

Isle au Haut Historical Society Newsletter

Spring 2026

Volume 8



Full Moon over Head Harbor by Mary Fennell

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2026 edition of the Isle au Haut Historical Society Newsletter:

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This year we are dedicating a large portion of our newsletter to Isle au Haut's own Gooden Grant, who lived and worked in Head Harbor for most of his long life. During the mid-20th century, Gooden was one of the most famous fisherman on the coast of Maine.

The first story contains an interview of Gooden (in his own words), done by author/photographer Lynn Franklin in the early 1970s with several photographs from negatives salvaged from Gooden's attic in Head Harbor just before the house was sold.

The next article, by Herman Gross, is about Gooden's brother, Les Grant.

Our own Harold van Doren wrote the next lovely little story about Gooden and his wife Nettie, with one of Harold's original illustrations.

There is a short film titled "Stonington 1972," which contains the only known film footage of Gooden Grant. (Be sure to click the link to view the film). Following the film, is a story about the filmmakers, the making of the film in 1971, and about life in Stonington at that time.

Jo Salas tells a story about Charlotte Endymion Porter. Charlotte, who was an influential literary figure and poet during the late 19th and early 20th century.

The last article is a commentary about change and culture on Isle au Haut by Malcolm Woollen.

Finally, we have photos of island folks, remembrances of those who are no longer with us, a request to islanders for items of historical interest, and a short statement about our Historical Society.

Table of Contents

<u>Gooden Grant</u> <u>Isle au Haut Fisherman</u> Lynn Franklin	4
<u>A Les Grant Story as told by Herman Gross</u>	11
<u>Gooden and Nettie</u> Harold van Doren	13
<u>Lost & Found</u> <u>Stonington, The Making of the Film</u> Lucy Anderson	15
<u>Charlotte Endymion Porter</u> <u>Literary pioneer and summer resident of</u> <u>Isle au Haut</u> Jo Salas	18
<u>Commentary: Change and Culture on IAH</u> Malcolm Woollen	21
<u>Folks Around Town</u> Mary Fennell	22
<u>Do You Have Any Items of Historical Value?</u>	25
<u>Remembrance</u>	27
<u>A Note From Your Historical Society</u>	29

Gooden Grant, Isle au Haut Fisherman

Lynn Franklin

from [Profiles in Maine](#) Based on an interview by [Lynn Franklin](#) on 22 February 1972

By permission from Maine Antiques Digest, Waldoboro, Maine.

Those few lobstermen who lived in the independent settlement around the hard sand beaches fished in strong tides, erratic winds and undertow. Gooden Grant was the last fisherman to live at Head Harbor. He went along until he was 84, 14 years ago. "I guess I fished more than 75 years," he said.

There is almost always a heavy sea outside Head Harbor, on Isle au Haut. Mooring chains grind themselves apart in a season, docks tumble and sheep once roaming the short cliffs were likely to be caught in suddenly looming storms, swept from ledges and drowned.

Four years before Gooden died, we sat on the porch of his elegant white wooden house at Head Harbor and looked out over the bay. He related some of the things that remained bright and crystal clear in his memory of 96 years living on the Maine coast. Lynn Franklin



Gooden Grant's home in Head Harbor in 1973. David Taylor

"WHEN VIRGIL'S FATHER came adrift into the harbor he was standing up. He had his oil clothes on, the kelps wrapped him around.

I'd come in just ahead of him, but that was five weeks earlier. I waited an hour or two for the tide. The last time I seen him was off Black Ledge. He went into Duck Harbor, was a smuggler in there.

It was hot then. It was July. Thick vapor all day except a few minutes at noon, you could see the top of Isle au Haut, not much else. He could swim. But I think he was stunned. Virgil was a little fellow then, right in his mother's arms. I think it was 1908. He had been missing for five weeks and we looked for him. There were ledges I thought might have him but I couldn't see him.

Then the next time we went to Rockland to sell lobsters we went to Mrs. Haney, the fortune teller. We got in to the dock, sold our lobsters and climbed the hill to her house. We was wearing rubber boots and it was hard walking that far. Halfway up the hill one fellow stopped to wipe the sweat. 'I doubt the old witch is home,' he said. When we got there and she was, 'That's enough for me,' that fellow said and ran off. She said she saw Virgil's father lying on a ledge with something floating over him. She said he would come home, and of course he did, but he was drowned.

FRIENDSHIP WAS the best and ablest boat. I had five or six of them built and used them to haul lobster traps. I'd go 15 or 20 miles, haul all day—as long as there was light—and then run home. I'd maybe beat in from Matinicus in five degrees above zero. Well, I'll tell you, it was a long beat home.

I never used a suit of sails more than a year, roll 'em up and use 'em for spares.

I've seen a coaming sea cover a Friendship. They had to be decked over good. I had to work like the devil to get enough money to have a good one built, cost about \$700. All us older fellows had them. I used to race and a gale of wind just suited me. I'd win if it was blowing hard. I got cups in here to show it.

After three or four years they'd get to loosen up and it was best to sell them. Let somebody who worked easier water than us use them. This is the open ocean out here.

On the Friendships we had a foretopsail, a jib and a jib topsail. There was 65 yards in my topsail. Had a hard time keeping a mast in her. Had to watch out.

We used to sail a Friendship out to Seal Island to haul traps every good day and plenty not so good days, too. It's about nine miles and took an hour or so in the winter when there was plenty of wind. In summer, sail was not much use, not enough wind, faster to row a good peapod.

