# FIGURING IT OUT

*The Story of Gardiners and Oaklands*

ROBERT H. GARDINER VI

Printed in New Orleans, LA, USA

This book is dedicated to my parents, Bob and Fratty,
who had the vision, generosity, and courage to create the Oaklands Corporation,
and who gave their all to make it a success.

# Contents

*Foreword* *vii*

*Genealogy* *x*

1. INHERITING OAKLANDS 18
    - RHG II 22
    - RHG III 26
    - RHG IV 31
    - RHG V 43
2. ORIGINS OF THE OAKLANDS CORPORATION 44
3. AUNTS AND UNCLES 56
4. GRANDMA 74
5. THE OFFICIAL BEGINNING 86
6. SHARING OAKLANDS 93
7. THE CORPORATION: THE FIRST GENERATION 110
8. THE DAIRY FARM 127
9. THE SECOND GENERATION STEPS UP (1985-2006) 136
10. NEW GOVERNANCE 139
11. HOUSE USAGE BY MY GENERATION 147
12. HOUSE REPAIRS 154
13. PORTRAITS 170

14. FINANCES 182

15. OTHER HOUSES 190

POND HOUSE 190

BANDBOX 192

THE FARMHOUSE AND FARM 195

OTHER PARCELS 200

HALLOWELL HOUSE 202

ORCHARD HOUSE 204

16. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT 206

17. MAINTAINING THE MOMENTUM 213

USAGE AND THE NEXT GENERATION 217

TECHNOLOGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE 221

THE INTERIOR PROJECT 227

18. REFLECTIONS 234

*Acknowledgments* 242

*About the Author* 244

# Foreword

IN 1837, WHEN NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE FIRST SAW the newly built Oaklands, he called it "Gardiner's Folly." He seemed to think that such a huge home was out of place in Gardiner, Maine. Perhaps it was, but, today, generations of the Gardiner family would strenuously disagree. We love it and want to keep it, no matter how unrealistic that may seem.

The idea for this book came to me initially as something that someone else—but certainly not Hawthorne—should have written years ago. It seems obvious to me that the story of Oaklands should be told. Our family members should have been far too interested in the family's accomplishments not to have somebody put them in writing. But no one did. Then the thought came to me that, because I had been personally involved throughout the years in which Oaklands has been operated as a family corporation, I did know that era well enough to do the subject justice. In late 2020 I overcame my initial resistance to the idea of writing a book and decided that, if I didn't do something soon, a lot of family history might be lost.

As I dug into this process, I discovered that my memory was not nearly as reliable as I had believed. Either I would get something factually wrong or I would forget to include some important detail. I am grateful to those siblings and cousins who gave me their recollections or reviewed my draft chapters to help me remember and to offer their own ideas. I also

discovered that I had not thought deeply about some matters to understand them as well as I should have. For example, I never thought about Uncle Ben's life in quite the same way that I present it here. Reading his newspaper obituaries and talking to his two surviving daughters, Diana and Frankie, provided me with an entirely new perspective. Another example of a new understanding was that I had never seen the letter from my father to his siblings until I stumbled upon the truth in a conversation with Elizabeth L. Gardiner while we were talking on an entirely different topic.

I think family histories are often rather dull, but I believe that there are two important ways that one can avoid that flaw. The first is to have a lot of entertaining stories to tell in plenty of rich detail. I received many such stories from my cousins. Most were about the people in the family—parents, aunts, uncles, etc.—with vivid details and interesting descriptions. Most people are inherently interesting, and, when they say or do something unexpected, the story gets even better. I have tried to include as many as possible in this book.

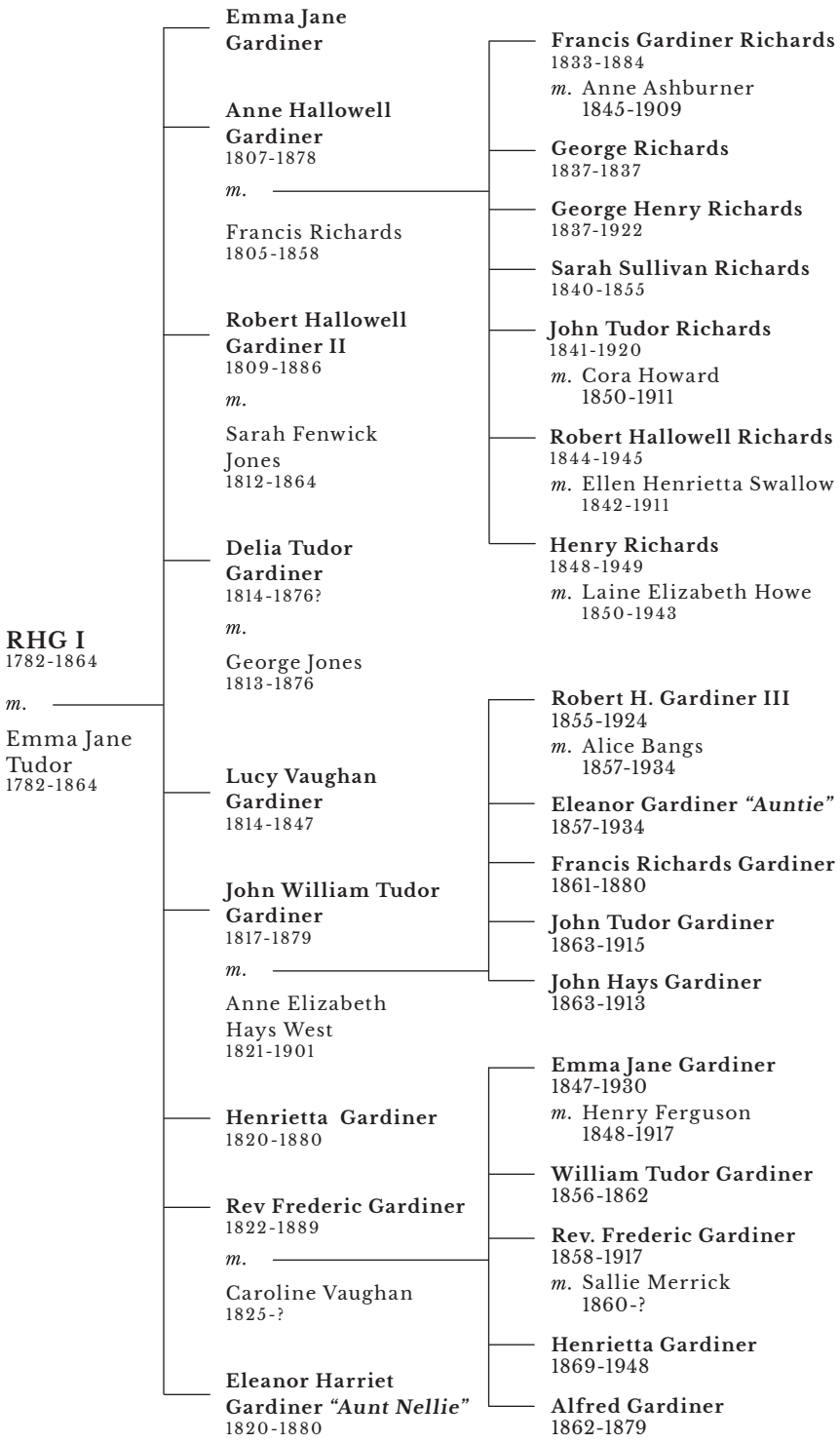
The second is to have a point to the story—to draw conclusions about the "big picture" that could help readers understand the underlying truths about the family and Oaklands. Once again, I was surprised to discover new perspectives about the house and the Corporation that were not obvious to me amidst the many busy aspects of my life at the time they occurred. Having more time to think about the different Corporation issues and generations of Gardiners, I came to see things more clearly and developed new thoughts about what I had witnessed. For me, this was the most fulfilling aspect of the entire effort. The most important of these conclusions are presented in the final chapter.

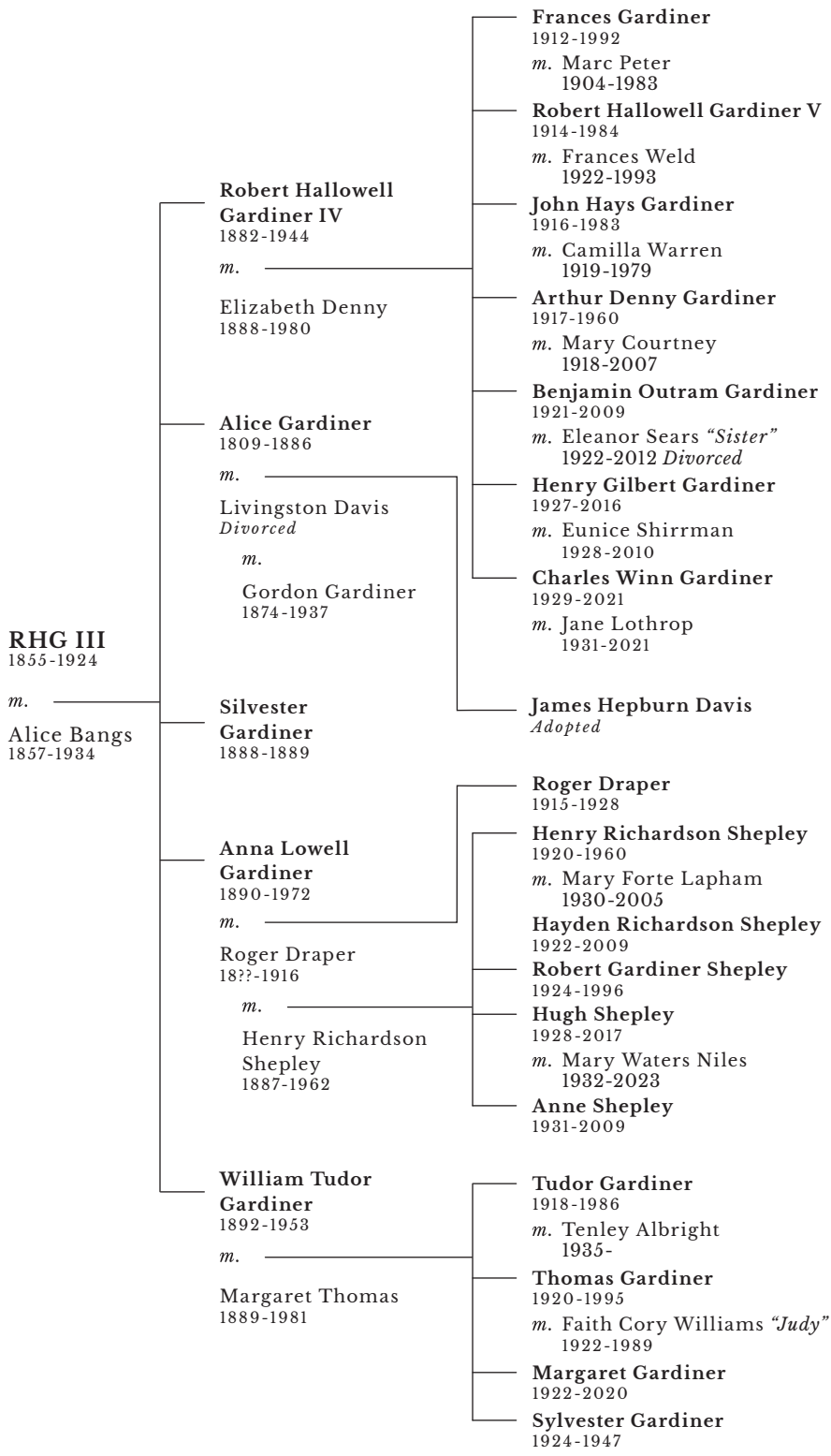
I have chosen to organize the material roughly in chronological order, but I deviate from strict chronology in order to present coherent themes, to help readers connect the dots. Thus I chose to organize this history as a series of eras. The era of the first four generations of Robert Hallowell Gardiners (RHG I-IV) constitutes the first era: 1804-1944. The next was the era of my parents' generation: 1945-1984. Following that are the eras of my generation (1984-2007) and, finally, the era that begins the story of my children's generation. These eras actually have years of overlap, so these dates should be considered only as approximates. Within each era, there are various themes, the most important of which are the subjects of their own chapters.

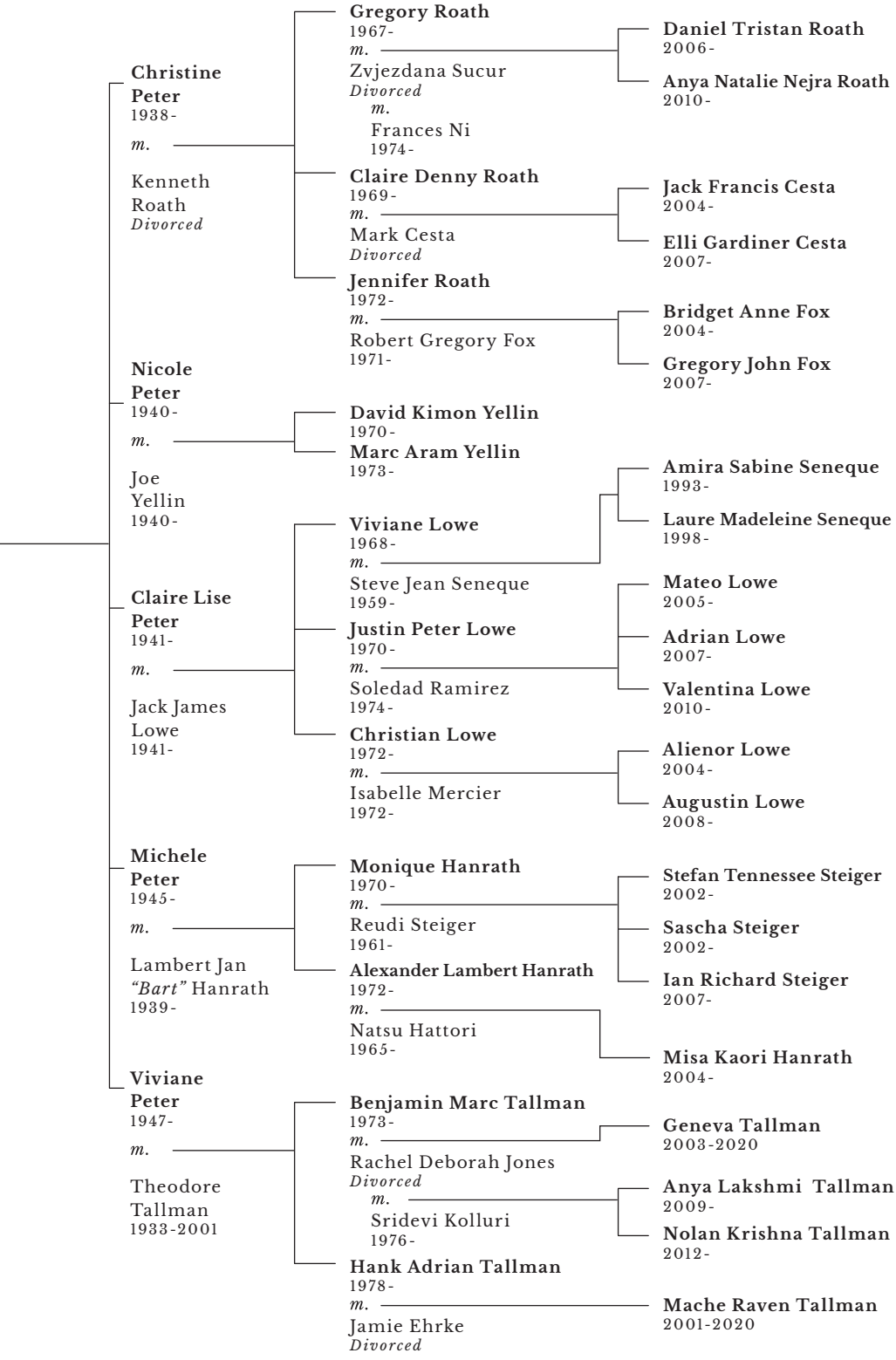
The "family tree" charts are provided to help the reader understand the relationships between family members and branches. I have to admit that, even with their help, it is hard to keep everyone straight. The text refers to individuals primarily by their relation to me, but, when appropriate, also by the way they were known to others. Thus Grandpa, RHG IV, and Holly are all the same person. I have used mostly first names only, except when referring to names such as Ian or Elizabeth—of which there are more than two each—so their last name or initial is added to identify which one. This will be hard enough for family members to manage; any reader who is not in the family will probably find the number of names nearly impossible to follow. I hope that all readers can keep track of who is who with the help of the charts.

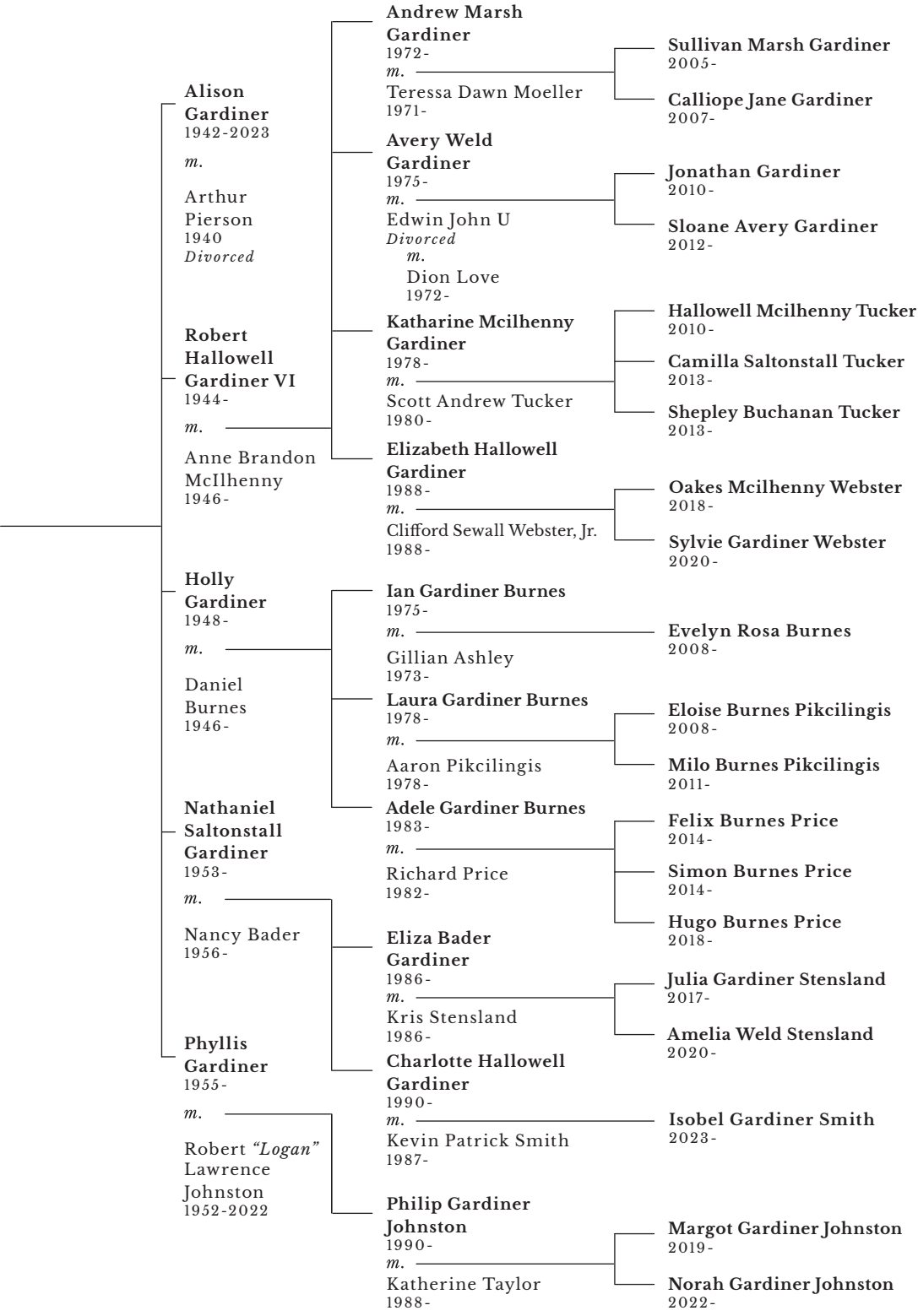
The photographs are placed within the chapters where they best illustrate the written content. But I urge readers to look closely at the various photos of Oaklands throughout the eras (and the book) to see the changes in the house more clearly than any text can describe. Also enjoy the images of people at different ages to add depth to the descriptions of their actions and antics during their times at Oaklands. I can only wish that we had had a staff photographer to record the many events at Oaklands for which we have no photos.

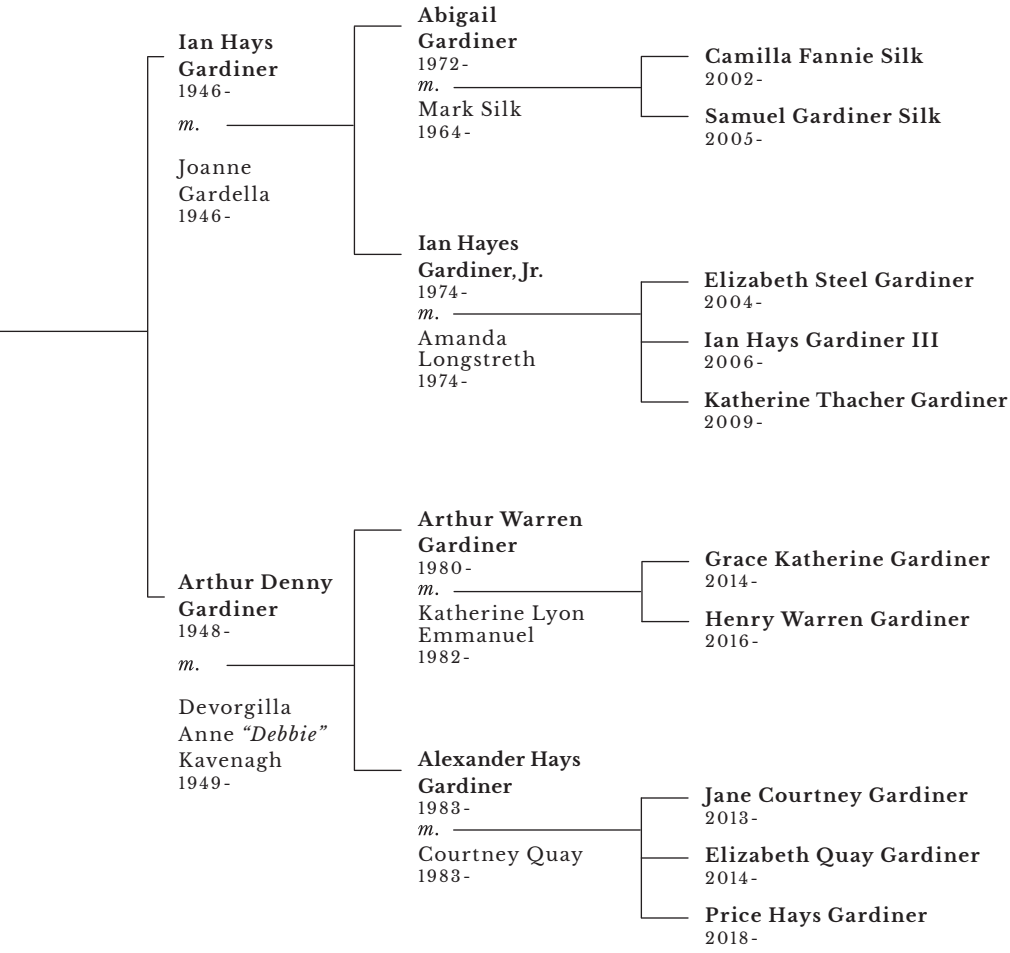
Finally, I hope you enjoy reading these recollections about our activities at Oaklands and about our parents and grandparents. For more than a year, I considered the title of the book might well be "Later Recollections" or "Further Recollections." Those were my obvious choices. Ultimately I decided that, while there are many recollections included, the real point of the story involved the house so centrally that the title needed to be more closely related to Oaklands and the Corporation itself. I also wanted it to reflect the primary theme of how we have kept Oaklands within the family. After thinking hard about the empowering effect of a simple bit of advice that one RHG had given to another, the decision to use that phrase as the title seemed the right choice.

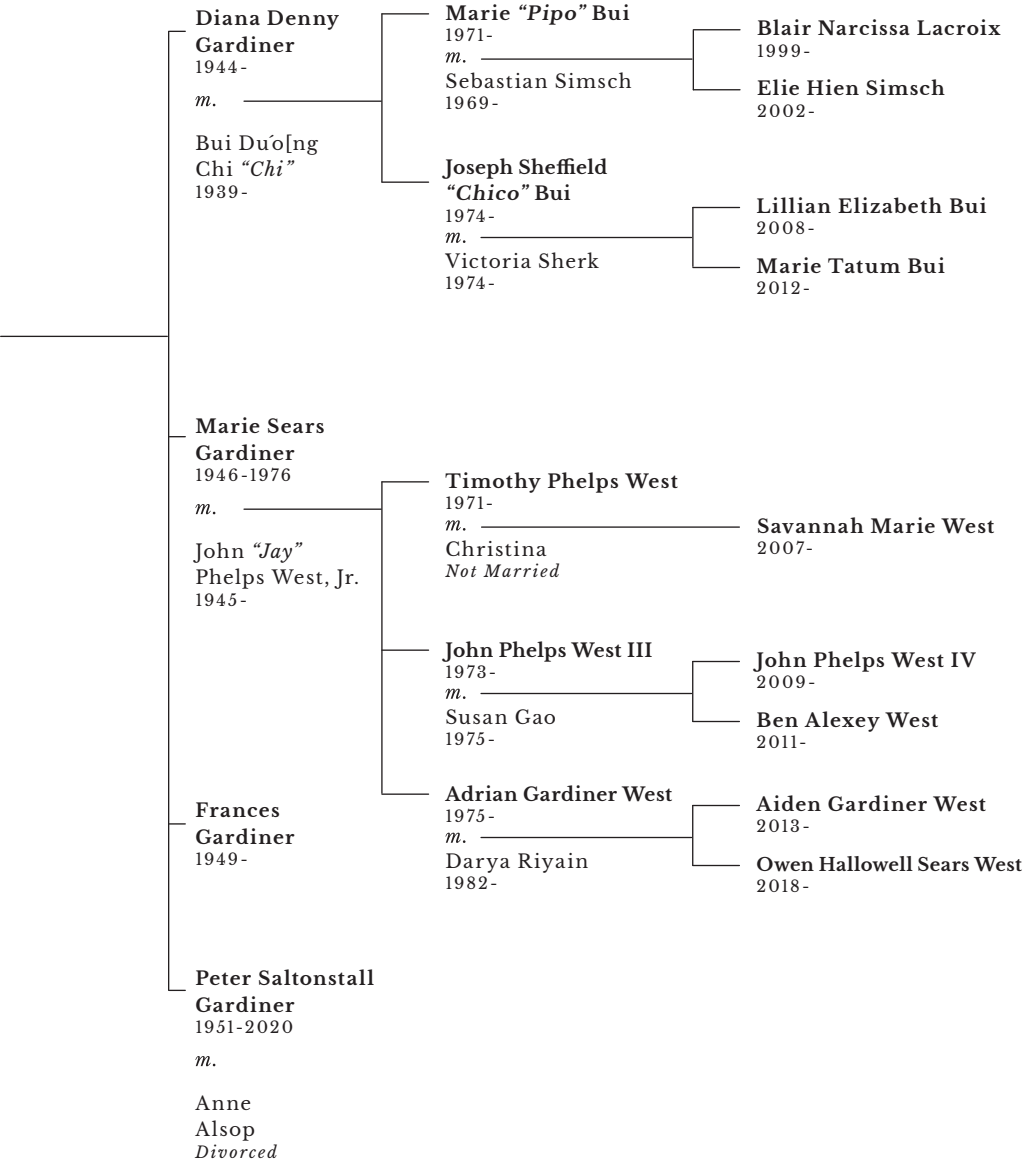

RHG I
1782-1864
m.
Emma Jane Tudor
1782-1864
Emma Jane Gardiner
Anne Hallowell Gardiner
1807-1878
m.
Francis Richards
1805-1858
Francis Gardiner Richards
1833-1884
m. Anne Ashburner
1845-1909
George Richards
1837-1837
George Henry Richards
1837-1922
Sarah Sullivan Richards
1840-1855
John Tudor Richards
1841-1920
m. Cora Howard
1850-1911
Robert Hallowell Richards
1844-1945
m. Ellen Henrietta Swallow
1842-1911
Henry Richards
1848-1949
m. Laine Elizabeth Howe
1850-1943
Robert Hallowell Gardiner II
1809-1886
m.
Sarah Fenwick Jones
1812-1864
Delia Tudor Gardiner
1814-1876?
m.
George Jones
1813-1876
Lucy Vaughan Gardiner
1814-1847
John William Tudor Gardiner
1817-1879
m.
Anne Elizabeth Hays West
1821-1901
Robert H. Gardiner III
1855-1924
m. Alice Bangs
1857-1934
Eleanor Gardiner "Auntie"
1857-1934
Francis Richards Gardiner
1861-1880
John Tudor Gardiner
1863-1915
John Hays Gardiner
1863-1913
Henrietta Gardiner
1820-1880
Rev Frederic Gardiner
1822-1889
m.
Caroline Vaughan
1825-?
Emma Jane Gardiner
1847-1930
m. Henry Ferguson
1848-1917
William Tudor Gardiner
1856-1862
Rev. Frederic Gardiner
1858-1917
m. Sallie Merrick
1860-?
Henrietta Gardiner
1869-1948
Eleanor Harriet Gardiner "Aunt Nellie"
1820-1880
Alfred Gardiner
1862-1879

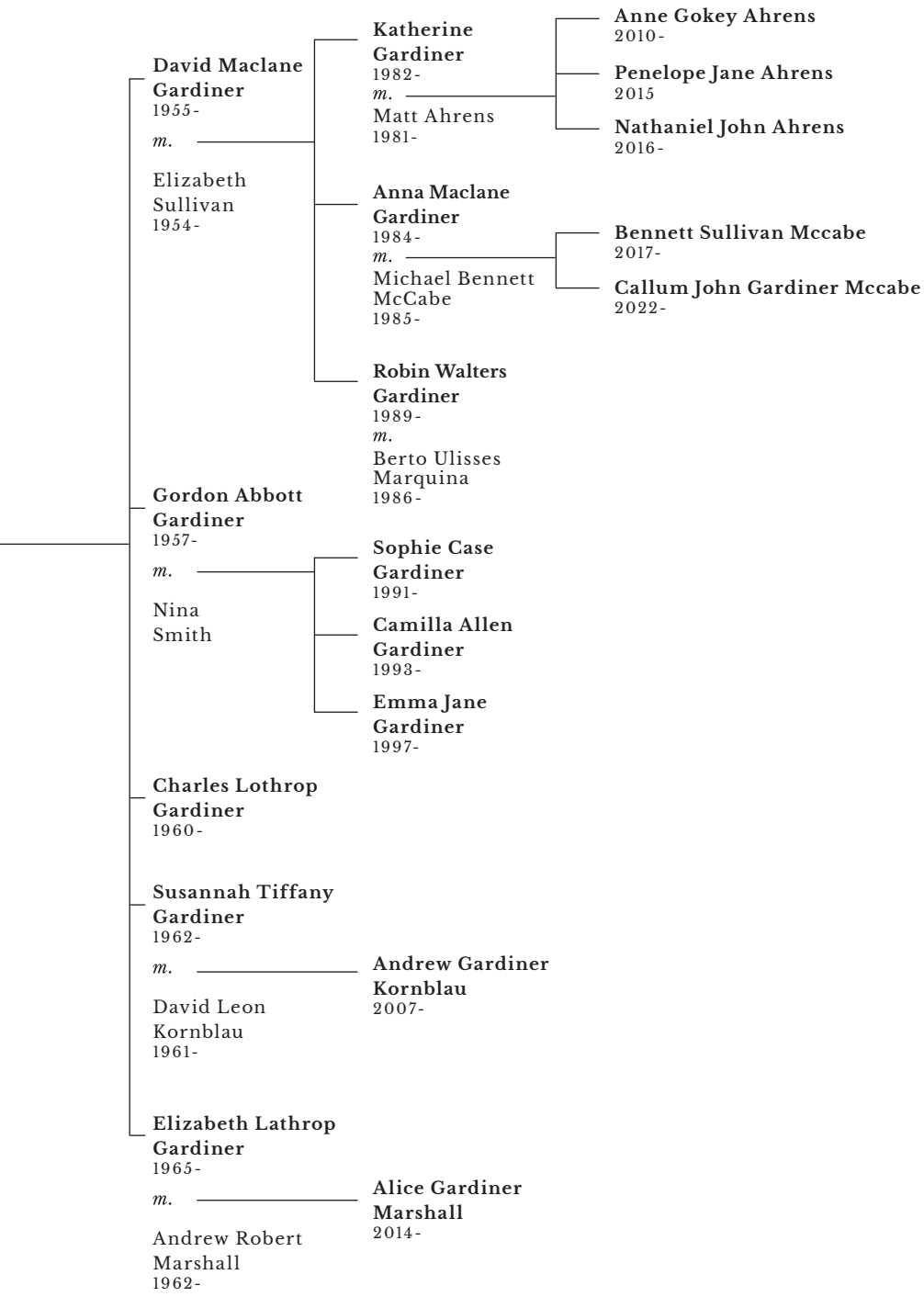

RHG III
1855-1924
m.
Alice Bangs
1857-1934
Robert Hallowell Gardiner IV
1882-1944
m.
Elizabeth Denny
1888-1980
Frances Gardiner
1912-1992
m. Marc Peter
1904-1983
Robert Hallowell Gardiner V
1914-1984
m. Frances Weld
1922-1993
John Hays Gardiner
1916-1983
m. Camilla Warren
1919-1979
Arthur Denny Gardiner
1917-1960
m. Mary Courtney
1918-2007
Benjamin Outram Gardiner
1921-2009
m. Eleanor Sears "Sister"
1922-2012 Divorced
Henry Gilbert Gardiner
1927-2016
m. Eunice Shirrman
1928-2010
Charles Winn Gardiner
1929-2021
m. Jane Lothrop
1931-2021
Alice Gardiner
1809-1886
m.
Livingston Davis
Divorced
m.
Gordon Gardiner
1874-1937
James Hepburn Davis
Adopted
Silvester Gardiner
1888-1889
Anna Lowell Gardiner
1890-1972
m.
Roger Draper
18??-1916
m.
Henry Richardson Shepley
1887-1962
Roger Draper
1915-1928
Henry Richardson Shepley
1920-1960
m. Mary Forte Lapham
1930-2005
Hayden Richardson Shepley
1922-2009
Robert Gardiner Shepley
1924-1996
Hugh Shepley
1928-2017
m. Mary Waters Niles
1932-2023
Anne Shepley
1931-2009
William Tudor Gardiner
1892-1953
m.
Margaret Thomas
1889-1981
Tudor Gardiner
1918-1986
m. Tenley Albright
1935-
Thomas Gardiner
1920-1995
m. Faith Cory Williams "Judy"
1922-1989
Margaret Gardiner
1922-2020
Sylvester Gardiner
1924-1947


**Christine Peter**
1938-
*m.*
Kenneth Roath
*Divorced*
**Gregory Roath**
1967-
*m.*
Zvjezdana Sucur
*Divorced*
*m.*
Frances Ni
1974-
**Daniel Tristan Roath**
2006-
**Anya Natalie Nejra Roath**
2010-
**Claire Denny Roath**
1969-
*m.*
Mark Cesta
*Divorced*
**Jack Francis Cesta**
2004-
**Elli Gardiner Cesta**
2007-
**Jennifer Roath**
1972-
*m.*
Robert Gregory Fox
1971-
**Bridget Anne Fox**
2004-
**Gregory John Fox**
2007-
**Nicole Peter**
1940-
*m.*
Joe Yellin
1940-
**David Kimon Yellin**
1970-
**Marc Aram Yellin**
1973-
**Claire Lise Peter**
1941-
*m.*
Jack James Lowe
1941-
**Viviane Lowe**
1968-
*m.*
Steve Jean Seneque
1959-
**Amira Sabine Seneque**
1993-
**Laure Madeleine Seneque**
1998-
**Justin Peter Lowe**
1970-
*m.*
Soledad Ramirez
1974-
**Mateo Lowe**
2005-
**Adrian Lowe**
2007-
**Valentina Lowe**
2010-
**Christian Lowe**
1972-
*m.*
Isabelle Mercier
1972-
**Alienor Lowe**
2004-
**Augustin Lowe**
2008-
**Michele Peter**
1945-
*m.*
Lambert Jan *"Bart"* Hanrath
1939-
**Monique Hanrath**
1970-
*m.*
Reudi Steiger
1961-
**Stefan Tennessee Steiger**
2002-
**Sascha Steiger**
2002-
**Alexander Lambert Hanrath**
1972-
*m.*
Natsu Hattori
1965-
**Ian Richard Steiger**
2007-
**Misa Kaori Hanrath**
2004-
**Viviane Peter**
1947-
*m.*
Theodore Tallman
1933-2001
**Benjamin Marc Tallman**
1973-
*m.*
Rachel Deborah Jones
*Divorced*
*m.*
Sridevi Kolluri
1976-
**Geneva Tallman**
2003-2020
**Anya Lakshmi Tallman**
2009-
**Nolan Krishna Tallman**
2012-
**Hank Adrian Tallman**
1978-
*m.*
Jamie Ehrke
*Divorced*
**Mache Raven Tallman**
2001-2020


**Alison Gardiner**
1942-2023
*m.*
Arthur Pierson
1940
*Divorced*
**Robert Hallowell Gardiner VI**
1944-
*m.*
Anne Brandon McIlhenny
1946-
**Holly Gardiner**
1948-
*m.*
Daniel Burnes
1946-
**Nathaniel Saltonstall Gardiner**
1953-
*m.*
Nancy Bader
1956-
**Phyllis Gardiner**
1955-
*m.*
Robert *"Logan"* Lawrence Johnston
1952-2022
**Andrew Marsh Gardiner**
1972-
*m.*
Teressa Dawn Moeller
1971-
**Sullivan Marsh Gardiner**
2005-
**Calliope Jane Gardiner**
2007-
**Avery Weld Gardiner**
1975-
*m.*
Edwin John U
*Divorced*
*m.*
Dion Love
1972-
**Jonathan Gardiner**
2010-
**Sloane Avery Gardiner**
2012-
**Katharine Mcilhenny Gardiner**
1978-
*m.*
Scott Andrew Tucker
1980-
**Hallowell Mcilhenny Tucker**
2010-
**Camilla Saltonstall Tucker**
2013-
**Shepley Buchanan Tucker**
2013-
**Elizabeth Hallowell Gardiner**
1988-
*m.*
Clifford Sewall Webster, Jr.
1988-
**Oakes Mcilhenny Webster**
2018-
**Sylvie Gardiner Webster**
2020-
**Ian Gardiner Burnes**
1975-
*m.*
Gillian Ashley
1973-
**Evelyn Rosa Burnes**
2008-
**Laura Gardiner Burnes**
1978-
*m.*
Aaron Pikcilingis
1978-
**Eloise Burnes Pikcilingis**
2008-
**Milo Burnes Pikcilingis**
2011-
**Adele Gardiner Burnes**
1983-
*m.*
Richard Price
1982-
**Felix Burnes Price**
2014-
**Simon Burnes Price**
2014-
**Hugo Burnes Price**
2018-
**Eliza Bader Gardiner**
1986-
*m.*
Kris Stensland
1986-
**Julia Gardiner Stensland**
2017-
**Amelia Weld Stensland**
2020-
**Charlotte Hallowell Gardiner**
1990-
*m.*
Kevin Patrick Smith
1987-
**Isobel Gardiner Smith**
2023-
**Philip Gardiner Johnston**
1990-
*m.*
Katherine Taylor
1988-
**Margot Gardiner Johnston**
2019-
**Norah Gardiner Johnston**
2022-


**Ian Hays Gardiner**
1946-
*m.*
Joanne Gardella
1946-
**Abigail Gardiner**
1972-
*m.*
Mark Silk
1964-
**Camilla Fannie Silk**
2002-
**Samuel Gardiner Silk**
2005-
**Ian Hayes Gardiner, Jr.**
1974-
*m.*
Amanda Longstreth
1974-
**Elizabeth Steel Gardiner**
2004-
**Ian Hays Gardiner III**
2006-
**Katherine Thacher Gardiner**
2009-
**Arthur Denny Gardiner**
1948-
*m.*
Devorgilla Anne *"Debbie"* Kavenagh
1949-
**Arthur Warren Gardiner**
1980-
*m.*
Katherine Lyon Emmanuel
1982-
**Grace Katherine Gardiner**
2014-
**Henry Warren Gardiner**
2016-
**Alexander Hays Gardiner**
1983-
*m.*
Courtney Quay
1983-
**Jane Courtney Gardiner**
2013-
**Elizabeth Quay Gardiner**
2014-
**Price Hays Gardiner**
2018-


Diana Denny Gardiner
1944-
m.
Bui Dứo[ng Chi "Chi"
1939-
Marie "Pipo" Bui
1971-
m.
Sebastian Simsch
1969-
Blair Narcissa Lacroix
1999-
Elie Hien Simsch
2002-
Joseph Sheffield "Chico" Bui
1974-
m.
Victoria Sherk
1974-
Lillian Elizabeth Bui
2008-
Marie Tatum Bui
2012-
Marie Sears Gardiner
1946-1976
m.
John "Jay" Phelps West, Jr.
1945-
Timothy Phelps West
1971-
m.
Christina
Not Married
Savannah Marie West
2007-
John Phelps West III
1973-
m.
Susan Gao
1975-
John Phelps West IV
2009-
Ben Alexey West
2011-
Frances Gardiner
1949-
Adrian Gardiner West
1975-
m.
Darya Riyain
1982-
Aiden Gardiner West
2013-
Owen Hallowell Sears West
2018-
Peter Saltonstall Gardiner
1951-2020
m.
Anne Alsop
Divorced


David Maclane Gardiner
1955-
m.
Elizabeth Sullivan
1954-
Katherine Gardiner
1982-
m.
Matt Ahrens
1981-
Anne Gokey Ahrens
2010-
Penelope Jane Ahrens
2015
Nathaniel John Ahrens
2016-
Anna Maclane Gardiner
1984-
m.
Michael Bennett McCabe
1985-
Bennett Sullivan Mccabe
2017-
Callum John Gardiner Mccabe
2022-
Robin Walters Gardiner
1989-
m.
Berto Ulisses Marquina
1986-
Gordon Abbott Gardiner
1957-
m.
Nina Smith
Sophie Case Gardiner
1991-
Camilla Allen Gardiner
1993-
Emma Jane Gardiner
1997-
Charles Lothrop Gardiner
1960-
Susannah Tiffany Gardiner
1962-
m.
David Leon Kornblau
1961-
Andrew Gardiner Kornblau
2007-
Elizabeth Lathrop Gardiner
1965-
m.
Andrew Robert Marshall
1962-
Alice Gardiner Marshall
2014-

Oaklands with vines, circa 1890.

*Chapter 1*

# Inheriting Oaklands

OAKLANDS AROUSES SO MUCH CURIOSITY. It is rare that a big house will remain in the same family for 200 years, especially such a grand and expensive house in a place that is as far away from the centers of contemporary society as Gardiner, Maine. The design of Oaklands is based on that of an English manor house. Its exterior is an elegant, hammered granite that is usually seen only on churches and huge government buildings. It is much larger and distinctly different in architecture from most Maine houses, with octagonal corner turrets, battlements, buttresses, and other unique features. The townspeople refer to it, not by its name, but as "The Stone House" or "The Castle." There are no other houses like it in Maine—one has to go as far as the Hudson Valley in New York to see anything else of that age and style. In addition, the fact that it has been kept within the same family for seven generations is remarkable. The family name became the city's name, as well. Uniquely, for most of those years and for the first five generations, the owner's full name was always Robert Hallowell Gardiner, which seems something that only European royals either could or would manage to do.

The man who built Oaklands was actually born with the name Robert Hallowell, named after his father. He later added his mother's maiden name, Gardiner, as his new surname upon reaching the age of 21. He did this in order to meet the conditions of the will of Silvester Gardiner, his

The earliest photo of Oaklands showing it as built and before any modifications.

maternal grandfather, which stipulated that, if he added the name Gardiner to become Robert Hallowell Gardiner, he would inherit Silvester's properties in "Kennebec." Today, seven generations later, we refer to him as RHG I. Since then, there have been five more of that same name, one per generation, and each one has taken care of Oaklands as one of the primary purposes of his life. We should acknowledge, as well, that Emma Jane Tudor Gardiner, RHG I's wife, and the spouses of all the succeeding Gardiner men also played a significant part in caring for Oaklands, often contributing their financial assets to its maintenance as well as lots of love and work.

Oaklands is actually the second house that was built by RHG I and Emma Jane. Their first house was built in 1810 as a handsome wooden house with large pillars on its east elevation, facing the river. Unfortunately, it burned to the ground in 1834, leaving a pair of pencil drawings by Emma Jane as the only record of its appearance. The Oaklands we see today was built on the same site but is larger than the first. The floor plan was created by the owners and designed to take advantage of the broad easterly view from high above the Kennebec River. They decided to consult with a young architect in Boston, Richard Upjohn, to assure that it had an appealing architectural style. We still possess some original drawings by Upjohn with different floor plans and many decorative details, but, as far

as we know, there was never a final set of drawings, and the actual result is different in significant ways from the drawings that we have. The granite exterior came from the nearby town of Hallowell and was chosen, according to RHG I, because it would be cheaper than wood, but I suspect that stone's fireproof quality might have been another reason for that choice. The resulting structure took longer to finish and cost a great deal more than was expected, but ultimately the owners were very pleased.

That sentiment has been shared by succeeding generations. Over and over, family members who have invited visitors to Oaklands have heard them say, "What an amazing achievement that this beautiful house has stayed within your family for so many years! How did you do it?"

There is no easy answer to this question, but there are many fascinating answers that take time to understand. This book is my attempt to find those answers. Each succeeding generation of owners has encountered new uses and ideas for improving as well as maintaining Oaklands, so those answers keep changing with the times. Each decision gets reevaluated by succeeding generations and either kept, modified, or undone. Many attributes remain the same as ever, while other changes demonstrate how different eras and different lifestyles have chosen to alter the house. The result is a form of multi-generational family history that never stops accumulating. Over time, the house has acquired a patina of age and tradition that feels permanent and unique to the Gardiner family. The mystique of Oaklands is that the important characteristics survive, even while changes were made to suit each succeeding generation's needs. That continuity seems to have a permanent and life-changing effect on its owners. This is the story of that effect on many individuals, on the house, and on what it means to us, as a family.

The origins of both houses known as Oaklands are well recorded in RHG I's book, "Early Recollections." I will pick up the narrative where that book ends, but I want to add some context to the story from the perspective of one who, with the benefit of hindsight, can see how many things have changed since the early 19th century. For example, life in the United States in its earliest years of independence from England was still based on lifestyles that were brought from England. The Colonies rebelled against the system of royal dominance from a faraway country, but the vast majority of residents in "New England" still continued their

family, religious, cultural, economic, lifestyle, and other traditions that came with them from the mother country. These included large land holdings, economic inequality, and family inheritance patterns as well as definitions of beauty, style, and marriage. So it seems likely that RHG I, who was born in England, would expect his family to continue to live in the house that he had built and to maintain the family's leadership status in the community. RHG I was a very thoughtful man who provided great public service to the town of Gardiner. He donated the town Common, financed the construction of the Episcopal church on the corner of the Common, created the Gardiner Lyceum as the town's school, and invested generously in mills and other town businesses. He was admired and appreciated for these actions and was honored to serve as the city's first mayor when it became organized as a prospering new city. It seems reasonable that he expected his descendants to continue there for a long time.

It was common in England, in that era, that large estates would be handed down to the next generation by the law and tradition of "primogeniture." Primogeniture called for entire landholding estates to be inherited by the eldest son, no matter how many other sons or daughters there were in the family. Although primogeniture may seem archaic and grossly unfair today, it would have seemed normal then.

Although RHG I personally benefited from the practice of primogeniture, he did not agree with the additional element of "entailment," which is the related principle that all such lands are permanently locked together with the estate. He inherited the lands from his grandfather, Silvester Gardiner, as an entailed inheritance (note: Silvester preferred this spelling of his name to the alternative "Sylvester"). RHG I needed to settle disputes with squatters on the lands and needed to have the entailment removed to achieve agreements with these squatters and to make other sales to facilitate the town's growth. He appealed successfully to the state legislature to pass a law to have that entailment provision removed from the property. Thus he could sell some parcels to various settlers and developers, and then give other parcels to family members, while he kept the lands around Oaklands largely intact. When he died in 1864, his will specified that Oaklands, along with all of his immediately adjoining lands, be left, according to primogeniture, entirely to his eldest son, RHG II.

Although the main body of the family estate was conveyed by will, first by Silvester to his grandson, and then again later by RHG I to his eldest son, it should be noted that other children received some gifts. Silvester gave Swan Island in Richmond to his daughter Rebecca and her husband Philip Dumaresq, and he gave lands in Dresden and other towns to some of his other children--although not of equal value, by any means. In the succeeding generation, RHG I gave to his daughter Anne and her husband, Francis Richards, a parcel between Hallowell House and Rolling Dam woods known as the Cove Farm, on which they built a large house and farm (more on the Cove House in a later chapter).

