

Ruth Moore and *Speak to the Winds*

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“An island less than 2 miles across and 3 miles around, Great Gott Island now welcomes back each year a faithful, small summer population who give up phone and electric service for the solitude of the windswept shores located about one mile off the southern tip of Mount Desert Island.”¹

The term “Gott’s” refers to Little Gotts and Great Gotts Island, connected by a bar at low tide.

“Four thousand years ago, the island's first residents -- perhaps the ancestors of today's Penobscot, Passamaquoddy and Micmac nations -- built their winter fires there. Their lives in tune to the seasons, those earliest inhabitants warmed their faces to the winter sun and dipped into the ocean for fish and seals. An abundance of clams were the beginnings of the shell heap that later intrigued Moore. By the late 17th century, two families were living year-round on the island... The island population grew from 10 families during the mid-1800s to its peak in 1900 of 100 year-round residents.”²

Ruth Moore was born to Philip Moore (1871-1937) and Lovina Ethel (Joyce) Moore (1878-1956) on July 21, 1903.

Photo: [Philip Moore with fish](#)
[Lovina Moore photos](#)

"Philip Moore lobstered, fished a weir, and ran a small store in an ell of the Moore house. He was also the postmaster for Gott's Island and turned his hand to whatever other work came his way. Lovina Moore was a hard-working woman who took care of her children, ran the house, kept chickens and a cow, and planted a big garden. She also took in a few boarders and fed summer people who vacationed elsewhere on the island but came to the Moore house for their meals. ‘She was a strong woman,’ Esther Trask, one of Ruth's younger sisters, comments. Trask feels that Lovina Moore was the model for the strong, resourceful, and emotionally resilient women characters that abound in Ruth Moore's books.”³

Ruth had one brother and two sisters: Harvey, Esther, Louise

Moore homestead photos: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [Aerial view](#)

Photo: [Ruth and Harvey, toddlers](#)

Photo: [Ruth, Harvey, and Esther](#)

Photo: [Harvey, teen](#): Seems like he could have inspired the Roger character in *STTW*.

Ruth’s parents ran the island store and post office.

Ruth and her siblings attended Gotts Island Elementary School.

“Ruth was born into and grew up during a time of great transition. Like most island communities along the Maine coast, life had gone virtually unchanged for the century or more of settlement. With

¹ “Museum Traces Island's History: Abbe Museum Blends Ruth Moore Poetry With Great Gott Island Artifacts,” By Kathy Harbour, The Bangor Daily News, May 28, 1994.

² “Museum Traces Island's History: Abbe Museum Blends Ruth Moore Poetry With Great Gott Island Artifacts,” By Kathy Harbour, The Bangor Daily News, May 28, 1994.

³ “Homesick For That Place: Ruth Moore Writes About Maine” by Jennifer Craig Pixley, The University of Maine site, 1996; <http://dll.umaine.edu/welcome/wom/rmarticle.htm>

the development of public transportation in the form of coastal steamers that traveled routes along the New England coast during the latter part of the 19th century, well-off families from the cities began to explore what they saw as untouched Nature. By the turn of the century, these ‘rusticators’ had made their way to Bar Harbor, Maine and established there a thriving enclave of summer ‘cottages’ and grand hotels. A few of these summer people ventured into areas outlying the established Mt. Desert Island communities of Bar Harbor, Seal Harbor, and Northeast Harbor.”⁴ –

