



Eagle Island

Eagle Island's first recorded deed in the Belknap County Court House is dated 1893 and it establishes that the Wilkinsons were then the owners. The island was sold to the Whittens in 1895, to the Graftons in 1909, to the Wrights in 1916, and to the Bentons in 1975.

The Eagle Island camp that appears on the 1906 U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey map was moved in 1917 by horse and rollers over the ice to the southwest shore of Pitchwood Island, where it stands today.

The present camp was built in 1918. Jack Wright, a Boston lawyer, presented the new building to his bride, Sarah, as her wedding gift. They shared the island for 36 years until Jack's death in 1954, and Sarah treasured the island 20 more years until her death.

Sarah has returned to the island 4 times since. I knew she was nearby twice because of a strong smell of jasmine, another person had the same experience once, and two people saw her one night in the house as a transparent, white, glowing spirit.

Jack Wright went out by himself to take care of the island and its trees during the day and night of the 1938 hurricane. He wrote an album of humorous but marvelously sensitive verse we now keep on the island. He was one of the financial backers of the new Mt. Washington in 1940, and he and Jim Irwin promoted the Power Squadron and weekend Weirs Bay speed boat races after World War II.

The Mentor, whose picture is to the right, is on the east side of the island. Several postcards from the 'Teens and Twenties in our collection feature the stone face. If you shift the position of your head a foot or so, the Mentor changes into a softer and different profile, the Mentor's Lady.



The island seems to have gone through three phases in the past century. I suspect that it was clearcut around 1890; 1920's photographs we have show no large trees. The Wrights surrounded their camp with lawn, wicker furniture, flagstone paths, and flowering shrubs. The island now is a mixed wood on the east and west sides, and is cleared but rustic elsewhere.

Corning Benton

A
History of Eagle Island
in
Gilford, New Hampshire

by

Corning Benton

1994

➤ The Early Days

Eagle Island was named for the eagles that nested in an old tree¹ on the island in the last part of the Nineteenth Century².

Aerial photographs show, about five to eight feet under the surface of the lake, a line of rocks inside a band of sand encircling the island. This is the old original shoreline that was submerged when the Lakeport dam was constructed in 1826³. The old shore line outlines an Eagle Island then was two or three times larger than now and was shaped like an irregular five-pointed star, with the longest arm extending 200' northwest towards Pitchwood Island.

Perhaps Eagle Island was an Indian landmark, the last for Pennacook⁴ canoeists heading towards Aquadoctan or The Weirs. No Indian lore of Eagle Island is known.

A review of Eagle Island's deeds in the Belknap County Courthouse was performed in 1981. Eagle Island was annexed to the State of New Hampshire in 1891. On 9-1-1893, title to the island was given to Elnora D. Leah, Mark M. Leah, and Leonard W. Wilkinson. Another deed, filed on the same day, adds Asa W. Drew to the title holders. Eagle Island was sold to Lewis T. Whitten and Hannah J. Whitten on 9-27-1895. The island was owned by Frank W. Grafton from August, 1909, to 11-15-1915, and by Edith M. Grafton from 11-15-1915 to 7-10-1916.

The first house on Eagle Island was probably built in the 1890's. I do not know whether it was the Leahs, Whittens, or unrecorded predecessors who provided for the initial construction. This is the building that is shown on the 1906 U.S. Coast and Geodetic survey map⁵ of Lake Winnepesaukee. Its masonry half-basement is underneath the present house's kitchen. The old house was put on rollers and pulled across the ice by horses to its present location, about three lots northwest of the old Pitchwood Hotel⁶, on the southwest side of Pitchwood Island during the winter of 1917-18.

This tree is illustrated in the Wright's "Eagle Island Arcadia" pen and ink drawing that is still on the island. Arthur Tilton of Gilford, personal communication, 7-27-93.

Mary Gillett Davis Donsker: The Story of Welch Island Through 1945. Personally published in 1984, re-printed in 1993.

Mary Gillett Davis Donsker: *ibid*.

Hung on the wall in the west room.

Irene Bowles, of Laconia and Pitchwood Island, told us about transportation of the old Eagle Island house. She knew Jack and Sarah Wright.

On the east side of the island is an abandoned low, rectangular foundation that was made with the same masonry technique as the half-basement. This probably was where the outhouse was located.

➤ Jack and Sarah Wright

The island was purchased on 7-10-1916 by Jack Wright when he was 44 years old. The title remained in his name until his death on 4-26-1954. The valuation of the island and buildings was \$15,000 then. Sarah Wright held title until her death on 7-15-1974, and her estate held title until 3-14-1975. Wrights had owned Eagle Island for 58 years.

John "Jack" P. Wright was born in 1872 in Chicago. He managed the Simmons Jack gold mine in South Africa for years. He then received a law degree from Boston University and became a member of Tyler, Wright, Eames and Young, one of the largest law firms in Boston. At one time, he was a law partner of Owen D. Young, who drew up the German reparation plan after World War I and later became President of General Electric Company. Jack Wright retired in 1934 at 62 years of age and the Wrights moved their winter home to Venice, Florida, in 1939. He was 82 years old when he died in Venice in 1954⁷.

