

**A HISTORY OF
SWAN'S
ISLAND, MAINE**

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A History of Swan's Island, Maine by H. W. Small

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BY
H. W. SMALL, M. D.

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1850-1854

HISTORY OF SWAN'S ISLAND.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION — ABORIGINES — DISCOVERY.

UPON the very threshold of this historical sketch I found myself quite destitute of early public records. For over half a century from the settlement of this island until its organization as a plantation no municipal records were kept. But I have been fortunate in bringing to light many private family records, old deeds showing what lots were occupied by the pioneer settlers; and written mutual agreements, which seem to have been often the result of arbitration on any disputed point where different claims to land conflicted with one another.

A great deal of the information which I have received concerning the early settlers was obtained from the oldest inhabitants of the island, many of whom were children of the first settlers, and in a few instances the latter of the pioneer settlers themselves. In this part, which I have obtained from the memory of aged people, some errors may appear, but in the main it will be found correct, as a great deal of pains has been taken to verify these records.

I feel that no apology is necessary for occasionally going beyond the limits of this town and bringing in the sketch of some person directly connected with the family

under consideration, for a book of this kind must necessarily be excursive in its character.

All the subjects of the following biographical sketches have been candidly and impartially treated, nothing withheld that would be of public interest, nor praise bestowed where it is undeserved. I think that everything of importance which has transpired here since its settlement, over a century ago, that would be of public interest, has been here recorded. I have thought best to gain and preserve this historical knowledge before the source from which it could be obtained is gone, when it would have been lost forever. It should be a matter of interest to all of us to preserve a record of our ancestors. These hardy pioneers came to this "island of the sea", cleared the unbroken forests, cultivated farms, built their houses, reared their families, and made it possible for their children to have advantages which they never possessed. Whatever of comforts or of luxuries that we now enjoy is due, in a great measure, to them as a result of their labor. They sowed the seed amid great privation and toil, and we are reaping the harvest. So it is most fitting that their names should ever be held in grateful memory by their descendants.

The location of Swan's Island is in Hancock county, thirty-six miles south of Ellsworth, and is separated from Mount Desert by four miles of water. The island proper contains 5,875 acres, besides a number of smaller islands which are included in the town. It is entirely surrounded by the Atlantic ocean, yet several islands intervene be-

tween it and the open sea. The surface contains no great eminences, but is generally hilly. The ocean has made great indentations into the island, cutting it into great peninsulas which, in some instances, nearly unite, the enclosure forming excellent harbors which offer safe shelter to vessels of the largest size. Excellent crops reward those who till the soil, yet on account of the rocky nature of the land, farming was never carried out to any great extent. An inexhaustible supply of granite forms the southern part of the island, but the fishing business now, as ever in the past, is the leading industry.

The remote history of this island, like that of all America, is shrouded in darkness. I am not able to raise the curtain and look into the past and see the people whom we know, by unmistakable traces, made their homes here, reared their young, carried on their ancient mode of hunting and fishing as a means of subsistence. Here, too, they died; and when the white men came to take possession of these ancient hunting grounds, they found only the ruins of savage occupancy. This was undoubtedly a favorite resort for the red men. The cool bracing atmosphere of the island tempted them to leave the seclusion of their forest homes, especially during the warmer months of the year. This island then furnished excellent hunting grounds. Sea fowl came in great flocks so near that they could be easily killed by their rude weapons, besides the excellent fishing in the harbor or very near the shore made it practicable to use their birch bark canoes. Also in winter the severity of the weather