When I was a boy a peapod was a big boat, 16 feet and wide, carry a big load. Not them little toy peapods you see around nowadays. We bolt a keel on to make them sail to weather, but you couldn't come into the beach after that. A centerboard was better but you had to pour kerosene into it in the winter to keep it from freezing. If it did it was a lot of trouble to take out the board and axe the ice.

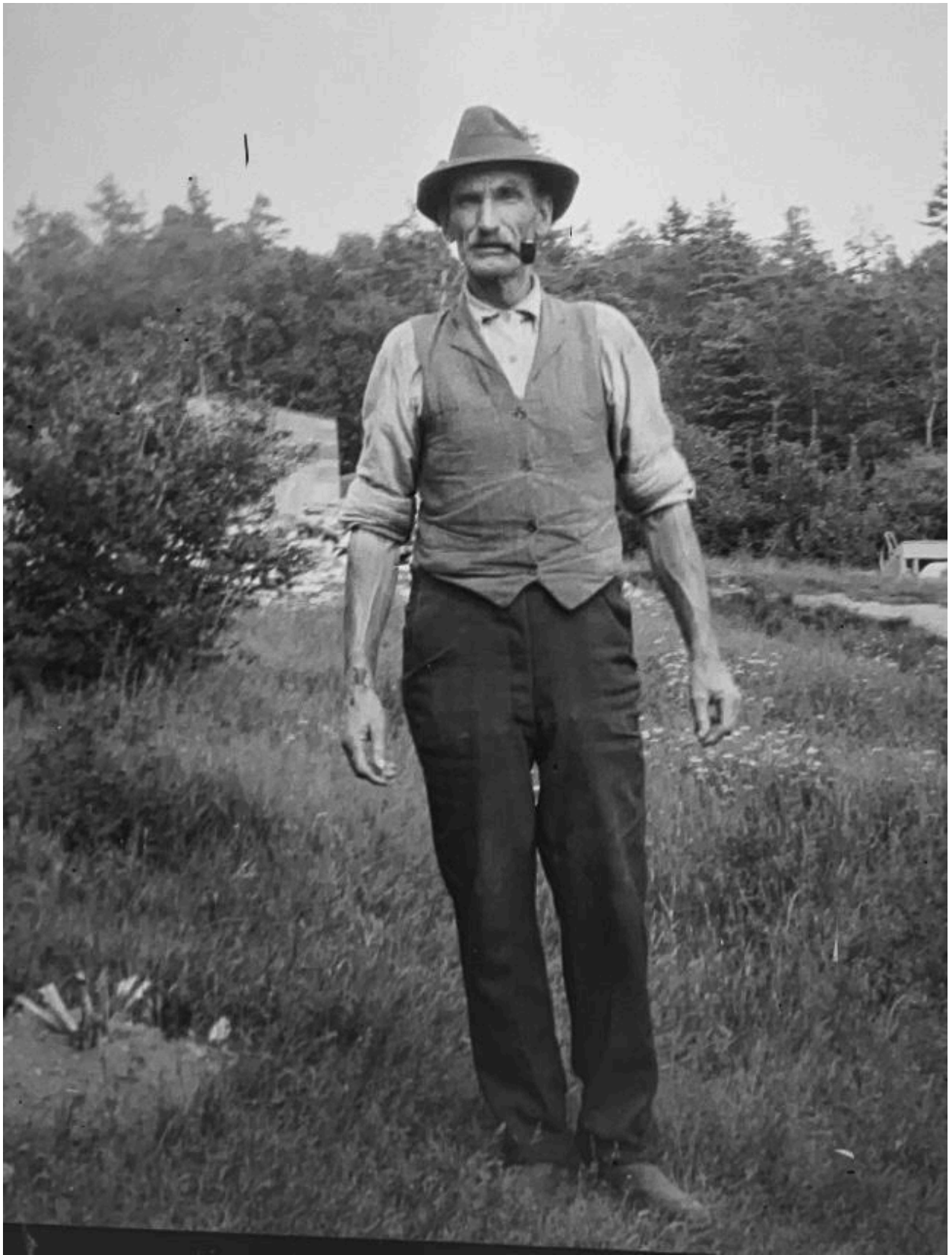
Just rowing standing up with my hands crossed using my weight facing forward was the fastest way sometimes.

We didn't always use lobster traps. When I was starting out with my father we used big hoop nets with joints and bows six or seven feet across. I've seen my father take a bushel of lobster out of them time and again. You catch a little buoy and haul quick for a fathom to close the net. After that you take time, bring 'em. Didn't matter. They couldn't get out.

Then we built the first lobster traps out of alder, pretty good traps. We got oak laths \$1.50 a thousand.

If I went lobstering again I'd have every trap you could get. I'd have 1500 and have a double haul every day. I'd catch a lot of lobsters if there was any and I'd work, too. It's no play game, you know.

When I was young I had 250 traps when plenty of men didn't have 100. I couldn't get them all lots of days. I'd get those left the next day first thing. By the time I got to Eastern Ear from here, I'd have a full peapod. I got about 4 cents a pound. They get better than a \$1 a pound now. I never dreamed of that.



Gooden Grant circa 1925 from the Isle au Haut Historical Society collection.



Gooden Grant in Head Harbor, circa 1915. Isle au Haut Historical Society

But out here is a bad place to keep traps. I've lost 100 many a time, so I kept a spare 100 on the dock ready to go if I lost out in a storm.

We never got engines until about 60 years ago. Willard Knox made them in Rockland. Altogether I bought 16 from him and he didn't even send me one free.

The Knox engine was a four horsepower make and break. You'd have to start it two or three hundred times a day. It was still better than rowing, although at times I didn't think so. I damned near got my wrist broke spinning the big fly wheel. Lots of fellows got hurt.