Jack Wright went out by himself to take care of the island and its trees during the day and night of the 1938 hurricane. He was one of the financial backers of the new Mt. Washington in 1940, and he and Jim Irwin promoted the Power Squadron and weekend Weirs Bay speed boat races before and after World War II.⁸

A scrapbook containing Jack Wright's writings, mostly poems, typed by him is on the island. His verses are humorous and sensitive. Here are two of them.

⁷ This information was obtained from an obituary published in a Venice, Florida, newspaper clipping dated 4-29-54.

⁸ This information was found in the Laconia Evening Citizen sometime in the 1980's. I do not have the clipping.

Eagle Island

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With my Wife, the two best
loved objects in my
life

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There's one spot in this wide world, that's heaven to me.
But living now on borrowed time, I clearly can see
That while I keep my faculties, a tribute full of praise
I should pay to Eagle Isle, there having spent, so many happy days
It is one of many isles adorning this fair Lake;
Its beauties always capture me, and I would not forsake
It for a grander place, a monumental pile,
For I care not for grandeur, for pomp, display or style.
Here I spent my honeymoon with my beloved wife,
And may our lives continue a long and goodly while;
Glad and happy that we live, on this enchanted isle.

AN ODE TO MY PROSTATE

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All I say, is, "DAMN THE LUCK."
My prostrate has run amuck.
Coiled within me like an adder,
A catheter runs from my bladder.
Like a maple in the spring,
I drip, and drip in pots they bring.
Nor with gladness do I shout,
A surgeon soon will cut it out.
Poor old prostate, if you knew
How I hate to part with you,
Ever faithful, ever kind
As I dealt with womankind.
But I do not swear or rage,
I don't need you at my age.
Resignation comes to me,
Ever sweet, your memory.

Sarah Wright continued to summer on Eagle Island until the early 1960's, when she became progressively infirm. Her last visit was for part of a day in 1969, 51 years after her Eagle Island honeymoon. At that time, there was a stove in front of the fireplace in the living room, and the stove's heat was not enough to ward off the chill in her hands and feet⁹. A manservant, whose

⁹ Bill Cannon of Weirs Beach, personal communication, 1975.

name I do not know, attended to Sarah after Jack's death, staying upstairs in a bedroom and bathroom suite installed for his use¹⁰.

I believe Sarah returned to the island four times after her death. I knew she was nearby twice because of a strong smell of jasmine, another person had the same experience once, and two people saw her one night in the house as a transparent, white, glowing spirit. This was in the late 1970's—I wonder if she was reluctant to take final leave of her island.

➤ Corning and Carol Benton

I was born May 22, 1934, in Exeter, New Hampshire. My father Corning, treasurer of Phillips Exeter Academy, also coached crew and taught history. I inherited my love of boats from him and my great grandfather, sea captain Calvin Valpe Corning. My mother Marion was a high school Latin teacher and homemaker. We first enjoyed Lake Winnepesaukee in 1939, spending the summer on Little Mark Island at the entrance to Alton Bay. I learned to swim there, wearing white water wings. My father let me drive the academy's 16' Dodge runabout¹¹, which we were allowed to use for the summer. I really did not control the boat—Daddy just let me sit in his lap and hold the steering wheel. We rented camps on Varney Point before and after World War II and, in 1947, bought a small seasonal camp on the southwest side of Governors Island. Father and mother sold this in 1965, after I assured them that I did not plan to come back to New Hampshire. I became a physician in 1959, a radiologist in 1964, and a pediatric radiologist in 1966. Except for two years at Lakes Region General Hospital in Laconia, I have been on the staff of Cincinnati Children's Hospital since 1964. I went off the payroll in 1984 due to the disability of a motor and sensory neuropathy.

Carol Benton was born November 22, 1930, in Cleveland, Ohio. She is a home maker in Mariemont, Ohio, and has been active in civic affairs. She cultivates the island's flowering shrubs and plants annual flowers in June, making the island and dock colorful and attractive for the rest of the season. She has made Eagle Island a hospitable spot, entertaining here our friends from as far away as Japan. We find that living here together for a few days is a marvelous way to richen friendships.

¹⁰ Bill Cannon, personal communication, 1975.

¹¹ This boat was used by the crew coaching staff at the academy during the fall and spring.

I was the first person Gilford realtor Doris Lord contacted in October, 1974, when Sara Wright's elderly heirs in New Jersey put Eagle Island on the market. Bill Cannon drove by boat John DeSilva and myself to inspect Eagle Island in November, and the decision was made to purchase the property for \$60,000.

➤ The Island

Eagle Island is an irregular polygon about 0.9 acre in area. Let's walk around the shore, starting at the south ledge facing Hoyt's Point in Laconia.

