capacity. He preaches in three churches, performs all the marriages, baptisms and funerals, and is a very busy man.

I would not call the Cape Islanders religious by any means. It seemed to me that for them religion was something to belong to, a thing to profess, as one might join and profess ~~the~~ Freemasonry. Mr. Atkinson told me that moral conditions at Stony Point and other sections on the east side of Cape Sable Island ~~xxx~~ were very low. He confessed, "I preach to them in church, and I visit them and admonish them delicately in their homes; and all the time they look at me with a kind of hard blank stare, as if I were talking a foreign language." My own impression was that most of the Cape Islanders are too vigorous and too independent for true piety, which they would consider effeminate. One pretty little girl, aged about nine, recited for me some doggerel she had been taught by her parents. One ran:

"When I was a little girl jes' so high,  
Mummy took a stick and made me cry.  
Now I'm a big girl and Mummy can't do it,  
Daddy takes a big stick and goes right to it."

The other ran:

"I went down ~~the~~ town to get a bottle of rum,  
I knocked on a door and nobody come.  
I peeped in the window, broke out the glass,  
And along come a nigger boy sliding on his tail!"

Her mother, in high glee, explained to me that the last word had been modified a bit.

But let us get back to our tour around Seal Island. We ~~started~~ at East Cove, visiting the South-siders. We walked up a narrow path ~~xxxxxxxx~~ lined and overhung with dense cat-spruce trees and emerged in a small bit of greensward before the lonely house of Mrs. Winnie Hamilton, the widow who owns the island. The house is of two stories and well kept and painted. In the small lawn are a number of well kept flower beds, each enclosed in an old iron wagon-tire, very wide -- relics of old John Crowell's wagons, which had broad tires to keep the wheels from sinking too deeply in the journey across the sand flats. The drum of an old ship's capstan, upside-down and mounted on a post, makes an good bird-bath. We knock on the door and walk right in, in the island fashion. Winnie knew we were coming and is dressed in her best, a warm and sensible grey gown, tan stockings, black shoes. She is 59 but there is not a grey hair in her dark brown hair, which is brushed sleek and shining, drawn loosely in a knot at the back of her head. She is of middle height, with a good figure, without an ounce of fat, with strong and well shaped hands and ankles. Her hands are calloused, for she cuts her own firewood, in fact does all her own work. She keeps very much to herself -- one fisherman told me he had not "seen her to speak to" in two years except when he went up to the house to pay his <sup>dividend</sup> rent. On all but the stormiest days she makes a walk right around the island -- a distance of about six or seven miles.

She has a clear skin and good colour, her face is somewhat lined but no one would take her for more than 49. Her eyes are a clear dark grey and rather shy, but she has a frank and gentle manner and talks to my fishermen companions in the pleasant direct manner of a sister. You get the impression of a gentlewoman talking to retainers who respect her and at the same time are on terms of complete friendship with her. The effect is charming. I liked her and felt sorry for her.

She was born in 1889, a daughter of John Crowell the lightkeeper and a direct descendant of Edmund Crowell who came to Seal Island with Richard Hichens. She is also related to Hichens' wife, who was Mary Crowell. She married her father's assistant,

Elsworth Hamilton, who took over the chief lightkeeper's job when Crowell retired. Both her husband and her son died years ago of tuberculosis. She remains on the island where she has spent her life, dependent on the \$700 a year or so she gets from the lobster-fishing rentals. She is in love with the place, wants to stay and care for the sea-birds and sheep as her father did, but knows she is growing old and must "go ashore" soon. She confessed she would like to sell the island to someone who would take an interest in it and "take care of the birds and the other things we have fought for all these years." (She asked me privately if I thought Jerry Nickerson would buy it. I did not know. He is fond of the place -- it was here that he got his start in life. I mentioned her inquiry to him but he was noncommittal.)

In answer to my questions she told me many things about the island, but confessed that her memory was getting vague. (Jerry thought her mind was "a bit touched".) She showed us a number of quite good oil paintings, mostly seascapes, done by an American artist, a Miss Drew, who came to Seal Island about 1910 and lived there as a recluse for several years. Her aloofness offended the fishermen, and when 1914 came they were convinced that she was a German spy. They reported to the authorities that she showed mysterious lights at night, and so on, and the resultant hullabaloo forced her to leave the island. She never came back.

