

# WILSON MUSEUM BULLETIN

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## A Cruise With Fitz Hugh Lane

Fitz Hugh Lane, whose work was admired during his life and then almost forgotten for many years, is "now firmly and generally viewed as one of the truly pivotal and significant figures of nineteenth-century American art. His work occupies a central place in luminism. . . ." \*1 Lane is of especial interest to those who know the Maine coast as some of his finest work was conceived while visiting the Stevens in Castine or while on trips with young Joe Stevens.

Fitz Hugh Lane was born in Gloucester, December 19, 1804. "When. . . a child before learning to walk, the nurse left him for a short while alone on the grass one day and he crept toward a bush of Apple Peru and ate some of its leaves which poisoned him. . ." Peru-apple was a common name for the very poisonous Jimson-weed. From this time Lane was crippled and never walked without crutches. \*2

Joseph Lowe Stevens was also born in Gloucester but, though only fifteen years older than Lane could not have known him well until they met in Castine many years later, for Joseph Stevens was sent to Phillips Academy when he was twelve, thence to Harvard and Harvard Medical School, returning home only for brief visits. By 1818 he was practicing medicine in Warren, Maine and the next year was called to Castine where he lived and practiced the remainder of his life. A son, however, Joseph, Jr. returned to Gloucester to live and help in the family business. Despite the disparity in age Stevens, Jr. and Lane became great friends and when Joseph visited his parents in Castine, Lane frequently joined him. Lane's first visit was in 1848 and his last probably in 1862, three years before his death.

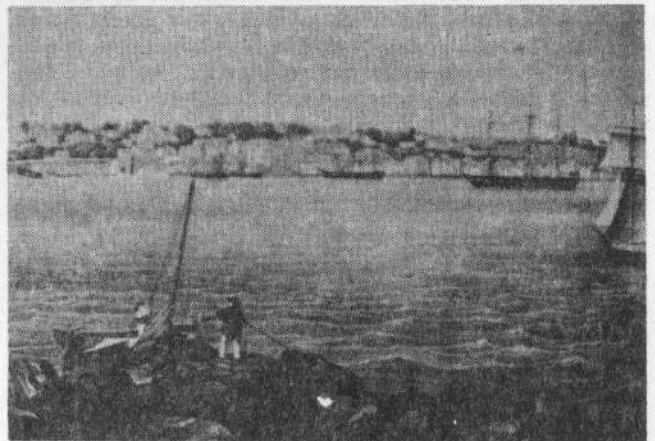
A previously unpublished note by young Joseph relates details of a summer day when he and Lane were in Castine. "The great granite boulder on the shore of 'Perkins' back pasture', though little known, bore the name of a Captain Hinckley, said to have been shot while cheering on his men from the top of it. (An event of the American Revolution).

On Saturday afternoon, August 11, 1855, with my friend the marine artist Fitz H. Lane of Gloucester, my young brother George B. Stevens, and his friend Charles A. Williams, I went to the rock and, aided mainly by Williams, painted thereon in letters that could be read from afar Trask 1779. (Israel Trask was a fourteen year old fifer who stood behind the rock to shelter from the fire of the British troops above.)

The large white rock of the young fifer's experience in the early morning of July 28, 1779, thus brought to notice, increased in public interest until it became a famous landmark, much frequented."

Also in 1855, Joseph, Jr. proposed "to have a Lithograph print of Castine struck off; similar to the sketch lately made by Mr. Lane to be executed in the best style in Boston, in plain dark & white, provided 100 copies are subscribed for at \$2.00 per copy." This resulted in the well known lithograph Castine from Hospital Island

It is interesting to consider that this was not the first such view. Twelve years earlier a View of Castine Maine from Hospital Island was lithographed by W. Sharp from a drawing by S. V. Homan. In 1780, apparently from the same, though then un-named island, a British officer also sketched Castine (then Majabaduce). \*3



