MALAGA ISLAND
FRAGMENTED LIVES

MAINE STATE MUSEUM | AUGUSTA, MAINE | Katherine A. McBrien

Group of Malaga Island students, circa 1910
Courtesy of Peter K. Roberts

"Small wonder Maine wishes to forget Malaga. It is still a bad nightmare in the minds of those who knew it well."
– Lewiston Evening Journal, 1935

By July 1, 1912, all visible traces of the community on Maine's Malaga Island had disappeared, following actions by the State of Maine to evict the poor, multi-racial group who had called the island home for over fifty years. To recognize the centennial anniversary of the island community's eviction, in 2012 the Maine State Museum opened the exhibit *Malaga Island, Fragmented Lives*. By giving voice to the people of Malaga Island through their images, artifacts, and stories, the museum hopes to bring focus and new understandings to this formerly hidden part of Maine's history.

MAINE STATE MUSEUM
Augusta, ME 04333
(207) 287-2301
www.mainestatemuseum.org

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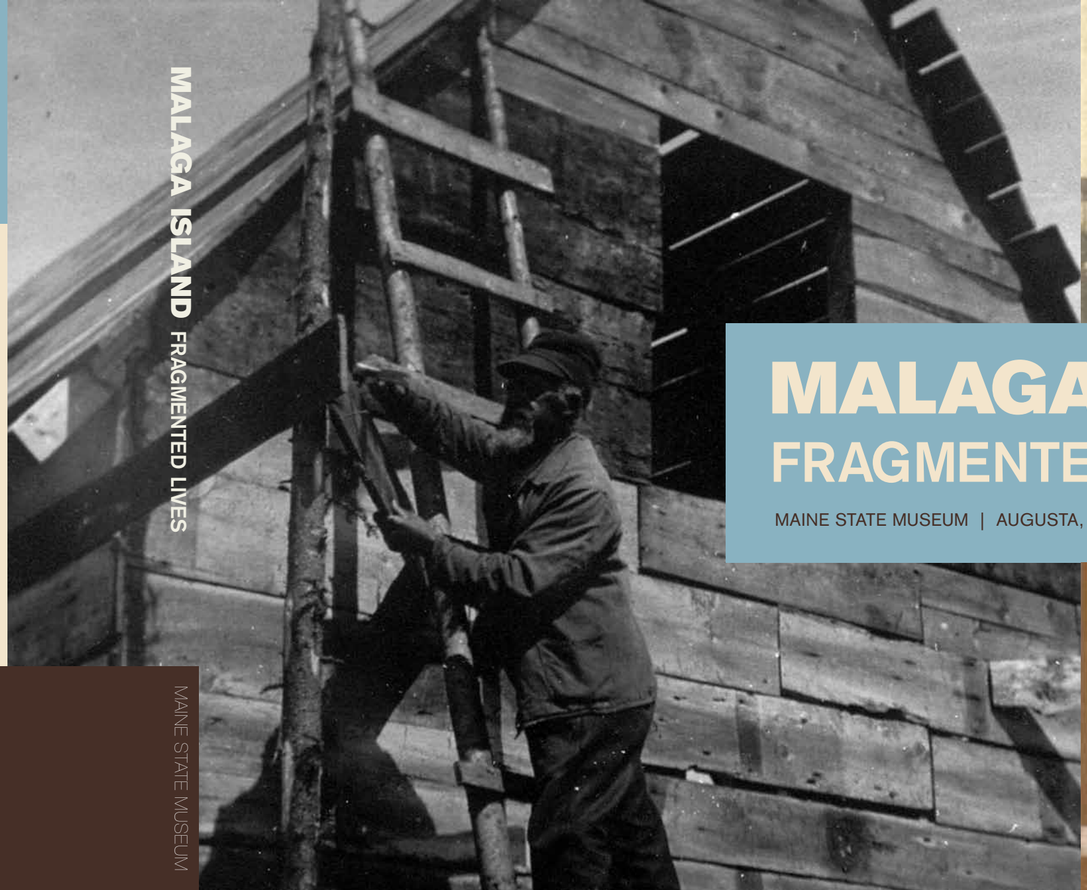

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Reprint of Introduction and History Summary
Malaga Island, Fragmented Lives Exhibit Publication
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Maine State Museum
Augusta, Maine

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Malaga Island, Fragmented Lives

A Maine State Museum Exhibition

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By

Katherine A. McBrien

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Introduction

Museum exhibits are by their nature ephemeral and even the best are not usually recalled for long after they have made way for something else. When they do persist in the mind, or the heart, it is because of their special cultural or personal meaning, assisted by the documentation that survives them and allows their content and observations to be recalled and become inspirational again. I think the Maine State Museum's exhibit *Malaga Island, Fragmented Lives* deserves to be documented and remembered, which is the purpose of this small catalogue and the information it contains. The exhibit merits this attention for two essential reasons: the sad and tragic story it relates should be a regular reminder of the dangers of state-sponsored racial and social panic, even within a free and democratic political system; and its subject matter distinguishes this exhibit from any other the Maine State Museum has ever developed, suggesting new dimensions and new values for the museum's work.