Winnie also showed us with pride her collection of stuffed birds. Her father skinned and stuffed most of them, but she and her older sister (now living in Halifax) did some. The work was beautifully done and after all the years the feathers still retain their colour and sheen -- an unusual quality in bird taxidermy. There were twenty or twenty-five different birds, ranging from wood duck to a small and lovely dove. She also showed us the 18th century bottles and the French clay pipes I have mentioned elsewhere.

We were going on to ~~skip~~ the lighthouse at the south end and she asked if she might come along. I was delighted, of course. She pulled on a pair of worn rubber boots and strode off with me vigorously. Jerry and Dewey Nickerson strolled on towards the lighthouse along the road, but she took me down to see the church first. It was built about the year 1914, when the seasonal population of fishermen and their families was about 200. For preaching they were dependent on occasional parsons who made the voyage out from Clark's Harbour in a fishing boat and stayed several days -- sometimes longer, for it is impossible to get off Seal Island in rough weather. The great depression of the 1920's, when many Cape Islanders migrated to the United States, and the subsequent depression of the 1930's, reduced the seasonal population to its present size -- about 43, including ~~about~~ 12 women and 6 children. Nobody lives on the island permanently except the radio operator, the lighthouse keeper and his family, and Winnie. The result is that the church has not been used in many years, although it is in good repair, and the interior is well kept. For many years some of the women held a Sunday school in the church, and the church remains as it was on the last day of that epoch, with the hymn numbers still in the ~~wood~~ racks.

Outside the church Winnie took me to a lone grave marked by a neat wooden cross, with an epitaph carved with a knife. She said, "This is the grave of a young woman whose body was washed up from a wreck in 1868. Some of the crew got ashore, and one of them ~~xxxxxxx~~ made the cross and carved the words. Somehow the cross became mislaid in the lighthouse after they left. Father could never find it, and the grave went unmarked for many years. I found it afterwards and put it ~~there~~." 1868

She then took me over to the site of the original Richard Hichens house, still marked by the foundation stones, a small hut, no more, about 12' by 12'. From it I could look across the neck of the island and see the houses at "the North home", precisely as old Hichens must have looked many times to see the ~~light~~ chimney smoke in Edmund Crowell's house there. The term "North home" for the houses on the northern side of West Cove apparently originated with Edmund Crowell, who built his first hut there, and subsequently removed and built ~~his~~ house with ~~his~~ stone chimney (the "Bears' House") on the south side of that cove.

We strolled on through the woods towards the lighthouse, along a road made by Winnie's father, John Crowell. She explained, "In those days the fog-horn was operated by steam, and Father used the ashes to make a good road to the landing place at East Cove. Now it's operated by gasoline and the old steam station is abandoned, so there

are no ashes for roadmaking and the road's become this grassy track." About half way through the woods Winnie pointed out a spot, now overgrown with scrub spruce, on the west side of the road. "We had a little red schoolhouse there. Father built it and paid a teacher to come off from the mainland in the summer time. It's all gone now." And farther back towards East Cove was a boulder, "Daisy's Rock" -- so called because one of the teachers, named Daisy, used to sit on the rock for hours at a time with one of the fishermen who was courting her -- and whom she eventually married.

The lighthouse loomed before us and we went inside. On the first floor John Crowell used to store his skulls and other relics. They are gone now; but the present keeper, a Prince Edward Islander named Gallant, remembered seeing a human thigh-bone in one of the sheds. He went and got it and presented it to Winnie. It was the thighbone of a man of about my own height (Dewey measured it against my leg), polished by the sands where Crowell found it. On the second floor of the lighthouse Crowell used to store the wool he clipped from his sheep. Pinned to a post were some old records in pencil. One dated as late as 1934 showed over a ton of wool stored and later sold in Barrington, where there was a carding mill. From the lantern casing with its stout glass panes we could easily see the sea breaking on Blonée Rock, 3 miles to the S.S.E. Jerry pointed out the spruce woods below towards the west; in his young days the best and tallest trees on the island. Now they have been smitten with a disease (probably the spruce bark beetle) and are all dying from the top down.

