

GRENELL

1893

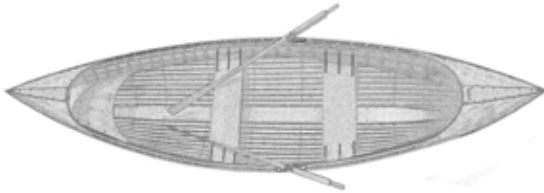
A NOVEL



1893

BOOK 2 IN THE THOUSAND ISLANDS SERIES

Lynn E. McElfresh



River Skiff Press
Grenell Island, NY

This is a work of fiction.
While real characters from history are represented,
their appearance, personalities, mannerisms,
and dialogue are imagined.

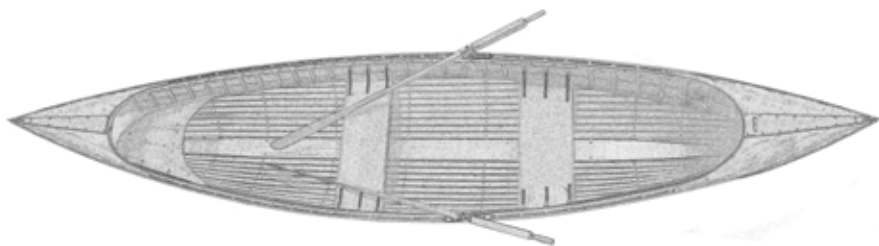
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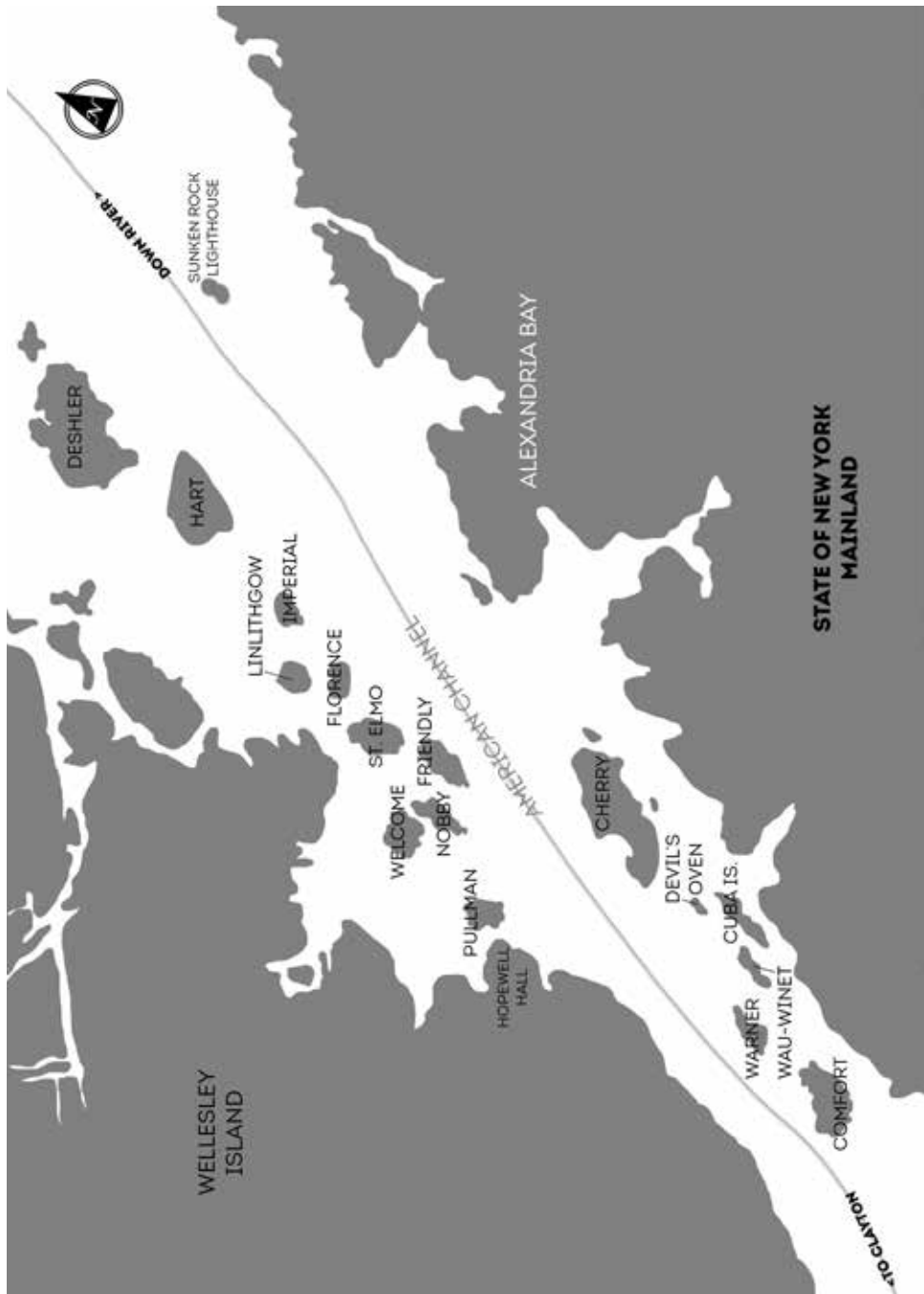


