

Transition

From Bob Norbie, Foundation President:

The challenges of 2020 – the pandemic and its impact on Mallard Island programs – reminds me how important and powerful the Anishinaabe expression, *Gi-bezhig-oomin*, is in our lives. Translated, it means “We are All One” and it has become central to how we breathe life into our mission.

As uncertain and disruptive as last year was, *Gi-bezhig-oomin* reassures us that when we nurture and revere our relationships, think collaboratively, act as one and responsibly to steward the earth, we can find our way through a myriad of challenges and changes.

In spite of the coronavirus, the assault on our environment, the racism, and the incivility and divisiveness of politics that have ravaged our nation, by working in the spirit of *Gi-bezhig-oomin*, Mallard Island continues to be a beacon for calm and harmony—if we pause long enough to listen.

Indeed, listening is one of Mallard Island’s most important tenets. Mallard Island encourages and enables her guests to deliberately and deeply listen. To listen to the familiar grand song of the tiny White Throated Sparrow. To listen to the wave’s raucous laughter against the rocky shoreline. To listen to the love notes whispering through the White Pines. And to listen to one’s inner thoughts and feelings from any number of magical spots on Mallard Island.

The strength of *Gi-bezhig-oomin* in the life of our mission was evident with the transition of leadership coming into the New Year. Herein I speak of our beloved executive director, Beth Waterhouse, who retired at year-end after serving passionately and skillfully for 13 years, but not before supporting a smooth and seamless transition with our new and very capable executive director, Rebecca Otto. Herein I speak of our past board president, Peggy Anne Smith, who for the past three years faithfully, gracefully and purposefully shepherded our mission, vision and values. Predictable as the rising sun off the easterly end of Mallard Island, Peggy brought much sunshine and clarity through the quality of her person and leadership of the Foundation. Thank you, Beth and Peggy, for being you!



As we look forward with new leadership and a vision for helping the world live in harmony through the teachings of Ober and Mallard Island, we invite each of you to continue being a steward of this spot on Rainy Lake and wilderness in general. We look after and care for these jewel islands (Mallard, Crow, Hawk and Gull) during this vulnerable time. When we serve in the spirit of *Gi-bezhig-oomin*, our connectedness and oneness will ensure that these treasures will enlighten generations to come.

Chi-Miigwech,

Bob Norbie
President, Board of Trustees

In the Words of Ernest Oberholzter:

We are in a period of profound transition. New values are emerging. New human satisfactions must be provided. Health and happiness depend only in part on man-made goods. It is no time to apologize, to speak in whispers. The hour has come to call out in ringing tones. Our young people will be the final answer.

Written when planning for the Quetico-Superior boundary waters region, ca. 1933.



Photo Credit: Shawn Otto

Rebecca Otto
Executive Director
Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation
Marine on St. Croix and
Mallard Island in Rainy Lake

Welcome!

Dear Readers,

I am writing this column today from the comfort of the new Oberholtzer Foundation world headquarters located in Marine on St Croix! First, I want to say how excited I am to be at the helm of this wonderful organization! It is a perfect fit for my passions as well as my skill sets. The mission and work also connect with my heart and bring me full circle in my life (a story for another day). Leading an organization that honors and promotes the legacy and work of an environmental leader who was a connector and collaborator and who had close relationships with the local Indigenous community is a dream. As a full time Executive Director, my role is to help the Foundation evolve to the next level and hopefully do more to promote and preserve Ober's legacy for generations to come. And none of it would be possible without you-- an amazing group of volunteers and supporters that pour time, talents, energy and resources into preserving Ober's islands, collections and buildings.

Second, I wanted to familiarize you with the new office. The office space reflects the principle of **reuse** - it is my son's former bedroom, converted into a lovely space with lots of sunlight and a deck with a view of rolling hills and wetlands. The office, located in our home, reflects the principle of **renewal** - we get much of our electricity from our wind generator and the solar array perched on our roof. We heat with geothermal heating plus passive solar heating with our south facing windows. We built this house over 25 years ago and sustainable building principles allowed us to reduce our carbon footprint. We know that climate change is negatively impacting our northern forests and much more, so I think if Ober were alive today, he would be pleased with the office and its low carbon impact.

