

A postcard of the ferry *Bluenose*. Collection of the Mount Desert Island Historical Society

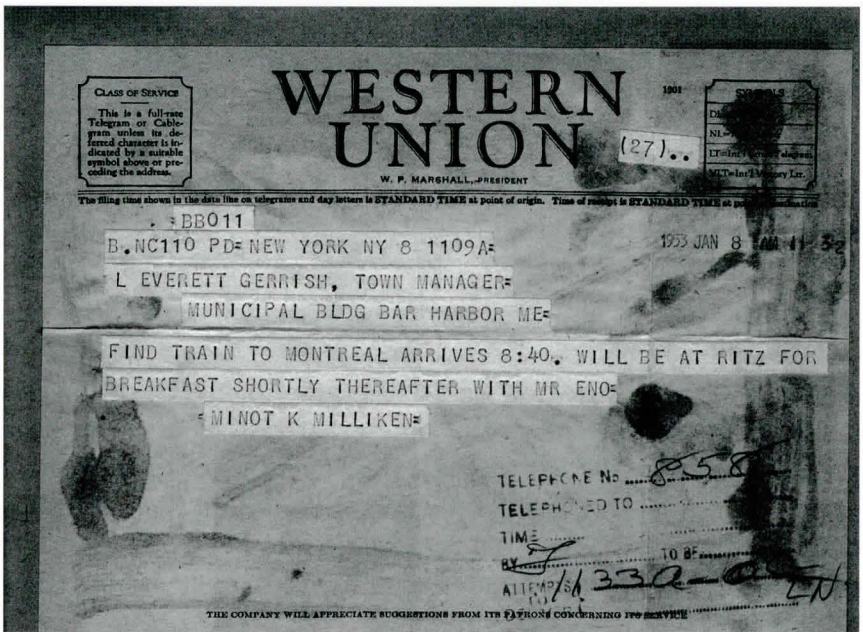
The Journey of the Ferry *Bluenose*

Carroll Fernald

The first mention of a ferry service between Yarmouth, Nova Scotia and Bar Harbor, Maine was reported late in 1949 in the *Bar Harbor Times*. Joseph T. Edgar, president of the Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce, stated that “the hydrographic map showed Bar Harbor to be the nearest suitable terminus on the Maine coast, it being 90 miles from Yarmouth. The deep and beautiful waters of Frenchman’s Bay would make an excellent location for such a car ferry.”¹ Angus McGugan of the Canadian Maritime Commission said, “I am looking forward to the day when this ferry will travel between Bar Harbor and Yarmouth. We are taking one step at a time. The passage of the Ferry Bill by the Maine Legislature is one of those steps.”²

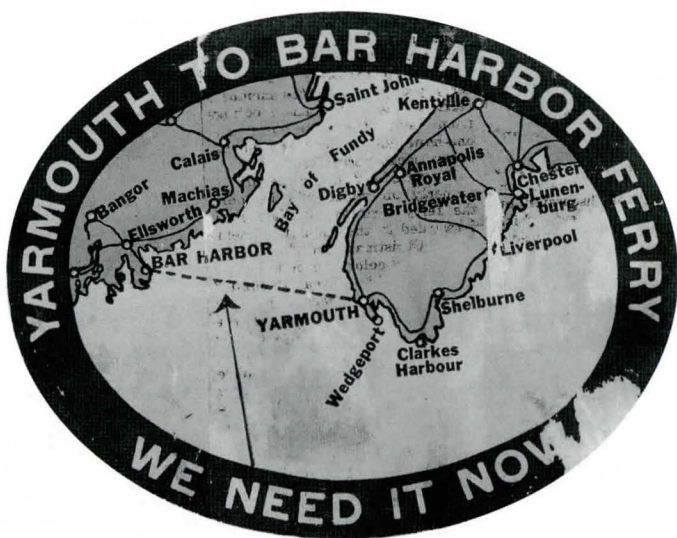
On December 31, 1950, six hundred citizens of Bar Harbor voted to purchase the seven-acre Edward T. Stotesbury Estate as the terminus for the new ferry. Some summer residents proposed a public hearing on “the

approaches, control and appearance”³ of the proposed ferry terminal but they didn’t get it. The choice of the site was primarily that of the Canadians because it was the only spot, at that time, that was both available and had the navigational facilities required. Multiple letters to the editor were submitted by both year-round Bar Harbor residents, who were in favor of the ferry, and summer residents, who opposed the use of the Stotesbury estate as the terminal site. Amos Eno and Minot Milliken were convinced that the location would accelerate a decline in the number of Bar Harbor summer residences, and that an ever-increasing tax burden could drive away the rest. They met in Montreal in January 1953 to discuss alternatives, but to no avail. The Stotesbury land became the chosen site and the residence was ultimately demolished after discussions about remodeling it as a waiting room and ticket office. The bill to commit \$1,000,000 to build the terminal passed on April 28, 1953.⁴



Bar Harbor residents Amos Eno and Minot Milliken opposed the proposed terminal site and met in Montreal to seek alternatives. *Collection of the Mount Desert Island Historical Society*

A ferry-naming contest in Canada was announced in *The Yarmouth Light* in February 1953. Some of the suggestions were “Yar-Bar,” “Progress,” “Fairy Queen,” “Fundy Bar,” “Do-Maine,” and “Maritimer.” The ultimate winner, “Bluenose,” was chosen to honor the schooner of the same name,



A sticker expressing support for the ferry service.
Collection of the Mount Desert Island Historical Society

the former queen of the North Atlantic fishing squadron whose grave is a hidden reef in the Caribbean. (The schooner was built in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia and her career, from 1921 to 1946, included victories in every official international schooner race in which she competed. When she finally met her end operating a cargo service in the Caribbean, she was still the undefeated champion of North Atlantic racing.)⁵⁵

The ferry *Bluenose* was built in Lauzan, Quebec at a cost of \$5,000,000. The ship had the capacity to carry 150 passenger cars and 600 passengers, propelled by engines capable of developing 12,000 horsepower and averaging 18 ½ knots. She made her first voyage to Bar Harbor in July 1955 and her last voyage to Yarmouth on January 13, 1997, after operating for more than 40 years.

Notes

- ¹ *Bangor Daily News*, [date illegible], 1949.
- ² *Yarmouth Light*, February 19, 1953.
- ³ *Bar Harbor Times*, [unknown date].
- ⁴ *Bangor Daily News*, April 29, 1953.
- ⁵ *Yarmouth Light*, October 12, 1954.