The sundeck in front of you is a converted swim float built in the summer of 1975 by Bill Cannon and his employee, George Kaiser. It was pulled up for the winter onto the easiest sloping access to the water, the south ledge—this gave us the opportunity to visualize it as a sun deck. In 1977, we did convert the float by leveling it and then attaching legs. The sundeck is used for reading, swimming, sun bathing, cocktails, and watching boats. Captain Harry Welch toots the Mt. Washington's whistle for us when he is in command and Sophie C Skipper Gerry Ingham blows the boat's beautiful three-tone air horn when he goes by.

On your right, a stone retaining wall with a boat cleat on top runs 30' to the west from the south ledge. It is part of the south harbor¹² constructed by the Wrights. The harbor was triangular, with the mouth pointing southwest. A dock resting on two stone-filled cribs formed the southeast side and a stone breakwater was to the west. The cribs and breakwater had disintegrated and were under water by 1975. In 1984, using a Winnepesaukee Marine Construction crane and bucket, their remaining rocks were scooped from the bottom and placed as riprap against the retaining wall—which had been undermined by boat waves.

Just to the west of the wall is Picnic Rock a few feet back from shore. Glasses and plates won't slide off its flat top. An opening in the shore rocks 20' further along leads to a gentle water-line ledge called Washing Rocks because it was a good place to soap and rinse clothes before we knew it was bad for the lake to do that. Turtle Rock is a few feet westward.

West Point is the sharpest point of land on the island. A nice sitting-rock is there, good for being alone because no one can see you.

¹² Bill Cannon showed me the underwater remains of the harbor. I did not think to ask why the harbor was built and how it was used. It would have been a convenient place to tie a boat in a strong east wind.

The depression in front and to the left as you look towards West Point is the Wright's dump. Poke underneath the pine needles here, and you will find bottles, cans, broken china, oyster shells and metal boat fittings. I suspect that this was a marshy area and dumping was done to build it up higher. The stump of what was the largest pine on the island is slightly to your right. This tree fell to the northeast, missing the house, during a thunderstorm microburst¹³ in 1983.

A short path leads to Pee Point on the north side. This is a quiet spot where we eat at the picnic table and can hear the wind in the pines and the waves on the shore. A beach and ledge on the west side come out of the water in August and September and are a fine spot to laze in a lawn chair.

Day lilies, no doubt planted by Sarah Wright, are in front of the large flat rock on the way to the dock and another group of lilies are on shore just southeast of the dock. The tiger lilies between the house and workshop have increased in number since 1975. The boulder next to the center of the northeast house wall is the highest point on the island. A duck nested in the ferns on a rock shelf on the east side of this boulder one year.

Sarah's canoe dock was just to the left of the main dock¹⁴.

The clear area on the east side of the island was formed when the tree, whose hollow stump is on the west side of the clearing, fell to the east, taking down several other trees with it. Carol Benton planted the young trees now in the clearing in honor of her mother, Katharine, whose ashes are under the flowers planted in the hollow stump. Butt Rock¹⁵, the boulder shoreward of Monkey Rock, is a nice spot to have a sandwich at noon and watch The Mount point right at you for a moment as she¹⁶ turns from Timber Island to the Eagle Island Channel.

A path leads to a clearing on the southeast side. Look down the path at the boulder on the shore—the stone face you see is called The Mentor. Come closer and move a foot to the left—the face softens and becomes The Mentor's Lady! The Mentor was the feature of several postcards published during the first quarter of this century.

The semicircular retaining wall to the Mentor's right defines The Beach. This is a sandy swimming area with a gentle slope of the bottom.

¹³ Eight trees went down in less than 30 seconds.

¹⁴ Bill Cannon, personal communication.

¹⁵ This was the rock smokers used when, for fire prevention, cigarette smoking was banned on the island in 1975 or 1976.

¹⁶ The crew of the Mt. Washington calls the boat "Mother." Capt. Harry Welch, personal communication.

Look to your right, and there is the sundeck. We have come full circle.

The island seems to have gone through four phases in the last 100 years. It probably was clear-cut around 1900. The evidence for this is that photographs we have that were taken in the 1920's show no tall trees. The Wrights, well-off financially, urbane, and convivial, created a contemporary and stylish summer home on what was then an open island. Flowers adorned the piazzas, lawn surrounded the cottage, and flagstone paths lead from one spot to another. Lilacs, azaleas, mountain laurel, and rhododendron bushes were artfully planted. Formal evergreens were set around the house and grounds. The concrete dock was built and extensive shoreline stonework created the beach and south harbor areas. This idyllic time ended around 1964, when Sarah's health failed and she could neither live on the island nor foster its caretaking. The house was boarded up and the grounds were not maintained from 1970 to 1974. The recent phase started in 1975, when Eagle Island was purchased by the Bentons. John DeSilva and I were faced in June, 1975, with a tangle of overgrown trees and shrubs covering most of the island and infringing upon the lawns, which were tall grass. We decided to leave the northwest and southeast parts of the island as they were and clear the rest. The beauty of the clumps of birches struck us—they were like bonsai growing from the earth—and so we cut away the overgrowth to draw attention to the white birch sprays. Carol Benton now plants colorful annual flowers at the dock, deck, piazzas, and other spots. The massed impatiens in front of the west room picture window is a joy to behold at meals.