We went down and walked over to the lightkeeper's house, where I took a snapshot of the iron plate which formerly supported the Hichens' ~~seal-oil~~ seal-oil lamp in 1831. The old ruin of the steam fog-horn remains, the building tottering, the boiler rusting. The present fog-horn lies close against the south tip of the island, a long grey building. This also contains the radio beacon, and apparatus for communication with Yarmouth. The fog-horn is operated by horizontal Fairbanks gasoline engines. The first radio beacon, installed about 1924, operated from a small dynamo belted to one of the foghorn engines, so that it was necessary to start the foghorn to operate the beacon. Now the beacon apparatus is self-contained, with duplicate self-starting gasoline engines and transmitting apparatus. The beacon transmits the letter H on a fixed ~~hex~~ radio beam, repeating the letter three times and then an interval of silence. The apparatus for communication with Yarmouth is small and compact. The call letters of the station are VGY. The present operator is a slim dark young man named Burns, from the Annapolis Valley. He was formerly a ship operator, has been on the island only a month or so, and still wears his ship uniform.

Dewey pointed out a wall of heavy beach stones flanking the foghorn-radio building, also a deep hole intended for a house cellar, with a ~~xxxx~~ drain dug and filled with large loose stone extending down to the sea. "All radio operators are a bit crazy. They get that way on these stations. The last one was a fella named Young. Kept to himself. Used to spend his spare time lugging rocks around -- lined the road with 'em, built that wall, dug the cellar -- thought the government was going to build him a house. They didn't. Operator boards with the lighthouse keeper."

With Winnie we walked down past Young's wall to a boggy path running along the shore between the woods and the beach. White violets blooming. The green swords of iris sprouting everywhere. Much raffle from old wrecks flung into the very edge of the woods, some of it mouldering to dust. Noticed one old wooden-barrelled windlass. From the island shore a bar of ~~xixixixix~~ shingle extends perhaps 200 yards into the sea, with a huge boulder at the end. This is "The Bar" and the rock is "Mother Owen's Rock". No one knew ~~why~~ why. Many ships have struck here, and in a small clearing we found three graves. Winnie has maintained the ~~was~~ small wooden headboards, which are painted white, with the epitaph in small black letters, "put on," she says, "with a match-stick and paint." They are enclosed in a rude circular fence of brushwood and old lobster traps to keep out the sheep, which otherwise would devour the daffodils (called "lilies" on Seal Island) which Winnie has planted on each grave.

The daffodils are in bloom and are lovely. I took snapshots of the graves, and persuaded Winnie to sit down beside them so that I could have a picture of the gentle caretaker. All three headboards have the same inscription:-

~~WOMAN~~ WOMAN  
 NAME UNKNOWN  
 WASHED ASHORE FROM  
 BRIG TRIUMPH  
 WRECKED ON BLOND  
 MAY 8, 1861  
 ALL LOST

Beneath each of these pathetic epitaphs are lines from "Crossing the Bar" -- under the first,

"Sunset and evening star,  
 And one clear call for me"

Under the second:

"And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
 When I put out to sea."

Under the third:-

"Twilight and evening bell  
 And after that the dark,  
 And may there be no shadow of farewell  
 When I embark."

When Winnie, under protest, sat down beside the graves to be photographed, she wore a forced and uneasy grin. I knew she was embarrassed by the little group we had picked up somehow along the way -- Dewey, Jerry, Gallant, and two young wives of fishermen. So I said, "Please forget we're here. Just look as you would if you had come here alone, as you so often do." At once the grin vanished from her face. She sat easily, looking off seaward gravely. The sunshine of the day was being invaded by a cold mist, just blowing in from the sea in almost invisible ~~whisks~~ wisps, so that eventually her glasses were blurred as if with tears.

Winnie now left us, and we continued our journey around the island, turning its south tip, called Ship Pond Point (pronounced Shippon Point by the fishermen). It is a curious formation. The steep shingle forms a point like a blunt arrowhead. Behind it lies the small pond, ~~shaping~~ the shape of the point exactly. And behind the pond, a point of scrub spruce extends into the water in exactly the same way. Here again the edge of the woods is littered with old wreckage, great timbers with trenails protruding, some of them half sunk in the boggy earth and sprouting grass.