The exhibit was conceived and proposed by Kate McBrien, Curator of Historic Collections, and developed by her and Sheila McDonald, Deputy Director, with Joanna Torow, the museum's Chief Educator. Its spare and effective design is due to Dru Colbert. I would like to commend retired Museum Director Joseph R. Philips for approving the exhibit at a time when the effects of its somewhat controversial nature could not with certainty be predicted. Of the many who helped in the exhibit's progress and creation I am very glad to identify for special appreciation Robert Sanford and Nathan Hamilton of the University of Southern Maine, whose archeology at the Malaga site gave the exhibit an unusual and very valuable dimension, and the present owner and steward of Malaga Island, the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, which assisted the museum outstandingly.

The exhibit has helped the Malaga story become an accepted, if grim, part of Maine's history. Two Maine governors have now publicly apologized for what happened there. In contemplating the Malaga events and its resulting moral failure and personal disasters, we must not forget that though the state engineered the evictions of the island's residents, it did so in response to the public and individual pressures of the time, and that painfully few voices were then raised in protest. It reminds us that we must question ourselves as well as our leaders in seeking ethical guidance. And for the museum itself, the exhibit fulfills a part of our institutional mission that we can seldom address with our more traditional exhibits: that an understanding of the past is truly essential to guide the future.

Bernard Fishman
Museum Director
Maine State Museum

Augusta, Maine
7 March 2013

By July 1, 1912, the community on Maine's Malaga Island ceased to exist. The State of Maine had evicted the multi-racial group in order to clear the small coastal island of "It's Shiftless Population of Half-Breed Blacks and Whites", as one 1911 newspaper article described it.[1] The community was controversial in the state; many people saw the island and its inhabitants as an ugly mark on the pristine beauty of Maine's coast. After years of well-publicized legal battles, the state succeeded in expelling the community of around forty people, committing eight to the Maine School for the Feeble Minded. By the end of 1912, all visible traces of the settlement had disappeared – houses had been moved and the cemetery was exhumed.

To recognize the centennial anniversary of the island community's eviction, in 2012 the Maine State Museum opened the exhibit *Malaga Island: Fragmented Lives*. Historic photographs, archaeological fragments, and original documents introduced visitors to this forgotten event in Maine's history. Quotes from descendants of the Malaga Island community helped viewers to connect this major historical event to lives today. An interactive comment board gave visitors the chance to reflect on and openly discuss the lessons of the Malaga Island story. Education programs shared with a wider audience the expertise and perspectives of a variety of interested scholars and advocates who combined their research and work to bring the story of Malaga Island to light. For years, Malaga Island has been "a story best left untold."[2] But today it is a story told repeatedly among families, schools, and communities. It is a story to learn from and remember.

Like much of the Maine coast, forty-two acre Malaga Island is rocky and rugged. The island is located at the mouth of the New Meadows River in Phippsburg. Bear Island lies one hundred yards to the west and the small fishing village of Sebasco is about three hundred yards to the east. The shell beach on the north end was the location of several settlements, beginning with Native Americans who inhabited the island within the last one thousand years. Little is known about how these first inhabitants lived. Considerably more is known about Malaga's later residents, the multi-race community of fisherman and laborers that occupied the island's north end from the 1860s to 1912.

The probable origins of Malaga Island's historic community trace back to one African American man, Benjamin Darling. He purchased nearby Horse Island (now known as Harbor Island) in 1794. Local legend reports that Darling married a white woman, Sarah Proverbs. In the mid-1850s, Darling's children sold Horse Island and settled with their own families on neighboring, uninhabited islands. The descendants of these families soon covered numerous islands throughout the New Meadows River. Although records are not clear, Henry Griffin and Fatima Darling Griffin, with their family, were most likely the first to live on Malaga Island, setting up house on the island's east side in the early 1860s.

[1] *Lewiston Evening Journal*, August 21, 1911, p.6

[2] *Malaga Island – A Story Best Left Untold* is a radio and photo documentary produced by Rob Rosenthal and Kate Philbrick. It can be accessed on the documentary's website www.malaislandmaine.org.