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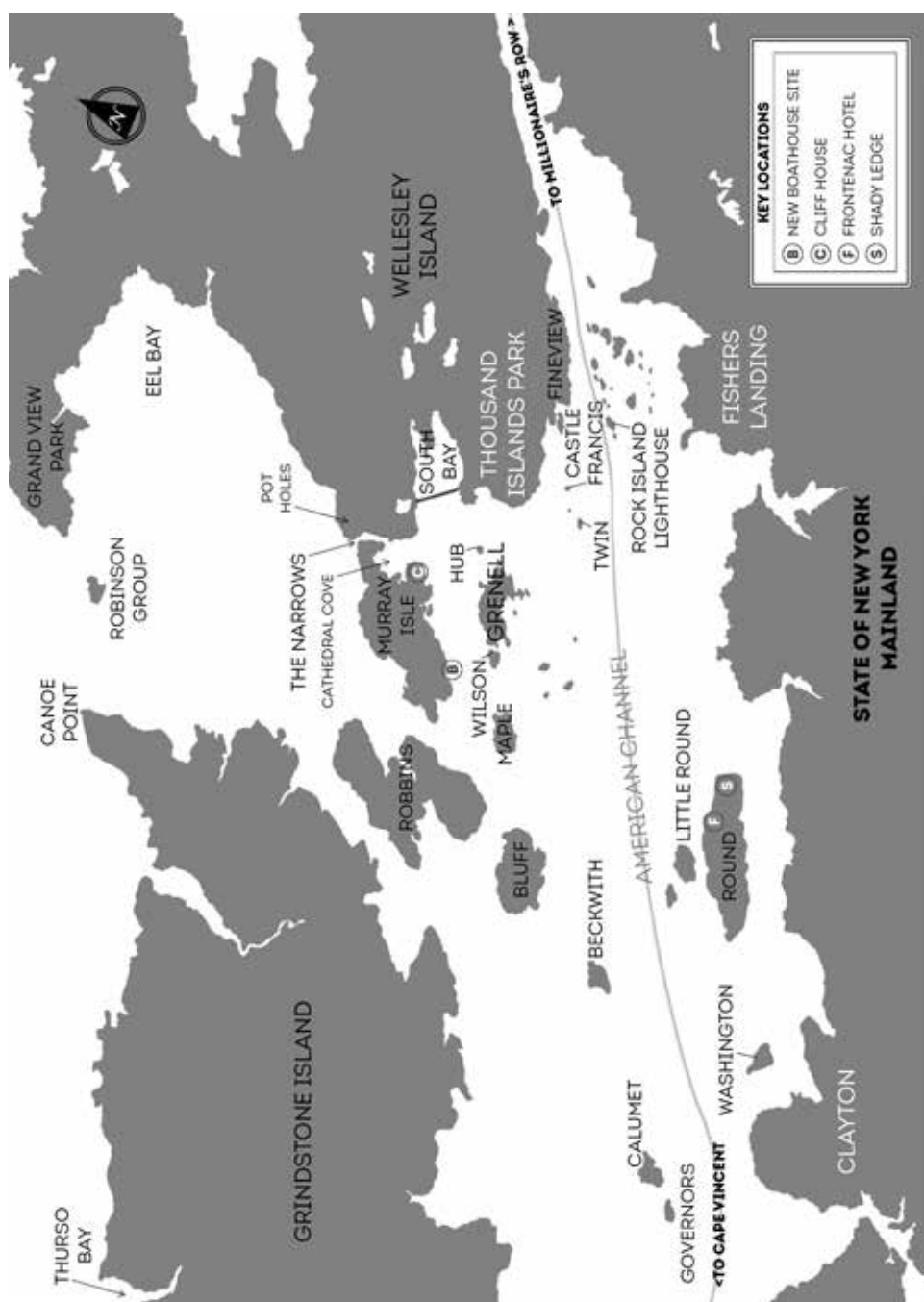
**To Alice Parker Pratt whose love and dedication
is forever imprinted on Grenell Island.**



