

Zhaa-bo-da-waan: Teaching Lodge

The name “Teaching Lodge” explains its use; people come to it to learn the universal truths of life—to learn about life. The fact that there is now a traditional teaching lodge built on Gull Island gives us pleasure, because it might well be considered one of Ernest Oberholtzer’s “universities of the wilderness,” and in this case the Indigenous People are, indeed, its faculty—much as Ober would have hoped.

Pebaamibines (Dennis Jones) sits on our board of directors and helps to direct the Inaakonigewin Committee, formed three years ago to oversee the multicultural aspects of our mission. The Oberholtzer Foundation mission is “to maintain Ober’s legacy and North Woods island home as a source of inspiration, renewal and connection to Indigenous Peoples, kindred spirits, and the natural world.”

The Teaching Lodge is a new connection to Indigenous Peoples on Rainy Lake. It was built this summer with the leadership of elders from the Nigigoonsiminikaning community, with added physical energy from volunteers on Mallard Island as well as the muscle and enthusiasm of several young women from Camp Ogichi Daa Kwe on Rainy Lake.

A traditional Teaching Lodge, explains Pebaamibines, has an equivalent space in the spirit world. Here in this world, the air-space defined by the bent lodge poles is a symbolic presence of that spiritual space. All spiritual implications of living on the Earth are represented in the lodge—in its natural teachings. There are 13 vertical bent poles standing erect that represent the lunar calendar. There are also four rings of poles encircling the lodge that represent the four layers of sky in the Ojibwe cosmos. And there are seven benches representing the 7 grandfather teachings. Sitting on a bench there gives a person space and time to consider an important question or to challenge their higher self, and thus to live more closely connected to the natural forces of the universe.

This lodge was a natural expansion of the Mallard Island mission. Pebaamibines says, “My intuition led me here, from the involvement on Mallard Island and with my language camp (first started on Mallard 30 years ago). One of my visions is to make this space available for any who have a pull to learn from it.” It is for all humanity—no special culture or race. “Part of our process is to help humans find ourselves, to bring the people back to ourselves or remind us of our connection to creation. It’s all about re-directing our energies to what is more conducive to our own awakening. We can awaken each other.”

During the summer season on Mallard Island, the Teaching Lodge was a new, quiet experience. We built it with ceremony and we enter it from the east. And though many people felt the energy present in this lodge, it is not quite finished and will be welcomed with full ceremony in the springtime. (Photo of partial Work Crew, see page six.)

In the words of Ernest Oberholtzer...

“The wigwam tent still stands this morning or rather ‘waves’ after one of the worst storms of the season during the night. It had been put up yesterday, and I had expected all night to look out the window of my sleeping place and see it flat on the ground.

Two Indian [sic] lads, 14 and 19, helped me put it up yesterday and install a stove. Then they scoured the country for boughs and came back with a toboggan load and covered the ground with fragrant cedar and balsam. The last thing they did was to saw me some wood and get a fresh pail of water from the opening in the lake, where the Bliss brothers have been making ice.

That <tent is> where I plan to take the old people and to have the recorder, if they will tolerate it.... They took up a pinch of tobacco to put in the palm of each old Indian as an invitation. That is the old <Anishinaabe> custom, and last night the boys said that the old people had accepted.”

Ober in a letter to Frances Andrews, March 25, 1948, MNHS, Reel 23.



Teaching Lodge in Process, May 2018
Photo by Mairi Doerr



Dear Readers,

We expect a lot from our favorite 1100-foot spine of rock up in Rainy Lake. This summer we listened more to you and to Mallard Island about island management. She said, “slow down a little—take on a little less,” and we are still listening.

I’m certain that on a trajectory of island use, we want it to bend toward the care or sharing of a sacred place, instead of pointing anywhere near destination tourism. We want to increase the reverence and deferential treatment that this historic place receives, while we still want people to enjoy it—and new and younger folk at that. We recognize that *everything* on Mallard is ephemeral—every book and piano, every old door and hinge, every rock ledge and scallop, and we grieved the loss of nearly a dozen more trees in this summer’s winds. Meanwhile, downed trees always open up new light, much like a year of renewal might for the leadership involved.