➤ The House

The current house, Jack's wedding present to Sarah, was built in 1918. It faces the Weirs to the southwest. The blueprints, drawn up by a Boston architectural firm, are in a cedar chest on the island. I think we know the names of the carpenters who built the house. Two shingles were

found tacked to the wall of the Eagle Island bob house in 1975¹⁷. On them was written in pencil a date, 3-5-17, and these names:

Billy Adams, Manchester, N.H.
Chester A. Young, Manchester, N.H.
D.S. Elwell, 70 Washington St., Boston
Dennis R. [illegible].

The 1917 date is a mystery; perhaps the bob house was built before the main house.

At the north corner of the new house was the kitchen. Two doors lead from the kitchen to the small informal dining room at the west corner and to the tiny hallway off the two master bedrooms and bath. The living room formed the south corner of the house. The stone fireplace in the living room was made by Herman Olsen¹⁸, who did the stonework at the Gunstock Recreation Area¹⁹ and later became Gilford Police Chief in the 1930's and 1940's. Three bedrooms and a bathroom were on the northeast side. The open attic was lit and ventilated by dormer windows to the southeast and southwest. We learned from penciled notes, dated 1920 and 1921, on window screen frames that the north bedroom was called "John's large bedroom," the east bedroom was the "guest bed room," and the west room was the "dining room."

Three brick piazzas gave character to the house. The names of the piazzas are found on the blueprints. The back door off the kitchen opened onto the small Pitchwood Piazza. One side of the piazza is a bluestone-capped stone wall at sitting height, good for husking corn or shelling peas. The living room opens into the Governors Island Piazza. The roof eaves overhang half of this piazza, creating a cozy outdoor shelter for enjoying thunderstorms or a rainy cocktail hour. Swinging french doors open to the Weirs Piazza from the central room. This piazza is closest to the lake. Old photographs show white wicker chairs and tables on this piazza, and potted flowering plants hang from the eaves. White balustrades running to stone pillars were at the sides of both the Governors Island and Weirs Piazzas.

A 10' addition to the northwest sides of the sun room and kitchen was made for the Wrights a few years later. Cabinets and counter, a porcelainized steel sink, more cabinets and counter, and a soapstone double sink for heavy clothes washing and rinsing occupied the northwest

¹⁷ In 1975, the Wright's decrepit bob house, shingled and windowed in the same style as the main house, rested on the ground between the work shop and ice house. It had probably lain there since Jack's death. John DeSilva found the shingles when he demolished the bob house and tacked them to the northwest wall of the work shop, where they are today.

¹⁸ Bill Cannon, personal communication.

¹⁹ Andy Moynihan of Laconia, personal communication.

wall of the kitchen. A fine Glenwood stove is on the northeast side. A food pantry is at the north corner and a dish pantry opens to the southeast wall. The soapstone sink was removed to make room for an electric clothes washer and drier in 1988. The cabinets and sink were replaced as part of the house rehabilitation in 1994.

The other major addition to the house was a bedroom with dormer plus a bathroom with sink and toilet in the northeast part of the attic. This was where Sarah's manservant lived²⁰, so I suppose that this was built after Jack's death in 1954.

The shape of the deep rectangular fireplace was changed to a "Rumford" configuration—a shallow fireplace with walls facing 45° outward—in 1989 by the Huston Brothers from Moultonboro. The chimney was raised 18" and capped with bluestone at the same time.

In the years 1992-94, the house was rehabilitated by Scot Young from Moultonboro. He and his helpers replaced the carpenter ant and powder-post beetle infested foundation sills, the floor in several rooms, all the kitchen flooring and joists, and part of the eaves. The southeast and southwest brick piazzas were removed and replaced with wood. New piazza balustrades were made and bluestone was placed underneath. The north piazza was rebuilt with new brick.

➤ The Workshop and Ice House

The workshop is divided into a small southeast room and a larger northwest room.

The Wrights installed in the southeast room a gasoline generator on a concrete block, a "new" water pump, plenum water tank, and an electric panel and switch box. The first wires were mounted on stand-off porcelain insulators. In 1975, the Bentons replaced the gasoline generator with a 5 kilowatt Onan generator which ran on propane. The water pump and plenum tank were replaced. When the Onan generator was turned on and the water pump was, for the first time, primed and running, the valve to the house was opened. Immediately, water poured into the north bedroom and kitchen from a ruptured galvanized iron pipe in the attic. All the iron pipe was replaced with copper pipe subsequently. In 1984, a backup 2.5 kilowatt Onan generator²¹ was placed in the east corner of the larger room, and, in 1989, after electrification, the 5 kilowatt Onan was removed²².

²⁰ Bill Cannon, personal communication.

²¹ The generator was named "Forrest" in honor of Forrest Young of Moultonboro, who helped transport the generator in his pickup truck from White River Junction.

²² The 5 KW Onan was given to Scott Young, Forrest's son.

The northwest room contained in 1975 a workbench with drawers and a near-complete set of old tools, a turn-of-the-century ice box with swinging doors, a working Servel propane-ammonia refrigerator, a wood box filled with kindling, a storage box containing a chain hoist, and lumber and pipes stored in the loft. The Bentons have continued to use the room as a workshop and storage area.