Still the make-and-breaks was better than sail close in to shore. There's not enough wind in the summer and sailings is work. You can't get a sloop in close. I could load a peapod with high wing boards twice a day.

FISHING WASN'T all we did in the winter. We cut ice from Long Pond and drew it here on sledges with yokes of oxen. I used two or three yoke and loaded all they could start on the sledge. Big schooners came in here to get the ice.

Many a time this was the only harbor on the coast wasn't frozen in. Just enough undertow to keep the skim ice out.. It was calm too, because of that ledge just under high and the beach is so hard you can walk to the water when the tide's out and not get wet feet.

After a time we switched from oxen to horses imported from farmers, somewhere westward. Damned few of them were worth it, always had the splints or something. Drive them half an hour and they'd be limping. I guess the farmers thought we were some fools to buy worn out horses. We didn't know any better.

We had a farm here. My father raised beef and hogs and had more than 500 sheep. Rarely bought food, raised all we needed and more. More often gave away than not, gave to folks who needed it. Used to have tough winters and I remember giving away 100 bushels of potatoes and plenty of beef.

We kept an eye on the sheep. You could sell the wool from a big sheep for \$1.50, a lot of money in those days. They'd fall off a ledge and drown, get stranded on a rock when the tide comes in. Wouldn't have the sense to get off, not like a goat. Their wool would soak up and down they'd go.

Father and mother are buried up behind the house.

I used to run to Searsport to market in four or five hours from here in good air and the tide right. It had to be or you could be going good but not making headway.

There were farmers and teams everywhere at the market. We dressed mackerel fancy in 25 pound kits to sell and farmers loved them.

I loved to run a smack from here to Boston. I knew every course, every light, every harbor good enough to get her into and out of. I never settled down until I was 40 years old. I carried 5,000 live lobsters to Boston from here. Lobsters ran big in those days, too.

An awful lot of lumber coasters ran ashore in those days. Didn't have charts like now, just dead reckoning. But many a captain sailed around the world with just sun, moon and stars. Damned smart men.

We used to go clear to Plymouth to get lobsters when I was smacking. Good lobsters there and white sand beaches. Pretty... The men were a rugged set, wore their pants pulled up to their knees. We called them the Cape Cod hair leggers and they all looked to weigh more than 200 pounds. That was when I smacked aboard the Sarah E. Hyde built in New London of white oak and copper fastened. Built good.

I don't reckon there's been any good lumber for 40 years or more on this coast, just knots and bark. In my house there's only one knot in all the hardwood floors and not three boards that don't run full length. I wouldn't haul away the stuff they try to sell now; resin seeping out. Handle a piece of lumber they want to sell and you get pitch on your hands. Maybe they figure nobody knows the difference. In my day the lumber stayed in the dry house in Bangor. We went there by boat to get it.

We'd take salt fish with us to sell and anchor in the river waiting for the tide.

The fellow put the inside work in my house went to the Civil War, was in Libby Prison. He was sickly afterwards. Said they got no food, no water, terrible fever. And they take our tax money to fight in Vietnam.

I remember one man came back from the Civil War. They were mostly shot up. Uncle had a bullet in his shoulder and didn't ever get right. Three uncles and only one came back. Nobody even heard about the others.

THE GOVERNMENT is peculiar. In my time they took care of the lighthouses. Some of them are gone now. Nothing to beat home for. Just black coast. I'd like to take one of them officials, turn out the lights in the houses and show him how black the coast can look in a gale of wind on a cold night.

They blew the spindle off the Roaring Bull, the mark I set to get me into the harbor and home. Just blew it off, damned near broke every window in my house. Bunch of Aroostook farmers, I guess, didn't know any better.

One of them government farmer boats came in here once and asked for fish. Sure, we said. We had plenty. They dropped a boat into the water and then they didn't know how to oar it over. How many times didn't they spin around before they finally got alongside!

Isle au Haut and Swan's Island were independent. We paid all our bills and had money in the treasury. That's the way we ran it. There was plenty of business. We had a porgy press, plenty of mackerel and lobster.

If we started hauling up haddock, we moved to another place. Didn't think they was worth catching and cleaning. Hake and Cod we wanted. Hake was 60 cents for 100 pounds dressed. We split and salted them and the more salt you put on the more they weighed. Rock salt was about \$1 a hoghead (17 bushels). Men on salt barges used to go barefoot. I don't know how they stood it.

Indians used to come here every summer, East Quoddy and Old Town tribes. Goodfellows amongst them. They took porpoise for the oil only, got it out of the blubber and some out of the jawbone. Jawbone oil was used for the best watches and the Indians dried out the jaw in a frying pan. They wanted seagulls too, and sold the feathers in New York. I was 16 or 17 then.

One fellow the Indians looked up to was called Big Thunder. He camped around here and I use to borrow his canoe to go up the Pond. Mighty tippy. He never minded. A birch canoe was a good boat if there was an indian in it.

One summer they passed against taking gulls and the indians lost their summer money. No need for the law. There were plenty of gulls. Seems the people cared more about the gulls than they did the indians.

Indians took their canoes out to Matinicus. There was an indian settlement right here where the house is in a forest of birch and maple. But a big fire destroyed the trees. I was in bed in Vinalhaven when my father woke me and showed me the fire. We got into a peapod with a centerboard and come over here in an hour and a half. The breeze was stiff and carried the tops of trees across the island like torches. There was mighty little left after that.