We are learning, or trying to learn, more about what Mallard Island was like before William Hapgood gave it to Ernest Oberholtzer. Who visited; who camped there? And we want to learn more about it before that—we’re listening for the spirit in the land, in the soil and rock, and we’re learning from a very generous female drum spirit who protects it all.

In this issue, we introduce to you a new idea: a traditional Teaching Lodge and the airspace that it creates for us to consider new ways—or is it old ways—of listening. Please enjoy the images and captions from another good summer on the island, and learn with us about “Poor Harry,” friend of Ober. Get behind Ober’s photographic eye, and imagine even more of his forthcoming images. Join each other at the fall gathering, and pass the word about this tiny-yet-still-surprising place in Rainy Lake.

Oh, and one last important plea... We do *not* wish to imagine what a Mallard Island week would be like without swimmable waters. Please visit the website for the “**Campaign to Save the BWCA**” [www.savetheboundarywaters.org/take-action] and donate or sign or take action as you can. Now is the time to step up to protect the Quetico-Superior region, and that also means Rainy Lake. *Thank you!*

Beth Waterhouse

A Mallard Island Wish List

Please contact us if you can donate any of the following or know of a good way to save money as we procure these items:

- (*) An AED or Automated External Defibrillator
- (*) A small outboard motor in good condition, 15 to 25 HP
- (*) Washable blankets, twin or double sized. (used are ok)
- (*) Dish towels, good condition (used are ok)
- (*) Small table lamps, simple size and shape
- (*) Two chairs for the drum room – comfort is a must, overstuffed ok, but in good condition and please not overly Victorian in design! (Send a photo.)

Special thanks to our cadre of Mallard Island Caretakers for their training and stalwart assistance this summer!!

- Daniel Laurence Andersen, * Judy Blais, * Paula DeMars, * Mairi Doerr, * Barb Draper, * Jim Fitzpatrick, * Mark Granlund, * Mary Swalla Holmes, * Prudence Johnson, * Nance Kunkel, * Emily Larscheidt, * Jane Lund, * Jennie Ross, * Kelly Sassi, * Danielle Sosin, * Diane Tessari, * Elaine Thruene.

We plan to hold a Caretaker Training Week again in summer 2019.

Contact: < beth@eober.org > or (952) 401-0591 or (952) 607-6879. Call if you wish to join a volunteer work-week or a standing committee to add your skills and energy to this mission.



MALLARD ISLAND

THE OBERHOLTZER FOUNDATION

The Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation maintains Ober’s legacy and North Woods island home as a source of inspiration, renewal, and connection to Indigenous Peoples, kindred spirits, and the natural world.

This newsletter is published twice per year, generally February and October. Cover sketch of Mallard Island is credited to Gene Ritchie Monahan. Send poems, stories or articles to Beth Waterhouse at beth@eober.org

Text Editor:

Beth Waterhouse, Edina, MN

Layout Editor:

Nance Kunkel, Hines, MN

For more information, visit

www.eober.org

Stay tuned for a **new and updated web site, coming in November**. We are working with Ms. Fiona Reid as webmaster, and we’re working on new design elements including a separate “Anishinaabe” section, more on “Archives” and better use of the amazing supply of beautiful, color images that are available from all of our photographer participants in recent years. The address will stay: www.eober.org.

Please support this organization (and this newsletter) as you are able. Send a donation for general support to help us reach our annual budget goal for 2018. We will always be accepting donations as bequests or for the endowment, as your heart tells you. Thank you for thinking about adding the Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation to your estate plans—we are approaching 100 years on Mallard Island in Rainy Lake! ~ We can receive gifts of stock. ~ To learn more about this Foundation, please contact the Executive Director, Beth Waterhouse, at < beth@eober.org > Mailing address: 4370 Brookside Court, #205, Edina, MN 55436.

Thank you!