The ice house was built with double insulating walls, triple Dutch doors on heavy hinges, and a ventilating cupola. It was filled with ice for the Wrights by men under Bill Cannon's supervision. In 1976, the roof, badly damaged by carpenter ants, was replaced—but the cupola was not restored.

➤ The Dock

The shape of the dock is like the letter U with the open end pointing northeast. The original dock inner walls and deck was made of reinforced concrete poured over a core of rocks. The outer walls were made of sloping riprap. Several whiskey bottles were placed in the wet concrete at the corners of the dock—perhaps to hold cut flowers—and a flagpole hole²³ was cast into the end of the southeast pier.

The original dock was large and may have been designed to hold one or two of the long, narrow runabouts that were in use in the late 1910's before planing speedboats were built in the 1920's. The Wrights did have a 19' Gar Wood runabout in the 1930's²⁴.

In 1987, the breakwaters were extended 25' and a wooden deck was placed on top of horizontal poles buried in the stonework. Red Robert's Winnepesaukee Marine Construction performed the work in 5 days. The workboat was a barge carrying a red diesel-powered crane²⁵.

The dock enlargement made it both easier to land²⁶ when there was a strong northwest wind and to moor our three boats²⁷ with space for a fourth visitor's boat.

²³ My son Jeff teased his younger sister Stacey by telling her that the billowing up and down of a cobweb in the hole was caused by the breathing of a giant spider living underneath.

²⁴ Personal communication from James Irwin, Jr., of Laconia.

²⁵ The next year, going to Glendale by compass at headway speed in fog, I came upon this barge dead in the water southwest of the Witches. I knew there was a compass mounted in the pilot house, so I asked the men why they were not using it. The crew chief told me that their compass worked just fine—but it always pointed at the crane's engine!

²⁶ Years before, coming back at night from Moultonboro, we were unable to land during a hard northwest blow that had ripped the Horse Island beacon off its mooring and we had to spend the night at the Lakeside Hotel at

➤ The Boathouse in the Weirs Channel

The boathouse with a pitched roof and two long narrow slips about 100' north of the Channel Marine condominium boat slips was built for the Wrights. I know neither when it was constructed nor when it was sold²⁸, probably by Sarah after Jack's death. The Wrights parked automobiles on the boathouse lot and kept their boat(s) in the boathouse in winter and when they were off-island²⁹.

The boathouse is 50' south of Bill Cannon's house and boathouse where his business, Cannon Marine Construction³⁰ was located. Bill was the caretaker of Eagle Island for the Wrights.

➤ Boating Since 1975

A 1968 17' Slickcraft inboard/outboard runabout named "Flying Low"³¹ was used from 1975 to 1978. A used 1970-vintage 13' Boston Whaler outboard, named "TipIt", was bought at Lakeport Landing in 1975 and is still in use, not much the worse for wear. The island workhorse is a 1978 21.5' Slickcraft inboard/outboard runabout also bought at Lakeport Landing. Its name is "Caroling," a meld of 'Carol' and 'Corning.' A 1970 13' Sunfish sailboat purchased new from Irwin Marine was used until about 1985. The fun boat for 11 years from 1981 to 1992 was a 1941 15.5' Chris Craft utility named "Agnes" that had belonged to Bob Baker, a Bostonian who summers on the land side of the Governors Island Channel. "Agnes" won several second and third place awards at the July Weirs Antique and Classic Boat Show.

The Glendale docks and parking lots have been important to Eagle Island people, serving as a safe harbor for the boats, a base of operations for guests, and a convenient departure point for trips on land for pleasure or provisions. If we go to Glendale 50 times a season, that adds up to 500 trips—3,000 boating miles—a decade! High winds prevent us from going to shore perhaps one day a season, and fog is no problem—the compass course at headway speed from the Governors Island beach swim float to Glendale is 155° going and 329° coming back³².

the Weirs. The clerk, seeing that we had no luggage, insisted upon cash payment.

²⁷ The Slickcraft, Boston Whaler, and Chris Craft.

²⁸ Probably to Bill Cannon.

²⁹ Bill Cannon, personal communication.

³⁰ Bill had a barge with crane and a Steelcraft work boat. The work boat's name was "Pile Driving," a name sure to bring a smile to one in the health-care business. Bill died in the late 1980's.

³¹ The boat was so-named because it was purchased with money from the sale of a Cessna 180 airplane.

³² Magnetic headings, compass not compensated.

➤ Storage Batteries and the Honda Generator

In 1982, a 800 watt Honda portable gasoline generator was placed on the Governors Island Piazza to power a battery-operated amateur radio station in the center room. Two deep-cycle lead-acid storage batteries were kept first in a corner of the center room and then, when I brought a computer in 1986, into the north bedroom. In 1983, we rigged four lamps with 60 watt light bulbs in two bedrooms and in the sun room powered by an inverter connected to the batteries so that we could read and write without generator noise. We also watched television by battery power.