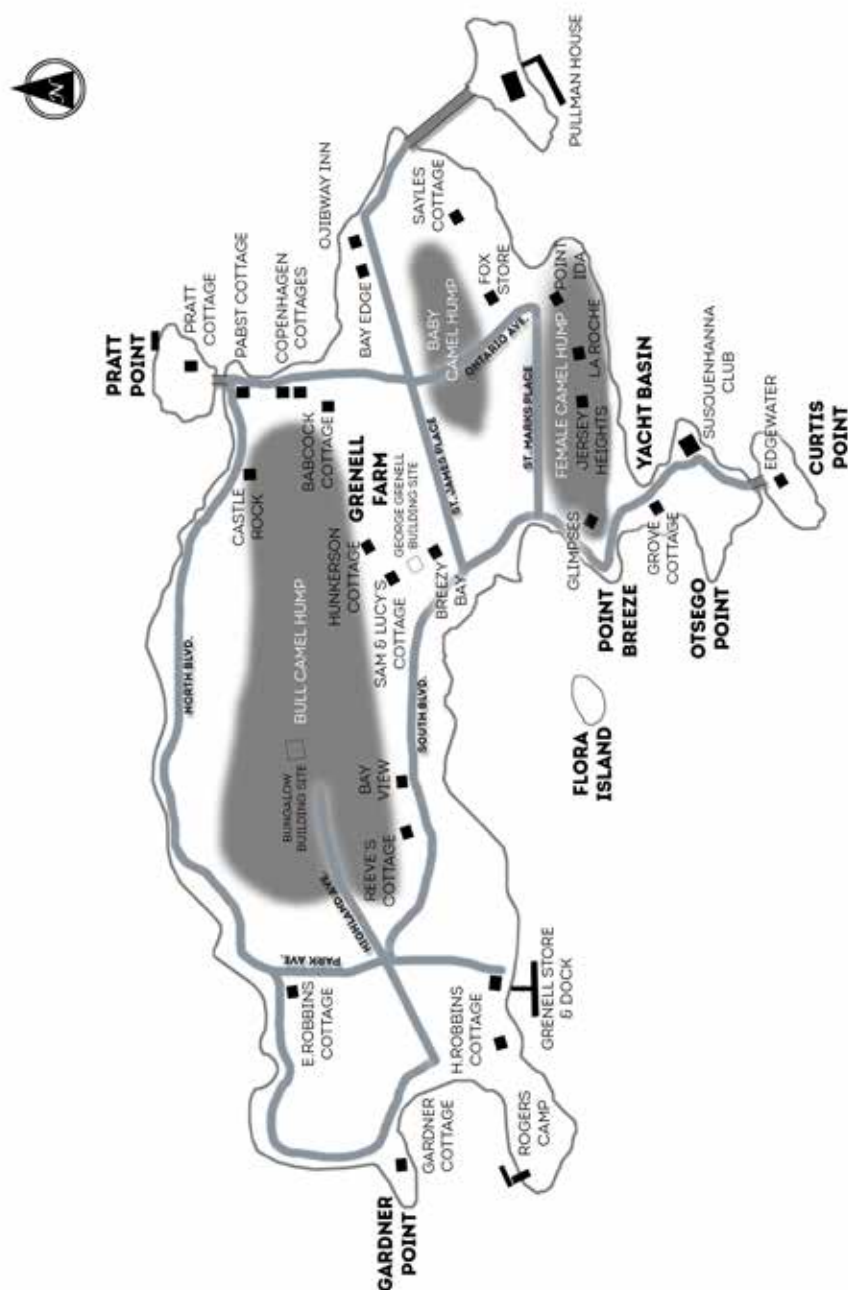
Millionaire's Row 1893



Thousand Islands Region 1893



Grenell Island 1893





Wednesday, June 7, 1893

CASTLE ROCK, GRENELL ISLAND, THOUSAND ISLANDS, NEW YORK

“Marguerite!”

I stopped scraping and steadied myself on the ladder. Did someone call my name? I turned my head to the left and listened intently but only heard the lapping of the St. Lawrence against the rocks below. When I turned my head to the right, I heard the twitter of birds as they hopped about the pine boughs, sending puffs of yellow pine pollen into the soft morning breeze. I turned back to the blistered paint on the cottage eave above me and put the scraper against the wood.

“You’ve been on the island for only a day and you’re already hearing *the Voice*,” I scolded myself as I started scraping again. White paint chips cascaded around me.

I’d started hearing *the Voice* about ten years ago. But it was almost always at night when I was alone on the island. Those times were few and far between. Friend Anne and I usually arrived and departed together and each year we have a steady stream of guests. “When was the last time I was alone on the island?” I wondered aloud. I mulled that over as I continued scraping.

“Marguerite! Are you there? Miss Marguerite, you must come!

Hurry!"

The urgency in those words jolted me to a stop mid-scrape. A sprinkling of white paint chips blew into my face. I spluttered, spitting out the paint chips that had fallen into my mouth.

"Miss Marguerite?"

Was that Nat? I looked down the path that ringed the island, searching for the twelve-year-old boy who always kept me abreast of island happenings but did not see him. He sounded excited. I hoped nothing was amiss.

"There you are!" Nat cried out. "Hurry, or you'll miss it!"

I turned to see Nat descending from the little-used path that went up and over the towering ridge of rock that we referred to as the camel hump.

"Nat! What is it?"

"No time to explain. Hurry!"

I dropped the paint scraper. The metal part clanked on the granite below as I climbed down the stepladder, which wobbled wildly in my haste.

"Hurry," Nat urged as he ran up the steep narrow path that went over the top of the Camel hump.

I brazenly lifted my skirt to mid-calf and ran after him. I raised an arm to protect my face as I wove through a cluster of squat sumacs. The protruding branches grabbed at my skirt and clawed at my hair. I pulled off my mobcap and stuck it into the pocket of my painter's smock. As I swept past honeysuckle bushes in full bloom, my long skirt dislodged the yellow-and-white blossoms. Panic gripped my chest and a sick taste filled my mouth. What was happening? Was someone sick? Hurt? Uncle Sam? Aunt Lucy? Arnie? Nat's brother Arnie was on the island supervising the stone delivery to Mr. Sharples's cottage Bungalow. Had something happened to Arnie?

Unencumbered by a long walking skirt, Nat quickly outpaced me, crunched through a sea of mayapples, and reached the flat farm in the center of the island before I did. He paused there, turned back toward me, and, with frantic motions, he once again urged me to hurry before he continued on. Once free from the tangle of undergrowth, I thought I could keep stride with Nat, but he was twelve. At age twenty-eight, I was no match for his youthful legs. Again, he quickly outpaced me.

Besides, the flat section of Grenell's farm was fraught with peril. Recent rain had filled wagon ruts with murky water. I kept my gaze down as I maneuvered around puddles and cow pies.

"Look," Nat said, stopping short and pointing skyward. "There it is! Do you see it?"

In a few steps, I was on his heels. "Where? What?" I asked, trying to catch my breath.

"It just disappeared behind that oak."

"*What* just disappeared behind the oak?"

"A flying machine," Nat said, his eyes wide and a huge grin on his face. He grabbed my hand and tugged me toward the rocky ridge that we referred to as the female camel hump. It was smaller than the bull camel hump on the north shore that rises up behind my small cottage.

I stopped and pulled back against Nat's hand. "But that's private property. It belongs to Colonel Haskell."

"It's fine," Nat said. "He's rented out the place. The renters will understand. It's the best place to see the flying machine. Come! Before it's out of sight. You gotta see it! It's giant."

With that, I followed Nat up the path. As soon as I reached the top, I realized why Colonel Haskell calls the upriver tip of the female camel hump, Point Breeze. The fresh, cool air blowing from the prevailing southwesterly wind cooled my cheeks, which were warm from exertion. The small white cottage called Glimpses was tucked into the shade. It was a dainty cottage, swathed in gingerbread trim and wrapped with a deep porch on three sides. Colonel Haskell's sister-in-law, Mrs. Beardsley, who looks after the place in his absence, was on the porch with two maids. The trio of women did not notice Nat and me when we rushed by, as their gazes were fixed to the sky. Colonel Haskell's renters stood at the far end of Point Breeze looking and pointing at something in the sky over the channel.

"There it is!" Nat whispered to me, not wishing to draw attention to our arrival. "Do you see it?"

I looked up.

Immediately, my forward progress stopped. My feet seemed rooted to the spot. My mouth fell agape, and I was unable to respond. My eyes fixed in utter wonderment on the contraption in the sky. I've seen sketches of

flying machines in newspapers and magazines. But seeing static black-and-white drawings was quite different than seeing the full-blown thing moving through the sky in front of me.