From the 1860s to 1912, more than sixteen families moved on and off Malaga Island, some returning several times, although it was always a difficult place to make a living. Evidence of their everyday lives was buried in the shell middens that acted both as foundations for their homes and as trash deposits. Ceramics, food remains, glass fragments, and pieces of metal all provide evidence today of how the community survived.

The island's stone-filled and shallow soil was not ideal for cultivation, although the islanders tried at times to grow vegetables. The spruce forest and small beach offered little in the way of protection from harsh weather. Like most other Maine islanders, members of the Malaga Island community made their living through fishing and odd jobs on the mainland. They endured as a community, helping one another and in turn accepting help from their neighbors both on the island and the mainland.

In 1989, University of Southern Maine researchers began to explore the island, looking for physical evidence of the community that once called Malaga Island home. Field research focused on examining shell midden deposits at the known settlement site and conducting artifact surveys on the adjacent tidal flats. Researchers recovered approximately 50,000 artifacts, which are now part of the Maine State Museum collection. Malaga Island is an unusual archaeological site because specific remains can be associated with household footprints matched to individual, named African Americans and placed within a defined period of time.

Although names appear on census records for Malaga Island, little has been known about who they were as individuals. Newspaper articles from their time period are unreliable resources, the reporting often falling to sensationalism, known as yellow journalism, which was prevalent at the turn of the twentieth century. Through archaeological evidence combined with careful examination of period documents, scholars today are now piecing together the true stories of the individuals who built their lives on Malaga Island.

Several other families lived on Malaga Island. Only a few house locations have yet been found or excavated, but pieces of information about the people can be gleaned through period newspaper articles and government documents. Rosella and John Eason set up home on the island and raised three generations of their family. Eliza Griffin was a successful fisherman in her own right and took in laundry from the mainland to supplement her income. The Marks family lived in a home close to the beach at the north end of the island. William Johnson lived on the east side of the island, facing the mainland. James and Salome McKinney were the most influential family on the island, with James commonly referred to as the King of Malaga Island. Their daughter, Louisa, set up house on Malaga Island with her husband, Jerry Murphy, and their children. For a time, the McKinney's eldest son, James Jr., lived on the island as well with his young family. Others lived on Malaga Island during the roughly fifty years of the settlement, occasionally moving back and forth between Malaga Island and the Phippsburg mainland. Most of the island men and some of the women fished (mostly for lobster and cod) or dug clams to earn a living. Others worked at a variety of trades for additional income. All earned money when they could, finding seasonal work as it became available.

Captain George and Lucy Lane, Christian missionaries from Malden, Massachusetts, began to visit Malaga Island during the summer of 1906. George Lane wrote to a friend in 1911: "[W]e built our summer house on the north end of Harbor Island (then Horse Island) and being interested in looking after people who need help found what I was looking for on Malaga Island." The Lanes focused their efforts on educating the children and teaching "moral values" to the women of Malaga Island. They opened the island's first school in 1906, operating it from one room in the McKinney home with their daughter Cora serving as teacher. By the next year, the school grew to fourteen students and the class moved to a larger room in the McKinney house. Benches were built and books purchased through private donations; James McKinney built a blackboard. The Lanes actively raised funds to build a permanent school on the island and help pay for food and clothing. By 1908 a new school building opened on the island with Evelyn Woodman of Scarborough serving as the full-time teacher. The island school was so successful at least one mainland student paid tuition to attend.[3]

In the early 1900s, the people of Malaga Island found themselves caught in a time of great change for Maine. A poor economy, the decline of the fishing and ship building industries, a boom in real estate prices, and thriving social reform efforts all affected Malaga. At the same time, the island residents became victims of the international eugenics movement, a popular theory that the poor, immoral, or criminal inherited that trait through their family genetics. This theory was widely accepted as fact throughout the early 1900s and included such advocates as heads of state, teachers, religious leaders, journalists, and scientists. Groups targeted by eugenicists included immigrants, the mentally disabled, criminals, alcoholics, and the poor, who were all deemed "feeble minded." Eugenicists believed communities of feeble minded people formed as these groups gathered and created centers that, in their view, needed to be reformed. Eugenicists also often feared that individuals within such groups were too promiscuous and produced too many children. These perceptions encouraged the passage of sterilization laws in several states, including Maine in 1925.[4] Through eugenics, the press publicized a common belief that the only way to help Malaga Island's residents, and improve tourism and property values on the Maine coast, was to dismantle the community.

