

Chebacco

A stained glass artwork featuring two pinecones and two pine branches with needles. The pinecones are rendered in shades of yellow and brown, while the pine needles are in vibrant teal and blue. The background is a deep blue with a grid pattern of black lines, and the entire scene is framed by a yellow border at the top and bottom.

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the Mount Desert Island Historical Society

HARBORING RELIGION: MISSIONARIES,
CONVERTS, AND SOJOURNERS

Volume XX 2019

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Volume XX
HARBORING RELIGION:
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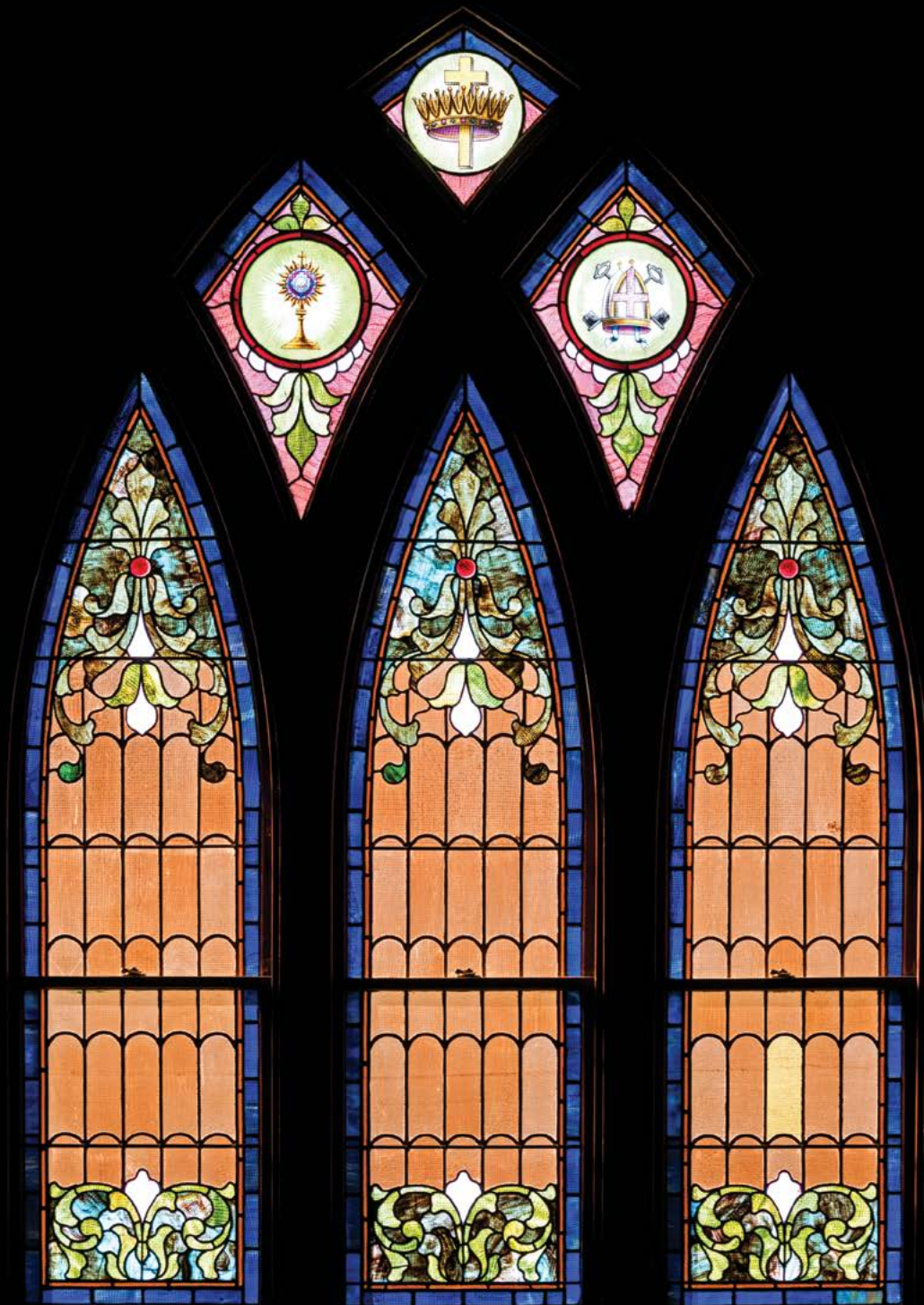
We would also like to acknowledge the Southwest Harbor Public Library Digital Archive and the assistance of Charlotte Morrill and George Soules in obtaining many of the historical photographs that illustrate this issue.