Mesmerized, I slowly moved forward until I was standing amongst the knot of people. I squinted into the bright morning light, hoping to bring the flying machine into sharper focus. The top was an airship made of grayish material. It was long, sausage-shaped, but pointed at both ends. It seemed to be as long as Twin Island, which it was slowly approaching.

Dangling beneath the airship, attached by ropes or wires—I couldn't tell which—were two wheelmen peddling safety bicycles. Apparently, the bicycles powered two huge paddlewheel-like things that churned and propelled them through the air. Behind the paddlewheels, at the stern of the craft was a huge rudder. My mind tried to make sense of what I was seeing, but my thoughts were coming so fast and furious that I couldn't sort them out.

The gentleman standing next to me passed a pair of field glasses into my hands without looking at me or saying a word. The field glasses were heavy. I raised them to my eyes and found first the silvery balloon, then moved the glasses around until I found the two wheelmen below and slowly brought them into focus. The wheelmen wore identical blue bicycle suit coats over matching bicycle trousers with golf cuffs. On their heads they wore leather skullcaps similar to what footballers wear and a pair of goggles. The two turned toward each other. They appeared to be talking.

I tipped the field glasses down to see if I could gauge how high they were in the air. Two hundred feet? Four hundred feet? Below I saw the steamer *St. Lawrence*, which had come to a stop in the water beneath the flying machine. Engineer Hammond and Captain Visger stepped outside the wheelhouse, and like their passengers who lined the hurricane deck, were staring up at the spectacle above them.

A collective gasp went up around me, and one of the women on Point Breeze stifled a shriek. Below on the hurricane deck of the steamer *St. Lawrence*, a woman had fainted. Passengers clustered around to support her fall to the deck. I handed the field glasses back to the gentleman, who immediately focused on the wheelmen.

"They've stopped pedaling!" he announced.

I looked up to see that the paddlewheels were slowing to a stop.

The rudder was at an odd angle, and the flying machine was inclined downward.

"Whatever are they doing?" asked one of the women from the small knot of people on Point Breeze. A flurry of other questions quickly followed.

"Do you think they are trying to land on Twin Island?"

"Whatever for?"

"Or are they crashing?"

"Oh! I can't look!" cried one young woman who hid her eyes.

Another young woman put a comforting arm around her.

"Look! Look! They are peddling again," said the man with the field glasses. The paddlewheels began turning. The rudder angle changed. The flying machine had stopped its descent and was moving forward again.

I realized I'd been holding my breath and inhaled as deeply as my corset would allow.

The flying machine slowly turned to the south. Soon we could only see the back of the craft, the rudder, and the back of the two paddlewheels.

"They are headed for the mainland," one of the young men said.

I stared after the curious machine, my mind churning with disparate thoughts. I heard a dog bark, and my thoughts came out of the clouds and back to Grenell Island. The steamer *St. Lawrence* was landing at Pullman House. Guests had poured out of the hotel onto the dock. Perhaps a hundred people milled about, pointing to the sky.

The wake from the *St. Lawrence* had reached the boats moored in the deepwater basin between our perch at Glimpses and Pullman House. The Kerr's sailing yacht, *Tiger*, and Mr. Burditt's steam yacht, *Otsego*, bobbed at their their moorings.

The largest and most elegant of all the cottages on Grenell Island surrounded the deepwater yacht basin. To my left were three grand cottages. The porch at Jersey Heights was empty, but the Griswold sisters were on the porch at La Roche. Fanny Harnois and her daughter, Ida, were on the upper porch at Point Ida. All were staring after the disappearing airship.

Below on the Otsego peninsula, the southern most point of Grenell Island, the porch and dock of the Susquehanna Club was crowded

with the families staying there. I only recognized the president of the Susquehanna Club, Mr. Burditt, who stood amongst the others on the dock.

Mr. Burditt cupped his hands around his mouth and called up, "Did you see that, T. B.?"

"Indeed I did," the man who lent me the field glasses called back.

"How far do you think they could go?" a young man next to him asked.

"Depends on how long the gas in the inflatable lasts," the man with the field glasses replied.

As the flying machine continued to shrink from sight, questions filled the air. Who were the wheelmen? Where did they come from? Why were they here? Where were they going? Did they mean to dive like that, or was it an accident? Was it all an experiment, or were they on a planned excursion?

"Have you ever seen such a sight?" a young woman asked me.

I shook my head. I wasn't able to converse right now. Everything was so jumbled in my head.

I had been invisible to the people on Breeze Point before, but now that the flying machine was a tiny dot moving quickly out of sight, I was suddenly noticed. Likewise, I began noticing the people around me. The middle-aged man who had lent me the field glasses was tall, clean-shaven, with hair combed straight back. He looked very business-like in his chocolate-brown sack coat. His simple fold-down collar was crisp and impeccably starched with a forest green silk necktie expertly knotted at the throat and tucked into his darker waistcoat beneath.

"What a wondrous age we live in! Wouldn't you agree, Miss . . .? I'm sorry, but I don't believe we've met," he said amicably, tilting his head to one side as he smiled at me.

"I'm sorry," I said, my cheeks coloring. "Please excuse my intrusion. Nat, the boy who works at the store, Nat Hunkerson . . . he . . . he alerted me. . ." I turned to point out Nat but only saw the top of his sandy brown hair as he disappeared down the path. "I'm Marguerite Hartranft. By the time we made it to the end of the Grenell farm, the flying machine was behind the trees. Nat insisted that I see it. Please forgive me for showing up uninvited."

"Not at all. You are more than welcome. How horrible if you had missed it! Point Breeze is the best venue for aero-machine observation. Nat is a bright boy."

"Miss Hartranft?" asked the younger of the two young women as she edged closer to me. "Oh! You have the cute little cottage on the north side of the island perched upon a rock. You were tenting in the same location the first time we arrived on Grenell."