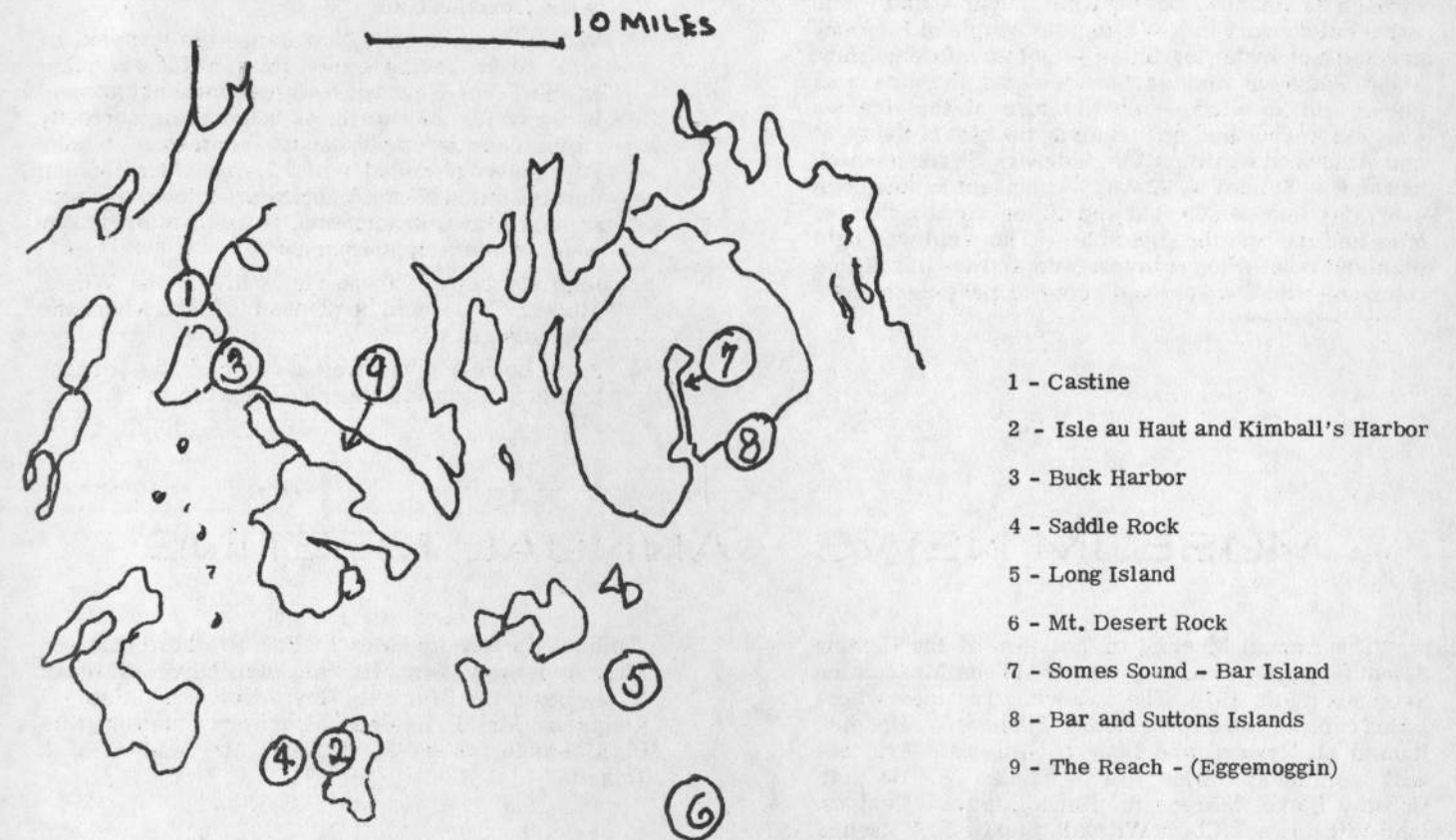
Castine from Hospital Island, 1855, Fitz Hugh Lane

Recently a Castine diary of 1852 was given to the Wilson Museum. Kept by William Howe Witherle it includes an account of a short cruise with several friends, including Joseph Stevens, Jr. and Fitz Hugh Lane. This account is printed here for the first time.

