

## HODGDON ISLAND P R E S E R V E

LAND DONORS: ELLIOTT AND ANNE FARR  
OWNED BY: KLT, WINTHROP



Cobbosseecontee Lake  
(Mort Libby)

One of Martha Kent's favorite family photos is of her grandmother Katharine Elliott Farr (circa 1904) paddling a canoe solo on Lake Cobbosseecontee. "She had this beautiful red canoe," remembers Martha, "and she was always out in it. She and my grandfather loved to take long canoe trips."

Martha has boxes of photos of her family extending back several generations summering at Belle Island on Lake Cobbossee. "We're very lucky that my grandfather was an avid family historian and photographer and loved to make albums," says Martha.

Martha's family has owned land on or near Cobbossee since at least the early 19th century. "My great-great-grandfather, Moses Briggs, was a farmer and blacksmith, and he owned a mainland farm that stretched down to the Cobbossee shore. In the mid-19th century, he acquired several of the Cobbossee islands, including Belle Island and parts of Hodgdon's and Horseshoe."

Moses Briggs used the islands as woodlots for his farm and forge, and in the summer, the south-facing granite ledges of Belle Island were used for picnicking. In the late 19th century, summer cottages were built on Belle. The surrounding islands were left undeveloped for the most part, although some of the island interiors continued to be logged through the 1920's or '30's.

Over the years, Moses Briggs' many descendants have loved these islands and frequented them for a quiet paddle, some fishing, or a chance wildlife sighting. "As a child and teenager I often canoed in and around the small coves and passages of Hodgdon's and Horseshoe Islands looking for loons and other wildlife," Martha recalls. "There were these little enclosed places and you just felt like you were away from everything. Today, the lake is healthier than it was in the 1960's, and when we go out for a paddle we often see beaver, mink, muskrat, loons, osprey, heron, and bald eagles, among many others."

Martha notes how memories of Hodgdon's and Horseshoe became woven into family folklore. "My father, Elliott Farr, used to talk about this enormous 'virgin' pine on Horseshoe and he would take us to visit it when we were kids. I don't know if it's actually virgin, but it's really big! [In the Horseshoe cove] there's a big rock ledge. I'm told that my grandfather... proposed to my grandmother in a canoe right there."

When Elliott Farr inherited the island properties from his father, Clifford Bailey Farr, and from his mother's cousin, Loutrel Briggs, preservation was a family priority. "Loutrel and our grandfather thought that Elliott would do whatever he could to preserve the islands in their unspoiled state, and he was fully in agreement with that."

Martha's husband, Don, notes that before there was an organized land trust in Kennebec County, "The only way to preserve land was just to own it and pay the taxes. So when the Kennebec Land Trust came into being, my father-in-law jumped on it."

Elliott Farr spent time in his later life working to make sure the islands were conserved. Just after he passed away in 1995, 17 acres on Hodgdon's Island were officially opened as public conservation land. A trail now follows the island's perimeter, giving visitors access to dense cedar stands, an interior forest with massive red oaks and white pines, and stunning views of the island's wetlands and shoreline.

Part of Horseshoe Island passed to Martha's mother, Anne, after her father died. Martha remembers, "She also wanted it conserved." In 2004, Anne realized her wish and added an additional 3.5 acres to KLT's Horseshoe Island Conservation Area.

Today Elliott and Anne Farr's grandchildren, as well as local and summer residents, visit the same places generations before them did, and according to Martha, the family "couldn't be happier with the work that the Kennebec Land Trust has done and continues to do."



Martha Kent  
(Jane Davis)



Katharine Elliott Farr in canoe (Contributed: circa 1904)

*Meanwhile, Katharine had acquired a canoe, given her on her twenty-first birthday by her brother, which I named "Medawisla" (Loon), a name which I found in Thoreau's Maine Woods.*

— Clifford B. Farr, Family Historian  
and father of F. W. Elliott Farr

