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# “AMID THE GREAT SEA MEADOWS”: RE-CONSTRUCTING THE SALT-MARSH LANDSCAPE THROUGH ART AND LITERATURE

BY KIMBERLY R. SEBOLD

*Salt marshes played an important role in northern New England agricultural from the colonial period to the twentieth century. While some coastal residents depended upon the natural grasses or salt hay to provide them with additional winter fodder, others transformed wetland into farmland through reclamation. The activities of salt marsh farmers created a whole new landscape which, ironically, late nineteenth-century artists and writers portrayed as the last vestiges of a “natural” landscape along the northern New England coast. Their paintings, photographs, poetry and stories established the salt marshes as an important part of coastal New England identity and aided the development of an idealistic world called “Olde New England.” Kimberly R. Sebold, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Maine at Presque Isle, received her Ph.D. in history from the University of Maine in 1998.*

Sarah Orne Jewett, a Maine regional writer, begins her essay “A Marsh Island” with a description of a young artist who has spent most of his day painting salt marshes somewhere along the Gulf of Maine. Jewett writes:

There was a pervading flavor of idleness and of pleasure about the young man’s industry. The olive-like willows and the birchtree and the shining water seemed to lend themselves to his apparent holiday-making. Not a great distance away, the mowers wished it were still nearer sundown, as they went slowly back and forward on the marsh. This was a hot day for out-of-door work; the scythes could not be kept sharp enough, and the sun was dazzling everybody’s eyes as it went down in the west.<sup>1</sup>

Jewett’s description reflects two distinct but complementary views of the salt-marsh landscape that emerged in the middle of the nineteenth

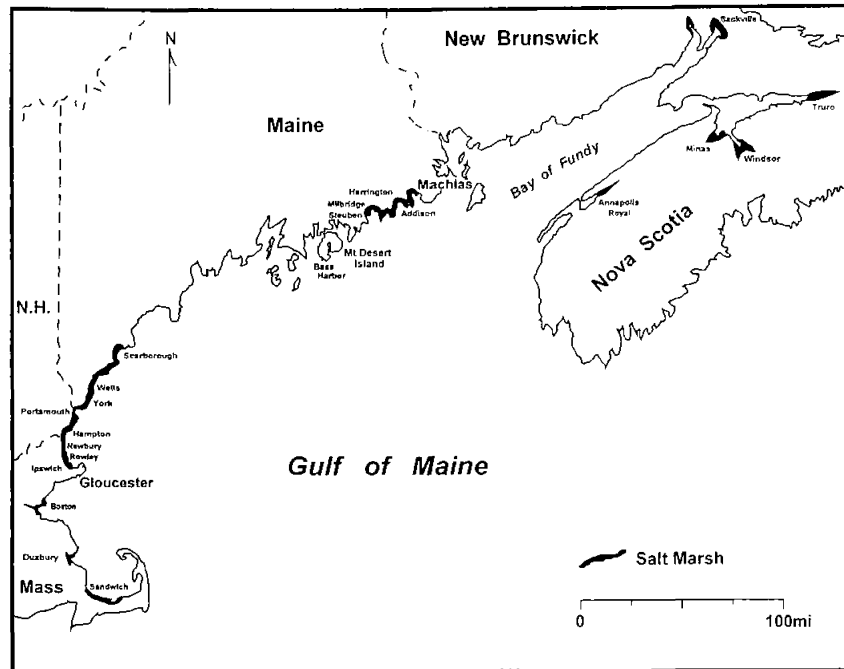


Fig. 1. Map of the Gulf of Maine indicating the location of salt marshes under consideration for this study. Drawn by Steve Bicknell.

century. Like her contemporaries, Jewett celebrated the marshes for their aesthetic qualities and portrayed them as a place of retreat from chaotic and overcrowded cities and as a place in which to commune with nature. These mid-nineteenth-century artists and writers also created a new vision of the farmers who harvested the salt-marsh grasses; these men and their families became stewards of the “natural” marsh landscape. As nineteenth- and early twentieth-century artists and writers romanticized the salt-marsh landscape in their works, the salt marshes and the people who farmed them became crucial elements in the development of “Olde New England” and the creation of a unique coastal New England identity.

Historically, salt marshes played an important role in the settlement of the New England coast. Colonists who migrated to Essex County, Massachusetts in the 1600s settled in areas with salt marshes recognizing that the marsh provided fodder for their cattle until they could clear upland and establish hay fields and pastures (fig. 1). Salt marshes continued to play an important role in settlement well into the seventeenth century when many second-tier settlements were organized around the marshes. In the 1760s, for example, farmers from Scarborough, Maine experienced a drought which reduced their salt-hay harvest and prompted them to explore more northern coastal areas in search of an



Fig. 2. "Cutting the Marsh Hay," from Charles W. Townsend, *Sand Dunes and Salt Marshes* (Boston: I.C. Page and Company, 1913).

adequate supply of salt hay. In Machias, the Scarborough farmers were impressed by both salt marshes and a potential lumber supply. Some of the men returned to Scarborough, packed up their households, moved up the coast, and founded Machias.<sup>2</sup>