## RHG II

When RHG II inherited Oaklands he was already over 45 years old. As a young man, RHG II had studied civil engineering and went to work in Georgia. The Maine Historical Society recorded the following (condensed) memorial describing his life:

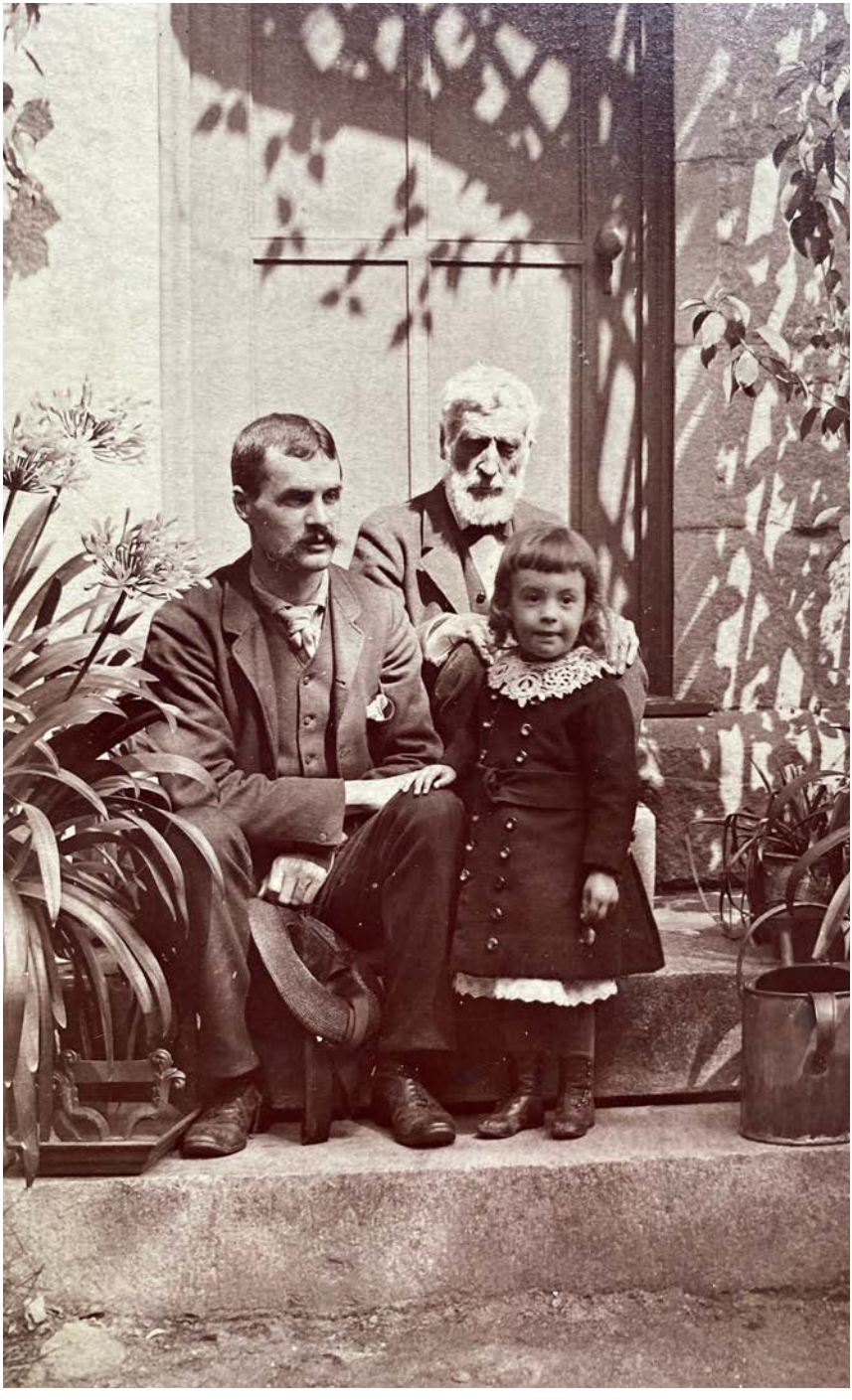
> *"...His early life there (Georgia) was in the Cherokee country, where he was employed by the state in making surveys of new roads to connect Georgia with the farther West. In 1840, he returned to Maine. In 1842, he was married, at Newport, Rhode Island to Sarah Fenwick Jones, daughter of Noble Wymberly Jones of Savannah, Georgia, to whom he had become attached during his residence in that state. They lived in Gardiner until the care of his wife's property required them to remove to Augusta, Georgia, where he became one of its most active, enterprising and useful citizens....*
>
> *"When the Southern states seceded, Mr. Gardiner found himself in a difficult and delicate position. His wife was a southern lady, whose family was identified with the South. Mr. Gardiner himself had given good proof of his regard for Augusta and Georgia, but could not raise his hand against the Union. With his wife he came North on the last train that was allowed to pass through Tennessee, and soon after went abroad, passing the greater part of the following four years in foreign soil ...."*

Upon their return to the U.S. after the Civil War, they settled into life in Maine once again. RHG II inherited Oaklands upon his father's death in 1864. He lived out the remaining 22 years of his life there deeply engaged in community and state affairs. He developed the farm and in particular its apple orchards, but made few changes to the house. While RHG II was living at Oaklands he maintained the tradition of including other family members as guests for extended visits. His nieces and nephews knew him as "Uncle Hal," and we remember him by referring to his preferred bedroom as Uncle Hal's Room.

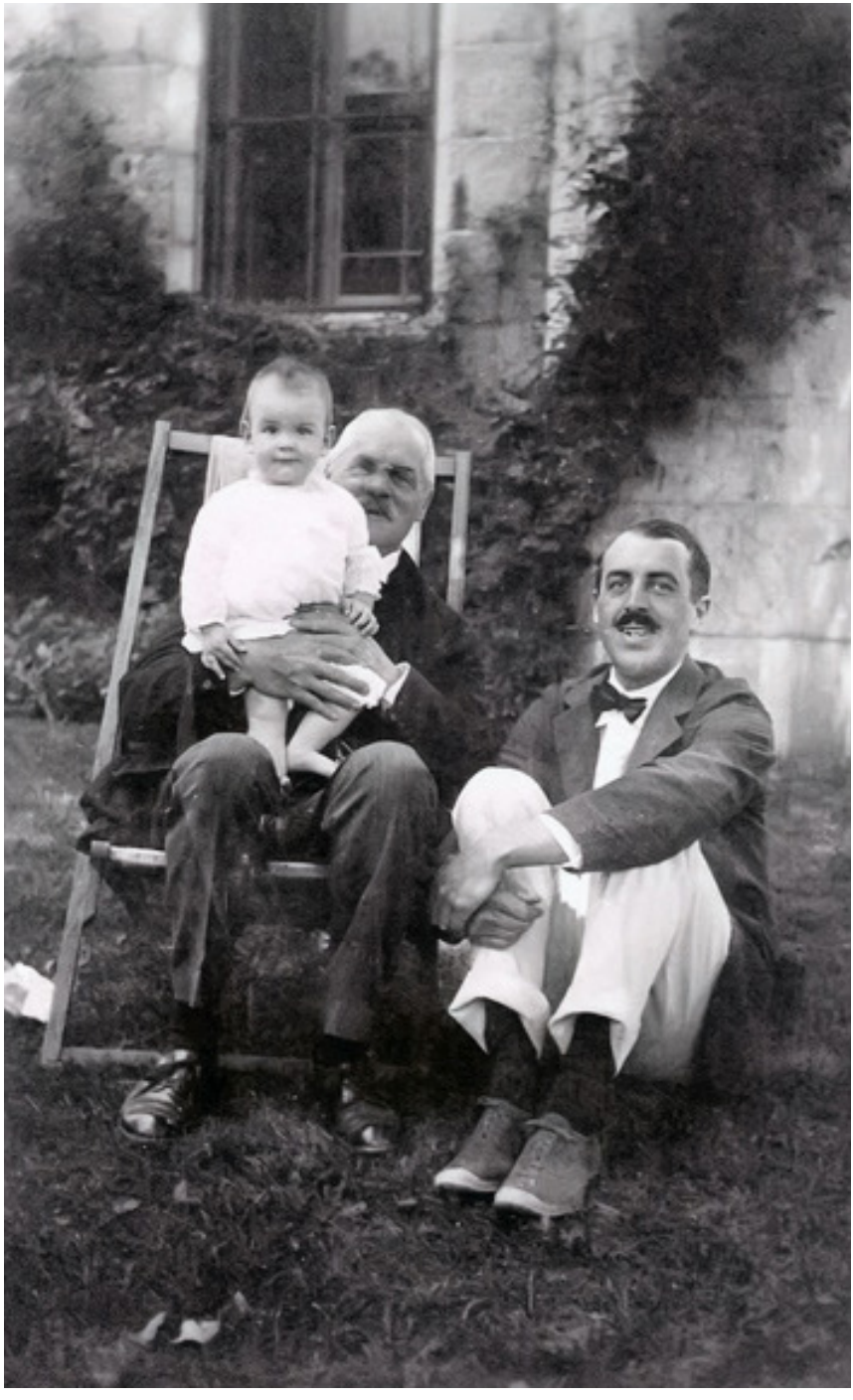
At this point, I want to reference my grandmother's book, "Golden Memories," in which she gives lively descriptions of family members and stories about their lives in the generations of RHG I through III. It fills the gap after the first-person recollections of RHG I ending in 1864 and up to the formation of the Oaklands Corporation nearly a century later, beginning in 1959. I will recount only a few of the essential elements of the story of the house and family, while leaving Grandma's descriptions to convey the character and feel of life in that period. Her book includes material about RHG II's love of Bellflower apples, his interest in the Maine Historical Society, his detailed records of the weather, and how he and "Aunt Fen" lived in Oaklands.

RHG II and Aunt Fen never had children. RHG II did have several sisters, including one, Eleanor (known early on as Aunt Nelly and then later, after entering an Episcopal convent, as Sister Eleanor), who lived at Oaklands with him. He also had one younger brother, John William Tudor Gardiner, who had married Anne Hays and had five children: Robert Hallowell Gardiner III, Eleanor, Francis, John Hays, and John Tudor.

When RHG II died in 1886, he willed Oaklands to his nearest male heir, his younger brother's son RHG III. Under English law, the eldest son of the next younger brother would be the next to inherit an estate through primogeniture, so this transition for the estate was an outcome that one might have expected upon RHG II's death.



RHG II-IV at the south door.



RHG III-V

# RHG III

RHG III was born far away in Fort Tejon, California, where his father, known as Tudor, was stationed in the U.S. Army. After Tudor's release from the army, the family bought a house in the town of Gardiner, within a mile of Oaklands. Along with their young son Robert and his siblings, the family spent considerable amounts of time with Uncle Hal and Aunt Fen at Oaklands, especially during the summers. When he reached adulthood, RHG III became a very successful lawyer in Boston who specialized in family financial affairs and built a business around creating family trusts and other estate matters. He married Alice Bangs, who was from another prominent Boston family. His portrait now hangs in the Office, and hers hangs in the upstairs hallway outside the North Room. Both portraits show people of substance, intelligence, confidence, and wealth. By all accounts, they lived up to their portrait images, but RHG III was particularly down to earth in his manner. He inherited the house in 1886, when he was only 31 years old. They had five children: RHG IV, Alice, Silvester (who died as a baby), Anna, and William Tudor.

RHG III had a sister named Eleanor, who never married. She lived in Oaklands with her parents for many years, before her brother inherited the house. According to Grandma, Eleanor ran the household for Uncle Hal and Aunt Fen when they were alive, and then she continued to live at Oaklands during much of her brother RHG III's period of ownership. After her nephew RHG IV inherited Oaklands, Aunt Eleanor remained a fixture at Oaklands every summer for the rest of her life. She was known as just Aunt by her nieces and nephews, and then as Auntie to later generations. Auntie was quite a character, and family oral history is full of amusing descriptions of her unique style. Grandma, in "Golden Memories," includes a classic:

> *"All through the many summers which Aunt spent with us from 1924 on, she lay out on the lawn by the south door, day in and day out, with all her shawls and pillows just rightly placed and a red Italian umbrella on to shade her eyes.... Aunt would ask of the children, "Would you be so condescending, stoop so low and be so bending as to..." and then would thank the boys for carrying out some request of hers with a "You're a gentleman and a scholar and I'll remember you in my will.""*

What strikes me, besides the personalities of Auntie and other relatives, is the way that every description of life at Oaklands—from the time it was built to the modern era—portrays it as a place for many family members to gather and even to live together for long summers in Oaklands or in one of the other houses on the place, no matter who was the "owner."

During the years around 1900, Robert and Alice decided that Oaklands required more space, more amenities, and more modern comforts for their large family and their guests. The original Oaklands was two stories high on the east and south sides, but three stories high in the kitchen wing to the west. The higher ceilings in the two stories of the grander, main portion of the house equaled the height of all three in the service-oriented west wing. RHG III hired his Harvard classmate, a Mr. Wheelwright of Wheelwright and Haven in Boston, to design more space. Wheelwright recommended building an entirely new story where there had been just a low attic above the second floor over both parts of the house. The style of the addition was generally Victorian. It had steeply peaked dormers with windows on the north side and a high vertical wall on the southwest wall. The large skylight that was directly above the main staircase and center hallway, which had been crucial to the design of the original house, was continued as a light-filled column through the new third floor. This addition dramatically changed the exterior appearance on the north side but left the original first two stories and the eastern elevation relatively unchanged. The architectural drawings are in the Oaklands Office files.

Oaklands' north elevation after the 1900 renovations
that added Victorian era features to the third floor.

Surrounding the skylight on the new third floor were five bedrooms and a bathroom. There were two large rooms with large dormer windows looking north and east on the north side. On the west were one large and one small bedroom, and the room at the top of the front stairs with the small skylight above them was the largest. It was originally a billiard room, but we refer to it as the "Bob and John" room because that's where my father and Uncle John slept when they were growing up. (I remember having that room for my own use when I was that age, and the photos of their Dexter School football team were on the wall, including Jack and Bobby Kennedy as teammates.) The rest of the footprint of the third floor continued to be attic space with steep eaves and no windows.

Other changes were made to modernize the house. Oaklands was originally designed with fireplaces in every room, as there was no good system for centralized heating. As part of the 1900 renovations, a coal-burning furnace was installed in the center of the cellar with ducts to distribute heat throughout the first floor. We don't know the details of this system, but it was maintained until the 1950s. Additional heat was not provided to the upper floors, so staying on the new third floor was a chilly experience in winter.

Modern plumbing was installed throughout the house, with iron pipes for wastewater that are still functioning in some areas today. Because bathrooms were not designed into the house when it was built, they had to be carved out of other spaces, such as closets in the East and Southeast rooms. The North bathroom was made out of a separate sleeping area, and that explains why it is so large compared with the other bathrooms.

Electricity was added throughout the house. The photos of the house taken before the renovations show large wooden candle-holding chandeliers in the Dining and Music rooms and some gas fixtures in other areas. The addition of electricity allowed them to be replaced by floor lamps and table lamps.

Many interior finishes were added, including the wooden floors in the three front rooms. Prior to that, the floors had a textile covering over boards that would have been hard to keep clean. The Dining and Music rooms were redecorated with cloth wall-coverings that were retained for the next hundred years. While the original neo-gothic and Greek revival molding details around the windows and doors were designed by Upjohn,

Two Oaklands' interior views before 1900; note the fixtures before electric lighting and some familiar furniture that is still in the house.

the carvings of the wainscoting in the Music Room, which echo that design, were added in the renovation. Interestingly, they are not actually wooden carvings but metal castings. Other rooms, including the upstairs front rooms, were redecorated and furnished in the style that we still see today. There are very few furnishings left from the original phase of the house before 1900. In "Golden Memories" Grandma records how some older pieces of furniture and portraits were acquired or given to Oaklands.

View from the gardens that were by the tennis court, looking over the brick wall toward the farmhouse and Long Barn (on the left), with Apple House in its original location

The landscaping around the house was modified in the style of the day, which was to add plants around the house as shade trees, hedges, ground plantings, and ivy growing up the exterior walls, as well as pathways and vistas looking outward. On the north side where the driveway passes the front door, a large, elevated parking area was supported by

concrete walls with elegant, raised corners that echoed the house's towers and were smoothly beveled.

Before 1900 there was a narrow wooden bridge where the granite bridge across the gully is today. There is one photograph that shows it as a low, horizontal structure, and it was reportedly quite shaky. There is a story about this bridge when Aunt Nelly was being courted by a particularly ardent suitor. The young man exclaimed, "Oh, Eleanor, I will follow you to the end of the Earth." She responded, "Follow me now," whereupon she leapt onto her horse and galloped across the bridge. The suitor did not follow for unspecified reasons, and soon afterward Aunt Nelly joined the convent.

The granite bridge that was built to replace it in 1904 made a rather dramatically different architectural statement and it expanded the visual effect of the landscaping to include the area to the south of the gully. It made the new tennis court area and the nearby gardens of vegetables and flowers much more accessible to Oaklands. The initials of the owners, AG and RHG are carved into the bridge–my sister Alison and I always appreciated their presence because we shared those same initials. We have several undated photos from that era, with one showing a lawn tennis court in front of Oaklands and another that shows extensive gardens immediately west of the new tennis court with a high brick wall and a little thatched roof hut separating the garden from the hay fields.

These renovations required several years to complete and, like most renovations, required more time and money than expected. The Office has an entire file of papers that include letters from Robert and Alice complaining about the cost overruns. Nevertheless, the final product was a modernized, spacious, and elegant home for a large family, and it was able to house many servants to support a very comfortable lifestyle.

RHG III also developed grand-scale plans for the farm. As Grandma describes it, there were acres of orchards—one reason that Orchard House got its name was that the whole field in front had been an apple orchard. There are drawings for many new farm buildings in a landscape plan that is still in the Office. It called for sheep and cattle barns that never were built, along with gardens, a greenhouse, and other improvements. I think it is fair to say that the level of operations on Oaklands Farm reached their zenith under RHG III's leadership.

All of these investments in Oaklands and the farm must have cost quite a lot of money. RHG III certainly did well in business and apparently could afford to pay. His wife may have contributed some of her wealth as well. Unlike his grandfather and uncle, who had sold portions of their land inheritance to maintain Oaklands, RHG III used his earned income to acquire assets and leave the house in very good condition.

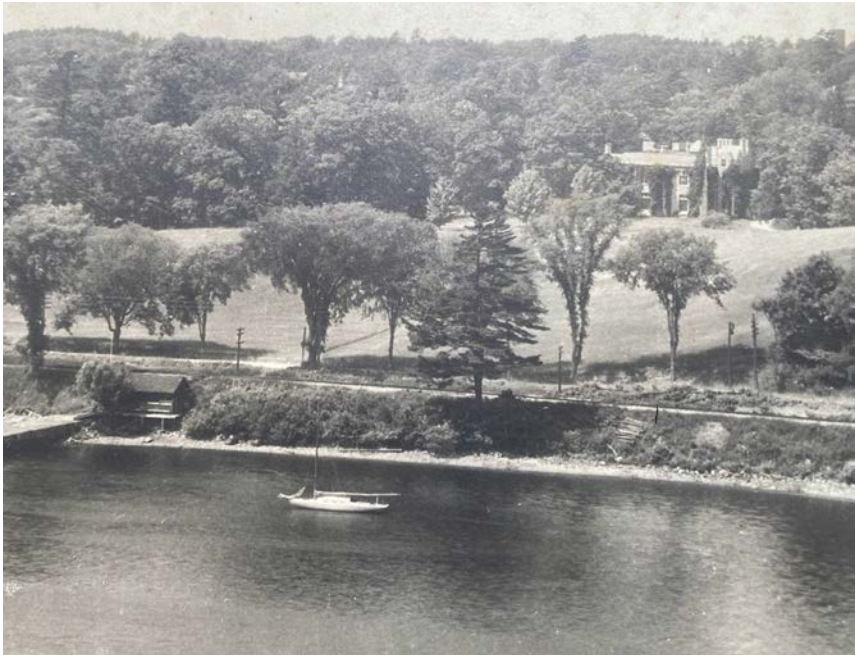
In addition to his trust work in Boston, RHG III played a major role in the relocation of the Boston Latin School and other community service activities in that city. In a cause called Ecumenism, his international efforts to unify all the different factions of Protestant churches were perhaps his most ambitious project, and the one that seemed most important to him. He gathered together church leaders from around the world, and there are old photographs of these leaders being entertained at Oaklands. His efforts are memorialized on a plaque in Christ Church in Gardiner.

## RHG IV

RHG III and Alice had four children who lived to adulthood: Robert Hallowell (RHG IV) was born in 1882, Alice in 1885, Anna in 1890, and William Tudor in 1892. The eldest was Robert Hallowell Gardiner IV. He went by the nickname Holly, which was derived as a contraction of his middle name. In Maine the Hallowell name has always been pronounced as "Hol-lo-well," hence the name Holly. (An interesting aside: the branch of the Hallowell family that includes my ancestors had three male members in 1800. One, our ancestor, became Robert Hallowell Gardiner I when he inherited Silvester's Kennebec lands. The other two male Hallowells who were his first cousins also changed their names in order to inherit their mothers' or wives' family fortunes when they added the names Carew and Boylston. Thus, the Hallowell name in our branch of the family came to an end. There are still several families in the Boston area who spell their names the same way but pronounce it with a short "a," and some of them have houses in vacation villages along the Maine coast. Today in Maine, if you hear someone refer to the town of Hallowell using a short "a," you know that they are not true Mainers– they are from somewhere further south.)

Holly Gardiner Burnes, my sister who was named after our grandfather (RHG IV), has researched family records and summarizes his life as follows:

*"Schooled at Groton, Harvard, and Harvard Law School, he joined his father's law firm, specializing in trusts, and transformed it into the Fiduciary Trust Company just before the 1928 Stock Market crash. He was a gifted student in school, and graduated Magna Cum Laude in three years from Harvard. His father was a force within the Episcopal Church, and Holly followed suit, becoming a senior warden of Christ Church in Gardiner, and a deputy from the Diocese of Maine to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, and other church positions. Not only was he treasurer of his Harvard class, but also treasurer of the Harvard Alumni Association, and on the Harvard Board of Overseers. He was a trustee of Noble and Greenough School, Groton School, and an agricultural school in Greece, the Anagnos School, and Cambridge Episcopal Theological School.*



Aerial view of Oaklands and the old wharf on the river, circa 1910.

*"Holly obviously worked very hard, but he enjoyed his business lunches at the elite Boston Lunch Club, and was a member of the Tavern Club for intellectual and creative pursuits, and the Somerset Club for socializing. Despite the family tradition of generations of Gardiners at Harvard before him and after, Holly was actually a founding member of the social club the Owl Club, not the Porcellian. It may have been the only radical decision he ever made.*

*"At age 28, in 1910, Holly married Elizabeth Denny, a strong partner for raising a family of one girl and six boys. In her own book, "Golden Memories," Elizabeth, Grandma to my generation, describes herself as wanting the simple life, but eventually enjoying a more privileged comfortable life as Holly became a successful businessman. She confessed having a strong idealistic streak, including encouraging Holly to go to fight in WWI. He enlisted as soon as possible, despite having three children and being 34 years old. He was a Major in the Field Artillery, and commanded the third Battalion, 303rd Field Artillery in France in 1918, and was part of the engagements of the Vigneulles sector, and the Woevre front. After the war Holly and Elizabeth hosted reunions of these veterans. There are photos at Oaklands of at least 50-75 men on the wharf in front of Oaklands, enjoying camaraderie and a picnic lunch. This looks like a good example of the kind of partnership activities they engaged in to hold groups of friends together.*

*"Sailing was a pleasurable pastime for Holly, and Elizabeth enjoyed it too for its simplicity and to return to the basics of life. Sometime in the 1930s Holly had a sturdy sailboat designed and built based on a northeast fishing boat called a pinkie. He found a builder in New Brunswick, Canada, and built a bigger version, about 32' long, very heavy, and capable of weathering any storm. The Bloodstone gave him opportunities to adventure with his children, his men friends, or his adventure-loving wife. They often took a few of their sons out cruising, but it must have been a tight fit.*

*"We can get a clearer glimpse of who Robert (Holly) Gardiner was by reading the semi-weekly newsletters he wrote to family and friends scattered across the globe in WWII. It is hard for us now to imagine what it would have been like to watch four sons, one son-in-law, numerous*

*nephews, a niece, his sister, and his younger brother go to war. We do not know what his inner feelings were when he decided to write The Patriarchal Paragraphs, originally named The Holly Leaflet, from August '42 to July '44, only two months before his death to pancreatic cancer, at almost 62 years old. Mostly he reported tidbits of what each person was doing, with much detail omitted due to military security. He lovingly recounted the births of grandchildren, offering temporary housing for his daughter and daughters in law and their babies whenever he could help, and collecting family members for annual dinners. He even rented an additional apartment next door at 295 Beacon St., Boston for any family member in need of temporary housing. In an extraordinary act of generosity he sponsored and hosted the Parke family from Poole, England upon (his sister) Alice's request, as they were her in-law cousins threatened by the war. This was a family of five girls and their mother, and they bunked into the house in Brookline, Mass., played with Charlie and Henry, who were their contemporaries, and spent summers at Orchard House for the duration of the war.*

*"In The Paragraphs Holly included a few tales about activities at home. In the summer of '43 Holly recounts putting the Bloodstone into commission without her engine, due to gas rationing, and having friends ready to charter her. In August he tells of serving his signature "moose milk" (presumably martinis) on the Bloodstone.*

*"Hunting woodcock and grouse from Oaklands was his other annual ritual, complete with the companionship of old friends and family members, and plenty of libation. Holly was a man of his times. By our standards 75 years later, his attitude towards women is cringe-worthy. He simply took their contributions for granted. He was steeped in upper class male sensibilities, yet always cheerful, upbeat, generous, self-effacing, and loving. Both he and Elizabeth displayed an aristocratic assumption that staff would always be there for household duties, and only had meager needs. Henry says that when they bought a very big house at 112 High St., Brookline during the '30s, but decided to economize, they boarded up the stairs to the 3rd floor to save heating fuel. They pared down the staff to one, and she was expected to simply sleep with more blankets!*

*"He shows tolerance for Elizabeth's patriotic passions during WWII in finding scrap metal to make into bullets. He reports that while he enjoyed a hunting house party in Maine, "The Little Mother came for weekends to search out metal scrap, and as a result of her appeal the Vestry of Christ Church voted unanimously to scrap the iron fence around the church and churchyard. Now she is tackling the fences in the Back Bay and around Boston Common and what Fran and the boys in the winter of 1918 used to call the Public Gardiners (Gardens)."*

*"He shows an easy going nature when he apologetically reports, "We are afraid we have slighted the distaff side of the family in our earlier numbers [of how many worked for the war], for which we present our apologies." There was no "we," of course. He referred to himself as The Publisher and spoke in the plural, as a joke as if he had a staff. He then proceeded to tell how Aunt Alice had gone to London 3 years prior in order to take her part in the war effort.*

*"We have a few assessments of Holly by his children. Ben, in his remembrances, suggests that he saw himself as a country squire, stylishly dressed, going to cattle fairs. Aunt Alice spun and wove cloth from the wool of Uncle Tudor's sheep in order to have a suit made for Holly with "plus four" knickers in the British tradition. Ben also says his father had no interest in theater, the arts, or reading fiction. He only read biographies. He and Elizabeth lived relatively frugally because Ben had the impression they were less well off than his friends.*

*"Fran told Ben she thought their father was stuffy. He certainly took his fiscal responsibilities very seriously, was a staunch Republican and traditionalist, and when he retreated to Maine, he spent time with the farm manager, Mr. Foote, discussing cattle records. It seems that the best way to know Holly was to sail or hunt with him."*

Grandpa had his own distinct personality, but I find noteworthy the many ways in which he followed in his father's footsteps: deep involvement in the church, continuing the trust business, caring for the dairy farm, taking care of his relatives and having them stay in Oaklands and other houses

on the farm, extensive forms of community service, etc. It is a pattern that was later passed on to his eldest son, RHG V as well, as we shall see in upcoming chapters.

For his funeral in Gardiner (in 1944), all shops closed, and the whole neighborhood came. In Boston, Alice said, "St. Paul's Cathedral was filled to the doors with such a congregation as is seldom seen."

Grandpa's siblings were interesting figures who also grew up in Oaklands and maintained close relationships with the family and the house throughout their lives. Here are some brief descriptions of them.

The second child of RHG III and Alice was born two years after Grandpa and was also named Alice (and we refer to her as Aunt Alice). Her portrait hangs on the north wall of the Music Room. When Alice was in her late teens, she would have met all of her family's guests who visited Oaklands. One visitor was a friend of her Uncle John Hays Gardiner named Gordon Gardiner, an Englishman, who was not believed to be a blood relation, in spite of having the same surname with its unusual spelling. He was much older than Alice and was a writer, among other talents, and Alice fell in love with him. Apparently her parents did not think the match was suitable and discouraged it. She later married one of her brother's Harvard classmates, Livingston Davis, whom she also had met at Oaklands. They adopted a son, James, who suffered from poor health and had a troubled life with little contact with his mother. The marriage was never very happy, as Alice and Livingston's interests seemed entirely different. Livingston was quite a philanderer, according to biographies of his good friend Franklin Delano Roosevelt—the two married American men frequently caroused late into the night in London in the 1920s. He and Alice divorced after years of estrangement.

Alice went back to live at Oaklands and devoted herself to taking care of her mother dutifully, until her mother died in 1934, which freed Alice to travel again. Somehow she and Gordon reconnected—he was living in Fiesole, Italy—and they soon married very happily. She loved him and enjoyed his circle of literary friends, which included Joseph Conrad, among others. Sadly, they were not to be together for long, as he died less than two years after the marriage. During World War II, Aunt Alice chose to be in London to help provide relief for Londeners whose homes had been bombed in the Battle of Britain, and later she spent years traveling

America trying to raise funds through the English Speaking Union. There is a photograph in Oaklands of her presenting a check to Queen Mary for this cause.

For the rest of her life, Aunt Alice lived in Orchard House. She was an avid gardener, and every summer Orchard House was surrounded by the most brilliant blossoms. Every day she would go "upstreet" to the post office in Gardiner to collect the mail for all the houses on the farm, as well as her one-day-late New York Times, and then she cheerily distributed the mail to each house in turn. Everyone in the family and on the farm adored Aunt Alice. She was an avid reader of fiction and is remembered fondly by anyone associated with the Gardiner Public Library as their most dedicated volunteer ever. Aunt Alice was very close to many of her Richards cousins, particularly those who lived in the Yellow House in Gardiner. The Richardses owned a summer house at the tip of Indian Point, on the east side of the Kennebec River's mouth in Georgetown, Maine. This connection led her to purchase a one-acre lot nearby when parcels went up for sale in 1954. She was one of the first buyers and so had her first choice of lots, upon which she had a little one-room cabin, called the Bandbox, built as her place to escape to the seashore during the hottest days of summer.

Aunt Alice

The third child was Sylvester, but he died in infancy.

The fourth child was Anna ("Aunt Anna" to my generation). She was traveling in England as a young woman when she met an Englishman, Roger Draper, and they got married just at the outset of World War I. Roger was in the British army, was sent into battle in the Gallipoli campaign, and was killed on that battlefield. Anna was living in England and was pregnant. She decided to return quickly to Boston, where her son, Roger Draper Jr., was born. Years later she married Henry Richardson Shepley of Boston. He went by the nickname Harry and, according Mary

Waters Shepley (his future daughter-in-law), "...was raised by his indomitable mother (Julia Richardson Shepley), daughter of the famed architect H.H. Richardson, to be a famous architect and to run the family firm. He followed H.H. to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts [ in Paris] and came back to work at Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, the successor firm to The Richardson firm. (H.H.'s "right hand man" was George Foster Shepley, who had married H.H.'s daughter, Julia.) Shepley had died and Coolidge was the senior partner. Coolidge died and (Harry R.Shepley) became the head of the firm. Soon after that, the Depression set in and when that was ending, WWII came and times were hard. Then after the war, the office was overbusy and has been ever since. The swings were wide and scary. For [Anna Shepley] it must have been challenging to adapt to life's vagaries, to say the least. However, as [Mary Waters's husband, Hugh Shepley] pointed out, they always had 2 maids and often a chauffeur."

Aunt Anna and Uncle Harry had five children together: Anne, Dick (H.R. Jr.), Hayden, Robert G., and Hugh. They spent a lot of time at Oaklands as a family. Anna was very close to her sister, Alice, and her younger boys matched up with my uncles Henry and Charlie in age. The large group of boys would all share the third-floor bedrooms. Uncle Charlie told a story about sharing the large third-floor bedroom on the west side of Oaklands with Hugh Shepley one winter night: "Hugh was fully asleep when awakened by a noise and saw what he thought was a ghost moving about, scaring him immensely. It turned out that it was Auntie coming up to borrow or return something, and she was wearing a white nightgown and carrying some sort of light."

Sadly, Anna's child from her first marriage, young Roger Draper, died in a boating accident when he was only 12.

RHG III and Alice's youngest child was William Tudor, who was known by his middle name. Tudor went to Harvard and Harvard Law before joining the U.S. Army in World War I and rising to the rank of lieutenant. He joined a law firm in Portland, Maine, after the war. Tudor had a magnetic personality and was a natural leader. He was elected three times to the Maine Legislature from 1920 to 1926, and then was elected governor of Maine in 1928 and again in 1930. In World War II he rejoined the Army Air Force fighting in North Africa. In 1943 the allies were planning an assault on the Italian coast near Salerno and were concerned about their ability to

Ice house across the Kennebec River opposite Oaklands, with schooners at anchor, circa 1900

neutralize the Italian air force bases near Rome. General Maxwell Taylor, Commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, and Uncle Tudor volunteered to go behind enemy lines to meet with anti-fascist Italian leaders to evaluate the level of support that they might provide. Tudor and General Taylor learned there were a large number of German Air Force in the area—far too many to allow the assault to succeed, and because of this new intelligence, the assault by Allied troops was called off at the last minute. If the assault had gone forward as planned, the effort would have been disastrous. General Eisenhower later described their mission as the most dangerous mission that he had ever ordered.

Uncle Tudor married Margaret Thomas, a Bostonian who was descended from the Thomas family of Thomaston, Maine. They had four children: Tudor, Thomas, Margaret, and Sylvester. During the 1920s they lived in a house on State Street in Augusta and spent much of their summers at Oaklands. In the years leading up to his run for governor, Oaklands became a gathering spot for political supporters and allies year round. Tudor and his family stayed at Oaklands for many summers in the '20s, which means that at some times both his and RHG IV's families were there at the same time. When he served as governor, they lived in the governor's mansion in Augusta, known as the Blaine House. If you visit the Blaine House you can still see a photograph of Tudor and his family along with several sheep, chickens, a pony, and several dogs, all on the Blaine House porch. At some

time in the mid-'20s Tudor bought a farm on Phipps Point in Woolwich, Maine, and they renovated that house as their home in 1928. After that, they stopped using Oaklands but would drive Tudor's large speedboat up the Kennebec to visit Oaklands or to continue up-river to the Blaine House.

Tudor had the challenge of being governor during the Great Depression and was generally considered to have done well under those circumstances. In terms of achievement, he is credited with restructuring the chaotic agencies and departments of state government into a more rational and streamlined system that survives in large part today. He had a knack for remembering everyone he met and would astonish people who encountered him even years later by remembering their names. His granddaughter Cory says that he studied the names and faces of the people whom he met every evening. When we lived in Augusta, 40 years after his governorship, our elderly neighbor, who had been a doorman for the legislature, told stories of how well everyone of all types liked Uncle Tudor for being so personable. While he was governor, prohibition was still the law. Not wanting to be accused of breaking that law, Uncle Tudor would take his boat out beyond the three-mile limit of the shore to have his cocktails. At least, that is the story as told to me by one of his contemporaries.

Uncle Tudor (left) and Grandpa (right) posing with Guernseys.

To return to the chain of succession of Oaklands, back in 1924, RHG III left Oaklands and the farm to his wife, Alice, without specifying who would inherit it after her death. She continued to live in and care for Oaklands. She did turn over the responsibility for managing Oaklands Farm to her eldest son, my grandfather. He and Grandma, then living in Brookline, began to spend all their free time at Oaklands with their growing family. But the families of his siblings would visit as well, so at times Oaklands would seem somewhat overcrowded—yes, Oaklands was, once again, not big enough for everyone to stay at once.

More than a century earlier, in 1796, the first man who was named Robert Hallowell (son of Benjamin Hallowell, who had been one of the 11 original investors in the Kennebec Purchase, along with Silvester) had had a small Colonial-style cottage built for his family to live in during the summers across the Kennebec River in Pittston (now Randolph), directly facing the town of Gardiner. Robert Hallowell (I will refer to him as RH I) had married Silvester's daughter Hannah and built the cottage when their son Robert (RH II, later to become RHG I) was still a boy.

Hallowell House relocated to Oaklands Farm.

That cottage went out of family ownership for many years in the 19th century. Over a century later, RHG IV decided to buy it back and then move it in large pieces across the icy surface of the Kennebec during the winter of 1927, when the ice was thick enough to support the weight, to its current location just south of Oaklands, where we know it as Hallowell House.

RHG IV family: (L-R)
Grandpa, John, Fran, Henry, Charlie, Grandma, Arthur, Bob, & Ben

A year later, the renovated house was ready for his and Elizabeth's occupancy. After they had spent only two summers in Hallowell House, RHG IV's mother, who still owned and lived in Oaklands, suggested that they switch houses to allow her son's family, which by then included seven children, more room. Thus in 1929, Grandpa and his family came to occupy Oaklands for the last five years of his mother's ownership before her death in 1934. By her will, he finally inherited the entire estate.

Life at Oaklands in the 1930s was very active with seven children in the house, as described in "Golden Memories." That is, until World War II disrupted everyone's life. During that war, family members were scattered all over the globe for several years—in the military, at boarding schools, and living abroad. Grandpa began to publish the "Patriarchal Paragraphs," many of which are collected in the Office. After Grandpa's death, Aunt Alice continued their publication until the end of the war.

Grandma and Grandpa had seven children who were widely spaced in age. Frances (Fran) was born in 1912, followed by RHG V (Bob) in 1914, John in 1916, Arthur in 1917, Ben in 1921, Henry in 1927 and finally Charles in 1929, a total span of 17 years.

Back in 1932, Grandpa wrote a letter addressed " To my successor at Oaklands," but it is not clear when, by what means, or even to whom it was

delivered. It was probably kept in confidence until his death, and it was rediscovered in the Office files some time later. In it he reviews the history of the entailment of lands and the greater practicality of allowing most lands to be transferred free of entailment. Then he continues:

*"I hope that the stonehouse and its contents and the adjacent grounds may continue in the (unofficial) entail. I hope also that in the future many of the family will have homes in Gardiner, thereby making it a real family center, and it should not be regarded as in any way against my wishes that other parts of Oaklands should be conveyed in fee simple to members of the family desiring to establish such homes of their own. But all of Gardiner was once family property and there would seem to be plenty of room for all.*

*"The Hallowell House which I have moved to Oaklands is the oldest family house now standing. I hope it may be used by members of the family generally without ceasing to be part of Oaklands. It would be suitable for a dower house, a use which in practice my mother has made of it. I believe that this house and my sister Alice's house has added to the charm of the place and has shown the way to a happy family association coupled with reasonable independence.*

*"Some cooperative method of bearing the heavy expense will probably become necessary. I should not attempt to prescribe that as I cannot provide for it..."*

## RHG V

Grandpa died in 1944 at the age of 61, only a few months after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He bequeathed Oaklands and all the surrounding lands to his eldest son, RHG V, who was my father, known as Bob. As a boy Bob had gone to the best schools in Boston, then to Groton, Harvard, and Harvard Law School. This set the pattern for most of his younger brothers, who attended the same schools (minus law school). After a brief law practice in Boston, he joined the Navy as an officer. Before the start of World War II he met my mother, Frances Weld (known as Fratty), at an Oaklands house party for his younger brother Ben. We have no stories about what happened that weekend, but a year or two later they were married. Over the five war years, they were stationed in 10 different locations for Navy assignments, from Florida to California to Norfolk, Va., and other

scattered cities as he served in many capacities, from being an admiral's aide to commanding officer of a small ship. He was still in the Navy when Grandpa died in 1944, leaving Oaklands Farm and Oaklands entirely to him. For another generation, Oaklands's future had been determined by primogeniture, or so it seemed.

*Chapter 2*

# Origins of the Oaklands Corporation

ONE THING THAT WE KNOW FOR CERTAIN ABOUT RHG IV is that, under his leadership, Fiduciary Trust developed a strong reputation for a trusteeship practice that put the assets of wealthy families under the control of experienced trustees, who would serve as stewards of those fortunes for the benefit of the families over the long term. Grandpa applied that same thinking in his own family. Grandpa may have had confidence in his wife in many ways, but he decided to leave his Gardiner, Maine, estate to his eldest son upon his death, even though Grandma was using Oaklands and the war had scattered his children to faraway places. He clearly did not want to leave the inheritance of Oaklands as ambiguous or unsettled upon his own death as his father, RHG III, had done 20 years prior.

Grandpa died in the late summer of 1944, not long after the Normandy invasion and well before the end of WWII. My parents were living in Norfolk, where Dad was serving in the U.S. Navy and where I, RHG VI, had been born two months before. Alison, my older sister, was not quite two. Dad was only 30 and his Navy service would continue for yet another year. Oaklands was far away and difficult to manage at that distance. Upon his release from the Navy late in 1945, my father initially thought he might live and make his career in Maine. He and my mother, with their two young children, moved into Hallowell House for a very cold and snowy winter. There was so much snow that they would leave their car at the farm

and bring the kids and groceries on a toboggan down to Hallowell House during the months of deepest cold. Unfortunately, he could find no good business opportunities and so decided to return to Boston, where he found employment at Fiduciary Trust Company, thereby continuing, for a third generation, working in the same trust business as his father and grandfather, even though by then it then had been incorporated and was no longer just family owned.

We do not know what were his thoughts, back in 1944, upon inheriting the full responsibility and expense of caring for Oaklands and the farm. I assume that he expected to receive that inheritance, after knowing how previous generations had handed it in one piece down to the eldest male of the next generation. But with the country fully engaged in WWII, with him being stationed far away in Norfolk when he wasn't at sea, and because he had no particular career plans, I doubt that he had given it much thought before his father died at a relatively young age.

The old cow barn and silos, before they burned in 1948, looking northward.

After Grandpa died, Grandma continued to use Oaklands for another year until Grandpa's estate was settled, and then for several years longer. My parents had moved to Lynn, Mass., for a year in order to be within commuting distance of Fiduciary Trust in downtown Boston. They established Hallowell House as their home in Maine and came to it as often as possible to oversee the farm operation and the place in general. By that time, the farm had been simplified to a herd of Guernsey cows and not much else except their care and feeding. Soon enough, however, disaster struck in

late 1948, when the cow barn caught fire and burned totally to the ground. It was a tall, old wooden structure with lots of dry hay in storage that became an uncontrollable conflagration. The barn was located near the farmhouse on the other side of the road at the top of the hill. One can still see some evidence of the foundations of the barn in the southeast corner of the "Night" pasture and of the silo just east of the current workshop. The loss created a chaotic situation for a farm of cows that needed to be milked twice a day. The fire must have come as quite a shock, not to mention as a large expense.

I was too young to remember much about it. I do recall my father planning the new cow barn further away from the farmhouse and its construction as a more modern, long, low building with two rows of stanchions for 48 milking cows, along with two conventional silos and two "haymaker" silos attached and a small milk room at the center on the back side.

My sister Holly was born in that same year. The next year, I contracted polio at age 5, which in those days, before any vaccines had been developed, was a terrifying disease. My parents were careful not to show any of their worry to me, so I stayed on an even keel and took my hot bath soaks, did physical therapy exercises as instructed, and gradually recovered completely. But it was months before they would know that outcome. Soon thereafter, Holly started to try to walk but had difficulty standing and walking without leaning heavily to her right. Doctors diagnosed her as having an incompletely formed hip socket and put her in a nearly full body cast for months and into leg braces for years after that. One can only imagine what a strain both of these developments must have put on my parents.

In addition to his other responsibilities for Oaklands and everything around it, my father was designated as trustee of trusts that Grandpa had created and left to Grandma to support her after his death. This put my father in the awkward position of controlling his mother's finances while having her live in "his" house, Oaklands. Their relationship had never been easy, and it is safe to assume that he did not want to move into Oaklands while she continued to use it. Eventually, around 1950, they somehow reached a decision to switch houses, just as Grandpa and Grandma had switched Hallowell House for Oaklands with his mother, Alice Bangs Gardiner, 32 years earlier.

During her last years in Oaklands and her first years back in Hallowell House, Grandma had her oldest grandchildren stay with her for long stretches in the summers. My father's older sister, Fran (see chapter 3 for more background), had been diagnosed with a frightening, large brain tumor and had to endure two major operations a year apart. Grandma had the children come to stay with her for the summers for several years while Fran convalesced, and my parents had some of them stay with us as well.

The family soldiered on despite these challenges. By the time I reached an age at which I can recall important aspects of my life more completely, we had moved to Milton, Mass., to be close to Milton Academy for our schooling. It seemed that we spent every vacation and many weekends in Maine—dozens of trips each year. Bernard Hilton had been hired as the farm manager and was living in the north end of the farmhouse, with another farmer and his family living in the south end. There were three houses along Lincoln Avenue for other men on the farm and their families, plus the house at the Green Gate, which was rented out (no one who is alive today ever saw "the green gate" that must have been located at the intersection of Oaklands Farm Road and Cottage Street very long ago).

Oaklands had a large building that we called the Stable just north of the driveway where the fence starts on the way toward the house from "the triangle." I am not sure when it was built, but in Emma Jane Gardiner's pencil drawing of the first house at Oaklands that burned in 1832 there is a faint portrayal of a structure in the background that looks quite like the stable that I remember. There are a few references to "the stable" in family documents, but not enough to be sure about its date of construction. It could have been expanded or replaced after the original stable was built. In any case, the stable that I recall had stalls for horses, a large open area for carriages and an upstairs apartment for the caretaker of Oaklands. A grove of enormous spruce trees blocked its view on the north and west sides, and there was a fenced pasture area to the east for horses. Charles Carleton was the caretaker at that time, and his wife, Jennie, helped with cooking and house cleaning—a role that she continued off and on until well into her nineties. (I can recall driving 90-year-old Jennie Carleton, years later, back to her mobile home in Pittston after she would come to Oaklands to help my mother in the kitchen for dinner parties in the 1980s, after her driver's license had been taken away due to poor vision, and thinking: this seems not quite right, somehow. But Mrs. Carleton really seemed to enjoy it.)

To make full use of the big house and possibly to help make ends meet financially during the 1950s, my mother created, at Oaklands, an experience for our older Weld cousins (my mother was born a Weld) and the children of some friends (ages roughly 8 to 15—close to Alison's and my ages—that was similar to a summer camp. Alison named it Camp Wannamama. The house already contained our family of five. Adding between five and eight other guests made the house quite full of kids. The boys all slept on the third floor while the girls were on the second floor. Our second cousins Jay Weed, George Denny, and Phyllis Denny, all great-nieces and great-nephews of Grandma, were among the guests, but the majority were either our first cousins on my mother's side or neighbors from Milton. Each day had a schedule of activities from tennis and swimming to chores and dramatics. We made good use of two horses for riding lessons. The whole time was tightly organized and designed to keep everyone active. It really was like a summer camp, and a new group of campers would come for different periods of one to three weeks. We had some kitchen help, but otherwise my mother managed the entire project more or less on her own. My father was at work in Boston during the week and would come to Maine on the Pine Tree Special train Friday evening and return Sunday night. The camp worked well for several exhausting years, but after she gave birth to Nat and Phyllis, my mother decided to bring the camp to an end.

Our times at Oaklands were not limited to summers, as we would come to Maine for New Year's Eve, long weekends, and any other time that my father could get away. He would spend a lot of his time there meeting with the farm manager and helping with small tasks around the farm, as he loved every part of farm life, except in late June, when the Timothy grass pollen gave him terrible "hay fever," which, in that time before over-the-counter antihistamine drugs, drove him away. He loved to ride horses and decided to buy a good horse for his own use. He found one through his first cousin Margaret Gardiner (known as Peggy), who owned and managed a stable of fine Morgan horses at Phipps Point in Woolwich. (Peggy was the youngest child of Uncle Tudor and Aunt Margaret Gardiner.) Peggy was very particular about handling and training horses and achieved national recognition for her efforts on behalf of the Morgan Horse Association while winning medals for horse-drawn carriage competitions and the like. My father bought a well-trained, spirited, and handsome gelding named

Merry from Peggy and kept him in the Oaklands stable in the summer. We also boarded another horse to keep Merry company, and relied on a local person to take care of the pair when we were in Milton.

During late winter and mud season, Dad didn't go to Maine for several months, during which time no one noticed that the other horse was bullying Merry and was eating all the grain that was intended for the two of them. Merry also had a history of intestinal worms that sometimes needed treatment, which recurred that year. Peggy swung by unannounced to check on Merry's welfare and found him in a skinny and weakened condition. Horrified, she went home to get her horse trailer and immediately drove Merry back to her horse palace in Woolwich for good. There was no way that she would ever allow Merry to return to Oaklands. My father was very embarrassed, but he was without a good excuse for the horse's bad care, so, after exchanging lengthy letters with Peggy, he acknowledged that his life was probably too busy to take proper care of Merry and swallowed the horse-napping incident without further protest. Peggy did refund the purchase price, and family ties would gradually mend.

In 1957, a problem with the north side of the house's exterior became apparent. The outer layer of granite stones had separated from the inner layers of bricks and mortar at the second and third floor levels. The cracks were allowing water into the walls and causing further separation in winter, when some of the moisture would freeze. Engineers advised that the additional weight that had been put by the third floor addition onto the existing lower walls in 1900 was too great and was causing the problem. Their recommended remedy was to remove the third floor exterior wall on the north side and create a sloped roof above the second floor on that face. This eliminated the two front bedrooms on the third floor and turned them into storage spaces under the eaves. A crane had to be used to lift each stone to the ground, one by one. Then the stones were carefully labeled and stored until the entire project was finished, including the replacement of some second-story stones that had become detached. We were also admonished to end the practice of encouraging ivy to climb the exterior walls. In the early 20th century Oaklands's walls had been heavily covered with ivy, which was a fashionable look at that time, but we were advised that its tendrils dug into the mortar and caused it to deteriorate. Without ivy, Oaklands looked very different, and some of the iron pins for the wires that supported the ivy are still visible today.