And, I would like to introduce my office mate! Her name is Maddy. She is a black lab mix rescue from Texas. The upside is that she is very supportive of my work - I can talk through things that I am working on, and she listens intently - (see photo). The downside is she sleeps on the job, she likes to chase bunnies at bathroom-break time and she lets me know when office hours are over. She serves as my "IT" support - *Inspiring Tailwagger* (sic)! She even wags in her dreams. I am thankful for her company as I put in longer hours right now.

Third, I wanted to fill you in on my transition as the new Executive Director. I am deeply grateful for the time the Board provided to allow Beth Waterhouse and me to work together (remotely) to ensure a smooth transition. We started in December and continued through January. I liken our working relationship to running in a relay. She is ahead of me with the baton. I have been running as fast as I can, finally reached her, placed my hand firmly around the baton, and she slowly let it go. I am now running with it as fast as I can and she continues to cheer me on from the sidelines. Truly, Beth has been a joy to work with. I want to acknowledge all of her work over her tenure to get the foundation to where it is today. Thank you, Beth, for your years of dedicated work and service! I know many of you would like to celebrate and thank Beth and to wish her well in her retirement. Our fall event will hopefully provide everyone that opportunity. So, please save the date - October 30th - for a metro area fall gathering. You will not want to miss it!

MALLARD ISLAND

THE OBERHOLTZER FOUNDATION

The Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation fosters Ober's legacy and North Woods island home as a source of inspiration, renewal, and connection to Indigenous Peoples, kindred spirits, and the natural world. Gi-bezhig-oomin



This newsletter is published twice per year, generally February and October. Cover sketch of Mallard Island is credited to Gene Ritchie Monahan. Send poems, stories or articles to Rebecca Otto at Rebecca@eober.org

Text Editor this issue:

Beth Waterhouse, Edina, MN

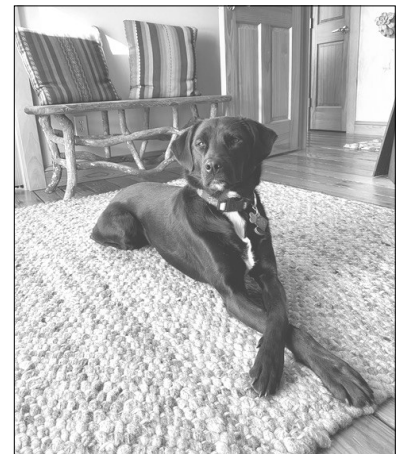
Layout Editor:

Nance Kunkel, Snowbirding in Arizona!

For more information, visit

www.eober.org

Please support this organization (and this newsletter) as you are able. To learn more about this organization, please contact Executive Director, Rebecca Otto, at < rebecca@eober.org > Mailing address: 12697 - 177th Street North, Marine on St. Croix, MN 55047. Phone: (651) 867-4803.



Maddy the IT tech!

As you know, the pandemic did not allow for much programming on the island last summer. We are hoping and planning to have more programs this year, but still at a reduced capacity - eight people total instead of twelve. We hope that with the vaccinations being rolled out and into people's arms, we will be able to safely gather starting in late May. (see page 4) Time will tell.

Please feel free to reach out to me by phone at 651-867-4803 (ext. 101) or by email at rebecca@eober.org. One project I am going to undertake, among many, is to gather your current email addresses. The pandemic makes it harder to connect, and having an email address is so helpful when we want to reach out. Thank you again for your support of the Ernest Oberholtzer Foundation, and I look forward to meeting all of you hopefully in the not too distanced future. Stay safe and stay healthy!

Miigwech.

Rebecca

**DOOR: Entrance * Exit * Opening * Arrival * Departure * Partition *
Division * Threshold * Surprise!**



#1



#2



#3



#4

There are no two doors alike on Mallard Island. Nearly all were home-made in one decade or another. The six huge and heavy hand hewn doors, like the one that opens into the Drum Room or the one that exits the channel-side winter kitchen, are immense and exquisite works of art.

