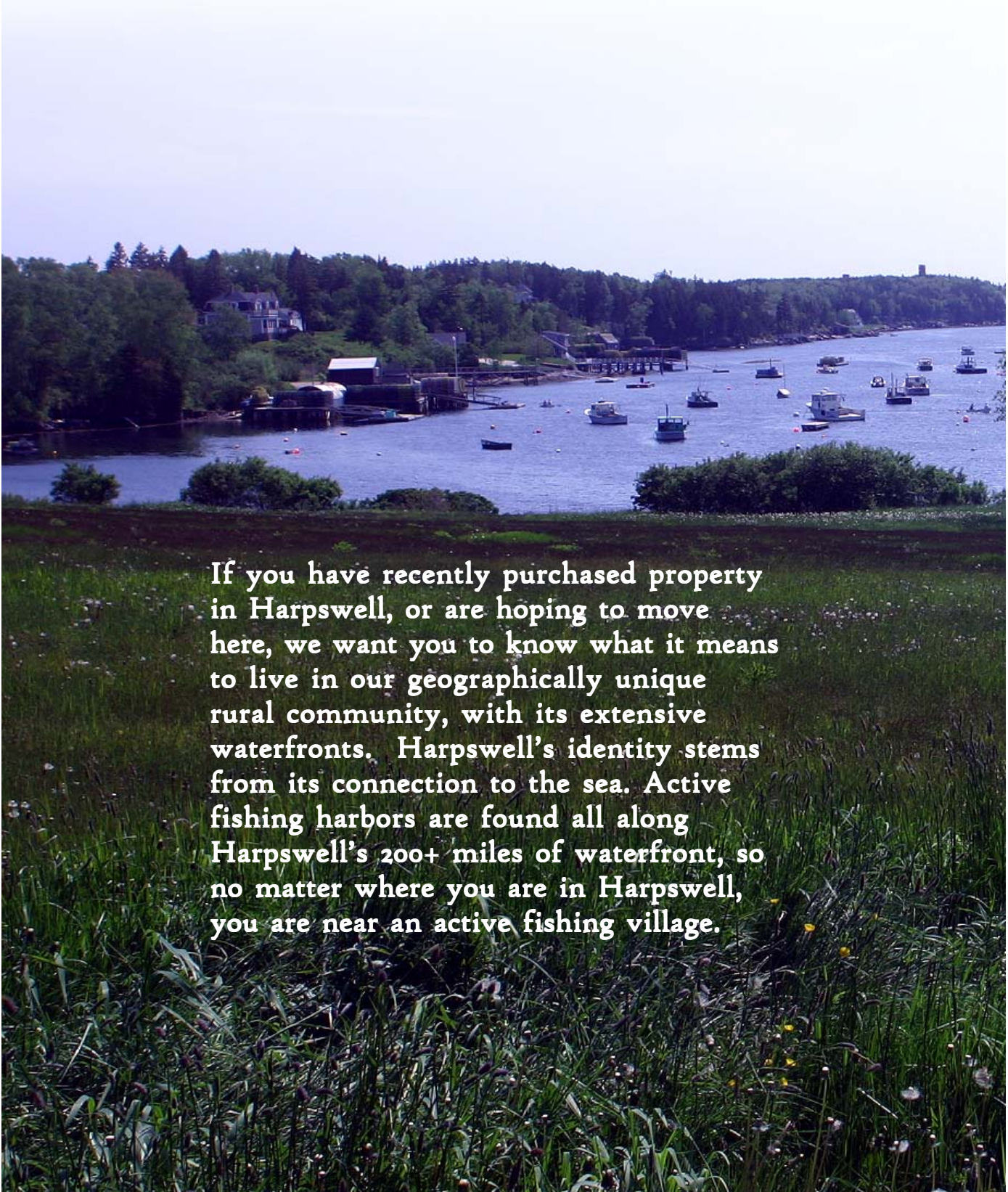


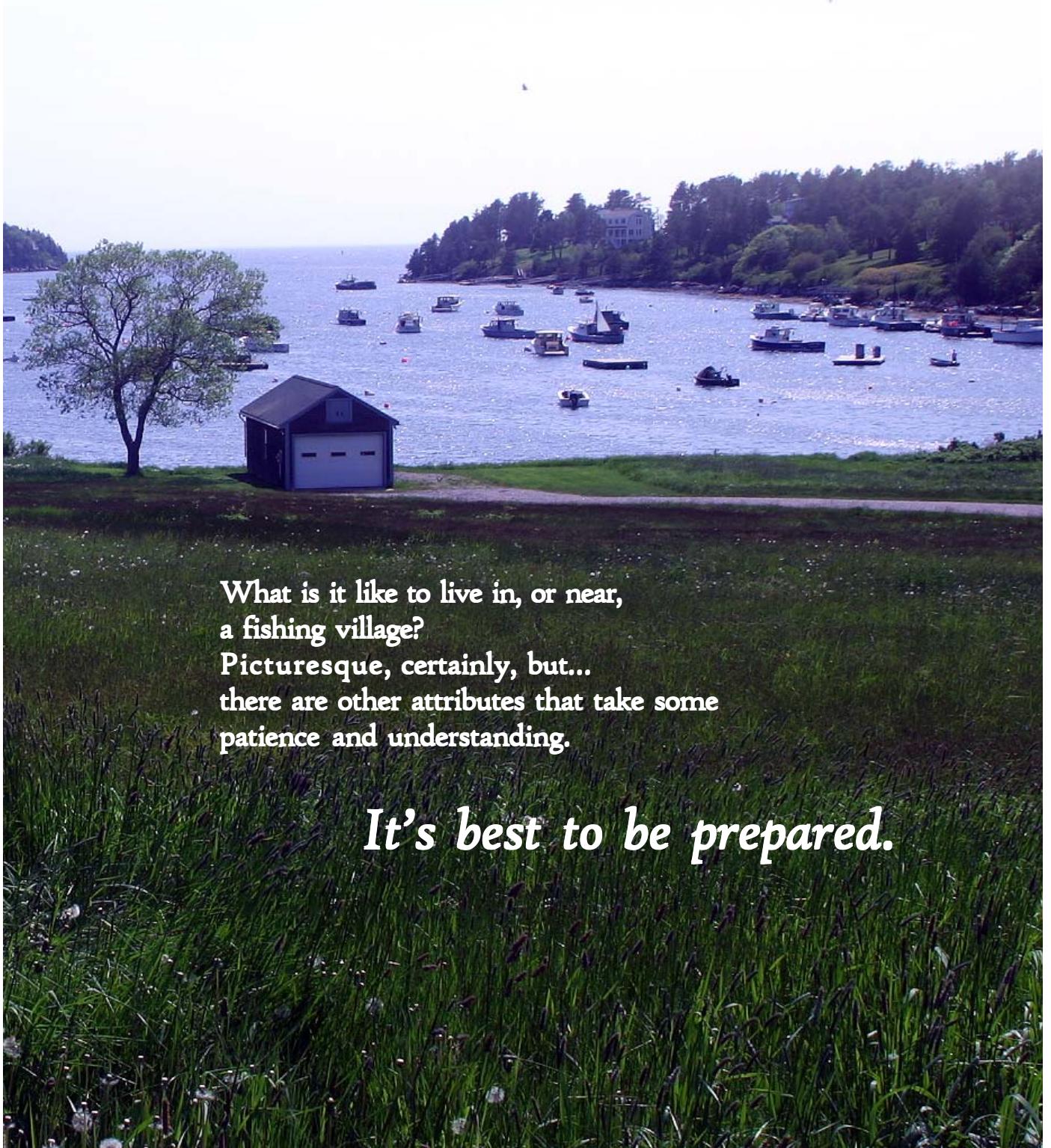
# Harpswell's working waterfronts

## A realistic look at Harpswell ...



If you have recently purchased property in Harpswell, or are hoping to move here, we want you to know what it means to live in our geographically unique rural community, with its extensive waterfronts. Harpswell's identity stems from its connection to the sea. Active fishing harbors are found all along Harpswell's 200+ miles of waterfront, so no matter where you are in Harpswell, you are near an active fishing village.

a working community  
with a fishing flavor.



What is it like to live in, or near,  
a fishing village?  
Picturesque, certainly, but...  
there are other attributes that take some  
patience and understanding.

*It's best to be prepared.*

# Sights

In the 1800s, the shores of Harpswell developed with small homes close together in villages. Constant reminders of our past and present maritime orientation are seen throughout town where boats and fishing gear – traps, nets, engines, blocks and tackle – are stored in yards. Often at night, lights are required on boats while generators are running to keep equipment operational for early morning departures. Stored fishing gear and overnight lights are among the aesthetic elements of authentic working waterfronts.



Bernice Kenney



# Sounds

The fishing day begins early, really early. At 3 a.m. the trucks and then the boats rumble or roar into life. At all hours trucks loaded with lobsters head for the marketplace, wasting no time on our narrow, winding roads. Competing with the shrieks of gulls and the distinct calls of ospreys, the sounds of diesel engines, outboard motors, and heavy equipment in use on the docks may be heard throughout the day – and night. Recreational boat noise adds to the mix, while the faraway sound of a foghorn may actually be comforting.

