

FROM MULE CARTS TO GOLF CARTS: A BRIEF HISTORY OF CUTTYHUNK ISLAND'S TRANSPORT



Old Cuttyhunk foot-paths connecting houses to the village and docks were gradually widened to allow passage of mule and oxen-drawn carts carrying building supplies and freight. John Black and Walter Allen were among the early 20th century drivers of these conveyances.

The island's first automobiles arrived after the establishment of the summer colony by the William Wood family in the 1920s. Guests renting from William's son Cornelius had access to both a Model A Woody station wagon and a Model T sedan for beach and picnic excursions. CHS director Allison Thurston has an early home movie featuring 12 people piling out of the sedan, ready to swim!

Francis Jenkins, the Woods' superintendent, maintained the vehicles and went as far as Boston to outfit them with tires. Many a young lad washed, waxed, and polished those automobiles back in the day, including Alan Wilder, Fred Burke (who married Francis's daughter Margaret), Johnny Bancroft, and Wye Garfield. Called "a saint" by so many for his good deeds, Francis drove a black Ford truck for years, tending to one task after another.

Early on, when there were just the two Fords, they collided one summer afternoon. While reported in the *New York Times*, the details here come from written remembrances of Don Macleod and Wye Garfield who were boys at the time. The Model T was totaled and its driver, Mrs. Peg Farr, on her way to the ferry dock, had serious cuts on her arms from the broken windshield. Both the Model A and its driver Mamie (Mary) House, survived unscathed.

The story became legend, kept alive by a black and white cartoon depicting the vehicles.

It was this accident, on a curve near the power house on what was then a tree-lined dirt way called Lovers' Lane, that spurred the widening of town roads. Some were also paved in the late 1920s and '30s. Copicut Neck roads and winding roads to the West End have remained dirt.

Since that early crash, a guardian angel has protected many a young island driver. Don MacLeod wrote the tale of "three naughty boys" attempt to drive the Woody one evening. It was parked, facing uphill, near the top of the hill by the tennis court. They managed to start it but tricks of the clutch and brakes eluded them, and it slowly rolled backwards towards Island Lodge where they were staying. Lucky for them, a rock



The Wood family's original Model T and Model A approaching Four Corners on Lower Broadway, c. 1928. Postcard from Elizabeth Stevens' family album



To the beach! The Woods' Model T and the Tucker clan, c. 1930. Photo: Allison Thurston

halted a rear wheel, and the escapade was never acknowledged by parents or admitted to by the boys. When the Woods retired their Woody, it went on to be driven by Louise W. Garfield and then Don Frothingham.



A photo of the Woods' 1939 Ford Woody Wagon on the *Cuttyhunk Memories* group FaceBook page prompted a slew of comments. Some recalled learning to drive or riding inside, on the tailgate, or running board, or just plain wishing they could have, well into the 1970s. Winter House's summer residents Connie and Muriel Wood drove that car with smiles. David Nemiah mentioned a memory of his distant relative Muriel driving the Woody down to the bath house (since washed away) around noon for her daily swim.

The stylish Woody even filled the role of hearse. Kevin Mach remembers it carrying his great-grandmother Florence Tilton Mackay's casket to the island cemetery back in 1969.



The 1939 Ford Woody Wagon owned by the Woods, 1975. Photo: Allie Thurston

Images of Army vehicles have proven hard to come by. During the war years when the Army built a base on Cuttyhunk, Alan Wilder recalls there being one large 4WD Army truck and several olive Army jeeps. The jeeps carried not only the servicemen on their duties but the occasional load of island kids over to Army barracks on Homers' Neck for movie night.

Lighthouse keeper's daughter Seamond Ponsart will always remember: "They had kid cartoons and the war news and ice cream sodas." She also got rides to school!



Allan Potter used his green pickup—sometimes with his boxer running alongside—for freight, propane tank, and garbage service. He cleverly rigged up a system with a movable piece of plywood vertically steadied against the cab: once the truck filled with trash, he headed to the dump where he pulled two chains attached to the plywood to yank the load out of the truck bed! His trash assistants included John Tabor, Jr., Peter Coope, Carter Goodrich, and Angus Garfield.

Other islanders' work vehicles were recalled from fading memories. "A.P." Tilton had a red dump truck and a tan jeep. Joe Bettencourt, A.P.'s right hand man, owned the repurposed red bakery van that he was known to park at the top of Tower Hill at the end of the day. An incomplete list also includes Ace Lombard's Jeep Scout and Dave Jenkins' Earth Angel, the WWII Command Jeep.