"This is my daughter, Lois," the man said. "I'm T. B. Kerr, and this lively brood is my family. This is Mrs. Kerr. Next in line is my eldest, Mary Mason; my elder son, John; and my youngest child, just out of knickers . . ."

"Father! I've been out of knickers for a half-dozen years now!" The younger man protested.

". . . Clarence."

Ah, the Kerr family. I had heard of the well-to-do family from Englewood, New Jersey, who, for the past few years, had rented Glimpses or sometimes the Gardner cottage at the head of the island.

"Excuse me, ladies," Mr. Kerr said, nodding to his daughters and wife. "We have a date with some pickerel." Mr. Kerr motioned to John LaRue, their oarsman, who was patiently waiting for them by the skiff on the dock below. The three trotted down the staircase to the dock. Mrs. Kerr excused herself and returned to the cottage to supervise the staff, and I was left alone with the two Kerr sisters.

"Forget the pickerel! Bring back a fine catch of perch," Lois called after her father and brothers. "We only arrived last night, and I've been waiting all winter for some nice fresh perch from the river St. Lawrence." Lois's eyes brightened then as she seemed to be imagining her first forkful of the tender, sweet, fresh perch.

I smiled at that, for I'd hoped I'd have time this afternoon to put my line in the water and catch a couple of perch for my supper tonight.

"So this is your third season on Grenell?" I asked.

"No. Our fifth, actually," Lois said.

"We arrived in eighty-nine, the year before the Pullman House opened," Mary Mason said.

"I'm the reason we are here," Lois said proudly, her gray-blue eyes glittering. "We had stopped by to visit the Curtises. Mr. Curtis and

Father are law partners in the firm Curtis & Kerr. They represent Mr. Westinghouse in the many lawsuits brought against him by Mr. Edison. They argued before the Supreme Court—well Mr. Curtis did—but Father was there, too.”

Her older sister, Mary Mason, nudged her. “Lois, you’ve gotten sidetracked again.”

“Yes. Yes. Quite right . . . as I was saying, the Curtises were staying here on Grenell Island and we were only to stay one week and then move on to Atlantic City. But I was so enamored with the place. Who wants to go to crowded ol’ Atlantic City when you could stay on this magical island in the middle of paradise? Well, I convinced the family to stay for the rest of the summer. And we’ve been back every summer since.”

I smiled at the young woman’s enthusiasm. “Reminds me of my first experience on Grenell,” I told her.

“I’ve heard you share the cottage with another woman? A doctor?” Mary Mason asked.

“Yes. Dr. Ashbridge. But she prefers to be called Anne or Dr. Anne.”

“I’m so happy to hear there is a doctor on the island in the event of a sudden illness,” Mary Mason said.

Both Mary Mason and her sister had hair parted in the middle and pulled back gracefully in a low coiffure at the nape of their neck. Mary Mason’s hair was a deep mahogany while her younger sister’s hair was a light brown.

“Yes. Do feel free to call on Anne if you are ever in need of a doctor, but I’m afraid Anne’s not here right now. She teaches at the Woman’s Medical College of Pennsylvania. One of her students, Dr. Okami, just graduated. Dr. Okami is the first woman in Japan to obtain a degree in Western medicine. She will be returning to Japan at the end of the summer. Anne and Keiko—Dr. Okami, that is—have decided to go to the Chicago Exposition. They won’t be arriving on the island until the first of July.”

“I suppose we shall all have to remain healthy until then,” Mary Mason said pleasantly.

“They’re at the fair?” Lois asked. “Have you been yet? We are just back. We witnessed the opening ceremonies as guests of Mr. Westinghouse. We were in the front row when President Cleveland

threw the switch and hundreds of thousands of Westinghouse Electric's incandescent lamps lit up the night. The buildings are all white, you know. That's why they call it the White City. And at night, when the lights come on, it's a veritable fairyland. Westinghouse Electric won the bid to furnish the Exposition's incandescent plant. Mr. Edison filed injunction after injunction, but Father's law firm batted each away like an easy tennis volley."

I smiled as Lois pantomimed a tennis player.

"The newspapers printed all this nonsense that the Westinghouse lamps would fail and ruin the Westinghouse company and the reputation of the fair—Mr. Edison pays for influence in the papers, you know—but it all went off swimmingly. It was spectacular." Lois threw her arms in the air to express how grand the event had been.

Mary Mason placed a calming hand on her exuberant sister's shoulder as she turned to me. "Will you be able to visit the fair later in the season?"

"I'm afraid not. I have commitments here on the island and will be returning for the start of the fall term at Penn at the end of September."

"You really must attend. It's not to be missed," Lois insisted.

"I wish I could. I will have to depend on those who have been fortunate to attend to fill me in on all the details. Could I persuade the two of you to come to tea and tell me more? Perhaps when Anne and Keiko arrive, and the four of you can compare notes about your visit."

"That sounds lovely," Mary Mason said, turning to see her brother John trot up from the stairs that led down to the dock below.

John rushed over and whispered something in Mary Mason's ear, then nodded toward me and said, "So happy to meet you." He raised a crooked finger to his head as if to tip a hat, although he wasn't wearing one.

"That's a splendid idea," Mary Mason called after him. "I'll do just that!"

As she turned back to me, Mary Mason's smile broadened, and a dimple in her left cheek sprang to life. "My dear, sweet brother just reminded me that you would be a perfect addition to our excursion tomorrow."

"Tomorrow? No, I'm sorry. I will be engaged in a painting project for the next few days. Regretfully, I will have to decline," I said.

"Painting? You're an artist? So that's why you're wearing a painter's smock?" Lois stepped forward to examine my smock.

"What?" I asked. I glanced down at my paint-stained smock and suddenly realized how I must look in my work clothes. Luckily, I had pulled the mobcap off my head and stuck it in my pocket during my run to Point Breeze. At that thought, my hand instantly went to my hair. As I suspected, my dark curls had come loose from the tight bun I had pinned them into this morning. They had sprung to life, sticking up every which way. When I smoothed a few errant strands back into place, a smattering of paint chips showered down on my bodice, so I quickly brushed them away.