Dependence on the marshes continued well into the nineteenth century. Farmers relied on marsh grasses to supplement their upland hay during the winter, and they also came to depend on the marshes to give them an edge on western competition (fig. 2). Dyking this landscape—constructing an earthen dam around the perimeter of the marsh to keep out the incoming tides—became a common practice at mid-century; farmers hoped that the marshes' natural fertility would allow them to grow crops that could compete with those grown by their western counterparts. Farmers also believed that the incorporation of marshland into their overall crop acreage would prevent their sons from seeking their livelihood as urban factory workers or sod busters.<sup>3</sup>

While farmers continued to harvest salt hay and experimented with dyking, Boston intellectuals, appalled by the problems of urbanization and industrialization, viewed the marsh landscape as one of the last vestiges of nature along the eastern seaboard. Artists and writers such as John Greenleaf Whittier, Martin Johnson Heade, and Sarah Orne Jewett

looked to the marshes for relief from their chaotic world and to discover the salt-marsh farmers' secret of living in harmony with nature. They also believed that coastal residents could teach a simpler lifestyle—one that intellectuals thought reflected the virtues of life before industrialization. They never recognized, however, that the marshes were an altered landscape or that the farmers and their families suffered from the effects of modernization. Through their art and writing, these culture brokers identified the landscape as symbolic of a better time in American history and created a place for it in the region's popular culture.

The poet John Greenleaf Whittier was the first of the Boston crowd to appreciate the beauty of the marsh landscape and to associate it with the pre-industrial world. In 1866, Whittier published *Snow-Bound*, a poem which tells the story of his father's childhood in Essex County, Massachusetts during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Whittier invited those "dreaming in throngful city ways" to enter the world of his childhood by envisioning themselves seated by the "homestead hearth" with his family listening to the stories of Whittier's father; Whittier explained to his readers that since his family had few books and read only the weekly paper, his father's stories formed the core of his family's time together. With his father's stories, as captured in *Snow-Bound*, Whittier popularized the salt-marsh landscape as an essential element of a simplistic world unaffected by industrialization and urbanization.

Or, nearer home, our steps led  
Where Salisbury's level marshes spread  
Mile-wide as flies the laden bee;  
Where merry mowers, hale and strong,  
Swept, scythe on scythe, their swaths along  
The low green prairies of the sea . . . .  
We heard the tales of witchcraft old,  
And dream and sigh the marvel told  
To sleepy listeners as they lay  
Stretched idly on the salted hay,  
Adrift along the winding shores,  
When favoring breezes deigned to blow  
The square sail of the gundalow  
And idle lay the useless oars.<sup>4</sup>

For Whittier's readers, the families who lived near the salt marshes were not concerned with crime, pollution, and other urban problems; nor were they affected by the market economy. Instead, they were hard-

working people in control of their destinies, and they utilized the marshes not just for hay, but also for access to nature. From Whittier's perspective, the benefit of cutting salt hay was not that it gave farmers extra winter fodder but that when one finished work, the marshes offered the opportunity to enjoy nature (fig. 3).<sup>5</sup>

Whittier's connection of the marsh landscape with the tranquility of rural life continued in his next compilation of poems, *Tent on the Beach*. These poems relate Whittier's experiences while on a camping excursion to Hampton Beach, New Hampshire with his literary colleagues, James Fields and Bayard Taylor. In the preface, he described the marsh scenery bordering their camping spot.

The long line of sandy beach which defines almost the whole of the New Hampshire sea-coast is especially marked near its southern extremity, by the salt-meadows of Hampton. The Hampton River winds through these meadows, and the reader may, if he chooses, imagine my tent pitched near its mouth.<sup>6</sup>

Including Fields and Taylor, two well-known names in the publishing and literary world, as participants in this trek to the beach made readers aware that members of the intellectual elite placed a high aesthetic value on the marsh landscape. For these men, the excursion was not just a camping trip but a time for them to escape city life and enjoy the awe-inspiring wonders of both ocean and marsh.<sup>7</sup>

Whittier also used his poems from *Tent on the Beach* to promote coastal New England as representative of pre-industrial simplicity.<sup>8</sup> In his depiction of a shipwreck at the mouth of the Hampton River, which occurs "in the old Colonial days,/Two hundred years ago and more," Whittier describes those who last saw the doomed vessel and its passengers:

In Hampton meadows, where mowers laid  
Their scythes to the swaths of salted grass,  
"Ah, well-a-day! our hay must be made!"  
A young man sighed, who saw them pass.  
Loud laughed his fellows to see him stand  
Whetting his scythe with a listless hand.<sup>9</sup>

By including agricultural activity on the marshes, Whittier makes this landscape an important part of New England's traditions and history.



Fig. 3. "Harvesting the Marsh Hay," from Townsend, *Sand Dunes and Salt Marshes*.