“POOR LITTLE HARRY”

By Debbie Dietrich Smith

Ober served as a mentor, guide, and employer of young men throughout his life. They came from near and far and from all walks of life to learn about the northland. This is the story of one Harry Henderson II of Omaha, Nebraska who spent time with Ober during the summers of 1936 to 1938.

According to Harry’s mother, Harry was always “keenly interested in wildlife.” When he was in grade school he’d hurry home on Fridays to listen to the *Farm and Home Hour* on the radio. Tuning in on December 30, 1933, thirteen year old Harry heard Ober speak on “The Border Lakes: A Nation’s Playground.” Sometime after that broadcast, Harry wrote to Ober, and the two began corresponding.

On July 3, 1936, Harry wrote to Ober, “Remember me? I’m a friend of yours who lives in Omaha.” Ober responded, “I should say I do, though it [has been] a long time between letters.” Ober continued, “I’ve always hoped that sometime you could come here to Rainy Lake and pay me a visit. . . .” Ober’s letter described what Harry might expect if he visited. This included helping with chores such as getting ice, and running errands in the boat. He also told him there’d be time for fishing, swimming, and canoeing.

Harry, now fifteen, took Ober up on his offer, arriving on Mallard Island in early August 1936. On August 13, the two set out for a seventeen-day canoe trip. During the trip, Harry, who had never paddled a canoe, kept an illustrated journal he titled “My Great Adventure in Canada.” Upon returning home to Omaha, Harry wrote to Ober, “I sure do want to thank you for taking me on our trip, it meant more to me than you think, it gave me a chance to see firsthand the wonders of the forest.”

The two continued to correspond and the following January, Harry wrote to Ober, “Say, here you are now calling me ‘Junior.’ I’d rather be called ‘Poor Little Harry.’ You always have called me that and it makes me laugh at the many instances when we’ve been together and you’ve called me that.” From that time forward, it was common for Harry to sign his letters to Ober as “Poor Little Harry.”

Harry visited Ober again in 1937 and 1938. Following a 1937 canoe trip he wrote Ober, “Well now I have had two wonderful trips behind me and I want to thank you a thousand times for them.” In 1938, at the conclusion of their last canoe trip together, Harry wrote to Ober, “I am only sorry that we could not make the trip longer.”

The two would continue to correspond over the years, and in 1940 Harry and a friend visited Ober en route to Lake Superior and Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. During WWII Harry was as a pre-med student and by 1944 he was married and had a son, Harry III. In 1954, Harry sends a heart-felt letter to Ober in which he writes, “In retrospect, looking back on the years of your strengthening influence upon me, with the cherished memories of youth, traveling beside you in the lake country, I deeply thank you for all of it. . . . Of all the boys you helped to learn the love of the wilderness, I was probably the poorest material to work with and the one for you to be

most discouraged over. Yet twenty years have passed and although you have not been physically present beside me, you have been constantly with me as a guiding light.”

Both Harry and his son graduated from Creighton Medical School in Omaha, Nebraska and became psychiatrists—Harry II in the 1940s and Harry III in 1969.

For three summers, 2016-2018, Debbie Dietrich Smith studied on Mallard Island as a landscape architect. On her own, she has continued to dig deeply into Ober’s correspondence via the Minnesota Historical Society. Debbie lives and works (for the National Park Service) in Natchitoches, Louisiana. We hope that she will continue to write stories for this newsletter!



To Contact Us:

Mallard Island is currently closing down with the capable help of Pam and Darrell Rundell, David Markwardt, Elaine and Steve Thrune, and other invaluable volunteers. Don’t forget to join us at the *20th Annual Fall Gathering*. (see p. 8)

Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation Board of Directors:

Bill Forsyth, Minneapolis, Minnesota
George Glazier, Devens, Massachusetts
Bob Hilke, International Falls, Minnesota
Pebaamibines Jones, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Bob Norbie, Great Falls, Montana
Michael Reid, St. Paul, Minnesota
Peggy Anne Smith, Thunder Bay, Ontario
Diane Tessari, Excelsior, Minnesota.