“As described in Ruth’s story ‘The Ladies from Philadelphia,’ which originally appeared in Harper’s Bazaar in 1945, this first influx of visitors brought a new facet to island life - always a little apart due to economic and cultural disparity, yet still a part of a now heterogeneous village. The ‘regulars,’ Ruth’s word, became familiar in their regularity and did not disrupt village life the way later arrivals would. They maintained a permanent presence on the island through their cottages, and interacted regularly with other island residents. This was especially true of the Moore family, as Philip Moore ran the local post office and provisioners, and took in boarders. These summer people were in sharp contrast to the second wave of partiers, who came to the island in increasing numbers on day picnics throughout Ruth’s childhood. From Ruth’s description, this second wave was treated with distrust - an attitude that seems, more usually than not, to have been well earned. The established summer families developed a symbiotic relationship with the island villagers. There can be little doubt that this exposure to people “from away” had a lasting influence on Ruth. The Ovingtons donated more than a hundred books to form the island library, housed in the basement of the Methodist church. Ruth admitted to tearing through all fifteen volumes of the complete works of Robert Louis Stevenson in a week. In ‘The Lonely Heart,’ Ruth recalled how Miss Peterson showed visiting children her Nature Encyclopedia and ‘tried to get us interested in knowing the names of the birds and grasses and mushrooms.’ The shelves that wallpaper Ruth’s house still contain numerous field guides to every conceivable plant and creature.”⁵

Steamboat photos - [“Norumbega”](#). [“Mount Desert”](#)

Ruth attended Ellsworth High School on the mainland, then New York State Teachers College in Albany, NY. In 1925, at the age of 22, she graduated with a major in English and a minor in Economics.

Ruth tried teaching straight out of college, but didn’t like it, so she moved to Greenwich Village and started secretarial work.

1926: “Her most important job at this point was as secretary to Mary White Ovington, one of the cofounders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The Ovington family had summered for many years on Gotts Island when Ruth was growing up. She also worked for the NAACP reporting directly to James Weldon Johnson, author of *God’s Trombones*, and helping run a fund-raising campaign. At least twice while at the NAACP she carried out investigations in the south, one leading to freeing two young black boys charged with murder. From 1932-35 she was private secretary to Dr. John Hayes Holmes, a liberal minister.”⁶

“In 1936 she became private secretary and assistant to Alice Tisdale Hobart, author of *Oil for the Lamps of China*. This job took her to Washington, D.C. and later California, where she also managed a fruit ranch for the Hobart family. In 1940 she was introduced to Eleanor Mayo by her sister Esther Moore.”⁷

⁴ Sven Davisson, from the introduction to “When Foley Craddock Tore Off My Grandfather’s Thumb: The Collected Stories of Ruth Moore & Eleanor Mayo”

⁵ Sven Davisson, from the introduction to “When Foley Craddock Tore Off My Grandfather’s Thumb: The Collected Stories of Ruth Moore & Eleanor Mayo”

⁶ History Trust biography.

⁷ History Trust biography.

1942: She becomes an editor at Readers Digest.⁸

1943: First novel published - *The Weir*

1946: *Spoonhandle*

“The New York Times review described the book as possessing ‘an authentic feeling for place, for the true and ordinary values of every day, the meaningfulness of independence, of work, of honesty and kindness.’ *Spoonhandle* spent fourteen weeks on the Times’ bestseller list—in company with George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, W. Somerset Maugham’s *Then and Now*, Ralph Gould’s *Yankee Storekeeper* and Robert Penn Warren’s *All the King’s Men*. Film rights to the book were quickly purchased by 20th Century Fox who produced it as *Deep Waters*, a feature length film shot on location at Vinalhaven, Maine.”⁹

“*Spoonhandle* spent 14 weeks on the bestseller list, and sold over a million copies. Hollywood director Henry King made it into a movie. *Deep Waters* was filmed on Vinalhaven and nominated for two Academy Awards. Ruth was very unhappy with the script, however, which differed significantly from her book and she ultimately walked off the set. The result, according to her niece Muriel Davisson, was that she was effectively blackballed by the film industry for the rest of her life.”¹⁰

1947: With money from *Spoonhandle* film rights, Ruth and Eleanor were able to relocate to Maine and build a house at Bass Harbor.