The reconstruction took a long time and must have been very expensive. In addition, it foreshadowed further structural problems that would crop up in the future. We don't know how much my father might have worried about that, but, with the benefit of hindsight, we know that he should have.

Two years later in 1959, disaster struck again. This time it was the stable that caught fire and burned to the ground. A couple (not the Carletons) were living in the upstairs apartment, but were not at home at the time. Later it was concluded that their kerosene space heater had caused the fire. The whole structure was made of very dry wood and burned very quickly. Almost everything in the stable was lost except for one sleigh and a few other items. In the large storage area of the stable there had been a collection of old carriages with plush interiors and elegant designs and various other unused curiosities. We used to have great fun playing in those carriages, moving from one to another, and imagining elegant life in the horse-drawn era. Everything in the stable was dust-covered, neglected, old-fashioned, and wonderfully mysterious to kids. All gone within one hour.

I suspect this litany of medical scares, fire losses, and expenses for house repairs must have weighed heavily on my father. How could one think that such a series of challenges could be handled without some second thoughts about the future and how many more of these problems he could sustain?

My father had by this time become president of Fiduciary Trust, and he served on many non-profit boards as well. He loved community service; the depth and nature of his commitment reflected his own personal values. He believed deeply in the value of education and served as trustee of several private schools in Boston, Cambridge, Groton, and even in Greece. As chairman of the board of trustees for Groton School in the 1960s, he guided the board through the extremely difficult, expensive, and contentious process of deciding to make the school coeducational and include girls for the first time. During the same period, he served as trustee and treasurer of Radcliffe College, at that time the women's division of Harvard, which was governed separately. He clearly felt throughout his life that equality for women was an important cause.

His second public service passion was community development efforts, which ranged from racial justice to economic assistance and economic in-

equality. I regret not talking more deeply with him about his interests in these matters, but there was one time when I gained insight into this side of his life. I was 22 years old and had returned unexpectedly early from a year of teaching in Lebanon because of the outbreak of the Six Day War. I was living at home in Milton and working on a summer job doing community development projects in Charlestown, a temporary position that my father helped me get on short notice. Over dinner one evening, we were talking about Boston's civic challenges during the Louise Day Hicks era, when city politics were showing an ugly White backlash to racial progress. Dad asked me if I would like to come with him to an ABCD meeting the next evening. ABCD stood for Action for Boston Community Development, the organization that grew with the support of the Red Feather campaign (later, the United Way), on whose board he had also served, and which preceded the creation of President Johnson's anti-poverty campaign in Boston.

The meeting was held in a community hall in Roxbury and was attended by the most diverse collection of people that I had ever seen. Dad was on the board of directors, but he was the only Brahmin or other privileged person in the room. Immediately a large, well-dressed, Black woman greeted him with a big hug and warm welcome. For me, watching him interact enthusiastically with that group was a moment of sudden awareness of a side of my father that I had not previously known, because he almost never allowed anyone to steer a conversation around to what he did himself. I can't recall much else about the evening; by then I had already taken in all that I could absorb.

While I didn't understand these aspects of my father, back in 1959, which was the time when he decided to end primogeniture at Oaklands and to create an opportunity for equality among all his siblings and for women as well as men, I am confident they were an important part of his decision.

In addition to the expense of time, effort, and money that Oaklands required, and in addition to my father's sense of the fairness of equality among siblings, I believe there was one other essential factor in his decision, and this is the one reason that he ever did talk about. The lives of Americans were changed deeply by the Great Depression and World War II. The old ways of maintaining the long-term security of assets and the acceptance of high levels of economic inequality were no longer considered appropriate by many people. During the first decades of the post-war era, America saw

a time of the lowest economic inequality in this country's history, and it appeared that that would continue into the future. Racial and social discrimination were no longer accepted by many who had fought together in the battles and worked together in the factories to win the war. More taxation was needed to support this equalization of opportunity. Income taxes had risen sharply, especially with the extremely "graduated rate" changes that taxed high-income families more heavily. Being in the trust business, my father fully understood the significant shifts in this era and was keenly aware of the new burdens imposed through the estate tax. Looking into the future, he foresaw great risks if further disasters occurred at Oaklands or if anything should happen to him or his ability to earn a living. A nagging question for him must have been: How could a continuation of the then-current financial trends allow Oaklands to survive as a single-family, second home in his or future generations?

Fifteen years had passed between the time that he inherited Oaklands and the double whammy of the burning of the Stable and the disaster of the north wall. He had multiple reasons that might have led him to turn ownership of the house over to a family corporation, but until 1959 when he proposed and formed the Oaklands Corporation, there was no evidence of his thinking on the subject. At least, that's what we thought.

Then surprisingly, fully 50 years later—long after RHG V and most of his siblings had died—a document was discovered. In 1995 Aunt Jane found a letter in her files from my father to Uncle Charlie, dated June 4, 1945, and it made clear that this idea had been under some consideration for many years. It showed that creating a family corporation to own and control Oaklands had been on his mind since well before he had inherited the house.

To review once again, the background picture at the time of the letter in 1945 was still dominated by the continuance of WWII. My father was still in the Navy and away from Maine. He had no career and no firm plans, other than his young family of four.

He sent this as a form letter to all his siblings, with a few spaces to personalize it for the individual recipient soon after he inherited Oaklands. It was typewritten as a series of carbon copies of identical text that was mailed to each of his six siblings. For context, Charlie was only 16 years old at the time. Fifty years later, Aunt Jane had found Charlie's copy, with my father's handwritten notes in a few places that are indicated in brackets:

*Dear {Chas},*

*This is kind of a business letter to let you know the background and the present situation in respect to keeping up Oaklands, to tell you some of the conclusions that have been worked out by Mother, Fratty and me with Richard Perry's advice, and to ask your advice and opinions on them.*

*As you probably know, Dad, during his lifetime, established a trust which he called the Oaklands Trust of which Richard Perry and I are the trustees, the income from which just about covers the taxes on the whole place, farm and herd included. In order to let the principal of the trust increase and because it was advantageous from an income tax point of view, he actually paid the taxes out of his own pocket. The principal expenses other than taxes which he also paid direct were insurance, repairs, renovation of barns, new farm machinery, etc. and Charles Carleton.*

*As you also know, Dad left everything except Oaklands to Mother. The income from this yields her a very comfortable living, but she's not what you would call stinking rich. He took care of all us children by establishing identical trusts in his lifetime, one for each child, the principal of which is payable upon reaching 30 years of age. Fran and I, the only ones yet to reach that venerable age, have both turned our trusts back into revocable trusts, so that we are all in exactly the same situation as far as our cash assets from Dad are concerned.*

*Oaklands, whether you consider it an asset or a liability, he left to me to run for the benefit and enjoyment of all the family. He knew that no one individual could ever swing the expenses of the place as he had, and often told me that some cooperative scheme would have to be worked out. However, he felt that each generation had to work out its own salvation, so never even made any suggestion as to how it could be done. His observations of joint ownership, especially where several members of one family were concerned, led him to the conclusion that ownership by one of them could better serve to keep Oaklands intact and a pleasure for all than any form of partnership, corporation or other form of joint enterprise.*

*It was with these considerations in mind that we arrived at the following propositions as a basis on which to run the place:*

1. *That for bookkeeping purposes the farm be separated from what might be called the "Homestead", each having its own bank account.*

2. *That the portion of taxes and insurance assignable to the farm be paid out of the Farm Account, and the remainder to be paid out of the Homestead Account.*

3. *That Charles Carleton's wages be paid out of the Homestead Account.*

4. *That the income from the Oaklands Trust be divided between the Farm and Homestead Accounts, the larger portion going to the latter.*

5. *That the expenses of the Homestead over and above what the income from the Oaklands Trust can cover be made up by voluntary contributions from the various members of the immediate family who would like to, in such amounts as they see fit.*

6. *That there be no assessment by way of rent for any of the houses, so that any one or family can come and stay as long as they like, paying only for heat, electricity, etc., weekends not to count.*

7. *That members of the family make known to me their requests for the use of a house or a part of the big house, and they must be content to abide by my decision.*

8. *That any member of the family may "buy" a part of Charles Carleton's time to run a chicken business or whatever. Horses, dogs, children and other pets may be boarded any time for the price of their food. Free fresh vegetables and cider unlimited to be held out as inducements to come often and stay long.*

9. *That the books of both the Farm and Homestead Accounts be open for inspection by any contributing member, except that the amount of anyone's contribution will be known only to his or herself and me.*

*10. That although suggestions and advice will be welcomed and be given careful consideration, for the preservation of harmony in the family the final decision will rest with me.*

*The amount, if any, which each contributed is entirely up to him or her to decide, but as a guide to reaching that decision Mother and I worked out a schedule based on each one's special circumstances. The portion of the deficit we agreed on suggesting to you is {2}% which for this year commencing Sept. 1, 1945 amounts to ${90}. {Sept. 1 is when the executors turn the place over to me.}*

*{Talk this over with Mother.*
*{Hope that if this war is still going when you finish school that you'll be able to find a good job and will postpone college till you can go with your friends.*

*{Hope the summer works out well for you.*

*{Yours,*
*Bob}*

Clearly, the idea of shared ownership or usage under some undefined structure had been recommended many years earlier by Grandpa, and it had been on my father's mind and the minds of others for a long time. However, in spite of its relevance to all of the family descendants, no one who is still alive has knowledge of any discussion of it among Bob and his siblings.

*Chapter 3*

# Aunts and Uncles

AT THIS POINT, IT IS TIME TO INTRODUCE MY father's siblings and their spouses more completely.

Fran was the eldest, born in 1912. She grew up and went to school in Boston. From the outset Aunt Fran adopted a manner of sophistication that set her apart. She developed an interest in architecture and took classes in it, including some that were taught by a young Swiss-born architect, Marc Peter. He had lived in the United States since he was 16, from the time when his father became the Swiss Minister to the United States in Washington, D.C. He and Fran fell in love, and they shared their interest in design and the arts throughout their lives together. They were married at Oaklands in 1936, at what Uncle Henry later described as "the BEST wedding the world had ever known," and just as highly praised in Grandma's book. They had five daughters over the course of the next decade: Christine, Nicole, Claire-Lise, Michele, and Viviane.

After serving in London during the war, where he used his architectural training to lead the Allied efforts to evaluate the preparedness of buildings to withstand strategic bombing, Uncle Marc returned to the U.S. and worked as an architect in Scarsdale, N.Y., until 1951. Among his projects, Pond House is the one we know best (more on Pond House in a later chapter). Aunt Fran and Uncle Marc used Pond House as a place to visit for

several years, when they were living in Scarsdale. Uncle Marc was behind the decision to modernize the Library at Oaklands by painting the walls an elegant, dark blue and the ceiling a light peach color, and by adding pinkish-tan leather upholstered chairs to the room. Aunt Fran's brothers thought that, in their father's eyes, Uncle Marc could do no wrong and received special treatment from their parents. They enviously referred to everything being evaluated by their parents according to the "Gospel of Saint Marc."

Aunt Fran was diagnosed around 1948 as having a large but not malignant brain tumor, and it was operated on two times in Boston, a year apart. In that era, brain surgery was a relatively new practice, and so the situation was quite scary for her family. Happily, she recovered almost fully and resumed a normal life, suffering only a decline in her sense of balance. During those years, their girls would spend the summers with Grandma, first at Oaklands and later at Hallowell House.

Aunt Fran skiing on Mount Tom in her bathing suit with MacGreggor at her heels.

Uncle Marc wanted to remain an architect. He believed deeply in the Bauhaus elements of design and the purity of modernist architecture, but it was difficult to find clients who appreciated these principles. Ultimately he decided to accept employment at the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, where some of his wartime colleagues had gone to work as well. There he used the expertise he had developed during the war to assess structural vulnerabilities to military weapons. The family lived in a house in Los Angeles that Uncle Marc designed, which included many of the concepts on

which Pond House had been built, and in which they continued to live until 1969. Transcontinental travel was difficult, expensive, and rare in those years, and they would use it first to return to Switzerland to visit Marc's family. This meant that they came back east very rarely, such as for Aunt Fran's trip with Christine and Nicole to attend Uncle Charlie's wedding to Aunt Jane in 1953.

In 1969 they moved to Geneva, Switzerland, where, according to some people, Aunt Fran "became more Swiss than the Swiss." She came back to the U.S. infrequently, and so most of her nieces and nephews never had much chance to get to know her. Her daughter Vivi described her in this way:

> *"The mother that I knew was a clear-eyed and adventuresome soul who experienced several major illnesses and yet never indulged in self-pity or succumbed to the temptation to look back. Wherever Maman found herself, then that was where she was, fully present, and able to find something amusing and interesting about her experiences…. She was a wonderful conversationalist and a witty storyteller. Preparing dinner for her large family included not only cooking the food but also having planned a few entertaining "sujets de conversation" to share. In addition she was a good listener, and a sociable spirit who believed in accepting others for what they are. She often advised us to live and let live…. As a young woman of twenty, Maman enrolled in architecture school in Boston. There she fell in love with my father who was her professor. She had a very strong aesthetic sense, one that was tightly entwined with his architecture and the house that he designed in Los Angeles in which I grew up and then later their apartment here in Geneva. My parents both loved beautiful things, and they were united in their decision to look beyond the traditions to which they were born and to explore new ideas and new ways of seeing the world."*

In a letter to Fran's daughters, Uncle Henry remembered several moments that impressed him most about his much older sister:

> *"She went skiing on Mount Tom on a warm day between Xmas and New Years in her bathing suit. She did not fall. I thought that was the height of bravery. Second, was her dog, a Cairn terrier named MacGreggor,*

*which she took everywhere, even to night-clubs in Boston. That seemed really swell, to me. Someone asked her what she did with the dog when she danced—did she leave it at the table? She answered that the hat-check girl was always happy to care for it.... The third image of her was the apartment at 417 Beacon Street. Your grandparents lived on the ground floor and your parents (Fran and Marc) had the top two floors. The top floor was the living room and the dining room. There was a piano, painted white to go with the modern furniture, and there were several comments about that! "Pianos are always black—whatever gave you the idea to make one white?" But best of all was the sofa which was covered in black and white calfskin with the fur still on. I was told it was an unborn calf skin. My but it had style."*

We have already introduced my father, the second child, RHG V, who was born in 1914 and called Bob. My mother, Frances, known as Fratty, was eight years younger than he. She had grown up as the youngest in a family of one boy and five girls. Her older sisters were all very attractive and vivacious and had all married early. My parents were married in 1940, when she was barely 19. A year later, he was in the Navy and soon to be in World War II. My older sister, Alison (named after Aunt Alice), was born in 1942, just before Dad's Navy assignment shifted to California. My mother took the train across the country with this small baby, feeling clueless about how she would cope with what she might encounter in setting up a new household in the Bay Area and in planting a victory garden. Two years and two moves later, I was born in 1944 in Norfolk, Va., as RHG VI.

My parents, Bob and Fratty

My mother had attended Milton Academy, where she had been elected president of the senior class and was an accomplished harpist. But growing up in the fast company of her older sisters, she felt that she struggled to

keep up with them for much of her life. Most people never saw her insecure side because she almost never let it show—she was that determined to live up to her own high expectations. She and my father made it through the war years, the serious ailments of two children, the challenge of caring for Oaklands, the running of the summer camp, and other challenges before the 1959 decision to turn the ownership over to a corporation, but I have no doubt that she backed my father's decision to the hilt. She was an extremely hard worker and was dedicated to doing everything right. She had great self-discipline and was very organized in managing her multiple responsibilities. She cultivated the beautiful gardens at Oaklands, maintained high standards for care of the house by running the vacuum cleaner nonstop, entertained guests graciously, played a fierce game of tennis, and played the harp at a symphony orchestra level—all in addition to feeding and caring for five children, including Nathaniel (born in 1953) and Phyllis (born in 1955). She entertained her grandchildren with displays of "bug faces"—silly, puffed-cheek, squinty-eyed faces—to make them laugh, and her imitations of the accents of the Scottish maids in her parents' house when she was young were favorite performances at family occasions throughout her life. Hugh Shepley said, "She radiated charm, and her smile would melt a glacier. On a deeper level, her empathy and humor enabled her to touch the lives of a large number of people."

In her "free" time, she served as a dedicated trustee for Milton Academy and did such a job of chairing a major capital campaign that the school asked her to become the development director for the Girls' School. After finding professional success in that job for six years, she felt determined to earn the college credentials that she had missed by completing a business degree program at Simmons College in Boston. She proudly graduated in 1980 at the age of 58, having cured her lack of a degree in higher education.

John Hays Gardiner, the third child, was born in 1916. He and my father were very close growing up and went on many teenage adventures sailing along the Maine coast together. John also went to Groton, where he was senior prefect, and Harvard, where he rowed on the varsity crew and was deputy marshal of the Porcellian Club. (His Harvard crew was undefeated for two years, and they set a Harvard/Yale race upstream record in 1937 that remained unbroken until 1966, when his son, Ian, was the stroke of the Harvard crew and they broke it.) After graduating in 1938 he also joined the

Navy, became an officer and served in the Pacific Fleet. His ship, the USS Bagley (DD), had just returned to port in Pearl Harbor when the Japanese made their sneak attack on December 7, 1941. The Bagley was one of very few ships to escape the harbor. He continued to serve on various ships until the end of the war. For the rest of his life he avoided talking about his war years, and he didn't want to return to Hawaii for a long time, although late in his life he, curiously, developed an affinity for wearing Hawaiian shirts.

Denny and Ian with one of the donkeys at the Upland Zoo.

In 1943 he married Camilla Warren, whose family lived in Prides Crossing, Mass., and wintered in Aiken, S.C. My father, RHG V, was his best man, just as John had been best man for him when my parents were married three years earlier. Camilla had gone to boarding school at Foxcroft Academy and then spent a year at the Sorbonne before marrying. On their honeymoon, their cabin burned down and her wedding ring was damaged, but their marriage became all the stronger. They settled in Hamilton, Mass., for a few years before fixing up an old farmhouse with a barn and acres of land in nearby Topsfield, which they named the Upland Zoo. They had two sons, Ian H. and A. Denny, in 1946 and 1948. Ian and Denny report that they had care and feeding responsibilities for the doves, ducks, geese, donkeys, and other animals, while Aunt Camilla ran the zoo and took care of the dogs. One Thanksgiving when my family went there for lunch, I remember being astounded that the two favorite donkeys were invited into the living room and were hand-fed cigarettes to eat, as our entertainment. It seemed like a regular event, although Denny contends that, after the donkeys left their "calling card" early on, the practice ended abruptly. I remember both Uncle John and Aunt Camilla being hugely amused by the performance and everyone's enjoyment of it.

For years, Uncle John kept a series of English setters as hunting dogs and Aunt Camilla kept Sealyham terriers as her lap dogs. Her father had been a breeder of champion Sealyham dogs in Prides Crossing when she was growing up.

Uncle John went into the commercial real estate business in Boston, where he became expert in applying the Massachusetts Real Estate Investment Trusts (REIT) law, which allowed trading of shares in commercial real estate ownerships and made such entities more attractive to investors. At the end of the Eisenhower Administration, he was successful in getting Congress to pass a similar law, which allowed the practice nationwide. Uncle John served as president of the Real Estate Investment Trust of America for many years; it was the first national REIT in the country.

In 1972 they sold the Upland Zoo and built a new house on the coast in Prides Crossing, where they lived for the rest of their lives.

Uncle John was a gregarious, friendly, charming, and handsome man who was innately suited to leadership roles from an early age. What most strongly characterized him was his desire to be with his friends, and particularly old friends. He reveled in the Porcellian Club and the India Wharf Rats Club (along with my father)—both men's clubs with longstanding traditions of goodwill and social amusement. He loved upland game hunting and avidly continued that traditional Maine sport, to which his father and Uncle Tudor were devoted, by hosting shooting house parties with friends at Oaklands every year. He loved sailing and kept a cruising boat at Camden to sail with friends every September. He seemed to me to be always in good humor and brimming with confidence. In almost all these respects, he seemed to have had Uncle Tudor in mind as his role model—the sociability, people skills, farm animals, sailing, hunting, etc.

Aunt Camilla was a tall, elegant, sophisticated, and athletic woman who was most loved for her wonderful sense of humor. Her humor was bone-dry, self-deprecating, irreverent, and bitingly funny as she delivered line after line that punctured bubbles and caught people off guard. She loved golf, tennis, and friends. What she didn't love were skiing, hunting, or sailing—all pastimes that her husband favored—but she would go along on those outings in order to be with John and her boys. She would read books at the base lodge of the mountain while her boys skied. She lived on Dramamine for seasickness while cruising on the sailboat (one of John's

sailboats was named Dramamine), and she insisted on calling the parts of the boat by their landlubber names, not by nautical terminology. Thus she would refer to the drapes (sails) and spend time downstairs (below) in the kitchen (galley) while John did all the sailing, navigating, etc. She gamely hosted two-week-long house parties for hunters at Oaklands and took her female friends to the shops in Hallowell or Camden while the men hunted all day. She was loving, caring, personable, and entertaining, and she had only one bad habit—she smoked cigarettes. (When aboard the sailboat she would flick her ash into the dinghy, which she disdainfully referred to as the ashtray.) Sadly, her smoking habit led to an unfortunately early death from lung cancer at age 60.

Arthur Denny Gardiner was the fourth child of my grandparents, born in 1917. Like his older brothers, he went to Groton and Harvard, graduating in 1939. He joined the Navy and served for five years through the end of the war on ships in the Pacific Ocean and as an admiral's aide in Virginia. While working in Virginia, he rented a large house with some other officers, and they held parties there—apparently, all of wartime wasn't hell. In the archives, there is a photograph from that period of Arthur confidently astride a handsome horse.

Upon returning from naval service, he decided to convert to Catholicism and joined the brotherhood of the Portsmouth Priory in Portsmouth, R.I. We don't know what, in particular, triggered his conversion. Tragically, in December 1949 he contracted polio at the Priory and was paralyzed, losing the use of arms and legs. For a long time he needed to be in an "iron lung"—a large machine that surrounded his torso and supplemented the chest muscles in breathing. Eventually, he required only a portable ventilator and was able to leave the hospital in a wheelchair, which he was forced to use for the rest of his life.

Happily, Uncle Arthur had a charming manner and sweet personality. He fell in love with his physical therapist, Mary Courtney, from Chicopee Falls, Mass., and charmed her into marrying him. I remember going to their wedding in Milton, and feeling that it was a very happy occasion. Uncle Arthur had a wonderfully warm smile and a great sense of humor. He would wait patiently while being attended to by others and showed no pain or complaint. He and Mary moved to Tucson, Ariz., where the warm, dry air was free of pollutants and easier for him to breathe. That was in

the 1950s, when Tucson was a small town and before it became a popular "snowbird" escape, and before there were many pollens in the air from the irrigated gardens and suburban sprawl of the city today.

By all accounts, Uncle Arthur was very charming and had many friends. His younger brothers particularly appreciated him. Holly Gardiner Burnes remembers visiting Uncle Arthur one summer in Pond House: "Aunt Fran and Uncle Marc were then living in California, and Pond House got renovated to accommodate Uncle Arthur's wheelchair. He gave (me) a pine scented pillow, and said, with a twinkle in his eye, and between the forced aspirations of his ventilator, "I pine for you, (deep inhale) and sometimes balsam." " I remember that same summer I was particularly astounded to see Uncle Arthur show his trick of inhaling a cigarette with his lips and then exhaling the smoke through the hole that had been created in his neck to facilitate the flow of air from his lungs. I think that he was even able to blow something like smoke rings. I was impressed!

In Tucson Uncle Arthur developed into quite a scholar. He conducted Catholic religious study groups and was known nationally as a scholar of religious philosophy. He translated many Latin documents in the field of theology, doing graduate work at Harvard, Stanford, and the University of Arizona. He died in Tucson in January 1960.

Aunt Mary moved back to her hometown of Chicopee Falls, where her sister lived. She stayed in touch with Gardiners and came to visit Oaklands from time to time. She was a cheerful, friendly, and happy addition to the family and was generous in making a significant gift to the Corporation through her will. She died in 2007 at age 89, leaving a legacy to her Gardiner nieces and nephews.

The fifth sibling was Benjamin Outram Gardiner, who was born in 1921. Uncle Ben was a tall, slender man and perhaps the most handsome of all the good-looking Gardiner brothers. He went to Groton and Harvard, just like his brothers, and then served in the Army in Europe during WWII. He married Eleanor "Sister" Sears in 1942 while in the Army, and they had four children: Diana, Marie, Frances ("Frankie"), and Peter. Soon after Peter was born they divorced, and Ben went to live in New York, while Aunt Sister maintained full custody of the children on the Massachusetts North Shore near her family. Uncle Ben became an absent father and rarely showed up in Gardiner, so no one in my generation had much chance to know him.

His daughter, Frankie, recalls going to visit Grandma in Gardiner:

> *"The first time I remember going [to Gardiner], my brother Peter and I, who were 8 and 9 at the time, stayed in Pond House with Grandma. We got settled into the place and then a tall dark man appeared at the door. Grandma ushered him in and then asked Peter and me if we could guess who he was. Well we knew he was a Gardiner, but did not know which one. We guessed all the Gardiner uncles, and there were quite a few of them, and then we had no more guesses. Grandma then said, this is your father. We were quite stunned, to say the least. We had not ever seen pictures of him nor had we heard any stories about him. We were slightly embarrassed and I can imagine he also might have felt a bit queasy on some level. It was and is a very clear memory for both Peter and me."*

What Uncle Ben did for that first decade after the divorce was a mystery to most of his family. Apparently he had been abusing alcohol for several years and had not had steady work. He worked part-time as a model; I remember one time that he told my father to look for his picture in the Sunday New York Times. My father couldn't find it, so he called to ask Ben and learned that it was on a particular page that advertised a men's watch. It was on Uncle Ben's wrist, but that was all that showed. Uncle Ben eventually joined Alcoholics Anonymous and never had another drink in his life. A few years later he spent time in a monastery up the Hudson River and adopted the name Brother Sylvester. Later, he became a truck driver with his own rig while living in Arizona. In 1975 he moved to San Francisco and came out as gay, in an era when social pressure against homosexuality was intense.

For the rest of his life, Uncle Ben's life was all about gay rights, and that seemed to bring him happiness through a strong sense of purpose. He was one of the earliest activists in San Francisco and engaged in many organizing activities. He developed expertise in computers, digital technologies, and video productions. He founded and maintained an electronic bulletin board for his cause and was later revered for his farsightedness in using technology to communicate among the persecuted gay community and for his educating people about AIDS. He worked closely with Harvey Milk on rights issues and was on the front lines of gay activism in that city, where gay rights were first recognized.

He also developed a sideline profession as a movie extra. In his later years, he had a full gray beard that extended well down his chest, with a long, flowing mane of gray hair on his head. With his dark eyes and gaunt, handsome face, he made a very striking image. He was given small parts in a number of major films, including "The Doors," "The Tripper," and "Patch Adams." I remember that we rented a video of "Patch Adams," with Robin Williams in the title role, based on being told that we could see Uncle Ben in it. It was like the wristwatch incident, all over again. We watched closely but didn't see him. After being told where to look, sure enough, as we watched a rerun, we got a quick glimpse of Uncle Ben in the role of a hospitalized inmate in the shadows behind Robin Williams, for a few seconds, as he walked through a doorway.

For more than a decade, Uncle Ben would host family dinners at his home on Noe Street in San Francisco, and he invited everyone in the family on the West Coast. His grandsons Chico Bui and John, Adrian, and Tim West would sometimes attend, as would others on the West Coast such as Pipo Bui, Ben Tallman, and my son, Marsh. Ben cared greatly about family; it just took him a while to figure out how to express it. He did extensive filmed interviews with all family members at one Oaklands reunion to leave as a part of family history, and by the end of his life, many nieces and nephews had built very positive relationships with him.

His children all express warm feelings toward him, even though their contact with him was sporadic. His daughter Frankie reports,

> *"At this point (after 1975) my times with Ben were mostly spent in his apartment talking about everything. Over the years I visited him a number of times. We would walk around his neighborhood of the Castro, greeting the various people he knew on the street, and stopping in to AA meetings. AA meetings were a large part of Ben's life and commitment to not drink alcohol. He was sober in AA for 58 years….*
>
> *"On my last visit to Ben in 2008, he showed me a stack of report cards from the North Shore Country Day School in Beverly, Mass. He had saved every single report card that the four of us, his children, had received for all of those years we were there. It gave me a sense of his awareness of it all, even though we rarely saw him during those years. I think he loved us in his own way, which was mostly to pray for us."*

His oldest daughter, Diana, recalls that she and Marie, who were older than Frankie, had much more contact with Ben during the earlier years after his divorce. He stayed in periodic contact with them, although his lifestyle and distant locations made visits relatively infrequent.

Uncle Ben died of heart failure in 2010. The very progressive San Francisco local newspapers gave broad coverage to Ben as an early and important champion of gay rights.

The sixth child was Henry Gilbert Gardiner, born in 1927, six years after Ben's birth, and was referred to by his brothers as "The Afterthought." He went to Brooks School and then to Harvard, where he was also a member of the Porcellian Club. He served in the U.S. Navy for a short time that was ended prematurely by a bad case of pneumonia and the end of WWII. Then he moved to New York to take up a banking career. Banking, it turned out, was not satisfying to Henry, but the fast-paced life of New York society with so many beautiful women certainly was. Henry didn't marry until much later in his life. I remember him telling me that being a bachelor in New York worked well because it meant that one often was invited to great dinner parties as the "extra" man to accompany some single female guest, who was usually quite beautiful.

Eventually Henry found that his true talents and passion were for the fine arts. He returned to Harvard and earned a master's degree in fine arts in 1960. His first postgraduate position was as assistant curator of painting and sculpture at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Among the leaders of the museum's curatorial staff there were four other senior members, and, strangely, all had the first name of Henry. Uncle Henry loved his new nickname: "Hank Cinq."

I was fortunate enough to be in Europe in the summer of 1964, and there was a period of about 10 days between my plans to travel with two college friend groups when I had no plans. Uncle Henry was already in Amsterdam on a month-long tour of art treasures on behalf of the museum. I was invited to join him on his travels up the Rhine to Cologne, Kassel, Strasbourg, Basel, and Zurich. His itinerary was all planned out to hopscotch from one art treasure to the next, from medieval church altarpieces to modern sculpture exhibitions; from small, in-town hotels to fancy castles that accepted overnight guests. All the way, Henry kept offering insight into what he saw of historical note and beauty in the enormous variety

of the fine arts. He loved everything, and his enthusiasm made a strong impression on me. We had a delightful trip together, and he proved a most gracious host and entertaining uncle. In Zurich we stayed at the huge apartment of old friends from New York—a wealthy Swiss banker and his gorgeous American wife—and that is where I gained insight into his earlier years in New York.

In 1969 Uncle Henry was appointed director of the Fine Arts Gallery in San Diego, later to be renamed the San Diego Art Museum. A year later, Anne and I were traveling as newlyweds across the country to see the central states and West Coast of America, and we spent a week in San Diego at the house of one of Henry's female friends who was away on travel. We went to a Fine Arts Gallery opening at which Henry showed his public persona as the charming, humorous, knowledgeable director in front of a large crowd. During his time there, the Gallery added many pieces to its collection and broadened both its activities and funding sources. However, it turned out that there was some behind-the-scenes dissatisfaction that I never understood, an internal coup occurred, and Henry was discharged unceremoniously. A few years later, after starting his own arts consulting business, he moved to West Palm Beach, Fla. to be nearer to some of his clients.

For his first 50 years, Henry had girlfriends, but he only ever brought one to meet the family at Oaklands. When he brought her to the annual family get-together on Labor Day, I remember his older brothers John and Bob and other family members thinking that Henry might intend to marry this one, at last, but she faded into the background afterward. About five years later, while living in San Diego and after his brothers had begun to think Henry would never marry, he surprised them by bringing Eunice Haymes to visit, and, soon after, they were married in a small ceremony in Hawaii. Eunice was a very attractive and stylish woman of his age who had a small embroidery business of her own and shared Henry's passion for the arts. She was definitely a city girl, but by then Henry had become a city boy himself. Around Oaklands he wore polished loafers and knee socks with his linen Bermuda shorts while she wore silk dresses with heels. Everyone else was wearing grubby sneakers and tee shirts.

Henry and Eunice had many happy years together before she died in 2011.

Afterward, he continued to live in West Palm Beach on his own, volunteering at the Four Arts Library, where he was greatly appreciated by others for his efforts to improve their collection of art books. He died in 2018, just before his 91st birthday.

Uncle Charlie and Aunt Jane's wedding: (L-R)
Bob, Camilla, Fran, Ben, Grandma, John, Arthur, Jane, Charlie, Mary, & Henry

Charles Winn Gardiner was the last-born, the seventh child and the sixth consecutive boy in the family. Henry and Charlie were considerably younger than all of their siblings—his brothers called their youngest brother "The Playmate for The Afterthought"—so they became a close pair from their earliest years and remained so throughout their long lives. Charlie, or Chas, as he was known to his siblings, went to Groton and Harvard. While all of the siblings were intelligent, Charlie was an exceptional student and particularly excelled in mathematics. He graduated summa cum laude from Harvard in engineering sciences and was a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He then went on to Harvard Business School.

Uncle Charlie was just as close to me in age as he was to my father—each 15 years apart. When talking with him, it was always clear that his mind was working on multiple levels. His manner was to ask precisely

worded questions and offer analyses that were grounded in demonstrable facts and scientific principles. He spoke deliberately and sometimes haltingly, always searching for just the right words to express his thoughts. What is remarkable is that such a quantitative and deliberate realist would end up marrying his total opposite. Jane Lothrop grew up in Boston and Manchester, Mass., where they met quite young and then married in 1953. She was entirely intuitive, expressive, warm, and sensitive to other people's emotions. She was also extremely bright and personable. They made a well-balanced couple.

Cousins at Uncle Charlie and Aunt Jane's wedding:
Back: Nicole, Alison, Rob, Christine; Middle: Diana, Ian
Front: Peter, Holly, Frankie, Denny, Addie and Charles Weed
(second cousins through Grandma), and Marie ("Re")

Uncle Charlie and Aunt Jane lived in the same house in Manchester for more than 50 years— most of their married lives—where they raised five children: David, Gordon, Charles L., Susannah, and Elizabeth L. For most of his career, Uncle Charlie worked in the computer industry, which in the early years was on the cutting edge of new technology that none of his siblings could understand at all. Early in his career, he moved from one

company to another, all located along Route 128, the major highway around the outer edges of Boston where many of the early advances in computer technology were developed, long before Silicon Valley took over dominance of the field. I remember asking my father about what Uncle Charlie did, and it was obvious that he didn't have a clue about it. The industry then—even more than now—was very unstable and poorly understood. As Uncle Charlie moved from job to job, sometimes with periods of unemployment between them, his brothers worried about his job instability, as though it were something of Chas's own making. In hindsight years later, it is much easier to understand that the era of having one employer for one's entire career was changing, and that Uncle Charlie would be just fine with his cutting-edge scientific abilities, which were fully portable and in demand. Then, for the last half of his career, he remained at one company, BBN, working steadily on matters such as cryptography and voice recognition technology. He earned several U.S. patents in his career and is remembered now as having been a software engineer well before that was commonly recognized as an occupation.

Uncle Charlie's home life was far more conventional. He loved tennis and played every week at the Essex County Club, where he and Aunt Jane had had their wedding reception. The two of them were tough competitors on the Oaklands court every Labor Day weekend. For years they kept a sailboat first in Manchester and then in Southport, Maine, and would go cruising along the Maine coast every summer. They also were renowned for their witty poems and lyrics, which they performed at special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries.

While at Oaklands, Uncle Charlie enjoyed taking long walks through Rolling Dam woods, always with an ax or a pair of clippers in hand. He often worked hard at clearing the brush that would grow up in the gullies and block the views from Oaklands. These were some ways that he could contribute physical labor to help take care of the place without asking for anyone else's suggestions or approval.

Aunt Jane had a passion for collecting and storing mementos from every event that she attended. For example, Alison and I recently received our original, formal replies to Charlie and Janie's wedding invitation, which we had hand-written and sent to her—Alison was 11 years old and I was nine at the time. Aunt Jane had carefully kept them, as if they had been

letters from the President himself. She had a place for everything, and the accumulation of all those items while living in the same house for decades added up to a mountain of items for her children to sort through when she and Chas moved out of the house and into assisted living in North Andover, Mass., for the final years of their lives. There were photos from every occasion. It took years, literally, to sort through it, but the treasures they found were fascinating. The letter from my father to Chas about Oaklands in 1944 that she had found, kept and filed is a particularly special example of the depth of her collected materials—it had been written three years before she had even met Uncle Charlie.

For years Aunt Jane was known for driving to friends' houses throughout the North Shore to deliver Christmas presents that reflected some connection to something that person had mentioned during some conversation months or even years earlier. All of these examples reflect the way she cared about others and wanted to enjoy their company.

Her son, Charles, at her funeral, recalls how she made special connections to everyone.

> *" I can't tell you how many times one of us would be walking through some public place—an airport, a restaurant or a grocery store—while our mother dawdled behind to speak to a check-in clerk or a waiter and then later hearing that she had somehow learned a gem of information—maybe a new daughter or grandson, somebody graduating or getting married. To her, that connection mattered. And those folks never forgot her!"*

These seven children of RHG IV and Elizabeth Gardiner were brought up to be close to each other, in spite of the age and geographic spread of the family and their diversity of interests. There are numerous family photos taken at Oaklands, on the Bloodstone, at weddings, and on other occasions, mostly with the boys lined up in order of age (and height), with Fran sitting beside them. All these siblings turned out to be successful, each in a different way. Fran was the sophisticated stylist who had a great interest in international and modern design; Bob was the expert trustee who continued the family business of Fiduciary Trust and the tradition of community service; John was the socially gifted, successful businessman; Arthur was the religious scholar who remained eternally cheerful in spite

of being a victim of paralysis from polio; Ben found his place as a pioneer of gay rights and of the use of digital technology to offer new ways to serve his community; Henry was the fine arts connoisseur and museum director; and Charlie was the mathematics genius who earned multiple U.S. patents in the process of building cutting-edge technology throughout his career. All were very intelligent, energetic, erudite, cultured, and good company. All had grown up in Oaklands and cared deeply about the house and their siblings. Bob and John had a particularly close relationship throughout their lives, as did Henry and Charlie, but all cared for each other, because that was the culture in which they had been raised.

*Chapter 4*

# Grandma

THE MOTHER OF ALL THESE SEVEN SIBLINGS —Grandma—not only raised them all, but then lived for nearly 92 years and remained active in their lives and in the lives of all of the 21 grandchildren that they gave her. Elizabeth Denny Gardiner was a strong and determined woman who lived a life of passionate commitment to family, God, country, and morality. She ended up living even longer as a widow (37 years) than she had as Holly's wife (35 years).

We do not have much information about her early years, other than her assessment, from "Golden Memories," that she had a happy childhood growing up in Chestnut Hill, Mass., and spending time each summer in Isle au Haut, Maine. She describes in "Golden Memories" how, even as a child, she exhibited certain life-long characteristics. She tells how she made her first impression on her future father-in-law. "Mr. Gardiner was present at some school exercises in the gym which involved marching. My partner was a very vague little boy and I was most earnest to have everything go right. Mr. Gardiner turned to my father who happened to be standing next to him and asked, "Who is that little girl wiping the floor with her partner?" My father had to admit that it was his daughter."

She led an outwardly conventional life. She married Grandpa at age 21, gave birth to seven children, was a devoted grandmother to all of her grandchildren, and was quick to provide assistance to anyone who needed

it, especially Arthur with his paralysis from polio, Ben with his identity issues and then his need for help connecting with his own children after his divorce, and Fran when she faced brain surgeries.

Throughout her years, Grandma was always known for her determination and idealism. In "Golden Memories" she admits to being driven, even at an early age, by a need to be dedicated to higher purposes. In World War I, her innate patriotism drove her to urge her husband, RHG IV, when he was already 34 years old and the father of four young children, to join the Army and fight in major battles in Europe . He did, and for years afterward he and Grandma hosted large reunion events for his Army regiment at Oaklands, as seen in large panoramic photographs of nearly 100 soldiers and their families that Grandpa and Grandma hosted for many years.

Grandma at the Christ Church iron fence gate.

She also acknowledges that, after the excitement of World War I had ended, she felt a sense of loss of purpose or meaning in her life. Some time after Ben was born in 1921, she entered McLean psychiatric hospital in Massachusetts to be treated for depression or some such condition that was not specifically identified. She stayed in that institution and away from her young family for an entire year. Despite the relevance of this period in her life, no one who is still alive knows the exact nature or even the source of her problems. Whether it was simply postpartum depression or related to her need for an inspiring cause, we do not know. Depression was poorly understood at the time and it was not talked about within the family—either then or later in her life. It must have had a significant impact on her young children, and especially Ben. Ben related that he suffered under the care of an abusive nurse during Grandma's absence. We can only guess at how other family members might have been affected. Based on her own words in "Golden Memories" it seems that she

felt the depression's source was at least partially due to her sense of feeling lost without an inspiring cause to promote.

Then, a decade later when World War II broke out, her patriotism was rekindled and she rediscovered a sense of purpose. Four of her sons were old enough for military service, and in her patriotic enthusiasm she relished their eager enlistment and exposure to the risks of battle. Even then Grandma felt a need to contribute more directly to the war effort herself. She found inspiration in the country's need to find metals quickly to make ammunition and weapons. She settled on the idea of melting down wrought-iron park and churchyard fences to provide the metal to make more bullets and tanks. She succeeded in getting approval from the vestry for removing the fence around Christ Church in Gardiner and having it melted down for the war effort. She tried hard to do the same to the fence around the Boston Public Garden as well, but she encountered stronger opposition from neighbors and preservationists. She was most inspired and happy when she found outlets for personal involvements like these.

Later, in the 1950s and 1960s, she was drawn into the cause of Moral Re-Armament (MRA), a globally oriented crusade that evolved out of the Oxford Ecumenical Movement. It blended religion, morality, and patriotism behind the charismatic leadership of Frank Buchman. For nearly a decade, she traveled the world with MRA on missions and always visited with family members in distant locations like California, Geneva, and London along the way.

Grandma was always very religious and after her wedding she adopted the more doctrinaire Episcopalian liturgy of her husband's Gardiner family over her own Unitarian upbringing as a child. But standard Episcopalianism by itself was still not sufficient for her. She needed something more like a cause. Grandma had a very strong moral core, and MRA appealed to her because it focused on the life-changing effects of its teachings. The force of her convictions drove her to take actions through MRA that would make her feel she was making a difference.

In her book she describes the experience she had "punging" as a child. Punging is the dangerous act of jumping onto the moving runner of a horse-drawn sleigh to grab a wild ride down the snowy and icy street—with or without the approval of the driver. In "Golden Memories" she writes, "I tell you about punging because there I learned the vital need of a good

hand hold. Sometimes the runner would go through deep snow and feet would be jammed if not quickly lifted clear. Or again it was the only way to avoid sharp spinning pieces of ice that could cut through rubber boots. There is in this a great allegory of life which has many times come to my mind. The need of a Strength and Security far above our earthly feet which may at any time be swept out from under, or have to meet danger." Her metaphor for religion as a firm handhold rings even louder than her excitement at that dangerous adventure.

In that light, the importance of religion's handhold throughout her entire life fit with the teachings of MRA. MRA offered a blend of her deep belief in God with her passion for public service. Her commitment to religion as the basis of her core sense of morality was also reflected in her support for Uncle Arthur's decision to become a priest after WWII, even though he chose to join a Roman Catholic monastery. Similarly, she strongly supported Ben's choice to join an Episcopal ministry in search of his niche in life. Patriotism and pride in America constituted other important facets of her passionate sense of purpose. After her urgent need to be directly involved in winning two World Wars, this same patriotism reappeared as a form of virulent anti-Communism.

MRA combined all of these elements along with a strong moral code, and it inspired Grandma not only to commit her time to the cause but also to become a generous financial contributor. But while she could spend her income traveling around the world with MRA, she could not give away the principal from her accounts without the approval of her trustee, my father. Because he saw her boundless commitment as a threat to her long-term financial security, Dad refused to allow large gifts. He may have been relieved to be in a position to block her gifts to a cause for which he had no enthusiasm, but his deep-seated disapproval of MRA was a continuing irritant between the two of them personally, and it further distanced him from his mother for the rest of her life.

Grandma writes in "Golden Memories" that the "simple" life always appealed to her, even though, later in life, she may have seemed to embrace more sophistication. She loved to pick cattle corn directly out of the fields in front of Hallowell House, to forage for mushrooms and other edibles in the forest, to dig blue clay from Rolling Dam brook to make pottery, and to observe the stars with her telescope on the lawn after dark. She always liked

outdoor activities, specifically sailing, canoeing, walking, and swimming. She sailed in Isle au Haut as a child and later enjoyed many days of sailing on the Bloodstone with her husband. In her later years she kept a canoe on Cobbossee Stream so that she could go canoeing—solo if necessary—on a moment's notice, well into her eighties.

When she said that she liked the simple life, I believe she was talking not just about living without frills and comforts, but also about simple ideals and principles—not complicated decisions, but seeing things in pure black and white—no shades of gray. That way her commitment to a cause could be total, not nuanced or constrained at all.

I remember driving one time from New York City to Boston with Grandma and Claire—I think I must have been in college—and stopping in Rye, N.Y., where MRA was having a big gathering on a nearby island with motor launches ferrying people back and forth. The MRA officials treated Grandma as someone very special. It seemed that they were cultivating her as a major donor, and Grandma clearly liked it. Yet we know that my father was positioned to block her impulses to make large gifts to MRA or other organizations and was only too ready to do so. Some of us suspect that MRA may have lost interest in Grandma after waiting much longer than they wanted for a big gift.

For whatever reason, Grandma's infatuation with MRA began to subside after nearly a decade. She had refused all alcohol during her MRA years, but then at one Labor Day weekend family gathering at Oaklands, when she was asked what she would like in place of a cocktail, she replied, "I think I will have one of those," while pointing to one of her sons' alcoholic drinks. One could feel the tension in the room diminish, as her family saw that her extreme moralistic phase was ending. From that time on, Grandma expressed her passion and commitment mostly through providing help to her family.

After Grandpa died in 1944, Grandma continued to use Oaklands as her second home to her apartment in Boston. During summers, she would have friends and family visit. In the years when Aunt Fran lived in Scarsdale, and particularly when she had her brain surgery, Grandma put great effort into hosting the Peter girls at Oaklands for long periods of the summers (in addition to going to Scarsdale to care for them as needed). Christine, Nicole, and Claire remember these times as lovely pastoral visits,

with Grandma's full energies devoted to their care and entertainment. Grandma was not a good cook, and Claire recalls dinners solely of creamed corn and ice cream—a strange menu, but one that did appeal to six-year-old Claire! Mrs. Carleton, the wife of the Oaklands caretaker Charles Carleton, would help with cooking so that Grandma could do what she did best: organize projects, acquire animals as pets, and encourage outdoor activities. She bought two puppies named Buttons and Thumper one year, a goat that escaped and swam across the river another summer, and a sheep named Jakey that Nicole used, when she dressed up as Little Bo Peep, as her companion on a leash and won the prize for best costume at the 1948 Gardiner downtown Fourth of July celebration. After Grandma had shifted from Oaklands to Hallowell House for summer usage, my sister Holly remembers two little piglets, named Violet and Petunia, running around on leashes, when they weren't penned into their makeshift sty in one of the cellar window wells on the west side of Hallowell House. Ian remembers learning about the delights of warm milk and cuddly kittens on the farm from visits that he and Denny had at Hallowell House with Grandma. She certainly knew how to entertain kids of both kinds—children as well as goats—and loved the adventure of introducing grandchildren to the fun that could be found around Oaklands.

The Peter girls at Oaklands:
Michele, Claire, Jakey the lamb, Nicole, Vivi, and Christine

After the Peters moved to California and Uncle Ben was divorced, Grandma used Hallowell House and Pond House to host pairs of Ben's children—first Diana and Marie; then Frankie and Peter—to help Ben connect to his children. Frankie remembers Grandma's devotion to her and her siblings: "If it weren't for Grandma Gardiner, I would not have had a childhood experience of Gardiner, Maine. She brought my siblings, Diana, Re, Peter and me there, two of us each summer, for two weeks many times. It was utterly charming. Between running to count the train cars, swimming in the Farm Pond, climbing over electric fences, greeting cows and seeing them named after us, exploring the big stone house, digging clay and making things, and canoeing with my father, it was a very expansive and influential visit every time."

Outside of summers in Maine, Grandma visited children and grandchildren wherever they lived: Arizona, Los Angeles, Geneva, Amsterdam—she would go anywhere. Those of us who lived in New England and had summer houses of our own may have seen her less than those far away. But whenever grandchildren went to visit Grandma in Gardiner, it was always memorable.

Grandma didn't own any of the houses on Oaklands, but she always had a place to stay on the farm and ended up occupying all of the four family houses for considerable periods. Around 1950 she shifted from using Oaklands primarily to taking Hallowell House for the summers. Later she used Pond House, and ultimately switched to Orchard House, after Aunt Alice died in 1963. No matter which house she was primarily using, she continued to move into Oaklands from time to time, usually to host Ben and his family or other large groups for several weeks.

Many of her grandchildren have vivid memories of walking up to Pond House to visit Grandma in the '50s and spending the afternoon making clay figures and reading her MRA-inspired children's books with their unsubtle morality tales. Grandma even wrote a children's book about a character named Guggle, who was a made-up young person who made terribly wrong moral choices. She had it published, with illustrations by Nicole.

Christine remembers another one of Grandma's favorite lessons for her grandchildren, from another book that she loved to quote, "The Goops and How to be Them."