"I so adore art and artists. Could I visit you at your studio? Or do you have your easel set up *alfresco* to capture your magnificent view of the river? Oh, how I wish I could paint or sketch!" Lois spun around with her arms outstretched, then hugged her arms to her as if to gather the surrounding beauty around her and capture it in her heart forever.

"I'm sorry to say that I'm not that sort of painter. I'm a house painter—or cottage painter, to be precise. I have guests visiting at the end of the week and hoped to have the cottage repainted before they arrive."

"Perhaps," Mary Mason said gently, reaching for my ungloved hand with her gloved hand, "you could take one afternoon off. My brother John will be a senior at Princeton next year, and as it turns out there is a bevy of Princeton students and alumni here in the islands this season. John has pressed me into service to organize a *fête champêtre*."

Lois giggled. "Don't let her fool you! There wasn't much *pressing* involved. Mary Mason loves to organize social events," Lois reported.

Mary Mason demurred but continued. "I booked the steamer *Nightingale* for a gala trip through the islands. We'll be picnicking at Grand View Park. I've covered all the details, except—and this is where you come in—I don't have enough attractive, intelligent young ladies."

My face must have expressed my surprise at being referred to as an attractive, intelligent *young* lady. At twenty-eight, as my mother and sister Rose often reminded me, I was teetering on spinsterhood.

"Please be assured that you won't be the only one. Lois and I will be there, of course, as well as a few young ladies I've already recruited from Thousand Island Park and a handful of girls who are staying at Pullman

House, as well.”

I glanced over at the grand, four-story Pullman House, which occupied the area of the island where the more modest two-story Grenell House had stood when I first visited the island over a decade ago. The island on which the Pullman House stood was called Grenell Island, while the larger island it was connected to via a long narrow bridge was Grenell Island Park. Both islands were referred to simply as Grenell.

I could see John LaRue pulling hard on the oars of his St. Lawrence River skiff as he slipped under the bridge that joined the two islands. As if he knew we were looking his way, John Kerr turned and waved to us.

“Please say you’ll come. John assures me we need to have a handful of the fairer sex to balance out the raucous collegians. I was hoping to invite the Hinds’ girls. Do you know Jessie, Grace, and Addie? They summer on the south shore in the Bay View cottage,” Mary Mason said, pointing to a white cottage with a double-tiered porch. “But they have yet to arrive on Grenell for the season. Perhaps they too are at the Chicago Exposition. You’d be doing me a great favor, and I would forever be in your debt.”

“Well, I . . .” I started.

“It’s settled then.” Mary Mason beamed. She reached forward and took both of my bare hands in her gloved ones. I had the feeling that Mary Mason was used to getting her way. “Thank you so much. You can meet us at the new Grenell dock, the one in front of the Grenell Island Park store. Ten o’clock.”

“Ten o’clock?” That would limit the amount of time I had for scraping and sanding. “What is the proper attire for this affair?” I asked.

“Oh, nothing special. A simple summer dress. Something like we’re wearing today. I’m sure you’ve been on college outings before. You attend Penn, correct?”

“I . . . well . . .” I stammered.

I was too distracted to respond properly. What were Lois and Mary Mason wearing? My sisters, Rose and Lily, seemed to take in a woman’s attire from hat to slipper in one glance. From that one glance, they could assess character, social standing, and other subtle nuances before they even uttered a greeting. I hadn’t paid attention to what the Kerr sisters were wearing but now took a moment to appraise their apparel.

Lois's dress was decidedly nautical, Prussian blue with a bold white stripe at the base of her skirt. Another smaller white stripe lined the sailor collar, which laid flat on her back. A long white, tightly knotted tie dangled almost to her trim waist. Mary Mason wore a delicate white dress printed with rows and rows of tiny red roses. Finespun white lace edged both the high collar and the cuffs at the end of her long sleeves. Three rows of ruffles graced the bottom of her skirt. I wondered what my sisters would glean from their choice of clothing. More distressingly, I wondered what the Kerr sisters might have ascertained from my attire.

"The pleasure will be all mine," I said. "I have taken up too much of your time, especially for your first full day on the island for the season. Thank you so much for your hospitality. Please, thank your father for sharing his field glasses. Until tomorrow," I said with a little nod to the two sisters.

I turned on my heel, fought the urge to run, and instead walked calmly toward the path leading down from Point Breeze. Halfway down the path, I looked up to see Uncle Sam standing in front of his cottage. After he and Aunt Lucy sold Grenell House and the small island it sat on to Mr. Sayles, they'd built a splendid cottage with a double-tiered porch. On a clear day, they could see all the way up the channel to Clayton. Two years ago, another cottage was built one lot over by the Hudson family from Syracuse. They named their cottage Breezy Bay, an apt name today as a pleasant breeze was blowing off the river. Like Sam's cottage, it had a double-tiered porch. Mrs. Hudson had insisted that as many of the trees remain, including a young maple tree very close to their front steps. "Just think how this maple will shade and cool our cottage someday." Mr. Hudson had grumbled but complied.

The Grenell cottage and Breezy Bay were only two of a handful of cottages on the south side of Grenell. A boardwalk stretched from the Grenell cottage to the store. Between the Grenell cottage and the store, I could see the Hinds cottage, Bay View, and the Reeve's cottage beyond that. Our little island was turning into a lovely summer community.

"Welcome back to Grenell for the 1893 season," Uncle Sam called out once I was within earshot.

"Thank you. How was your winter?" I asked as I joined him on the porch.

"It was a cold one! The ice was solid and thick. Good thing, I had four tons of wood timbers to transport the six miles from Clayton on the ice."

"I heard you built a splendid dock. I've yet to see it. Captain Taylor picked me up in Clayton in the *Minnehaha* and brought me straight to my dock."

"Ah! Well, we have two other captains on the island now. Both of them are Robbins—Captain Hy and Captain El," Uncle Sam informed me.