Here are eight doors of Mallard Island.

See if you can match the image to the location! If you have never stepped onto Mallard Island, let this be a small architectural story of a place beloved by many, a place that we “renovate backwards” to the 1930s.

See answers on page seven



#5



#6



#7



#8

*Summer of 2021 brings new leadership and new experiences of beauty and history. Due to the coronavirus, carrying on
Here is the proposed schedule*

May 23-29, 2021	Opening days of Reflection, Fasting, and Indigenous Spring Moon Ceremony as we welcome the new season. Dates flexible to ice-out. Pebaamibines is assisting with fasting protocol and leading ceremony. Rebecca Otto will be there with Mairi Doerr and Nance Kunkel as caretakers.
May 30 to June 5	Maintenance Work Week#1: With a focus on carpentry. Michael Reid, coordinator. The group will begin the demo and replacement of the tool shed. Mairi Doerr and Michael are caretakers.
June 6-12	Maintenance Work Week#2: With a focus on the island’s 28 garden spaces. Canadian gardeners as likely coordinators. Some tool shed work may carry over. Prudence Johnson and Nance Kunkel are caretakers.
June 13-19	#1 Individual Artists and Special Projects: Apply with arts, writing, or island-related/archival projects in mind. Jennie Ross and Barb Draper are caretakers.
June 20-26	#2 Individual Artists and Special Projects: Apply with arts, writing, or island-related/archival projects in mind. Beth Waterhouse and Teghan Grulkowski are caretakers.
June 27 to July 3	ISLAND REST WEEK: Artist Mark Granlund and filmmaker Jeff Ryan will be on the island as caretakers and to capture some footage for an upcoming project.
July 4-10	Maintenance Work Week#3: The tool shed is a major 2021 project, and this week will hopefully see its completion inside and out! Mairi Doerr and Isaac Montano (trainee) are caretakers.
July 11-17	NEW - “Water is Life” Hosted by Aimee Craft. Indigenous relationships, obligations and responsibilities relating to lands and waters must be better understood. Aimee Craft, Ottawa lawyer, activist and artist brings a group of Anishinaabe women together on these topics. Mairi Doerr and Laura Pawlacyk are caretakers.
July 18-24	Ojibwe Language Transcriptions Week Hosted by Pebaamibines (Dennis Jones). Bringing students together to help in the preservation of the Ojibwe language and history as they transcribe stories of Nancy Jones, Tobasanakwut and Johnnie Whitefish (about Billy Magee) from valuable Ojibwe recordings. Mid-summer moon ceremony. Prudence Johnson and Paula DeMars are caretakers.
July 25 to 31	ISLAND REST WEEK Week will also include staff orientation time and TBD.
August 1-7	NEW - “Sustainability Authors and Mentors” Hosted by Christie Manning. Environmental studies professor from Macalester brings women authors and young women as students for connection to Ober’s legacy and the Anishinaabe culture. Kel Sassi & Jane Lund are caretakers.
August 8-14	“Stewards of the Wilderness II,” Hosted by Daniel Andersen. This week will bring environmental studies students ages 20-25 to the island, offering experiences and education about sustaining the islands, cross-cultural traditions, and the life and legacy of Ernest C. Oberholtzer. Daniel Anderson and Mary Swalla Holmes are caretakers.