(1852) MONDAY AUGUST 16th.

Our party consisting of F H Lane and Jos L Stevens Jr of Gloucester — Geo F Tilden, Saml Adams & myself and Mr Getchell-Pilot left Mr Tildens wharf at about 11 o'clock in the good Sloop Superior — bound on an excursion among the Island of the Bay — the wind was northerly and the weather fine — And we had a charming run down the Ship Channel towards "Isle Au Haut" - anchored off Isle Au Haut about 5 o'clock and Fished till about sun down — when we put away for Kimballs Harbour — but the wind died away and the tide headed us — so we were obliged to anchor in Shoal Water near the entrance of the Harbour — this has been a most Auspicious commencement to our Excursion — and we have enjoyed it highly — have done our own cooking and made out first rate under the Superintendence of Geo Tilden — whose talents in that line are the most prominent — Mr Lane however has a decided knack for frying fish and gave us a specimen of fried cod for supper — which was most excellent — in the night we hoisted anchor and shifted our birth owing to the proximity of certain shoals and rocks — — Tuesday Morning Aug 17 — up early — prospect of another fine day — Sam A & I rowed ashore about 2 miles for wood — which article we did not lay in a stock of — which gave us a somewhat ravenous appetite for our Breakfast which came off in due time — and which we took on deck — as it was calm and beautiful — After breakfast we weighed Anchor and with a light breath of wind put for "Saddle Rock" some 10 miles off — but did not make much progress — and finding a chance to run into "~~back~~ Duck Harbour" we took advantage of it and run in — a very pretty snug little place — dropped Anchor and landed and leaving Mr Lane to take a Sketch we took a climb on to a Hill — from which we had a fine view of the Sea and Bay — returning on board we Started with a fine breeze for Saddle Rock — which we reached between 1 & 2 o'clock — anchored and leaving Mr Lane and Getchell on board landed and were met by old Mr Burgess Keeper of the light — who welcomed us and Showed us the lions of the Rock — we enjoyed the novelty of the Scene but did not stop long as our Sloop seemed to have a strong desire to come ashore after us — fearing probably to trust us on such a rough looking spot — so we embarked again and Sailing round the ledge — with a fine pleasant breeze — from the westward a smooth sea and one of the pleasant afternoons on record we put for "Lunts Long Island" passing out side of Isle Au Haut and all the Islands — we stretched ourselves out on deck spun yarns — and read a little and enjoyed our life on the Ocean Wave — under such pleasant circumstances — to our hearts content — about Sundown we reached Long Island Harbour — and anchored — and lowered our mainsail for the first time since leaving home — after getting our Supper it was dark — we played Backgammon — I enjoyed a "Smoke" — by myself — on deck before going to bed — the tinkling of cow Bells on shore give promise of plenty of milk to fill our jug in the morning — — Wednesday Aug 18 — up by sunrise another fine morning — no signs of fog — which we have been dreading — went ashore with our water cask and milk jug — landed near Squire Lunts wharf and went to his house — but after knocking at the door and could not succeed in rousing any body but a dog — went to two houses near by — but found them unoccupied — the place seemed to be deserted — but after a while we spied out a woman milking a cow on the opposite side of the harbour — and Joe & George steered off — in