Now we begin to pass up the west shore of the island. First comes Green Head, a grassy clearing extending in a rough table from the edge of the woods. Here we found amongst other raffle a n old dead-eye of lignum-vitae, the iron rusted and crumbled, the wood still fairly sound. As we follow the sheep paths along the bank above the beach we draw opposite the shoal known as Scratch All, so called from the tide rip here, which in the old days of rowboats, as Dewey says, "made all hands scratch with the oars to get past to the cove". Now we draw abreast of the first of the barriers which guard the Western Cove and have wrecked so many ships. First is Loch ~~Shoal~~ Shoal (pronounced "Locks-alloy" by the fishermen) which breaks continuously. North of that rises the great rock standing well above the water even at high tide, known as The Devil's Limb. And north of the Devil's Limb is a long reef just awash, known as The Limb's Limb.

We are now back at the little settlement of West Cove. Jerry points off to seaward. "There's where I made my first dollar -- hauling lobster pots." We go down to the cove, splashing through muddy pools -- the fishermen have thrown down a few wreck planks here and there, but for the most part they splash through the ~~mud~~ puddles, and soil the floors of their houses with a mixture of mud, rotten kelp and mashed and rotten herring every time they come and go.

Loch  
Shoal

We pass over the boat stagings and haul-up, and cross the cobblestone beach which now blocks the old entrance to Lobster Pond. On the north side there is a smaller but similar establishment. We peer for a moment through the gaping windows of "the French house", cross a boat haul-up, and enter a house of men. This is a group of Cape Island men, 8 or 10 in all. They have no woman with them and the cooking is done by a soft-voiced dark young Acadian youth from Pubnico. Amongst these rugged men he has a girlish look. We talk for a while. All the talk is of fish. It is the favourite and unvarying topic here and at Cape Island. There are one or two small double-ended rowboats here, hauled up, one carvel-built, one clinker-built, but both shaped alike, rather like a cross between a dory and a skiff. Jerry says they are a type favoured at Wood's Harbour.

We pass on along the shore. The bank has eroded so badly along the ~~east~~<sup>west</sup> shore of the ~~north~~ island that the old sheep walk has collapsed into the sea in many places, and we are obliged to stoop and crawl through tunnels in the thick spruce growth like the sheep themselves. Most of Winnie's sheep are along this part of the island. She hates to have them killed for mutton, and the high cost of labour in these days when the lobstermen are making such good money has prevented her from having the sheep rounded up and sheared. The old shearing-pens which we encounter here and there about the island are falling down. The fishermen would be willing to help her but it is impossible to round up the sheep without a well-trained dog. Old John Crowell's sheep-dogs died long ago and Winnie has been unable to replace them.

And so we pass sheep dragging great pelts of old wool, dragged with mud and their own ordure. Some of them look as if an old rotten quilt had been flung across their backs, with the stuffing coming out of it everywhere, and the lower fringes dragging on the ground. They are timid and nimble and rush into the woods or take to the beach as we come along. It is amazing to watch them running at full gallop over the beach stones, never missing their footing. This part of the shore is known as Gravelly Beach, although there is precious little gravel that I can see, but rather a mass of smooth-worn stones about the size of a football. We pass the latest wreck, a very small thing, a vessel with a built-in metal water tank, used as a water-tender to the shipping in Halifax harbour during the late war, and lost here while in tow to an American port afterwards. The hull has broken in two, and the sea has dragged out the water tank and flung it ~~XXXX~~ higher up.

Now we come to Division Head, a low table of green pasture, studded with rocks, about 30 feet above the sea. This is where the great ebb tide strikes the island and divides, one stream flowing past the north tip of ~~the island~~ (Race Point) and the other sweeping along the west shore towards Ship Pond Point. Just off-shore, and extending well out, is the shoal and tide-rip known as The Hospital, where the northerly stream of the ebb tide begins its rush around Race Point. Thus we are back to our starting place, completing the circuit of the island.