*"The Goops they lick their fingers And the Goops they lick their knives; They spill their broth on the table cloth—Oh, they lead disgusting lives! The Goops they talk while eating And loud and fast they chew; And that is why I'm glad that I Am not a Goop—are you?*

*"The whole book was about what the bad-mannered Goops did and we shouldn't."*

Holly (my sister) recalls a time during Grandma's MRA years:

*"When I would spend an overnight or two with her at Pond House, she would give me a notebook and pen and make me reflect on the previous day and critique my choices. The problem was that she wanted me to write in the second person. Instead of saying, "I shouldn't have…" I was supposed to say, "You shouldn't have…" because God was talking to me. I never could wrap my 8 or 9 year old brain around that concept. She also gave me a propaganda 45 rpm record of two songs. One went:*

*"Write the thought down, brother, Write the thought down. You don't know for certain Just what might be found, It may be the key that will make history, So get your pencil and paper and write the thought down." "*

After checking with many cousins about Grandma in this period, all remember her fondly as a warm, caring grandmother who paid attention to us. She may have had her MRA quirks, but they did not bother any of us at all. However, when we would go home and tell our parents about anything to do with MRA, my father would become furious at what he saw as indoctrination of his children into some threatening moral or religious code. Uncle John felt the same way. They needn't have worried—none of us were significantly affected. Her message was nothing more than pretty basic religious principles with some patriotism and a few social commandments mixed together.

Alison recalls:

*"Grandma was inspiring and intrepid and a forceful independent presence. I loved her outdoor adventurer self. I remember her inviting us kids*

*for a cookout under the pine trees on the point by the river in front of Hallowell House. We had marshmallows on sticks, maybe s'mores too, and sang some songs with her while she played her guitar by the fire. It might have only happened once when Peter cousins were visiting her but it made a big impression on me. The familiar landscape got transformed. The fact that she painted and had a telescope and loved to canoe or walk through Rolling Dam woods and point out edible plants, or plan a hiking day trip to Mt. Battie made her very distinctive from other grandmothers I knew. I was secretly proud of her for her spunkiness and individuality."*

Grandma's sense of adventure showed up throughout her life, and she did her best to pass it on to her grandchildren. A classic example of Grandma's style is the following account by Nat describing a week that he and Phyllis spent with Grandma when she was 76 years old:

*"I had just turned eleven and Phyllis nine, and we were left to stay with Grandma in Oaklands for a week, probably in August. I recollect that it was at breakfast on the second day that Grandma announced that she had planned a trip for us to Lake Moxie. She then explained that Moxie had to always be pronounced with great enthusiasm, as in, "We are going to Lake Moxie!!" She explained that it was going to be like camping and we would bring a canoe.*

*"I remember helping Harold Bickford, the elderly caretaker, put the aluminum canoe on top of Grandma's Dodge Dart (a compact sedan). We set off mid morning. I believe we were only a few miles up the Turnpike when the canoe started to wobble badly. Grandma pulled over into the breakdown lane and we started to study the situation. Fortunately, a trucker, having spotted this older woman in her dress and two scrawny kids struggling with a canoe on top of the car, stopped and helped us. After he tied the canoe down tighter, we continued up the Turnpike onto Route 201, headed to the Forks, and then soon turned east up the road to Moxie, Maine.*

*"Lake Moxie is a long shallow lake, created by a dam at the west end of the lake. Grandma had rented a one room cabin right near the dam on a small point overlooking the lake.*

*"That afternoon we immediately set out to explore the lake by canoe. We went up the lake easily with a northwest breeze at our backs. When we turned to return, we had a strong headwind and waves. Grandma intelligently positioned herself in the bow, instructing me to paddle stern. She never said it, but now I am certain she knew that her weight would cause the stern to follow the bow, as long as I did enough to keep the stern squared into the wind. We strained at the paddles and bobbed in the waves, but Grandma saw no need to pull off to the side until the wind died down. Finally, just as we approached the cabin, the wind did die down. Grandma was very pleased with our effort, and we cooked some kind of canned stew for dinner in the gathering darkness.*

*"The next day, Grandma found a teenage boy to guide us down the Moxie Stream trail to see Moxie Falls. It was a long clamber down a steep ravine, and, of course, Grandma was no doubt wearing one of her flowered blue summer dresses which she considered perfectly appropriate for outdoor activity (this was before she discovered pants suits in the '70s).*

*"Later that day she announced that she thought I was old enough to have a 22 rifle, so we went to the local hardware store and she bought me one. Then she asked our guide if he would take us the next day to the local spot where locals would go for target practice; he readily obliged and took us to the local gravel pit for some shooting. I have often wondered whether that Maine woods kid had ever met a grandmother like mine.*

*"When we got back to Oaklands, Grandma decided we should have lobsters for dinner. I think it was her plan all along that we would end up with lobster shells that I could set out as bait to try and draw in the raccoons that had been eating the corn in the farm manager Jimmy Shores' garden. After dinner, I put the shells out in the gulley on the far side of the bridge. At about 9:30, Phyllis with a big flashlight and I with my 22 headed over the bridge to check on the lobster shells. Sure enough, there was a raccoon in the shells with his eyes lit up in the beam of the flashlight. I shot him with one 22 shot and we ran back to the house with great excitement to report our success to Grandma.*

*"The big surprise for me was the next morning when I came downstairs to the kitchen. Grandma announced that she had arranged for Harold Bickford to help me skin the raccoon. I wasn't very excited about this, but there really was no choice. So I went out by the back door, where Harold had already started to skin the animal. It was a very prosperous, corn-fed raccoon—much bigger than I had realized the night before—so there was a lot to skin. Fortunately, I hadn't had breakfast, so I was only queasy through this whole procedure. Harold then told me to go in and get breakfast while he would find a board to spread the skin on. At that point I had lost all interest in the whole activity, but Grandma thought this was fabulous and admired the healthy pelt with great enthusiasm.*

*"The next time I saw that pelt was on Christmas Day when I opened my present from Grandma to find that she had the raccoon pelt beautifully mounted on green felt, ready to be hung as a trophy. It traveled with my possessions for years—a lasting, vivid memory of my special adventure with Grandma."*

Every one of her grandchildren remember her vividly and fondly. Claire, Michele, Diana, and Frankie have all expressed to me that their attachment to Oaklands is based largely on their times in Gardiner with Grandma. Looking backwards, I see that Grandma, through all of her efforts, was the most significant person who kept the family spirit strong for everyone, both prior to the Oaklands Corporation's formation and then continuing for the next 30 years of her life.

Grandma was strong in every way—morally, physically, and mentally. She may have experienced lapses in these areas earlier in her life, but her determination to be strong drove her to do things into her eighties that no other woman of her generation would have attempted. Furthermore, after understanding where she had discovered those sources of her inner strength, she worked endlessly to convey them to her grandchildren. Because her life covered two generations at Oaklands before the Corporation was founded and then continued for another 30 years after 1959, her personal involvement in everyone's lives was an important factor in unifying the rapidly expanding family and affecting the way Oaklands and the entire family entered a new era in the second half of the 20th century.

Elizabeth Denny Gardiner, *"Grandma"*

*Chapter 5*

# The Official Beginning

IN 1959, AGAINST THIS BACKDROP OF FAMILY personalities and history, my father decided to act on the idea that had been on his mind for 15 years. He turned Oaklands into a family corporation by giving it to his siblings to share with him. There are no known records of how his thinking was shaped between the 1945 letter to his siblings and his presentation of a full set of bylaws in late 1959. We might assume that he had at least some conversations with his closest brother, John, and perhaps Chas. He certainly would have had many conversations with his wife, Fratty. He may have discussed the idea with his Aunt Alice, whose advice he valued, but, in spite of the reference in the 1944 letter to his siblings, I doubt that he relied much on consultation with his mother. We simply do not know how he made the many decisions about whether and how to do it. As the president of Fiduciary Trust Company, he would have been exposed to the experiences of many other families with large estates, and there were several Fiduciary professional trustees, such as Richard Perry, at his elbow who could offer him good counsel.

When Uncle Tudor was governor in 1928, Maine had passed a law that was intended to help keep historic family properties intact. Uncle Tudor had previously been the sponsor of the bill when he was a state senator. The law was designed to create a vehicle for ownership of a family homestead by a large family group and, thereby, avoid the estate taxes that were

levied when a single owner died. After the death of his father, RHG IV, at age 61, when my father was still in the U.S. Navy and had no established career, he had become well aware of the tax risks and other financial burdens that could make a house like Oaklands unsupportable. As it turns out, the Maine law allowing family homesteads to avoid the tax was only ever used by a few families before its repeal in the 1960s. One other property, "the Homestead," belonged to our cousins the Marvins in Hallowell, and a third belonged to the Gardners—the "non-seeing" or "blind" variety without an "i"—who owned all of Roque Island off the Machias coast in eastern Maine. That family property with multiple houses became a corporation before Oaklands. My father told me that he had conferred with Robert Gardner Monks, his contemporary who was a lawyer in Boston and a member of that family, about Maine's law on homesteads, but I don't know whether that occurred before or after 1959.

It is safe to assume that with 15 years of ownership experience and with the availability of excellent sources of advice, my father came to develop pretty strong opinions about how the new venture should be structured. He would include in the Corporation both Oaklands and Pond House as the shared properties with adequate land for their enjoyment, but he would keep the farm and all the surrounding lands himself. The purpose was to make the house available to his mother and his siblings for occasional use, and he was fully prepared to pull back from his heavy use of the property by using Hallowell House as his primary Maine dwelling. He believed deeply in the value of the family's history of sharing time in houses in Gardiner and wanted to encourage family use under the new structure. He was conscious of the risks of family division—either by divorce or by disagreement—and was determined to have provisions to reduce those risks. Finally, he was optimistic that the idea had great positive potential; it was typical of him to take action to move into an unknown future with one part of caution and three parts of optimism.

The Maine Family Homestead Act required that at least seven family members become members of the new corporation. With seven siblings in his generation, he saw a fairly obvious and seemingly fair way to begin by including each of his siblings as the only members. Other than that, there were few legal requirements imposed by the state. My father proposed that membership be open to all descendants of Oaklands's founder, RHG I,

which narrowed the risk of the effects of divorces, but which also meant that Grandma—who was not a descendant—could not be a member. Members were to be elected for life, so his intent was clearly to move carefully beyond the initial group, with a limit of 15 in all. Any new members required a vote of at least 75 percent of the membership. Other provisions of the bylaws were relatively standard, practical elements that were common among family and not-for-profit corporations. The members would elect each year five persons to be directors who collectively would manage the corporation, and there were rules about timing and quorums for meetings, and other noncontroversial elements such as the election of officers, payment of dues, and conditions for use of the property. Provision was made for associate membership for people who were not descendants of RHG I, but they were to be allowed no rights or voting privileges.

There were two aspects of participation that are common among family corporations that were never mentioned or discussed, but about which my father had strong convictions. Most important was the absence of ownership shares among members. The property was to be held intact for the benefit of current and future family members' use, but there would be no chance of a division of ownership. No one could use their "share" as a financial asset or to apply any influence in group decisions. There would be one vote for each member, but decisions would always be a collective effort, not a power-brokered deal. This element, which is not usually explicitly mentioned in describing the Oaklands Corporation, was, in my opinion, one of the most brilliantly conceived attributes and has enabled the Corporation to evolve and thrive in its first 60 years.

The second provision was that no one would be compensated for service to the Corporation—its work would be done by volunteers only.

Most of these elements of his plan to share the house among his siblings and their descendants were taken from or consistent with aspects of the 1945 letter. But there were two important parts of the 1945 concept that were dropped in his 1959 proposal. First, no annual financial "contribution" from all of the siblings according to their ability to pay was mentioned. Second, my father gave up the right to be "the decider" of certain matters regarding management and usage. He had seemed to think in 1945, the same way his father had advised him earlier, that it would work better for him to continue to wield the ultimate authority on some issues.

By 1959, his idea of what was either acceptable or workable had evolved to an attitude that such primacy was not recommended. We can only wonder whether he was advised to make that change or thought of it on his own.

The assets that were initially given to the Corporation included the houses known as Oaklands and Pond House and 31 acres of land. That parcel is a highly irregularly shaped lot that begins at the intersection of the front driveway and the River Road, then south along the line of the River Road to a point below Birch Hill where it angles 90 degrees westward, over Birch Hill and beyond the tennis court. From there it turns north along the edge of the field briefly to the path between the tennis court and Oaklands Farm Road, and then continues westerly along that path to the road, where it turns northerly along the road to the Lily Pond, where it turns to follow the pasture line roughly southwest to a point beyond Pond House before turning north briefly and then slicing northeasterly across fields (and including Pond House) back to the starting point at the front driveway. This includes all of Mt. Tom and much of the Mt. Tom pasture, the tennis court and lawn , the Lily Pond and the streambed through the old "swimming pool" on the edge of the Oaklands lawn, the front driveway, and several acres of field in front of Oaklands.

He decided not to include most of the contents of Oaklands in the initial gift, to assure the transaction would not exceed the gift tax limitations. Instead, over each of the following three years, my father gave the furnishings of the major downstairs and upstairs rooms in lots that were of the values allowed under the tax code. Furthermore, he gave shares of the most valuable portraits to his siblings over those years with the understanding that they would immediately convey those shares to the Corporation. It took five years to accomplish this without exceeding tax limits. In this manner, the transactions were timed to transfer all of the assets without incurring gift taxes or inheritance taxes. The generations of Gardiners who had founded Fiduciary Trust knew very well how to avoid paying taxes unnecessarily.

The final element, more of a formality, was influenced by the wording in Maine's law, as the name of the new entity became Gardiner Family Homestead—Oaklands Corporation. Within the family, we have always called it simply the Oaklands Corporation.

OAKLANDS CORPORATION 31 ACRE PARCEL


A. Oaklands
B. Farm Buildings
C. Pond House
D. Tennis Court
E. Orchard House
F. Hallowell House
G. The Hollow
H. The Dock
I. Mt. Tom

While we may lack knowledge of all the factors that led to the formation of the Corporation, we do have a vivid description of its formal creation in the form of my father's President's Report in 1960, which he titled "The Beginning":

> *"The month of December is not when the state of Maine is at its best, but there could scarcely have been a bleaker, more miserable day than December 12, 1959, when we four brothers (Bob, John, Henry and Chas) drove down to Gardiner from Boston in sleet and freezing rain to give birth to the Oaklands Corporation. Nothing ever looked more bleak and downright unattractive than Oaklands did that day. The ground was partially covered with snow, but the freezing rain had revealed the cellar hole of the old stable which had burned to the ground in January 1958 and the stumps of about twenty trees which had surrounded the stable had recently been dug up by a bulldozer and lay on the top of the ground like unburied corpses. The house was cold and clammy and as the old coal-burning furnace had completely fallen apart, there was nothing that could be done to warm it up. The portraits were all on loan to Bowdoin College, so the walls were vacant, save for marks which showed where the portraits usually hung. Altogether, it was a helluva day for anything to make its first appearance into the world."*

The four brothers met, with local attorney Ralph Clark in attendance and with proxies from Fran, Ben, and Arthur, in Oaklands at noon on December 12 for the formal proceedings to form the corporation. The minutes of that meeting indicate that, in the freezing cold Library of Oaklands, they swiftly voted to approve the proposed articles of incorporation: "for the purpose of preserving and maintaining the Gardiner family homestead in Gardiner known as "Oaklands", and such other buildings and lands to be used in connection therewith as the corporation is able to maintain and the rights of descendants and members of the family therein for the benefit of certain issue of Robert Hallowell Gardiner, the first of that name."

The four brothers present, plus their mother (Grandma), were elected as directors and Uncle John was elected treasurer. [It was not required that directors be members, so Grandma was eligible to vote on matters decided by that body.] All this was accomplished in less than 15 minutes, after which

the new directors convened a directors' meeting and elected Bob as president, authorized the establishment of a bank account at the National Bank of Gardiner, and approved the use of the Hallowell and Gardiner coats of arms (as depicted over the mantel in the Music Room) as the Corporation's official seal.

The minutes of these meetings record that "the four newly elected directors then repaired to Orchard House to join Aunt Alice in christening the new Corporation with some champagne which John and Chas had each so thoughtfully brought for the occasion. This coincidence of thought was generally regarded by those present as not surprising, but nonetheless auspicious as proof, if proof were needed, of how closely parallel run the minds of the family, particularly when gathered at the old homestead."

So with these poignant descriptions of the grim reality of the house's condition, evidence of strong family feeling, and cheerful optimism about the future, on December 12, 1959, Oaklands ended its 155-year era as an inherited estate owned solely by the eldest son, and became a joint family property in which every member of the family is invited to share in the grandeur and responsibility of ownership.

There is another, different, and equally valid perspective that I think suggests that Oaklands's new ownership model and the decision-making structure for family usage ought to be interpreted as being totally consistent with the house's entire history, from its original construction right into the new corporate structure, with many relatives participating in various ways. Oaklands's owners had always hosted other family members and allowed various relatives the use of other houses to accommodate as many family members on the estate as possible. The new ownership structure, in a new way, brought the importance of these 19th-century notions of responsibility for the entire family into a form that was arguably more appropriately equal and better suited to the 20th century, with its new values.

*Chapter 6*

# Sharing Oaklands

ONCE THE NEW CORPORATION WAS FORMED, my father and mother were true to their promise to use Hallowell House as their primary residence on the farm, and they used Oaklands mostly when others did not.

Grandma was the heaviest user in the first years. She would arrive in late June and stay for a month or longer. She often had some of the Peters for long visits, and most summers had Uncle Ben for a visit with some of his children. One summer (1965) she was in the house right through Labor Day hosting Claire-Lise Peter, then Uncle Charlie and Aunt Jane, followed by Uncle John and Aunt Camilla on their way to go cruising on their sailboat. Then she had Aunt Mary stay for a week, followed by a church group of 14, and then several other friends. She finished by having Uncle Henry and Aunt Anna Shepley, followed by Uncle Ben with three of his children, Diana, Frankie, and Peter.

Grandma felt comfortable using Oaklands, just as she had for many years before the Corporation was formed. She describes in one note from 1963 how she decided to make repairs to several paintings that had been damaged. She identified the paintings as the "Dutch canvases upstairs" and the "Harding portrait of Samuel Appleton given by Aunt Anna Shepley." She describes how, after practicing on the Dutch canvases, she repaired the Harding canvas where it had a hole and how she repainted it. She describes,

"My summer project—self appointed—was to restore it as best I could." This was done on her own initiative without asking for anyone's opinion as to whether she should. She also touched up the Copley portrait of Anne Gardiner Browne in a few places but without leaving a written description—this last initiative was work that would be undone by a New York City professional conservator several decades later.

This was all done during the summer that she invited Aunt Mary to bring her Courtney family nieces and nephews to stay in Pond House. She describes how they would come to Oaklands every evening for croquet on the lawn—which Aunt Mary always won—and then have dinner. One day, she and Aunt Mary counted the number of freight cars on a train and she declared a record 204 cars. In the 1960s there were several passenger and freight trains per day that would always draw the attention of Oaklands users.

These details come from Grandma's handwritten notes in a "Log Book for Oaklands" that my mother created at the Corporation's outset for every user to make notes on their experiences with the house, either good or bad, to share among the other users, with particular interest in things that needed attention. Different users recorded entirely different kinds of entries. Some were on her intended topics of house maintenance, but others only described, often in long reports, who they had as visitors and what they did in their time in the house. Some users never made any entries about their stays, so it is far from a complete record of actual usage. The log is kept in a loose-leaf folder in the Library desk, next to the guest books, of which there are seven volumes going back a century. These leather-bound books have more complete lists of guests and family during their visits, along with brief comments on their experiences. The practice of signing the guest book was a much more reliable habit for most users, but still I can recall many times when a guest would leave without remembering to sign.

From 1959 on, the preferred usage patterns were different for each of the principal users of the house. Uncle John and Aunt Camilla used it most often in October, when they would host shooting house parties. Uncle John loved to have old friends come to shoot for a few days each during the two weeks in mid-October when he calculated that the hunting would be at its best. He inherited his passion for hunting house parties from his father and Uncle Tudor, both of whom loved to hunt grouse (usually referred to

as partridge) and woodcock as much as they loved to host house parties. Their wives were always included in the parties, even though they would usually not hunt birds. Aunt Camilla would lead the other ladies on expeditions to antique stores in Hallowell, to the coast, or to some other points of interest. There were usually eight to 10 people in the house at a time, and many of the names—Minturn, Russell, Von Stade, Weekes, Hadden, and Gardiner—showed up year after year in different combinations. These were old friends from Groton and Harvard who looked forward to the week every year.

I was lucky to live near Gardiner in the 1970s and to be invited occasionally for a day's hunt. The day would get off to a leisurely start—we were assured the birds were late sleepers, so there was no need to hurry. The hunts were managed by Uncle John with Jimmy Dorso as guide. Jimmy was a local Gardiner resident who was an excellent hunting guide and a wonderful guy. He would seek out new "covers" to hunt during the off-season. Uncle John never hunted on Oaklands Farm. He was looking for overgrown farmsteads, of which there are many within a 20-minute drive, where alders, poplars, brambles, and other low growing shrubs would be mixed with white pines, oaks, and the occasional apple tree. These landscapes are not beautiful at all—just productive for birds, with little human usage other than hunting. They are where woodcock raise young birds during the summer season and also stopover spots for birds migrating in October from points further north. They are also places where partridge live year-round, eating leaves and berries and apples. Apples are their favorite food in October, after the fruit has been softened by a hard frost. The location of apple trees with fruit was always explained to the hunters before entering the covers. Every year new covers would be needed to replace the old favorites, because a new house was being built or, more likely, a new house-trailer had been placed right in the sweet spot of the cover. All of this was on privately owned land for which Jimmy had received permission to hunt.

The hunts required several covers for both the morning and afternoon hunts, and Uncle John preferred not to return to a cover for several days to allow the birds to resettle. This meant a lot of territory was needed to have good hunting for two full weeks. Any cover that was considered good enough to be a permanent addition was given a name by Uncle John. Some of my favorites were Woodcock Heaven, Lower Slobovia, 63 Yard Shot,

Russian Palace, Joker, and Evening Cabin. Year after year the group would retell the stories of what had happened to give that cover its name, and these were told with great gusto.

Between the morning and afternoon hunts, the party would usually return to Oaklands for a nip of sherry and then lunch, followed by a brief nap. If the weather was warm and sunny, we might have the wives meet us for a picnic lunch in the field. Ian loves to recount the story of a time long ago when his father was hunting with Uncle Tudor and several others. After having lunch, everyone was lying down and resting comfortably, when someone said loudly, "We can't kill any birds lying around here." Whereupon Uncle Tudor, while still lying on his back, spied a partridge flying overhead. Without even sitting up, he grabbed his gun and dropped the bird with one shot. "I guess we can," said Uncle Tudor. Every time Uncle John picnicked during a hunt, someone in the party would say, "Well, we can't kill any birds sitting around here."

After lunch Uncle John would lead the group back to hunt several more covers before concluding the day in a hot spot for partridge in the last half-hour before sunset, which he called the "killing hour." Hot baths, cocktails, and dinner finished the day.

Uncle John and Aunt Camilla occasionally used Oaklands in other seasons, but they more frequently showed up in the guest book as guests of my parents. These two couples spent a lot of time together and greatly enjoyed each other's company.

Uncle Charlie was the other frequent user of Oaklands, usually for long weekends scattered in different seasons of the year. Every autumn, he and Aunt Jane would come to find a source of local apples to make hard cider that he would store in the cellar. He would get the apples juiced into cider, which he then put in a barrel to ferment over the winter. I never understood how the process worked, as it seemed very hard to control the outcome. After some time for fermentation that had been started with the addition of a little sugar, the barrel would be opened, the contents strained, and then the next stage of the cider was to be bottled in old beer bottles that were used year after year. The fermentation was supposed to stop some time after the bottling. If the elements were all correctly calculated and timed, the result would be a champagne-like, fizzy, light amber liquid with only a little sediment at the bottom. This annual chemistry experiment appealed to Uncle

Charlie's scientific nature, not only because it was so difficult to control but also because, when everything went right, the results were deliciously satisfying. Some years the cider was flat or vinegary or just not as good as the year before. Then there were occasional years when bottles exploded in the cellar from having a mixture that was just too volatile. In the spring Uncle Charlie would have a long-awaited opening of the first bottle to sample that year's vintage, and then he would proclaim whether or not the result was better or worse than the year before.

Uncle Charlie and Aunt Jane also came repeatedly in other seasons: for Thanksgiving, winter skiing on Mt. Tom, skating on the ponds and the river, New Year's Eve celebrations, bottling cider, tennis, canoing, and spending time with Lothrop cousins in addition to their own growing family. His log entries are full of descriptions of the flowering plants, berry picking, visits to the Windsor Fair, visits to the cow barn, and other activities. The guest books include writing samples by all of their children several times each year. Their children grew up using the house a lot and, as a result, they appreciate it in all seasons.

My parents used Oaklands nearly as much as anyone else, but their normal pattern was to stay at Hallowell House for most of their visits to Maine, and then move to Oaklands for a month in summer when it was otherwise unoccupied and then again for the week of Christmas, when their children would visit all together. During the summer, my father would spend the work week in Boston and come to Gardiner for weekends, except for one or two weeks of vacation. Whenever he was in the house, he was often working on farm matters or doing some project like weeding the lawn or cutting burdock in the pastures. My mother worked intensely most days she was at Oaklands, but would take time for a set of tennis or a swim. They continued to treat Oaklands as their responsibility. They wanted others who used the house to share in the maintenance of the place and to prioritize all types of maintenance work as highly as they did.

One particular entry in the log by my mother in late July 1964 shows this, in an obvious cry for help. She first describes a thunderstorm that pounded the house with rain, which "came through some windows as if there were no glass (despite the fact that those very windows would not open). A resounding crash reported by Holly turned out to be a large chunk falling out of the West bedroom ceiling." Half of the house was without

electricity, and when the electrician arrived the next day to check the fuse box, he found many 30 amp fuses in 15 amp circuits—a real safety threat. Then she continues, "The cesspool was pumped for the first time in twenty years…. There is a baffle on the outflow which goes directly by pipe to the stream in the gully…." And later, "Speaking of the gully, Bob has spent at least 12 hours spading up blanket berries in the gully. There is still more to do—doesn't anyone else want to do it?"

Unfortunately no one else did spend enough continuous time in the house to match my parents work ethic or take as much responsibility for fixing problems. My parents continued to work hard, and they did indeed enjoy many days for social time and recreation, particularly when they had house guests, as described in other log entries. Their message to others in the family, about committing more time to work on Oaklands, was heard and their efforts were appreciated, but my parents never found the level of support from others that they really wanted. No matter how many times that someone else cut brush and cleared views, or how much someone else cleaned the kitchen, my parents continued to feel the burden of keeping the house in good condition.

My parents often invited other family members to use the house along with them, especially during the December holiday season, or Presidents' Day weekend or Labor Day, when they would mix some of their children with members of Charlie or John's families, various friends, and nearby cousins such as the Vaughans and Gibsons for the weekend or an evening. These large groupings in the Library for cocktails with a warm fire, around the dining room table for dinner, and playing charades late into the evenings took full advantage of Oaklands's special qualities and traditions of how to entertain guests. They also demonstrated to others how the house could be used to inspire an appreciation of elegant style, family tradition, and the enjoyment of being together for everyone there. Oaklands has always been thought of as a place for fun, and they knew how to combine all the right elements to make that happen.

Initially, Labor Day weekend in early September was set as the date for the annual Corporation meeting. Grandma and Uncle Henry both had birthdays near Labor Day, so we always had a large gathering, with a lot of social time as an entire family. This would usually be Henry's only visit of the year, as he lived and worked far away. Grandma and Uncles John, Henry

Aunts and Uncles in 1978
(L-R) Standing: Bob, John, Camilla, Fratty, Eunice, Henry, and Charlie
Seated: Mary, Grandma, and Jane

and Charlie would squeeze their families into Oaklands and Pond House, while my parents hosted their own children at Hallowell house. With many but not all of their kids there, it was a tight fit, but everyone always found a bed on the farm. As families grew in size, Uncle John would sometimes sail his boat up the Kennebec and anchor right in front of Oaklands for the weekend, thus providing a few extra beds. Labor Day was the one time of year that families always used the house together. My father had expected that joint usage would become more common, but that trend never materialized beyond several New Year's Eve weekends. Thus, early September became the de facto time of an annual family reunion along with the business meeting.

At other times of the year, when various family groups came to Oaklands for a long weekend, or week-long stay or house party, they enjoyed the place with other invited friends, and engaged in the traditional activities that they had enjoyed since childhood. Outdoor activities changed with the seasons. Thanks to Grandma's gift of $5000 for a new oil furnace to replace the old coal-burning furnace that had broken down the week that the Oaklands Corporation was founded, it became possible to use the

house more comfortably in cold weather. It took some years for people to develop new habits to use the house beyond the traditional seasonal closing after New Year's weekend, but gradually winter weekends became more popular.

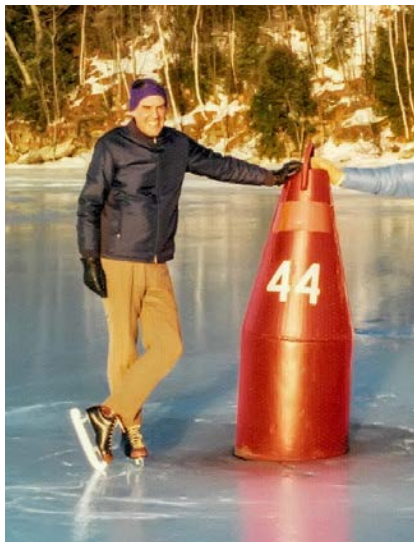
In winter, whenever Mt. Tom had good snow, there were sleds, toboggans, flying saucers, "snurfers," and skis waiting in the cellar for whatever the conditions allowed. A fresh snowfall would bring dozens of townspeople to ski and toboggan as well (as is still the case). They would come through the gate along the River Road, and with so many people on the slope, it could be dangerous if one wasn't paying attention, when the next thrill seeker came flying downhill with no idea how to turn or stop. If the snow became icy or crusty, we would use sleds on Mt. Tom or ride them down the steep part of the road from the farm to Oaklands or from Orchard House to Hallowell House and on down to the River Road.

When there was no snow in the winter, the pond ice might be smooth enough for skating. The Farm Pond and the Hollow (the pond between Oaklands and Hallowell House) are just large enough for pick-up hockey games, and they freeze pretty quickly, but the best skating was when it had been very cold for days. Then we would go to Cobbossee Stream or Cold Stream where they cross the Litchfield Road. If the conditions were ideal, we could skate down Cold Stream for a couple of miles and then go up Cobbossee Stream for several more miles to Horseshoe Pond or beyond, on beautiful black ice. The ice quality might not be completely even, but where it was best one could see through a foot of ice and through six feet of water to see the leaves and grasses on the streambed, as though looking through a windowpane.

Once a decade, the Kennebec River might freeze so hard that even the six- to eight-foot tidal movement on the river did not break up the ice. It is always dangerous to skate on the river because of the currents, even under the best conditions, but it is so exciting to skate downriver to South Gardiner when no one else is on it and to see the incredible ice that is packed around the navigation buoys and heaved up on the shoreline. We would tie ourselves together with ropes or all carry bamboo poles for an extra margin of safety in case someone did break through. The most excitement came when we heard the frightening and wonderful sound that is made by the pressure of expanding ice that echoes for great distances. It is eerie,

like a whale song played at a slow speed, but fast-moving like a thunderbolt within the ice up and down the river. In reality, it is a sign of strong ice, but it makes you wonder whether the ice might swallow you up.

One day, a few years after Tenley Albright won the gold medal for the United States in figure skating—she had married Uncle Tudor's son, also named Tudor Gardiner—Alison was practicing some figure skating moves right in front of Oaklands while the rest of us were carrying hockey sticks.




Bob, on skates on the Kennebec, at the buoy in front of Oaklands during a long freezing period.

We heard a voice voice from a car driving along the River Road saying, "Oh look! There's Tenley Albright." Another time the Kennebec Journal police report contained the following entry: "A Pittston resident said she saw children skating on the river. An officer went over and found six adults skating near the west shore of Mt. Tom. He warned them that the ice wasn't safe, but they tied themselves together and promised to stay away from the middle."

The last weekend of the year has always been a favorite weekend for use by large numbers of family and guests. The days of fun culminated in the big New Year's Eve party at Oaklands, to which every family member staying at all of the houses was invited. Everyone dressed up in semi-formal style—fancier than at any other time at Oaklands. Cocktails were enjoyed by the fire in the Library so that everyone was feeling good, leading into a large feast that usually spilled over from the dining room into the Music

Room space. After dinner, everyone would divide into teams for a lively game of charades that would go on for hours (this game will be described more fully later in this chapter). If the charades ran later than midnight, the hall clock would simply be stopped at 11:57 p.m. by securing the pendulum.

Charades with a large cast in the dining room.

Co-New Year's babies for 2000: Philip (reluctant) and Charlotte (exuberant).

Then when we were fully ready, everyone would gather standing around the dining room table to await Father Time. One of the uncles would then enter from the hall, playing the role, wearing a white sheet pulled over his head and showing a long gray beard. He would enter the room holding his scythe—a real one from down in the cellar—and opine about his year of activities. Father Time would always refer to the achievements and foibles of

various family members during the year and usually offer colorful commentary on the world at large—all designed to evoke maximum laughter. He would stagger around the dining room table before slumping in death at the stroke of 12 from the hall clock, which had been restarted for the purpose. Then the youngest member of the household would enter as the New Year's baby, wearing nothing but a cloth diaper and a top hat displaying the number of the new year, and dance around on top of the dining room table. Champagne bottles popped and everyone toasted the New Year. This was followed by holding hands and circling the table, singing "Auld Lang Syne." It is a formula that produces a wonderful evening, every year.

In warmer weather, which included most of the days that Oaklands was occupied, the range of activities broadened. The tennis court got a lot of use. We had croquet and badminton set up on the lawn. We swam in the "swimming pool" in the gully at the edge of the lawn until siltation filled it in. For years we had a rope swing attached to a tree on the far side of the dam, and it was exciting to pull it up the steep slope and then swing out over the pond before dropping into the deepest part. After the Farm Pond was built, we created another rope swing on its north side, near a sandy area for entry and exit. Then in 1963 my parents created the Hollow by digging out a marshy area to create a pond with an earthen dam near Hallowell House that backed up the water all the way to the Corporation property line in the gully. Because the pond's bottom was muddy, there were concrete block steps into the pond at both ends. The best fun was another rope swing on the farm side where the steep slope provided a long fetch for the swing to sail out and then up to let you drop a long way into the water. I remember its inaugural moment when Uncle Charlie took the first ride, followed by several others. David was a teenager at the time and wanted to enjoy the thrill. He sailed out over the pond, but for some reason chose not to drop into the water. Instead, he swung back up the hill and his back smacked right into the tree trunk that supported the swing. I remember the horror I felt watching as the inevitable collision knocked him to the ground, amazingly without serious injury. David's brave comment in the guest book that week was "I need a lesson from George of the Jungle on how to miss a tree."

The opportunities for canoing near Oaklands are many and varied. There were two Old Town wood and canvas canoes (made in Maine) in the Oaklands cellar that we used many times each year. Sometimes we kept one on the river bank below Oaklands for easier access, because they were quite heavy and a challenge to lift up to the roof of a car. A classic trip was to paddle downriver to Nehumkeag Island just below South Gardiner or to paddle on further to Little Swan Island in Richmond for a swim or to camp out for the night. For some reason, while we considered that the Kennebec was much too polluted to swim in at Oaklands, a few miles downstream we would enjoy swimming in the very same waters. Nehumkeag has a nice sandy beach and Little Swan has great rocks to jump off, but, really…?

More often we would drive the canoes in the back of a station wagon with almost half of them sticking out beyond the tailgate or put them on the top of the car to drive to Cold Stream or Cobbossee Stream. We would take long paddles past just a few camps and other boats but e mostly through quiet stretches of great wildlife habitat for ducks, hawks, beaver, muskrats, and herons to watch. We would picnic on the shores and swim where it was deep. In autumn the leaf colors were spectacular.

Another favorite expedition was to walk through Rolling Dam Woods to the waterfall, especially after there had been heavy rains to boost the stream level and make the cataract look impressive. On the walk to the falls, we would sometimes collect mosses, lichens, leaves, nuts, cones, and other interesting-looking items to take home to make creative art projects or terraria. Grandma would frequently lead some grandchildren to a lower part of the stream where there were deposits of blue clay that they would dig up and then use as excellent pottery-making material.

Because Maine's forest naturally tends to encroach on fields, viewsheds, and other open areas, we always needed to cut encroaching brush and young saplings, as well as to remove deadfalls from trails and fields. Gardiners—particularly the men—have traditionally felt their Paul Bunyan gene and worked to develop skills with axes, hand saws, and clippers. In the 1960s chainsaws were newly introduced, but we considered them too dangerous for amateur woodsmen. The macho activity that was encouraged on a cloudy or cool day was to go into the gully or along a trail, with an ax or a saw in hand, and clear it out. Then in winter, after the wood had dried a bit and the snow cover had provided some safety for bonfires, we would

get a fire permit and spend a day burning all of the brush. The clouds of woodsmoke, warm embers, toasted marshmallows, and crackling flames that were part of the ritual all seemed very appealing on a soggy December or March day.

One particularly nice aspect of Oaklands is that, if the weather makes outdoor activities unappealing, the indoor options for fun are endless. Kids and others need to work off energy, and Oaklands's great size allows that to happen. Sliding down the banister is irresistible to kids, as is running up and down the hallway. The playroom has had a pool table for years, and there is a ping-pong table in the third-floor hallway. Oaklands is one of the best houses for games such as Beckon, Beckon and Sardines in a Box, which we played whenever there was a large group in the house. For Beckon, Beckon, a small rug at the foot of the stairs was the "jail." One person was "it" and had to spot and identify one of the other players to put them in jail. This led to much running around. Once in prison, the captured player would call, "Beckon, beckon, I want a beckon." When a prisoner saw someone who was not captive in the act of beckoning, that prisoner was allowed to run free again. The person who was "it" had to try to catch sight of and call the name of the escapee again or else he would be free to beckon someone else. Everyone operated on the honor system regarding actually seeing the beckons, and collusion between free agents was officially banned. The key was to have an old and fast enough "it" to get just the right balance between the elements of freedom and captivity to make the game fairly balanced, so that the "it" would likely win by capturing everyone a good percentage of the games. Just imagine the excitement and exercise of running up and down that staircase all afternoon to catch someone, or scanning the many doorways to the hall to guard one's prisoners from the multiple angles from which to see a beckon. It was high-intensity play.

Sardines is a quieter game. While everyone else closes their eyes and waits for one minute, the person who is "it" finds a hiding place that is large enough for everyone to gather and hide together. Then everyone else is on their own to find that person, but without letting anyone else know that the "it" has been discovered. Each person who finds the "it" slips silently into the hiding place and waits for others to find them. By the time that four or five people have found it, the hiding place becomes harder and harder to keep quiet. The remaining seekers gradually become aware that there are

not many others roaming the house any longer and realize that they are about to lose the game. Big closets, crannies under the eaves, and dusty storerooms were among the best hiding places, so Sardines taught us all about Oaklands's strangest corners, especially those that were too dusty or creepy to want to enter under normal conditions.

Usually, the most memorable activity for a house party was Charades. This is a game that is played many different ways, but at Oaklands only one version of the rules was accepted. After dinner, the group would divide into two teams, which would meet separately to decide on an English word that they would act out in a series of scenes, while the other team watched and tried to guess the word. Scenes would be crafted around acting out one or two syllables in each, until all had been performed, whereupon the final scene depicted the full word. For example, In 1972, "hemophiliac" was performed as "hemo"--"filly"--"yak"; another was "pharmaceutical" as "farmer"-- "Sioux"--"tickle." Words were chosen based on their dramatic potential, as in these examples. "Hemo" became an emergency stomach pumping scene in a hospital with the patient's life in the balance; "filly" might have portrayed Cousin Margaret's horse show events; "yak" suggests a trek through Asia, and the whole word might involve a scene with the family of Russian Tsars. Similarly, "farmer" invited an Oaklands farm barn scene, almost always featuring a cow being milked or giving birth; "Sioux" suggested some sort of Western scene; "tickle" could make fun of any family member or popular celebrity; and the whole word was about a dreadful illness and a potential cure. Dramatic flourishes would always be designed to mislead the other team into guessing wrong, and the rules allowed that the selected syllable could either be spoken or merely implied.

The dining room or music room served as the stage, using the large sliding doors on both sides of the music room as the screen separating the stage from the audience until the scene was ready for action. In support of charades, the costume trunk in the playroom played a key part, and it motivated creative costuming by each actor. Props could be found in the tool shed, kitchen cabinets, and upstairs closets. The fun was in creating a role for each team member in every scene, shaping the dramatic action in rough form, and then turning everyone loose to find their costume, props, and ad libs. Often someone shy would emerge as a surprise star performer or someone's antics would be unexpectedly funny. Large, hairy men would

play dancing girls in skimpy clothing with tennis balls inside their bras, children were given featured roles, everyone would take turns as the lead actor in the roles of head surgeon, shamed political figure, or farmer with the thick Maine accent. The object of the game was not to win but to create the most entertaining and memorable moments. It was fun to watch the scenes, but the actors themselves were always having the most fun. Performances frequently ran past midnight, as the productions grew more elaborate. These were the features that made Oaklands weekends special for family veterans as well as first-time guests. The guest books are filled with references to the words acted out or someone's role in a scene. The guest books also include a fairly complete record of the many house parties, when these activities made the long weekends so much fun.

In addition to the house parties for Uncle John's annual shooting weeks in October, my parents held several parties for adult friends at times of year when their children were away at school. These were among their favorite occasions in the year. Uncle Charlie and Aunt Jane had various large groups, often including other cousins named Bundy, Lothrop, and Shepley. Every one of Bob, John, and Charlie's children had one or two house parties for their friends when they were in high school, usually during Christmas or spring vacations. One time my mother and Aunt Camilla held a joint house party for both Ian and Holly's friends together. I had two winter house parties while I was in high school, and like most of the other parties they included boys and girls who were closely chaperoned. For me and for many of my cousins who went to Groton or another boys' boarding school, these were our introductions to being together with girls, for a weekend, at least—girls who were not sisters or first cousins. These were important steps toward learning to be adults, as well as chances to enjoy Oaklands's special qualities.

The other category of occasional usage was for even larger, special events. My mother hosted her entire Simmons College business degree classmates for a day at Oaklands, and my father invited all of the Fiduciary Trust Company employees down from Boston for a fall outing. These set the tone for the next generation's large events in later decades.

In 1968, we held an epic 80th birthday party for Grandma. Nearly all of the family attended, and everyone had a song, poem, or other tribute to Grandma. A scrapbook that is kept in the Office shows all of the contents

of these tributes. Grandma's note in the guest book was "Five sons, four daughters-in-law, 13 grands and one great-grand. Full quiver!" Uncle Ben's was "I am astounded and delighted by the wit, fellowship, and the love of these my relatives." It was so good that we did it again for her 90th in 1978.

Grandma at her 90th birthday party
(L-R) Back: Susannah, Fratty, Grandma, Claire Cesta, Jennifer, and Marsh
Front: Avery, Ian B., and Ian G. Jr.

Another type of special event was weddings. Holly was the first of my generation to get married there in 1970, followed by Alison, Phyllis, Susannah, and Cory Gardiner (daughter of Tommy and Judy Gardiner and Uncle Tudor's granddaughter). Holly's wedding was a large affair with the ceremony at Christ Church and the party under a tent on the southwest lawn. Alison's in 1975 was a smaller group that could fit inside the house for the party, with the ceremony held on Birch Hill, overlooking the Kennebec. Phyllis was also married in the church and feted under a tent on the west lawn. Susannah's ceremony was held under a chuppah in front of the flower garden on the east lawn, with a dining tent on the opposite side of the house. Cory's ceremony was conducted at Christ Church with a reception at Oaklands with a horse-drawn carriage to carry the newlyweds away together. All had music, dancing, champagne, and plenty of delicious food. These weddings were the first to be held at Oaklands since Aunt Fran's wedding more than 30 years earlier, and they re-established the reputation of Oaklands weddings as wonderful events that made the next generation want to be married there as well.

Family gathering, September 1978.

*Chapter 7*

# The Corporation: The First Generation

WHILE THE FAMILY ALREADY KNEW HOW TO ENJOY the special beauty and the fun activities of staying at Oaklands, running a family corporation was something new for everyone. Because my parents had been living in and operating the house, and my father had been the sole owner for 15 years, it seemed natural to expect him to take the lead on every decision. This was not due to any insistence on being given authority, but more likely momentum from the previous era. It simply took several years for other directors to figure out how they might participate beyond simply approving everything that Bob suggested.

My father had a long time to think in advance about how the Corporation would begin to operate, so he was quite well prepared to get matters started. There was a flurry of meetings in the first two months to arrange the details of his gift to the Corporation. On Christmas 1959, my parents hosted a Christmas party at our house in Milton with Grandma, all of the Bob and John Gardiners present, Uncle Henry, and Uncle Charlie with only Gordon, as David was sick at home, with Aunt Jane attending to him. After everyone shared Christmas presents and had a sumptuous lunch, a directors' meeting was called to order to officially accept my father's gift of land and buildings to the Corporation. The minutes make no note of the Christmas celebration that had occurred in the morning but indicate that all family members were present. I was there but have no recollection of

this meeting, so I assume that it was conducted in the blink of an eye. The gift of Oaklands, Pond House, and 31 acres of land was officially accepted. Then, according to the minutes, "There were indications that certain members of the family might be interested in making gifts to the corporation before the end of the calendar year…" so the meeting was temporarily adjourned until some time before the end of the month. Presumably, the Christmas celebrations then continued.

Five days later, the directors' meeting resumed at my father's Fiduciary Trust Company office in Boston at 10 a.m. with Bob, John, Henry, and Charlie present. "The Treasurer [Uncle John] presented documents conveying or intending to convey "….paintings and portraits of the ancestors in the front rooms of Oaklands (Mrs. Sylvester, RHG I, Judge Tudor, John Sylvester John Gardiner, William Tudor, and Henrietta Gardiner Sullivan)." The donors were all of my aunts and uncles plus Grandma and Aunt Alice, each of whom had been "given" shares in those various portraits by my father for the sole purpose of them being given immediately to the Corporation. That was the only purpose of the meeting. The remaining portraits and valuable assets would have to wait between one and five years before they could be given in similar fashion, in order to avoid gift taxes.

These quick meetings were orchestrated entirely by my father, who knew the inheritance and gift tax laws, and his recommendations were readily accepted by everyone else, with excellent good humor that was reflected by my father in his carefully crafted minutes. They display his wry sense of humor, for example, in the glaring understatements about the value of the gifts, and they include colorful flourishes, such as denoting the one non-family person in the house but not in the room, the woman who had cooked the Christmas feast: "Minnie Munck (the cook) was in the kitchen, exhausted."

Over its first decade in the 1960s, the Corporation saw minimal changes to the roles and responsibilities that everyone initially undertook. Officially the directors were in charge of making all decisions, but it soon became clear that Bob, John, and Chas were the ones who participated far more than any others. Aunt Alice was elected as a member after Uncle Arthur died, but then she passed away in 1963, creating a need for another family member to be elected to fill the minimum membership requirement. Alison was chosen for that role, and she was for many years the only member

from the next generation to be elected as a Corporation member. Uncle Henry attended many directors' meetings but never played a significant role as director. Grandma served as a director until 1963, when she turned 75 years old and became ineligible according to the bylaws. Uncle Ben was elected to take her place as a director, but he seldom attended meetings because he lived so far away. So while several other family members were officially included, the real strength was the three brothers who used the place the most.

From the outset, the Corporation's annual meetings were always open to everyone in the family who was present, including all the aunts and cousins who were staying in the houses. All adults were invited to speak up, but the early practice was to conduct very short meetings with short agendas and little opportunity to discuss matters.

The directors held meetings as often as needed—usually two to five times per year—and many of these other directors' meetings were held for their convenience at the houses in Massachusetts of Bob, John, or Chas, where attendance by other family members was less likely. Many short meetings were held at my father's Fiduciary Trust offices in Boston. One meeting was even held at the Porcellian Club in Cambridge when my father and Uncles John, Charlie, and Henry—all of them were club members from their time at Harvard—had gathered on the occasion of my initiation into the club. Directors' meetings that immediately followed the annual membership meeting were generally open to others to witness and occasionally to participate.

The atmosphere was always "clubby." Everyone got along well, emphasized good humor, and papered over any differences. Everyone seemed cheerful, sociable, and amenable to whatever the president (my father, for the first seven years) suggested. Meetings at Oaklands were scheduled at convenient times for the major participants—either after lunch, shortly before cocktail hour (which was intended to start on time, thus keeping the meeting brief), or even after dinner. Behind the scenes, all of the business affairs and planning were handled by my father. He knew how to sense agreement and move the agendas quickly. He would present plans and invite comments, which were usually supportive and always kept quite brief. The trio of Bob, John, and Chas became accepted as the ones in authority. Bob and John were always in agreement on every important matter, so they

constituted the core of most decisions. Grandma restrained herself, for the most part. Fratty, Camilla, and Jane were the only others who occasionally offered ideas and opinions. The club of Oaklands Corporation ran quite smoothly under this system, and no one seemed to object.

The seven original members were my father and all of his siblings. Sadly, Uncle Arthur died at his home in Tucson before the Corporation had existed even two months, on January 16, 1960. All of Arthur's siblings gathered in Gardiner for the funeral, along with Aunt Mary, Grandma, Aunt Alice, and others. Uncle Arthur had fought off germs and infections for years. He could barely draw sufficient breath to get through a good day, let alone cope with lung infections. He probably lived as long as his doctors might have expected, even though it seems that he died very young— at just 42 years old.

