

Button Island, Ferrisburgh, Vermont
Photographs, 1891-1948
FB-106

Introduction

This collection contains photos of Button Island owned by the Avery and Welcher families in Lake Champlain near Ferrisburgh, Vermont, beginning in 1891. The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation donated the collection to the Vermont Historical Society in 1990; the department had received the collection from Amy O. Welcher of Hartford, Connecticut, in 1990. The collection is stored in one flat box and occupies 1 linear feet of shelf space.

Biographical Notes

Button Island consists of 1 ½ acres and is located 400 feet from the mainland in Ferrisburgh, Vermont. It is very near the Basin Harbor Club, is 7 miles by road from Vergennes, Vermont, and 4 miles by water from Westport, New York.

The island was acquired by Samuel P. Avery, Jr. (1847-1920), from Ida A. Winans in June 1891 and from the State of Vermont by quit-claim deed in 1893. Avery was the son of Samuel Putnam Avery (1822-1904), an influential New York City art dealer, who endowed the Avery Architectural Library at Columbia University in memory of another son, Henry Ogden Avery. Samuel P. Avery also had a daughter, Fannie Falconer Avery Welcher (1849-?), who married Manfred Philester Welcher (1850-?). When Samuel, Jr., died in 1920 he bequeathed the island to his niece, Amy Ogden Welcher (1897-1992). In 1965 Amy Ogden Welcher and her sister, Emma Avery Welcher, sold the island and 13 acres on the mainland known as Button Point to the State of Vermont.

A summer residence with eleven rooms was built on the island in 1897. The family advertised the property for sale in 1948-1950. The state purchased the island from the Welcher family in 1965 and it is part of Button Bay State Park. The island is uninhabited and visited by kayakers and other boaters. The structures created by the Welcher family on the island are no longer standing.

Scope and Content

This collection contains one scrapbook and several folders of photographs which document the use of Button Island by the Welcher family beginning in 1891 and concluding in the 1940s when the island was put up for sale.

The scrapbook contains early photographs of the process of constructing a simple dwelling on Button Island in 1891, a larger house in 1897, and various projects to improve the property over the years including building a windmill, pump house, ice house, large porch, retaining walls, docks, and a boat house. The scrapbook contains

many photographs of sailing and steam vessels, including the interior of a steam launch. The family created at least two rustic arbors on the island.

Other photographs include Samuel Putnam Avery's first automobile (folder 2); water views of the island; a windmill; the installation of a pressure tank to replace the windmill (folder 3); and miscellaneous people (folder 5). Included in the scrapbook and folders are photographs of the arbors and manuscript designs for the arbors by S. P. Avery (folder 6). The photograph of the arbor house in folder 6 includes several identified women.

Finally, the collection includes a folder containing a list of flowers on Button Island, two photographs of Camp Dudley in Westport, New York; an aerial photograph of Basin Harbor Lodge on the Vermont mainland near Button Island; and two real estate listings describing the property as it was being offered for sale in 1948 and 1949.

Inventory

FB-106:01	Scrapbook, 1891-1918
02	Photos, Auto Trips and Vehicles
03	_____, Island Property
04	_____, Water Views
05	_____, Miscellaneous People
06	_____, Rustic Arbors & Designs
07	Miscellaneous Articles

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