Like Whittier, tourists who traveled to Hampton Beach or anywhere along the New England coast not only experienced the serenity of the setting but also witnessed activities that had not substantially changed since the arrival of the first white settlers. Salt-hay harvesting, as portrayed by Whittier, represented an element of traditional subsistence agriculture that withstood the forces of modernization and commercialization.

While Whittier's words popularized the marshes as part of a bygone era, Martin Johnson Heade revealed their essence through his paintings. Heade was the first artist to paint the marshes of Plum Island, near Newbury, Massachusetts, and in doing so, conveyed to his audience the idea that marshes possessed spiritual qualities that could allow humans to become more in tune with nature and themselves. His paintings emphasized the vastness of the marshes and gave the impression that one might find God on the edge of the marsh where earth meets sky. Heade began painting the Plum Island marshes in 1863 when Reverend James Cooley Fletcher, a Newburyport resident, introduced him to the area. Heade's paintings conveyed his preoccupation with nature and its forces. His desire to understand natural processes drew Heade to focus on seasonal and climatic changes and allowed him to find his own place within

nature. By capturing the dynamics of nature during times of transition, his paintings taught viewers to contemplate nature's variations in order to understand better changes within themselves. For those intrigued by Heade's paintings, becoming absorbed by the marsh landscape meant learning valuable lessons about nature as well as the human place within nature.<sup>10</sup>

Heade's paintings affected Harriet Prescott Spofford, a literary friend of Whittier and a member of Boston's elite. In 1867, Spofford published her short story, "The Marshes" in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. The story captures the landscape's redemptive nature, presenting it as a place to escape from the problems of the modern world. The plot focuses on a hunting cabin built on the marshes by the narrator, Guinness, who appears to have been an important figure in the Boston business world. Guinness explained that he enjoyed the isolation of his cabin because while there he "considered [him]self safe from intrusion . . . for the place was a point of long, low meadow running into the river mouth, unapproachable at high tide except by boats, and only to be reached by land at the other times after deep wading through the black bog." He continued that the area offered "the freedom and solitude . . . too delicious to abandon."<sup>11</sup> For Guinness, this was the refuge he sought from the corruption of capitalistic society. Here he could ponder his existence while reflecting upon the simple life that the cabin's caretakers, Jack and Willy, enjoyed throughout the year.

The highlight of Spofford's message regarding the importance of the marsh landscape and its redemptive qualities comes when Guinness' friend, Laurence, seeks refuge in Guinness' cabin. The authorities are looking to arrest Laurence, a banker caught in the corruption of the industrial world, for embezzlement; Laurence explains to Guinness that he and his wife had been having marital problems and that in the heat of an argument she had burned some valuable bonds and then left him. Laurence lamented:

You [Guinness] once jested on my haste to be rich. Perhaps you were right; but I would have enjoyed wealth while enjoyment was possible—while youth and relish lasted. Lately another person [his wife] reproached me that I forsook home, happiness, all better ambitions, in an inordinate lust for money.<sup>12</sup>

Spofford uses the cabin on the marshes as a setting for Laurence's cleansing experience. Unfortunately for Laurence, his quest for fame and fortune had so engulfed his life that he could never be free from his pur-



suers. Soon after his confession to Guinness, Laurence perishes in the nearby surf attempting to save his wife's life. Laurence's tragic ending epitomizes the problems faced by those pursuing fame and fortune, while the tranquility that Guinness found in his marsh cabin offers readers hope.

If Laurence's demise did not convince her readers of the benefits of simplicity, Spofford re-emphasized her point through her description of the relationship between Jack and his wife, Willy. Unlike Laurence and his wife, the caretakers Jack and Willy share a special love in which the desire for wealth did not interfere. Guinness observed a private moment between the couple:

I glanced again into the room . . . at the smile stealing over Jack's still face as he looked into her happy eyes; and sweeter far than any oblivious sleep seemed to me the calm confidence of that clear gaze—the rest of love that, tried and trusting, outlasts the dross of earth, and the sunbeams of the sky itself.<sup>13</sup>

The isolation of the marsh protected this couple from the chaos of an urban and industrial world. Spofford made it clear to her readers that if they embraced the simplicity of the pre-industrial lifestyle found on the marshes they would find happiness.

Like Spofford, Sarah Orne Jewett concluded that there were lessons to be learned about nature and civilization through frequent visits to the marshes. Jewett, a resident of South Berwick, Maine, corresponded often with her close friend, John Greenleaf Whittier. In one of her letters, written prior to 1884, Jewett mentions her enchantment with the coastal areas of Essex County, particularly the town of Essex.