Detail of south
wall window,
ca. 1916, artist
unknown. *Sz.*
Edward's Convent,
Bar Harbor (currently
the Bar Harbor
Historical Society)

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West sanctuary
window, ca. 1904,
artist unknown.
*St. Ignatius of Loyola
Catholic Church,
Northeast Harbor*

Stained Glass Windows of Mount Desert Island

By Jennifer Steen Booher

This photo-essay was initially inspired by the religious theme of *Chebacco XX*, but as I became more and more obsessed with the topic, it developed as a parallel and only loosely associated work. I photographed eleven buildings in the course of my studies (and am acutely aware of the ones I was not able to access in time), and created more than five hundred photographs, most of which, obviously, will not fit in this magazine. The historical society is planning to exhibit some of those photos at the Selectmen's Building in Somesville this summer, and we have discussed making many more available on the website as a scholarly resource. I hope the society didn't regret taking me on as artist-in-residence when I produced this embarrassment of riches!

In planning this issue of *Chebacco*, the editors and I have attempted to place a sampling of these photographs with articles on which they have some bearing, either by way of their subject (a view of the Bear Island Light with an article on Acadia) or their location (Episcopal church

windows with an article on Episcopalian history). I freely admit that some of my pairings are a bit of a stretch and claim artistic license. Furthermore, it seemed to me that pairing Christian windows with an article on the Jewish presence on Mount Desert Island would add insult to injury, and since I was only able to find one example of stained glass Judaica on the island, I expanded my brief to include Beth Abraham Synagogue in Bangor. It also seemed critical to me that the Wabanaki tribes be represented for the article about early European contact, and as I was unable to find any stained glass by a member of those tribes, I contacted the Abbe Museum, explained my dilemma, and asked for "something translucent." The remarkable bitten-birchbark piece by Bonnie Newsom, Penobscot, was the result. This type of work is made by folding the birchbark and biting gently to create symmetrical patterns. Birchbark is remarkably pliable, and the bite marks compress without piercing, allowing light to shine through the thinner areas.

Before I undertook this project, I knew, as do most of us, that Saint Saviour's has several windows by Louis Comfort Tiffany. Other than some half-remembered bits from college art history classes about Chartres and Saint-Denis, that was the beginning and the end of my knowledge of stained

glass. I tell you now that there is a thesis waiting to be written on the stained glass of our island. We have marvelous examples of several late nineteenth-century glass styles, most notably the Gothic Revival windows at Church of Our Father, the Munich-style windows at Holy Redeemer, and the Art Nouveau windows at Saint Saviour's. These three churches include work by some of the most important glass artists of the nineteenth century. We also have some wonderful pieces from the twentieth century — I especially love Susan Dunlap's work at St. Saviour's, with its witty details and local references.

Of course, many of our local buildings are fitted with simple colored glass panels — of these, the Otter Creek Hall, the Tremont Congregational and Southwest Harbor Congregational churches are represented in this photo-essay. It proved impossible to find much information on these windows, as this type of glass was mass-produced and usually ordered through builders' catalogs. You may notice in some of the photos that these windows are much more translucent than the more elaborate type, which has to do with how the pigments are applied. The light coming through the plain windows colors everything it falls across, and I photographed a whole series of spiderwebs and window frames glowing in the sapphire and amber light.

As you look through these photographs, you may notice that some are primarily documentary while others are purely artistic, but I hope you will be inspired by the message inherent in all: "Look how beautiful this is! Go forth and see it for yourself."

Jennifer Steen Booher is an artist and photographer from Bar Harbor.

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"The Visitation,"
ca. 1908, Mayer &
Company, Germany. *Holy
Redeemer Catholic Church,
Bar Harbor*



The mission of the Mount Desert Island Historical Society is to foster meaningful engagement with the histories of Mount Desert Island.

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Cover design by Rebecca Hope Woods based on Jennifer Steen Booher's photograph of a stained glass window in Saint Saviour's Church, Bar Harbor.



Chebacco silhouette adapted from a photograph by Len Burgess for the Essex Shipbuilding Museum.

Our magazine, *Chebacco*, is named for a type of boat built in the eighteenth century in Gloucester, Massachusetts and nearby towns. In 1762, Abraham Somes, his wife, and four young daughters sailed in a Chebacco boat to make their home in Somesville and become Mount Desert Island's first permanent Euro-American settlers.

We invite you to voyage through the histories of Mount Desert Island in this contemporary Chebacco.



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