At West Cove we stay three days with Dewey Nickerson and his lobster-fishing crew in "the old Hardy house". The crew includes Dewey's two sons and five other men. The young wife of son Orville does the cooking, assisted by a plump smiling girl of 17 from The Hawk. Orville's two little girls are part of the establishment also. Orville and his ~~family~~ sleep in a large room on the ground floor; the other ground-floor bedroom is occupied by the hired ~~guy~~ and the two youngsters. Dewey and the other men sleep in bunks in two rooms upstairs. So do we. The larger room contains bunks for eight, and the smaller room has bunks for three. I sleep in the smaller one with a big, quiet, fresh-faced, heavy-lidded man of 60, named Robbie Blades. Jerry sleeps in the big room, occupying the same bunk he used when he was on the island 32 years ago. The bunks are equipped with old, rusty, sagging springs and thin straw mattresses but they are comfortable and we sleep well.

Dewey is a character himself, a well-built muscular man of 50 (who looks 40) very tanned and with deep eye-wrinkles, good teeth, active as a cat, voluble in speech, brisk and intelligent. There is no trace of grey in his brown hair and his grey eyes are keen. He is by mutual consent the boss of West Cove and is a capable manager.

His son Orville is a lean, muscular six-footer with a brown face and a strong Roman nose, silent, unsmiling, reputedly the best player on the Clark's Harbour baseball team and a very good fisherman like his father.

Dewey's brother-in-law is one of the crew, another lean six-footer, silent, smiling, with light grey eyes and tousled curly hair, aged about 40.

All the men, young and old, are quick and alert, pleasant, but except for Dewey not given much to speech. In the evening we sit about the ~~Yong~~ kitchen, which is also the dining room and lounge, a long chamber extending the full length of the house front. There is a single Coleman lamp on the table and a warm fire in the stove. The men sit and smoke, a few play forty-five, poker or cribbage. Mostly we sit and spin yarns.

Some of the boys went over to Mud Island on Sunday afternoon (the day of our arrival) "to git a mess o' ducks for Jerry". They came back with half a dozen eider-ducks, which they call "sea ducks". They say the "sea ducks" are fat at this time of year, and it appears that these ducks are a favourite Cape Island dish. But then the Cape Islanders have peculiar tastes; they sometimes eat loons, for instance, and even sea gulls. They said the people at The Hawk especially are fond of loons. The women pluck the ducks, and one of the young fishermen heats a stout iron poker red-hot in the stove and sings the birds quickly. Then Dewey gets down on the floor with a big knife and guts the birds and cuts them up. Some are to be stewed, some baked. He spins yarns as he works on his knees, pausing now and again to wave his big hands (blood-stained to the wrists) to emphasize a point.

All evening the radio peals forth words and music from American stations. They get excellent reception here from all sides, having no land mass to shut off the radio waves, but the best reception comes naturally from Boston and Portland. They listen to these stations constantly for weather reports and news. Consequently their viewpoint on world affairs is largely American. They listen to the radio broadcasts of the night baseball games in the U.S., know the names and batting averages of all the players, and follow the hits, runs and errors with loud exclamations. They love their homes on Cape Island and seldom leave it for the mainland, except for a week or two in the autumn, when they go to Clyde River for the deer hunting. "Gunning" seems their chief diversion. They shoot ducks and sea birds all year round with a sublime indifference to the game laws.

During the evening various other fishermen drop in for a yarn. One is a rugged, hoarse-voiced, long-faced man of 30 with reddish-brown hair, Jerry ~~XXX~~ Simmons, who served overseas ~~31~~ years with the West Nova Scotia Regiment in the late war. The name proudly painted on his boat's bow is "West Nova". Another visitor is short, wiry, dark, greying Tom Nickerson, who tells me he is retiring this year from the Seal Island fishery and going to live on Sherose Island. He is quite well read, an unusual quality in the fishermen, most of whom seem to have left school at an early age. (Although they visit their homes in Clark's Harbour every week-end I noticed that not one brought off a book or magazine to while away the evening hours of the week on Seal Island.) Tom says he has spent 46 consecutive seasons in the lobster fishery on Seal Island. He has at his Sherose Island home two or three arrowheads which were found on Seal Island, and promised to send me one.

