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<http://www.westportihc.mainememory.net>

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

The Westport Island History Committee
Town of Westport Island
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The Westport Island History Committee oversees, collects, preserves, and stores Westport Island's historical documents and artifacts owned by the town.

ADDITIONAL WEBPAGES:

westportisland.us/board-committee/history-committee

westportisland.us/community/our-history

WESTPORT ISLAND HISTORY CENTER

38 Ferry Road, Westport Island, ME 04578
Open Sundays, 11 am to 1 pm and by appointment

FRIENDS OF WESTPORT ISLAND HISTORY

The Friends of Westport Island History educates, communicates, supports research, acquires documents and artifacts, and conducts fundraising to further the collection and preservation of Westport Island history. The Friends works in tandem with the Westport Island History Committee and the Westport Island History Center to pursue, preserve and promote the Island's proud history and rich cultural heritage.

Tax deductible donations may be made to:
Friends of Westport Island History, a 501(c)(3)
6 Fowles Point Road, Westport Island, ME 04578



THE Friends OF
WESTPORT ISLAND HISTORY



MY ISLAND HOME

Recollections of Verlie May Colby Greenleaf
of Westport Island, Maine (1891-1992)

OPENS AUGUST 15, 2021
WESTPORT ISLAND HISTORY CENTER
38 FERRY ROAD | WESTPORT ISLAND, MAINE



Verlie Greenleaf, 1991

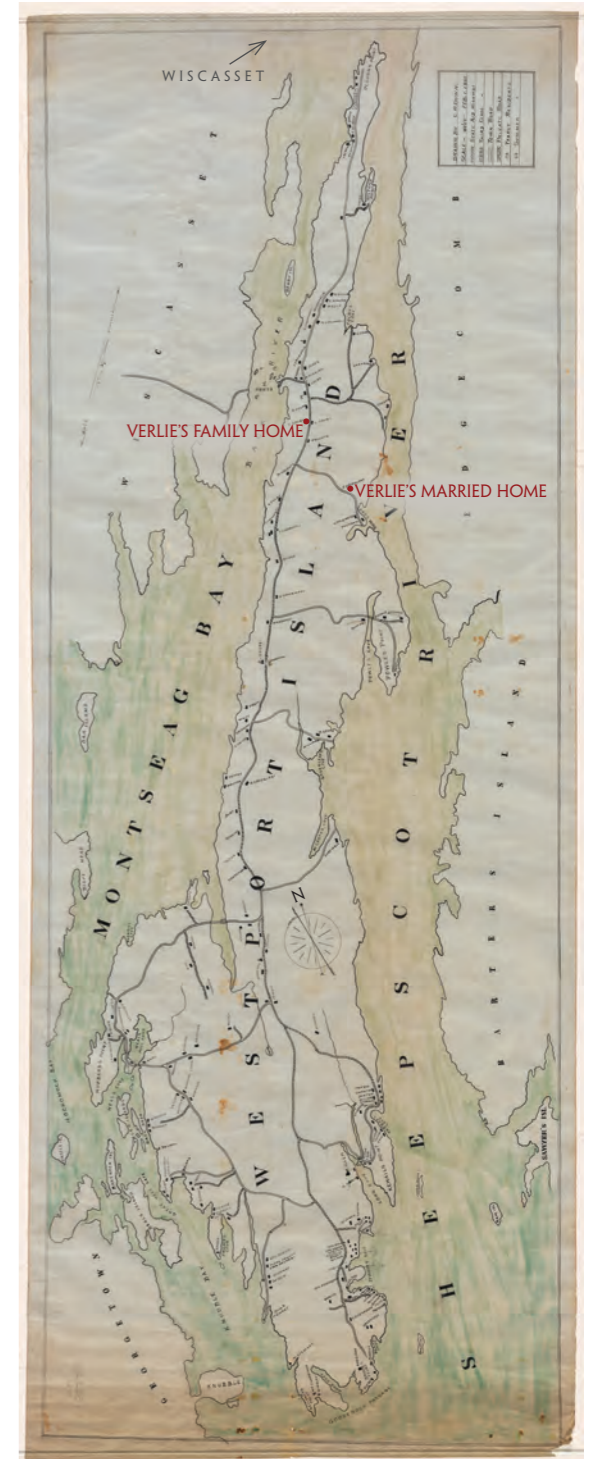
"This is Verlie May Colby Greenleaf speaking. I would like to tell you about my childhood and the many changes that have taken place during my lifetime. I was born the 19th of February, 1891 on Westport, formerly Jeremysquam, an island on the coast of Maine..."