Summer Hopes for 2021

Transition”

comes to our four islands offering in turn their measure of continuity, capacity is limited to EIGHT people on the island in any week. and schedule as of this printing:

<p>August 15-21</p>	<p>NEW - “Women in Sustainable Agriculture” Hosted by Mary Swalla Holmes. Offering the islands as respite and focus to a group of women engaged in small-scale agriculture across the Midwest. Intending to distill critical lessons from their experiences and reflect on how those lessons inform future directions in agriculture. Mary Swalla Holmes and Prudence Johnson are caretakers.</p>
<p>August 22-28</p>	<p>“Oberholtzer Foundation Presents-II” Hosted by vocal musician Prudence Johnson. A community connection with a talented group of artists and musicians offering a culminating event co-sponsored with the Backus Center. After time on the island, the event may (hopefully) include an evening outdoor concert of music and storytelling. Prudence Johnson and Danielle Sosin are caretakers.</p>
<p>August 29 to Sept 4</p>	<p>Mallard Island Archives Week Hosted by the Oberholtzer Foundation. Working to assess the value and archival storage of many of Ober’s maps. Featuring Tom McCann. Annual book care continues as well. Beth Waterhouse and Clay Gustafson are caretakers.</p>
<p>September 2021</p>	<p><i>Autumn Oberholtzer Board Meeting, to be held on Mallard Island, on a three-day weekend mid-month, conditions permitting. Tentatively scheduled for September 10-13</i></p>



To Contact Us:

Mallard Island is frozen solid under a blanket of snow, awaiting our return and the sound of laughter and human voices. Meanwhile, carefully parallel fox tracks likely thread the island, and the whitetail have been known to bed up in the thick day lilies up on the eastern hill.

Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation Trustees are:

- Bill Forsyth, Minneapolis, MN
- George Glazier, Devens, MA
- Mary Swalla Holmes, Polk City, IA
- Pebaamibines Jones, Minneapolis, MN
- Shannon King, Fort Frances, Ontario
- Nance Kunkel, Hines, MN
- Ward Merrill, International Falls, MN
- Bob Norbie, Great Falls, MT
- Michael Reid, St. Paul, MN
- Dave Rolloff, Sacramento, CA
- Peggy Anne Smith, Thunder Bay, Ontario
- Diane Tessari, Excelsior, MN

Please visit our evolving web site at www.eober.org. Enjoy images, history and stories here, or shop for one of the three remarkable books noted in the “store.”

Please add the Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation to your estate as well as to your annual giving patterns! Call Rebecca for details. We can easily receive gifts of stock. Ober’s legacy, his rustic yet historic buildings, and his living-legacy values will carry on for several forthcoming generations—we are quite confident of that. Consider a lifetime gift.



Photos by Mary Swalla Holmes and Nance Kunkel

From Peggy Anne Smith, Past President Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation, 2018-2020

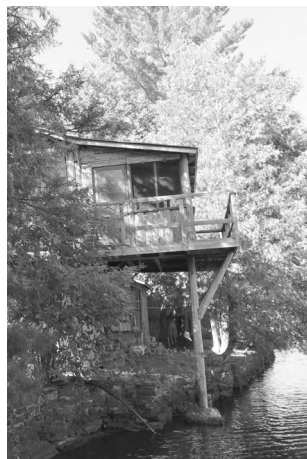
Welcome, Bob, to your new role as President. As I step down from the position, I have reflected on my experience as President. It's been quite the ride with the development of our first strategic plan, our year of reflection to consider Mallard Island's capacity to host us, the heartbreaking disappointment of not being able to travel to the Island last summer because of Covid (it would have been my 30th year tending to the Island gardens), and finally the departure of Beth Waterhouse as our Executive Director and the welcoming of Rebecca Otto.