"Are they related?" I asked. Hyland and his young bride moved permanently to the island last year.

"Well, his uncle Eldridge bought a lot in February and dragged a house from Robbins Island—s'pose people are calling it Emery Island now. Between you and me, it'll always be Robbins."

"They brought the house over on the ice?"

"Used sleds and a team of dray horses. Hauled the house right over top a little sapling oak tree. Most say it won't survive, but take a look at it when you walk by. It's startin' to straighten up. Lookin' mighty fine, it is," Uncle Sam said, stroking his white goatee thoughtfully. "But go see my dock first! She's a beauty!"

"I can't wait to see it," I said.

"It's a marvel! Recovered the timbers from the old timber station dock in Clayton. That lumber'd been underwater for fifty years and none the worse for it. She's a fine steamship dock. Told you I'd build one someday. First the store, then the post office and now a steamship dock." Sam hooked his fingers behind his lapels and rocked back on his heels.

"I'm sure it is a fine dock," I said.

Sam stroked his white goatee, leaned forward, and added in a conspiratorial whisper, "There's been complaints the past few years about Mr. Sayles at Pullman House chargin' cottagers eye-waterin' rates to land at the Pullman House dock and have their belongings transferred to their cottages. Vowed to remedy that particular predicament and I did! Gotta keep my island family happy," he said with a wink.

In January of 1891, Sam had a team of dray horses drag Britton's old store on a sled from Fishers Landing across the frozen river to Grenell Island and renamed it the Grenell Island Store. That spring, Mr. Sayles recruited E. A. Fox of LaFargeville to build a provision store in the little harbor on Grenell Island Park just opposite Pullman House. When

Uncle Sam found out, he was furious. He stamped his feet and could barely speak. I thought perhaps he would twist himself into a knot and tear himself in half like Rumpelstiltskin. It was not lost on me that the more people Uncle Sam brought to his dock, the more chances he had of making sales at the store.

“Did you see that flying machine this morning?” Uncle Sam asked.

“Yes. Nat ran to collect me to make sure I didn’t miss it.”

“Not much gets by Nat. Kinda like his pa that way.”

I smiled. Nat was perhaps more like Hunk than any of Hunk’s other offspring.

“Maybe I should’ve built me an aero-ship dock instead of a steamship dock. I hear some day in the future, folks’ll be traveling by aero-ship. Makes me think I should’ve hung on to those nine lots at the crest of Grenell instead of selling them to the Quaker colony.”

We both looked up through the trees to the crest of the island. Uncle Sam pursed his lips in concentration. “I’d thought we’d be knee-deep in Quakers by now. When they bought them lots, they were supposed to build nine cottages and a shared boathouse on the north-side shore.

“I think the Panic scared everyone off that idea.”

“Not your Mr. Sharples.”

“No, Mr. Sharples seems to be doing quite well, especially after he won that gold medal at the Paris Exposition for his cream separator. He was more than happy to buy the lots from his friends.”

“Hear tell he’s calling that castle-sized cottage he’s erecting ‘Bungalow.’”

“That’s true,” I said. When Mr. Sharples first showed the plans for the grand summer home and told me he was calling it Bungalow, I’d laughed and said if his cottage were a bungalow then our cottage was a castle. Mr. Sharples presented Anne and me with a sign for our new cottage the very next week: Castle Rock. The name stuck. After a dozen years of referring to our place as Camp Anne, we now referred to it as Castle Rock.

“Arnie’s doing a fine job for Mr. Sharples. Worked all winter building a road to transport the quarry stone to the buildin’ site. Got a delivery later this morning. You should watch Arnie in action.”

“I’ll have to do that. Where is Aunt Lucy?”

“Tendin’ to her chickens, I believe. Spends more time with them

birds than she does with me. Not quite how I envisioned my retirement.”

“Retirement! I’m sure she can say the same of you—starting a store, building a steamship dock. What’s next?” I asked.

“Got a hotel on the way!” he said, rocking back on his heels and tucking his thumbs behind the lapels of his frock coat again.

“Do tell! You are full of surprises, Uncle Sam. Please give Aunt Lucy my best wishes. I’ll be by later to see her myself.”

“Don’t dilly dally! She’ll wanna latch eyes on you as soon as possible.”

“Certainly. I can’t wait to see her either. Farewell for now,” I said as I descended from the porch.

Seems hotels were popping up everywhere. I thought when Captain Taylor had transported me to Castle Rock that he’d pointed out the huge construction project near Oak Point on Murray Isle as we passed between the two islands. Two years ago Captain Jack Taylor had rafted and towed timber to the island to build the one-hundred-and-fifty-foot dock for a grand hotel planned for Murray Isle. The construction of the boathouse for the future hotel was in full swing.

My list of things I must do had multiplied in the short time I had been away from our little cottage. Somehow, I needed to visit Arnie at the Bungalow building site, visit Aunt Lucy, finish scraping and sanding the cottage, catch fish for supper, and most importantly, find suitable attire for a Princeton *fête champêtre* aboard the steamer *Nightingale* . . . all by ten tomorrow morning.



*P*erspiration dotted my forehead. I raised my wrist to mop my brow with my sleeve and thought better of it. White paint chips coated my sleeve. I reached instead for a tea towel and dabbed my face. Who was I fooling? I'm sure my face was splattered with paint chips. I probably looked like a speckled hen. My arm ached as I raised my scraper to attack the last section that needed to be scraped.

The sun was nearly at its zenith and, despite my unexpected visit to Point Breeze, I was nearly finished. I'd returned from the aero-machine sighting full of frenetic energy. As I attacked the blistered paint of our two-year-old cottage, thoughts, and images of the aero-machine filled my head as paint chips filled the air. I pondered over the details. How exactly had the safety bicycles been attached? What kept the wheelmen from falling off those dangling safety bicycles to the abyss below? Had they been strapped to the safety bicycles in any way? How useful would the footballer skullcap have been if they had fallen? When they landed, did the aero-machine roll along the ground? My mind leapt ahead to the future. I wondered if someday I'd fly on an aero-machine from Philadelphia directly to an aero-port on Grenell Island. Oh, what a wondrous, marvelous age we live in!

