



New Castle: A boatload of Island Pride

A fisherman's skiff full of beautiful flora, a greeting upon entering New Castle

Bill Pappou Drew, article and photos

Upon entering the island community of New Castle, people are greeted with a welcoming symbol of island pride, a small boat filled with bouquets of flowers. Appropriately named, *Islander*, the colorful flora display represents the Yankee soul and spirit that are part of the fabric of New Castle life.



A beautiful greeting

Looking back over this past year in my association with Rye Reflections, I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to highlight some of the town's challenges and successes.

My 2007 September and October articles, [Citizens polish a gem in New Castle](#) and [The Great Island gem releases new views](#) describe the splendid work that was accomplished by Peter Rice and his Brigade in taking back and refurbishing abandoned Fort Stark.

A January, 2008 article, [Making waves with a cookbook - a winter project](#) describes the phenomenal financial success of the Guild's, [The Island Cook Book](#), (21,500 copies sold). For decades, it has been a labor of love for Peg MacDonald and Ruth Lanham. The Guild has used the funds to complete the



The challenge: NH State Representative, David Borden, on the left, listened to NH State Park employee Gary Bashline point out what could be done, while Peter Rice on the Right, observed and then directed what WAS DONE.



*This is the western shore of Fort Stark. Almost all that is seen was buried or surrounded in brush prior to the arrival of Peter Rice's Fort Stark Brigade.
(Jim Cerny photo)*

building of the Parish Hall and provide for continued maintenance of its operation. It has been and still is the center of the social life in the community.

In May, [Anatomy of a heist: It was history that was stolen](#) is about an affront to the vision, work and support in the restoration of an abandoned town building into the Old Library Museum. It has made us ever aware of the vulnerability of our surroundings. New Castle Historical Society President Rodney Rowland has lead the way for the group to improve the building, obtain a collection and offer to the community a program of some real historical value.



On the left with its calico cover is the first edition of The Island Cookbook. On the right is the entrance to the New Castle Historical Society's headquarters and the Old Library Museum.

In July, [New Castle's backyard hosts man and nature](#) and in August, [Live marine lab for high schoolers](#) display the pride of sharing our very special natural environment.



On the left is a picture of the local swimming hole, "Jumping Rock," and that activity surrounding it's use. On the right future marine biologists, attending the St. Paul's summer program for incoming high school seniors from around the state, do research at the site of the old millpond dam.

Also in August, [One-day opening of Cafe puts visitors back in time](#) is an article describing a personal visit through a crown jewel of the riverside, hundred year old Piscataqua Café. Through the decades descendants of Luther Amazeen, the builder, have preserved the structure.



The Piscataqua Cafe

Future articles are in the works dealing with the New Castle Fire Department, Wentworth Hotel complex, and the Common, all examples of New Castle pride.

The origin of "Islander," is a case in point. Its history parallels those of each of the above examples. It is one of *an opportunity* presenting itself, *vision* of what could be, *efforts* by many to bring it about, and *a continuance* in the use, improvement and expansion of the result.

More than four years ago a lackluster reception was given residents and visitors who entered our island community as they passed by the small island of dirt, lawn, scrub brush that separate the lanes of NH Rt.1B,

In passing the area almost daily, Gina Beecher took note and thought an improvement could be made. In conversation with friend Carolyn Payzant, an artist, creative visions began to take shape. Now, the throttle was open and their creative minds rode the waves to bring something about.



This is the view of four years ago as people came off the causeway onto the island of New Castle

Their first approach was to present these ideas to their spouses. As with such journeys, there is a bit of apprehension that sometimes exists on the part of the listener. However, all jumped on board and embarked on the voyage

The group decided to pursue the project without formally asking permission of the town to do so. Perhaps knowing from previous experiences in town, like the Wentworth Hotel, Camp Langdon (the Common), the Old Library, Fort Stark and others, each time a project was first proposed, the response seemed to be, "We have no money, no time, you're on your own."

In contacting the New Castle Cemetery trustees who have responsibility over the condition of this small patch of ground, they supported the project and said they would continue to mow the grass and be helpful in any way possible. A course was charted and it was "sally forth, we're underway."

Cruising over the first wave of "let's do something," they pondered, "How can we make the *something* happen?" Ideas flowed and alternatives analyzed. "Yes, a garden, with a floral display. Yes, it can be planted, seasonally decorated and modified," The idea of "Perhaps a boat, with flowers planted in and around it would be a good tack."

The Word spread. "OK, a boat but where do we find one?" A search was made but no boat and no leads. (Maybe those last two words should be "no painters," a nautical term for the single rope attached to the bow of a small boat to lead it and tie it up)

When friends Sugden and Sally Murphy traveled by Petey's Summertime Seafood Restaurant on Ocean Road in Rye and with knowledge of the search Sally commented, "Look, small boats with flowers. Perhaps he has a spare one we could use?"