Muriel Trask Davisson, in “[The House that Ruth and Eleanor Built](#),” (published in The Newsletter of the Tremont Historical Society in 2005), notes:

They built the house themselves with the guidance and help of Eleanor’s father, a builder by trade. They hammered nails, sawed lumber, shingled and painted. Only tasks requiring specialized skills, such as plumbing and wiring, were done for them....The story of their home building is as true to Maine as the novels they wrote.

At the end of World War II with lumber scarce and funds short, they scavenged much of the raw material that went into the house. For \$225 they bought an old CCC camp building on Eagle Lake that provided dry wood for timbers and flooring....

They bought 100-year-old doors from a second-hand dealer in Lamoine who thought the doors may have come from the old Thompson house on Thompson’s Island. Some joists and timbers came from two century-old houses being torn down. Some of the lumber came from beachcombing. Thresholds for the doors were fashioned from a new, two-by-eight, 20-footlong piece of Oregon spruce that Ruth surmised in an article she wrote, may have been lost from some ship’s deck load. They dragged it a half mile across the island where they found it and boated it home in their skiff..

While they were building, the Fire of ’47 raged on the east side of Mount Desert Island. Ruth wrote that they often paused to watch the smoke rising over the mountains and wondered what would happen if the wind shifted. They moved in on Thanksgiving Day in 1947. They

⁸ Islandport Press website

⁹ Sven Davisson, from the introduction to “When Foley Craddock Tore Off My Grandfather’s Thumb: The Collected Stories of Ruth Moore & Eleanor Mayo”

¹⁰ “Ruth Moore Remembered,” by Harry Gratwick.

had no electricity or plumbing and carried water from the pasture spring, but they were at last at home in the house they had built.

“And, indeed, the two women were well-suited to one another. If Moore could sometimes be ‘abrupt’ or impatient, Mayo often smoothed things over. If Moore liked privacy and solitude, Mayo was the one who arranged their social life. If Moore preferred to spend her energy writing, researching, and gardening, Mayo ran the house and kept up with their investments. Both women enjoyed working in the gardens. The big vegetable garden was Ruth's territory while Eleanor managed her English garden.”¹¹

Bibliography

Novels

The Weir (1943)

Spoonhandle (1946)

The Fire Balloon (1948)

Candlemas Bay (1950)

Jeb Ellis of Candlemas Bay (1952)

A Fair Wind Home (1953)

Speak to the Winds (1956)

The Walk Down Maine Street (1960)

Second Growth (1962)

The Sea Flower (1964)

The Gold and Silver Hooks (1969)

"Lizzie" & Caroline (1972)

Dinosaur Bite (1976)

Sarah Walked Over the Mountain (1979)

Poetry

Cold As a Dog and the Wind Northeast (1958)

Time's Web: Poems by Ruth Moore (1972)

The Tired Apple Tree: Poems and Ballads (1990)

Collections

High Clouds Soaring, Storms Driving Low: The Letters of Ruth Moore (1993)

When Foley Craddock Tore Off My Grandfather's Thumb: The Collected Stories of Ruth Moore and Eleanor Mayo (2004)

Short fiction and essays

“Pennies in the Water,” *The American Girl* July 1942

¹¹ [“Homesick for that Place: Ruth Moore Writes About Maine” by Jennifer Craig Pixley](#)

"The Ladies from Philadelphia," *Harper's Bazaar* August 1945

"It Don't Change Much," *The New Yorker* October 1945

"Farmer Takes a Newspaper," *The Saturday Review of Literature* July 1948

"The First Christmas Spent in the House Ruth Built," *Boston Sunday Post* December 1963

"The Lonely of Heart," *Puckerbrush Review* 1989

"How Come You're Picking My Violets," *Tuesday Weekly*

"Some Notes On Clerks of the Works," *Bar Harbor Times*

"St. Columba's Mission," *Ashé Journal* 3(2) Summer 2004

Note: Eleanor Mayo is also writing at this time: *Turn Home, Swan's Harbor*, etc.