As I pried blisters of paint from the clapboard siding, my mind flitted to snippets of my conversation with Mary Mason: "*a fête champêtre*,"

“attractive, intelligent young ladies,” and “a simple summer dress like mine.” As usual, my mind focused on the words and their etymology. *Fête champêtre* was a French term that literally meant rural party. Nowadays it generally referred to a garden party. The outing was on a boat, so I guessed it was a social interaction out-of-doors. I had fought the urge to correct Mary Mason’s pronunciation. While her pronunciation of *fête* was good, the ending on *champêtre* should have been more closed. But who am I to correct her? My French is far from perfect. My expertise lies with Greek and Latin.

I laughed at myself as I paused to swat away a swarm of gnats. Here I was dithering over language when the more pressing issue was what to wear. My wardrobe consisted of dark-colored walking skirts and mostly white shirtwaists, although I did own several black and brown shirtwaists that were certainly not suitable for a summer outing. I sighed heavily. I had the wardrobe of a schoolteacher.

Knowing that Mary Mason had invited “summer girls” from Pullman House and Thousand Island Park did not help matters. These girls arrived at the hotel with four or five Saratoga trunks and stacks of hat boxes. I would be a drab thistle in a bouquet of dainty primroses.

“For heavens sakes!” I chastised myself, attacking the weathered paint with renewed furor. “You are not a simpering summer girl who worries about hats and dresses to attract a summer dalliance or even better, a husband,” I mumbled to myself as I gave the wall a final scrape. I climbed down from the stepladder, put the scraper down, and brushed the paint chips from my hands. “I have a home, a summer home, and a teaching position at the University of Pennsylvania. I don’t need a husband,” I reminded myself.

That last sentence came out louder than I intended and the words stung as sharply as the sweat that dripped into my eye. I looked around to see if there was anyone on the path or out in a skiff who might have overheard my outburst before I wiped the sweat from my eye. I was not opposed to marriage, but I hadn’t met anyone who seemed suitable.

I swatted those pesky thoughts away along with another swam of gnats. I needed to focus on the task at hand. I stepped back to survey my work. The scraping was finished, and I needed to sand next. I had sandpaper. Nat suggested I ask Arnie for a block of wood to wrap the sandpaper

around to use as a handle. I took off the painter's smock and mob cap, brushed paint chips from my clothes, wiped the perspiration from my face, and headed toward the Bungalow worksite. I chose the north shore path along the backside of the island to avoid the posh south side as I wasn't wearing civilized attire. Uncle Sam had named the north shore path North Boulevard. I laughed to myself at the thought. This boulevard was still no better than a cow path from field to manger.

A cacophony of sounds swirled in the air above me as I turned onto a path that led from North Boulevard to the Bungalow worksite. I heard grunts of men as they pushed and shoved, shouted and whistled to the horse team. Sledgehammers rang out as they struck metal wedges. The sounds grew louder as I climbed the steep, narrow path to the crest of Grenell. Uncle Sam was right. This would be the perfect spot for an aero-port. When I finally reached the top, I was surprised that there were only fifteen or twenty men toiling away. It sounded like a hundred. The scene was dirty and hot. Dust stirred up by the horse team swirled in the air. Thankfully, a cool breeze wafted through just as I saw Arnie. I hadn't laid eyes on Arnie since last September. He seemed taller, his shoulders broader. His face was stern as he shouted orders to the men, but it softened when he caught sight of me.

"Miss Marguerite! Nat said you'd arrived. I hoped to see you today," he said as he waved me over.

"Oh my! Look at this," I said. "You've made great progress. Uncle Sam said you'd accepted a delivery of stone today."

"Yes." Arnie turned, let out a sharp whistle, and then shouted, "Delaney! Move those draft horses! Find a post in the shade for them and get them a drink. They're done for the day."

He turned back toward me and continued. "This is our third delivery. We finally have a smooth system for unloading the stones. As you can see, we have the foundation laid and we're moving up. It'll be a grand building."

Over the winter, I hadn't received many letters from Arnie. He had been knee-deep in a huge project for Mr. Caswell, who was the contractor for the Bungalow project. Knowing he would start construction in the spring, Mr. Caswell directed Arnie to turn the path called Highland Avenue into a road. I was proud to learn from a letter that Arnie sent in

April, that Mr. Caswell had been so delighted with the completed road, that he asked Arnie to supervise stone deliveries.

"I'm keen on seeing the road you built over the winter," I told Arnie.

"Yes. Come see."

We walked around the foundation of the house.

"Do you think you'll finish this season?" I asked.

"God willing. The Sharples family is hoping to move in by next season. I only need to keep this work crew on task. Did you see the flying machine this morning?"

"Yes. Thanks to your brother, Nat."

"Work came to a complete standstill for nearly twenty minutes.

I thought it would put us behind schedule but somehow seeing that apparatus spurred the men on. The sight of men flying through the sky made it seem like anything was possible."

"Is Friend Helen here?"

"No. Mrs. Sharples likes to be onsite to help supervise but she is in West Chester this week. Arriving sometime around the middle of the month."

I sighed and my shoulders drooped a bit. I'd hoped Helen would be able to lend me something appropriate to wear to the Princeton *fête champêtre*.

"Is there anything I can help you with?" Arnie asked as a look of concern crossed his face.

"No, no," I said, straightening again. "How is the little one? Alma, is it?"

"Alma Mae! What a little darling she is! Between you and me, I wasn't sure if I'd like being a pa. Babies cry and fuss and require so much attention. But at the end of every day, I can't wait to rush home and hold that sweet little bundle in my arms."

"And Mavis?"

"Doing well, especially now that Alma Mae is sleeping through the night. Mavis'll be happy to see you. Hope you can stop by soon."

"I'll make a point of it."

"Well, there it is," he said, pointing to a steep road that descended through the trees.

"That's amazing! How long did that take?"