We took a rest . . . at Essex which I have quite fallen in love with. It is all afloat when the tide is in, like a little Venice . . . I have been thinking a good deal about a longish story to be called A Marsh Island and I have had beautiful times going to Essex to see about it!<sup>14</sup>

In 1885, *The Atlantic Monthly* published Jewett's "A Marsh Island" in seven installments and Houghton Mifflin published it as a single volume later the same year (fig. 4). The novel celebrates life on a coastal New England farm surrounded by salt marsh and suggests that the isolation of the island farm protects the salt-hay farmers' traditional way of life. But more important, the book holds lessons for those plagued by the problems of modernity.<sup>15</sup>

The novel opens with wealthy New York artist Dick Dale setting his



Fig. 4. “Marsh Islands,” from Townsend, *Sand Dunes and Salt Marshes*.

easel at the edge of the marsh to paint the landscape while farmers harvested the salt hay. Dale soon meets the owner of the island farm, Mr. Owen, and finds himself a guest in the latter’s home. The novel focuses on Dale’s extended stay at the house and the impact this has on him. While the view of the marshes from his attic studio inspires his best work, his overall experience with the Owens family and their farm gives him “a sense of purpose and self-respect; two things which city-life had been unable to give him.” In her book, Jewett implies that coastal farms and their surrounding marshlands help preserve the simplicity of a by-gone era and that urbanites can retreat there to escape the challenges of the more chaotic and modern world.<sup>16</sup>

*A Marsh Island* provided urban readers with an opportunity to gain insight from the pastoral world without leaving their homes. A review of the book in the October 1885 issue of *Atlantic Monthly* describes its benefits for readers.

[Jewett] can make us feel the cool breeze blowing over the marshes, and suggest those long, even lines of landscape, and bring up to our imagination the swing of the scythe, the passage of the hay boat, the homely work of the kitchen . . . We are grateful to her for the shade of such a book as this, and accept it as one of the gifts which Nature herself brings to the tired dweller in the cities.<sup>17</sup>

Jewett's work not only promoted the salt marshes as part of a more bucolic world but also reinforced the importance of this landscape in contemporary culture. The marshes received unsolicited publicity through her story *A Marsh Island*. Her readers became more aware of the marsh landscape and this awareness helped shape their regional image of the coast extending from northeastern Massachusetts to southeastern Maine.

Like Dick Dale in *A Marsh Island*, landscape artist Arthur Wesley Dow, who studied art in Paris and taught in New York and Boston, turned to the marsh landscape for sanctuary from the turmoil of city life. For several decades before and after the turn of the century, Dow held summer art classes at his studio in his hometown of Ipswich, Massachusetts. There he taught his students about the complexity of nature using the nearby marsh landscape as his primary source. Dow considered the marshes "the most characteristic and beautiful feature of Ipswich" and described them as "changing from hour to hour with the rise and ebb of the tides, and from month to month with the seasons' advance, they are always new, always surprising us with unexpected light and color."<sup>18</sup> He taught his students that to truly understand nature, they needed to understand all of its elements and capture them in their work.

Dow taught his students that in order to capture fully the landscape in their work, they needed to understand its spatial relationship to the town of Ipswich. Dow accomplished this by taking his students on field trips throughout the town and also by strategically placing his studio on a hill located between the town and the marshes. Dow's obituary in a leading art education magazine describes the view from the Ipswich studio:

One summer while in Massachusetts, I spent a day in Ipswich, at Mr. Dow's invitation, to visit his class of teachers and art workers. One part of the day I was on Bayberry Hill where the students worked in the presence of the "blue serpent"—the Ipswich River—crawling along through the salt meadow between those immortal haystacks to the shining sea on the far horizon. Opposite the sea were the trees and roofs of the town, on the higher ground at the west were clumps of bayberry bushes, and at the foot of the slope on the east was a good New England woods. In this pasture lot on Bayberry Hill the students worked out their symbols of the points of the compass and studied composition under the inspiration of the master spirit.<sup>19</sup>

Dow emphasized to his students the need to take the time to contemplate the relationship between the natural and cultural landscapes in order to comprehend fully the serenity and beauty of nature. He extended this notion to a larger audience through his works of art, particularly his wood block paintings, which were typical of the work done by artists identified with the Arts and Crafts Movement.<sup>20</sup>

Dow's belief in the interrelationship of wilderness and town rested upon his love for natural forms and their aesthetic qualities. In a 1891 editorial for the *Ipswich Chronicle*, entitled "Ipswich As It Should Be: From an Artist's Point of View," Dow criticized the townspeople for not appreciating nature and offered suggestions on how to improve industrialized Ipswich through the use of nature and art. Dow encouraged Ipswich residents to hold their town's natural beauty and its historic fabric in equal esteem—both had inspired his art—rather than to agonize over straight roads, out-of-place rocks, and order in general. "Everybody unconsciously rebels against [the] exactness and squareness [of straight roads] by getting out into the country up on the hill or down the river. It is not wholly for the air and exercise, but to enjoy the picturesque which the human heart loves."<sup>21</sup> Ipswich was a manufacturing town that had retained its historic architecture and natural surroundings, offering solace from the larger metropolitan world. Dow concluded that the town could maintain this interrelationship if its residents recognized its natural and historic elements and planned for their incorporation into future development.