Verlie Greenleaf (1891–1992) bore witness to over a century of Westport Island's history.

Soon after Verlie's birth, ice destroyed a wooden bridge connecting Westport to the Wiscasset mainland. From her earliest memories, there was no ferry or bridge—only boats to carry people on and off the island. There was no electricity on Westport Island until the 1940s, thus no radios, televisions, telephones or computers. Those changes came during Verlie's 100-year life.

Verlie served as Westport's Treasurer and Tax Collector for 45 years. She began participating in town government in 1931, as a school committee member. Verlie and her husband, Fred Greenleaf (1887–1944), raised three children to adulthood, ran a large market farm, and were integrally involved in the social fabric of the Island.

Verlie donated photographs, personal notes, and sat for an interview in 1987, all part of the Westport Island History Committee's collection today. Her words are included here, in italics, providing a first-person account of her life.



FAMILY ALBUM



Winter sleigh at Charles Colby's House, Westport Island, ca. 1908
MMN #105117

"[I was] born and brought up in that house over there where big Clarence lives now. My mother said I was born in a snowstorm, a good snowstorm, the 19th of February, 1891, and she said it really was a snowstorm. They used to get the doctor. The women had their babies at home. ... [The doctor came from] Wiscasset, and then you had to row him across because we didn't have any ferry. You had to meet him across the river.

There were no cars then, just oxen and horses. In winter, the snow was rolled down by what they called a 'heater.' It was a large sled with a log fastened across the front pulled by a yoke of oxen or horses. The man that went by our house had oxen.

[The house] was my father's father's place. He was lost at sea. And it was a Cape Cod house... my father built it over ... he fixed the house as it is today. He raised it up, put bay windows on it and put on an ell."



Charles E. Colby family, Westport Island, ca. 1904. Verlie at far left.
MMN #105121

DAILY LIFE



Hauling the boat "Verlie" to shore, Westport Island, ca. 1900
MMN #101001

"[We] didn't have any ferry. When I was first growing up, they had rowboats at the shores. Everybody had rowboats. There was a Post Office, of course, down at the Center but it was easier for my father to row to Wiscasset to get his groceries and he had a post office box up in Wiscasset, and that's where his mail came in. Sometimes if he was busy, my mother would row up and get the mail. She wouldn't be going there in the middle of winter."



Ferry preparing to cross to Wiscasset, Westport Island, 1925
MMN #105125

"We had our first ferry when I was eight years old. It was a flat bottomed scow which took two cars and was pulled across the river by a wire cable. The cable was attached to iron posts on each side of the river. On the one side of the scow were wheels on rails called 'gins' which the cable went through. First it was pulled by hand. Then they used a motor boat to push it across. They did not make regular trips.

The boat was kept on the Westport side—[the] ferryman lived there also. When you got to the landing you blew your horn. He would take you across. Blow your horn if you were on the Wiscasset side and he would come and get you. The ferry was established in 1899."

OCCUPATIONS



Hay wagon at the barn, Westport Island, circa 1910 MMN #105223

"... [Y]ears ago when there was nothing but oxen and there were two horses, the south end was just as far away as Boston would be for us. ... There was the north end and the south end. Everybody walked."



Ernest Colby sharpening saw blade, Westport Island, ca. 1918
MMN #101530

Verlie's brother Ernest Colby (1884–1969) sharpened the saw blade of a portable sawmill with a stone. The sawmill had a circular saw with a carriage mechanism to move the logs into the saw. The saw had a lever that allowed operators to control the thickness of the board. The mill could be moved from location to location around the island.

WESTPORT LORE



Marie Antoinette House, Edgcomb, ca. 1930 MMN #105208

"And then they went and took our Marie Antoinette house away from us, you see. They put that on a scow and paddled it across the river. It was up at Clough's Point. Captain Clough was going from here to France. ... Well, he got acquainted somehow with this Marie Antoinette. He built this house for her and the last trip he went over there to get her, it leaked out what she was doing and they beheaded her. Edgcomb wanted the house. It really belongs on Westport. It's really ours, our history, because Clough didn't belong in Edgcomb; he belonged on Westport."



Camp Molly Hall, Westport Island, ca. 1908 MMN #105126

Island legend has it that the "Camp Molly" dance hall, in operation in the 1890s and early 1900s, was named after Penobscot woman Molly Molasses, who in the 1840s saw a group of merrymakers at the north end of the island and stopped to share how her people prepared a clambake.

"... we had that dance hall up at the North end, up Camp Molly. [It was] right on the tip so they could come from Edgcomb or Wiscasset or wherever by boat. ... We ran dances from the Fourth of July to Labor Day."