Margo (Race-) Moore on hood of her grandparents' grey jeep, c. 1956.

Photo: Margo Race-Moore



Allan Potter in his truck, c. 1979.

Photo: Anna Shaw



Clarence Allen and his wife Lucille stand by their green panel truck, used to carry Poplars guests' luggage up from the ferry. They later bought a Cadillac sedan to transport guests.



Two Navy men enjoyed a jaunt to the West End in the Bosworth House's black 1929 LaSalle Phaeton. Gladys Snow, joined by a friend, is at the wheel, and daughter Beverly Snow is on the running board, c. 1948.

Photo: Beverly Snow



The “Blue Bomb,” a typical old family station wagon, at Ken Hunter’s house, c. 1967.

Photo: Allison Thurston

Freight vehicles have always gathered at the Main Dock at boat time. Storekeeper Muggsy Thomson loaded groceries into his Chevy pickup, with a bumper sticker reading: “Please drive slow and drive with care. We’ve lots of kids but none to spare.” Later Muggsy and his family used a yellow van.

Island jeep club members included the Robert Moores, Hueys, Ponzeccchis and later, the Munds (a new 6-cylinder!). The Dave Twichells and Wye Garfields shared an old Ford truck dubbed “Sparkle Plenty” in the mid-50s. The Baldwins kept their very rusty red “Thumper” hopping, while the Pettits cruised in a long sedan.

The dark nights and freedom of Cuttyhunk encouraged mischievous unauthorized jaunts, including a lark admitted to by Bev Snow and friends. They took the Moores’ big grey jeep for a midnight tour of the West End where it got stuck in a swamp—but nonetheless, miraculously, was back at the Moores’ in the morning.

Sisters Leila Hall and Peg Thurston shared the “Blue Bomb,” a ’53 Ford wagon. Matt Lovell’s childhood memories bring it back to life: “It started with a screwdriver; the driver’s side door was held shut with clothesline, and at some point in their lives, every Lovell/Hall/Middleton/Thurston/Coope/MacLeod kid rode on the tailgate. And sometimes a lot of them at once.” Ken Hunter kept the Bomb going a few extra years.

I have my own distinct memories of many a wooden lobster buoy placed under the wheel of a car parked on an island hill, keeping it in place, then yanked out in a flourish as a skilled driver next popped the clutch and rolled off...all quite mysterious to children who, now grown, cannot quite recall the last time this was seen.



Storekeeper Muggsy Thomson (left) and children in store truck at Main Dock, 1971.

Photo: Flora Lovell

Fog and salt air subjected brakes and batteries, floorboards and door handles, to wear and tear. When vehicles—many already past a typical lifetime when they arrived on island—had stumped Allan Potter’s diagnostic abilities they found rest at the “Car Dump,” one of many spots for trash off the bumpy road to the West End. This was a destination for Beverly Snow, Carlyn Veeder Nunes and friends to explore and play. West End property owner Alan Spaulding eventually had this mass of rusting metal cleared and taken away on a barge.



As the decades passed, a few novel vehicles appeared. Twig Spaulding, one-time windmill inventor, had the unique orange electric “Little Lester”. Louise “Gan” Garfield was way ahead of the times when in the late ’60s she ordered a Mini Moke which she drove to the Main Dock for daily swims. Ralph Stuart followed suit with a second Moke. Like “Newt” (Bruce Newton) long before her, with his graffiti-covered Fresh Air Taxi, Gan was one of the islanders who enjoyed giving a lift to arriving ferry passengers. Much later, Donna Veeder Hunter played the same role, offering a lifetime of island stories to visitors.

Another chapter in the stories of stolen cars, on another dark night, is that of a grandson who took friends (never were the escapades attempted solo) on a wild ride to the West End in his grandmother’s Mini Moke. Other incidents are still cloaked in mystery, and presumably more are kept secret. Chet Meredith Hathaway asked on FaceBook whether anyone “knows how Ace Lombard’s Scout mysteriously coasted from wherever and went off the Alert Pier into the Harbor.” Somebody must know.



Donna Veeder Hunter and her dog Princess, taking a break in her golf cart, c. 2010.

Photo: Weezie Garfield



Diana Houha and daughter Laura in Oriole Ponzeccchi’s olive 1939 Toyota Jeep 1993.

Photo: Phillip Houha



Alan Wilder at the wheel of the Packer diesel truck (which replaced the Hathaway Oil truck in 1993), 2016.