Ipswich residents did not always see the value of Dow's ideas and work. Several town selectmen decided the town should profit from Dow's success by taxing the unsold works in his Ipswich studio according to their market value (two had been appraised at twelve hundred dollars each). Although the town withdrew its demands after Dow threatened to move his school and studio, Dow's biographer suggests that Dow's "whole life seemed to them a form of madness and this painting day after day of their marshes, which had value only in terms of marsh hay, was a manner of life with which they had scant sympathy."<sup>22</sup> The Ipswich residents involved in this clash considered the salt-marsh landscape to be of greater monetary than aesthetic value. Dow's struggle with the town reflects the issue that Spofford and Jewett had raised in their literary works, and Dow had discussed with his students: if people failed to take the time to contemplate nature, they would miss its lessons of serenity and beauty and become overwhelmed by the turmoil of urban society.

During the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the northern New England coastline from Ipswich, Massachusetts, to Woolwich, Maine became a focal point for tourists who wished to escape the urban problems of places like Boston, Portsmouth, and Portland. These people, as Dona Brown explains in her work on tourism and the invention of New England, “sought isolated regions of New England . . . looking for an imagined world of pastoral beauty, rural independence, virtuous simplicity, and escape from urban industrial life.”<sup>23</sup> Artists and writers found what they desired in the salt-marsh landscape and through their work passed on their perception of this wetland world to a larger audience.

In this context of a surging romantic interest in old New England, the works of Whittier, Spofford, Jewett, Heade, and Dow reconstructed the meaning of the salt-marsh landscape. For these artists and writers, salt marshes comprised not merely a marginal agricultural landscape, but an important element in the urban search for regional identity as it pertained to traditional New England. Their paintings and writings became unsolicited advertisements that attracted urbanites to the area so they, too, could partake in the region’s mythic qualities.

Travel literature, such as William Sloane Kennedy’s “In Whittier’s Land” encouraged readers to visit Essex County, Massachusetts, the home and inspiration of John Greenleaf Whittier.

The present landowners of Essex are far enough away from Boston to be uncorrupted by it. They are unmetropolitanized, and in the more secluded rural parts have nearly the unsophisticatedness and simplicity of life found in Cornwall or the Scotch sea shires . . . The salt estuaries make far into the land, are bordered by salt-grass meadows where is cut the hay stored in the old shingled barn.<sup>24</sup>

Attracted by such descriptions, tourists visited the home of Whittier and looked upon the same marsh landscape which had been such an important part of his life and work. They could also travel to the “northern extremity of Salisbury Sands, at the mouth of the Hampton River [where] Whittier and Bayard Taylor and James T. Fields camped out” in *Tent on the Beach*.<sup>25</sup> Kennedy pointed out that this trip could be made by “taking the train to the Hampton station and then a stage across the salt meadows for three miles to the beach.”<sup>26</sup>

Ten years after Whittier’s death and publication of Sloane’s article, Samuel T. Pickard, Whittier’s nephew, wrote a more detailed guide book called *Whittier-Land* in which he reiterated the importance his uncle placed upon the marshes. Pickard included an illustration of the Hamp-

ton River marsh because Whittier viewed these marshes while residing each summer at the home of a Hampton friend. Pickard describes the setting:

On the right as the train passes Hampton Falls station may be seen in the distance, shaded by magnificent elms, the house of Miss Gove, in which Whittier died. It was upon these broad meadows and the distant line of the beach [which could be viewed from the balcony of the house] that his eyes rested, when he took his last look upon the scenery he loved and has so faithfully pictured in his verse.<sup>27</sup>

Pickard's depiction of Whittier's last scene implies that the serenity of the landscape comforted the great poet as he passed peacefully into the next world.

Like Kennedy and Pickard, Harriet Prescott Spofford also realized the importance of Whittier's poems as well as Heade's paintings in promoting the tranquility of the marsh landscape. Through her various poems and travel guides, she encouraged urbanites to experience the marshes for themselves.

He who desires to see a meadow in perfection, full of emerald and golden tints and claret shadows, withdrawing into the distance till lost in the sparkle of the sea, must seek it here, where Heade found material for his dainty marsh and meadow views.<sup>28</sup>

Spofford held that those seeking retreat from the urban world would find immense marshes "unbroken by any thing save the soft outlines of huge hay-cocks" (fig. 5). Readers exploring the coves and curves of Plum Island River would ultimately find "an illimitable world of infinite distances by ocean and shore, an atmosphere blown from the gray mid-deeps themselves, and underneath the soaring arch an immense and unobstructed heaven." The marshes provided a respite from civilization and its problems.<sup>29</sup>

Attracted by such romantic portrayals of the area, more and more people turned to the marsh landscape as a tourist destination and so commodified its scenery. Guidebooks encouraged prospective tourists to visit the marshes in "Whittier Land" and innkeepers furnished lodging and food. Vacationers bought postcards to keep as souvenirs, or to send back to the unfortunate who could not enjoy the view for themselves. Newburyport, Massachusetts, Hampton Beach, New Hampshire and Wells, Kennebunkport, Cape Elizabeth, Yarmouth and Small Point, Maine all sold marsh postcards that portrayed an enchanted landscape