that direction - while Mr Getchell & I prowled round in pursuit of a well — to fill our water(cask)— but after diligent search not a well could be found — we finally filled our keg at a running brook — which we happened to discover — looked in to the windows of a meeting house which was set down in a wild spot without a road or signs of a path leading to it — the specimens of native Seen by Joe & George had a very ancient and Fish like appearance — their first enquiry was if they were traders — Altogether the aspect of this place is dismal — a little trading Sch had come in in the night and was at anchor near us — and after we had finished our breakfast the trader came on board and made us a call — but was soon hailed to come back by customers from the Shore — we started with a fresh Breeze for "Mount Desert Rock" 18 miles distant — it was rougher than we have yet had it — being considerable swell but we get on finely — with the exception of George" being sea sick — which however we comfort him with the opinion that it will do him good — About noon we arrive at the Rock — the Keeper of the light Mr King — came off in his boat and gave us the end of a buoy Rope to Moor to - he was expecting his wife off in a craft similar to ours and was disappointed to find his mistake but notwithstanding treated us most hospitably - we spent a couple of hours most pleasantly rambling about the Rock Examing a wreck of a Sch was lately cast away there — watching the seas dash up onto the windward side — and a Fin Back Whale dash every now and then into Shoals of Herring which almost surrounded the rock — and which Mr King had taken a large quantities — the light House is a fine Structure and was in most perfect order — Mr King has two sons & two daughters with him and seemed to have plenty of employment in fishing and the wreck which he had bought — he told us he had not been ashore for two years — we all consider this visit to the Rock as something not to be forgotten — we felt that we should have enjoyed two days there — but as we had proposed to reach Somes Sound that night we had to tear ourselves away — Mr Lane took two sketches while there — We had a fine free wind for the sound — and the view of the Mt. Desert Hills as we approached them was splendid — Mr Lane improved it to take a Sketch of their outlines — The Steamer Lawrence went in to the "Sound" an hour before us with a party from Penobscot Bay and River — said to be the first Steamboat that ever went up Somes Sound — we had a fine sail up between the high hills which in one place are perpendicular — and came to our anchorage above "Bar Island" just after Sunset — after supper we went up in the Boat to Somes — where we found the Party by the Lawrence and among them many of our acquaintances — Thursday Aug. 19 — "our regular fine weather" Went to Somes this morning again and got a good breakfast — and sent letters home to our respective wives by — our Friend Mrs. Mary Lowe Kimball \*4 who came in the Lawrence and returns this morning — When we got back to our Sloop we found Lane and Getchell doing a brisk business catching mackerel — So we all rushed for our lines and were in for our share in short order — and had fine sport for an hour or so — when we packed up a luncheon and filled a jug with water and got into the Boat and rowed across the Sound two or three miles — to a favorable point to ascend one of the highest Mountains — we found a pretty good path about ¾ the way up — we had to wait once in a while for Lane who with his crutches could not keep up with us — but got



along better than we thought possible — the climb up after we left the path was somewhat severe — as it was very hot and not even at the top of the Mountain was there a breath of Air Stirring — Lane got up about an hour after the rest of us — felt about used when I first got up but Soon revived and I started off on a cruise — found some Lillies in a Pond near the Summit — the Atmosphere was Smoky so that our view was not very extensive — but it well repaid us for our labour — about the time we got ready to descend it began to thunder in the distance and clouds began to rise — and by the time we reached our boat it was evident that a shower was near at hand so we put in for a Smart row and our good Sloop Superior just as the rain began to fall — and it soon came down in torrents and after a hearty supper — and a good Smoke being pretty tired we turned in early — Friday Aug 20 — Our good luck again for weather — Hoisted Anchor — and dropped down with the tide — George and I went ashore and got some milk and we took our breakfast on deck drifting down the Sound — Surrounded by the noble Scenery — in this beautiful morning with a good cup of Coffee and good Substantial edibles to match — and famous appetites — this is the way to enjoy life said we! the wind breezed up and we put on all Sail and had a bit of a try with a Bangor Sloop called a crack Sailor but she didnt beat us much if any — ran in to North East Harbour looked about and ran out again and put for Bear Island — where we landed and visited the lighthouse - this is a high bluff little island - the Beach that we landed on appears from the top of Island of a perfect Crescent Shape — started again for Suttons Island — and landed Mr Lane to take a Sketch and then proceeded for Southards Cove — to afford our ancient Pilot an opportunity to visit his sister — We all