We've had whales here, one must have been 100 feet long. Shot from a whaler, we reckoned, but nobody could find the wound. An old timer came up and said she was killed by a harpoon and he'd find it. We laughed at him.

He called for a ladder and just to see the fun we fetched it. Everybody crowded him. He didn't really give any mind to the high jinks.

Well, sir, he fetched his own box of knives and sharp lances, climbed aboard the head and started in carving around the blow hole. He carved himself in and right out of sight. He worked more than an hour and then we couldn't see him unless we climbed up, too. He had cut himself down along the backbone, said he was following the wound of the lance.

Pretty soon up he came with 15 foot harpoon in his hand. The old man climbed down and handed the harpoon to me. He said this was a Right whale, finest in the ocean. He took off his oilskins and walked home and nobody laughed at him again.

THEY USED TO go to the Georges Banks from here. Many a farm boy wanting to learn the sea went to Georges on his first trip. Awful hard way to learn right off.

Quite a few Georges men were lost. Plenty of them found dead drifting in dories. Many a fisherman has laid down in the bottom of a dory and been found after they give up hope, only to be fetched out and fed up again back to work.

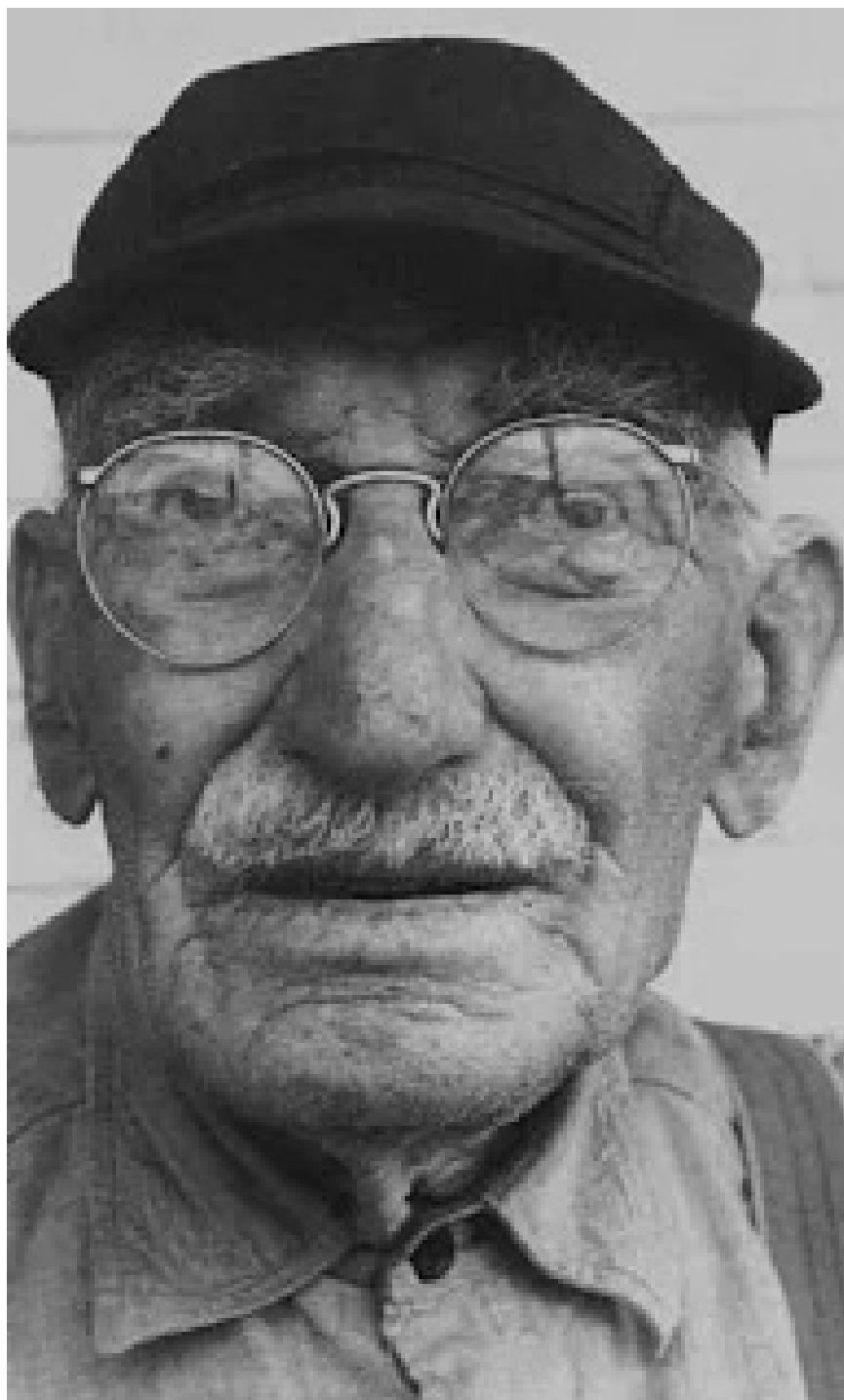
I never went to Georges. All the fish I could tend to right here. Used to be 20 or 30 of them Georges men in the harbor waiting for the weather.

So many ducks and fish here, life so good here I didn't want to leave. They ask me to go to Florida and see the beaches. What for? I was born on the beach right alongside the Atlantic. This is my kind of beach. I don't like

the heat; Maine's the finest kind of country.

I've always found a good friendship was better than money, many a time I've found that to be true. Makes me feel bad to lose 'em, one after another." Gooden Grant.