We say “welcome” to Bill Forsyth, long-time work-week volunteer and friend of the Foundation. We say fond “farewells” to Jim Fitzpatrick, Mark Granlund, Charlie Kelly, and Denise Lajimodiere, who each had to end their board commitments for distinctly different reasons. We are glad that Jim and Mark will stay on as caretakers and that Denise will continue to enjoy the island as a place of healing and teaching. We can never thank Charlie enough, and we know his lifetime of commitment to Ober will carry on as always.

Staff Members of this Foundation:

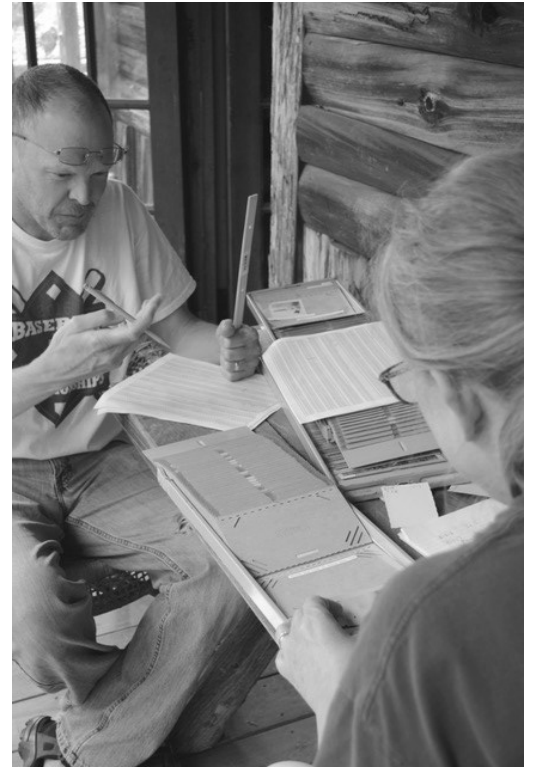
Beth Waterhouse, Executive Director; Mairi Doerr and Prudence Johnson, Summer Program Directors; Paula DeMars, Archivist.



A SUMMER OF RENEWAL



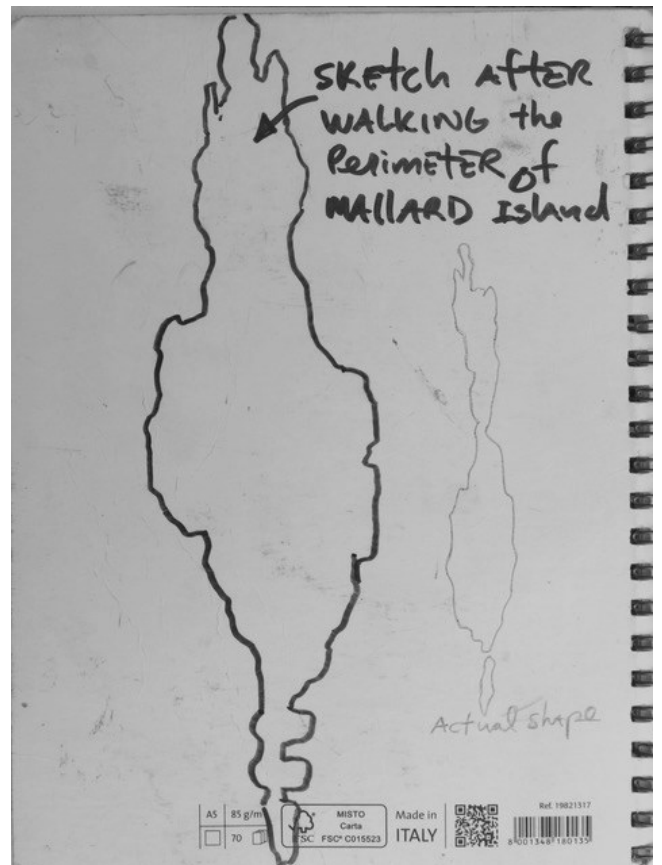
Kathy Johnsen gets up early and witnesses this well-known silhouette.