We had plenty of opportunity to talk and get acquainted, for on Tuesday a terrific easterly gale blew up with sheets of rain. All the boats had to be hauled up on the slip for safety, and the whole crew spent the day sitting about the kitchen yarning, snoozing in their bunks, or visiting back and forth. That evening Dewey and I visited an elderly couple in the next house, the woman quite tall, stoutly built, with dark hair and a vivacious manner, the man short and wiry, with thin grey hair, small deep-set grey eyes, a small Roman nose and a small tight mouth, aged about 60. The man has been a diligent and successful lobsterman for years, has cleared \$4,000 or \$5,000 a year for the past three or four years, and is reputed to be worth \$15,000 or \$20,000. The conversation passed from one thing to another, but soon this man launched into a bitter diatribe against the Canadian government, which has just begun to check up on the fishermen's bank accounts and to compel them to file income tax papers. His small eyes gleamed with hate and his tight mouth closed like a clamp at the end of each phrase. Avarice was written in every line of his face. It was a study. It was also unique, for although the Cape Islanders are notoriously worshipful of the dollar, his was the only face I saw in which avarice was so clearly written. And there he was, able to retire and spend his last years comfortably in his home at Cape Island, still struggling with



the tough trade of the lobsterman -- a man-killing trade -- to gain more dollars ~~for~~ <sup>with</sup> ~~his~~ ~~services~~. Much of his invective was directed against a prominent fish-merchant of Clark's Harbour who, he was sure, had "informed on the fishermen" to the government. I found this belief widely held amongst the men on Seal Island. It was typical of their uneducated viewpoint. They could not understand that the Income Tax Department has inspectors busy checking on bank accounts everywhere.

The men in the house take turns at "morning duty". The "morning duty" man takes the alarm clock to his bunk and sets it for 2.30 A.M. At the first ring he is up, pulling on his trousers. (All the men sleep in their shirts and underwear.) He goes down the narrow creaking stairs, lights a fire in the kitchen stove, heats the ~~xxx~~ tea, and then yells up the stairs, "All right! Come and get it!" The men slip out of their bunks at once, dress, pull on their rubber boots, and clump downstairs. Soon after 3 A.M. they are off to their boats to make the first haul at the traps. The currents vary with the stage of the tide, and some traps are set near the island and others far away. (The farthest is the "Goldfield", a shoal so-called because the man who discovered it got some wonderful hauls of lobsters there.) This means that the lobstermen must make two and often three trips a day to cover all their traps.

At about 9 A.M. all hands return for a second breakfast, this a substantial one of bacon and eggs and pie. At noon there is another heavy meal. At 5.30 another. Finally there is a "mug-up" -- tea and cake -- before going to bed. Always the long table is laden with food, and the men eat prodigiously. (Our ~~xxx~~ six "sea ducks" were demolished at a single sitting.) One memorable meal for me was a lobster supper. The lobsters were of the short non-marketable type known as "tinkers", very tender and delicious. Usually these are thrown back into the sea, not so much because the law orders that this be done as because the "tinkers" are difficult to market and because the fishermen know full well that a "tinker" will grow into a marketable lobster in another year or so.

The lobsters were served up in two styles, "wet" and "dry", in two huge enamelware bowls, so that each man could help himself. The "wet" lobsters consisted of the shelled meat boiled and served up in a gravy composed of butter, water and "tomalley". The "dry" consisted of shelled meat fried in butter. Both were delicious.

(I ate my share of ~~the~~ eider ducks at another meal. They were not so fishy as I expected, although the meat was dark, almost black, and ~~xx~~ unappetising in appearance. They were served up stewed or baked, with potatoes, parsnips, turnip and "doughboys". Probably there was a lot in what Jerry Nickerson said -- "Only the Cape Island people know how to cook a sea duck.")

Winnie Hamilton explained why so many castaways perished on the island shore in winter, even in comparatively moderate seas. After zero temperatures set in, in December, January and February, each tide and each rough sea deposits, on the seaward face of the bank (roughly 20 to 30 feet high all round the island) a coating of ice. The flying spray freezes at the top of this, sometimes into the very woods, and the whole process forms an "ice wall" all around the island, sloping down to the sea like the glacis of a fort. Many unfortunate seamen must have reached the island in their boats or on rafts, only to perish in the surf in a vain effort to climb this icy rampart. She ~~xxxxx~~ related that as a child she was forbidden to go ~~xxx~~ near the edge of the "ice wall" in winter lest she fall over; and she told how one fisherman, out gunning for ducks, slipped over the "wall" (fortunately at low tide) and had to walk half way around the island before he found a place where he could climb to dry land.

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