



# Window on the Marsh

CAPE ANN Museum

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March 19 – November 27, 2022

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The Great Marsh stretches from Cape Ann northward to the Massachusetts/New Hampshire border. It contains over 25,000 acres of salt marsh, beaches, tidal flats and uplands, some of it privately owned and some of it publicly held. An historically and ecologically important resource, the Great Marsh was traditionally used for salt marsh haying, beach plum and cranberry harvesting, fishing, and clamming. In addition to these very practical uses, the Great Marsh has served as inspiration for generations of artists.

As part of an ongoing community-wide initiative, the Cape Ann Museum is pleased to present a spotlight exhibition exploring the beauty and ecological importance of the Great Marsh using four paintings by artists Martin Johnson Heade (1819-1904) and Fitz Henry Lane (1804-1865) as well as a small group of photographs by Martha Hale Harvey (1863-1949). Working over a century ago in different mediums and with differing approaches, each artist captured the singular beauty of the Great Marsh in artwork that continues to inspire viewers today.

For half a century, Martin Johnson Heade, one of America's most well-known painters of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, focused his artistic skills on the salt marshes in and around the coastal community of Newburyport, Mas-



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Martha Hale Harvey (1863-1949), *Marshes along the Annisquam River*, c. 1900, printed in 2021 by Anne Rearick from a glass plate negative in the collection of the Cape Ann Museum.

sachusetts. *Sunny Day on the Marsh (Newburyport Meadows)* (c. 1871-75) and *Sunset on the Marshes* (1867) are two of Heade's masterpieces from that period, works that embody his talents as a painter and capture the splendor of the Great Marsh. They are small yet powerful paintings showing an expansive scene as light and atmosphere change overhead and tidal waters ebb and flow. While the overall effect achieved by Heade is one of quietness, the haystacks perched atop wooden staddles, driven solidly into the turf, and the workers and their hay wagon dwarfed by the landscape remind us of the hours of labor that went into cutting and storing salt marsh hay, an essential forage for livestock in pre-industrial New England. Clouds that dominate the sky in both paintings are moving in off the Atlantic Ocean, foreshadowing a storm encroaching on the tranquil scene. In creating works like these two, which record an agrarian way of life that was quickly disappearing, Heade is known to have used underdrawings to assure the accuracy of his landscapes; his skill in handling the finish paint adds drama and beauty to each composition.

Fitz Henry Lane also relied on detailed underdrawings and his remarkable skill at applying paint to canvas to create two compositions that capture more southerly parts of the Great Marsh: *Babson and Ellery Houses, Gloucester*, and *The Babson Meadows at Riverdale*. Both done in 1863, the paintings show the Babson homestead in Gloucester. For generations, the homestead was one



Martin Johnson Heade (1819-1904), *Sunset on the Marshes*, 1867, oil on canvas, private collection, photography by Bob Packert.



Martin Johnson Heade (1819-1904), *Sunny Day on the Marsh (Newburyport Meadows)*,  
c.1871-1875, oil on canvas, private collection, photography by Stephen Petegorsky.



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Fitz Henry Lane (1804-1865), *The Babson Meadows at Riverdale*, 1863, oil on canvas, gift of Roger W. Babson, 1937, collection of the Cape Ann Museum. [accession #779.3]





Fitz Henry Lane (1804-1865), *Babson and Ellery Houses, Gloucester*, 1863, oil on canvas, gift of Roger W. Babson, 1937, collection of the Cape Ann Museum. [accession #779.2]

of a handful of saltwater farms on Cape Ann, a family-driven venture that produced dairy products, hay (both salt marsh and English hay) and vegetables.

While Lane is typically known for his seascapes rather than landscapes, the skill with which these two views of the Babson farm were done shows that the artist was adept at both genres. As in Heade's canvases, the figures in Lane's paintings are dwarfed by the landscape around them and the men (in this case with a wagon and a flat-bottom gundalow) go about the businesses of harvesting hay unaware of the beauty surrounding them. As is characteristic of all his works, Lane spares no attention to detail in these paintings and lets the luminescent sky dominate his composition.

Photographers have also found inspiration in the Great Marsh, and one of the most accomplished to work on Cape Ann at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was Martha Hale (Rogers) Harvey. Little is known about how Harvey came to be a photographer. She was, however, friends with Anna and Harriot Hyatt and Harriot (who was a sculptor like her younger sister Anna) is known to have been an avid photographer. Harvey worked with glass plate negatives, making images of people, Gloucester's working waterfront and coastal areas surrounding her home in the village of Annisquam.

Her work typically shows a peaceful coexistence between man and nature and is thought of as being of the school of Naturalist Photography. In her desire to celebrate a time before industrialization, Harvey's work shares much in common with Heade and Lane. Martha Hale Harvey often shared her images with her husband, George Harvey, who was a painter and a printmaker. When artwork created by George is compared to Martha's photographs on which he based his work, it is clear that her artistic eye was the dominant force. ■

#### Martha Oaks

Chief Curator, Cape Ann Museum

*Working with Martha Hale Harvey's original 4" x 5" glass plate negatives of marshes along the Annisquam River and at Wingaersheek Beach, contemporary award-winning photographer Anne Rearick created prints in the darkroom. Based in Gloucester, Rearick has been a professional photographer and photography teacher for over 30 years. She has worked in post-apartheid South Africa, the French Basque country and across the United States. She has received numerous awards including a Fulbright Fellowship in 1990-1991, a Guggenheim Fellowship in Photography in 2003-2004, and grants from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. During the summer of 2021, Anne completed a residency in Normandy, photographing the French countryside.*



Martha Hale Harvey (1863-1949), *Marshes on the way to Wingaersheek Beach*, c. 1900, printed in 2021 by Anne Rearick from a glass plate negative in the collection of the Cape Ann Museum.

## CAPE ANN Museum

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[www.capeannmuseum.org](http://www.capeannmuseum.org)

**Downtown Campus Hours:**

Tuesday – Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

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