[Editor's Note: This article has been lightly edited. Other interviews and photos in [Profiles of Maine](#) by Lynn Franklin can be read at [Internet Archive](#) and the original transcript and audio of Gooden Grant can be found [here](#) at Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History Repository at the University of Maine. Lynn Franklin died prematurely on June 28, 1983 when he flew his plane into Mount Monadnock. A [profile](#) with photos has been created if you are interested in pursuing the short life of this gifted man further.]



Gooden Grant (1876-1976) in 1972 by Lynn Franklin

Uncle Les Gets the Salt Whiskey in Head Harbor As told by Herman Gross

Ulysses S. Grant, better known locally as Les Grant, was ten years older than his brother Gooden. Both lived and fished out of Head Harbor. Gooden's home was on the water and Les' a few hundred feet behind his on the current road. The houses still exist today. Below is a group photo we believe was taken around the same time as the telling of the story, 1908.



L to R

Front row: Charles Collins, Abbie Draper, Blanche Howes, Effie Bailey, Ellsworth Thomas, Les Grant.

Middle row: Burt Nevells, Emma Collins, Edna Turner, Lilla Ferris, Jeanette Turner, Abigail Thomas, Harriet E Works, Nora Gross Grant.

Back row: John Collins, Sam Bridges, George Turner, Gooden Grant, Pearl Small, Elmer Thomas, Charles Turner.

Editor's Note: The characters in this story: Burt is Burt Nevells, second row left; Gooden, is Gooden Grant, third row, fourth from the left, Uncle Les, is Les Grant, first row seated far right, Aunt Nora is Nora Gross Grant, standing directly behind Les.

Burt and I had been somewhere. Probably over town. When we got home to Aunt Nora's and Uncle Les', Aunt Nora said they would be making ice cream and would I go out in the shed and get some salt. I went out and the box we kept the salt in was almost empty. Not enough to make any ice cream. I knew there was 15-20 bags of salt down to the Shore that Gooden and Uncle Les had for salting bait. I told Aunt Nora the situation and grabbed a bucket and went down.

At the time Gooden was storing a lot of whiskey for the rum runners. Gooden's shop was full upstairs and down

and so was the bait shed. The smell of whiskey was in the air because some bottles would get broken while handling. The whiskey was in wooden crates and the bottles were wrapped in paper.

The salt was in the bait shed so I went in and started filling my bucket. About that time one of the men who was guarding the whiskey came in and wanted to know what the "hell" I was doing. He kicked me in the ass and threw me out of the bait shed. He had a sawed-off shotgun, double barreled, no longer than that. It made me mad so when I got outside, I started throwing small beach rocks at him. He told me again to get to "hell" out of there. With my ass still hurting, I headed back to the house without any salt.

I got up there and Uncle Les wanted to know where the salt was. I told him that they wouldn't let me in to get any and that he kicked me in the ass and threw me out. Uncle Les said "What!" He jumped into his boots, put on his coat and hat, grabbed his 6-cell flashlight and said come with me and bring your bucket along. We are going to get some salt.

We went down to the shore and to the bait shed. The door opened and the same man with the shotgun was there. Uncle Les grabbed him by the front of the collar, took his gun way from him and dragged him over to the hogshead barrel that was there in the bait shed. It was one that had been cut off and it had about a foot or a foot and a half of bait pickle in it. Uncle Les drove that guys head down into that barrel almost into the pickle and said "if you ever touch that boy again, I will drown you in this pickle."

We got our salt and a couple of bottles of whiskey besides and went home.



Les Grant and his home, upper left, Head Harbor, Isle au Haut Historical Society.

Gooden and Nettie by Harold van Doren



Edith, Nettie and Gooden on the steps of their home.

Gooden and Nettie lived down to Head Harbor. It used to be called "Little Korea" because of the amount of feuding that went on, so much so that if a man from a different part of the Island got a mess of clams from Head Harbor, he'd say to his wife, "Well, prob'ly we'll have us a fight tonight after eating these!"

In spite of this reputation, Gooden and Nettie celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1961, an event that had only happened once previously on the Island. My father used to come visit them back in the 30's with his girlfriend and stay in the blue room upstairs. But, that's another story.

Gooden was a big man when young; it's been claimed that a pot lath would just span the width of his shoulders. By his own admission, he weighed 230 pounds in his shirtsleeves. When I first met him in 1953, he was a rugged-looking old devil, deep in his seventies and still lobstering. (In fact, he lobstered by himself until he was 84.) I remember him rowing a big, gray fishing dory with his arms crossed, an unfamiliar style to me. He was one of those people you hear about who seem to enjoy good health even though they drink and smoke every day of their lives. My father used to take him cigars, and I heard he liked his rum pretty well, too.

All of his life was spent on the water. As a youngster, he fished by rowing around a 16-foot peapod. Later on, he used a series of Friendship

sloops. When he first started to fish with his father, they used hoop nets to catch lobsters. For a while, he went up and down the coast on the lobster smack Sarah E. Hyde out of Boston. It was not until around 1914 that he had a boat with an engine or as he called it, "machinery"— a four horsepower Knox make-and-break. As he used to say, it was better than rowing although at times he didn't think so, probably when he couldn't get it to run.

Nettie came over from Vinalhaven to teach school on Isle au Haut (probably at the Head Harbor schoolhouse), and eventually, she and Gooden were married. She was a stout woman, likely weighed over three hundred pounds. One night, Gooden was drinking down at the old store on the edge of Head Harbor with "the boys". Somebody looked up and asked, "What damn' fool's driving a car down here?" Sure enough, through the gloom they could see two lights were rocking back and forth, coming down the road. At length, Nettie appeared out of the darkness carrying a big flashlight in each hand, coming to fetch Gooden.