Photo: Weezie Garfield



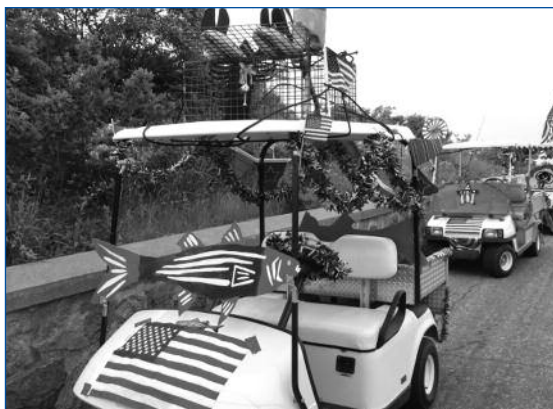
Harley-Davidson cart with (l to r) Elizabeth Munds, Catherine Munds, Lou Ketchum, Millard Ashley, Carmen Ward, c.1978.

Photo: Flora Lovell



As their jalopies sputtered and rusted away, islanders began to opt for newly developed golf carts in the '70s. With the arrival of these doorless and carefree wheels, the island entered the "Golf Cart Era." No one can recall who bought the first one. Al Wilder notes that early ones, all gasoline powered, had a steering stick rather than a wheel, and the Cushman brand—which Lloyd Bosworth owned—had only 3 wheels.

Thirty years on, the Club Car and kin are offered in electric and gas. They have multiplied like rabbits, with distinctive seating, roof and color features. The carts come with many island rentals and are seen loaded with kids and beach gear. Like cars before them, the carts have been "borrowed," occasionally. Mishaps are not uncommon, and Dale Lynch now manages a busy golf cart garage. The proliferation is especially apparent when the golf carts, bedecked like their drivers in red white and blue, form the bulk of the the annual July 4th Parade.



Golf carts have their annual day of glory in the 4th of July parade.

Photo: Weezie Garfield

With increasing complaints of "too many golf carts," overloaded or speeding vehicles, underaged drivers, and unwarranted nighttime use, the Gosnold Selectmen in 2017 directed a study group to consider appropriate town regulations for safe operation of the fleet of 100+ golf carts. Gosnold is the smallest town in Massachusetts, with Cuttyhunk the town's center. Its list of vehicle holdings is short: one (used) fire engine, one (used) brush truck, a police car and the solid waste truck (new in 2016) in which Asa Lombard IV and crew haul island trash and recycling six days a week. In addition to the Island Market truck, a few official-looking vehicles can be spotted on today's roads.

One hundred years of vehicles—with the style of the oldest and the individual personality and colors of the mid-century specimens long gone—has culminated with a homogeneous herd of golf carts. Walking is said by some to be in decline, and the island virtually swarms with traffic at boat time. Imagining the future of motor vehicles, what could possibly be next for this small island with a mere 2.2 miles of paved roads?

LOUISE GARFIELD



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Many of the past CHS Monographs are accessible on line.

Sources:

Details from CHS library:

Monograph: *Allan Louis Potter (1914–1996)*, by John K. Tabor, Jr., Jan. 1997.
Eleanor Moore interview in *People of Cuttyhunk*, p.23, 1986.

Cuttyhunk and the Elizabeth Islands, Arcadia Publishing, 2001.

Remembrances: In 2000, of Don Macleod (born 1923), and Wye Garfield (born 1924) in *Tales of Cuttyhunk*, privately published 2000.

Thanks for photos and fact checking—

On FaceBook's *Cuttyhunk Memories* group page, to: Beverly Snow, Allison Thurston, Kevin Mach, David Nemiah, Phil and Diana Houha, Daniel Thomson, Dan Moore, Chet Meredith Hathaway, Lynne Hathaway Gautreau, Christine Fairchild, Carol Thompson Camara, Charles Hulley, Carlyn V. Nunes, Lisa Thurston, Deb Middleton, Kit Dennis.

And by phone and email to: Matt Lovell, Allison Thurston, Beverly Snow, Al Wilder, Kitsy, Seth, Angus, and Wyatt Garfield, Jr.



Arriving by barge is the island pumper truck donated by the Mass. Fire Academy, c. 1992.

Photo: Flora Lovell



Asa Lombard IV on a household trash day—always Monday and Thursday, 2016. Photo: Weezie Garfield



The Bubble transports islanders' mail to and from the ferry, 2017. Photo: Weezie Garfield