But mostly what I will treasure are the relationships we as Board members have built with each other. Beth was a rock during my presidency, providing much needed support and seeking my support for her efforts. I was happy to step up. Will Forsyth brought encouragement, legal expertise and with Karla a cozy place to stay in Minneapolis. Mary Swalla Holmes brought her years of experience to bear and graciously agreed to act as secretary. Bob Norbie brought his strong organizational skills and his willingness to embrace spirit (*Gi-bezhig-oomin*). Dennis (Pebaamibines) Jones transformed our Board by bringing ceremony, teachings, and a different way of making decisions. He gave me my spirit name, *Miskwaanaquadook* (Red Cloud Woman) and guided me on fasts on Mallard in the springtime. George Glazier is the only current Board member who had a personal connection with Ober through his family. I cherish those connections. Shannon King brought her teachings about the Anishinaabe, her work in education (Seven Generations Institute), her connection to Rainy Lake, and the heart of a busy mother. Nance Kunkel, a sister at heart and fellow gardener, brought her years of experience on Mallard and down-to-earth insights about Ober's legacy. Michael Reid brought skilled hands and a strong heart to looking after Island infrastructure, and he inspired me with his letters to our supporters. David Rolloff brought his love and knowledge of Rainy River and Rainy Lake and his commitment to environmental stewardship. Diane Tessari is steadfast in bringing us news of environmental issues, particularly the proposed mining projects, in the Rainy Lake, Lake Superior and Mississippi watersheds and encouraging us to follow in Ober's footsteps and be good stewards. Ward Merrill brought his connections to the local community of International Falls and his experience in the not-for-profit sector. We keep him in our hearts as his wife struggles with a cancer diagnosis.

What an honour and a privilege it has been to serve Ober's legacy.
Thank you Board members for holding me up.



Peggy Anne: The sweater is red!



Island Life, Cook's House

Enough clean clothes

Clean enough hair

A room, twelve by twelve,

A decent bed,

One chair.

Laughter rises

As china dominoes hit the Wannigan table.

Leftovers aplenty in the pump house,

And a boat that starts...

Is there more to a good life?

Oh, and a lake breeze gentle from the east.

Oh! and white-throat still sings at ten!

BEW

June 2014.

Letter from the Treasurer

Dear Friends of the Oberholtzer Foundation,

This letter starts us on a new year of hope and gratitude, tampering down the country’s rhetoric and divisiveness and instead emphasizing what it means to bring people together again. Ober’s Island has always been at the crossroads of ideas, whether by invitation or just by folks regularly showing up to discuss the events of the day or share a story. This neighborly approach is exactly what I remember from regular drop-in visits from Ted Hall, Jim Davis, Don Maronde or Bob Hilke, to mention just a few of the past, but also our current friends like Pebaamibines (Dennis) Jones and his brother Don, who have kept alive a rich tradition of storytelling. Maybe you too once found yourself around a campfire or in the wanigan taking in some engaging conversation? It’s so inspiring and hopeful to experience a simple story surrounded by the sounds and sights of Nature and arriving at some basic common truths. Ober certainly found himself in contentious situations and was able to find common ground, and I suspect a lot of it had to do with the Rainy Lake environment and the good neighbors he surrounded himself with. It’s certainly a great example for all of us.

It’s a positive time again where we can soon embrace each other and rid ourselves of the anxiety of the unknown. Not that we truly *know* what the future holds, but by placing ourselves with those who support us, listening to their stories and sharing the rewards, we at least stand a better chance that our steps are leading us in the right direction. I see the Oberholtzer community of that mindset, and I hope it nurtures all who care to participate. We give a little, and amazingly we find out how satisfying and contagious it is.

Precedent is out and “*transition*” is the new word of the day, not only for our world but particularly for this organization. In welcoming our new executive director, Rebecca Otto, our fourth director after Jean Replinger, Mary Holmes and Beth Waterhouse, we’ve expanded the role and extended our reach. This is an exciting time and I do hope you feel free to reach out and welcome Rebecca. Tell her your story or the stories you’ve heard from others who have walked the Island before you, and bring her into the fold. Keep those stories alive!

I would hope this letter might anticipate a summer season of programming with a full complement of guests on Mallard, but again we will need to consider our limits. We’ve been able to work through this before, so I’m sure we can be thoughtful again this summer. In the meantime, we will continue to keep true to the Foundation’s mission, keep restorations on track with our volunteers, and keep our supporters apprised and excited about whatever Mallard has in store. Look for more communication through eober.org as we develop new relationships with communities throughout the north and across the Midwest.

There aren’t many of us that haven’t been affected by events of this last year, but I do hope you have a moment to reflect on the rewards you’ve found either on Mallard or through your own means and find a way to cherish and share them with others. Even if you can’t make it up to Mallard Island, invite neighbors onto the porch and share a story or two.

