

## **From the Mallard Island Newsletters in 2014-2015**

*With permission to share from the Ernest Oberholtzer Foundation and author Mary Swalla Holmes*

*The following information is a compilation of 3 articles that were published over a year's time in the Mallard Island Newsletter put together by the Ernest Oberholtzer Foundation.*

### **In Celebration of Frances E. Andrews: Part One**

*By Mary Swalla Holmes, Oberholtzer Foundation Board Vice President*

I first heard of Frances Andrews as the namesake of a vintage Larson boat on Mallard Island. In fact, I hadn't even been to the Island yet when I met that "Frances Andrews." When I met Jean Replinger at Erickson's Bald Rock dock for the first time, (decades ago) she directed me to follow her to the Island in the small outboard motorboat tied beside the pontoon boat. This was a bit of problem. While I was an experienced canoeist, I did not know how to drive a motorboat. I hadn't mentioned this fact when I applied for the position of summer caretaker on Mallard Island. I must have had a look of terror on my face, because Jean proceeded to show me how to start the motor and how to pull the lever to go forward and backward. And off we went to Mallard Island.

I soon learned that Frances Andrews was much, much more than a boat. She was an intelligent, sensitive woman whose story I came to admire greatly. She played a large role in supporting Ernest Oberholtzer and Mallard Island, as well as many other organizations and causes that she believed in. Over the next three newsletters, the Oberholtzer Foundation will honor her memory by sharing what we know of her story. We would also love to hear from those who know more.

Frances Elizabeth Andrews was born on October 9, 1884 to Arthur Chase Andrews and Mary Hunt Andrews. Both Arthur and Mary had graduated from Oberlin College in Ohio. Mary's father, William Hunt, had been a New York legislator and prominent businessman. Married in 1880, the couple moved several times and settled in Fargo, North Dakota where Frances was born. A few years later, her brother William was born. Their father established a lumber and hardware business in Fargo and soon after began to build grain mills. When Frances was nine years old the family moved to Minneapolis. Mr. Andrews formed a partnership with James Gage with the sole purpose of milling grain. When Mr. Gage died in 1908, Arthur became the sole owner of the Andrews Grain Company.

I know very little of Frances's childhood. By the time she was 16, the Andrews family was doing quite well. Frances lived with her family and Bessie, a Swedish housemaid, in an apartment at 1902 Park Avenue in Minneapolis. In 1900, this area was known as the "Golden Mile" with 35 mansions lining the street. By 1905, Arthur Andrews had built the family a substantial home at 245 Clifton Ave, in the Loring Park district. Back in the year that Frances was born, Arthur had purchased a vacation cabin on Barnum's Island near Isle Royale. The family spent many happy summers there. Eventually Frances went off to Oberlin College in 1904, graduating in 1906.

Frances's mother, Mary, had graduated from the Literary Course at Oberlin. Mary's uncle was the poet John G. Saxe, and she often quoted his verses. Mary was said to have had a keen sense of humor and a strong sense of philanthropic duty. The family was struck by tragedy when Mary Hunt Andrews died in 1912. Frances, unmarried, took on the role of her father's hostess. Just four years later, young William died in California. Frances, then 32, and Arthur, 62, were devastated.

When Frances met Ober, they were both in their early forties. In our records, the first correspondence between Mr. Andrews and Ober was in 1928, and shortly after that a correspondence began between Frances and Ober. The early letters are delightful descriptions of the enjoyment of each other's company and wishes for continued health of Frances's father and Ober's mother.

In the next newsletter, we'll let the letters that flew between Mr. Andrews, Frances and Ober tell more of the story. Frances Andrews went on to play an important role in supporting Ober's conservation work, his life on Mallard Island, and ultimately his legacy.

## **In Recognition of Frances E. Andrews: Part Two**

*By Mary Swalla Holmes, Oberholtzer Foundation Board Vice President*

Frances Andrews and her father, Arthur C. Andrews, met Ernest Oberholtzer through mutual friends that were all working toward passage of the Shipstead-Newton (later the Shipstead-Nolan) Act. "Ober," as he was known to his friends, was someone new to the Andrews. Frances had spent many summers on Isle Royale and had traveled to Europe and Alaska when she met Ober. His stories of the Hudson Bay canoe trip and his European adventures must have resonated with her. They had many values in common.

The Shipstead-Newton Act was a radical concept in protection of wilderness in 1928. As Mallard Island friend, Stephen Wilbers, explains in his [Boundary Waters Chronology](#), "The Act withdrew all federal land in the boundary waters region from homesteading or sale, prevented the alteration of natural water levels by dams, prohibited logging within 400 feet of shorelines, and preserved the wilderness nature of shorelines. These regulations applied to a 4,000-square-mile area extending from Lake Superior on the east to Rainy Lake on the west. Passage of the Act represented a defeat for Edward Wellington Backus's plan to build a series of dams in the Rainy Lake watershed to create storage basins for industrial waterpower."

Ober was the point man for the lobby efforts for the bill. Behind him was a group of businessmen and attorneys who all were interested in the passage of the bill. Arthur and Frances Andrews had considerable political savvy and connections along with ample funds from the milling industry. They were willing to spend political, social and financial capital on the effort to pass the bill, and for years they made donations and wrote letters to organizations and Congressmen. When the bill passed just before the Congressional session ended at midnight on July 3, 1930, Ober immediately sent a telegram to the Andrews, rejoicing in passage of the bill and thanking them for all they had done to support the passage of the Shipstead-Nolan Act.