Nettie had her ways. She'd throw those old dry cell "B" batteries after they'd gone dead into the kitchen stove. They would explode with a Hell of a bang, rattle off the lids and all. Once, my sister went to visit and found her digging in her garden filling back a hole. When asked about it, Nettie said she thought she had found a coffin but wouldn't open it up-the body it contained might have had smallpox.

One time, Nettie was switching the batteries on the radio, as you used to have to do when they wore out, and somehow she got them hooked up wrong. When Gooden came home from hauling, she told him she'd changed over the radio batteries. "That's good, Mahm," he declared, "Now we'll get us some news." He turned on the old Crosley and listened intently, fiddling with the knobs. "Herhh, B'God, there's not much on," he grumbled. "Gooden," called Nettie from the kitchen, "You've got to let the wires charge up before it will come on."



Gooden & Nettie. Drawing by Harold van Doren

Well, he gave another five minutes of listening to nothing before he decided he didn't agree with Nettie's electrical theories. He drove both of his feet down onto the parlor floor and there followed a very spirited discussion concerning the values of having Gooden be the sole battery installer in the Grant family, ending up with Gooden's final directive, "and you keep your dam' mitts off'n it!" Probably the radio made a quick trip out the window or overboard.

Gooden, given to colorful description, once said that the hill down from the Herrick Camp was so

steep that the oxen shit on their horns. Speaking of the Herrick Camp, that was Gooden's birthplace. Towards the end of his life, his memory got a little weak but he remembered hauling the timbers for the house he was born in.

The Grants used to host card parties, often playing the great bidding game, "83". One night, Gooden wanted the bid so badly that he bellowed, "84, b'Jiesus!"

Gooden never did believe that they had put a man on the moon, but at the same time, he believed that " ... all them messin' around up there was what was foul'n' up our weather."

There was a meeting up to Stonington around 1937 about the Social Security Administration and Gooden went to find out what was going on. When he returned home, he told his wife that everybody would have to start paying money into the program. "Now, Gooden," Nettie told him back, "I'm putting my foot down, you are not going to join any more of these clubs!" As it turned out, that was a good "club" for Gooden to "join", considering what he probably paid into it against what he received in benefits, the "dues" were quite reasonable.

It is truly impressive when you stop to think that Gooden was born when school kids had to remember only eighteen Presidents. During his lifetime, he saw the country and the world go through unbelievable changes and he made many comments about them until he died at a almost a hundred.



Edith Grant, Gooden and Nettie's only child, in front of their home in Head Harbor about 1925. Isle au Haut Historical Society

Lost & Found
Stonington, The Making of the Film
Lucy Anderson



[Stonington](#) is a short film by Michael J. Anderson and Karen Iuppa made in 1972.

Gooden Grant makes an appearance and, therefore, we have the opportunity to see the man, his vitality and clarity at 96, a few years before he died at 100. You can watch the film [here](#).

My folks landed in Stonington in September 1970 and stayed through the winter and spring, living off an insurance settlement my mom received from a car accident. We had traveled from San Francisco north then east in a Rambler station wagon. Young parents on an adventure with no particular place to go.

Both would go on to build careers as visual artists: Michael Anderson filmmaker. Karen Iuppa photographer. It was in Stonington that my dad made his first independent short documentary. My mom made bathtub yogurt that she proudly sold to E.B. White and stocked at Vic's IGA. My dad called those 9 months the happiest time of his life.

When Michael passed away in February 2024, the overwhelm set in. Shelves lined up with film prints, thousands of feet of footage, video tapes in all formats, magnetic audio reels, slides, proof sheets, black and white prints, then digital files and hard drives. Where to begin?

And then intrusive thoughts: "Just throw it all away, who cares, life is pointless." That's the grief talking. Over time, perspective shifted. The silver can labeled "Stonington" moved from the big pile to the medium pile, and eventually into the small group of items worth a second look. But no faith in the old 16mm film projector or my ability to thread 55 year old celluloid through it. So I mailed the reel off to a digitizing house, got back a digital file. Didn't watch it for almost a year...

When I finally did, I LOVED it – the music, the people, the sense of time and place, the early hints of my dad's cinematic style. I still wasn't sure what to do with it, but I decided to put it up on YouTube, why not? I'd made the effort to have it digitized, at least could share it with my family. I had no connections with the folks back in Maine, being only age 1 to 1.75 when we lived there.

Then came the surprise – Tom, from this very newsletter tracked me down with some questions about the film. I pulled it up on YouTube and was SHOCKED to see more than 2,500 views. What!?!?! The people of Maine had found the film! They were sharing it! Enjoying it! Recognizing it as a historical document.

And the best feeling of all: seeing comments about the lobstermen in the film that said, "That's my dad". That's my dad too – behind the camera, coaxing the interviews, logging the music and footage, editing, mixing, screening, and finally putting the film up on the shelf. I'm so glad it has brought 1971 Maine back to life. Lucy Anderson, Sonoma, CA.



Gooden Grant and Lucy Anderson at Gooden's 95 Birthday Party in 1971, with permission from Penobscot Bay Press.



Michael J Anderson and Karen Iuppa 1971 by Lucy Anderson
Charlotte Endymion Porter,
literary pioneer and summer resident of Isle au Haut
Jo Salas

Carved into the stone mantelpiece at Ardensea, a tall, weathered cottage overlooking the sea on the eastern side of Isle au Haut, is a quotation from Shakespeare's [The Tempest](#): "The ayre breathes upon us here most sweetly. Heere is everything advantageous to life." This quotation was the writer and editor Charlotte Porter's loving tribute to the peace and comfort that she and her life partner, Helen Clarke, found on the island. (Charlotte strategically omitted the cynical rejoinders from other characters in the play.)