➤ Electrification and The Submarine Cable

In 1983, Red Roberts, owner of Winnepesaukee Marine Construction, told me that it would be worthwhile to protect the Eagle Island dock by installing an electric circulating pump, an "Ice Eater," during the winter months. He had thought Eagle Island was electrified. I explained to him that I had looked into running a submarine electric cable from Governor's Island about 1978, and that our neighbors across the Eagle Island Channel did not feel that they were able to grant the 25' easement Public Service of New Hampshire (PSNH) requested³³. He said, "Why don't you ask for an easement from people on Pitchwood—they are real islanders and would be helpful."

Pitchwood Island had been electrified about 10 years earlier. The man who had organized the Pitchwood islanders and contacted New Hampshire Electric Cooperative (NHEC) is Wally Jones, a retired insurance agent who then lived in Laconia during the winter and moved back to Pitchwood Island before the ice was completely out. Wally was glad to help and said several people would be willing to grant easements. The Pitchwood camp nearest to Eagle Island is owned by Irene Bowles, a former swimming instructor³⁴ at old the Pitchwood Hotel. She was willing to give us an easement.

NHEC was not willing to provide us with electricity for three reasons. First, it is not profitable to supply power to a small island. Second, Eagle Island was in the franchise of Public Service of New Hampshire. And, third, we were a pawn in a hostile game that the two utilities had played for 20 years after one of their officers believed a promise had been broken.

³³ In retrospect, I bet a 5' easement could have been negotiated.

³⁴ When Irene wanted to go to the Weirs before World War II, she would swim there rather than use a boat !

On April 2, 1987, the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission heard our petition to switch the franchise for Eagle Island from PSNH to NHEC. NHEC's stance was that we had not gone far enough to prove that an easement was unobtainable from Governors Island people, and that PSNH should condemn a right-of-way on Governors Island, the anticipated "brisk legal response" notwithstanding. The PSNH lawyers felt that there was not adequate legal precedent for condemning a right-of-way for one family and that such a tactic was futile. Carol Benton presented her meticulously assembled chronology and facts for several hours under direct and cross examination. The commission found in favor of the franchise switch and, possibly because the proceedings had been free of acrimony, NHEC did not appeal the finding.

On June 1, 1988, a 5' wooden spool containing 2,200' of submarine cable arrived on the wooden Hayward Price Construction Company barge. Hayward Price is a Meredith contractor whose specialty is power-line construction. The cable's outside diameter is 1.45" and its central conductor is number "0" aluminum wire. The cable barge backed in to shore at Pitchwood Island and 125' of cable was pulled off the reel. The end of the cable was run 20' past the nearest pole for the 2,400³⁵ volt primary electric loop in the island's interior. Then the barge was driven the 1,750+' to Eagle Island in only 10 minutes and the other end of the cable was coiled at the transformer site.

There were high winds on the Lake for the next few days, and no construction work could be done.

A backhoe was carried by the barge to Pitchwood Island and a 3' deep ditch was dug in the rocky soil from shore to the power pole. Underbrush had to be cleared and three trees cut down. The end of the cable was run right up the power pole to the circuit breaker and fuse. The cable was enclosed in 4" PVC pipe from its beginning on the pole, in the trench, and through the shoreline boulders down to about 3' under water on the lake bottom.

The backhoe was then landed on the southeast pier of the Eagle Island concrete dock and eased on its caterpillar treads past the dock's uprights to shore. The transformer and its 4' x 4' concrete pad were lifted off the barge with the backhoe and then a trench was dug from the transformer to the generator house; a 240 volt 3-wire line inside 3" PVC pipe was placed in this trench.

35

7,200 volts now.

Jack Kozlowski from Meredith and three other electricians meanwhile had installed a 100-amp 120/240 volt system for the house in accord with Gilford's electric code. Two circuit breaker boxes plus a Square-D double-throw master switch connecting either utility or generator power to the house were installed in the generator house. Twelve 110-volt base plugs and 4 220-volt sockets were installed in the house and a circuit-breaker box was placed in the pantry. Seven lamps were placed on the path to the dock and on the breakwater.

The electric power to Eagle Island was turned on at 3 P.M. on June 20, 1988. At that moment the NHEC meter was inserted into its socket on a 6' telephone pole placed just on the house side of the step-down transformer. We took photos, thanked the three Hayward Price Construction men, oohed and aahed at the silent—no generator sound—glowing kitchen light bulbs, and had Coors Lite beer all around.

That summer we took special delight in the new electrification. Life was safer and easier. I suppose it was the same feeling that farmer families had during rural electrification in the '30's and '40's. We no longer knew when water was being pumped because the generator did not kick on. I was able to work quietly at my computer without starting a generator. We did not have to wash dishes by Coleman gasoline lantern light. What a convenience it was to receive telephone calls all over the island with the cordless telephone! I learned to solder copper pipe and re-plumbed the kitchen for the new washer and cut a hole in the kitchen wall for the new drier. We purchased an electric incinerating toilet, a microwave oven, and—best of all—electric blankets.

Once or twice a summer electric power fails for a few hours and we start the 2.5 kilowatt Onan generator, throw the master switch, and run the island on generator power again.