Photo: [Adult Ruth with her catch of the day](#)

"Ruth was known to her nieces and nephews as 'Uppy,' a name that stemmed from when her oldest nephew was a baby and would follow her around the house saying, 'up, up, up,' when he wanted her to lift him up. Subsequently Muriel told me Ruth signed her books to family members, 'From Up.'" ¹²

"The house and its outlying buildings are a testament to the two's diverse interests: antique glass bottles, Native American artifacts, old maps, fossils, and geologic specimens clutter every available inch. Whole rooms are dedicated to displays of collections organized and labeled, forming a home museum. The house was also the focus of social gatherings with their literary friends. They maintained close friendships with other female couples along the Maine coast and literary, publishing-world friends would visit from New York in the summers. They did, however, treasure their privacy... They constructed a secluded shore-side camp that Ruth could escape to and write undisturbed. Soon enough they settled back, once again becoming enduring fixtures in the fabric of village life."¹³

1981: Eleanor Mayo dies.

Eleanor was diagnosed with cancer in 1978 at the age of 58, and Ruth nursed her for three years until she passed away from a brain tumor (1981).

According to Sven Davisson, in letters written after Eleanor's death, Ruth described herself as having "lost her guts."

Dennis Damon talk at Bass Harbor this year:

Dennis is a former high school teacher. He fell in love with Ruth's writing, and decided he wanted to talk to her. Called the "M. Moore" in the phone book and she answered.

Dennis: "I would like to come visit with you."

Ruth: "Oh, I'd love that."

Dennis: "You would?!"

Ruth asked him to come over two hours later.

Dennis: "The kitchen was clean, Immaculate in fact."

"Living room in my mind's eye now is all wood. Walls were all books - all bookcases."

She had a red Naugahyde chair in the corner. Side table piled high with books.

¹² "Ruth Moore Remembered," By Harry Gratwick Working Waterfront, December 29, 2010

¹³ [Source?](#)

Another side table covered with the biggest ash tray you've ever seen.

"She wore denim pants and a red chamois shirt and white tshirt. White hair, lot of wrinkles, and steely steely eyes that locked on you."

They started trading stories. He thought if he could have a half hour with her, that'd be great. He spent almost three hours there. He had to leave, but she asked if he could come back, and he did, many times. She was the one that got him into reading, even though it was later in life.¹⁴

Ruth Moore died in 1989 in Bar Harbor.

Since her death:

Ruth had shown items from her personal collection to Diane Kopec, director of the Abbe Museum. Diane believed they may have archaeological significance, and proceeded to set up an excavation project on Gott's Island at "The Ruth Moore Site."

"On display throughout the summer, the Indian Shell Heap exhibit is rich not only in memorabilia from the past 100 years and Moore's own life, but also the fragments of past centuries. Pipe stems and beads have been lifted from the heap and dated at more than 1,000 years old. Stemmed spear points and dentate-impressed pottery show the work of early hunters and gatherers from 2,000 years ago. Even more rare in a site that is being swept away by the winds and tides of erosion, are shards of pottery from what may have been the island's earliest inhabitants 4,000 years in the past. And dog bones are there, a reminder of those early companions from 2,000 years gone by whose bleached out remains also fell in place for preservation in the shell heap that has inspired both poets and archaeologists."¹⁵

Results from that site were included in the exhibit [Layers of Time at the Abbe Museum](#).

Blackberry Press printed a collection of her letters (edited by Sanford Phippen), and her and Eleanor Mayo's short stories (edited by Sven Davisson).

Numerous articles have been published about her.

Islandport Press have been republishing her books, most recently *Speak to the Winds*.

Bass Harbor Library and Tremont Historical Society celebrate Ruth Moore every July during Ruth Moore Days.