While Ober was appreciative of the funds that the Andrews provided for conservation efforts, he did not like to be the beneficiary of the funds, personally. When Frances found that Ober would send back any money that was sent directly to him, she found other ways to support him and his work. In 1941, Frances began to supplement Ober's meager salary by channeling funds through the *Quetico-Superior Council* and the *Izaak Walton League*. From a communication on Quetico Superior Council letterhead in 1949: "This will acknowledge the receipt of your check for \$1,200, which amount, in accordance with your instructions, is to be paid in amounts of \$100.00 each month, commencing in October, as additional salary to Mr. E.C. Oberholtzer."

Frances also rented the Front House on Mallard for many summers, especially after getting to her summer home on Barnum Island at Isle Royale became more difficult. In 1950, Ober sent Frances a letter explaining that the floodwaters had taken a heavy toll on Mallard that June and refunding her check for \$600.00, which she had paid for two months of the summer season. Frances protested that Ober should keep the check to help pay for damages. They argued over that \$600 in letters over the next few months. In the end, Frances always seemed to find ways to help keep Ober above water, financially. (pun intended) Next issue: more about their later life stories on Rainy Lake.

## **Frances E. Andrews – A Lasting Legacy**

*By Mary Swalla Holmes*

*Editor's Note: The previous two issues of this newsletter have featured pieces on Frances Elizabeth Andrews. We learned about her family and her early life, including their connections to Barnum Island near Isle Royale. Born in 1884, Frances graduated from Oberlin College in 1906. We learned about her mother, Mary Hunt Andrews, and how her early death affected Frances. Frances Andrews met Ernest Oberholtzer about 1928, and their friendship and correspondence was a lifelong practice for both of them. In the last issue, we learned more about how Frances loved the Front House on Mallard Island and how she continued her support of Ober and his advocacy work.*

Frances and Ober remained friends until her death in the summer of 1961. Five years earlier, and with Ober's research and correspondence, Frances had purchased the piece of land that she called "Wildcroft," on Bancroft Bay (now Frank's Bay). She renovated a home there, with a second story that was labeled "Ober's" on the blueprints. As usual, Ober had other ideas. He instead purchased yet another old houseboat at auction and, with the help of several of his Ojibwe friends, moved it to the shoreline of Wildcroft. Once it was up on land, he had Charlie Friday build a second story and a stone fireplace. He then dubbed his new home the "Frigate Friday" in honor of Charlie, and he set about building a small duck pond and garden. Among the things that Ober and Frances had in common were their unwavering efforts to grow their own food and to make a little money at it if possible.

Frances had been experimenting with all sorts of agricultural enterprises at her property near Sarona, Wisconsin. Inherited from her father, the acreage had been both a working farm and a lovely stretch of timber and wetland. She experimented with various crops, sheep, ducks and even looked at uses of acorns as income for the land. In 1954, she deeded the 300 acre "Hunt Hill" to the National Audubon

Society as a teacher's camp and bird refuge. During this same time, her family's long-time summer retreat on Barnum Island was becoming part the Isle Royale National Park. She and her father had supported development of the park, but they believed that the families that had commercial fishing interests on the islands should be able to remain and continue to fish. Frances spent many hours writing letters and personally visiting park personnel, but in the end, the fishermen were not allowed to stay.

She was also interested in the Ojibwe families living in Grand Portage. Again, Frances schemed to find economic opportunities to keep them on their land and preserve their way of life. She donated the funds to rebuild the dock at Grand Portage, believing that it was critical to the lives of the people in that community. She and Ober were both very opposed to the road going through Grand Portage, especially if it impacted Mount Josephine in any way.

A strong, deep attachment to the land and wilderness motivated Frances Andrews, and she was willing to spend her resources, both time and money, to preserve the places she loved. She also understood business and politics, and kept her mind sharp and organized. Ober very much admired her organizational skills, and he often commented that she could get more done than any person he knew.

In the end, she made one last trip to her beloved Rainy Lake. She had been ill for several years with congestive heart failure but wrote that she would arrive at Wildcroft in a day or two— on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1961. She did arrive but went straight to the hospital in International Falls, where she died on July 23<sup>rd</sup>. In her will, Frances provided for the people she loved and the organizations that she believed in. Notably, she left the National Audubon Society \$100,000; Ober \$55,000; the Minneapolis Art Institute \$50,000; The American Association for the United Nations, \$10,000; Planned Parenthood Federation, \$20,000; Nature Conservancy, \$25,000; Quetico Superior Council, \$10,000 and YMCA, \$12,500, as well as other organizations. The will states that Sarah Bosworth Jones, her only surviving relative, received her personal effects and family jewelry along with \$8,000.

In addition, Frances had already generously set up scholarship programs at her alma mater, Oberlin College, and several study-abroad scholarships at other universities. The Minneapolis Foundation still gives grants that originated with the generosity of Frances E. Andrews.

A decade prior, back in 1950, Oberholtzer had worked with Frances and William Hapgood so that Frances might purchase Deer Island (Grassy) to keep it from being developed. After Frances' death, Deer Island was in Ober's care, and he soon donated it to the Camping and Education Foundation, who owns it today and maintains it as a wild island surrounding Camp Koochiching.

In summary, I am so thankful that my life story has crossed paths with that of Frances Andrews, and that I've been able to travel back in time to walk along with her for awhile. I've learned much about generosity and how to shape the future—with vision, persistence, skill and the use of one's resources. Thank you, Frances Elizabeth Andrews!

**All three parts of this tribute were written by Mary Swalla Holmes.**