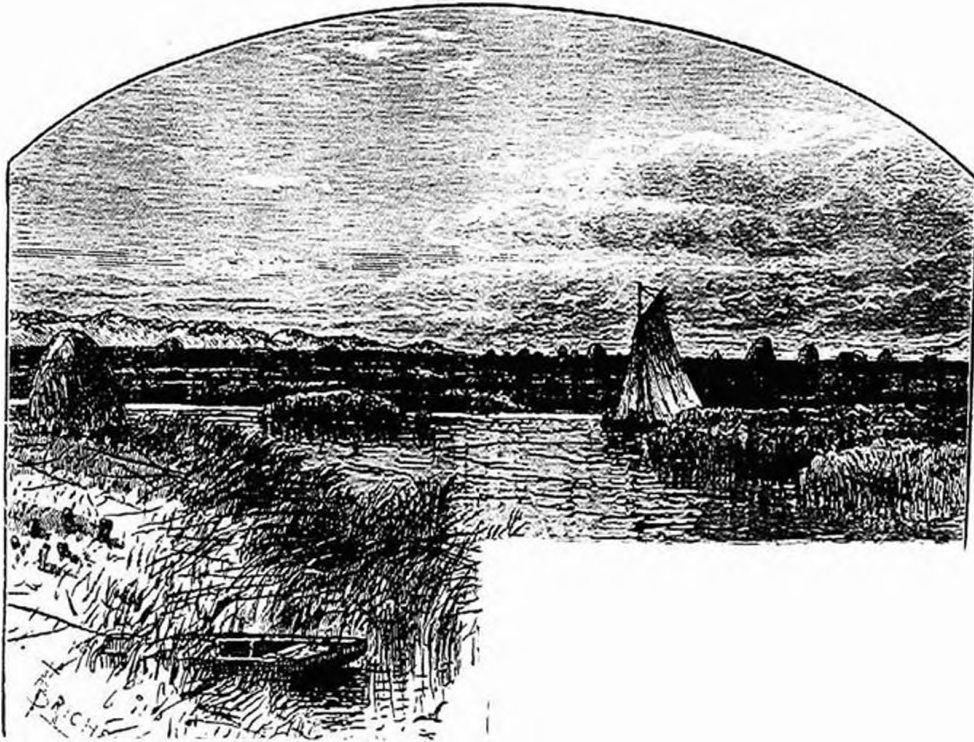


Fig. 5. Sketch illustrating Harriet Prescott Spofford's poem "Inside Plum Island," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 55 (August 1877): 415.

(figs. 6 and 7). Postcards of the Hampton Beach marshes depicted the salt marsh and its haystacks in the foreground and the Hampton Beach Hotel in the background, a view meant to assure visitors that one could see the marshes in style and luxury simply by renting a room at the Hampton Beach Hotel and sitting on its veranda. The proliferation of salt-marsh postcards suggests that this landscape was a favorite among those who visited New England and the popularity of these images helped to shape the region's identity.<sup>30</sup>

Some postcard owners further illustrated the importance of the marsh landscape in their attempt to become a part of "Olde New England" by filling the message areas of the cards with poems. An unknown Cape Elizabeth, Maine postcard owner cherished the following poem found cut from a local newspaper: "I saw the marsh-grass blowing;/It took me far away;/For I was born where marsh-grass/Was endlessly at play./Its ripples were the gladdest things/That one could ever see,/So who could think that marsh-grass/Would bring tears to me?"<sup>31</sup> The poem is typical of those printed in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century magazines and newspapers. Together the poems and postcards

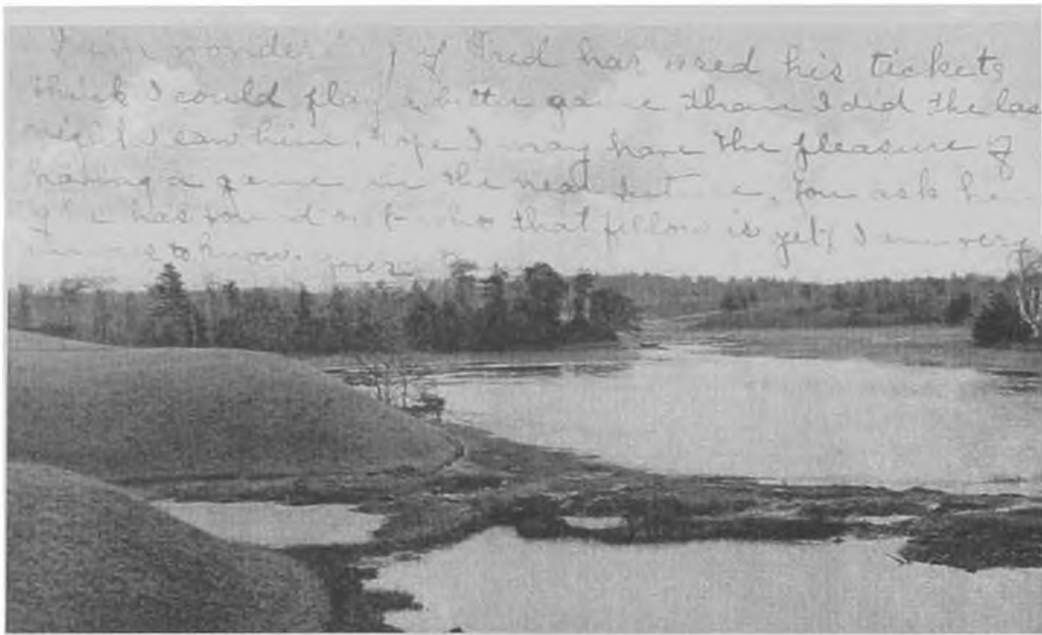


Fig. 6. Postcard entitled "Yarmouth, Me., Scene on Royal River." From the collection of Kimberly R. Sebold.