It was not as simple a matter as we first thought when the power failed at 10:30 A.M. on August 12, 1993. After waiting half an hour, we telephoned the NHEC electric outage operator and assured her that our master circuit breaker was 'on' and that there was no 60-cycle hum from the transformer. Ninety minutes later, Bill Hamblin from the Y-Landing in Meredith arrived at the dock with two men from NHEC. Knowing that the fuse and circuit breaker were intact on Pitchwood Island, they diagnosed failure of the Eagle Island transformer. A new one was needed.

A Campbell Marine barge with a crane was at that moment passing between Eagle and Stonedam Islands. The men went to the barge and asked if they would be willing to help with our problem. They were willing, and they then waited, dead in the water, while Bill went back to

Y-Landing and loaded a new transformer athwartships onto his work boat. The transformer was transferred by crane to the Campbell Marine barge. Bill had brought two more NHEC linemen with him, so there were four NHEC and two Campbell Marine men ready to go to work. The first thing to do was to open the transformer box with a special pentagonal socket wrench. When opened, the correct diagnosis became apparent—the cable had been pulled off the two transformer terminals, damaging the central one. The barge came to shore and, with its crane, the old transformer was removed and the new transformer was put in place.

Meanwhile two men borrowed the Boston Whaler and brought the cable up from the bottom and laid it across the boat. They passed the whole submarine length of the cable by hand over the Whaler, drawing themselves at a snail's pace to Pitchwood Island. The outer coating of the cable was damaged³⁶ near the middle white spar buoy towards Welcome Island to the north. When the cable was laid, it was put down in a gentle curve outside³⁷ the three white spars. Now, the middle spar was outside the cable.

The cable was connected to the new transformer and power was restored by 5:30 P.M. How's that for good service! NHEC owns everything up to and including the electric meter, so the repair did not cost us one cent.

This happened on a Thursday. The Monday before, the 46' sailboat Queen of Winnepesaukee struck a rock outside the white spars off Eagle Island. Skipper Larry Tanner telephoned Marine Patrol and asked them to reposition the buoys so that all shallow rocks would be inside, to the west. And, as I learned from talking to one of the Marine Patrol maintenance men, on Thursday morning they moved the middle white spar into deeper water to the east, inadvertently dragging the cable³⁸. The man, as nice as could be, explained that it never occurred to him that our power would come from anyplace but Governors Island and he now was thinking of contacting the two power companies and asking for a map showing the location of all their submarine cables.

³⁶ This superficial 'abrasion' was repaired by wrapping an entire role of electrical tape around the cable at the injury site.

³⁷ To the east, that is.

³⁸ Buoys are anchored by a chain attached to a 200 pound concrete disk. The cable was caught and dragged when the disk, skidding along the bottom, went underneath it.

➤ Telephones and Radios

The underwater telephone cable comes across from Governors Island. Every 3-5 years the cable fails due to internal moisture and it is promptly replaced by two telephone employees on board the New England Telephone Oldtown tunnel-drive runabout kept at Fay's Boatyard.

Before electrification, the house telephone was in the west room and the two outside telephones, kept in elegant rainproof boxes made by Forrest Young, were at the dock and sundeck. After electrification, portable phones sufficed outside and an answering machine was installed next to the telephone inside.

Cellular telephone service came to the Lakes Region in 1992, and we now hold our portable car-and-boat cellular telephone in reserve in case the landline telephone fails.

From 1981 to 1986, my amateur radio station operated from the center room. A 102' dipole wire antenna was hung over the house and a ground plate was put into the lake. Using battery power for a radio-wave output of 100 watts, I contacted many states and countries from Alaska to Czechoslovakia.

➤ Water Systems

In the beginning, the water pump was located in the basement under the west room. The original pump is still there. It is a piston pump with a drive wheel about 18" in diameter. The leather belt and electric motor that ran it are gone. I am not sure, but I think the first water intake was to the west—the 3" pipe³⁹ that emerges from the foundation in this direction may be part of that intake. A sheet-metal lined water storage tank is in the attic above the north bedroom. I suspect that the Wrights ran their generator to light the house in the evening, pumping water at the same time into the storage tank to use the next day. The water pressure at the sinks would have been about 3 pounds⁴⁰ with this gravity-fed system. The water stored in the solar-heated attic would have been pleasantly warm.

³⁹ Removed in 1994.

⁴⁰ If the water surface in the storage tank was 6' above the sink, the water pressure at the sink faucet would be (6/30) x 15 lbs./sq. in.

Later, probably when a half-bath was put upstairs, this system was abandoned and replaced by what we use now. The water intake is at the dock⁴¹, the centrifugal pump and plenum are in the work shop, and the water pressure is about 45 pounds.

The plants and flowers need frequent watering, daily when it is hot or windy. We have set up three garden hoses with nozzles going to different groups of plantings to make it easy to water. A fourth 100' hose, coiled at the north door, serves as a fire hose.