Again, thanks for all your support through the years and keep the spirit alive!

Sincerely,

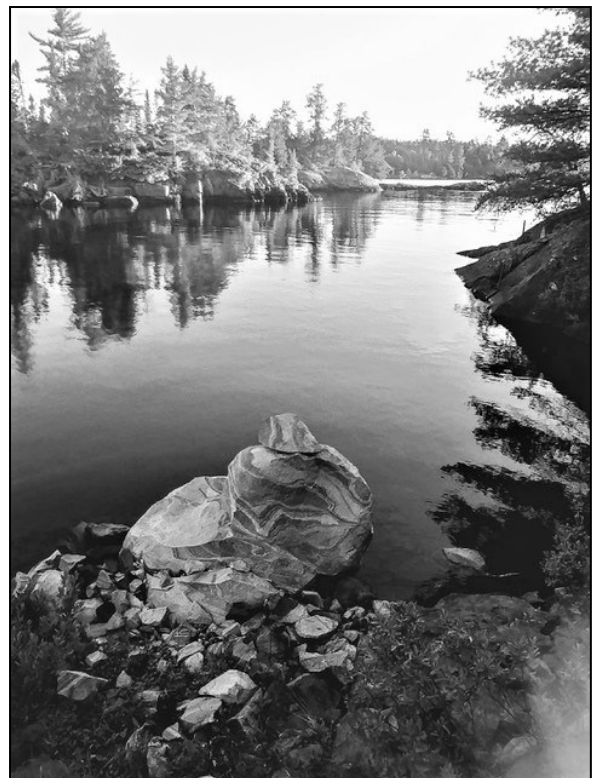
Michael Reid, Foundation Treasurer

‘The’ rock at Gull Island
Photo by
Mairi Campbell Doerr



Finished railing on the balcony at Bird House

Photo by BEW



Doors:	
#1 The Torii	#2 To the Drum Room
#3 Japanese House	#4 to the Winter Kitchen
#5 Ober’s Bedroom	#6 Winter House
#7 Root Cellar	#8 Library



MALLARD ISLAND

Ernest C. Oberholtzer Foundation
12697 N. 177th St.
Marine on St. Croix, MN 55047

Gift Designations in 2020:

You may always lift up a friend or family member in honor or memorial as part of your donation to Mallard Island and Oberholtzer's Foundation. Here are the special designations made in the past year: (alpha by donor)

Jackie Comito, special gift designated "to young women and the environment"
Mya Coursey, gift in memory of Frances E. Andrews
Connie Ghostley, in memory of Dr. Mary Ghostley
Mary Harrelson, a gift in memory of Kate Weyrens
Bob Hilke and Eddie Blaha, gift in honor of Harry and Ginny Sweatt
Mary and Allan Juers, gift in memory of Tim Heinle
Carol Marshall and Cheryl McChesney: gifts in honor of Jean Sanford Replinger
Christine Patten, gift in memory of Gendron Jensen
Susan and Jeffrey Sieve, gift in memory of Ken Norbie (Bob's dad)
Susan and Jeffrey Sieve, an additional gift in honor of Jean Sanford Replinger
George and Ruth Simmons, gift in memory of Tim Heinle
Christopher Hale and Miranda Stone, gift in memory of Don Maronde
Ted and Kristen Eide Tollefson: gift honoring Beth and "the Anishinaabe stewardship of the Oberholtzer legacy"
Ronnette Trulson, gift in memory of Don Maronde.
Talleiv or Karen Vollen, gift in honor of Bob Norbie
Beth Waterhouse, a gift in memory of David Jackson
Marianne Zarzana, a gift in memory of Kate Weyrens.

Given the current organizational transition, we are grateful for the following 2020 donors who gave special gifts honoring the work and leadership of *Beth Waterhouse* across her thirteen years: from Jim and Patricia Kallsen, Barbara LaValleur, Jane Lund, Edie Meissner, Bob and Mary Lou Norbie, Dave Rolloff and Kristen and Ted Tollefson.