Fig. 7. Postcard entitled "Cape Small Point, Maine, On the Salt Marsh." From the collection of Kimberly R. Sebold.



promoted the romantic images of the salt marshes created by Whittier, Spofford, Jewett, Dow, and Heade.

In conjunction with the postcards and poems, amateur photographers used the marshes as settings for works of art. An 1893 article in *New England Magazine* captured the Boston Camera Club's appreciation for marsh photographs. Among its illustrations the article included marsh photographs taken by its members. The club also awarded Emma Sewall of Bath, Maine seven medals for her marsh photographs and displayed them in its 1894-1896 exhibitions. Sewall not only captured the marsh landscape of Phippsburg, Maine, she also helped to shape the image of rural Maine as part of the larger region known as "Olde New England;" her photographs did not simply display images of haystacks and marshes but depicted farmers harvesting the hay as it had been done from the colonial period through the mid-nineteenth century. Sewall's images portrayed these farmers as unaffected by the problems of the modern world and as the crucial link to an idyllic past.<sup>32</sup>

Other amateur photographers also saw the scenic value of the marshes; Emma Coleman, friend of Sarah Orne Jewett and resident of Brookline, Massachusetts, was among them. Coleman visited Jewett at York, Maine during the summers from 1883-1886.<sup>33</sup> There she photographed salt-hay haystacks on the marshes in Braveboat Harbor, adjacent to York. Like Heade, she used her artistic abilities to capture the Newburyport marshes. In 1899 Coleman exhibited Newburyport marsh photographs at Memorial Hall in Deerfield, Massachusetts. She also displayed her work in London at the amateur exhibit of the Royal Photographic Society.<sup>34</sup> By encouraging amateur photographers like Sewall and Coleman to photograph the marshes, the Boston Camera Club and the Royal Photographic Society helped to promote the picturesque qualities of the marsh landscape. In the process, club members' trips to the marshes produced more revenue for all institutions that supported the photographers.

Late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century artists and writers transformed American attitudes toward the salt marshes. American society no longer viewed the salt-marsh landscape as marginal; instead, they saw it as the embodiment of pastoral nature, the antithesis of urbanization, and they viewed its farmers as the survivors of a bygone era. Late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century town historians emphasized the importance of the salt marshes to their colonial ancestors and to development of the initial settlements all along the New England coast. For many residents the marshes became essential to their cultural

identity; as New England Yankees they and their ancestors had been frugal by utilizing all the resources God had provided despite the arduous nature of the salt-hay harvest. Even today, coastal residents from Gloucester, Massachusetts to Machias, Maine consider the marshes and their resources a vital element of their history. One town has built a diorama that illustrates the construction and location of the nineteenth-century agricultural dykes that protected their marshes. Residents in other towns continue to capitalize on the historical significance and picturesque nature of the marshes by including them in the name of their places of business. There are the Salt Marsh Kids and Salt Marsh Tours in Essex, Massachusetts, Salt Marsh Antiques in Rowley, Massachusetts, and Salt Marsh Tavern in Kennebunk, Maine. Other entrepreneurs have used the human story of the marshes as a selling point for their product. The Muddy Rudder Restaurant, located between Route 1 and the Freeport marsh in Freeport, Maine, uses illustrations of men harvesting the marsh hay on their menu, while the Ould Newbury Brewing Company insists that they use the same Yankee ingenuity in brewing their beer as was used by their ancestors to harvest the grasses of the salt marshes.

Yankee Ale embodies New England's reliance on the bounty of nature, hard work and craftsmanship as seen at harvest time in the stacks of salt hay that once graced marshes along coastal Massachusetts. Piled on cedar stilts, called staddles, sunk deep in the rich tidal meadows, the nutritious fodder remained dry until needed for livestock. With the same diligence, Ould Newbury Brewing Company handcrafts its Ale using only the finest barley malts, whole hops, brewer's yeast, and water.<sup>35</sup>

As the beer label suggests, the salt marshes help to define the cultural identity of coastal residents along the Gulf of Maine. The townspeople enjoy the marsh landscape, not just because of its ecological importance, but because of the historical and cultural significance given to it by late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century artists and writers.