When I arrived in 1975, the two flush toilets⁴² had been removed and sat ignominiously beside the ice house. These, as well as the sinks and bath tub, had drained into the concrete septic tank just northwest of the kitchen. Propane-electric incinerating toilets, the notorious "Destroylets" were placed over the closed toilet pipes in 1975. The downstairs one was replaced by a Canadian propane "Store-Burn" in 1984. After electrification, two all-electric "Incinolet" incinerating toilets were installed⁴³.

➤ Birds and Beasts

These are the birds we have seen on the island: Baltimore oriole, blue jay, cedar waxwing, chickadee, chipping sparrow, crow, dove, downy woodpecker, flicker, goldfinch, hairy woodpecker, kingbird, kingfisher, myrtle warbler, phoebe, purple finch, redwing blackbird, robin, ruby-throated hummingbird, scarlet tanager, song sparrow, tree swallow, and white-breasted nuthatch.

Two of our pets, the dear white kitten "Flake" and 17 year-old "Kitty" are buried in front of the rounded stone⁴⁴ visible from the west-room picture window. Both cats took pleasure in surveying their territory through this window. Planting flowers, I came upon cat bones under the window, no doubt a Wright cat who had enjoyed the same view.

The raccoon cage⁴⁵, made of 1" pipe set in a concrete floor, opposite the work shop contained an animal platform mounted on a vertical tree limb stripped of bark in 1975. Around 1991

⁴¹ The iron intake pipes beside the dock in the 1970's have rusted away. The 1" plastic pipe now used was installed by Bill Cannon and George Kaiser in 1975.

⁴² I paid Bill Cannon \$25 to dispose of these. I later found out from John DeSilva that Bill had carried them to "Pile Driving" and dumped them in Weirs Bay.

⁴³ An incinerating toilet can be intimidating. A guest from Connecticut was perched on one when an electric arc occurred between two rings of the heating coil. The arc hissed, molten steel dripped into the ash pan, the lights dimmed, and a 60-cycle hum was heard throughout the house in the moment before the circuit breaker tripped. The lady's first thought was, "What have I done wrong?" She did not return next year.

⁴⁴ This stone is southeast of the path to Washing Rocks and about 12' from shore.

our husky-chow dog, "Belknap," startled a raccoon who had come through the animal entrance in the kitchen door to see what he could scrounge inside in the middle of the night. The frightened raccoon climbed the kitchen's north wall, as if it were an inside-out tree, and found safety next to the ceiling. We put "Belknap" in a bedroom, turned out the lights, and, in a few minutes, heard the raccoon drop to the floor and go back outside.

A deer was found dead on the island in June of 1975. Neither deer nor moose have been seen near the island since.

In 1978, a duck nested in one of the concrete flower pots on pillars on the Governors Island Piazza. Five ducklings were born within a day of each other. Mother duck jumped to the ground and four babies fluttered down to her. The fifth would not, and, after encouraging the duckling in vain, mother duck and the four babies started down to the dock. This was what the last little fellow needed, and he jumped down and joined the parade to the dock. They all jumped into the water without hesitation, the babies jostled into diamond formation, and all swam away.

When opening the house in 1986, four flying squirrel babies were found in a furry nest on the sill between the shutter and window just to the southeast of the fireplace. We reclosed the shutter and, for a couple weeks watched the babies grow and the mother come in and out of the nest through the diamond-shaped light opening in the shutter. The babies left the nest and we hope they survived. A year later, when the oak tree next to the kitchen door was cut down, a flying squirrel glided down to a nearby tree.

These were the first squirrels that I had seen on the island. Jack Wright had shot all the squirrels decades before⁴⁶. The red squirrels returned in 1990, when a pair of them nested in the tallest pine tree in back of the raccoon cage and had at least two babies. I shot all four⁴⁷, but there have been one or two squirrels shot or found dead in each of the next four years.

Two seagulls, unable to fly because they were tangled together with monofilament fishing line, swam to Eagle Island shore near the sun deck in 1987. Our guests caught them despite several painful pecks. They used a knife to cut off the line wrapped around their legs. The hook of a fishing lure had pierced one seagull's foot. The hook was removed after cutting off the barb with pliers.

⁴⁵ Bill Cannon told me it was a raccoon cage. I never had the heart to ask any more about it.

⁴⁶ Bill Cannon, personal communication.

⁴⁷ Because they eat into houses and damage furniture and supplies.

Around 1990, a pair of weasels from Stonedam Island had kits in a nest in the rocks under the northwest dock pier. They were unafraid of humans. The parents swam back to Stonedam Island with the surviving kits in their mouths when "Kitty" caught one⁴⁸.

In 1992, four muskrats regularly swam back and forth from Governor's Island

A skunk lived in the ice house during the winter and stayed in the vicinity of the dock for years during the 1990's. We did not see the skunk for several seasons but we caught its aroma from time to time and saw the pine-cone shreds that remained after he dug out the pine seeds on the ice-house floor. We finally saw him by flashlight one night just after he sprayed our collie, "Honey."



⁴⁸ The kit that "Kitty" caught was brown and looked like a mink or otter. I showed to a N.H. Fish and Game officer, who said it was a weasel.

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