After the service in Christ Church, the family went to Hallowell House for dinner together. My father wrote that, after dinner, "Aunt Alice sprang to her feet and announced that she wanted to give her property at Indian Point, Georgetown, Maine known as the "Bandbox" to the Oaklands Corporation." This was received as a great addition, and "before the offer could be withdrawn," a directors' meeting was immediately called to order—all directors being present—and they voted to accept the gift. I am quite sure that Aunt Alice had arranged it previously with my father, but the minutes are too sly to provide any more detail.

The minutes then continue: "In the excitement following this surprise announcement, the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting was completely overlooked, but this was not regarded as a serious oversight, as many family had been observed reading the record book during the earlier part of the day and had seemed pleased with it."

Thus, whether in the midst of a busy family Christmas party or even on the sad occasion of a funeral for their brother, they mixed pleasure with the conduct of Corporation business. The family seemed willing to let my father take the lead, and he was careful to present all plans as being in the Corporation's best interest. There is only one document or memory that indicates that anyone offered alternative ideas, let alone any resistance to whatever he proposed—at least, in the early years. (This was when, for a matter of about two hours, Aunt Camilla hesitated to give her share of a portrait to the Corporation. No explanation for either the hesitation or the

change of heart was given.) The six brothers, their sister, and their mother had not managed any property or business together previously—primogeniture had always placed full responsibility on one person. I believe the use of family traditions and good humor was crucial to the success of the new venture, as it transitioned gradually from primogeniture to something altogether new and different.

Because the house's infrastructure was old and somewhat worn in the 1960s, the Corporation faced a long list of tangible needs for the directors to address. The roof leaked in different areas at different times, depending on the wind direction, the amount of ice dams at the eaves, and the gradual deterioration of the sections of roofing materials. The minutes reflect this recurring theme of roof problems almost every year. The roof's design is complex, with many different angles and slopes. Winter ice dams and wind-driven rains seemed to cause leaks in different rooms. No sooner would one leak be fixed than another would be discovered. Everyone was frustrated by leaks. Different contractors were hired to fix one section at a time, because there seemed to be no larger-scale solution, and the costs were high.

The Corporation's budget was tight. There were not many dollars in it for major repairs. In addition, most leaks caused damage to wallpaper, ceilings to collapse, or some other cosmetic disaster that required interior repairs. Repairs to appliances, repainting of rooms, replacing utilities, and other house needs were also part of every annual meeting discussion. There was never enough money in the budget to address the long list of needs. Nevertheless, the list of accomplishments in completing repairs and redecorations that was given at each annual meeting showed the determination to keep up with the house's needs. For the 20th anniversary celebration for the Corporation, my father compiled a long and complete list of all the improvements. By keeping at the work year after year, an impressive amount was accomplished, including many hundreds of hours of volunteer labor by family members.

My parents filled the role of house managers simply as a matter of tradition. My father handled the official corporate duties, arrangements with contractors, and any issue that involved family, and my mother took care of house maintenance, cleaning, gardening, and many other practical matters. They worked hard to do this the year 'round, and they

did it whether they were staying in Oaklands or Hallowell House. They proposed and implemented changes, and everyone appreciated having them handle the corporation affairs. No one ever really thought that it could be otherwise.

As previously noted, Aunt Alice became the Corporation's first new member in 1960, and when she died in 1963, Alison was elected. Aunt Mary was the first person to become an associate member, right after Uncle Arthur died in 1960.

Cove House circa 1900.

The second person elected as an associate member was Cousin Ruth Richards in 1961. It is important to digress from the Corporation's first months to explain who she was and why someone who was completely unknown to anyone in my generation would be so honored. Cousin Ruth was a granddaughter of Anne Gardiner, the eldest daughter of RHG I, and her husband, Francis Richards. RHG I had given Anne 100 acres immediately downriver from the current site of Hallowell house for them to build on and develop a farm. Their acreage began at a place called the Cove on the river and stretched westward deep into the woods. By carving out land for the Cove House and farm between the Oaklands Farm acreage and the Rolling Dam Woods sections of the property, RHG I effectively split the lands that he continued to own. The Richards family lived there until 1901, and then they sold it to Weston Lewis. He and his family managed it as a rustic resort called Cove Manor until the business faltered during the Great Depression.

Ruth Richards never married, but she worked hard to make a living outside of Maine, running a boarding house and other entrepreneurial ventures. When she was only 30 years old, a Mr. William Brewster, a wealthy man whom she had befriended, left her a large inheritance, which eliminated the need for her to continue to work. Because she no longer had the Cove House to stay in when she visited Maine, my grandfather (RHG IV) would allow her to stay at Hallowell House, which is very close to the Cove. Then my father continued to lend it to her for visits, which she greatly appreciated. In return, in 1948 she decided to buy back the Cove Farm acreage and the Cove House, which by then had fallen into disrepair. She had the house torn down and gave the property back to Oaklands to reunify the original family estate lands. This gift occurred before the Corporation had been created, so it became part of Oaklands Farm, with my father as the new owner.

Her generosity did not end there. It turned out later that she had also decided to give Oaklands Corporation a large portion of her total assets in her will. I presume that both RHG IV and V, when they were presidents of Fiduciary Trust, would have provided her with wealth management advice, but there are few records to provide any details, and we don't know when she made the decision.

My father wrote subsequently that his knowledge of the prospect of this endowment for Oaklands was a critical factor in his decision to create the Oaklands Corporation at the time when he did. He knew that the Oaklands Trust was too small for long-term security, and he needed to be more confident that the Corporation's resources would be sufficient for it to work. His President's Report for 1965 describes the gift after her death:

> *Cousin Ruth "left the Corporation 20% of her whole estate. Converted to dollars this will mean eventually something on the order of $120,000…. This magnificent endowment may in the long run make the difference between survival and bankruptcy, and it was only after ascertaining Cousin Ruth's interest in making this generous provision for the Corporation that I dared to embark on what would otherwise have been an extremely risky undertaking in setting up the Corporation in 1959. We all join in saying, "God bless her.""*

Cousin Ruth lived her later years in South Carolina until she died in 1964. To compare the value of her gift to values today, in 1965 when the Corporation received the funds, the equivalent value of the gift in 2023 currency (accounting for inflation) was over $1,000,000.

Other members of Grandma's generation were generous to the Corporation in the 1960s. In addition to Cousin Ruth's gift to the endowment and Aunt Alice's gift of the Bandbox, Aunt Anna Shepley gave furniture that is now in Uncle Hal's Room, Aunt May Williston bequeathed several nice pieces of furniture, and Grandma gave silver and other items. As a result, Aunt Anna was elected as the fourth associate member, after Grandma had been elected as the third when she turned 75 and ceased to be a director.

Returning to the story of how the Corporation operated in the first years, the true sharing of duties among the members did not take place for a while. Uncle John was the elected treasurer from the start, even though my father kept all of the books and managed the accounts. In the clubby style of management, Uncle Henry was given the title Curator of Everything Esthetic. While there was little for him to do, it was a nice recognition of his strengths when matters of portraits or other fine arts were under consideration.

In the first year, after local business owner Bill Norton had installed the new oil-burning forced-air furnace for Oaklands, it didn't function as well as expected. The directors held a session in the cellar with Mr. Norton to see if the various users of the house could learn how to operate it more successfully. There was a note about this that was added to the minutes of the directors' meeting that followed:

> *"After about an hour, four of the five directors were satisfied that they had had enough, but Charlie stayed on for another hour, during which time he exposed the fact that Bill Norton didn't know much about it and had hooked up the wiring incorrectly. This being the third occasion on which Charlie had found Bill Norton to be quite wrong, he emerged from the cellar much less confident of the wisdom of taking Bill's word without question."*

As a result, Uncle Charlie was given the title Committee of One in Charge of Maintenance and Operations of Everything to Do with the Running of the House.

The first real committee that was created was to manage Oaklands's investment assets, and it was appropriately called the Investment Committee. Because it consisted of Bob, John, and Charlie, it didn't really establish any precedent for further sharing of governance. In 1968 the CHERMS committee (Committee on Household Equipment and Routine Maintenance Supplies) was created to address household maintenance matters, and it was composed of their three spouses. Their requests for small budget allocations were always met by the directors, but the allocations were very modest.

It was taken for granted that all of the initial members would be able to use the house, and they all did. The bylaws at that time stated that one's election as a member was a lifetime appointment. The seven siblings were cautious to avoid growth in the number of members—in fact, the only additional members, first Aunt Alice and then Alison, were not elected until the corporation had fallen below the legal minimum. All of the original members had grown up in the house, so there was no discussion of standards for use by anyone. It was assumed that all would care for the house properly when using it. There were discussions about usage fees. At first my father proposed having no fees, but within a short time a "voluntary" amount of $20 per week was introduced, soon followed by converting that to a requirement. Because of the increase in use in winter months, thanks to the new furnace, it became clear that every person's winter use was a burden to others, and the fee was soon increased to $40 per week in winter. Those fees were low, even after adjusting for inflation, when compared to today's rates.

On most matters that needed decisions by the Corporation, such as equipment purchases, hiring of support staff, and house maintenance, my parents continued to assume responsibility for researching the needs and making recommendations to the directors. Their recommendations were almost always accepted with appreciation. But for certain kinds of changes, they began to see that some family members had different opinions and were resisting their recommendations. Deciding what fabrics should be used for reupholstering furniture and other decorating matters were an example. My parents determined that hiring non-family, outside consultants was the way to marshal support for recommended actions. My mother had a friend from Boston who was a professional consultant

on interior decoration, Cornelia Hartman, and recommended her as an advisor. Cornelia visited Oaklands as a guest of my parents, and then made several recommendations for reupholstering pieces, including the Library sofa that had come from Cousin Ruth and the tall, wooden-backed chairs in the front hall, among other items. Cornelia worked for a very small fee and the family liked her advice, so that worked successfully.

A second consultant, Alice Pickman, was a landscape architect. She was asked to develop a plan to improve Oaklands's outdoor aesthetics. She visited Oaklands several times and took several years to produce a plan that was conceptual in nature and not prescriptive in its detail. The plan was extremely articulate about the underlying concepts and the need to reduce the level of required maintenance, now that labor was more expensive than in previous generations. But Grandma had other opinions of how it should be done, and it took some time to gather enough support for the architect's plan to override her objections. Reading the report, most found it well considered and a good basis for long-term planning. Some excerpts will illustrate the wisdom of using consultants for difficult issues:

*"Oaklands, as long as it is standing, will be significant, not only for its beauty, but for its historical importance. It was the precursor of a dramatic change in architectural style, approach to design, and also of a way of life in New England. But social upheaval has changed a lifestyle that lasted nearly 100 years. This change, that has substituted mechanical help for that of many hands, has affected the house little (though the lives of the lady housekeepers considerably). Out of doors, the gardeners and their helpers have gone, the stable, coach house, grooms and horses are gone, having motors and motor cars in their place. Oaklands is fortunate. The scale of the building, the aged trees, and the basic concept of the grounds in the English "naturalistic manner" have absorbed the change with grace….*

*"Perhaps the most conspicuous change I have suggested (and a change of relatively recent arrangement) is the removal of the car park from directly in front of the main entrance, to the side. This leaves the view of the house uncluttered by cars as you drive up from the river, or from the farm. Also it opens the lovely aspect from the front door down across the fields. Automobiles are entirely out of scale and an abomination with their shiny*

*crass colors—especially in such a restrained and magnificent scene. The hedge that would screen the cars and road from the living rooms and lawn continues, to the other side of the house, the line of the hedge screening the service yard. It also makes an excellent background to the perennial flower bed…*

*"The addition of the terrace is quite a radical change. It is also dictated by a different way of life, but, I feel, will give a newer visual connection between the bridge and the house; a base to the view of the tower as one comes from the tennis court. It is located where, after much study, seems to be the most pleasant place to sit because of the view, the orientation to the cycle of sun and shade, the prevailing winds and the ease of access from the house…*

The view from Ruth's Rocks down the Kennebec River.

*"The most important consideration in maintaining the quality of Oaklands is to keep it simple and keep the scale large. There is no place for little gardens, for fussy detail. Space, expanse—it is a conception of the grandeur of nature by a building that for its European antecedents fits beautifully its dramatic site."*

Once it was accepted in 1967, this plan guided outdoor changes that continued to be implemented over several years (and which still guide us today). The most dramatic change was the addition of the stone terrace. My father was particularly excited by this project and undertook the job of directing it himself, along with help from a professional mason, the caretaker Howard Rioux, and farm helpers and equipment. He found the granite blocks in an old quarry in St. George, Maine, and he devoted a full month to complete it, with a lot of support from my mother when he had to take trips to Boston. When it was finished he named it Ruth's Rocks to memorialize the generous gift from Cousin Ruth that had made it possible. Finally, for amusement he composed a report for the members of the Corporation, titled "Terrace to end all Terraces," that humorously mimicked the style of "Mrs. Gardiner's Receipts" in which the letter s is written as an enormous f. (For readers who are not familiar with this book, it is a reproduction of Anne Gibbons Gardiner's 18th-century cooking recipes for large groups of people.) My father's report began:

> *"Take 120 granite ftones, weighing no more than 37 tons in all, selected from a difcarded lot in some active quarry (such as Hockings in St. George). You will ufe only 100 in all, but it is well to have extra because some will be too irregular to ufe. Your ftones muft be drilled at each end for eafe of handling with Chain and Tongs…. Select very good and symmetrical ftones for walks to terrace and fet in place. First ftones will go slow–in fact eight the firft day will be good going…. Continue the procefs for another 4 or 5 days if the weather holds good…. Two fkillful men with crowbars and fome junks of hardwood two-by-fours can move your granites as if they were on cafters, so don't hesitate to shift your ftones around if placed the firft time where they create problems. The men may simmer or do a slow burn, but a little of this is necefsary and fruitful, it being important never to let them ftew or boil over…."*

The report goes on for pages and records all of the steps in detail and with great appreciation for men who did the job. Building the terrace was one of the first major alterations to the house in the Corporation era, and one in which my father took great pride.

In 1967, after serving as president of the Corporation for seven years, my father suggested that it might be time to give someone else the title of president. Uncle Charlie was eager to step into the role and was elected. But in the next minute, Uncle John suggested that Bob continue to conduct all meetings, which deflated the president's position considerably. Charlie had to put up with this awkward division. It took him several years to make sense out of it. He ultimately proposed a rationale that put Bob in charge of everything "physical" while the president handled "membership" matters.

In 1970 Uncle John suggested that we drop the facade of him being the treasurer and give Bob the title to go with the responsibility that he had actually always assumed. Finally, in a moment that badly needed an element of levity, it was decided to give Bob the title of "the Actually" because he was actually in charge of almost everything. Thus everyone's true roles and responsibilities were fully disclosed.

Throughout these early years of the Corporation, some of the children of the seven siblings were reaching adulthood and had become curious about when they might become members of this nice club. Holly, Ian, and I were all married between 1970 and 1971. We were in our mid- to late twenties, had started our careers, and were feeling pretty adult. We wanted to become members of the Corporation and begin to use the house. Our five Peter cousins were our age and older, but they lived too far away for it to be very practical to participate and use the house.

In 1969, Bob, John, Charlie, and their wives had been the only persons present for the annual meeting in April and had anticipated their eldest children's interest in membership. The minutes, which were written by my father, summarized the discussion:

> *"It was a long, wandering, and sometimes heated discussion of whether and how the next generation might be allowed to use Oaklands on their own. The general feeling seemed to settle on the fact that as a general principle it is difficult enough for one generation to learn to share the house and that to introduce another should not be encouraged—at least for the time being—sufficient unto the day being the evil thereof."*

Holly, Ian, and I had no knowledge of this until we saw the draft minutes at the 1970 annual meeting, when we officially expressed our readiness to be considered for membership.

Bob, John, and Charlie went off in private, immediately before the 1970 annual meeting began, to have a candid discussion about the next generation becoming members. The decision of "The Three Wise Men," as Uncle Charlie dubbed their group when he announced it upon their return to the annual meeting, was presented as a *fait accompli.* They had decided that a few of us, who had shown enough interest, maturity, and good choice in spouses, and who lived close enough nearby to be active members, should have a chance to prove ourselves. He announced that Ian, Holly, Denny, and I were to be elected, which would bring the new total number of Corporation members to 10, given that Aunt Fran had decided to resign. He then noted that the privilege of using the house would no longer be automatically a part of membership. That was something that would be decided later, after full consideration of the standards of usage and the process of approval had been decided.

Thus began a long, difficult process of rationalizing membership for my generation—with some being accepted at various ages and others left to wait longer. Running parallel to this membership issue was an effort by the first generation to forestall the next generation's use of the house by asserting how usage by them would be too problematic. The first generation was deeply committed to that strategy and struggled to explain their concerns to their own children.

It took an entire decade to make real progress; in some years there was no effort to discuss change. At other times, committees of both generations were formed but were slow to produce agreement on any aspects. Membership was frozen at ten for many years, and usage by my generation was blocked. There were plans to produce a manual covering use of the house to define the expectations, but the manual never materialized either. There were discussions of how standards for using the house could be defined and enforced, but no standards were ever written.

Uncle Ben had resigned as a director back in 1971, and I was elected to fill that slot. Throughout my first decade on the board of directors, I pushed, as did other contemporaries, for decisions about change and progress, but the foot-dragging continued for years. It seems that the Oaklands Corporation was vulnerable to the same kind of generational divide that, in that era, gripped social institutions of all kinds, throughout America.

On the surface, the Corporation appeared to make good progress on many other matters. One change to the bylaws was to have everyone's term as a member become one year instead of for one's lifetime, so that there would be a solution available if any new member caused too much of a problem. We were very aware that our cousins in Hallowell, the Marvins, who were descended from the Hallowell family and owned the Vaughan Homestead, had been frustrated by having just two members, including one who frequently blocked any decision with which he did not fully agree. Uncle John called that one particular member a "bounder"—a term I had never heard before, but which needed little explanation, given the way that he used it. By limiting membership in the Oaklands Corporation to one year and requiring a vote of three-fourths of all members for election, it was felt we would be protected from such behaviors. The next generation was not-so-gently put on notice that bounders would not be tolerated.

The bylaws were further changed to require that all members be descendants of RHG IV instead of RHG I, as the bylaws initially defined. This was considered important because the Oaklands Trust was providing much of the income, and RHG IV had established that trust with his descendants as the group of beneficiaries. This preempted any possibility that second cousins, such as the Tudor Gardiner descendants, could become eligible. It also was consistent with the elder generation's desire not to expand the membership any more than necessary.

Holly's wedding to Dan Burnes at Oaklands in September 1970 triggered an entire year of budget-busting improvements. A lot of work was accomplished, both indoors and out, to prepare for it. My parents continued to emphasize the importance of hard work by family members to Oaklands's survival at every occasion. They also practiced what they preached, as they put in many hours, year after year. They organized work weekends when aunts and uncles and members of my generation would work together on cleaning, organizing, brush cutting, and other projects, and participation was strong. Everyone got along well. There was no outward sign of generational differences, but they continued to fester below that surface.

Gradually, as the end of the 1970s neared, a few more of the next generation were elected as members when they reached adulthood, as

Holly and Dan's wedding party photo with the Guernseys.

defined by the directors. Nat and David joined in 1978, Gordon and Phyllis in 1979, and Charles not until 1986. But house usage was still denied to my generation throughout the decade.

Uncle John became the Corporation president in 1974, when Uncle Charlie had completed the same number of seven years in the job that my father had served, and the practice of seven years for the next presidential cycle was continued. What did not continue was the practice of having my father run all the meetings, once Uncle John was elected president. I can only imagine how Uncle Charlie must have felt about not being allowed to run the meetings during his presidency. Then in 1980, the nominating committee of Bob, John, and Charlie made a counting error and triggered turnover again, but one year too early, by accident. Their solution was to elect me as the next president and create a new office— chairman of the board— for one year to put Uncle John in a close position to advise me. This was fine with me, as Uncle John was not only my godfather and hunting guide, but when I was the deputy marshal of the Porcellian Club in college, Uncle John was the club's grand marshal and sat next to me at all events. We were already used to working closely together.

As the current president of the Corporation, I was responsible for managing reservations for the house as well as to preside at the meetings.

1980 was a slow summer for reservations, with a long period in July without any at all. Anne and I lived in Augusta, just a few miles away, and we had wanted to use the house for years. I had been a member and a director for 10 years. I realized that my great-grandfather had inherited and assumed full responsibility for the house when he was married with two children at age 31. My father had inherited Oaklands when he was married with two children at age 30. In 1980, I was married with three children and was 36 years old. Anne and I decided simply to make our own reservation and move into Oaklands for nearly a month with no guests, quietly and without any further ado. Fortunately there were no repercussions. My siblings tell me that my parents were pretty steamed up about it but said nothing. Perhaps they and others had come to the conclusion that it was time for change and that, if it had to happen this way, well, so be it. My entry in the guest book for that visit was, "Twenty seven days of living like kings and working like slaves. God, this is fun!"

Oaklands in winter with family on skis, circa 1970.

*Chapter 8*

# The Dairy Farm

OAKLANDS CORPORATION'S LAND WAS ALWAYS LIMITED to 31 acres. The experience of using Oaklands depends on the continuation of Oaklands Farm. The farm is a cluster of contiguous parcels that cover about 800 acres, stretching on its eastern side from Cottage Street in Gardiner southward along the river for about a mile and a half to the outlet of Rolling Dam Stream, and on the west side running along Lincoln Avenue and then angling southwest toward the Marston Road until it is nearly a mile from the river, where it reaches an area that we call the New Farm parcel. About a third of this area is open fields and the other parts are forestland. The Oaklands Corporation sits protected from nearby development by the farm, and everyone in the family uses those acres for recreation. From the outset and forevermore, Oaklands's character and the sense of its grand, open spaces have depended on the farm's continuance. This was just as true before the Corporation was formed as it would be afterward.

My father decided in 1959 that he would keep ownership of the farm separate and for himself, because he thought the Corporation would be challenged enough to figure out how to succeed as a shared house without making it manage a dairy farm as a business as well. No one seems to have ever doubted the wisdom of this position. Besides, my father adored the farm operation, in spite of the headaches that it caused him. As noted earlier, a few years before the Corporation was formed, the main barn building

had burned to the ground. My father had to be deeply committed to the farm to want to rebuild. He took the opportunity to modernize operations with a different design. Moving the cow barn away from hay storage was one way to protect against fires in the future. The new barn was a long, low building that created a farm-style courtyard of buildings surrounding a central area where all the roads came together and anyone near the farmhouse could readily see most of what was happening.

View from the Farm Pond southward across the night pasture toward the cow barn with two silos and one haymaker circa 1970.

The farm had specialized in breeding Guernsey cows for generations. As a result, my father favored Guernseys over other breeds—when it came to cows, my liberal-minded father was not a broadly tolerant man. His passion for Guernseys bordered on bovine racism! On every other aspect of farm decisions, he listened closely to the advice of his farm managers. He relished all matters of farm decision making.

The farm experimented with corn silage for winter feed for several years in the 1950s, because experts thought it was the best food source for milk production. However, the soils at Oaklands Farm tend toward heavy clay types that erode easily when tilled and are not well suited to growing corn. After several years of that experiment, he returned to growing

perennial grasses to make both silage and hay. The first crop, which was usually ready for harvest in mid-June, was largely ensiled, meaning stored in low-oxygen environments in silos, where a fermentation process would turn the partially dried roughage into a somewhat juicy, strong-smelling and nutritious fodder. The new cow barn had two silos; some years later, an additional silo was added next to the Long Barn, and then, more recently, another huge blue one was built at the south end of the cow barn, which my mother dubbed the Halo. Next to the original silos were two steel haymakers, which never worked very well. They were domed cylinders with air holes on their sides and they were designed to store chopped hay and allow ventilation to continue its drying process. The haymakers were soon converted to storage bins for sawdust and shavings that were used as bedding for animals.

The challenge in the wet Maine climate is to get the moisture out of the grasses as quickly as possible after cutting and before rain can spoil the process of preserving the crop's nutritional value. Silage was a faster process than leaving it to dry in the field, and it was better suited to the damp ground in June and early July. Then the perennial grasses would produce a second crop later in the summer, when the weather was usually drier and it was possible to eliminate almost all the moisture to produce dry hay that could be baled and brought into the Long Barn and stored for winter feeding. Properly dried hay is excellent nutritionally; incompletely dried hay will rot and can combust spontaneously—every farmer's nightmare. Gradually, many of the fields were converted to alfalfa (a perennial grass that technically is a legume) because of its nutritional value and suitability to heavy soils.

Visitors to Oaklands have always been encouraged to be aware and respectful of the farm operations, and to appreciate the pleasures of living on an active farm by observing all activities. Milking time in the afternoon was always a highlight. There was a long cement corridor down the center of the barn with stanchions for each cow so that all were aligned side by side facing east and west, and with their tail ends pointing toward the corridor. Twice a day during the growing season, the cows would be let out to pasture after the early morning and late afternoon milkings to graze on their own before being herded back to the barn for the next milking. All winter, the cows stayed in their stanchions for five months and were fed from cement cribs that extended the length of the barn.

Cows eat an enormous amount in order to produce milk continually for 10 months straight, eating for most of the day and chewing their cud every minute in order to digest the roughage. Their milk production is highest right after calving and then tapers off by the end of 10 months. They are given a two-month rest without milking to gather their strength before calving again. Calves take nine months for gestation, so the cows needed to be bred within three months of producing their first calf in order to be ready with a new milk supply for the following year. The calves are taken away from their mothers within a week of being born so that the cow can return to production of money-making cow's milk to sell to consumers. The timetable for calving for the entire herd is best to be scattered throughout the year to keep a steady supply of milk.

Between the barn's central corridor and the stanchions was an 14-inch-wide gutter for removal of waste. Cows produce a prodigious supply of excrement. The barn design was intended to direct that into the gutters, but cows are not toilet-trainable. Their sloppy waste would splatter everywhere, and the barn reeked of it. Anyone who visited the barn for even a minute would go home with plenty of evidence of exactly where they had gone. But we Guernsey-loving Gardiners learned to love that smell. It was evidence that we cared about the farm and were not prissy urbanites who didn't understand the origins of our food products.

The farm provided all sorts of interesting diversions. The most common was a milking time visit. When I was a child, two men worked to keep three milking machines operating, starting at one end of the barn and leapfrogging down to the other end and back on the other side. It took about ten minutes for each cow to let down her milk into the stainless steel base of the milking machine, whereupon the milker would remove the machine and then pour its warm, sweet-smelling contents into a large stainless steel bucket on a portable rack in the center of the corridor. Then the second man would weigh the milk, record the amounts, and carry it into the milk room, where there were 20-gallon cans ready for storage in refrigerated, water-filled vaults once they were full. The milker would set up the machine on the next cow in line until, after about three hours, all the cows had been milked and could be released to graze again. Later, in the 1960s, a pipeline milking system was installed to pump the milk directly from the cow into a huge refrigerated tank in the milk room. This eliminated the

need for the second man and the challenge of lifting the 20-gallon cans out of the vault. Instead, the big milk tank truck came every other day to take the product away for pasteurizing and bottling.

In my day, the milkers (usually called herdsmen) always enjoyed the company of visitors, as it was otherwise a demanding and somewhat tedious, repetitive job. Kids were always treated to a squirt of milk delivered directly from the teat of a cow by the milker's hand motion from six feet away. There always was a hoe leaning close by in case some cow's waste had to be scraped off the corridor into the gutter—visitors were welcome to help with that frequent chore. The Red Sox game on the radio would be blasting throughout the barn, so you had to shout to converse with the milker, but he was always ready to answer questions and offer stories to make people want to return. At the south end of the barn were a half-dozen pens with young calves of various ages—two days to eight weeks old. They were irresistibly cute and eager to suck on fingers if anyone dared offer something that was so similar to a teat. After a few weeks, they would not only have their sandpaper-like tongues for sucking but also begin to have teeth that might hurt when fingers were offered. The calves seemed to enjoy the company of people, so everyone's visit felt very welcome. There were feral cats living in the barn too—they were welcome because, with the inevitable grain spillage, rats could be a problem. At the end of milking time, the cats would get milk to drink to keep them around. Often they would have a set of kittens for us to cuddle.

The bales of hay were stored in the Long Barn right up to the roof. During the winter the daily consumption of hay for feed would gradually create some open areas—often 20 feet high—where one could climb around, create forts, and play games. This was allowed as long as bales were not broken or caused to fall down. Rides on a tractor were a treat, and it was always interesting to see any other farm activities that might be happening. The most regular event was a trip to the farm to get milk from the big cooler. We had four-quart metal cans for this. We'd carry one up from Oaklands and fill it with a huge ladle from the tank. Then we'd put the rich, raw, "golden Guernsey" milk into the refrigerator for the night. By the next morning, four inches of cream would have risen to the top. One could ladle this out for special uses, like on cereal or to make butter in the churn.

For anyone who came to Oaklands near the end of mud season, there was an annual performance that was highly entertaining. After the grass had started to grow again, the cows could be let out to pasture for the first time in months. They had been restricted to their individual stanchions for so long that their leg muscles must have been screaming for activity. Uncle Charlie and his family were at Oaklands in April 1968 for a long weekend, and he recorded this entry in the log:

> *"The main extracurricular event was the spring springing of the cows. Jimmy Shores had kindly delayed this from Friday till Saturday, so that more of the family could see it. That was worse for the cows because Saturday was quite cold and wet, but they performed well, just the same. The first cow out paused at the door for the classic sniff, then leapt over an imaginary fence (or moon). After release, they worked off some bottled up aggressions in butting matches. Jimmy put them in again after an hour or so to avoid any muscular hangovers"*

Cows often have health problems, and getting the vet to come to treat them was an expense and took time to occur. One day when Michele was staying at Hallowell House with Grandma, the cows were turned out to pasture for the first time in the field between the Farmhouse and Hallowell House. That field was planted with alfalfa. Cows are sensitive to rapid changes in diet, and the sudden richness of the alfalfa disturbed their complex digestive systems. Michele recalls that Grandma noticed that many cows were lying down in the sun—unusual behavior for them—and appeared bloated. She notified Jimmy, who immediately diagnosed the problem and realized that he could not wait for the vet to arrive. The cows' stomachs had produced gas that collected inside them with no means of relief. One cow was in such critical condition that Jimmy had to stab her in just the right place to save her life. A geyser of pressurized body fluids shot into the air, but the cow lived. I remember always noticing the scar on that cow—she carried it forever.

One other type of special occasion sometimes required a vet, and it usually stimulated yet another Oaklands charade on the topic. When a calf was about to be born in the barn and Jimmy knew there were family members in Oaklands, he would offer a chance to view the birth. Everyone in

Oaklands would gather to watch for the next hour or three hours to see the miracle of birth. The mother was somewhat put off by the crowd, so we had to be very quiet and still until the cow stopped nervously pacing in circles. Eventually the cow would lie down and start to heave and push. A cow's labor is intense and probably quite painful. Of course, none of the kids had ever seen anything give birth, so we would be transfixed. Sometimes Jimmy would have to reposition the calf to allow it to come through the birth canal. A proper delivery had the front legs come first with the head tucked under, so the little hooves would be the first parts to emerge. Sometimes Jimmy would be worried about the cow's or the calf's welfare during a long labor, and he would reach deep inside to grab the front hooves and just pull the calf into this world. Even without such complications, a calf's birth provided plenty of drama and wonder for us all. As soon as the calf dropped, the mother would stand up and lick the calf until it started to breathe on its own. Within the hour, the calf would miraculously be standing up on its own and begin to suckle. If Oaklands was hosting a house party of teenagers when such a birth event occurred, as happened once to me, it was the highlight of the weekend.

My father and Jimmy Shores with the grand champion Guernsey cow at the Windsor Fair.

My father was pleased when Jimmy Shores, the farm manager, said he wanted to enter agricultural competitions at regional fairs. At first, he took a few cows to the Windsor Fair, where they had to stay for five days and nights to qualify for the judging of bovine beauty. The cattle judging occurred late in the week, but the fair operators wanted the livestock there for the entire time so that visitors could see them every day. The fair was held in the first week of September, so it aligned nicely with the family's

annual gathering. Usually there were five or six other Guernsey herds represented—far fewer than the number of Holsteins—so the competition was real but not overpowering. Over the years, Jimmy raised Oaklands Farm's standing to a solid first place year after year. Jimmy also took the animals to Skowhegan for the official statewide fair in some years. My father and I, and possibly a few other family members, would get to help with the presentation in the judges' ring when the judging for "get-of-sire" or other groupings of cattle called for three or five cows in one bunch, and all needed to be held by a halter. My father also took great pride in winning the Green Pastures award for the best field conditions in the county, as judged by a panel of county agricultural agents. The Corporation's president's reports are full of references to such achievements, as everyone could see and understand Oaklands's close association with the farm.

Producing milk demands several workers to cover 12 hours of milking every day of every year, with no holidays. As labor costs increased, mechanization shrank the number of men who were full-time employees from six to four. In the 1970s and '80s, many Maine farms gradually were consolidated so that the machinery costs could be spread over more acres each year. This put more and more stress on the remaining employees, and it became more difficult to retain good workers, who might typically be offered sick days, overtime, five-day-work-weeks, and vacations if they went into a different line of work.

In 1977, Jimmy Shores had a serious heart attack and could not function as farm manager any longer. It took the better part of a year to find a replacement. Fortunately, Nat was between college and law school, and he spent the fall, winter, and spring on the farm, where with Jimmy's guidance he oversaw the farmhands' work to keep the operation afloat until a new manager could be hired. Pat Berends was that new manager. He was a loyal and dedicated man, but he could not overcome the increasing economic pressures on farms. As milking operations consolidated and transportation efficiencies made markets national in scope, not local, the retail value of a quart of milk dropped below half of that for the same amount of Coke or ginger ale. Dietary experts claimed that consuming a lot of dairy products caused cholesterol overload that led to people's heart attacks. Demand for milk from high-butterfat cows, such as Guernseys, dropped in favor of the lower-fat milk of Holsteins. All of the farm's expense categories were

rising, while the price that the farmer received for milk declined, year after year. It became harder and harder to stay in business.

When my father died in 1984, the farm property was turned into a trust with my mother and her five children (me and my siblings) as beneficiaries. We were able to see the financial records for the first time—my father would never engage in talk about farm finances—and we discovered that losses had been accumulating for years. My father had just covered them in order to keep his beloved farm going, even as an expensive hobby. We were determined to explore ways to make the farm more efficient and to consider other crops, breeds, or any alternative strategies that made sense.

We traveled around New England to look at some of the best farm operations that the state agricultural agents could recommend. After several years of this, we had to conclude, however reluctantly, that further investment in dairy farming required a fully engaged owner-operator. This was beyond our ability to do, either with some profit or as a break-even operation, and, therefore, it would be unwise to continue. On behalf of the Farm Trust trustees, I wrote to the members of the Corporation in early 1990:

> *"In January we made the decision that we have to sell the herd and go out of the dairy business. The decision has been particularly difficult because we all have such a great attachment to dairying and realize, as all of you do, that without cows Oaklands will seem a very different place. But the limitations of our land, the decline of dairying in Kennebec County, the lack of trained labor, and dozens of other factors beyond our control led us to this as the only prudent choice. We are currently working on a plan for how we will manage the farm properties in the absence of an active dairy operation.... Phyllis and Logan are proposing to move into the farmhouse to actively oversee the farm operations."*

*Chapter 9*

# The Second Generation Steps Up
(1985-2006)

MY FATHER'S DEATH NOT ONLY TRIGGERED drastic changes in the farm, but also totally changed the Corporation as well. He died not long after several other family members. Aunt Camilla died in 1979 of lung cancer; Grandma died in 1980 at the age of 91; Uncle John died of heart problems in 1983; and my father died in 1984. Thus four of the seven men and women who had been the backbone of the corporation were suddenly gone within a five-year period.

Replacing them as directors radically changed the character of the board. I was already a director, and Ian was elected to the board in 1981 to take the place of Uncle Henry, who had decided to step down because of distance. Then my mother was elected as a director to fill Uncle John's slot after his death. Phyllis was elected to fill my father's slot two years later. Thus within a few short years, generational transfer of responsibility simply happened. My president's report in 1985 said:

> *"My father founded the Oaklands Corporation in 1959 as a way to share his inheritance with the rest of his family and to preserve the estate for future generations. In so doing, he demonstrated the vision, generosity, and caring for his family that were characteristic of his whole life. He guided the corporation and the Gardiner family to create a new tradition*

*that blended old-fashioned values with a modern outlook on the world—owned equally by everyone interested and willing to invest their efforts to make it succeed.*

*"My father never knew exactly how the corporation would turn out. Yet his fundamental optimism and confidence in others led him to believe that it would work somehow. He gave generously of his own money and sweat in hopes that his example would inspire others to do so. His was a formidable example to follow. He wanted everyone to care for Oaklands as deeply as he did and to share his appreciation of strong family ties. During the 25 years of house sharing, Corporation meetings, New Years celebrations, and many other large gatherings of family and friends, his vision of the Corporation has gradually taken root in other members."*

I remember asking my father, some years before he died, how he envisioned the Corporation working after he and his generation were no longer with us. I will never forget his answer. He simply said, "I really don't know. It will be up to your generation to figure that out."

In preparing to write this book, I researched how Grandpa had decided to convey the entire estate to his eldest son, Bob. I was surprised to learn, as stated in Bob's letter to his siblings, that Grandpa had expressed his belief that individual ownership of Oaklands would not be possible in the years after World War II, and that it would be good for Bob to figure out how to share the place with his siblings in a way that seemed feasible. Despite that, Grandpa left it all to his eldest son, because he felt that decisiveness was needed to manage the estate and that one person ought to have that responsibility. But his advice to Bob was that he should figure out how sharing Oaklands might be possible. In other words, he saw the direction that seemed likely but did not try to answer the question himself. He believed that each generation had to find an answer to fit its own unique situation. The message that I received from my father was, therefore, precisely the same as the message that he had received from his father: "Figure it out."

One major difference was that my father had to figure it out by himself, with whatever advice he might have sought from others. My generation had

to figure out our solution as a group of 12 members of the Corporation who were from two very different generations and with 10 other potential members, counting only those in my generation of cousins.

In addition, there were a large number of unsettling questions about the future feasibility of the Corporation. The major questions (from my perspective and making use of hindsight) were:

How should we as a group govern the Corporation after my father's death, since during his life he had guided the process pretty much by himself for the first two decades. Could the finances be altered or supplemented to cover the Corporation's expenses, and how could it manage when the Oaklands Trust would expire within about a decade? How could the users of the house—a number that seemed certain to grow exponentially—resolve the need for usage standards and terms that would be fair to all and properly protect the house at the same time? How could we solve the house's structural problems, including roof leaks, collapsing walls, and rotting windows and beams, and keep it within our ability to pay? What should we do with the portraits and other valuable furnishings to preserve them in a house that was far below museum standards and used by so many different people?

These issues were interrelated and, therefore, could not easily be settled by handling them one at a time. In the next era, which lasted for about 20 years and into the 21st century, the family grappled with every one of these issues every year until something close to consensus was found for each one. The story of how we eventually settled those questions is best told by dealing with each of the five issues separately, but one must keep in mind that each one's resolution depended on the members finding answers that were compatible with all of the other issues. A further complication was that the house already needed expensive repairs and replacement of furnishings and equipment that were wearing out. Paying for such urgent needs was already driving our budget into the red. Solving all these problems was a tall order.

*Chapter 10*

# New Governance

FOR THE FIRST ISSUE OF GOVERNANCE, there was an existing structure as a place to start, even if changes were needed. The bylaws had already been changed from the original lifetime terms for members to election or reelection for terms of one year at a time, to go along with the election or reelection of directors annually, as well. The bylaws were clear that the members elect a board of five directors, and that those directors are responsible for almost all decisions. Thus it fell to the directors to organize themselves to deliver new levels of engagement to meet the needs.

My mother had been performing half of the role of "Actually" for many years by managing most of the house decisions in company with my father. She had recently become the assistant treasurer as well. So initially, the Corporation made no quick changes in the way it operated. It just retired the term "Actually" in favor of "manager."

For the first two years, I joined my mother as co-manager of the house, until she chose to step back from the role, leaving me as the sole manager. The manager's role was ill-defined at the time, but was generally interpreted as being the individual who was responsible for implementation of the directors' decisions, although the directors had not been called on to make very many decisions until this time. The manager was expected to handle independently any issues that were too insignificant to be taken to

the directors, and in practice this had been most commonly the case. This unclear distinction left plenty of room for disagreement over where the line between those processes should be drawn. It was not until years later that a more formal job description for the manager was finally adopted.

As I was holding the offices of president and manager at the same time, I had virtually stepped into my father's previous role of doing just about everything. However, I and everyone else knew that a new definition for sharing responsibility needed to be found. Other members and directors, particularly my mother and Uncle Charlie, would not want a continuation of the old system of one-man control. So the board of directors began to be more deeply engaged in a broader range of decisions.

While my father was alive, my parents stressed the importance of proving one's value through hard work and making the next generation earn responsibility. They insisted that we learn more and more before being given larger roles. Attendance at the annual meeting was a way to show that interest and to learn. Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, participation levels in the annual meetings of members and directors had been rising. With more of the next generation present at these meetings, they became full-day sessions with long discussions and expressions of various opinions, all of which led to considerable education for everyone about the house's needs and how to meet them. The era of clubby, efficient business management evolved into a more open, questioning, and participatory process that took much longer. Annual meetings became all work, all day, until dinner time.

When I became president, the board began to turn to ad hoc committees to help the directors address a few difficult issues where the solutions were not easily found and to make progress in between board meetings. The idea was to pick a few people with the time, knowledge, and commitment to dig deeper and offer solutions, thereby allowing the full board to concentrate on broader issues such as long-range planning. This also became an avenue for non-directors to contribute in significant ways. I appointed two committees in 1980: one to address the addition of new members, and one to recommend ways to reduce our very expensive fuel bills. Both committees included a mix of directors and others.

The Energy Committee took several years to do its work. In 1983 it offered a plan to insulate in the attic spaces, add storm windows on the

first floor, and make other improvements for winter use of the house. The committee spelled out its thinking and its recommendations in great detail, which made it easy for the directors to adopt and fund the plan. This committee demonstrated the value of breaking off certain matters and putting them into the hands of a small, qualified group to find ways to move forward. Over the next few years more and more committees were charged with other tasks, in order to keep the decision processes moving.

The Membership Committee started work at about the same time but had a thornier task. For years my parents had preached on the concept of limiting membership to a small number of people who used the houses, who spent considerable time at Oaklands, and who lived close enough to both attend meetings and use the house frequently. This was the Corporation's established culture. My parents set very high expectations for members and were comfortable with having a very elite few make decisions on behalf of everyone else. For years no new members were elected until there was a legal need for one to meet the minimum requirement of seven. Alison had taken Aunt Alice's place as the seventh member in 1963, and she had remained the only member from our generation for seven years.

Aunt Fran had not attended a meeting in over a decade and decided to resign and shift to associate member status in 1970. As described previously, this created an opening that led to the election of Ian, Holly, Denny, and me as new members. After that, additions came slowly and were only from the families of Bob, John, and Charlie. Other cousins were considered to be not geographically close, involved, or informed enough to qualify. While those few of us in the next generation were brought in gradually as members, use of Oaklands was not offered to us.

The new Membership Committee in 1980 was charged with recommending new standards for deciding when someone was ready to be proposed as a new member and to address the differences between membership and house user status. The idea that usage and membership were closely related seemed logical. This was expressed as, "It doesn't make much sense to be a member of a club and not be allowed to use the clubhouse." It took a long time and a great deal of effort to figure out how to treat those categories independently. The Membership Committee struggled to find alternative rationales that would work and that could be agreed upon. The differences of opinion between the generations made

consensus recommendations nearly impossible, leaving the Corporation stagnant throughout the 1980s. Membership and the list of approved users didn't change. When younger cousins reached adulthood they were elected only as associate members, joining the Peters, Uncle Ben, and various non-descendants all together in that category. Those cousins had every reason to question whether Oaklands membership would ever be attainable for them.

What would change this eventually? As we will see in a later chapter, the house's structural problems became more serious and the solutions more expensive, year by year throughout the 1990s. We established Long Range Planning Committees to look at how we could anticipate our needs for expenses and fit those within our financial capabilities. As anyone who has worked with nonprofit organizations knows, "long range planning" usually leads to a major capital fundraising campaign. Oaklands Corporation was no exception, but our approach was different. Our building repair needs and the knowledge that the end of the Oaklands Trust was getting closer and closer gradually brought people to recognize that the family's thinking about membership needed to shift. The concept of including as full members everyone who took enough interest to attend annual meetings and to become more knowledgeable about the house, independent of their being approved to the house on their own, gradually became accepted.

This shift was aided by the useful participation of a larger and larger number of people who served on committees, who planned reunions, who stayed in the house, and who demonstrated commitment in other ways. New leadership, especially from David, who had become chairman of the Membership Committee and who then later, when he was president, formed the Long Range Planning Committee, gradually changed the opinions of those family members who had for many years followed the advice of my father. This shift made a big difference to the Peters and Ben Gardiners, many of whom had felt uncomfortable about their lesser connections to the Oaklands Corporation because of their distance from Gardiner and the difficulties of becoming approved, regular users.

With this change in approach, Christine, Nicole, and Claire moved from being associates to full members, and Uncle Ben's three surviving children, Diana, Frankie, and Peter, became associates. Soon thereafter the third generation started to become old enough to be elected associates

once they reached the age of 25 years. All of this took several decades, but the shift from a small membership of dedicated users and workers to an inclusive embrace of everyone in the family who showed interest eventually came about. By the time that Nat was elected president to succeed David in 2007, in his remarks about David's service Nat declared that David would be remembered as "the Inclusion President."

The board of directors changed less dramatically. Their workload increased, so their meetings grew from one or two per year to five or six in some years. New committees were formed to take on one task after another, from nominating members and directors, to managing investments, to exterior repairs on the house, and to overseeing the care of Pond House. Gradually, most of these committees became standing committees, and they gained experience and strength as they worked together on the same issues year after year. These committees also proved good ways to engage new members and associates in the functioning of the Corporation. The directors focused on managing the budgets, usage, urgent matters and long-range planning. The directors retained oversight of and final decisions on all committees and their recommendations, but largely endorsed their work to the extent that the budget allowed.

Around this time the Membership Committee morphed into the Nominating Committee. As that committee became a regular feature in the process of preparing for the annual meeting, it began to consider how to distribute the five slots on the board of directors and how to prepare people for taking on higher levels of responsibility. With the children of five of the original members of the Corporation now active as members and associates, there was reason to spread the director seats more broadly than just among the Bob, John, and Charlie descendants. Then there was interest in beginning to include members of the third generation. Countering the pressure to be inclusive was the feeling that directors need to be on site with some frequency, to be in close touch with the house and farm, and to have institutional memory —not to mention having executive and business abilities as well. All of the original members in the first generation had stayed on as directors until death or remoteness caused them to resign. Phyllis was the first of the next generation to rotate off the board voluntarily, Ian was the second, and I was the third, followed by Christine, Holly, Denny, and others. We chose to resign our seats as directors after serving

many years in order to provide opportunities for others to take their turn and for deeper engagement. The Nominating Committee had to include all of these factors into their decisions.

Another critical governance need is to have someone who is well qualified and ready to take the reins as the next president. I served for seven years from 1980 to 1987, and then Ian took over. After five years, Ian resigned and Uncle Charlie took a second turn as president—this time with full powers! After Charlie, David became president, followed eventually by Nat and then Gordon. Fortunately every one of these presidents gave enormous amounts of time to attend to the needs of both family and corporate matters and had the leadership skills to help us all make progress. We now have a written job description that nicely spells out the many expectations of the president.

In 1997, following a large family reunion, Christine published a compilation of the records of when each person was a member, director, user, or officer of the Corporation, to help everyone keep track of the growing family involvement. She also included a complete list of changes to the bylaws over time and some history about the Corporation, which is a useful source of information that is available to everyone. The purpose was to provide a handbook for family members who had not grown up fully involved in the Corporation .

The official records of the Corporation are maintained by the Corporation's clerk. This was another of my father's roles for the first 24 years, and Phyllis took over for the next 40 (and still counting). These include minutes of all annual membership and directors' meetings, as well as some committee reports, president's reports, and other important and interesting documents. The clerk's skill in capturing the right information and conveying it through the minutes provides some transparency to the inner workings of the Corporation and keeps people well informed.

Two limitations of relying on corporate minutes for communication are that they are always backward-looking and the time that it takes for ratification by the directors at their next meeting. This leaves everyone unaware for many months of what has happened recently and what are upcoming issues. When my father, Uncle Charlie, David, and I were presidents, we often sent out informal president's reports following meetings and sometimes in advance of them. I believe this practice was very

valuable. Both Holly and I, when we were the manager, wrote summaries of the year's activities for everyone to read before the annual meeting. This also greatly helped provide the background for better-informed discussions at meetings and more complete records of how matters were being handled outside of meetings. Communication to inform everyone so that they know when to participate in various ways has always seemed to me to be crucial to the successful workings of the Corporation.

The role of manager of Oaklands grew out of my father's role of the "Actually" into something that everyone could understand and accept, but it took a while to figure out the specifics. The Nominating Committee finally adopted a job description for this role in 2009. It is basically an unpaid executive director role that implements the budget and other directors' decisions, oversees the caretaker position, serves as liaison with the farm and community, coordinates usage schedules with the president, supervises the cleaning crews, and just about every other detail of taking care of a large house that is loaded with small needs that must be attended to but no one else even sees. It can be very challenging when there are large renovation projects in play, during preparations for big events such as weddings, around annual meeting times, and especially when there is a problem with the caretaker or cleaning crew. I know because I encountered all of these situations in my 12 years as manager. I was able to cover most of the areas of responsibility, but in the area of housekeeping standards and techniques, Anne was an invaluable extra asset. She not only supervised the house cleaners but also made sure that the linens were clean and replaced when necessary, and she would either donate replacement linens or make a cash donation to cover a need without asking for anyone's help.