# Smells

The smell of salt water and mudflats hangs in the air, sometimes overwhelmed by the pungent odor of bait. Lobster traps drying on shore emit the odor of attached decaying marine organisms. Barrels waiting to be filled with salted fish line the docks, a reminder that it takes bait — and work — to catch the lobsters and fish dinners we enjoy. Working waterfronts have their smells, there's no escaping that fact. To the fishermen, it's a sweet smell of money. In Harpswell, 50% to 60% of local jobs are fishing related.



## Touch

What comes to mind about the feel of a working waterfront? The rough uneven surfaces of the old docks and wharves, the rolling waves under the floats, and the unpaved, often muddy or dusty approach to the waterfront.

Informal parking areas, if they exist, are likely to have a haphazard arrangement. With limited land available, there is competition for the few parking spaces. Remember that most working wharves are privately owned, so permission to visit is required.



Wolfe Tone

## Tastes

In addition to the joys of fresh fish, clams, and lobsters, we appreciate the critical importance of clean water – both salt water and groundwater. This is one of the most important facts to understand: our villages sit atop a fragile water supply. Harpswell's groundwater comes only from rain and snow; there is no deep aquifer or reservoir. When wells are pumped dry, salt water infiltrates. There is no public water supply or distribution system. It is hoped that newcomers to Harpswell will help conserve our water supply by planting drought-resistant gardens and lawns. We must actively protect our groundwater; it's a fact of life in Harpswell.





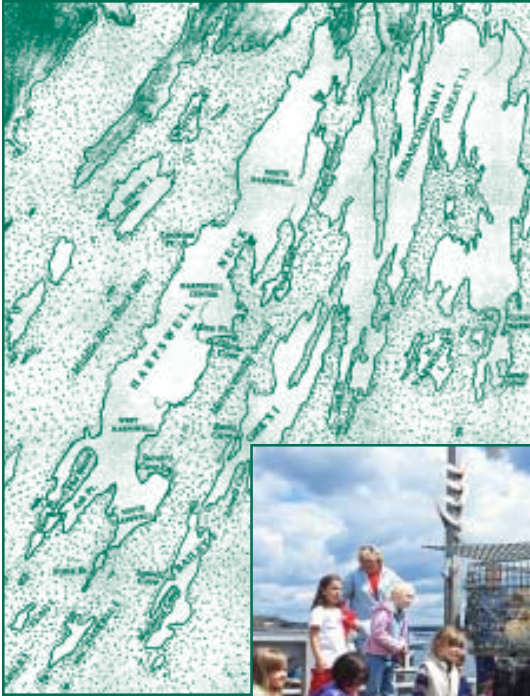
## And a sixth sense: Common sense.

Harpswell's heritage and character are defined by a commitment to the fishing industry. We recognize the value of our natural resources. We know we must protect our shores. After all, everything runs downhill and into the ocean; we cannot let fertilizers or oil spills or other contaminants drain into the coastal waters. Harpswell has voted to restrict certain pesticides that are known to impact shellfish.

We also must protect the vitality of our community character. We want to maintain the character of our older waterfront neighborhoods with small-scale waterfront homes. We would like to preserve the traditional access to the waterfront over private lands. Water access is considered to be the most important factor in sustaining the fishing industry. Critical rights of access to the waterfront are often based on custom, not on legal grounds. Too often these traditional access points are closed off without any warning, thus straining the fabric of our community.



While we welcome new residents to Harpswell, ensuring that the fishing industry continues to thrive matters to us. Please take the time to understand the traditional uses of your waterfront property and what it means to the community. We encourage dialogue and exploration with your neighbors about the use of traditional access points.



**What else should we tell you? We want you to know what it means to live in our rural community. What does “rural” mean to you? clean living? healthy environment? slower pace of life? independent folks? perhaps old-fashioned ideas or standards? We hope that is why you have been drawn to our community. Rural also means that Harpswell has none of the traditional town or city services; we take care of each other — our wells, septic systems, recyclables, trash, transportation, and volunteer fire and rescue protection. We vote at town meeting on every penny to be spent, or not spent.**



Wolfe Tone

**Living in Harpswell means taking responsibility for each other ... it often requires strength of character. The residents of Harpswell wish to keep our rural and peaceful atmosphere, preserve the natural environment, and remain home to young and old, fishing families and business leaders, old-timers — and newcomers. We hope you do, too.**



This brochure has been developed at the recommendation of the 2005 Harpswell Comprehensive Plan with the assistance of Maine Sea Grant and the support of University of Maine Cooperative Extension and the Maine Coastal Program at the State Planning Office. We are grateful to Judy East for the brochure's framework around the sensory experiences of a working waterfront, and to Cheryl Daigle for the elegant layout and design.

*Photos by Elsa Martz unless otherwise noted.*



*A member of The University of Maine System*

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