Numerous times in the life of any project fortunate circumstances just seem to happen which propel it significantly forward. It is like 'riding a good wave.' An example of this is the beautiful reconditioned flagpole at Fort Stark. A thank you is in order to a thoughtful benefactor and to a small assist with a detail from a helpful organization in town. The pole and its flag are magnificent.

To the Murphy's surprise, Petey Aikens, owner of the restaurant, offered them a boat. A quick review determined that it was too big for the need. He did, however, offer to contact friend, John Heisey, a local fisherman and boat builder.

'The Boat Folk,' as they began to call themselves, became excited at the opportunity Petey had presented to them. "I wonder how much we are in for?" they questioned. In a special meeting with Petey and John, the need was



Petey's Summertime Seafood Restaurant. Ocean Boulevard, Rye Beach, NH



Petey Aikens

evaluated and John offered his services to build a skiff, (A word describing a small flat bottomed boat with a pointed bow and square stern used in shallow water areas). "I will do it and have it delivered it to you, gratis." Perhaps there were a few free meals offered at the restaurant for getting John into the situation, but the Boat Folk were thrilled the outcome.



This functional skiff used for the display was built by John Heisey. (Gina Beecher photo)

Practically within hours John created and built a skiff. Seeing and hearing about the voyage another Rye resident got involved. Ben Robbins of SLX Landscaping and Excavation joined the crew and the three of them, Petey, John, and Ben delivered the skiff, prepared its final mooring, moved it into place and filled it

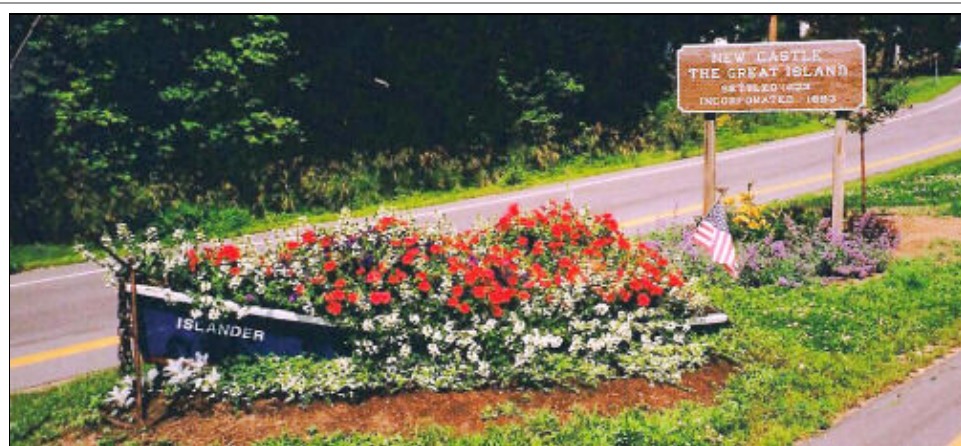
with dirt.



The group of three, Petey, John and Ben arrive with the skiff, equipment, supplies and then work to install their end of the project. (Gina Beecher photo)

This huge move forward came about through the unsolicited generosity of three out -of-town individuals helping neighbors in need. Isn't that what "boat people" do? Help each other?

On May 26, 2004, and the Memorial Day weekend that followed, efforts to bring this all about were initiated and completed. The first planting was a complete success.



With the first planting, the result is outstanding. (Gina Beecher photo)

After the launching, the group received some financial help in the form of a grant from Portsmouth Garden Club. From their "Festival of Trees" event at the Urban Forestry Center in Portsmouth, proceeds raised provide grants to area individuals and groups involved in new projects in the beautification of the seacoast area. It was the only outside monies received by the Boat Folk in the venture of the Islander voyage.

Now that the first "leg of the course" was completed, a different tack necessitated a need for organized support to keep the effort in the proper direction and afloat. Sugden designed an irrigation system with a holding capacity of fifteen gallons. This saves time and attendance in the watering of the garden. Tirelessly, Carolyn and John Payzant continue to provide the impetus to cruise forward in the plantings and summertime activities. Sugden takes on the fall and spring chores of preparation and maintenance of the site. It is solely, the Boat Bolk's project.

One person's idle comment, provoking more thought, with the thread picked up by others, then expanded into a full blown program produces a wonderful result.

Have lunch or dinner at the Wentworth Hotel. It was one person's dream and vision that instead of tearing down the abandoned Hotel, "USE IT." It was Etoile Holzaephel, who for years encouraged others that success could be realized. She was the spark that kept the fire from going out. It survived many storms although at times there were threats of going under. But the vessel endured, continued to float and is now cruising. It has been individual efforts, working in harmony with others, to bring about the result of which we are all are so proud.



The AAA Four Diamond Wentworth by the Sea, A Marriott Hotel & Spa overlooking Little Harbor and the Atlantic Ocean in New Castle, New Hampshire

New Castle Pride.

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