The current owners of the Moore homestead found a shoe in the [wall!](#)

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SPEAK TO THE WINDS

Setting the scene:

[Old postcard of surf at Gotts](#)

¹⁴ Dennis Damon speaks at Bass Harbor Public Library during 2022 Ruth Moore Days: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wK3RIHODYc>

¹⁵ "Museum Traces Island's History: Abbe Museum Blends Ruth Moore Poetry With Great Gott Island Artifacts," By Kathy Harbour, The Bangor Daily News, May 28, 1994.

[Moore's weir](#)
[Accidentally Wes Anderson post office](#)
[Gott's sloops](#)
[The Pool](#)
[Montell Gott's buildings](#)
[Great Gott Island village](#)
[Great Gott Island bar](#)
[Methodist Church and congregation](#)
[Weir](#)
[Great Gott weir](#)

The people of Gotts

Berlin Gott's account from the 1920's, quoted in the Lewiston Sun Journal in the '50s:
"The island people have been a remarkably healthy, long lived and prolific race. A good many of them have been lost at sea, but if they escaped that fate, their chances of surviving to a good old age on a diet of fresh fish, homegrown produce, and germ-free sea breezes were excellent. It is a local tradition with a good basis of proof that if one wanted to grow fat and healthy, all he needed to do was live on gotts island for a few months."

"Early mail service to Gotts Island was very informal with letters taken ashore or brought out by anyone who had an errand in the harbor. Myra Miller's writes in her diaries of 1874-1878 of the arrival of much welcomed letters."¹⁶

[Esther Moore in front of their house](#)
[Frank Babbidge and Erastus Gott](#)
[Frank Babbidge and family](#)
[Frank Babbidge](#)
[Jennie Lawson and Marie Rumell](#)
[Gotts Island students, Ruth Moore included](#)
[Schoolkids, Moores included](#)
[Hollis Melvin, 5yo in 1921](#)
[Old Mr. and Mrs. Babbidge](#)
[Moore women and girls](#)
[Erastus Gott](#)

[Berlin Gott and family](#)
[Berlin Gott, Gott's Island mailman](#)

[Montelle Gott](#)
[Last year-rounder article](#)

Dennis Driscoll:

"Dennis Driscoll, the young Irish man who worked for the Hardings on Duck Island, moved to Gotts Island in 1883 after the fire [on Duck] forced them all to leave. His wife, Rose Gott Driscoll, was born on Gotts Island. He became the first person of record that I know of to become a mail carrier to Gotts Island. Clarence Harding tells me that Dennis brought the mail twice, sometimes three times a week, from the post office in Tremont... Dennis kept his rowboat, right next to the doctor's dory, at the "peapod beach," just beyond the Crescent Beach. Clarence says that the man would not row all the way to [Bass] harbor but would beach his boat just past the lighthouse, approximately where Ruth Moore built her house in

¹⁶ [Gotts Island Maine - Its People, by Rita \(Johnson\) Kenway](#)

later years. Then he would carry the mailsack on his back and walk almost a mile to the wharf and back. This seems strange because most of the local people, unless the seas were rough, would rather row than walk anywhere. He continued to carry the mail over the years until he got too old to do it. He delivered the mail to the post office on the Island which was located at Philip and Vinie Moore's house and store during the early years."¹⁷

[Dennis Driscoll wheeling Miss Peterson](#)
[Dennis Driscoll and dog](#)
[Driscoll women](#)

Mrs. and Miss Peterson, aka Mrs. and Miss Greenwood:
[Note: There is more on Miss Peterson in Ruth's story, "The Lonely Heart."]