By 1997, I decided that it was time to turn the manager's role over to someone else when I realized that I was tired of being at the center of everything. Frankly I was also getting frustrated by the challenges of keeping the caretaker at the time productive and accountable without being at Oaklands several times per week. Fortunately, Holly was ready to step up to the position because she was spending more time at Orchard House and could provide closer oversight of Red than I. She held the job for nearly 20 years before encountering similar fatigue. She then split the job, first with Nat's help in overseeing the caretaker Shane Condon's activities for several years, and then with Phyllis on everything else, until Phyllis took over the

manager's role in 2020. Phyllis still relies on Holly to help with gardens and housekeeping matters.

Each manager brings a different skill set to the position, and Holly is a good example. While every manager must take care of the major tasks and business needs, Holly put a new focus on interior details. She could sew well and used that skill to replace the decaying fabric on the East Room bed canopy. Then she taught herself how to reupholster furniture and applied those new skills to the Library chairs and other pieces in the upstairs bedrooms. Few people knew about her extra work—some of which occurred after handing off the manager's role—but her efforts made a huge difference in the condition of the interior of the house. Another example was the extra care she took to juggle usage schedules during the COVID pandemic to assure that people could use the house to the greatest extent while meeting the need to keep everyone safe. In addition, both Holly and I had the important assistance of Logan Johnston, Phyllis's husband, as a person who was on the farm every day and who would help in many situations when we could not be on site. Although there is benefit to dividing parts of the job among several people, we found that, in the late 2010s, a problem of too much division had left everyone else confused about who was responsible for which functions. When Phyllis stepped up to provide a higher level of coordination between the Oaklands co-managers and the caretaker and farm staff, we corrected that problem.

Having a family member willing to do the manager's job and do it well is, in my opinion, essential to the Corporation's success. I cannot imagine being able to hire anyone to handle this multifaceted role, which requires wide-ranging knowledge of housekeeping maintenance and repair matters, as well as being sensitive to the varying wishes and opinions of many different family members. It demands sensitivity to family issues, transparency, management skills, practicality, collaboration, and good communication. It is inevitably quite time-consuming as well. Succession in this position will be one of the most important questions about the future that the next generation will have to "figure out" for themselves.

*Chapter 11*

# House Usage by My Generation

As described earlier, I was the first of my generation to become a user of the house in 1980—but without formal permission. I never passed any test devised by the first generation, because they would not devise a test or establish any other clear criteria. My usage was quietly accepted, but no one else was allowed user status for five more years. Finally, a Usage Committee offered a simple set of standards recommending that any new user must be at least 30 years old and be judged responsible, be limited to eight occupants in the first two "provisional uses," and have their housekeeping standards reviewed by my mother. She was respected as the most knowledgeable user with the highest standards for maintaining the house. She was renowned for her readiness to run the vacuum cleaner and put everything away in its proper place. The idea was that every new user would be so motivated to pass my mother's cleanliness and orderliness tests that the house would somehow survive unscathed. This plan was adopted as the new basis for allowing new users, and the directors continued to be charged with screening all candidates in advance and ruling whether each one was qualified. At long last, a way for my generation to use Oaklands had been adopted. Eventually we even developed written guidelines and provided helpful information for users of the house.

Over the next few years, different people developed fairly regular usage patterns, which seemed to allow more members to use the house

when they wanted without encountering much difficulty in getting their first choices. Anne and I would take much of July, except every few years when most of the Peter family would come to be together at Oaklands for a week or two. Uncle Charlie and Holly took turns in early August, with Denny taking it in late August. Sadly, the traditional big family gathering around Labor Day ended after the death of Grandma. Ian sometimes used the house in October for hunting parties, Phyllis for Thanksgiving, my mother at Christmas with her children and grandchildren, and Uncle Charlie for New Year's weekend. Other uses and users were frequent but lacked any coherent patterns. The Peters had family gatherings every few years; people had house parties for their kids; and the Ben Gardiners began to take it for family gatherings as well.

Everyone was respectful about giving each user an equal opportunity, and the president tried to manage reservations so that people who had used it less recently had higher priority in cases of overlapping requests. Lead times for reservations were limited to three months at first, and then that changed to six months, with even longer lead times when reserving for major events like weddings and family reunions. Happily, we discovered that the problem of having a larger number of approved users did not mean that one could not get a reservation when one wanted.

During this period, younger members and associate members were strongly encouraged to use Pond House and the Bandbox as houses to enjoy without needing to be approved as Oaklands users. But Pond House was used only lightly and the Bandbox was used hardly at all for many years, to the consternation of more senior members who wanted to see their use by younger family members. Eventually, as more new members and associates reached more mature ages, they began to make more use of them. Pond House gradually became a popular place to stay, and the experience of using it well became a way to demonstrate readiness for Oaklands usage. It also developed appetites within the next generation for the Corporation's continuance and enthusiasm for the experience of living on Oaklands Farm.

When my mother withdrew from her Oaklands roles around 1990, there was no heir apparent for her housekeeping oversight, so her part of the qualification process lost emphasis. As manager I was charged with oversight of users. Somehow the house survived, although wear and

tear and breakage were unavoidable. It became easier to become qualified as a user as years went on, until it has become routine that, upon reaching the age of 30, permission is almost assured. Still, the old requirement that the first two uses are provisional and must be limited to a small number of guests remains, as a way to introduce new users to the magnitude of the job of moving in and out successfully and taking care that kids and adults maintain standards of civilized behaviors to protect the house with its antiques and its old-fashioned facilities, before they try to host larger groups.

Uncles Ben, Henry, and Charlie with Aunt Jane at the 1999 reunion.

In 1992 the family decided to have the first official family reunion in July at Oaklands for all the descendants of RHG IV and Grandma. Family members came from all corners of the globe for a three-day weekend of activities, games, meals, expeditions, dancing, and social time together. Everyone had such a good time and thought it had been such a good idea that we agreed we should do this again. It had the additional advantage that it strengthened the family bonds between the different branches and their connection through the Oaklands Corporation. The effects of this and subsequent reunions are hard to overestimate, especially when one looks back in hindsight at the way everyone's participation slowly evolved in this era. Additional reunions were held in 1999, 2006, 2012, and 2022.

In each case, some family members who had been least involved in corporate matters made the greatest effort and commitment of time to travel great distances to participate. Many of them served on the planning committees for these reunions and were among the most enthusiastic participants. They demonstrated to all that there are important ways to show commitment to the family besides attending annual meetings.

Family members' other uses also evolved in many other ways, as families gathered for birthdays, anniversaries, and, of course, weddings. Claire and Jack gathered old friends from all over the world to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary in 1992. Uncle Charlie and Aunt Jane celebrated their 50th anniversary with a big family dinner in 2003. Elizabeth was married in 2011, and by then the next generation had already started to take their turn, led by Jennifer and then followed by my daughter Kate, Ian Burnes, Laura, Avery, Anna, and Philip. All of these big parties required tents on the lawn—either on the southwest side and accessed through the south door or on the east side with access through the center window of the Music Room to a platform with stairs down to ground level. Every different way to modify the house for big events seemed to work equally well. Ian and Gillian's wedding faced a particularly different challenge, as it was held during the major renovation project in 2004. The day of the rehearsal dinner a torrential rain turned the newly seeded lawn to mud puddles, so many attendees wore rubber boots to the wedding the next day. This was another reminder that everything at Oaklands is more about family than fanciness.

Claire, cutting the cake in the shape of Oaklands at the 1999 reunion, with (L-R) Charlotte, Christian, and Dan Burnes watching.

Anne and I hosted several other large events. When I was chairman of the National Wildlife Federation in 1992, we invited the board and senior

staff, who were conducting their summer meeting in Portland, to have dinner in a big tent on the lawn. It was a lovely mild evening, and the featured attraction was Senator Ed Muskie. Muskie had been the leader of the entire Congress on environmental matters for years, but his support for a large dam project in northern Maine had driven a wedge between him and many environmentalists. By this time, that project had been dropped and he had retired from public office. The dinner was an opportunity to patch up the relationship, as NWF gave him a lifetime achievement award. Oaklands was a perfect setting for such a momentous event.

We also hosted political fundraising dinners for Governor Joe Brennan and Senate candidate Libby Mitchell in other years. These were hugely successful because the invitees wanted to see Oaklands and were willing to make a handsome contribution to be there. An additional benefit was that one attendee was an art curator and dealer, and he ultimately played a pivotal role in the sale of Dr. Silvester's portrait many years later, as a result of being there for a party. For these events we removed the furniture from the Music Room and seated 52 people in the Dining and Music rooms, with cocktails in the front hall. Phyllis and Logan also hosted fundraising events for Johnson Hall that followed the same model.

Throughout these years, the more traditional ways of using Oaklands remained much the same. Big fir trees were brought in from the woods for Christmas until some plantings of young balsam firs began to provide more shapely trees that had been grown out in the open in plots behind Pond House and on the side of Mt. Tom. At New Year's Eve, whoever took the house maintained the Father Time tradition—everyone seemed to want a turn in the role. Unfortunately, the New Year's baby role has always been a harder sell, and in some years was left vacant.

In warm seasons the tennis court was used heavily. My parents had always said that the court just needed some calcium chloride to bind the surface followed by rolling with the large iron roller with the two extra weights hanging inside on the axle. I can still remember the rhythmic clanking sound of those weights as someone rolled the court up and down. But no matter how often we rolled it, the court always surprised players with wild bounces off of pebbles and tapes. Tennis at Oaklands required a sense of humor.

I was friends with Fred Woolworth, who lived in New York and spent summers at his family's estate in Monmouth on Lake Cobbossee. They had a beautiful clay tennis court and employed a resident tennis pro to give lessons and take care of the court. The pro told me how a court should be built and maintained during a visit to see ours. He said that we had a good base at Oaklands, but we needed lots of proper surface material on top, and that frequent watering was essential as a binder. One summer I took it upon myself to resurface one side of the court—I didn't have enough time to do both sides! It was a great opportunity to see how much the court could be improved, as everyone wanted to play on the new side. After we did the other side the following year, the improvements reduced the home-court advantage for family members who knew how to prepare for wild bounces. Subsequently Nat assumed responsibility for the court and in addition to doing the annual maintenance also has added inventive automatic watering systems so that the court can be ready for play at any time. Rolling took a back seat to watering as the key element of maintenance.

Another improvement for users was the installation of a dock on the river. Before 1900, in the days of sailing ships and icehouses on the river, there had been a large, permanent pier built on a huge rock pile on the shore in front of Oaklands. A spring flood in 1936 washed it away. By the time of my childhood, the waters of the Kennebec had become disgustingly polluted by the human waste of upriver cities and the heavy load of organic matter from pulp and paper mills. Senator Muskie had written both the Clean Water and the Clean Air Acts in the 1970s, and after two decades of treating sewage in modern plants and annual spring river floods that scoured the bottom, the river was becoming cleaner. I remember splitting firewood on Birch Hill early in the spring of 1983 and noticing that the color of the river was clear blue, while the Hollow, where we swam, was bright green with algae fed by all of the cow manure nutrients from pastures of the farm. I decided right then and there that we needed a dock in the river for swimming.

Happily the directors understood the reasoning and delegated the design and construction to Dan Burnes and me. We determined that we needed a design that would allow removal every winter to avoid losing the dock to ice and floods. This meant building the dock in sections that could be moved into place on top of the old rock pile and bolted together, with a

long ramp to reach a float that would extend beyond the low-tide line and operate within a 10-foot tidal range every day. The final product was built of wood and styrofoam blocks in the Oaklands parking area, in about 12 sections, some of which took three or four strong backs to lift. A lot of people contributed labor to the job. To everyone's delight the design worked wonderfully. We had to tinker with the anchoring system to keep the float in position during upstream and downstream current conditions and covering the tidal range, but we learned. The final touch was to mow a curved path through the Mt. Tom pasture that followed the contours of Birch Hill down to the River Road to connect the dock to the house.

Almost everyone seemed to like the river for swimming better than the ponds. There is no rope swing, but the tidal flow provides a new wrinkle to swimming, as well as some danger for anyone who is not a strong swimmer. For those who are strong , the challenge is to swim across the river and back—we recommend that this be done only in large groups for safety, as about 20 of us did at one reunion. It was a first time for all, and it felt great to reconnect Oaklands to the river that had originally made the site attractive to RHG I nearly 200 years earlier, and where our Tudor family ancestors had cut and preserved ice blocks made of fresh, clean water in the 19th century to put on clipper ships and sell throughout the Western Hemisphere.

*Chapter 12*

# House Repairs

FOR THE FIRST 15 YEARS AFTER MY FATHER inherited Oaklands, he had to cover major expenses like the replacement of the dairy barn, the failure of the north wall of Oaklands, and the clean-up of the charred remains of the stable. Thus, when the Corporation was formed, there was already a long list of needed repairs and refurbishments to the house that had been deferred. Over the Corporation's first two decades, when my parents' generation was in complete control, every year it would approve painting a room, repairing some furniture, replacing an appliance, or other needs that were often long overdue. The one time that rule did not apply was 1970, in preparation for Holly's wedding, when my parents pulled out all of the stops. The CHERMS committee (led by my mother and helped by Aunts Camilla and Janie) assumed responsibility for directing the painting of walls and woodwork on the first floor and repapering several upstairs bedrooms, we replaced the old black linoleum floor covering in the front hall with imitation wood parquet flooring, and the garden was redesigned and refreshed by my mother. All of these improvements made a dramatic difference in the house's general appearance. But the most constant refrain in the annual meeting minutes for every other year of that era was roof leaks and the various attempts to stop them. During this era, it seemed that half of the kitchen's many baking pans, aluminum foil pans, and bowls were distributed around the

attic spaces under the eaves to catch rainwater before it did damage to the finished parts of the house.

The roof on Oaklands is complex, in part because the house is simply so big that there are many different sections, and in part because of complications with the addition of the third floor in 1900 and its partial removal in 1957. Over the years, we would repair or replace one section with certain materials, and then some years later do another section with different materials that we thought would be more effective. Thus by 1985, we had rolled asphalt over the flat center section, sloped slate roofing over the southwest eave, rubber roofing next to the skylight, asphalt shingles on the north slope, and metal gutters where the sections came together. Oaklands has about 24 chimneys, which penetrate the roofline and require good flashing to keep the water out. With all of these changes in slope, direction, and materials, there were many points of stress that were vulnerable to leaks. In addition, it became clearer over time that the crenellations (the upright and evenly spaced stones that sit on the edges of the roof) were causing many problems because of the rigor of Maine winters. The building's architect, Upjohn, grew up in England and lacked knowledge of the severity of Maine winters and the kind of ice formations that could impede the drainage of snowmelt. He received the Oaklands commission soon after his arrival in America. During our winter usage of the house in more modern times, the improved indoor heating would allow heat to rise into the attic spaces and melt the snow on the roof from underneath, causing runoff toward the edge of the roof. Under relatively common Maine weather conditions, it could be cold enough for that snowmelt to refreeze as ice behind the crenellations, where the roof flattened and where the lack of insulation beneath the edge created a colder surface. After several days of these conditions, ice dams would form and back up the liquid snowmelt so that it might flow back under the shingles. Similarly, freezing and thawing effects on other parts of the roof seemed to create other stresses that led to leaks.

In the mid-1970s the global energy crisis occurred. It flipped the world upside down, leaving Saudi Arabia and Kuwait on top and Europe and the U.S. struggling to pay a lot more for their expensive oil importation habits. Energy conservation became a "thing." Everyone in Maine felt they needed to insulate their houses and/or switch to wood-fired furnaces—Oaklands

Corporation was no exception. As mentioned previously, we formed an Energy Committee (Uncle Charlie, Phyllis, and Logan), which explored the most cost-effective ways to reduce heat losses. This led us to insulate some of the attic spaces that were accessible, as well as the cellar walls—work that was done mostly by our caretaker, Red Robbins. We also put up Lexan storm windows on the inside of the regular windows to reduce air flow and heat radiation, first downstairs and later on the second floor. The committee worked creatively to design how to fit the panels tightly over the large expanses of windows and attach to their curved cabinetry details. Logan played an important role in assuring that these were installed correctly, and he was needed to help Red carry full-sized sheets of heavy Lexan from the cellar to the various rooms where they were custom-fitted. These improvements made the house easier to heat, but may have had the unintended effect of aggravating the roof melting and freezing cycle. In the main sections of the house, however, there still was no insulation at all in the walls. That lack of insulation continues to be a concern today.

In this era, winter use of Oaklands had become quite popular, especially during the holidays around Christmas, New Year's, and Martin Luther King and Presidents' Day weekends. Thus the house was heated for usage during months when ice dams were very likely to form. Once we figured this out, we tried to shovel or chip away the snow and ice dams that collected on the flat edges of the roof. Unfortunately, even that did not succeed, and it might have caused damage to the roofing materials. The next approach was to try removing some of the crenellations and see if that made any difference. That did some good, and then we were faced with deciding whether to remove only those in the most critical places or all of them, which made the house look very different and less appealing to some people. Eventually, we realized that we needed help understanding the condition of the house, the problems with the roof, and what we should do to care for it properly. We found it in Sylvanus Doughty, a local architect who had a close working relationship with a civil engineer. Together they collaborated to help us analyze what we needed to do to save energy and take care of the house. In choosing them, I think it helped that the name Sylvanus had the ring of appropriateness for Oaklands.

Syl, as we came to call him, looked at our roof problems in 1986 and noted the leaks around chimneys. The president's report to the members the next spring said,

*"To our surprise, he found that our most serious problems are not old wiring and leaky roofs, but major structural decay in the walls. In particular, he found an alarming amount of movement of the granite blocks below the chimneys on the north wall. At his recommendation last fall the directors decided to have the weight of the chimneys removed before winter; we are now on the verge of signing a contract to repair the wall and chimneys. As this work is being done Doughty will be able to see more clearly what forces are causing the problem and what the solutions might be."*

This began a 17-year-long effort to understand the structural problems of the house and what the solutions might be. The directors were intent on planning for the long term and wanted to identify the full range of needs. Doughty led us through this first of several contracts for masonry repairs with a project that cost about $20,000 and that taught us that we were probably looking at paying for a lot more. Opening the north wall was like opening Pandora's box and having the problems fly up in our faces.

There were no surviving records or drawings of the construction techniques from when the house was built in the 1830s. We did have a model of the original wood structural timbers and rafters in the attic (which became more helpful later) but nothing to tell us about the walls. What Doughty found was that the walls have a relatively thin skin of granite blocks that is not intended to support the walls, as many of us had assumed, but is attached to the brick chimney masonry behind the 20 fireplaces (which make up a large portion of the exterior walls) and to a mixture of rock rubble and mortar walls everywhere else. This makes a thick sandwich of wall that is held together by mortar and, in many places, metal pins to tie the elements together and provide the necessary strength. One vulnerability of masonry is that if water can penetrate through cracks, it will leach out the mortar's limestone binder, leaving almost nothing but loose sand that will fill the space but not bind the stones together.

A few years before Doughty came to us, we had recently hired a new caretaker, Red Robbins. We had been without a very capable caretaker for quite a while and felt that to complete the improvements that we anticipated, we needed a higher level of support. In the first years of the Corporation we had two very kind and helpful elderly caretakers, Harold Bickford and then Howard Rioux, who did the lawns, other landscaping jobs, and

minor repairs—but not much more. Between their and Red's tenure there was a decade when we had short-term and not very skilled caretakers, so that when we hired Red, we were looking for a lot more ability. Red had been a full-time carpenter and was about 50 years old. One of his first jobs was to repair decaying finish cabinetry above some windows on the first and second floors. He found a common problem among them all: wet sand was sitting on top of the window cabinetry and causing it to rot. This was our first clue that the mortar in many sections of the exterior walls might be falling apart, but we didn't learn its full meaning until Doughty could see inside the north wall. (A side note about caretakers: When Red started work, he was shown around by his predecessor, Bill Hayward. Red noticed a windowpane in the back vestibule that had cracked, with overlapping pieces of glass in one corner. When Red asked about it, Bill proudly told him that he had "patched" the glass rather than replace it. Red kept it in that condition for 15 years, he said, "until it is the last thing I do on this job." That perfectly describes the difference in what we could expect between Red and his predecessors.)

Doughty's style was very analytical and thoughtful; he spoke in a very calm and soft voice. But his news was alarming to the directors. After inspecting the other walls, he found not only rotten mortar but also indications of stone movement in several other areas. The directors wanted answers to the scope of what they were facing, and Syl would only speculate that a lot of work was needed but not all immediately. He guessed that it could be spread out over 10 to 20 years and that we might expect costs to accumulate to 10 to 15 times that of the north wall section that we had just done. Syl thought that the problem of leaks was primarily related to the chimneys, and, of course, nearly every room has a fireplace with a chimney behind it. When the north wall work began, it also exposed crumbling mortar in the brick section of the wall on the back side of the Northeast Room fireplace, in addition to the rotten mortar holding the granite stones in place.

Because granite-faced buildings are quite uncommon, most masons have no experience with the building techniques or the materials required. Syl led us to one contractor, Gordon Millett from Turner, Maine, who had recently worked on the historic Lincoln County jail renovation. He was a small contractor but was ingenious in the way he used his pickup truck

to lift and relocate heavy granite blocks with a simple pulley system. He labeled and cataloged each stone to be sure he could put them back in the same order, since each stone is a different size—unlike bricks. He kept removing stones until he found solid mortar. That was as far down as the first-floor windows in some places on the north wall. That project was completed over the summer of 1987. Our contract, and those that would follow, all specified a certain amount of expected stone block removals, and then a fixed price per additional layer of stones that might have to be removed. Once the extent of the bad mortar had been reached, the job was to replace the mortar in all exposed sections of the wall and put the granite facing stones back in place.

We learned from this first project that, when water had come in contact with the mortar, decay had set in, starting from the roofline and penetrating deep down into the walls in some areas. There had been so many roof leaks and the chimneys presented so many places for water to intrude that it was hard to say exactly where the water was getting in. There was yet another way water could form within the walls, as well. Moisture in the air within the house would condense within the walls at certain low temperatures because there was no moisture barrier in the walls. In winter, when the outside of the wall sandwich was chilled well below freezing temperatures, some water could even be frozen, and, as it expanded, the ice that formed might crack the mortar and push the stones outward. Syl and the engineer recommended that we closely monitor temperature and humidity levels in several rooms and correlate changes to the outdoor temperatures several times a day for the next few winters. They wanted us to experiment by raising the thermostat settings to different temperatures to see which combinations of room and exterior temperatures caused condensation in the walls and which avoided that outcome. To do that better, we installed a second oil furnace for the first two floors of the back section of the house, and that allowed the kitchen temperature to be independent of the rest of the house and took some heating burden off the main furnace.

After the northeast wall project, Red went up on the roof every summer to fill any vulnerable looking cracks with roofing “gunk” to try to ward off new leaks. Six years later, Doughty told us we needed to take down the four chimneys high above the back vestibule because of ongoing leaks in that area, remove the two chimneys over the kitchen due to crumbling brick

masonry beneath them, reset the buttress on the northwest corner, and repoint the stones on the west wall of the kitchen. This cost another $25,000. Unfortunately, two years later we discovered that the mortar of that last repair was crumbling to the ground. For that project, Gordon Millett's son, Keith, had taken over the business, and we subsequently concluded that, without Gordon's expertise, he had miscalculated the formula for the mortar mix and it had not adhered to the old mortar. Thus we learned that all mortar is not the same and that repairs had to match the old mortar formulas. We also learned the risk that expensive projects could fail totally, although in this case Millett did come back to do these repairs at no additional cost to us.

Removing the chimneys over the Bob and John room in 2004.

After waiting a few more years to recover financially from these expenses, Syl advised us in 1999 that it was time to address the south walls of the Office and Library and the west wall, where a very noticeable bulge in the stones outside the West Room seemed to be continuing to move outward. The initial cost estimate of $140,000 for this, without any clear sense of where we would find the end of our rebuilding expenses, left us in a quandary. This larger scale of problem needed a different kind of solution. Could we wait to find the money by selling some assets? How long might that take? And what might happen to the house if we waited too long? To buy some time, we were advised to install posts at an angle against the outside face of several stones high on the west wall to resist any further movement.

We decided to hold off on the project until we determined how to address all of these issues properly. From 1997 to 2002, the directors'

meetings minutes reflect long discussions about how we could possibly afford to pay without spending too much of our limited assets, how we might raise funds within the family or sell other assets, and how to gain confidence that we knew what the house truly needed for repairs and what they should cost.

While we had appreciated Doughty's knowledge initially, his inability to make strong recommendations or provide real cost estimates for a long-range plan were frustrating. Furthermore, he was incredibly slow to develop plans. We decided to defer further actions until we felt more comfortable that we were getting the best advice. At that time, I became the chair of the Exterior Committee, which was charged with both managing any restoration projects and developing long-range plans for repairs.

In addition to problems with the house, we knew that the bridge had many stones out of place, and we could see that its side walls were bowing outwards. Logan was asked to search for a consultant on the bridge, and through a masonry company contact he was given the suggestion to consult a young architect named Scott Whitaker in Portland. Scott came to look at the bridge and saw that there were issues with the house as well. He mentioned them to Logan, and Logan picked up on his potential. Scott specialized in all types of old buildings and had worked on several granite building restoration projects. I was charged with checking out Scott's credentials, and I readily concluded that he was well suited to guide our house repairs.

In October 2002, the Exterior Committee and the directors gathered to hear Scott outline his preliminary plan and estimate of $225,000 to $315,000 for urgently needed work. We felt confidence in his analysis and hired him to develop a comprehensive plan for those future repairs. Over the next year, as he dug deeper into the condition of the house, Scott modified his initial plan, which had primarily been focused on wall and roof problems.

He discovered, when he looked inside the house in places like the North Room fireplace and the front hall below it, that the interior plaster walls, wooden baseboards, and floorboards showed signs of significant settling due to excessive weight load. The basic design of the house includes a small space between the outer walls, which are supposed to carry the roof weight, and the separate interior wood and plaster walls, which are independently

supported by timbers that carry their weight down to the granite posts that are scattered throughout the cellar. Scott concluded that the outside ends of several roof trusses had been so dampened by leaks and/or condensation for many years that they had rotted. The angled end of the truss that is immediately under the sloped roof was supposed to carry the roof's weight onto the top of the lower horizontal rafter and side timbers, but the development of extreme rot at the junction point was causing timbers to settle or dangle, rendering them unable to perform their basic function of distributing the roof load evenly onto the exterior walls. Some trusses were just dangling like cantilevers over the outside walls, leaving the interior walls to carry all the weight.

Scott also discovered that, during the 1900 renovations to add the third floor, some parts of the roof truss system had been compromised to allow for the new rooms. He saw a need for a huge beam to be installed in the third floor along the west side of the skylight and through the spot where the shower tub stood, to provide extra support. This had the effect of splitting the third floor into two parts by partially blocking the hallway (and disrupted one of Maine's greatest showers). This structural analysis explained why our multiple roof repairs had never lasted. The roof underpinnings were simply not firmly in place. That amount of roof instability would inevitably cause cracks in any roofing materials. Scott also concluded that the mass of the west-facing granite wall above Uncle Hal's Room, which included a mass of chimney flues that rose six feet above the third-floor roofline, was putting excessive weight on the wall below it, which had been originally designed to support only the first two floors. This was exactly the same conclusion that my father's advisor had reached about the north wall of the third floor, 40 years earlier. Removing this section of wall meant having a new, sloped roof in that area which would turn the Bob and John room into attic space and make the third floor nearly useless, except for storage.

The project grew in scope throughout this planning phase. Because the truss and masonry repairs were so extensive, the entire roof appeared to need replacement. We had expected this and settled on new rubber roofing in flat areas, new asphalt shingles on the slopes where the slate was not in good condition, and a copper-lapped system for the outer apron that extends from well up underneath the slope of shingles to the roof's edge.

When the copper areas were done, they looked like a quilt of moderately small copper sheets all soldered together to be watertight. This design requires a particular soldering technique that has a scalloped look and which many roofers cannot do well. This technique, when done correctly, does not require expansion joints in order to last a long time. Then the crenellations (more properly called merlons, as we learned) would be relocated on slightly raised pads that would shunt any water around them.

Scott's ballpark cost estimate for repairing all of this was over $1,000,000. Everyone was horrified at this cost, and so I proceeded to push Scott harder over the next few months to find ways to reduce the scope and price. We didn't doubt his recommendations, and his proposal to remove the weight of the Bob and John room made sense. I had been educating myself about other granite-faced buildings that were built in Oaklands's era, including the Maine State House and the Bowdoin College Chapel, both of which had undergone extensive repairs of the same sort in recent years. I talked with their project managers and received useful advice. But I also knew that there was little competition within this category of building repairs. The other building owners were known to pay top dollar for much of the work that they contracted. I figured there was room to lower our cost estimates without compromising the job. I didn't know for sure, but it was worth trying. We had to disabuse Scott and any other contractors that our pockets were anywhere near as deep as the state's or Bowdoin College's and convince them that we needed a leaner budget to be able to approve the work. So I challenged Scott by telling him that $1,000,000 was a nonstarter and asked him to go through several iterations of his plan, until he had cut costs to $750,000 by late winter of 2003, even while adding scope to the project.

After these negotiations, the directors agreed to go forward at the lower price. The plan was to shut down house usage for most of 2004 and do a very large project, with a two-week hiatus to allow for Ian Burnes's wedding, which had been previously scheduled for September, if the work hadn't been completed before then. Scott guided us to a capable general contractor, Hebert Construction, based in Lewiston, who then engaged the Joseph Gnazzo Company, a masonry subcontractor all the way from Connecticut, who had experience with granite-block exteriors and had recently done the Maine State House restoration job. Our new caretaker,

Shane Condon, cleaned out the attic spaces and was the person assigned to protect the building and its contents from the mess and exposure to construction. Logan agreed to check on progress almost daily throughout the project, with assistance from Ian Burnes. I began to have weekly meetings on site with Logan, Ian, Scott, Shane, and the contractor all present. Scaffolding went up around the house, and lawns were peeled back to allow gravel roadways for mechanical equipment access to the east and west facades. Oaklands became a full-sized construction site for the next four months, and again after Ian and Gillian's wedding for the rest of the fall.

During the six-month project we found that, time and time again, we had to perform more work than planned, and we were sometimes presented with unanticipated complications. Because the contract price was based on a certain scope of work, each new discovery led to another change order, with a cost increase for each one. This meant that I developed heartburn every time I received a call from Scott. We had decided that we were going to fix the house right, so my response was always to breathe deeply and approve the change. The single largest task that we had not fully anticipated was the amount of rot on the ends of roof trusses that run east-west in the main portion of the house. Most of the trusses on the east side had rotted so much that the only solution was to manufacture custom-made plates to repair each one of them according to their condition. Some of these roof framing pieces were made of oak as big as 12 by 14 inches. We could not simply replace them, because the portions of the timbers that were still


Roof truss repairs showing metal plates on both sides of the angle where the beam and truss are joined and are supported by the exterior wall.

West wall, just days before the removal of the Bob and John room on the third floor.

there were holding up the roof. We were lucky that there was a good steel manufacturing company, T.W. Dick, in downtown Gardiner, which could produce steel plates to serve as splints for the timbers according to each particular truss's dimensions, and in a relatively short time. Then our contractor would use a small crane to provide enough lift to attach the plates to the timbers and put flat steel plates beneath the end of every timber, while that timber remained in place, and without long delays. I likened this procedure to a human's knee replacement surgery, but on a much larger scale, and with no pre-manufactured parts.

As we had done in the earlier restoration projects, the scope of the work was specified at a certain level for removal of the granite facing, based on estimates of how far down the wall sections we expected to have to go. In some places we expected the masonry to be still in good condition. Often the reality was that we had to continue deeper. Along the west side by the West Room was a prime example of finding that the walls were rotten several rows further down. Behind the granite facing, the rubble walls that filled spaces between chimney masses were deteriorated in many locations, just as we had found a decade earlier in the first restoration project

on the north wall of the Northeast Room. Parts of the brick chimney masonry needed extra restoration as well, especially where timbers connected to the masonry. The single most shocking discovery to me was that the end of the roof truss that met the outside wall above the Southeast Room had completely rotted out, leaving nothing more than the two-by-six studs of the interior wall to hold up the beam and truss that support the roof and prevent the collapse of the structure. The horizontal two-by-six header at the top of that wall was bent downward six inches, like a bow, in its effort to hold up the building. I could not believe that it hadn't already failed entirely.

Scaffolding around the SE and NE turrets during the reconstruction in 2008.

As we worked through these issues every week, we gained confidence that the team was extremely capable. Scott and the Hebert Construction project supervisor worked together closely and communicated well. The masons were able to devise fixes to every new situation they encountered. The general contractor's team found a way to install the new beam that was put into position on the third floor without causing damage to the interior spaces in the floors below. They also were expert at handling the rotten truss repairs. Scott seemed to be truly on our side when negotiating

change orders—of which there were more than 20. All of the family members involved kept in close touch.

Logan was on the phone with me reporting on issues as they arose so that we would not suffer delays. Ian and Holly contained their anxiety about the time required to finish the job running well past his wedding date, and they cheerfully worked around the construction chaos for the two weeks of the wedding hiatus. Shane Condon kept cleaning up after everyone and proved to be a useful and watchful eye on the contractors' work—he would quietly notify Logan or me whenever he thought something was amiss. Finally, we managed to finish just before the end of the season for masonry work, and the extra costs were held to merely $80,000, for a total cost of $830,000.

While that summer was the climax of the rebuilding story, it was not the end. We had excluded the elements of vestibule and turret repairs from the big project to save money, because we had been told that deferring them would not compromise structural integrity. But that work still needed to be done. We also still had some areas with roof leaks. Some of the joints of the new copper apron had not held. The large area of copper over the East Room bay window was so wide that the copper had expanded and contracted enough to break some solder joints that had not been shaped with sufficient care. We ended up putting rubber sheet roofing over the copper and under the merlons from the northeast turret along the east and south roof edges up to the south door. Fortunately we were covered for this failure by a project work guarantee, and the roofer came back to fix these problems. Thus once again, we ended up with different roofing materials in different areas. There is slate roofing above the rubber apron on the east and south sides, with asphalt shingles above a copper apron on the north and west sides, and rubber sheets on the flat top sections. After doing all of this, we took a few years off to recover until a new source of funds could be found.

But it was only three years later, in 2007, after a healthy amount of new money came into our bank account through the sale of a portrait, that we went back to planning how to finish the remaining parts of the restoration that had been left out of the big project. These were the two big turrets on the east wall, the front and back vestibules, the south steps, and the bridge. The first few elements were routine and were taken care of as relatively small projects during the next few years. Logan took over the chairmanship

of the Exterior Committee from me at that time, and he found a capable granite masonry contractor from southern Maine, Stone Age Masonry, to do these pieces as smaller jobs over several years with minimal disruption of house users. The costs were considerable, but by then we could afford it, and Stone Age proved themselves able to meet our needs.

The bridge project required more time before it could be fixed, in part because every cost estimate of how it should be done was extremely high. The question facing the directors was, "Is repairing the bridge worth the cost?" The bridge had been built in 1900 and had not received much maintenance, because it didn't seem to need any for many decades. One hundred years later the integrity of the decking had been compromised, the side walls bowed outward, quite a few stones in the top layer were out of position, and, in the spaces between the stones of the arch underneath, stalactites of leached mortar had grown up to one foot long. At Scott's recommendation, for a decade we had covered the bridge with tarpaulins in winter to prevent further absorption of rain and snowmelt as a temporary measure, because the house easily took priority for our limited funds. Clearly something had to be done, but finding an expert advisor proved extremely difficult. We ultimately found two independent advisors who told us that, while it needed work, it might not be structurally at risk. They said that the original method of construction had been to build a wooden arch first to support the first row of stones that make the curve of the bridge's bottom arch, and that this stone arch held up the bridge without relying on mortar. Then stones were added with mortar and rubble to fill to the decking level and the wooden supports were removed. The side walls rested on the deck. What was needed was to replace the deck to prevent water from seeping into the bridge and to reposition the stones above the arch that were out of place. The job required masonry skills but no particular specialization in bridge work. Our efforts to find someone to plan the work thoroughly and to find a bridge contractor had been frustrating. Then the owner of Stone Age Masonry proposed a plan to restore the bridge without using an engineer to draw up plans, at an estimated cost of $140,000. The directors accepted. Getting this job done completed the major masonry and roofing restorations in 2014.

Although we never were able to determine precisely how the water that deteriorated our mortar and rotted our timbers had made its way into the

walls, we had to conclude that it was probably from many different ways, given the extent of damage. We did learn several lessons from these restoration projects that are important to remember. First, we learned how the structure was designed to function: sandwich walls of granite, brick, and rubble with mortar layers and metal pins; the necessity of having all roof trusses effectively spread the weight to the outer walls; etc. Second, we understood that masonry requires vigilance and quick action to keep water from entering the building and causing unseen decay inside the walls. Third, we learned that modern masonry mixes are not compatible with old mortar, and the curing process is temperature-sensitive, which limits the season for work in Maine. Fourth, even though Oaklands may look like a highly durable structure, no materials can provide real permanence without regular attention and maintenance. Finally, we learned that we were lucky that we addressed these problems, as Grandma would have said, "just in the nick of time."

*Chapter 13*

# Portraits

ONE OF OAKLANDS'S MOST STRIKING FEATURES IS the array of portraits in the house, and especially in the three front rooms. Anyone walking into those rooms knows that it is a family house—one that has been in the same family for many generations.

The portraits in the dining room are particularly powerful in the way that they look down upon anyone in the room. Most people are drawn first to the largest one, in part because it is in the prime location over the fireplace, in part because it expresses the nature of its subject, Dr. Silvester Gardiner, in a way that is unusually compelling, and ultimately because it is a truly great work of art by America's first great painter, John Singleton Copley.

As one looks at them all together as a group of 10 portraits in the three rooms, they start to reveal the family story, even before one begins to hear the actual personal stories about each figure.

It seems appropriate that the portrait of Dr. Silvester is the most impressive, because he represents the beginning of the family's history in Maine. He organized the acquisition of 1.5 million acres on both sides of the river that became known as the Kennebec Purchase; he assembled the partners who participated in the project; and he led the effort to bring colonists to central Maine.

Across the room is a portrait of the son of another Kennebec Purchase partner. This is Robert Hallowell (RH I), tax collector in Boston for the British king. He became Dr. S's son-in-law when he married Silvester's daughter, Hannah, and he was the father of RHG I, the man who would build Oaklands on the lands inherited from Silvester. RH I's portrait was painted by Gilbert Stuart.

The minister's portrait is of John Sylvester John Gardiner, another grandson of Silvester who became a minister at Trinity Church in Boston and served as a mentor to RHG I, his younger cousin. His portrait is also by Stuart. In the opposite corner is a portrait of RHG I's father-in-law, Judge William Tudor, who served as judge advocate general in George Washington's army and was the father of Emma Jane. The final portrait is of Emma Jane's brother William Tudor Jr., who briefly partnered with their other brother Frederic in the ice industry that flourished along the Kennebec in the second half of the 19th century.

In the adjoining Music Room are the ladies' portraits, of Silvester's wife, Anne Gibbons Gardiner, by Blackburn, and their daughter, Anne Gardiner Browne, by Copley. Finally, facing Dr. Silvester from the Library is a portrait of RHG I himself. It is by Harding.

Once one knows the story of these figures' careers and how they were related, one has learned much about the major historical events of their era. This includes the Revolutionary War (from both sides), the oppressive English taxes on the colonies, the political divisions between neighbors in the Boston area, the development of White settlements in central Maine in the 18th century, and the tenuous legal status of former Tories after the war.

Every Gardiner family member—for generations—has struggled to learn the stories behind the portraits, because we know we will eventually be asked questions by a visitor, and one needs a good answer. Remembering all these names and relationships has been a challenge for everyone. One vivid expression of the family's difficulty in mastering this comes from Susannah's entry in the guest book when she was age 10, "I am starting my lessons on the portraits. It will take ages."

There is an effect of living amidst and dining under all of these symbols of family history that makes most Gardiner descendants feel that they are deeply rooted in Oaklands as well as part of a special family. The portraits

feel like they belong right where they are. As my father wrote about the day the Corporation was founded, Oaklands without any portraits on the walls was a pretty empty and cold place. They were on loan to the Bowdoin College museum at the time. Interestingly, not all of these portraits have always been in the house. Grandma described in "Golden Memories" how several portraits, including the portrait of Dr. S., were reacquired through the generosity of various family members and returned to Oaklands many years before I was born. Throughout my lifetime, however, the portraits have hung in the same spots in Oaklands, so they feel permanent to anyone who is alive today.

Protecting the portraits has always been a priority of the Corporation. Nevertheless, at no time did we ever have enough insurance on them to cover any loss, and we were never up to date with the rapidly rising art valuations throughout the life of the Corporation. Back in 1959, Copley and Stuart portraits were valuable but nowhere near their values today. The extraordinary rise in art values in the past 60 years has simply outstripped almost all other sectors.

We have, from time to time, allowed some of the portraits to be displayed on loan to Colby College, Bowdoin College, and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, but, out of fear of inviting break-ins to the house, we never permitted any indication of their permanent home at Oaklands. Having them housed in museums over the winter months helped protect them from the cold, clammy conditions of Oaklands when it was closed from New Year's to May for many years.

When no one was in the house, there was little protection for the portraits beyond the locked doors. Every now and then someone would break in—one time the sword that used to hang beneath Robert Hallowell's portrait was stolen, as were other small items. We installed an alarm system one year after some antique thieves broke into Hallowell House and stole several valuable furnishings. This security system was a simple intruder alarm with interior motion detectors and a screeching siren that was designed to drive any sentient person out of the house immediately, because we didn't want to wait for the Gardiner city police to respond. After that we had fewer break-ins, with only minor impacts. Eventually, after learning more about the risks of theft, we converted to a more sophisticated alarm system with movement detection devices

attached to the major portraits. Throughout the 1980s more and more family members became concerned that, even without art thieves and teenage intruders, we needed to worry about falling ceilings (as occurred within six feet of Dr. Silvester when a section of ceiling crashed to the floor) or fires—which might be caused by electrical malfunctions or even someone using the fireplace irresponsibly—or from some other unanticipated threat.

As we gained understanding of the scale of exterior wall and chimney masonry problems, and as the roof leaks continued to frustrate everyone, our sense of urgency and concern about the anticipated costs for necessary house repairs began to mount. Some members and directors felt we needed to consider proposals to sell some furnishings, such as the portraits, to pay for the building repairs. These early ideas met with resistance from other members who felt that the portraits were absolutely essential to their enjoyment of the house. They offered counterproposals to sell valuable furniture, or to conduct a capital fund campaign, or to raise funds through leasing the house for movie sets (Empire Falls was almost filmed there), or some other creative solution.

These ideas were discussed within the family for over a decade, without consensus. Meanwhile, the directors began to inform themselves about the true market value of antiques, portraits, and other possessions (such as the Bandbox). With a lot of help from Uncle Henry, they discovered that while there are some nice pieces of furniture and other art, their combined value would not begin to cover the anticipated building renovation costs. The value of the Gilbert Stuart portraits was similarly far less than the need. That left the two Copleys as the only realistic options for sale. (My father had maintained for years that Mrs. Gardiner's portrait was by Copley, although most expert opinion held that it had been done by Blackburn. He was an English artist who came to America to paint and was one of Copley's few teachers. Thus we couldn't quite claim to have three Copleys, but we had two plus a key Copley influencer.)

My friend Fred Woolworth owned the Coe Kerr Gallery in New York, so I asked him about the market for family portraits. He thought there was demand for good Copley portraits, and in particular one of his associates was helping a very rich collector in the Midwest who was trying to create a new museum and who he thought would be very interested. The directors

approved a cautious and quiet strategy to let Coe Kerr house the three portraits of Dr. S. and his wife and daughter. The idea was that a Copley family group was a rare and appealing package. Coe Kerr felt we could ask a price of several million dollars for the three. Top-quality Copleys rarely went up for sale, as almost all of the best were already in museum collections. The most recent to have sold was a large portrait of Mrs. Thomas Gage, the wife of a British general in Boston, who was very pretty and was painted in a glamorous dress. Objectively speaking, it was a more appealing portrait than that of either of our females. According to a book on the artist, Copley himself said about the Gage portrait, "I think beyond Compare the best Lady's portrait I ever Drew." It had sold at a world record price of $2.5 million to the San Diego Museum a few years earlier.

Because of my personal friendship with Woolworth, I asked Ian Gardiner, who was the Corporation's president at the time, if he would serve as the negotiator and liaison with Coe Kerr. Ian formed a Portraits Committee composed of himself, Uncle Henry, David, Susannah, and me. We developed a strategy to show them only to a very select number of people to assure that no one thought they were "on the market." Our concern was that, if they fell into that category, the values would drop if the very thin market for old portraits didn't produce a buyer quickly. In the end, the Midwest museum client didn't pan out. Coe Kerr was true to its pledge to limit the viewings very tightly. After two years in New York, we asked to take back the paintings.

As part of the agreement, Coe Kerr had provided photographic reproductions and high-quality frames on loan to keep Oaklands from feeling empty while the portraits were in New York. Unfortunately, most family members thought the reproductions were very unsatisfactory and the frames even worse. Thus, members' and associates' opinions about what to do next were all over the map. Meanwhile, the news from the Exterior Committee about the scope of work needed on Oaklands became worse and worse. The Corporation was deeply unsettled about what to do for a long time.

In 1994, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York called me to ask permission to include the portrait of Dr. S. in a big Copley retrospective show that would travel over two years to Boston, Houston, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis, in addition to New York. The museum already had

commitments for most of their first choices, totaling about 80 paintings in all. They were not interested in Mrs. Browne—only in Dr. S. The directors asked me to negotiate a contract with protective terms and insurance. Many family members came to Boston for the party for the exhibition's opening at the Museum of Fine Arts. As we walked through the galleries, we found Dr. S. on a central panel in the center of one room, and on the reverse side facing the other direction was Copley's famous portrait of Paul Revere—a clever juxtaposition of the old Tory loyalist and the young revolutionary silversmith. In this elite company, our ancestor's portrait looked as impressive as any.

During this decade, our understanding of Copley's career grew deeper. Copley was a largely self-taught artist, as there were few other true artists painting in the colonies in the 18th century (Blackburn was one). He was influenced by British artists such as Gainsborough early in his career and painted gorgeous, elegant portraits that displayed the wealth and importance of his subjects. The portrait of Anne Gardiner Browne in 1763 is considered a turning point in his career, in which he worked more intently on simplifying the background scenes and focusing on central features over others. Later, between 1770 and 1774, Copley further simplified his paintings to emphasize specific features and the unique character of his subjects, and presented them in strong and appealing compositions. Thus, for example, Dr. S.'s seated posture feels dynamic, his facial expression is both kindly and stern, and his white shirt cuffs and gleaming buttons offset the deep red suit to form interesting angles along with his white wig. This is the period when most art historians feel Copley did his best work. He painted Dr. S. in 1772—right in the heart of his prime years as a portraitist. After he left America to go to England during the Revolution (a sensible decision for him because all of his rich clients like Dr. S. had already left), his work became grandiose and overly dramatic, and it is less appreciated by art historians. The catalog for the museum show described Dr. Silvester's portrait this way:

> *"A meticulously rendered likeness, it is among Copley's most dignified portraits.... In Gardiner's portrait there is no sense of embellishment other than the bit of decoration on the chair.... The brightest spot in the composition is Gardiner's face, his serious yet amiable expression speaks of his steady temperament and animates the picture."*

Doctor Silvester Gardiner portrait and frame reproductions
in the dining room after the sale.

In late 2003, I received a call from Marvin Sadik, the art dealer from Kennebunkport who, as I mentioned previously, had attended a political fundraising dinner we had held in Oaklands years earlier. A former director of the National Portrait Gallery, he had been blown away by Dr. Silvester's portrait at the time. Now he claimed to have a client who was extremely wealthy and interested in collecting a great array of American art that would eventually be given to a major museum. The client insisted on

complete anonymity and secrecy. Sadik wanted to bring his client to view the portrait right in Oaklands. I was careful to project a tone of skepticism to Sadik about the chances that the family would ever sell, but inside I was wildly excited by this spike—or, even more rare, a lightning bolt—in the market. I took the concept to the board. We jokingly speculated that the client might be Bill Gates, at that time the richest man in the world. Who else could it be when Coe Kerr had found so little interest in New York City?

One chilly day, Sadik and the client arrived for a viewing. Logan agreed to pose as Oaklands's hired caretaker and hang around to try to eavesdrop on the pair's conversation. Unfortunately they were too discreet and Logan could offer us little useful intel, except that the client didn't look to him much like Bill Gates. So the mystery buyer retained his anonymity.

Soon afterward, Sadik called me and offered a price for the portrait and the original frame that was more than double the previous world-record price for any Copley that had ever been sold. We discussed the need for two conditions on the sale: first that the buyer's wife had to approve, and second that the Oaklands membership would have to vote to agree to the sale.

I took the offer to the directors, and they were thrilled. There was a legal question facing the board: while according to the bylaws almost all matters were delegated to the board to decide, when the issue is the sale of a large portion of a corporation's assets, under general corporate law it is wise to have a full vote of the membership (or shareholders) for such an action. At the price that was offered, this single portrait was worth more than all of the other assets of the Corporation combined!

The offer came to us just before the November 2004 annual meeting. At that meeting our discussion of the potential sale was the culmination of our years of trying to figure out how on earth we could find a way to pay the costs of keeping Oaklands standing. David's president's report of that meeting noted:

> *"We just finished a great Oaklands Corporation meeting weekend, which was made immeasurably better because we had record participation, including many who had never been to a meeting and had traveled long distances to get there. Christine and Elizabeth have established a high standard for long distance participation, but were matched, if not bettered,*

*this year by Claire Lowe, Nicolle Yellin, Ben Tallman, Charles Gardiner, and Justin and Soledad Lowe. Thank you all for making the effort to get there; it helps to strengthen the mortar that binds this family together—the mortar that matters."*

By this time, the huge costs for the massive renovation project had become undeniable. There was lengthy and passionate discussion among the many members present, because they cared so deeply about the various features of Oaklands. Many were ready to sell other portraits or furnishings to raise money, because everyone seemed to share the view that our hearts wanted to keep Dr. S. in Oaklands. But it gradually became clear to almost everyone that we had only one asset that realistically had the potential to cover the huge costs of house restoration, and that was the Dr. S. portrait alone. Having so much of our assets in one portrait felt extremely risky. The question for the membership was simplified to: "Do we keep the portrait, or do we keep the house where the portrait hangs?" The family finally succumbed to this extreme pressure and reached agreement on this decision to sell at the annual meeting. Those members who had opposed selling graciously dropped their active opposition.