Charlotte Endymion Porter, who was born in 1857 and lived until 1942, was an extraordinarily accomplished literary figure, widely known and respected in educated circles of her time. (Some sources claim that her adopted middle name was inspired by the Keats poem, but the family story is that she named herself after her supposed ancestor Endymion Porter, a poet in the court of Charles 1.) In 1885, after graduating from Wells College in upstate New York, she became the editor of [Shakespeariana](#), the journal of the New York Shakespeare Society. It was here that she met and fell in love with [Helen Clarke](#), after Helen submitted an article to the journal. (Her article was accepted.) Together, Charlotte and Helen founded the American Drama Society and went on to edit books of poetry by Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. They also edited a new publication of Shakespeare's complete works, with one small volume for each play.

Their most significant and lasting achievement was the magazine [Poet Lore](#), "devoted to Shakespeare, Browning and the comparative study of literature," as the front cover declared, which they founded in 1889. [Poet Lore](#), still published today, was notably influential in its time. Its initial focus on Browning and

Shakespeare soon broadened to literary writing in translation—a cultural scope far beyond by any other contemporary publication in the US. The list of writers who appeared in [Poet Lore](#) shows a truly extraordinary editorial knowledge and appreciation for international literature in languages including Russian, German, Norwegian, Czech, and Japanese. The editors were uncannily prescient, discovering and introducing world-class writers to American readers years before they were widely recognized outside their own country: Strindberg, Mistral, Tagore, Lagerlof, Gorky, and many more. They also published and wrote about African American writers at a time when they were largely ignored by the literary world.

Charlotte and Helen lived together until Helen's death in 1926. They were as married as two women could be in those days, passionately devoted, publicly a couple, wearing rings that they exchanged in a commitment ceremony. Charlotte's 1926 poem "[What Loneliness](#)" expresses her heartbreak after losing Helen.



Charlotte and Helen

Ardensea came into Charlotte's hands in 1907. From that time she, Helen Clarke, and sometimes other women friends spent their summers on the island. A frequent visitor was Charlotte's young niece and protégée Helen Tracy Porter. She was a gifted writer, who, under her aunt's influence, also became a translator, known professionally as H. T. Lowe-Porter after her marriage to Elias Lowe. Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter was the

translator of the great German novelist Thomas Mann and brought his work into English for the first time. When Mann won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1927, it was Helen's translations that made it possible.

Charlotte bequeathed her beloved Ardensea to her niece Helen, knowing it would be a refuge for her as it had been for herself. Like her aunt, Helen spent many happy and fruitful summers on the island, working on Mann's novels and other translations as well as her own writing. And she brought her daughters and grandchildren, who played in the woods, gathered blueberries, and scrambled along the rocky beaches just as Charlotte Porter and Helen Clarke had done. (Full disclosure: I am married to one of those grandchildren, and our family has also spent peaceful summer weeks at Ardensea.)

When Charlotte bought the house, she had a doorknocker made for the front door, engraved in a plain but graceful font:

ARDENSEA
MISS CHARLOTTE PORTER

Obscured for years, it is now restored and legible, a touching memento of this distinguished resident of Isle au Haut.



Jo Salas lives in New Paltz, NY. Her novel [Mrs. Lowe-Porter](#) was published in 2024.



Clarence Turner and road crew circa 1910. Blacksmith shop is in the background.

CHANGE AND CULTURE ON ISLE AU HAUT

Malcolm Woollen

The history of planning has many cases where planners placed emphasis on one agenda while neglecting others. Many of these efforts have resulted in dissatisfaction and political backlash. High-rise housing was built in North America without consideration for parks, schools, commerce and security. Later, in an effort to redevelop many cities in the USA, public officials created tourist destinations such as aquariums and stadiums, overlooking the needs of neighborhoods. Although a narrow set of needs were met in all instances, the quality of life for residents suffered.

New Thinking

More recently, public officials and planners have begun to shape plans that attend to more than one objective. Leaders in many cities have learned to coordinate different parts of government to create successful city plans. In many cities where riversides required redevelopment, a consensus formed to make plans that would appeal to tourists, protect heritage and meet the needs of residents. Likewise, when planners in the Connecticut River Valley in Massachusetts wished to show ways that the region could develop, they drew aerial views of conventional development and views of strategies that preserved the historic continuity of landscapes. In all instances, historic preservation, commercial development and social needs were successfully combined.

Editor's Note: This is just the first page. The full story can be read [here](#).

Folks Around Town by Mary Fennell



Kendra & John



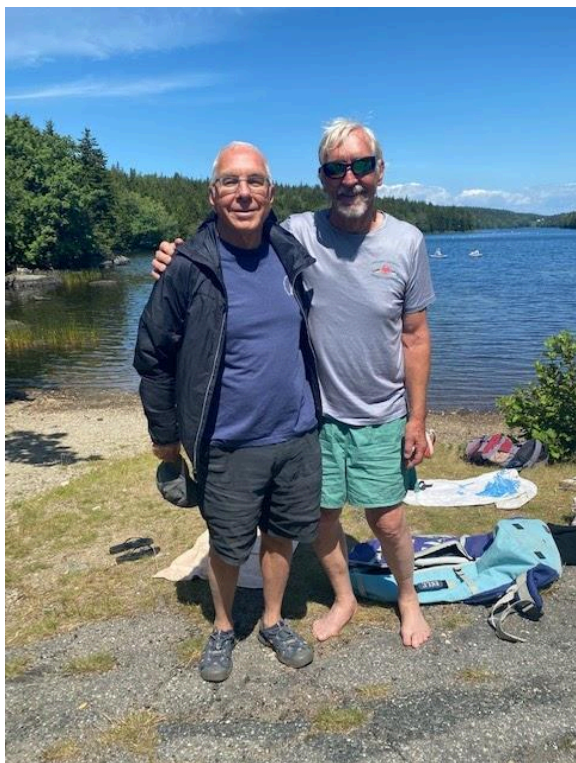
Liliana & Miel



Hannah & John



Celeste & David

*Gail**Bill**Jeff & Greg**John & Rob*



Back Row: Craig Donaldson, daughters Emily and Abigail.