"...a few of the village families took in boarders. In the early 1900's a Miss Peterson and her mother came from Philadelphia to spend the summer. They came several summers, and then, one fall, Mrs. Peterson was too ill to make the trip back to Philadelphia, so they rented a village house for the winter. Mrs. Peterson died during the winter and her daughter decided to make Gotts Island her home. That summer, she had built a house on Gotts Island Head, a promontory of huge rocks jutting out to sea. Her house was rather a city house of two stories and a porch. She had a beautiful rose garden, surrounded by a stone wall to shelter it, and during the winter, she was forced continually to wash her windows because of the spray from the waves breaking on the rocks in front of her house. She had sent, from Philadelphia, her furniture and beautiful china and silver. Here she lived all year around from 1910 to 1925, with occasional trips to Bar Harbor to visit relatives. She often entertained the island people, and is said to have had seven-course dinners which she cooked and served herself. My husband remembers going to her house as a boy with the village children and the younger married set for parties of charades and games....Miss Peterson used to push the wheelbarrow the mile and a half of woods road to the village, to get her mail and groceries, three times a week, on mail days..."¹⁸

Berlin [Gott] claims that a man walked over to Miss Peterson's once a day to check up on her. She kept a kerosene lamp going in her front window, an unofficial but meticulous lightkeeper.¹⁹

Miss Peterson was also considered "ugly," there really was an episode of Hokey Pokey embarrassing the kids at the Christmas party, and Ruth's father and Frank Babbidge did go after her during a huge storm to make sure she got home alright.²⁰

"Living on the far side of the Island presents many difficulties in getting provisions, as those living there today can readily attest. Everything she needed had to be transported nearly a mile across the island to her house. Although I am sure some neighbors helped her occasionally, this wiry little woman brought most of her supplies across by wheelbarrow in all weather conditions. Ted Holmes, in his story "An Island in my Life", relates that he once saw her start out, pushing a three-burner kerosene stove on her wheelbarrow. ...Betty Holmes Baldwin remembers that Miss Peterson wore her hair in a pompadour in front, swept it up in back into a bun on top, covered with a flat black hat. She would never wear pants, but dressed in an oilskin skirt and rubberboots when she needed to keep dry."²¹

[St. Columba's Episcopal Church](#): Founded at Miss Peterson's insistence
"Although she attended the active Methodist/Episcopal Church which had been built on the Island between 1893-1894, Miss Peterson yearned for the familiar Episcopal service. Through her influence,

¹⁷ [Gotts Island Maine - Its People, by Rita \(Johnson\) Kenway](#)

¹⁸ Gotts Island, Maine by Jane M. Holmes, typescript pamphlet, p. 8 - 1953

¹⁹ Berlin Gott's account from the 1920's, quoted in the Lewiston Sun Journal in the '50s

²⁰ [Gotts Island Maine - Its People, by Rita \(Johnson\) Kenway](#)

²¹ [Gotts Island Maine - Its People, by Rita \(Johnson\) Kenway](#)

the Trustees of the Episcopal Diocesan of Maine bought a small piece of land from Margaret Trask in July 1916 for \$40.00. Then she took charge of the building and furnishing of the small chapel. St. Columba, and dedicated it to her mother. When it was finished, she astonished the Island people with the display of the fine linens and rugs she had made for it.”²²

“This introduction of a second church on the island divided the island people. Some joined the Episcopal Church to please Miss Peterson, but some who were just as friendly with her stuck staunchly to the Methodist Church and, I am sorry to say, were belligerent about it. Miss Peterson herself was heard to say toward the end of her life that she thought the introduction of a second church had been a mistake, and I must say I agree with her.”²³

[Photo: Mrs. Peterson's house that burned](#)
[Petit Plaisants Cottage \(Miss Peterson's house\)](#)
[Death inquest](#)

“During World War I, RADIONBD, located at Otter Cliffs, had a remote transmitter site at Seawall from 1917 until 1935...Radio men at this broadcasting station on Mt. Desert Island knew [Miss Peterson's] place and had watched for her light, which burned as a beacon for mariners each night in an upstairs seaward window. At 4:50a.m., one of them saw flames coming out of the roof of the house; they saw the roof fall in at 7:30a.m., nearly three hours later.

“There was nothing they could do to alert the islanders for there was no telephone cable to Gotts. A strong wind blowing from the North carried the flames out to sea. On the Island no one saw the flames nor dreamed what was happening so near at hand. On Great Duck Island the lighthouse keeper knew, faraway on Mt. Desert the radio men knew, all up and down the coast it was telephoned from village to village. But her friends on Gotts Island, a mile away, suspected nothing.