Having reached this momentous decision, soon afterward we were disappointed to be told that the buyer's wife did not want to buy the portrait, and the failure to get her approval invalidated our agreement. For the next two years we were left to go forward with the renovations without understanding how we could pay for them without a portrait sale. However, after we had accepted this big offer from the mystery bidder, the family had clearly made its decision to sell; it was only a question of when and to whom.

A long and anxious two years later, I received another call from Sadik with a new offer, this time from the Seattle Art Museum (SAM) for a somewhat lower price, but one that seemed close enough to consider. Because the offer was from SAM, it meant the portrait would be housed in a major museum and available for public viewing. The directors agreed to a counteroffer that asked for a 5 percent increase to cover the dealer's fee and reproduction costs that would otherwise be ours to cover. This was accepted by SAM, and so the deal was struck.

During the events that followed, we gradually learned the behind-the-scenes story of what had been happening in the three previous years. SAM invited me to speak at the unveiling of its new purchase, and the invitation came from a museum trustee named Tom Barwick. He hosted Anne and me for several days in Seattle, showing us the extensive SAM facilities and telling us the following background story.

Many years earlier, Tom and his wife had undertaken to learn more about the art world to strengthen Tom's contribution as a member of the SAM board of trustees. Tom was interested in making SAM a center for collectors of American art. His vision was that, with all of the high-tech fortunes that were being made in the Seattle area, very wealthy individuals would want to collect great art and eventually give it to SAM. Tom knew personally most of the top-tier potential collectors, including Bill Gates and others with close SAM connections. His strategy was to advise them on which paintings to acquire, both to make their collections as impressive as possible, and to complete SAM's strategy for becoming a truly great museum for American art as the ultimate recipient of these private collections.

Tom educated himself by asking many museum directors and curators around the country to identify for him the 10 best American artists who predated Andrew Wyeth and whose work would be essential to any great collection. The many responses showed substantial agreement. At the top of the chronological lists, which typically included Bellows, Hopper, Eames, Sargent, Church, and Peale, was Copley. He was first on every single list. Tom then turned to the catalog of the Metropolitan/MFA Copley exhibition in the mid-1990s to learn that, among the 80 paintings that were displayed, only three great Copleys were still in private hands. The best one—by far—was Dr. S. Tom then knew his mission.

Tom had grown up in Seattle as friends with Bill Gates Sr., the father of Bill Jr., at that time the richest man on Earth. He knew young Bill well and offered to help him with his art collection project. As it turned out, Tom was, indeed, the visitor to Oaklands three years earlier, and he was there as Bill Jr.'s advisor. Unfortunately, Bill's then wife, Melinda, apparently decided she did not want another portrait of a wealthy, old, White man in her house, and had vetoed the purchase. Tom, however, was determined to acquire the portrait for SAM somehow and spent the next two years

convincing other museum supporters to help him buy it with the approval of SAM's acquisition committees.

So as we look back on the Corporation's various decisions over the preceding decade: to loan the portrait to the Metropolitan/MFA show; to allow Oaklands to be used for a political fundraiser at which an art dealer was amazed by the portrait; to avoid appearing to put the painting on the market to maintain its value; to portray the family's resistance to any sale to position us to command a top price; and to show patience over almost 14 years since we had first contemplated a sale—these all contributed significantly to the successful outcome. We had found a safe and suitable home where the public could readily see the portrait, we had shattered the record for the sale of a Copley portrait, we had found a way to ensure Oaklands's future, and we had done it while keeping the family working together as one and in support of the decision.

The day before the SAM ceremony Anne and I were invited to cocktails with Bill Gates Sr. and his second wife, Mimi Gardner Gates, who was the director of SAM, followed by dinner with a large group of SAM trustees, donors, and art collectors. The dinner was part of the festivities scheduled for the next day to show the progress on SAM's partially completed, newly expanded, high-rise, downtown museum. Their big newsworthy event was the announcement and unveiling of their new acquisition of a major Copley painting. It was a lovely event.

We entered SAM's new, huge foyer for public events with a dramatic two-story escalator up to the floors where the collection was displayed. When we reached the top of the escalator, Dr. Silvester was looking right at us—seemingly greeting us to his new home. To the left was an enormous Bierstadt landscape of Seattle and to the right was a stunning Frederic Church landscape. The galleries had not yet been formally opened, and this was the first opportunity for the invited museum supporters to see some of them still in the process of being assembled.

Uncle Charlie had also made the trip to Seattle for the opening, and we were joined as well by Seattle-based cousins Gordon, Pipo, and Sebastian. We heard welcoming remarks from Mimi Gardner Gates, and then Tom Barwick talked about his quest for this particular painting. I gave a short speech about Dr. Silvester's life as a loyalist Tory and an entrepreneur who colonized part of Maine, and I concluded that Seattle was an appropriate

place for his portrait to be on view in these impressive surroundings. For me, it was a sad goodbye to my ancestor's portrait and, at the same time, a thoroughly satisfying conclusion to the plan to save Oaklands.

The remaining task was to get a satisfactory replacement portrait for the house. The newest photographic reproduction techniques were able to produce a convincing reproduction of the image for a mere $1,000, but replacing the frame was a bigger challenge. The museum-quality frame that had been provided for the photo replacement during the traveling show was not nearly good enough. We were told that we might find someone in New York to make a closer replica for about $65,000, which seemed extravagant.

Luckily good fortune shone on us again. Anne and I went to a pre-Christmas craft show in Waterville, where Anne found a wood-carver/furniture-maker from nearby Waldoboro, Maine, named Valdemar Skov. He made beautiful hand-carved furniture but had never tried to make a frame. He said he thought he could and was interested in the challenge. Logan and I had taken detailed pictures of the frame before it was shipped to Seattle. The frame is unusual in its depth, elaborate open carved details, and delicate relief. Valdemar offered to do it for a price that was less than a third of the New York estimate and began his research. He even took a trip to Cambridge, Mass., to examine a similar frame on a Copley portrait in Harvard's Dunster House to learn how the original had been created with such complex carving. He could see that the old frame had been constructed in three layers, to allow each one to be carved from the angles that were necessary to achieve those exact, deeply carved features when the layers were joined together. He was steeply challenged to produce a perfect replica, which took about six months, and he succeeded. His friend and neighbor in Freedom, Maine, happened to be an expert with gesso and gilding for museum clients, and he produced a nearly perfect reproduction of the finish that looks 200 years old.

The result is that most family members have long since stopped worrying that the house would never be the same without the original portrait in its usual place. When I eat a meal in the dining room or give a tour to a new guest, I am comfortable that the room is basically unchanged and that we did the right thing to preserve our ancestor's legacy.

*Chapter 14*

# Finances

MONEY IS ESSENTIAL TO RUNNING A LARGE HOUSE, and Oaklands needs plenty. My father recognized this from the outset and, as we have already seen, made plans to provide some financial support even before he could know how much would be required. The Oaklands Trust was established by Grandpa in 1927, along with other individual trusts for each of his children. Each was started with $10,000 and was invested with the expectation that the interest could be withdrawn but that dividends and capital appreciation would be preserved. We do not have records of the growth of the principal year by year, but the Oaklands Trust gained value rapidly. The trust was intended to support the entire property, so my father had sole control and could have used it all for the farm. But when he started the Corporation, he chose to apply the amount of annual income that was greater than the farm property taxes to support the Corporation by paying its property taxes. Later he changed his mind and allowed the Trust's entire revenues to go to the Corporation. Additionally, from the beginning he encouraged using the farm workers and machinery to help Oaklands Corporation whenever he could—such as building the Ruth's Rocks terrace.

As described in an earlier chapter, the prospect of a generous gift from Cousin Ruth upon her death was anticipated as part of his calculation of what Oaklands would require. In 1965, when this became an actual gift of $120,000, it became the basis for what was called the Oaklands portfolio,

which was invested by Fiduciary Trust alongside the Oaklands Trust. Both had a variety of stock holdings, with the largest single holding being shares of Fiduciary Trust itself. The portfolio became the second largest source of annual income for the Corporation after the Oaklands Trust.

Fees for using the house were very small at first and grew slowly, so they did not contribute anything meaningful to cover expenses. The idea was to encourage use and to expect users to pay only for all of their needs while in the house. There was no household help provided, and that made moving into and out of the house difficult, but the first generation didn't think twice about that. Their attitude went hand in hand with their policy to limit usage to the first generation.

Expenses were guarded carefully during my parents' generation to keep them from exceeding income. This left only a few thousand dollars a year for repairs and a part-time caretaker. My parents opened and closed the house for the season, and after New Year's there was no use allowed, so the house was unheated for most of the winter. Frugality reigned.

Over time, new needs for improvements and repairs to Oaklands and other expenses were reflected in some growth in expenses. Still, the principal in both the Trust and portfolio continued to grow, because they were invested primarily for asset appreciation. The Corporation's annual budget was based for many years on withdrawing only the interest and not the dividend portion of annual income from investments. It was not until the 1980s that we asked Fiduciary Trust to adjust our investment strategies in ways designed to generate a little more interest income annually to cover more expenses.

Each year the main discussion at the annual meetings was over a list of repairs and other house expenses, how much they would cost, how some might be deferred, and which ones would ultimately make the cut. Gifts of furniture, china, rugs, and other furnishings were encouraged, and quite a few gifts made a nice difference. As the list of improvements in the 20th anniversary report shows, they accomplished a lot with a small budget. In later years many large rugs, a grand piano, bedclothes, sound systems, canoes, flatware, ski equipment, outdoor furniture, new fences, and dozens of other items were donated by a wide array of members, and those kinds of gifts continued to be offered in recent years. When moving or redecorating their own households, members were encouraged to decide that Oaklands could make better use of their old furnishings and equipment.

After my father died, Oaklands Farm—a separate property from Oaklands Corporation—was put into a trust with my mother holding the controlling shares and her five children as the ultimate beneficiaries over time. This brought about several changes that were mostly revenue-neutral to the Corporation, but which started to rationalize for whom shared expenses were incurred and how they should be reimbursed between all of the different parcel owners. Thus we reached an agreement on distributing the cost of road maintenance and snowplowing to allocate them fairly to the different houses including Oaklands, Hallowell House, Orchard House, and the farm. The cost of new trucks and lawnmowers were similarly allocated. The caretaker's time spent working around the other houses on the farm was repaid to Oaklands. Everyone knew that the farm's economic viability was shaky and that it needed rental income for the caretaker's house, which was farm property.

In 1983 we hired Red Robbins as a full-time caretaker with free housing (to him) at the Green Gate at quite an increase in cost, but we judged that his carpentry skills would allow us to avoid other expenses that we could not afford. This proved valuable for many years. The list of window repairs, woodworking projects, rooms and ceilings painted, etc. grew each year. However, in spite of all these improvements, we soon began to learn how wrong we were to think that we had been keeping up with all of the building's needs.

In the 1980s and '90s the Investment Committee worked on balancing the holdings of the portfolio. Because Fiduciary Trust Company shares had been the largest original holding and had appreciated so much, the portfolio seemed too heavily weighted in that one stock. But Fiduciary stock is not publicly traded and is not very liquid. For several years in a row the committee would sell the allowable small fraction of Fiduciary shares, but the value of the remainder would go up so much in the following year that it was hard to achieve any better balance. This was a nice problem to have. The second effort was to shift the investment objectives and the investments themselves to maximize total return (interest, dividend yield, and appreciation combined).

Then the committee was asked to figure out how to pay the high costs of house repairs, once we saw how much would ultimately be needed. The committee considered every conceivable option. The most obvious—a

capital campaign—was determined pretty quickly to be unlikely to succeed at sufficient scale. Sale of the Bandbox, opening the house for nonfamily party rentals, and some other schemes seemed too problematic. Using the portfolio as something we could draw down for cash, either permanently or long term, was considered, but our innate New England reflexes about spending capital pushed back hard. Eventually, as described earlier, that led to the sale of Dr. Silvester's portrait..

The other financial worry was about the end of the Oaklands Trust. When it was established in 1927, neither Uncle Henry nor Uncle Charlie had been born. Grandpa set up the trust so that it would expire upon the death of the last of his then-living children. At that point the shares would be distributed according to how many of his children had descendants, with equal shares assigned to all within the same generation. By 1992, Uncle Ben was the last of the elder siblings still living, and members became worried that the end of the trust might be imminent. Ian was president at the time and appointed a committee to explore the means by which we might get all of the beneficiaries to commit their shares to the Oaklands Corporation, rather than pocket the money as they were entitled to do. The trust terms did not allow for its continuation to meet Oaklands's needs indefinitely. The committee received advice that the trust distribution would not be a taxable event to the beneficiaries, and that they could commit it to Oaklands at no cost as long as they complied with gift-tax exemption limits under the law at the time their estates were probated.

Under the terms of the trust and because Uncle Arthur had died without any children, there would be one-sixth shares for Uncles Henry and Charlie, and the balance would be split evenly between all members of my generation (except for Charlie's children), regardless of how many were children of each of the first generation. Because Uncle Ben would have died before the distribution, his children would receive the same shares, and his daughter Marie's three children, who had lost their mother years earlier, would split her share. We could not know the value of each person's share until the triggering event, but it was a meaningful amount for members of my generation—roughly enough to put one child through private college for four years. There were 18 potential beneficiaries, each of whom had to make their own decision. Many of the potential beneficiaries had not thought through how they would act, because many had no knowledge of the terms and amounts.

What followed was a very quiet, behind-closed-doors effort led by Ian, with help from David and Nat, to reach out to every beneficiary and persuade them to commit their share. In the first year, less than half had reached a quick decision to commit, but Ian told me that he and the others were careful to avoid being rejected outright by anyone. In each of the next few years, another few would commit, until we had reached a level of 77 percent. We thought that was very good, but we knew that we were still looking at a loss of 23 percent of the income from the trust.

There were four beneficiaries who had not committed by the end of the campaign. Two of them committed within a few more years. My sister Alison never formally committed, but did make provision to return the funds to Oaklands in her will—she simply felt she might need the funds as insurance in case she became destitute. Thus, ultimately, the campaign was remarkably successful and returned 83 percent to the Corporation. Uncle Henry was the only one who did not return his share to the Corporation. Every other member of the family followed through on their promises, and everyone deserves to feel great pride in this achievement and the family solidarity that it represents.

In hindsight, I attributed this level of support to the good effects of running the Corporation transparently, the fun everyone had had getting together at reunions, the shift to embrace everyone as members and associates, a well-conducted and patient fundraising campaign, and Oaklands's obvious need for funds for its survival. But in doing research on it, I asked Diana about her decision and how she had felt about giving up her share, given that she and her family had not spent much time in the house. Her response added another reason: "My father told us in no uncertain terms that we had to do it." She never for a moment considered doing otherwise. All of Uncle Ben's children and grandchildren did the same.

This success meant that the Corporation ultimately would lose only about $5,000 of the revenue from its single largest source of annual income. But this achievement by itself was not enough. It did not change the Corporation's need for a huge new source of funds to cover the expensive structural repairs that were becoming more urgent. In the absence of any other immediate or long-term solution, several individuals offered personally to loan the Corporation funds at a very low interest rate to help

cover the costs of the repairs until the Corporation could sell an asset such as a portrait to repay the loans. In 2004, half a dozen members provided $365,000 in three-year loans to be paid back at a very low interest rate of less than 2 percent. The directors then identified $500,000 of stock holdings in the portfolio that they could sell to cover the rest of the repair costs. In this way we paid the bills for the renovation in 2004, but it didn't change the fact that annual income to the Corporation was diminished by about $20,000 from reductions in both the portfolio and the original Oaklands Trust funds.

After talking about desperate fundraising measures for two years in anticipation of large repair costs, in 2004, when the actual repair costs were known, the directors consulted with the membership about imposing an annual assessment to make up the difference in the portfolio's income. It was a bitter pill that some declined to swallow. A $1,000 assessment was levied on all members except those in the third generation. Several members chose to drop to the associate level as the alternative, but most paid without complaint. Oaklands's financial crisis, for the first time ever, was felt directly in every member's wallet. The levy continued for another two years without assurance that it would ever end.

When the offer to buy the Dr. S. portrait came in from the Seattle Art Museum in 2006 (two years after the money for Oaklands's restoration had been spent), the final answer to the Corporation's financial salvation fell into place. When these funds were received in 2007, the huge cash infusion not only allowed repayment of the personal loans and restoration of the $500,000 to the Oaklands portfolio, but also an end to the assessments on members and the creation of a much more significant endowment. Then, just when we were feeling very flush, we had to confront the reality that, because the sale constituted a corporate capital gain, the portrait sale price was subject to a 42 percent capital gains rate on our income tax for the year. We had understood this all along, but the pain of writing a multi-million-dollar check to the I.R.S. was palpable. Our endowment no longer felt quite as robust as many had dearly wanted.

Over the next few years the directors were careful to restructure the budgets to set aside funds for ongoing building maintenance. At first, they created a roof fund and a repointing fund into which money would be put every year at the rates of $15,000 and $8,000 respectively. The concept

was to fund depreciation for at least those two particular long-term repair needs, before making the Corporation's annual decisions on priorities for spending for other purposes. Nat had become president around the time the funds from the sale were received, and over the course of the next decade he reminded everyone of the need to be careful to limit expenditures and stay within our means. No one was allowed to feel well off, as Nat and others led us through the steps of putting our financial house in order for the long term.

Eventually the way we would fund depreciation was converted to a process of setting aside a fixed percentage of the annual budgeted expenditures in a more broadly defined capital improvement fund to cover all major infrastructure needs, as the first step in the budget process. By setting those amounts aside, we felt we were being more disciplined. Then every year we could make decisions on when we could afford to spend money for major projects based on how much we had already accumulated in that fund. We were determined to stockpile enough cash to cover the full costs before repairs were needed and still maintain some reserves.

The final significant change in financial discipline that we made was to determine how much revenue could be taken out of the portfolio each year to cover routine expenses. We borrowed a concept that is used by many colleges and other large institutions, and we chose to apply a rate of 2¼ percent of the current value of the endowment for annual expenditures. We defined "current value" as a rolling average of the portfolio's market values over the preceding three years, to avoid large annual fluctuations, and we chose a percentage rate that is much less than most colleges use because they have regular capital campaigns that boost the endowment. We didn't feel that Oaklands was in a position to assume anything like that. While we could eagerly encourage large capital gifts, it seemed foolish to count on them when our record has shown such infrequent interest. Still, 2¼ percent meant a significant boost in the total revenues that went into the annual budget. That also reduced the financial pinch that had made other kinds of repair work and interior improvements so hard to cover.

Overseeing the financial affairs has always been the job of the Corporation's treasurer. After my father died, my mother served as treasurer for several years, followed by Logan for several more. During Logan's tenure, we wisely engaged the help of a local C.P.A., Peter Flynn, to work on the

tax returns and balance sheets and assure that the treasurer was doing the job correctly. I took over as treasurer after Logan and did the job for seven years before handing it to Uncle Charlie for another 17 years. Denny has served since then, and he has wisely simplified the role by outsourcing the payroll features, which demand the greatest knowledge, to a specialized payroll management company. The treasurer is routinely included in directors' meetings along with the manager, whether or not they are concurrently serving as directors. It is essential to have someone dutiful and capable to perform the role, but the family seems to have plenty of competent candidates as long as they are willing to commit the time to do it.

*Chapter 15*

# Other Houses

IN ADDITION TO THE FARMLAND THAT SURROUNDS OAKLANDS, there are other houses that are so nearby that they are important to every member of the Corporation.

## Pond House

The nearest is Pond House, the only other building that has been a part of the Corporation from the outset. It was built in 1940 and designed by Uncle Marc Peter. It seems it was intended to suit Aunt Fran and Uncle Marc's family, and indeed they used it frequently before they moved to California, but it has always been available for other family members' use as well. In 1941 the Kennebec Journal carried a story about the house, which is the only available description of the concept behind the design:

> *"Standing in strong contrast with the baronial halls of the main house, a new and modern home has been built at Oaklands in Gardiner adding a touch of newness in the air of antiquity that surrounds the estate. The house was designed by Marc Peter, Jr., Gardiner and Boston architect and son in law of the present Robert H. Gardiner, and was created with an eye*

*to low cost efficiency. It has been built to fit the needs of a family of five and a maid and does this with a minimum of required labor and materials. With the site of the house in mind, the architect has placed windows and doors on the north and south sides of the building in order to catch all the available breezes. A large fixed window on the east not only allows the rays of the morning sun to enter but also frames the view which extends across the winding Kennebec River. Western exposure was reduced to a minimum to keep out the hot afternoon sun and since the building is not to be occupied through the winter the heating problem for chilly mornings and evenings has been solved by building the house around a central chimney with a heat-o-lator system to circulate the warm air through all the rooms.…"*

Pond House

Pond House stayed almost exactly the way Uncle Marc designed it until about 1990, with its dramatic plywood paneling, curtained bedroom area, compact floor plan, and ultrasimple details. Claire says that her father designed their house in Los Angeles using the same principles on a somewhat larger scale. As a result, the Peters have always been attached to the original design and advocated that its unique style among the houses in Gardiner be retained, even as some elements have been replaced or refinished. The porch was altered to accommodate a ramp for Uncle Arthur's wheelchair, but otherwise the structure changed little.

After Aunt Fran's death, the Peter sisters made a $10,000 contribution, in her memory, to restoring Pond House's condition during a time when

the pressure of major repairs to Oaklands left few resources for other houses. They sent a letter to the Corporation saying, "We have both sentimental and practical reasons for making the gift. Our father's designs reflect not only our parents' taste in architecture but also their shared values…." The work involved undoing several decorative changes that had compromised the original feel of the house, while allowing repairs and some modernization.

Pond House has received more and more use by family members who prefer a simple lifestyle and the ease of moving in and out quickly. It is used primarily from May to September, which is a short season. When Aunt Mary died she left some funds to her Gardiner nieces and nephews, in appreciation of earlier times when she had used Pond House. Many of them chose to commit them to a fund dedicated to the house's upkeep. For the last decade the Pond House Committee has been composed of members of the third generation who like to use it. They have not only guided modifications but also contributed free labor to achieve them at low cost. Pond House has been serving its purpose not only as a simple place to live but also as an alternative to Oaklands, an annex for Oaklands, and a place to extend one's stay in Gardiner after one's Oaklands reservation time has expired. It has been a perfect place for new in-laws to stay during wedding weekends, as well as a place where the groomsmen can party late into the night.

## Bandbox

The Bandbox (often spelled Band Box) was built by Aunt Alice in 1954 and given to the Corporation in the first month of its life. It is in Georgetown, very near the mouth of the Kennebec River, in a community called Indian Point. All households on the point are members of an association that maintains roads, operates a seasonal water supply, and socializes together. It is a 50-minute drive down the Kennebec and across the river to its eastern shore, following a long, winding, narrow road that was gravel for many years before it was finally paved to reduce the dusty trips that left one choking for fresh air by the time one reached the Bandbox. Georgetown is an island

The Bandbox, tucked into the trees at Indian Point at the right edge.

community that is accessible by several bridges and surrounded by many coastal marshlands that have earned it the title of "the mosquito capital of Maine." In the Indian Point area it has rocky shores but also sand beaches, which are rare east of Portland. Aunt Alice was one of the first buyers of a lot in 1954 and so could pick one of the best spots on a protected point of land with a small island on the east, a lovely sand beach on the west, and a view of other islands and the great expanse of the Atlantic. There are tide pools everywhere, mussels in the cove, and raspberry bushes all around.

She built the Bandbox as a place to picnic and read, away from the swarms of mosquitoes during the hot days of summer when the ocean breeze is the only form of relief from the heat. It was a one-room cabin with two built-in sofas that could be used as single beds, a tiny kitchenette for boiling lobsters or tea-but not both at the same time-a small table for eating, and a half-bathroom with only cold water. It is about as simple and tiny as any "house" can be, but the scenery is more beautiful than that of most mansions along the coast. Aunt Alice dubbed it the Bandbox because that is a term that was used in her era for a tiny, neatly arranged space.

After Aunt Alice's gift in 1960, the Bandbox received little usage, as everyone's emphasis was on Oaklands. My parents, especially my mother, felt the need to get away from the responsibilities of Oaklands and Oaklands Farm at some times, and so when a lot adjoining the Bandbox came up for sale, they developed the idea that they would buy it to provide some

protection from having a new house built nearby, if, in return, the Corporation would allow them to build a camp for their own use at the north end of the Bandbox lot, where the views are spectacular. The Corporation agreed, and my parents had a two-bedroom camp built entirely out of lumber that was harvested from the farm. They named it Herplace. Their intention was to redivide the two lots so that they could ultimately own the land under their camp, but the next-door neighbors were opposed and created difficulties that were better avoided than encountered. After my parents died and left the camp to their children, Anne and I offered to buy out my siblings' shares in the camp if we could revive my parents' plan to change the lot boundaries to allow us to own the acreage beneath it. Again, the Corporation cooperated and approved the change. We have since expanded and renovated the camp to be a more spacious and comfortable house for our use all summer.

Until 1990, there was very little overnight use of the Bandbox by members other than Alison and occasionally Anne and me. Then Ian discovered that the striped bass fishing around Georgetown was world class, and suddenly he became chairman of a Bandbox Committee to explore the potential for expanding and improving it. This was just during the period of the Corporation facing massive rebuilding expenses for Oaklands, but somehow Ian encouraged enough commitments of gifts to cover half the costs of expansion. Under Georgetown's new and stricter zoning ordinances, any structure as close to the water as the Bandbox was limited to a lifetime increase cap of 30 percent. Although 30 percent of a tiny amount turned out to be less than 200 square feet, that was enough to create space for a double bed and two comfortable chairs. The Corporation agreed to pay the other half of what was a very inexpensive upgrade. There was still no hot water, and no plumbing improvements could be made because the septic system was failing. However, because the cabin retained its small-scale charm, spraying for mosquitoes had made it easier to enjoy the outdoors, and the usage pressure of more family members wanting to stay at Oaklands increased, there was a big growth in family usage of the Bandbox. In 2021 we finally bit the bullet and put in a new septic system to meet the plumbing code and stop the telltale odors that occasionally occurred with too much use. Ian Burnes, Robin, Elizabeth L., David, Philip, Marsh, and others now use it year after year. Anne and I are always delighted to have family come down to use the cabin next door.

# The Farmhouse and Farm

The history of the rest of the Oaklands Farm property is more complicated and requires considerable explanation to understand. Three of my siblings—Holly, Nat, and Phyllis—all have houses in Gardiner on the 800 acres of farm and forest land that comprise Oaklands Farm, the property that my father kept separate from the Oaklands Corporation property. This land and its buildings are now part of the Gardiner Family Farm Trust, which was created just before he died in 1984 as a mechanism for us to share the property. Initially the owners were my mother, Alison, Holly, Nat, Phyllis, and I. Now our children have ownership shares as well. The Farm Trust, which is the shorter name we use for it, owns almost everything, including Orchard House, Hallowell House, and (initially) the Farmhouse. Holly and Nat have lifetime leases on Orchard and Hallowell Houses, but those houses are still under trust ownership without any commitment on who might be the next occupants in the distant future.

The Farmhouse is owned by Phyllis, but the land it sits on is owned by the Trust and leased for Phyllis's lifetime. The Farm Trust also owns three other rental houses on the property and all the farm buildings, plus some equipment. Finally, it owns the approximately 600 acres of woodlands that we call Rolling Dam Woods. The Trust is overseen by four trustees, who are elected by the owners of Trust shares to act on their behalf. Since 1990, Phyllis and Logan (and now Phyllis) have served as the managers of the Trust.

Beef cattle herd owned by Oakfarm, with baleage marshmallows and farm buildings in the background.

OAKLANDS FARM IMAGE
WITHOUT ROLLING DAM WOODS TO THE SOUTH OR
THE GIFFORD AND NEW FARM FIELDS TO THE SOUTHWEST


A. Oaklands
B. Hallowell House
C. Farm Buildings
D. Oaklands Farm Rd.
E. Lincoln Ave.
F. Cove House Location
G. Cove Field Solar Farm
H. Lincoln Ave. Houses
I. Green Gate
J. Kennebec River

There is yet another entity, Oakfarm, Inc., which is an agricultural business started by Logan and Phyllis and now managed jointly by Phyllis and Dan Burnes. The cattle, sheep, and most of the farm equipment belong to this entity, which also does business under the name Oaklands Farm. The fields are maintained by that entity as well.

The background story on how the Oakfarm business developed is that when we decided in 1990 to sell the milking herd and drop out of the milk business, our entire farm crew (a manager and three other workers) had to leave as well.

Phyllis and Logan volunteered to step into the role of on-site managers of the property for the Trust, with the ultimate goal of developing some new type of agricultural use of the surrounding farmland. Phyllis and Logan had already lived in Maine for seven years, first in Orchard House and then in a house they bought and renovated on Dresden Avenue. Logan was running a book publishing business in Gardiner during that period and had the desire to commit to managing the farming operations, as long as the workload could be designed to fit. Phyllis was working full time for the Maine Attorney General's Office in Augusta and helped Logan around the farm as much as possible. They felt that they would need to live on the farm to manage any active farming operations.

My siblings and I knew that we had to figure out a plan for the farmland and wanted to make arrangements with Phyllis and Logan that would allow them to accomplish what they wanted, but we were skittish about financing any sort of farming scheme because we knew the difficult history of agriculture in Maine's challenging environment. We agreed to lease fields and equipment barn space to Phyllis and Logan so that they could start an independently owned hay-making business using a few fields that were closest to the farm center and the storage capacity of the barns, while we leased out the other fields to different farmers. The haying business was based on selling small square bales to owners of horses and other livestock in the area.

The farmhouse at that time was divided in two parts—the original Cape Cod-style house on the north end (built around 1803), and a 1920s-era addition to the south that created a second house for another farmer. The original house was better built and more amenable to renovation. Phyllis and Logan moved into the north section to start, while they developed

plans for expanding their farming business and converting the farmhouse to a suitable house for the rest of their lives.

This transition took several years to complete, as the ownership and land use issues were complex. Because the farmhouse and farm buildings are so central to the enjoyment of everyone who lives on the place, we felt it was important to keep ownership of the farm as a unit and avoid subdivisions, while Phyllis and Logan felt they needed equity ownership of any improvements that they wanted for the farmhouse. It was difficult to negotiate as siblings. We all wanted them to succeed in farming, but there were so many issues of importance and potential expense. We settled on a plan to have them lease a lot under and surrounding the farmhouse, while they would own outright the farmhouse itself. This allowed them to move forward with plans to have the south section removed and sold to a family who moved it downriver to Dresden, while they added a timber-framed two story structure with a curved turret that resembles a silo attached to a barn on the north side of the house with a wraparound deck. They did most of the work themselves and completed the project in 1997.

They (along with everyone else) missed having cows on the farm. When they decided to expand their lease to include more fields and begin to raise a small herd of Hereford/Angus cross-bred cattle that would graze the pasture lands in summer and consume the crops of silage and hay from the other fields in the winter, we all felt we were making good progress. They converted to a new silage making system called baleage, which packs partially dried forage into heavy, white-plastic-covered packages that mimic the anaerobic silage-making process and which a tractor with a front-end loader can move around with ease. This made the process of preserving feed for later consumption easier for a labor force of one or two. It also made the old silos superfluous and added a new landscape feature of rows of bulging, white plastic marshmallows in the farmyard and on the edges of some fields. The old silos, except the one by the Long Barn, were removed in 1990, as was the milking stanchion barn and milk room. The remaining Pole Barn, which is next to the Equipment Shed, was converted by Oakfarm to house beef cattle; the Long Barn is used for hay, sheep, and some equipment storage, and the Shop is where most of the tools and equipment are stored. Oakfarm continued to sell surplus hay bales to horse owners in the region. This operation worked well for many years because Logan was

quite a gifted mechanic and was generally very handy with projects of all sorts. The former farm manager, Pat Berends, who had taken over after Jimmy Shores retired and who was a good cowman, still lived nearby and loved to come over and advise Logan on the care of the animals. Oakfarm's principal income-generating product was "natural, grass-fed" beef that Logan sold locally throughout the year. Those animals continue to be raised by this system.

In 2020, Oakfarm prepared to transition to a new management for the farm to allow Logan to retire. It hired an experienced farmer, who owned a flock of sheep that came with him. In March of 2021, Kristian Holbrook moved into the first house on Lincoln Avenue, which is owned by the Trust and rented by Oakfarm. His sheep became another new sight on the farm, as their moveable pasture fencing allows them to graze one small area at a time. Kristian's arrival took some of the workload off Logan.

Tragically, Logan died of a sudden heart attack in the spring of 2022, leaving Phyllis and the family bereft and the future of the farm in further doubt. Having recently retired from the Attorney General's Office, Phyllis took over administering the farm business, and Dan Burnes stepped up to help. Since Dan and Holly had retired and were spending more time living in Orchard House, he has provided more and more help both in the fields and with business planning and management. Kristian has experience as a cheesemaker, which presents the potential to add a profitable cheesemaking business, which is currently being developed. This and the possibility for creating other high-value products promise further adjustments in the way that Oakfarm operates in the years to come.

The second house on Lincoln Avenue is also owned by the Trust and occupied by the Oaklands caretaker and part-time farmhand, Josh Robbins. The Corporation covers the rental fees. Both houses on Lincoln Avenue and a third one that was torn down due to poor condition quite a few years ago were previously used to house farm workers during the dairy farming era, when it was important for the milking crew to live nearby.
The other farmhouse owned by the Trust is located at the north end of Oaklands Farm Road, and was formerly known as the Green Gate. It is now a rental property but has been used in other times as housing for the Oaklands caretaker.

# Other Parcels

In 2020 during the COVID epidemic, Adele Burnes and Richard Price moved into the first house on Lincoln Avenue for the winter when it was vacant, and Richard became interested in knowing more about the houses on the farm. He collected historical descriptions and references in a paper that provides a lot of interesting, additional information about these houses. He became particularly fascinated by one house that no longer exists—the Cove House, which was built by RHG I's daughter Anne and her husband, Francis Richards. It was repurchased by their granddaughter, Ruth Richards, in 1948, from another family that had bought and occupied it for more than 40 years. Cousin Ruth had the house torn down because it was derelict, and then returned the property to my father to become part of Oaklands Farm again.

Richard Price has collected many documents and photographs of the house and farm buildings. They tell the interesting history of this part of Oaklands Farm, which has since reverted to woodlands, with only a few signs of old cellar holes by the time the Corporation was founded. The only remaining structure is a house that was built for the Richardses' farm manager in a low spot between the Cove and Hallowell House, and which had been already separated from the Cove Farm when the elder Richardses sold the property in 1901. It is owned by Tom Reeves, who provided much of the historical information to Richard. Thus this small out-lot remains as a gap in the contiguous Oaklands Farm lands stretching along the river for one and a half miles from Cottage Street to the outlet of Rolling Dam Stream.

There are two other parts of the farm that have been sold. For two generations before the dairy herd sale occurred, there was a second dairy barn and farmhouse, known as the Gifford Farm, on the west side of the property, which is most easily accessible by the Marston Road. It housed another 36 milking cows during the ownership of Grandpa (RHG IV) and my father, but many of our family members never even knew that it existed as part of Oaklands Farm. It is also accessible more directly by following the extension of Lincoln Avenue into the woods before taking a right turn into the Connecting Field. We sold those cows after my father died, and then the house, barn, and the immediately surrounding pastureland were sold to streamline the Trust ownership in 1992. (A colleague of Phyllis's, Thom

Harnett, who subsequently served for several years as mayor of Gardiner, and his wife, Lisa Copenhaver, bought the property and have been good neighbors ever since.) All of the other fields that border the Marston Road, including the so-called New Farm field at the southwestern corner of the property, remain as part of the farmand are still leased to another farmer for haying.

The other parcel was a small lot on the north side of Cottage Street near the river that the Trust decided to sell to Ian and Gillian Burnes in 2005 for a new home, which they built there to be next to the farm, but without infringing on any of the fields. Ian is the first of the next generation to live in Gardiner, and his presence supports Grandpa's belief that there is plenty of room in the area for other Gardiners to have homes and create a larger community of family.

Today, in the 10-acre Cove Field, which is immediately inland from where the Cove House used to be, there is an astonishing new array of solar panels. This field was difficult to manage as a hayfield because of its poor soils and limited accessibility, and its proximity to the electrical distribution lines along the River Road made the solar investment attractive to a developer. The panels are owned by a solar energy company that pays an annual rental fee to the Farm Trust, and it has become an important addition to the financial health of that entity. It is an illustration that land use—even in a community with a history of very gradual change—may suddenly shift to new purposes that previously seemed incongruous, but which reflect the need to adapt to changing times.

The other source of income for the Farm Trust is the management of the forest lands that make up nearly three-quarters of the farm's total acreage. My father committed Rolling Dam Woods to the Tree Farm program back in the 1950s. This program requires a long-term, sustainable forest management plan that allows periodic harvests to maintain the growth and renewal of the forest. Since then, we have followed those practices and harvested small sections every five to eight years. This has provided a boost of income when needed and at the same time kept the lands as a fairly mature forest area, particularly where the steep slopes of the gullies make harvesting difficult. We follow the same system for managing the wooded areas around the fields of the farm. Most of the fields and woodlands are now registered under the Farm and Open Space Law, which allows for a lower property tax valuation, as long as the land is actively farmed.

# Hallowell House

Hallowell House was originally built in 1796 for Robert Hallowell (RH I) on a site across the river in what is now the town of Randolph. It was repurchased, as described earlier, by RHG IV in 1927 and moved to its current site on the west side of Mt. Dick with a lovely southerly view down the Kennebec toward the Cove House (which was built on the side of Mt. Harry—now you know how Mounts Tom, Dick, and Harry got their names). The house was cut into sections for the move, and Uncle Harry Shepley played a significant role in seeing that it was put back together correctly, with a small, new kitchen wing added on the north side. When I was young, the original main structure was virtually unchanged from when it was originally built, with its wide paneling, narrow staircases, low ceilings, and big fireplaces. Around 1974, my parents decided to rebuild the kitchen wing to accommodate a larger, more up-to-date kitchen and breakfast area on the north side, and to add a large living room to the east. Geoff Freeman of Shepley, Bulfinch (Uncle Harry's old architecture firm) designed a new, more modern living room addition to capture the river view and to be set apart from the original house for two reasons. They wanted, first, to preserve the handsome and classic Colonial exterior appearance of the house and, second, to minimally affect the old paneling and wallpaper in the sitting room that depicts Revolutionary War scenes and gives the house such character. Their solution was to convert an east-facing window into a doorway to a long, connecting link to the new living room. The other addition was a granite block terrace outside the kitchen to add a sitting area for sunset viewing. It bears a remarkable resemblance to Oaklands's Ruth's Rocks.

When my father set up the Farm Trust shortly before he died, he retained ownership of Hallowell and Orchard Houses and nine acres around them out of the Farm Trust as separate properties for my mother's use. At first, my mother primarily used Hallowell House, but later she decided to switch to Orchard House, and then she conveyed Hallowell House to the Trust. Alison was living in New York with little use for a summer house, Phyllis was firmly established in the Farmhouse, and I

had just bought a house in Cumberland, Maine. Holly and Nat decided they wanted to share Hallowell House as a vacation home where they could get away on weekends from their primary houses in Brookline, Mass. The Farm Trust negotiated a lease with them that was based on the terms of the Farmhouse lease. This worked well for several years. After my mother died, Orchard House was returned to the Farm Trust. Some time afterward, Nat and Nancy took a lifetime lease on Hallowell House, and then Holly and Dan did the same with Orchard House in 2012. The agreement among the five of us siblings (the owners of the Trust's shares) was to keep the farm property as a unit and allow leasing of the houses for only one generation at a time. Holly and Nat cover all the taxes and costs of maintaining the houses, including any renovations that they choose to make. Meanwhile, in 2000, Anne and I offered to purchase my parents' camp in Georgetown next to the Bandbox from my mother's estate, once the Corporation had agreed to redraw the lot lines, as described above.

Nat and Nancy have kept Hallowell House much the way my parents modified it, but not without difficulty. Before Hallowell House was moved to its current spot, that site had previously been the location of the farm's dump. Some time before my mother died, cracks began to appear and grow in the ceilings and walls of the new living room wing. Everyone assumed that the foundation of the new wing had settled as the old dump contents decayed. Nat and Nancy spent several years with engineering consultants before determining that the problem was not in the foundation but that the walls were buckling outwards. Apparently the initial plans had called for substantial beams at the top of the walls across the open space to distribute the weight of the roof properly. My parents had loved the two-story height of the room and wanted to minimize the visual impact of the overhead beams. Unfortunately, it turned out that the metal rods that were substituted for the beams weren't up to the task. The large windows at the gable end also needed additional structural support. Once this was determined, the room was repaired and refinished successfully. Nat and Nancy also updated the kitchen wing again to create a more open kitchen and a comfortable eating area.

# Orchard House

Orchard House was built about 1920, according to Uncle Ben's notes. It was built for Aunt Alice after her divorce, and it was designed by her brother-in-law, Harry Shepley. The original house was, at the time, just the main cottage-style section on the south side, and it contained a living room, bedroom, tiny bath, and kitchen/dining area on the first floor, and two small bedrooms on the second floor, accessed by a very steep staircase. Later Aunt Alice added a room on the north side, known as the Book Room, and a one-car garage. Uncle Ben described it as "simplicity itself." After Aunt Alice died in 1963, ownership remained in my father's name, but Grandma used the house for much of the next decade. In 1976, my parents added a second-floor dormer in the back to create a larger bedroom and an upstairs bathroom. From that time on, they used Orchard House primarily in the winter and Hallowell House in other seasons. Then after my father died and the ownership of the farm had shifted to the Farm Trust, my mother decided to expand Orchard House for use year round by replacing the garage and Book Room with a larger addition containing a new kitchen/dining/family room, plus a bigger downstairs bathroom. She also simplified the flower beds that Aunt Alice had so lovingly and laboriously cared for, while preserving the house's original floral character.

When Holly and Dan took a lifetime lease on Orchard House in 2012, they used it more and more, as they gradually eased into retirement. They added a new section onto the back of the house to change the circulation design, relocated the bathroom for the downstairs bedroom, and expanded the small sitting area into a more comfortable living room. With these improvements they have increased their time on the farm, and that has provided several significant new benefits. First, Holly has had more time to manage Oaklands and its gardens. Second, she loves to work in the farm's vegetable garden along with Phyllis. Third, Dan got involved in Oakfarm and started helping with the field work—in his words, "beating back the chaos" that comes from the adjoining woods' natural tendency to encroach on the fields. After Logan's death in May 2022, Dan stepped up to co-manage the business with Phyllis as they work to develop it into a sustainable agricultural operation for the long term.

Behind Orchard House is a tiny one-room house that was originally built near the old greenhouse site on the path from the farm to the tennis court. It was designed by Harry Shepley for Aunt Anna when he was an apprentice architect in his father's firm and courting her. Because he had many years of apprenticeship in front of him, he felt he could not marry her until he was older. He designed Apple House to serve as a teahouse amid the extensive flower gardens that occupied most of the area that is now north of the tennis court path. Anna moved to England and married Roger Draper there. But then he was killed in the war, and soon afterward Anna returned to America, and her life story took a happier turn. She reconnected with Harry Shepley, they married, and they lived long lives together in the Boston area.

Orchard House
The section on the left is the original house with later additions on the right.

Uncle Henry recalls that, in 1938, Uncle Ben, along with some farmhands and equipment, dragged little Apple House up the hill to a spot behind Orchard House where Aunt Alice could use it as a place to spin wool. I am not sure whether it was named Apple House before or after the move, because in both locations it was on the edge of the 20-acre apple orchard that RHG II had planted. Holly and Dan have since moved it a bit to the northwest of Orchard House to allow a clear view from the kitchen windows, across the gully behind the house, to the fields beyond. It is used mostly as a workshop and a place for an occasional sleep-over.

*Chapter 16*

# Community Engagement

THE WIDER CONTEXT IN WHICH OAKLANDS FUNCTIONS is the community of Gardiner, Maine, and, to a lesser degree, all of Kennebec County, which, after all, covers much of the area that Silvester Gardiner and his partners bought as the Kennebec Purchase in 1750. He made loans to cover costs for many new settlers in their first few years before they had established themselves as farmers and business persons, and thereby earned appreciation for his deep commitment to the new settlements, as demonstrated by their naming the city for him. Silvester's life has been well studied by local historians, and we hope that visitors to the Seattle Art Museum continue to delve into the story of this figure who gazes so knowingly back at them when they admire Copley's portrait. He represents the beginning of English influence on the territory of the Abenaki people; all history of the area since then flows from his vision for what the Kennebec Valley could become.

RHG I returned to America following the Revolutionary War, and then, upon attaining the age of 21, proceeded to claim his land inheritance. While it may seem surprising that Silvester had managed to retain legal ownership of his property after he had left America during the war, the various attempts to seize his lands had been done in technical violation of the acts of confiscation in the colonies. So for the next few years RHG I negotiated from a position of strength with the people who had squatted on Silvester's

lands in Gardiner, in his effort to settle ownership rights. He offered a fair price for the improvements they had made and agreed to the boundaries of their farmsteads. Then he used his wealth to invest in mills in the fledgling community of Gardiner, to found the Gardiner Savings Institution, to build Christ Church, to donate the Gardiner Common, and to establish a local school, and then gave his time to serve as the city's first mayor. He is remembered just as strongly as his grandfather, Silvester, as a founder of the city. The community still greatly appreciates the tremendous efforts provided by these two men, and no one since has come close to equalling them in terms of importance to the community.

Every succeeding generation of Robert Hallowell Gardiners has lived with the expectation that they will be pillars of the community and be positively involved in community affairs. While none have reached the levels of commitment of either Silvester or RHG I, the city of Gardiner itself has changed and has needed less from the succeeding generations. Still, every RHG has made useful contributions. All have supported local causes and have invited community leaders to Oaklands in the pursuit of common goals. RHG II contributed to many community institutions—Christ Church, the Maine Pomological Society and many civic causes. RHG III is remembered for his support of Christ Church and worldwide ecumenism in Maine. RHG IV helped many school and community activities in the Boston area and focused his efforts in Gardiner on Christ Church. RHG V continued most of his father's commitments in Boston and added several in Maine, most notably as a trustee of Colby College for two terms. He also served as a director of the Gardiner Savings Institution, the local banking institution that RHG I helped to found. My father hardly missed a Gardiner Savings meeting in over 30 years. He seized every excuse to be back in Maine. It was always a challenge for these men to engage deeply in the Gardiner community when they lived and worked in Boston for most of the year. Still, every RHG from I to V was fully committed to helping Gardiner in any way possible.

The relatively few family members who have chosen to live full time in Maine have had more opportunity to play significant community roles. Several women connected to the Richards family achieved fame as authors, including Laura E. Richards, who married one of our Richards cousins, and Laura's mother, Julia Ward Howe, who often stayed with them in Gardiner.

The local school that was built around 2000 is named for Laura E. Richards, not only for her fame as an author but for the family's leadership as advocates for education in the community over several generations. Uncle Tudor was elected to serve in the Maine Senate for six years and then as governor for four more (1929-33, two two-year terms). Aunt Alice was a beloved volunteer at the Gardiner Public Library. I was the first in my generation to live full time in Maine and was deeply involved throughout my career in subsets of the local community involving Maine Public Broadcasting, the Maine Natural Resources Council, and the Maine Bureau of Public Lands. I have also served on many Maine nonprofit organizations' boards, Anne served two terms on the Augusta school board, and Anne and I have hosted community events for United Way volunteers at Oaklands.

Phyllis was the next family member to live in Maine. She worked in many capacities in the Maine Attorney General's Office during her career, and has chaired the Gould Academy board of trustees in Bethel. She and her husband, Logan Johnston, undertook the challenge of restoring Gardiner's old music hall and theater, Johnson Hall, to good physical condition as the home of a reenergized cultural center. They hosted several major fundraising events for Johnson Hall at Oaklands. It took 35 years and some extra help from Dan Burnes, but they succeeded at last in raising the money to finish the renovation. Logan also was elected to the city council for four years and served on numerous city development committees, arts programs, and other civic activities over several decades. Through all of these activities, he came to know everyone in downtown Gardiner very personally, and perhaps because his last name was Johnston—not Gardiner—he was treated more as an ordinary person who was totally engaged in the community and respected for all that he gave to it. Now there are several family members in the next generation who are beginning to contribute to the communities of Gardiner and other towns, and I expect that they will make many meaningful contributions as well.

In addition to these individual efforts, for years Oaklands Farm has allowed members of the public to walk through the farm from the end of Dresden Avenue to Lincoln Avenue and walk the trails from the Lincoln Avenue Extension into Rolling Dam Woods and down through those woodlands to the river. Because the local snowmobile club is highly organized, we have worked with them to keep several of these trails open for their

recreational use in winter. Those wooded areas away from our houses and south of Hallowell House have always been open for deer hunting season as well, as long as permission is granted by the Farm Trust. Probably the most prominent benefit to the community has been the opportunity to use Mt. Tom for coasting and skiing. Mt Tom is a superb coasting spot that has been written up in the local newspaper as one of the state's best. On snowy weekend days there can be over 50 people on the hill all at once.