## NOTES

1. Sarah Orne Jewett, "A Marsh Island," *The Atlantic Monthly* 55 (January 1885): 39.
2. William Southgate, "The History of Scarborough from 1633 to 1783," *Collections of the Maine Historical Society* 3 (1853): 177-181.
3. For a more complete analysis of the human use of the salt-marsh landscape see Kimberly R. Sebold, "'The Low Green Prairies of the Sea': Economic Usage and Cultural Construction of the Gulf of Maine Salt Marshes" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maine, 1998).
4. John Greenleaf Whittier, *Snow-Bound: A Winter Idyl* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866), 51-52.
5. For more information on the role of John Greenleaf Whittier in New England's literary history see Lawrence Buell, *New England Literary Culture: From Revolution Through Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
6. John Greenleaf Whittier, *The Complete Poetical Works of Whittier* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1894), 242.
7. For more information on Fields and others in the Boston literary movement see Buell, *New England's Literary Culture*, 23-24. Buell discusses the creation of Boston as the center of New England's literary culture. He traces the region's literary history from the mid-eighteenth century through the mid-nineteenth century. The latter part of chapter two discusses the impact of Romanticism and Transcendentalism on the mid-nineteenth-century Boston literary circle of which Whittier was a member.
8. John B. Pickard, *John Greenleaf Whittier: An Introduction and Interpretation* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), 73.
9. Whittier, *The Complete Poetical Works*, 245.
10. Ann Vileisis, *Discovering the Unknown Landscape: A History of America's Wetlands* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1997), 96; Robert G. McIntyre, *Martin Johnson Heade* (New York: Pantheon Press, 1948), 49-50; Erica E. Hirshler and Julie Aronson, "Martin Johnson Heade and the Newburyport Salt Marshes," in *Antiques Show* (Newburyport: Newburyport Maritime Society, 1983): 44.
11. Harriet Prescott Spofford, "The Marshes," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 35 (July 1867): 95.
12. Spofford, "The Marshes," 97.
13. Spofford, "The Marshes," 107.
14. Sarah Orne Jewett to John Greenleaf Whittier, n.d., mss. 106, box 5, folder 16, The Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.
15. Paula Blanchard, *Sarah Orne Jewett: Her World and Her Work* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1994). Chapter 14 offers a critique of *A Marsh Island* as well as the context in which it was written.

16. Randall R. Mawer, "Setting as Symbol in Jewett's *A Marsh Island*," *Colby Library Quarterly* 12 (June 1976): 86.

17. "Recent American Fiction," *The Atlantic Monthly* 61 (October 1885): 560-561.

18. Arthur Warren Johnson, *Arthur Wesley Dow: Historian, Artist, Teacher*, vol. 28, *Publications of the Ipswich Historical Society* (Ipswich: Ipswich Historical Society, 1934), 42-43. For more information on Dow see David Sellin, "Ipswich Figures in a French Background," in *The Ipswich Painters at Home and Abroad: Dow, Kenyon, Mansfield, Richardson, Wendel* (n.p.: Cricket Press, 1993), 4-15 and *Arthur Wesley Dow, 1857-1922* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977).

19. "A Great Teacher," *Industrial Education Magazine* 24 (February 1923): 230.

20. Arthur Wesley Dow and Everett Stanley Hubbard, *By Salt Marshes: Pictures and Poems of Old Ipswich* (Ipswich, MA: Privately Printed, 1908). For more on the Arts and Crafts Movement see Wendy Kaplan, '*The Art That Is Life*': *The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1987).

21. Arthur Wesley Dow, "Ipswich As It Should Be: From An Artist's Point of View," *Ipswich Chronicle*, 9 May 1891.

22. Johnson, *Arthur Wesley Dow*, 44.

23. Dona Brown, *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 4-13.

24. William Sloane Kennedy, "In Whittier's Land," *New England Magazine* 7 (November 1892): 275.

25. Kennedy, 278.

26. Kennedy, 281.

27. Samuel T. Pickard, *Whittier-Land: A Handbook of North Essex* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1902), 92-93.

28. Harriet Prescott Spofford, "Newburyport and its Neighborhood," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 2 (July 1875): 174.

29. Spofford, "Newburyport and its Neighborhood," 174.

30. The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities has a comprehensive collection of marsh postcards. Researchers wanting to view these postcards should look for them under Hampton, New Hampshire; Newbury, Rowley, and Ipswich, Massachusetts; Wells, Scarborough, and Cape Elizabeth, Maine.

31. Jesse B. Rittenhouse, "Untitled Poem," on postcard entitled "Spurwink Marshes, Cape Elizabeth," in the collection of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Boston, MA.

32. For copies of these photographs see Abby Sewall, *Message Through Time: The Photographs of Emma D. Sewall, 1836-1919* (Gardiner, ME: Harpswell Press, 1989).

33. Josephine Donovan, *Sarah Orne Jewett* (New York: Ungar, 1980), 225.
34. Elle Reichlin, "Emma Lewis Coleman: Photographer in the Barbizon Mood, 1880-1890," unpublished paper in archives of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Boston, MA.
35. Label from Ould Newbury Brewing Company, Yankee Ale, Brewed and Bottled by Ould Newbury Brewing Company, Newburyport, MA.