Front Row: Astrid, Lucy, Elmina and Eli (Emily owns Astrid and Elmina from Vermont, Abby owns Lucy and Eli from Rhode Island).



Joan Tilney Memorial at the Isle au Haut Congregational Church

Do You Have Any Items of Historical Value?



Tim and Meg Gailey sharing their trove of Historical letters, photos, etc with the Historical Society.

If you have any items of historical interest in your home, we would very much appreciate hearing from you. Although we can not accept or house any additional historical items at this time, we would like to photograph and document what you have. Last summer the Gaileys and the Kennedys allowed us to photograph objects in their homes which were of historical interest. Please contact us at IsleauHautHistory@gmail.com or call 207.335.2731 after 25 June 2025.



From the Gaileys' collection at The Professor's House.



Bill Stevens towing the house from Bills Island from the Doermann Collection.



The Clyde Turner auction in 1954 from the Kennedy Collection.

Remembrance

We would like to honor those members of our Isle au Haut community who've died since our last Newsletter. Sympathy and thoughts to their families and apologies for anyone who we've inadvertently missed and has not been mentioned. Please click on the name to see more information



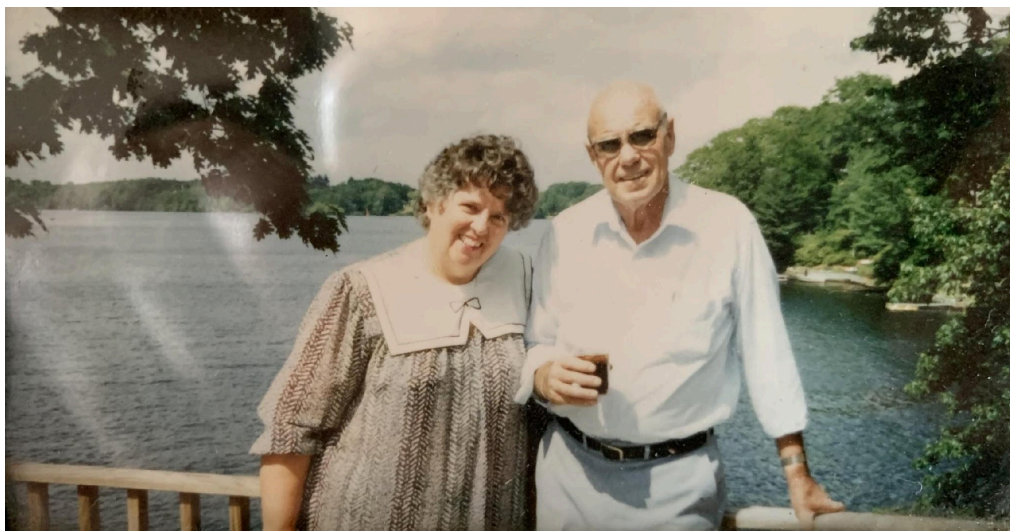
[Marie A. Hamly](#)

December 9, 1932 — December 26, 2025



[Pat Marks](#)

November 19, 1933 – October 19, 2025



Jean and Russ Devereux, from the Devereux Family Collection

[Jean Devereux](#)

9 Sept 1934-27 January 2025



[Linda Giragosian](#)

December 24, 1935 – February 27, 2026

A Note From Our Historical Society

MEMBERSHIP

We hope you've enjoyed this Newsletter and that you will support your Isle au Haut Historical Society by becoming a member or by renewing your membership for 2026. To do so, please send your name, email address, and annual dues payment of \$10 for individual or family membership (check preferred) to The Isle au Haut Historical Society, PO Box 7, Isle au Haut, ME 04645.

Membership Dues help preserve our rich Island history, this Newsletter and support the programs offered by our Historical Society each summer.

DONATIONS

We also accept donations, any amount, even \$1. Donations and Memberships means a lot to all of us; it confirms that you care and consider what we do important and a valuable contribution to our community.

To those who joined last year and sent in contributions, A Special Thank You!

SUMMER EVENTS

We have a series of Summer Lectures that are still being planned and will be posted on the Town's Swap FB page when they are finalized.

PARTICIPATION

We especially welcome your involvement. If you are interested in taking a more active role, please send an email:

IsleauHautHistory@gmail.com.

THANK YOU

Special Thanks to all who have helped make this edition possible by contributing photos and articles and with editing: Mary Fennell for her beautiful photographs and wonderful invaluable design sense, Herman Gross, Lynn Franklin, Harold van Doren, Lucy Anderson, Jo Salas, Malcolm Woollen for their stories. Also to Harold van Doren and Kris Carlson-Lewis for their help in sorting out the many historical conundrums that often arise and Leslie English for final editing. Mary Fennell and Tom Guglielmo edit the Newsletter.

Comments to tomguglielmo@gmail.com