We have been careful to allow this public use as a favor to the community without seeking any publicity, in part to protect the Corporation from liability in case of anyone getting injured on the property. One person did try to sue us for damages in a winter coasting accident in the 1990s, but the case was rejected by the courts. (An amusing story: One winter a teenage boy who was just learning to ski fell in the area with the steepest slope and broke his leg. He howled in pain, and we called from Oaklands to have an ambulance come and help him. Gardiner had a hospital facility on Dresden Avenue at the time, but this was prior to the current system of having local ambulances and EMTs as part of every fire department. Instead, it was the Staples Funeral Home black hearse that came down the River Road to pick him up to get his leg fixed. The boy saw it and totally misunderstood; he must have thought that he was about to be put out of his misery like a horse with a broken leg! He started screaming, "Don't let them take me!")

In return for Oaklands's neighborly role, we have been reminded of the important benefit of keeping the land open to users from the community every time there has been a revaluation of properties for tax purposes—something that the city of Gardiner goes through about every decade or more. Each time, the outside company that had the contract to perform the revaluation has increased the tax valuation of Oaklands dramatically. Each time my father or Logan or I have appealed the valuation on the basis of the house's ancient condition, as well as for the Corporation's acceptance of town members' usage of the property. We have won significant concessions every time. It has been rewarding to see the city's acknowledgment of the importance of good relations with the Gardiner family.

On every occasion of a major celebration for the city, such as its centennial anniversary and subsequent big anniversaries, the city has invited RHG III, IV, or V to participate as speakers. Soon after I moved to Augusta in 1978, I was invited to speak at the ceremonies for the reopening

of Fort Western (in Augusta) after its large-scale renovation as one of Maine's oldest structures. At first, I could not imagine why I would speak, since I thought that few people in town knew me. This prompted me to do some research, and I discovered that Fort Western's construction in 1754 had been commissioned by Dr. Silvester Gardiner in his role as chairman of the Kennebec Proprietors. So even when we are unaware of our family's importance to the community, there are other people in the community who do know!

One difficulty inherent in allowing public access has been the challenge of protecting our own privacy and safety. Virtually everyone who uses Oaklands has had the experience of hearing a knock on the front door by someone asking when the next house tour will begin and what the tickets cost. Although most such interactions are benign, some have become quite testy. A few people just seem to have no respect for private property and feel they can drive or wander wherever they want. We have placed signs at all access points to inform people that this is private property, but many people drive right past the signs as if they were not there.

The most serious intrusion occurred when Kate Tucker was in residence with her family and another family from New Orleans in the fall of 2020. As Kate tells it,

> *"The Covid-19 pandemic had persisted for eight months and our two families were enjoying being out of the city and in the crisp, fall weather of Gardiner for a week. Our collective six children had the most fun exploring the gullies and the farm, and even creatively invented the game of Extreme Croquet, which started at the top of Mount Tom and finished on the front lawn. At 8am on Sunday morning, a confused woman with mental problems parked at the Oaklands front door and walked directly inside and upstairs to the West Room, where our friends were sleeping. In the fog of being woken up, they initially thought she was perhaps an aunt or the housekeeper, but quickly realized she was an intruder. I, still in my pajamas, found the woman in the upstairs hallway demanding that she was a Rockefeller and this was her house and everyone must leave. Realizing that she had broken in and was a total loon, I coaxed the woman downstairs by suggesting that we take a look at the family photo albums, while also calling the Gardiner police from my cell phone. The woman*

*continued to refuse to leave the house and luckily, a police woman arrived in about ten minutes. Thankfully the officer had recently completed a course in handling perpetrators with mental health issues and calmly convinced the woman to leave the house and get into her police car. It is easy to feel as though you are removed from the world while staying at Oaklands (especially during a pandemic) and this reminded me to always stay vigilant."*

The lesson seems to be that even though Oaklands feels remote and safe, there are always reasons to lock the doors. Our memories of these experiences with uninvited visitors were part of the reason the family decided in 2004 that the house and, in particular its portraits, were not as secure as they ought to be.

This and other serious problems with intrusions have, unfortunately, put Oaklands users in the position of needing to defend our rights to privacy. It is natural to react reflexively when faced with an intruder, but most of us who live in Maine are able to see that the preponderance of public opinions is one of respect and appreciation for what the family does provide. Oaklands itself is something truly distinctive about Gardiner, and people justifiably take pride in knowing about it and pointing it out to others. Public attention like this should be considered flattering, and we do hear many expressions of appreciation for the access we provide. As the saying goes, the public attention—both good and bad—"comes with the territory."

A wholly opposite example of access to the public came in 2013 as a result of a call from a friend of ours, Ned Cook. He was an art history professor at Yale, and he asked whether an elite club called the Walpole Society, a group of about 30 distinguished art dealers, academics, collectors, and museum curators from all around the nation, might come and visit Oaklands during their trip to Maine the following autumn. Anne and I decided to host them for an afternoon and have a nice dinner with them in the house. We checked with the Oaklands board for approval, which was given, according to our policies that restrict such events to ones that do not invite public attention. They were an extremely interesting group of experts, and they were fascinated by Oaklands. They scattered and scrambled all over the house for two hours, like kids on a treasure hunt, looking at the

various paintings, furnishings, architecture, statues, books, and tchotchkes. Afterward we received an impressive number of beautifully handwritten thank-you notes praising our family for its extraordinary job of preserving Oaklands and its wonderful collection of objects. They were particularly effusive in their praise for the way the family had adapted the house for family use while preserving its aesthetic beauty and historical integrity. They described Oaklands as "a historical jewel that was the highlight of our trip" and as an example of "the noble goal of balancing preservation and family usage." I interpreted those comments as high praise from a group who knew their stuff. It was a rare and entirely spontaneous validation of our family's long-term commitment to preserving Oaklands's best characteristics and our decisions to allow modernization where it mattered.

*Chapter 17*

# Maintaining the Momentum

AFTER THE DRAMATIC CHANGES OF RECONSTRUCTING the house, selling the portrait, and restructuring the finances, everything that followed in the most recent era (2007-2023) seems smaller in scale, but there were many improvements and involvements that are important to note. In 2007 everyone was feeling exhausted by the scale and costs of the changes we had made and had little appetite for new projects—either financially or programmatically. Nevertheless, Holly was manager and pushed to keep making progress, both before and after the big project, on several fronts, particularly in the areas of electrical and decorative needs.

Oaklands's electrical system was quite outdated when the Corporation was founded. For years, the existing lighting and appliance load on the old electrical system used up all of its capacity. Hairdryers were forbidden because they would blow fuses before the user's hair could be dried. In a cabinet in the hallway to the downstairs bathroom was an electrical panel from about 1900 that was fascinating and beautiful but dangerously accessible to curious children. Fortunately no one touched it incorrectly before it was removed in 1992 and replaced with a larger-capacity, safer, modern distribution panel and a new entrance panel in the cellar. There was another old-fashioned electrical relic in the kitchen, a circa-1900 panel that showed when someone in a remote room, either upstairs or downstairs, wanted maid service. Their call would trigger a bell and an arrow on the

panel indicating which room was calling. The system still worked in my lifetime to a limited degree—limited by the fact that there were no maids left to respond.

Recall that, well before we understood the magnitude of Oaklands's structural needs in the late 1980s, we thought the house's most urgent issues were to get a new roof and total rewiring to meet modern electrical standards. While we were struggling to understand the changing structural needs in the next decade, Holly pushed for small scale increments of rewiring work, which Logan helped to plan and supervise. Whenever any repair projects created temporary access into the walls where the electrical wiring winds through the house, they would make sure that upgrades to the circa-1900 wiring system took advantage of the opportunities. These involved the addition of grounded wiring and upgrades for the distribution subpanels that fed the upper floor rooms. The directors approved these gradual upgrades and finally bit the bullet on upgrading the entire electrical service to the house by digging a trench underground across the Mt. Tom pasture to a pole along the River Road. Thus the house gradually gained a modern electrical system with capacity for expansion, if we need it. There may still be a few, noncritical, hard-to-access places where the circa 1900 wiring has not yet been fully upgraded, but we have achieved a much higher safety level overall.

Holly's other priority was to chip away at interior decoration and kitchen issues, especially after the structural renovations were finished. By 2007 there was some newly available slack in the budget to pay for interior improvements, as a result of Oaklands's new fiscal situation. The dining room had a very nice fabric wall covering that had been installed during Grandpa and Grandma's era, but it had suffered years of staining over large areas, caused by various roof leaks and upstairs plumbing failures.

The Interior Committee in 2008 proposed that we fix the plaster moldings, which had been rotted by leaking water, and replace the wall coverings. The molding work required patience and skill to recreate the smooth detail of the original shape. After painstaking discussions about the fabrics that were available, the committee selected one of a similar style but different color to maintain the feel of the room. This required an expensive installation involving padding and decorative trim, but everyone agreed that it was worth the cost to do it right. A team of professional installers

had to be brought up from Boston to do the work. At the end the upgrade showed what an important difference some interior work could make to the appearance of the house.

The dining room today, with the portraits of
John Sylvester John Gardiner and Robert Hallowell.

In the next few years, the Interior Committee, guided by Laura's design and construction skills, undertook a series of improvements to the kitchen that began with the replacement of the old wooden table in the center. This proposed change was controversial, because some members were attached to the old table with its funky overhead rack from which utensils, pans, and other equipment hung down in every direction. After long discussions, the change was approved. Our caretaker, Shane Condon, built in its place a new island with storage cabinets beneath and a butcher block wooden top. It was much larger than the old table and provided excellent, working counter space for the first time. A few years later we installed a new ventilation hood over the two stoves, and a heat pump was added to cool the room in summer. The general feeling was that we had done well to make these upgrades and that they made a real difference in making the kitchen a nicer place for family members who now do their own cooking and want to have the company of others. Shane subsequently rebuilt the cabinetry in the laundry and refurbished other elements in that space over the course of another winter, which made that room far more useful and attractive.

Holly also pushed that project through on a small budget. Shane applied his carpentry skills to all of these projects, and that enabled us to keep the costs down. Still, further improvements that Shane could not do had to be deferred to stay within the Corporation's budget.

The old kitchen at Oaklands with the central table and overhead rack holding kitchen utensils.

Nat and Nancy in the new kitchen with new cabinets, appliances, etc in 2023.

After the major structural renovations in 2004, the Corporation kept discussing and implementing various new ideas through the different committees under a theme of more gradual changes . The most important have centered on three areas: (1) the transition to the next generation of family members, (2) the addition of new technology, and (3) a more extensive renovation of interior spaces.

# Usage and the Next Generation

In 2012, David was asked to chair a Strategic Planning Committee to chart the way forward on major issues and how we should deal with them in the post-renovation era. The members of that committee divided up the task of conducting one-on-one interviews with almost all members and associates to ask their opinions of what mattered most to them, what changes they wanted, and what level of participation they would like. The effect was to tease out all sorts of ideas for improvements as well as opinions about what ought to be preserved. While most of these ideas were not acted upon immediately, in hindsight we see that many were achieved over the next decade. The committee recommended four changes that were adopted in the following year. (1) The budget was increased to allow 2¼ percent of the endowment to be spent each year—this was the first significant increase in decades; (2) the concept of a capital improvements fund replaced funding depreciation and was given first priority in the budget—a major new long-term set-aside; (3) the directors took on the challenge of making Oaklands easier to move in and out of; and (4) reservations were made nonrefundable for cancellations within one month—a reflection of higher demand for usage. Other ideas for changes, including addressing the interior finishes and kitchen, the use of the back of the house, new energy systems, and new leadership were discussed and eventually turned into outcomes that everyone could agree upon. Another effect of the process was to engage all of the family in decision making in a way that was widely appreciated and that made people feel included.

A second major development that strengthened the family's sense of togetherness was a series of large family reunions in 1999, 2006, 2012, and 2022. There was never any particular schedule for reunions—they simply were planned whenever there was a surge of interest and when the circumstances were favorable. For example, the 2006 reunion was timed to show everyone the 2004 renovations, and the most recent reunion was initially planned for 2020 but had to be delayed twice until 2022 because of COVID travel restrictions. By having reunions between six and 10 years apart, each one benefited, because the long interval meant that most members were more than ready to make the effort to travel long distances to see their cousins. With attendance in the 60-to-80-person range, many

members had to stay in hotels instead of in Oaklands. All were three-day affairs starting on Friday afternoons and ending on Sundays. Each included family history presentations, filming projects, sporting activities, entertainment, plenty of food, etc. All provided ample opportunities to meet new family members and spend time with lots of relatives without any business agendas—just the chance to reconnect and enjoy the sense of belonging to a worldwide network of family members who lead interesting lives and share a love of Oaklands.

The 2006 and 2022 reunions were planned by committees led by Elizabeth L. and by Jennifer; they and their committee members put enormous energy into the efforts to make sure that everyone else greatly benefited. These weekends were fun because of the work they put into planning an interesting schedule of activities that offered chances to interact in original ways. For example in 2022, Gordie and Holly presented a slideshow of photographs of earlier generations and Oaklands in the old days from Aunt Jane's enormous photo collection, which few had ever seen before. We were asked to help identify some of the people in the photos where there were no captions or markings, and it was amazing to find how many were identified by one of the various older members present. Philip and Nat hosted a game show format with Downeast Maine accents in which teams of family members had to guess the answers to their questions about Oaklands and family trivia—with the prime entertainment coming through the hosts' old Maine lingo and heavy accents. These were activities for the whole group; at other times small groups of family members took part in activities of their own choice, such as cycling led by Aaron and Jack, canoing guided by Ian Burnes, and a creative, group-photo treasure hunt organized by Gillian—you had to be there to understand how entertaining it was.

In this era the next generation, which has come to be known as Gen 3, has begun to play important roles in the Corporation's affairs. Ian Burnes has led energy and bat eradication committees, Ian Gardiner Jr. became chair of the Investment Committee, Laura has led several major interior redecoration processes, and the Pond House and Technology committees have been composed almost entirely of Gen 3 members. In addition, others have served on all of the Corporation's standing committees and made major contributions to decisions. Ian Burnes was the first to be elected a

director, followed by Abby and Monique. By 2020, the Corporation had 37 members, the majority of whom were from Gen 3. There also were 24 associate members and three junior members.

Participation in Oaklands affairs changed dramatically during the COVID pandemic of 2020-2022 and, surprisingly, not always in a negative way. Because of travel restrictions, annual meetings were switched to teleconferences on Zoom, which allowed more people to attend and participate. Even though the interaction was not as intimate, the inclusion of many more participants was a significant advantage.

Another surprising effect of COVID was that people were looking for ways to isolate themselves in safer environments, while many jobs were converted to "work from home." Several family members came to Oaklands to live for longer periods of time, and the result was increased usage, including during seasons that had never been popular. The house was booked more solidly than ever before—enough so that the directors chose to defer some improvement projects because the house was in nearly constant use. Interestingly, these users, staying without a houseful of guests, experienced Oaklands in a different way than they had before. Anne and I used to stay in Oaklands for long periods without guests in the 1980s, but few other members used Oaklands just by themselves, until COVID. When one stays in the house without any guests and for weeks at a time, the experience is quite different. The house becomes easier to manage with only two to five people in it. The pace of activities slows down, and one has time to poke into the collections of books, records, furnishings, and artifacts. One can explore the trails and features of the farm, and appreciate Oaklands's deeply layered accumulation of family history. Anne and I find that, instead of feeling that our little group is too small for the house, we actually love the sense of having all of its grace and enjoying its elegance by ourselves—at least for a short while.

The objective of making the house easier to move in and out of, presumably by hiring extra help to perform tasks such as washing the sheets and towels, having provisions delivered, or other such helpful tasks, has been on the list of desired outcomes for two generations without much progress. Gardiner is a small town that has limited services of that sort available commercially. On top of that is the relative infrequency at which users move in and out, so that the housekeeper must have a highly flexible

schedule to be of real value; realistically it has been a hard stretch to reach that goal. Oaklands has had fairly frequent turnover in the regular house cleaners, even though we have hired them on a weekly schedule, precisely because an employer must provide regular work to hold onto a trained employee. Oaklands has adopted a uniform Friday turnover schedule in order to synchronize the schedule of the users with that of the house cleaners. Even that does not allow much time for cleaning between back-to-back uses. Thus the manager struggles quite enough to meet the usage schedule and provide a clean house for the next user as it is, let alone provide more help for moving in and out. Perhaps having newer bathrooms and a better organized kitchen will begin to make the transitions easier in some ways as we go forward. Fortunately, there is one improvement beyond our control that has helped: Instacart has made provisioning in Gardiner much easier for people trying to move into the house.

During the 2012 strategic planning effort, there was one particular topic on which everyone's opinions were solicited, and that was the idea of building a swimming pool for Oaklands. Surprisingly to me, there was practically no interest and there was some opposition. At the time, Nat and Nancy were spending many summer weekends in Hallowell House. Nancy felt that the dock on the river was a pretty good place for adults to swim, but that it was somewhat difficult and dangerous for small kids. The river's strong upstream and downstream tidal currents were not easy to cope with, and the dock was not a particularly comfortable place to sit and watch kids play in the water for any length of time. In addition, the water quality of the Kennebec, for all of its improvements, was not sparklingly clear. To Nat and Nancy, a conventional pool seemed far preferable. Nat polled his siblings and the Corporation about pitching in for a special pool fund that would support a new pool in a spot accessible to all, if he would take the lead. The Corporation declined, but Phyllis and Holly, with their houses on the farm, jumped in. The farm trustees decided that a piece of farm property that abuts the tennis court was an appropriately central spot, and that is where it was built. The contractor could not understand why a pool was being located in a pasture—our reasoning was too complicated to explain. After it was built, everyone in the family was invited to use the pool as much as they wanted. Within one year, users of Oaklands began to split their swimming time between the river and the pool, with the pool gaining steadily. Because

the chairs, chaises, and umbrellas provide comfortable places to sit and talk, it has become a nice way for people in different houses to interact while on the farm together. It has been a great addition to the family dynamic.

## Technology and Infrastructure

Because Oaklands was built in the 19th century, it was designed to be heated by fireplaces only. There was no central heating system, originally. Around 1900 a central coal furnace was installed in the cellar, but the heat distribution system was very limited in scope. When Oaklands converted to an oil furnace 60 years later, ductwork was extended to all of the second-floor rooms, but it was quite uneven. There was no reliable way to regulate the amount of heat for each room, as everything was in a single zone. Heat would get to most first-floor rooms, but much less rose to reach the second floor bedrooms. One had to leave the bedroom doors open all day to avoid having a very cold room that night. Adding Lexan windows in the early 1980s helped, as did adding insulation in parts of the attic and the second furnace to heat the back section of the house separately. When the second furnace was added, the directors considered buying a wood furnace to take advantage of the ample supply of firewood around Oaklands, but they ultimately decided that it would require too much constant labor to keep it stoked. From then on, we have considered various ways to improve our heating systems and manage our costs.

Ian Burnes's full-time job was to work on state energy matters in Augusta, and he wanted to explore heating Oaklands with geothermal systems. The directors were interested, and this led to several years of consideration. Expert advice was difficult to find, especially because Oaklands would be a very unusual retrofit. Eventually, we found that, although geothermal pipes could be placed under the lawn to generate enough heat, our existing ductwork to distribute the heat needed to be upgraded significantly, and it would be too expensive to do. Oaklands's lack of insulation in the walls is a continuing drawback that is hard to solve. Insulating the walls requires installation of a moisture-proof membrane, and gaining access to do that all over the house has been judged too much of a challenge. Without a

properly installed membrane, we might exacerbate deterioration of the mortar and structural timbers all over again. We have yet to find a reasonable solution.

In 2010, we followed Ian Burnes's next energy improvement recommendation and added an electric heat pump in the kitchen. The primary purpose was to provide air conditioning to cool the kitchen on the hottest days of the year, and it has the additional advantage of heating the kitchen separately in winter. Based on this success, when the rooms on the third floor over the kitchen were renovated in 2017, heat pumps were added for all three rooms. There had never been heat in those rooms previously. The interior walls had been opened up to address water intrusion, which made insulating those rooms and adding a moisture barrier both feasible and sensible. Again, these heat pumps provided both heating and cooling. Thus, we are on the way to modernizing the heating system and providing higher levels of temperature control in both winter and summer.

Oaklands's thick masonry walls are hard for radio frequencies to penetrate. One consequence of this is that broadcast television signal reception is very poor throughout the house. Most family members abhorred the idea of television sets in Oaklands—after all, what would it do to the family traditions of charades, etc.?—so the directors never cared about the problem. When Uncle Henry and Aunt Eunice visited, they would try to maintain their habit of watching the evening news on TV. They brought a portable TV with a rabbit-ears antenna and found they could get passable reception in one corner of Uncle Hal's Room. In the evening they would be tucked away in that corner. No one else wanted to do that, especially during the cocktail hour, so no one else cared that broadcast and cable TV were not available.

As the internet gradually gained importance to people's lives, the next generation began to seek ways to provide service. A Technology Committee was formed, consisting of Marsh, Ben Tallman, Chico, Betsy, and Adele, among others, all of whom wanted better use of computer systems in Oaklands. For several years Oaklands successfully used its telephone land line to provide internet connection, but it was available only in the Music Room. Eventually we switched to more robust internet services and added a wifi system that reaches most of the first-floor rooms and some upstairs. The committee's next effort was to create a wiki to allow access to all sorts

of information about Oaklands to all of the family members, wherever they might live. Their vision had to be approved by the directors, most of whom were unfamiliar with new technology and who were concerned about privacy, cost, and other matters. The tech com readily answered those issues. "Oaklands.org" was registered as the Corporation's website.

The committee's vision was to allow the family to communicate using an early type of wiki that many members had trouble adapting to. The membership preferred to rely simply on email for most communications. Over time, however, the Oaklands website has become very useful for other functions such as making reservations, sharing historical records, and making information about the houses broadly available. Now there is detailed information about the use of Oaklands, Pond House, and the Bandbox that is readily available to every user, as the need arises. The website stores a full set of instructions and useful information about how members are expected to use Oaklands and cope with problems when they arise. It has proved to be yet another way to improve the standards of care for the house with so many different users.

The next challenge was getting cell phone service to work in Oaklands. The thick walls of the house that blocked television signals also blocked signals from cell towers. Reception inside most of the house was terrible, so people would have to go out to the driveway for conversations on their mobile phones. The Technology Committee guided us through several technology upgrades to improve internet and cell phone service with more sophisticated wifi systems. By 2020 the Technology Committee had provided the house with excellent wifi coverage on the first floor, so that phones and computers have good coverage and enough bandwidth for multiple users at one time. This has meant that one does not have to revert to 20th-century communications standards when using Oaklands. The benefits of this became even more apparent when COVID hit and members were using the house as their home and workplace for weeks at a time.

We should note that, long before there was a technology committee, there was Uncle Ben with his interest in using new technology to enable and enhance communication among the family. He developed the automatic email birthday alert system that notifies everyone in the family whenever someone has a birthday. His system is still maintained today by his

grandson Chico, and it is virtually unchanged. It does not just remind us of the date of the birthday and the person's age—sometimes to the annoyance of a few members who don't like being reminded of their actual age. It also uses a numbering system to identify that individual's position on the family tree as a reminder of who's who. Everyone's place is determined by birth order, with the first digit indicating the ancestry descending from RHG IV (thus Aunt Fran was # 1), followed by the next generation's birth order (making Christine #11), etc. Third-generation members have three digits, hence the broad acceptance of their definition as Gen 3. The fourth generation has four digits. Thus, Sloane Gardiner is number 2222 because she is the second child of Grandpa and Grandma's second (Bob) child's second (me) child's second (Avery) child. No other family that we know so enjoys referring to themselves by such a numbering system. At the 2022 reunion, everyone's name tag was numbered and color-coded to show their generation and branch on the family tree. Every in-law also has a number, based on the number of their spouse, with an "S" added to indicate that they are married into the family.

The final issue of "infrastructure" is hard to categorize, because it has to do both with the limitations of technology and the introduction of a new kind of "user" of the house. For as long as anyone can remember, Oaklands has been a house in which bats suddenly appear and fly around until swatted with a tennis racket or ushered out an open door. These bats never properly applied to become authorized users of the house, and their use is never on the schedule. They seem to think they have a historically justified right to use it, and no amount of effort has made much of a dent in the regularity with which they show up.

When I was a child in Oaklands, I was quite terrified by bats swooping through the house on warm summer nights. Ever since, I have tried to come to terms with their presence in Oaklands. The men in the family have always been expected to chase and dispose of bats, and, for some men--and some women, as well— this has been a popular sport. To them, taking battle stations to knock down flying bats is a highlight of their stay. It's a way to show bravery and athleticism, and if the incident occurs during dinner or in a bedroom at night, they might even be seen as chivalrous too.

In 2014, while all of my family had gathered at Oaklands to celebrate my 70th birthday, Sullivan and Calliope were sleeping in the Southwest

Room, and later that evening Marsh found a live bat on the floor, not flying around. He swiftly dispatched the bat and disposed of it in the gully. The next morning he began to question whether the bat had been acting strangely because it might have rabies. Kennebec County has historically had nearly annual incidences of bats with rabies, so we could not dismiss the potential. Marsh had disposed of the dead bat, but we could not find it the next morning to take it for testing. The kids had no marks on them. Further research of recommendations on how to act in cases of suspected exposure to rabid bats indicated that shots were strongly recommended. Every untreated human rabies case results in the victim's death, so Marsh and Teressa felt they had to be safe and have themselves and the kids take the painful series of shots when they got back to San Francisco.

This kicked off several years of learning about the life patterns of bats, disagreements on whether this was a real problem, frustration in finding ways to control bats, provision of nets for all the bedrooms for users who felt the need, and other challenges. It became an entirely new way to split the membership and occupy agenda time at annual meetings. Nat, as president, declared all-out war against the bats, and appointed a Bat Annihilation Team (BAT), but we soon discovered that some bat species are considered endangered in Maine. This provided them with protection from eradication by any licensed pest control service. For the rest of that summer Holly, Ian, or Shane took every bat that was found in the house to the state laboratory in Augusta for rabies testing. All tested negative.

One year later, Holly was staying in the house with her family, and Adele's twins, Felix and Simon, were sleeping in the Northeast Room with a motion-activated camera pointing at the crib in front of the fireplace. The camera recorded one small bat squeezing through a tiny crack in the woodwork and into the room. The entire Burnes family spent the rest of their weekend in Oaklands trying to seal every crack in the walls and woodwork that they could find. This second event, this time captured on camera, added fuel to the fiery feelings about bats among the membership, and the alliances about what to do began to shift.

Over the next few years, Ian B. positioned wildlife video cameras throughout attic spaces, and we could see that bats were active in every area. Holly and Shane tried to isolate different sections of the attic to figure out where they were entering the house, but they continued to show

up in various sections, which suggested they had many potential entrances through the roof, walls, and possibly chimneys . We hired a pest control agent to put in several "best practice," one-way gates where there were suspected entry points, to allow the bats to get out but not to get back in. That, too, was unsuccessful. We were told that any attempt to poison or harm the bats was prohibited by law, but we found all nonlethal, legally approved methods to be ineffective. Thus, we were prevented from waging all-out war and were limited to the equivalent of having fencing matches against the bats. We couldn't win this war, but we did gain some ground.

What we learned was that we had big brown bats (as opposed to little brown bats). Big brown bats do not migrate, like their "little" cousins, but find a nearby place to hibernate over the winter and then resume activity when flying insects become available again. Oaklands's attic suits them nicely as a dry, protected space. They mate in the fall before winter hibernation, and then give birth in June. They produce one to three babies just once a year, and those babies are ready to fly around by mid-July. They are particularly programmed to stay at their place of birth, and thus actions to get them to move to a different roost will not likely succeed. All of the bats that we killed and tested in the first two years were immature and without rabies. Because of that and the period of the year that we typically have incidents (late July through August), experts advised us that our problem was likely that some juvenile bats had not yet learned the colony's regular avenues in and out of the attic area. The house has air spaces between the inner plaster walls and the outside masonry walls, and these spaces provide bats access almost anywhere within the exterior walls. We concluded that sometimes the juveniles wandered aimlessly through these spaces and unwittingly went through a crack and into the interior of the house, as the camera recorded, instead of going outdoors. In other words, our bats were probably not rabid, just temporarily lost. Thus the Burnes family had done the right thing when they sealed cracks around fireplaces and other woodwork where bats could enter through the interior walls. After they did this, the bats had no choice but to keep looking for a way outdoors, which is where they really wanted to go. We have since found that, if users are careful to keep the doors to the third floor closed, incidents of bats flying around where there are people become much less frequent. It appears that we must resign ourselves to negotiating this sort of

peace treaty with the bat colony. We will have to wait until the government removes them from the endangered species list before true eradication and protection can occur.

## The Interior Project

In 2014 Anne gathered all of our immediate family in Oaklands to celebrate my 70th birthday. It was a wonderful party that reminded us how much it means to have a house like Oaklands where so many family members want to gather. The significant milestone of 70 years made me think deeply about reaching a new stage of life in which I had stopped having a full-time job and had begun to think about making a positive impact by giving some of our accumulated resources to a good cause. I had worked for numerous nonprofit organizations and knew how much impact large gifts could make to them, but we did not have enough resources to give to be as meaningful to a large organization as we would like. I decided that because family was my first priority, I would make my portion of our top philanthropic priority to benefit Oaklands, and thus to the continuation of the one asset that holds us together and is a unique benefit to everyone in the family. We also had seen many other people wait until they died before making their big gifts, which meant they would never see their effects. Thus, we began to develop plans to make our gift to Oaklands immediately.

During the previous 35 years I had watched the annual budget process allocate tightly constrained budgets to "higher-priority" projects such as walls and roofs over interior decorating improvements almost every year. I did not disagree with those priorities, but now that the building envelope had been fixed, we had less reason to fear water damage to new interior finishes. It felt like a new era of opportunity had started. I considered how an infusion of funds that were dedicated to this one purpose could radically change the house.

I also felt strongly that it was high time that the third generation take (or be allowed to take) a larger role in deciding the future of Oaklands, because they were going to be the primary users over the next decades. I had had the benefit of being in a position of responsibility for Oaklands when I

was relatively young, and I knew how much that had solidified my commitment at a pivotal time in my life. I felt that we needed a process that would engage Gen 3 members in order to strengthen their commitment to keeping the Corporation going for a long time. I was also conscious of the need to balance people's desires for modern styles and equipment with maintaining the historic character of the house. I thought a large gift to accelerate interior improvements could achieve both goals, if handled correctly.

Our third objective was to set an example of generosity to Oaklands that we hoped might stimulate others in my generation to follow. Over the next decades we will see whether that will occur.

We made a proposal to the directors that Anne and I would commit to make annual contributions of $50,000 for 10 years to support interior improvements that were not in the category of basic infrastructure. We said that our objective was to upgrade whatever interior renovations were recommended by a new committee, to be composed of Gen 3 members only, and approved by the directors. I think this caught everyone totally by surprise, but those involved expressed pleasure immediately and the terms were accepted.

Our daughter Avery was appointed chair of the committee along with eight other Gen 3 members from different branches of the family. She led them through a process of discussing what they thought were the most urgent needs and how they might decide on projects. All of these discussions were held by conference call because the members lived so far apart. In the first year, the Northeast bathroom was chosen as their top priority, and they made a proposal to the directors at the annual meeting for renovations that included replacing the bathtub with a shower. This first step by the committee seemed to me to be an obvious choice, but there were several members who strongly resisted the potential loss of the bathtub. The committee had, indeed, looked hard at keeping the tub until they concluded that they had to choose between having a tub or a shower or else change the two-way access to the bathroom, and they had chosen to sacrifice the tub. Facing this unexpected resistance at the annual meeting, somehow an alternative approach to shift to renovating the bathroom between the West and Southwest rooms arose, and consensus around how to do that formed quite quickly. So the Southwest bathroom became the first project that

was completed. Interestingly, the new bathroom design introduced a glass shower and other modern finishes, even while trying to have it "fit" with the house's older decor. Everyone was pleased, which showed that the Corporation was more ready for changes and contemporary tastes than had seemed the case during the annual meeting discussion.

After that success, the committee turned the following year to renovating the Music Room as the second project. This effort, which was also led by Laura as Interior Committee chair, introduced new styles as well as freshening and lightening the decor. New furniture was bought, including a large cabinet to function as a bar, with space to store bottles and glasses, so that the equipment and provisions for cocktail hour did not have to be carried every evening from the pantry to the Library and back again. The final new idea was to add a centrally positioned chandelier to illuminate the room, along with new electric sconces on the walls. The effect of these changes, plus a more cheerful tone of new fabric to cover the walls, a new rug, and other new finishes, was to make the room more attractive and more regularly used, especially during the daytime.

Music room after renovations.

The next project was even more ambitious. Ever since the big structural renovation project had required placement of a large beam across the third floor hallway and taken away the Bob and John room, the appeal and usefulness of the third floor had been greatly compromised. All that remained on that floor was the dingy west-facing bedroom and the big central area; the rest had become storage space. For some time, I and others had had our eyes on the often-forgotten level in the back of the house that was below the third floor and above the second (and which, in a Harry Potter moment, was given the name "the 2 ½ floor"). This floor had been used just for storage in my lifetime and had suffered serious water damage from the deterioration of the outer walls on the south side. There were four small rooms there with potential for use as extra bedrooms. The Gen 3 committee made that their next priority, to provide more space and reduce the creepy feeling of that neglected area. Again, Laura guided most of the design decisions. Over the winter months a contractor moved walls to make one large, triple bedroom on one side and an ample bedroom with a king bed and new bathroom on the other. The rooms were given simple decoration with a very nice bathroom, heating and air conditioning with heat pumps, and a great sense of privacy. The addition of these two nice bedrooms more than offset the reduction of beds on the third floor, and so we expanded the house's total capacity. This suite became a popular choice for guests who wanted cool bedrooms in the summer heat and reliable warmth in winter. It was renamed again as the Northwest Wing.

After these three projects the Gen 3 committee was unsure what to do next. The COVID pandemic introduced problems with real potential for contagion from having workmen come and go when house usage was so high. So we waited three years before making the next attempt to plan another project. Eventually the committee came up with a proposal to do a much larger project to renovate several bathrooms and the kitchen, while adding new wallpaper in two bedrooms and new lighting in hallways to make the house feel less spooky, and to do it all at once. This meant shutting down all usage after the start of 2023 and employing a larger contractor who had the resources to finish that complex job in only four months. This plan was expected to spend most of the remaining gift and bring the interior improvement project near completion.

By this time, it became clear that the next generation was fully ready to make decisions about changing Oaklands to suit their needs, and thereby we had achieved the second of the project's goals. At the same time, an implicit design concept behind the multiple renovation projects had emerged. To my ear, it was an echo of what the Walpole Society had appreciated so much when they had visited nearly a decade earlier. Oaklands did not need to be dark and old-fashioned. It could include elements of many eras as long as they respected the grand style of the house's architecture in the way that Alice Pickman had articulated when describing her thoughts about landscaping decisions for Oaklands. The Southwest bathroom project had relieved us of the notions that antique style was a requirement and that contemporary standards were unacceptable. What we had ultimately agreed upon—without ever articulating it as a group—is that changes that are compatible with Oaklands's large scale and elegant features do feel right. Oaklands must evolve over time, because its appeal depends on meeting people's contemporary standards, even while we are obliged to respect the house's traditional character.

The front hall in the final stages of the 2023 renovations, showing the new lighting with the moose head and grandfather clock wrapped in plastic.

The design work for the final project was led by Laura, and she came up from Boston almost every week to supervise the construction. She was backed up by Phyllis as manager on a daily basis. The project was finished in early May. This project generated quantities of construction dust in the rooms and bathrooms of the North, East, Southeast and Uncle Hal's rooms as well as the kitchen. This dust had been circulated everywhere by the hot air furnace fan, and so the entire house desperately needed a thorough cleaning. Furniture for all of these rooms had been moved out of the way, and then it had to be cleaned and put back in place. Every nook and cranny of the house needed dusting and mopping. Phyllis and Holly organized a team of more than a dozen family volunteers to do this work over the course of two weekends, and they greatly enjoyed all pitching in together to reopen Oaklands. When they were done, the house seemed transformed. The new lighting made rooms more cheerful and long hallways less intimidating. The kitchen had new flooring, a new ceiling, new appliances, and new cabinets, with a beadboard finish that reflected an earlier era but was functionally fully up to date. The North Room bathroom had a new shower, sink and finishes; the East and Southeast bathrooms had been expanded with new fixtures; the Southeast Room and the West Room had new wallpaper and paint. These improvements, when combined with the three earlier projects, changed Oaklands into a more comfortable house that should meet the needs of young families who don't have a lot of household help, while maintaining its elegance and character. In other words, it was all spruced up and ready for another generation of use by Gardiners.

Family reunion 2022

*Chapter 18*

# Reflections

OAKLANDS'S INFLUENCE ON THE GARDINER FAMILY now extends over a very long time—more than 200 years thus far. We hope it will continue long into the future. In the first century of use under the practice of primogeniture, each of the owners exhibited their values of generosity and hospitality by including many close relatives as frequent guests. During the more recent phase under the system of joint ownership through the Oaklands Corporation, we learned ways through which family members could successfully collaborate on decisions about Oaklands and its shared use. The overarching theme of its entire history is that decisions that are made in ways that promote family harmony seem to endure, while constant changes are needed in the ways we engage family members and update the physical features of the house.

For the first five generations, Oaklands was passed down like a mantle—a responsibility, a burden, and an honor—from the individual named Robert Hallowell Gardiner in each generation to the one with the same name in the next generation. Along with the house, the mantle included the roles of steward of the family estate and frequent host of events that maintained family connections.

Each RHG, from I to V, assumed those responsibilities willingly and gave back to the family opportunities to be together and enjoy one another's company. The personalities of those individual hosts were different,

but they all exhibited many principles in common: generosity, commitment, duty, and love of family, among others. Whether they were trained for this role by growing up with the expectation that it would be passed down to them is hard to judge. It does seem that some such dynamic was involved, because, as stewards of Oaklands and leaders of the family, they demonstrated similar styles.

This primogeniture system worked well for a hundred years, but as the 20th century unfolded, both Grandpa and my father came to realize that some change would be necessary for Oaklands to remain in the family. The change that my father triggered, after years of thought and with the advice that he received from his father, was to change the ownership and tax status of Oaklands, while maintaining its purpose as a place for family gatherings and as the seat of family history. He understood these issues from being the third generation to work in the business of managing family estates and relationships. He knew he was heading into uncharted waters, and he certainly was anxious about how it would turn out. More than a generation later, we are able to see the fulfillment and validation of his vision. The cooperation and commitment of many relatives has achieved a truly new and inclusive approach to the stewardship of Oaklands.

I was raised, for my first 15 years, knowing that my name, which reflected my position by birth within the family, would likely lead to my assumption of the role of owner of Oaklands some day. But I was only 15 at the time of the conversion to corporate ownership, and frankly I didn't really have clear thoughts about it. The expectation of inheritance was simply there for anyone to see, and there was never any discussion of it. I did not especially look forward to or worry about that future. So when my father told me about the plan to create the Corporation, I didn't react much at all. I was far more preoccupied by school life with my friends. Still, I do know that for a good number of years I had expected to be the eventual owner. To be completely honest, from time to time since then, I have thought about how things might have been different. During most of those moments, I have felt a sense of relief that I was not burdened by the heavy mantle of responsibility that I had seen take a toll on my father, no matter how much pleasure it brought him at other times. I had a freedom of choice that my predecessors in name did not have.

Now, 64 years later, having been an integral part of the Corporation at every stage, I feel satisfied that I have enjoyed all the benefits of Oaklands's ownership, including usage, enjoyment of family traditions, and interactions with many aunts, uncles and cousins—more opportunities, in fact—because Oaklands was jointly owned. The Oaklands Corporation seems a very good thing to me personally.

When I step back and evaluate the broader effects of the Corporation, including the closer connections to so many cousins, our sharing of the workload, and the improvements to the house, I am convinced that Grandpa and my father were right about finding a way to share Oaklands among many relatives. Big changes are always difficult to achieve, and when they turn out well in so many ways, those changes should be celebrated. Almost all of my father's siblings and their children have seized their opportunity to use the house and stay closely connected to the family. Most have invested time coming to meetings, serving on committees, attending reunions, and the like, all of which demonstrate that the allure of Oaklands is both real and widespread.

There are very few large families, with members on different coasts and on different continents, who not only know their aunts, uncles, and first cousins well, but also have a place where they gather together. Fewer still both know and see their second cousins. Our family is exceptional in this regard. We are even beginning to get to know our third cousins through Oaklands. Everyone in the Gardiner family has a sense of belonging to a huge family tree and has intimate knowledge of our family history as well. This is extremely unusual in America today. My obvious conclusion is that Oaklands has been central to this effect. It is also true that the new ownership structure during the years of the Corporation's existence has fostered it and enabled it to grow with such widespread support.

Through our efforts to guide and govern the Corporation, the Gardiner family has demonstrated a set of values that expresses a deep belief in the benefits of belonging to a family that chooses to work together and allows people to share in the use of this very appealing property. Those two objectives must be worked on simultaneously, but each one has its own set of needs.

For all of the eight generations thus far, use of Oaklands by many relatives has nurtured commitment to family togetherness. For the most recent

three of those eight generations, the Oaklands Corporation structure has been an innovative, supplemental vehicle to achieve those very same ends. At the outset of the Corporation era, participation in the Corporation was kept deliberately small in order to make sure it would work. The first generation's leadership emphasized the need for deep commitment by members to succeed. In his report on the first 20 years, my father wrote, "The next twenty years is likely to see the gradual transfer of "power" (which is usually spelled w-o-r-k) from one generation to the next. This will be the true test of the strength and validity of the whole concept and structure, but with these last twenty years as a starter the prospect looks hopeful, to say the least."

When the next generation assumed that "power" only a few years later, we struggled until we changed direction to become more inclusive and to stress family engagement as much as the amount of work completed or the efficiency of decision making. Although we were not so explicit about it for years, we effectively elevated the Corporation's purpose of maintaining family unity to match the obvious importance of taking care of the house and grounds.

Once again, I recall my conversation with my father about how he thought my generation, with as many as 21 members, could all manage to share Oaklands, let alone how the next generation, with many more members, could. His answer—that we would simply have to "figure that out" for ourselves—has been ringing in my ears ever since. It does seem likely to me that the third or fourth generation will be less likely to include everyone to the same degree. I expect we will develop some process, which I can only describe vaguely as one of "self-selection," that will result in a more narrow group of active participants and some new and different status for others. But I may be entirely wrong about that.

During my generation's leadership, we figured out how to include everyone better than I think most members expected. This required us to take more time to make big decisions, such as the sale of the Dr. S. portrait, because the conflicting views among the members took years to resolve. David wrote in his president's report about the discussion and the momentous decision on that sale in 2004, after 14 years of deliberations, "As is often the case, everyone did a great job thinking, speaking, and listening. It is hard to listen to diverse viewpoints, and then meld them into decisions

and a way forward, but our family seems to do a great job of this." Another example of taking time to achieve unity, I believe, was the commitment of each person's Oaklands Trust shares, by every eligible member of my generation, to the Oaklands Corporation. These vitally important decisions support my belief that it is essential that family unity be the highest priority, even when it takes a lot of time.

The second essential priority is to take proper care of the house and property that draw people back to Gardiner again and again. The needs for repairs and renovations dominated the Corporation's attention for its first 50 years, and the result is that we have brought the house into better condition than ever. We may be surprised by some hidden problem that shows up one day, but we have dug deeply to find and take care of most of the building's needs. We are all well aware that merely maintaining Oaklands is a huge task that requires eternal vigilance and long-term financial planning. It also requires generosity from members, especially those who are able to make significant gifts, and the hard work that my father described as crucial.

Thus far in the Corporation's history, much of the care and hard work has come from two key positions, and it has been essential that there were family members who would perform effectively in those roles. The first is the president, who runs the members' and directors' meetings and sets the tone for the interaction and the dynamics of decision making. The second is the manager, who oversees the house and grounds. Both require a high level of contact with other family members as well as familiarity with the use of and care for the house. The manager's role is especially time-intensive and requires much of that time to be spent on site. My father described it in his 20th-year report: "It is one thing to decide on a course of action to be taken—be it landscaping, gardening, papering, painting, furniture repairing, new appliances and equipment to be bought or what have you—but the implementation is something else again." He could well have also mentioned the tasks of managing the caretaker, the house cleaner, and various contractors! To meet these needs effectively, the Corporation needs some people to be reasonably nearby, with management skills, and with time available when needed. The manager also needs to be sensitive to the family's decision process and to have the long-term perspective on taking care of a place with so much tradition. We have been lucky so far to have

people ready to do that, but there has never been a pool of talent waiting in the wings to take over the manager's role. There appears to be plenty of potential presidents for the coming decades, but having someone to be a complete manager is a challenge that the next generation will have to rise to meet.

In addition to the needs of the family and the house, the Corporation has its own needs. It has bylaws and procedures to guide it, but there is so much latitude in them that other principles need to be articulated to provide real guidance. As was noted in an early chapter, the bylaws specify two unusual elements that have been very important thus far. The first is that Oaklands is a non-stock corporation, which means simply that the members do not own shares that they can call their own or do with as they please. Everyone participates as they choose, but they cannot take a piece of the corporation for themselves. This seems like a permanent feature. The second is that all family participation shall be volunteer, meaning that no one is compensated for their activities. Other relevant values that have emerged during the Corporation's life include a high level of financial discipline, with particular attention to maintaining the endowment that has been accumulated to take care of the long-term maintenance needs of the house. The close interdependence between the Corporation and the farm is another aspect that seems unchangeable and vitally important. We have managed to do without the Guernsey milking herd, which everyone thought was central to the Oaklands experience, but doing without a farm of any sort seems a much larger concern. Finally, we have always understood that time spent in the house, particularly at an early age, has an effect of imprinting a priority on Oaklands that affects the rest of one's life. We must not underestimate how central this has been to all of our experiences.

I list these values not because they are unchangeable, but because they have been foundational. The key to Oaklands's longevity has been its owners' ability to understand what should be kept and what can be changed. Both preservation and change are powerful and competing forces that must be respected. The trick is to get the balance between them correct. The answers to questions that were decided one way in the past may not fit so well in the future. Wisdom comes from understanding the logic of the past and applying it to the circumstances that the future presents.

This book has been an exploration of that story of preservation and change, through the first five generations of primogeniture and the next two generations of governance as the Oaklands Corporation, for the purpose of providing that information.

As the third and fourth generations of Gardiners in the Oaklands Corporation era prepare to cope with questions that will certainly arise in the future, I suggest that there is no way that they can anticipate everything that will occur during their time. Many of the issues may simply be new versions of old matters that were previously settled by the actions described in these chapters, although they may look quite different. But some will be entirely new.

The wisest advice to whoever will decide matters in future generations has been repeated in several earlier generations of Gardiners. Shared ownership and usage are never easy to manage, and there is little history of long-term success in reaching this goal among similar entities. There is no proven method. The best advice was given by Grandpa to my father; then it was given by my father to me. It is that the elder generation can point in the general direction. But each generation must figure it out for themselves.

View of Oaklands from the Front Drive

# Acknowledgments

A FAMILY'S HISTORY IS SEEN AND UNDERSTOOD DIFFERENTLY by each family member. I realized from the outset that I would need to confer with many others before I tried to describe our Gardiner history without omitting important elements. Thankfully, many cousins came forward with stories, memories and observations that added to my knowledge and enriched this narrative. Almost every one of my first cousins has participated through their writings, remembrances and photographs. Thank you all for providing such interesting material.

My father and Phyllis, the only two clerks the Corporation has had, diligently wrote extraordinarily complete meeting minutes, laced with wry humor, and those minutes have been compiled by Phyllis to maintain an accurate record of decisions. I note also that they had pretty witty participants in those meetings who provided dashes of humor worth recording. The clerks' skills in documenting the Corporation's business have made it easy for anyone to learn about Oaklands. This is a very rare circumstance, and it is seldom appreciated as much as it deserves to be.

Oaklands is full of its own records and memorabilia, but most of them relate to the years before 1959. The logs, guest books, and game books that everyone has contributed to and that reside in Oaklands have provided nice, supplemental color and information. Oaklands also has quite a collection of scrapbooks and photographs that are fascinating. I have bor-

rowed many of them, and I leaned on Holly, Gordie, Kate, Claire, Marsh and others for additional photos to add important visualizations of the places, people, and events that I tried to describe in words.

I consulted with all of the presidents and managers to check on their perspectives on matters where they played key roles. Ian, David, Holly, Nat, Gordie and Phyllis all provided important insights as well as information. Since I began this project, Aunt Jane, Uncle Charlie and Logan have passed away, and I greatly regret not being able to include their thoughts as well. Holly and Phyllis each read two or three chapters in draft form to help me portray matters accurately and to fill in details from the last decade's activities that I needed help describing. Marsh and Kate T. have been enormously helpful with digital formats and the handling of photographs and charts.

From the beginning, I knew that, as a first-time author, I needed professional support. Susannah was the obvious choice, with her experience working for some of the country's best newspapers. I will forever be grateful for her insights and gentle suggestions that helped me communicate the story more clearly and in an interesting way. She then proofread the manuscript with such an eye for detail and an awareness of subject matter that she makes me appear far more capable in my writing than I really am.

Finally, I express my thanks to everyone in this family for your contributions to the rich tapestry of family history that has been my subject matter. We have worked hard together over the years to strengthen family relationships, to make the Corporation function effectively, and to take good care of the house. My memories of our times together bring me great pleasure, and I hope that this book shares that pleasure with all of you.

# About the Author

ROBERT H. GARDINER VI, KNOWN AS ROB, WAS BORN IN JUNE, 1944 as the eldest son of the eldest son of RHG IV, just three months before RHG IV died. He attended schools in Milton, MA, Groton School, and Harvard College. He met his future wife, Anne McIlhenny, in New Orleans three years before they were married in 1970 in New Iberia, LA. They raised four children in Sabattus, New Gloucester, Augusta, and Cumberland, Maine, in addition to many visits to Oaklands. His career included work in public broadcasting, environmental advocacy, management of Maine public lands, and as developer of a large commercial wind power project in Roxbury, ME. He and Anne now live in Georgetown, ME in the warmer seasons and in New Orleans, LA in winter. This is his first book, and he has written stories about his life for his grandchildren.