

Anne W. Simon

*Quotes from No Island is an Island*

Page 6:

“This variety attracts an extraordinary mix of citizens to the Vineyard. One of Massachusetts’ two Indian towns is at the west end of the island, one of America’s first and most exclusive yacht clubs at the east, and in between, a community frequently cited as the only middle-class black seaside resort on the East Coast. There is as impressive a collection of powerful, important, and influential members of the Establishment here in the summer as can be found in any one place; there is a burgeoning enclave of its better-known young radical counterparts. There are descendants of Portuguese pioneers who came from the Azores and Cape Verde Islands on whale ships. There are new Vineyarders who have migrated to start a business or to retire in one of the three more urban down-island towns, there are New Englanders whose ancestors were the first white settlers here, whalers, fishermen, farmers, whose names still dominate up-island villages as well as the streets and stores of the towns.”

Pages 13-14:

“Reading the land and reacting to it, as this man did, is the mark of a true Vineyard aficionado ... and there are many, still, who pursue the never ending discovery, accumulating knowledge with combined awe and delight. For every man who knows the pond-swamp-bog cycle, or the marvel of oysters’ sex life for which he will dig across a sandbar to provide the proper salinity for this mating in a brackish pond, there are those who understand the complex architecture of a dune, built by winds, anchored by grasses, wild roses, and strong-rooted poison ivy, or the slow growth of trees, kept down by wind and salt spray, which will nevertheless transform a meadow into a scrub oak forest. There are men who know that West Tisbury’s rich soil propagates fine vegetables as well as every variety of wildflower growing in the entire state, others who have identified three pockets of rare plants, hidden in the up-island hills, others whose skin is ripped by brambles in the search for thickets of wild raspberries and blackberries. One specialist has catalogued seven hundred separate species of plants growing on the island, another knows what date it is by which migrating birds arrive as his feeder. There are books about Vineyard’s flora and its fauna; the local paper devotes a column to “Our Avian Visitors,” a page to the fishing news from surrounding waters.

Fishermen, hunters, sailors, ornithologists, biologists, archaeologists, naturalists – each finds the Vineyard intriguing for his own reasons, each understands a part of the land and water which was not too different when the first white settlers arrived in the beginning of the seventeenth century.”

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