landed and leaving Mr Getchell with his friends cruised up in the Hills after Blueberries — saw some girls there and approached them to buy their Berries — but they took fright and ran into the bushes — George T — being the longest limbed and fleetest of us gave chase while we get onto a Rock to watch the result — both pursued and pursuer disappeared from our view — but presently we caught Sight of the Calico flying through the trees — and next George at some distance astern Spring in to view and Snuffed the Air — but seeing the Chase had gained upon him so much he gave it up in dismay — the "Coup d'oeil" was very striking at the moment George emerged to view — with the Fluttering of Gowns and cape Bonnets in the distance — On returning to Mrs Bracys — the first object that met our sight was — our "Ancient Mariner" — stretched at full length upon the Grass — pallid and faint and groaning — he had been taken Suddenly in a few minutes after we left and fainted away and had recovered sufficiently to crawl out thus — he had been complaining somewhat before — he was now so unwell that we concluded to leave him here to night and call for him in the morning — So we started to take in Mr Lane at Suttons Island and then run down to South West Harbour and anchored — and went ashore and saw Mr Durgain & Mr Heath — Sarah & Crawford, ? Stanley & c & c - George & Joe pitched the tent ashore to night and Slept there but the rest of us preferd the old Sloop — Saturday — Aug 21 — "pleasant of course" — George, Joe & myself took breakfast this morning at the Island House — and a fine one it was — price 25 cts — Mr Lane took 2 sketches here — it was calm till about 9 o'clock when it freshed and we beat up to Southards Cove — and there found our "Ancient" recovered from his illness — So

we took him on and about 11 o'clock Started with a fair wind homeward bound over Bass Harbour Bar and through the Reach — but the wind is light — and we do not get along very fast — Caught a couple of Haddock and had a chowder for dinner — got up off Deer Island about Sundown and anchored — as the tide was ahead and no wind — on the turn of the tide we weighed Anchor and drifted along the rest of the night and Anchored again on the Sedgwick Shore towards morning — Sunday — 22 Aug — pleasant as has been every day since we started and all feel certain that we have had the best time possible — The wind was light till about noon when it breezed up and we had a fine run home where we arrived about ½ past one o'clock

- \*1 Fitz Hugh Lane by John Wilmerding, Praeger publishers, 1971. Background material on Lane is taken from this book.
- \*2 Wilmerding suggests that Lane was crippled by polio after having eaten from a tomato plant (Apple Peru). However tomatoes were not normally grown for they were, as Wilmerding correctly states, considered poisonous. Two tropical plants, Physalodes physalodes and Datura Stramonium, naturalized in North America are known as Peru-apple. Datura Stramonium, Jamestown or Jimson-weed is intensely poisonous.
- \*3 Reproductions of these views are in the Wilson Museum. We would be pleased to learn where the originals are.
- \*4 Mary Lowe Kimball was a sister of the younger Joseph Stevens and was also home for a visit.

## MUSEUM NEWS - ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of Trustees of the Castine Scientific Society was held at the Wilson Museum on September 9th, 1974. The following Trustees whose terms expired were re-elected — Ellenore W. Doudiet, Roland M. Howard and Lucy J. Grossman. Trustees with continuing terms are — Helen A. Bartlett, Dorothy Blake, Marguerite Hale, Donovan Kvalnes, John Wiggins and Clara Wiswall. Sturgis S. Wilson is Honorary Trustee. Officers elected were — Ellenore W. Doudiet, President; John R. Wiggins, Vice President; Donovan Kvalnes, Secretary; Lucy J. Grossman, Treasurer.

The following were elected Members of the Museum Council for a term of one year: — Col. and Mrs. A. Bagot, Mrs. D. Dunfee, Mr. and Mrs. G.

Dunham, the Rev. and Mrs. M. Eck, Bradford Emerson, Mrs. A. Fairley, Mrs. H. Farnham, Oliver Garceau, Miss Barbara Glidden, Hoyt Hutchins, Capt. J. Kennaday, Mrs. D. Kvalnes, Mrs. Starr Lampson, Mrs. D. McMaster, Miss M. O'Neill, Mr. and Mrs. L. Tolman.

### REQUEST FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Anyone knowing of letters or documents concerning Josiah Bartlett, signer of the Declaration of Independence, please write the New Hampshire Historical Society, 30 Park Street, Concord, N. H. 03301.



Castine, Maine 04421

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