Clay and Lisa Gustafson work hard in June to document Ernest Oberholtzer's photographs.



Peggy Anne Smith captures these twinflowers. Imagine them pink.



Artist John Schuerman uses his body memory to re-trace the shape of Mallard Island.



Mary Alice Smith and Barb Balcom talk gardens.



Pebaamibines and Bob Norbie learn in the Teaching Lodge.



Michael Reid begins to clear downed trees after the August 27th storm.

Ernest Oberholtzer took photos nearly every day of his adult life, working with various cameras as the technology changed. He was known in the early 20th Century for his images of moose, taken from the front of a canoe and benefiting from some expert paddling by Billy Magee or other Anishinaabe canoe partners. We are re-discovering thousands of images as we create better ways to retrieve them: over 6,000 black and white print images, and approximately 2,000 colored slide images soon to be enjoyed in digital form. This project has employed archivist Paula DeMars, and is supported with a MN Legacy Grant through the Minnesota Historical Society.



Foundation Board Considers Alcohol Ban

Over the last decade or so, Mallard Island caretakers and directors have discussed the use, occasional mis-use, or enjoyment of alcohol on the island. First of all, Mallard is a rocky island, and we foster a sense of reverence for this 1100-foot spit of rock as a place to be away or be creative. Recently, this issue has come forward again, and this time with the leadership of our Indigenous board members.

They ask—are we ready to treat Ober’s islands as the sacred spaces they are? And leaders go on to declare that any island experience should be a time of renewal, reflection, and creativity. Simplicity is at the core of this experience, from our re-use of lumber to our composting and careful water use. Leaving behind the routines of “the mainland” is essential, and some feel that alcohol can and does interfere with our ability to be present.

Though not exclusively, these thoughts come from the “Inaakonigewin” committee. This title is an Ojibwe word that means, “to go toward spirit to learn life purpose and the steps toward living that purpose.” We agree, all around, that Mallard Island is not a tourist or “resort” experience. We recognize that being on the island is like living in a museum, and that the islands themselves are historically important, even sacred to the Anishinaabe. And we know—especially again in recent years—that ceremony is being conducted on the islands and that sacred tobacco is often offered, meaning that all of the islands are sacred ground. We know that alcohol has been a powerful element in the life of the Anishinaabe, and that it was introduced, often wrongly, into the culture many decades ago.

Taking all that into important consideration, the board of directors also knows that many adults enjoy a glass of wine at dinner; many hard workers like to end a day of carpentry with a beer, and other moderate uses of alcohol have been a small part of a week on Mallard Island. In addition, volunteer caretakers do not wish to become enforcers. It was after much discussion that the board voted as follows:

Responsible use of beer and wine by adults will be allowed in the Wannigan and in the central part of the island.

We will educate visitors about *and expect* a ban of alcohol in the Drumroom or Teaching Lodge areas at all times and in other places during special times on Mallard like drum ceremony or fasting times.

Hosts for Mallard weeks may declare any week “alcohol free” for their own reasons, and people will be asked to comply voluntarily.

All Mallard Island guests should take alcohol into consideration much as we do food allergies or special food needs for each other.

Finally, our planning documents and verbal agreements will try to be clearer about this, as we ask Mallard Island workers or program participants to honor the policy. In essence, we believe that several days in the semi-wild of Mallard Island is enough and that the experience should be unencumbered and serve as an example of simplicity and community in many ways.

Teaching Lodge Crew



Left to Right, Back Row:
Jerrica Bauer, Alice Woods, Lizzie Thomson, Craig Fernholz, Calvin Morrison, Don Jones, Ernie Morrison, Doug Kelley, Sherry Rovig.

Front Row: Lindsay Wiebold, Pebaamibines (Dennis) Jones.