The next afternoon, after the storm had blown itself out, two men, on their way to Duck Island to water their sheep pastured there, came in sight of Gotts Island Head. They were amazed to see that the house was gone! They hurried back and rushed up across the island, alerting the village as they went with the news, stopping only to get a woman to go with them- so that if she was wandering around in her nightdress, there would be a woman along to look after her -they entered the snowy woods. ²⁴

GOTTS ISLANDERS MOVE AWAY

“In 1927 came the real end of the village. For some time the young people of the island had objected to the isolation of island life. They wanted movies, cars, telephones and electric lights. Also, the economic advantage of living on the island had diminished. In the days of sail being so much nearer to the fishing grounds had given Gotts Island fishermen a distinct advantage over fishermen from the harbor. Philip Moore had a weir between the islands, so there was always plenty of lobster bait, and there were enough men carrying lobster to bring a buyer to the island periodically. But with the advent of the gas engine the island became a twenty minute run from Bass Harbor, and harbor men were at their traps almost as early as island men. Also, the island had always had one great disadvantage. The only harbor, known as the Pool, is dry at low tide. This meant moving one's boat sometimes in the middle of the night to make it available in the early morning, and then sleeping with one ear to the wind so as to move it again if a gale struck on the side where it was temporarily moored. Perhaps nothing would have come of the idea of moving if Clarence Harding's house and barn had not burned one rainy night. But Clarence decided not to rebuild and moved with his family to Bernard. That began the exodus. The Babbages moved to Portland (Mrs. Babbage had always hoped the island would sink!). And finally the Moores, who had been very successful with summer boarders, bought the Davis house in McKinley to run as a hotel. This took

²² [Gotts Island Maine - Its People, by Rita \(Johnson\) Kenway](#)

²³ Gotts Island, Maine by Jane M. Holmes, typescript pamphlet, p. 8 - 1953

²⁴ [Gotts Island Maine - Its People, by Rita \(Johnson\) Kenway](#)

the store, the post office, the weir and, as Mrs. Moore was the only one willing to board the teacher, the school as well.

“By that time Berlin Gott had a powerboat and was awarded the mail contract. At first Berle delivered the mail house-to-house by wheelbarrow. A central location in the village was selected and the outgoing mail was deposited in a Gotts Island mailbox in Jennie Harding’s barn. At one point, as the story is told, Russell Gott read the contract more carefully and discovered that it need not be delivered door-to-door but only to the Island.²⁵

Berlin Gott and his family also left, in the fall of 1927.

One Gott has returned and still lives there alone [in 1953]. Berlin’s brother, Montell Gott, left the Light Service, where he was stationed at Duck Island, and, separated from his wife, came back to the island in 1928. He left again in 1933 on a romantic journey with an Irish girl who was working for a summer family, and was gone for five years. Since 1938 he has lived alone on the island and is weathering the winter gales now.²⁶

But the island is still there, still beautiful, still used and enjoyed. Summer people have bought many of the old houses and built a few new ones. Gotts, Hardings, Moores and Trasks all come frequently to visit, and most of those who have died have been buried in the cemetery on the hillside, [including Ruth’s parents].

The use of Jennie Harding's barn probably ended the summer after her death in February, 1942 because her family closed up her house then. At this point, the shed was added to Montell Gott’s house and the mailbox and individual mails lots were housed there [until his death in 1963.] Russell helped distribute the mail until the early 1950s, when he was nearly 40 years old.”

Now, about 60 years since Montell’s death, the island is a blend of summer residents and Maine Coast Heritage Trust conserved land.

²⁵ [Gotts Island Maine - Its People, by Rita \(Johnson\) Kenway](#)

²⁶ [Gotts Island Maine - Its People, by Rita \(Johnson\) Kenway](#)