Photo by Michael Reid

Letter from the Treasurer

Dear Friends,

Another great open-water season is coming to an end up on Mallard, the waters are getting brisk and the evening light is quickly diminishing. Mallard Island got some extra rest this summer, or at least tried to. It was a season for the island to reveal its stresses and for us to understand how to be better stewards. We learned from Ober's islands and their weekly inhabitants that both are meant to serve each other. Mallard shares its gifts of peace, wild storms and nesting creatures, and we attempt to let this all in, to repair the island *and ourselves*. Our stewardship comes in various forms—we come together and rebuild as volunteers, we offer our expertise (or, for a time, our leadership) and those who can't participate directly contribute monetarily.

The endowment campaign, first introduced to you in 2016, has transformed this foundation from a hand to mouth subsistence operation to a less encumbered Foundation, able stretch our wings and support or mission.

This year, we called for "Renewal." Directors listened, and we've begun to set goals for change. Although our findings are just being compiled, the exciting part of this has been the number of survey (or other) responses and the passion behind them. The board committed to fully immerse ourselves in this feedback, spending a week in the beginning of the summer and a few days at the end, aligning feedback with the core values that Ober has exhibited and re-evaluating how this might alter our strategic plan.

We also know that any anticipated initiatives require support from you. As the endowment campaign and this renewal season now come to a close, the focus shifts to new island programs or capital improvements, a never-ending demand. We have archives that are being better documented and restored, Anishinaabe cross-cultural efforts bringing together new folks, roofs on several buildings soon to be replaced, a new web site coming to fruition, and the Big House siding restoration ongoing. We achieve all this through many hours of volunteering but that can only take us so far. By reaching into the community, we are also letting contractors and suppliers know our needs. These needs are ever pressing on our annual operational revenue, and we trust you'll continue to help.

This summer also brought its surprises: a problematic water treatment system, carpenter ants, and storms that twice shut down the power and once felled trees, all of which challenged our caretakers. Through these events we are reminded of the needs for maintaining a safe environment for our guests. We intend to procure a gas-powered generator. Caretaker training reminded us of the benefit of an automated defibrillator, and our attention often turns to fire prevention. Weather has also beaten up one dock to the point that simple repair is not sufficient-- this time we we have to invest. By next spring we will have a new dock as our main wannigan dock, thanks to David Markwardt of Ely, MN, who has offered his help. Dave and a hundred more show us, again and again, how important Mallard Island is to so many skilled and generous people.

So we have a lot going on lately: new initiatives, a re-evaluation, an endowment that affords us some security when earnings are spent wisely, and a constant need for repair and restoration. So many of us believe in the mission and values that Ober has instilled-- the love of place and the need to take action to protect our environment for next generations. We encourage you to join us any way you can in these endeavors. Your support is invaluable; it's what continues to make things happen.

Michael Reid,

Oberholtzer Foundation Treasurer



Photo by Ernest C. Oberholtzer



MALLARD ISLAND

Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation
4370 Brookside Court #205
Edina, MN 55436

20th Annual Mallard Island Fall Gathering

Saturday, October 27, 2018 2:00 to 6:00 PM / Cider and Light Refreshments

Judson Church, 4101 Harriet Avenue, Minneapolis, 55409

Please come! Join this informal event to share your memories of another fine summer, to read your words or share your stories! Bring memories, artwork, photos, and your checkbook—to buy the new notecards, this year featuring Ober’s own black and white photos. Plan to take part in the *impromptu talent show* held about 3:30 p.m., which will reflect the renewal nature of this past season. What’s important is that we meet and greet and laugh and sometimes cry and basically re-live the meaning of one of our favorite spots on Earth.

This year, view Ober’s photography, peruse the tables to “find the door-knobs” where the winner receives a “taste of Mallard” grape and crab-apple syrup! Plan to peel off in small groups and enjoy dinner in one of so many nearby Minneapolis restaurants. Hope to see you there!

2018 Archives Volunteers Working on Photography

Top Row, L to R: Gordy Paquette, Sue Carver, Lisa Gustafson

Middle: Paula DeMars, Edie Meissner, David Duggan, Elizabeth Hutchins, Andrea Allison.

Front Row: Laurie Probst, Jennifer Huebscher, Clay Gustafson.



Photo by Beth Waterhouse.