Although efforts were well underway to improve living conditions on Malaga Island, the notoriety of the island community in statewide and regional newspapers gave Phippsburg a bad reputation, just as the tourism industry was beginning to grow in Maine. Newspaper headlines such as "*Homeless Island of Beautiful Casco Bay – Its Shiftless Population of Half-breed Blacks and Whites and His Royal Highness, King McKenney*" and "*Queer Folk of the Maine Coast*" put forth commonly held beliefs rooted in eugenics that the individuals living on Malaga Island were degenerate and needed assistance in order to survive. The stories of Malaga Island, and the actions of both the town of Phippsburg and the State of Maine to evict the community, were

[3] "A history of parts of Capt. And Mrs. Lane's and their daughter's work among a neglected people on Malaga Island, Maine and reference to other localities when the new motor boat will make it easier for them to carry messages of love and helpfulness" edited, compiled and illustrated by Fred H.C. Woolley, 1906-1908, (manuscript), Collection of the New England Historical Genealogical Society, Mss1900

[4] Rep. No. 1925, c.208, p.198

reported throughout the New England region and in nationwide publications such as *Harper's Monthly Magazine*.

Newspapers reported on the living conditions on Malaga Island in the most biased form, often applying the theories of eugenics to observations of life on the small island. "Their homes are of the most part the most miserable huts, in which there is no pretense to cleanliness. Families of six or more eat, live and sleep in one room. A bed is the exception rather than the rule; a mattress a luxury few can afford. They sleep on the floors on heaps of dirty rags, and seldom remove their clothing. Their faces and hands show accumulations of grime; their clothes are little more than rags, the cast-offs of people from the mainland, worn until they will hardly hold together."[5] In 1909, famed journalist Holman Day described in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*: "To counsel on economy and to preachment on thrift they are as inattentive as little children would be. A coast missionary (George Lane) took in hand one especially improvident family of six… Spurred by him, they fished, dig clams, sold bait to trawlers, and at the end of the summer had saved about seventy dollars among them. Then the missionary went away, confident that at least one Malaga family would reach "March Hill" in comparative comfort. When his back was turned they used for kindling the shingles that he had given them for the repair of their miserable hut, bought six dogs in order that each member of the family could have its own pet, and spent the rest of the money for sweets, pickles, jellies, and fancy groceries."[6] Such reports were circulated nationwide. At times, the articles contradicted one another, vacillating from disgust at the perceived loose morals and shabby homes of the island residents to general concern for the well-being of the island inhabitants and their ability to support themselves.

The archaeological evidence from the island disputes the reported claims of filth, poverty, and hunger. Instead, the evidence demonstrates the creativity, variety of work, and subsistence food production that was the truth of the Malaga Island experience. Newspapers reported that the homes were made of dirt floors, were unheated, and had no modern decoration. However, fragments of a cast iron stove were found at the Eason/Griffin home site; ceramic shards of popular twentieth century dishware patterns came from each house excavated; numerous nails are scattered through each house site; and fish and bird bones abound in every shell midden on the island, which in itself is evidence of shellfish processing. Archaeologists also found evidence of a small vegetable garden between the homes of John Eason and Eliza Griffin. Historic photographs document how similar the homes on Malaga Island were to other common homes along the coast of Maine. The McKinney house was a well-built structure in the Cape Cod style, which today would be considered a quaint coastal Maine home.

As early as the 1890s, efforts were underway in Phippsburg to rid itself of the Malaga Island community. Phippsburg allotted $669.03 (2.7% of the total town budget) to support for the poor in 1891, a period of economic decline and increased need for food and medical assistance in coastal Maine. Malaga Island residents accounted for more than 78% of the total poor support that year. In an attempt to divest itself of this economic responsibility, in 1903 Phippsburg petitioned the Maine State Legislature to declare Malaga Island within the town of Harpswell's borders, therefore making Harpswell responsible for financial support of the island's residents.

[5] *The Bath Independent and Enterprise*, February 17, 1906
[6] Day, *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, 1909

The state declined the petition, declaring Malaga Island to be within the town of Phippsburg.[7] Legal disputes continued until Maine's state government became involved once again. In 1905, all of the residents on Malaga Island were named wards of the state and under the jurisdiction of the Governor's Executive Council. George Collar Pease of Phippsburg acted as the state agent to oversee the supply of food, clothing, and medical care to the island community.

State Agent Pease submitted a report to the state's Executive Council in 1911, using difficult and often racist terminology to describe the various families living on Malaga Island. In his report, Pease described the health and his opinion of the work ethic of individual Malaga Island residents. Pease described the age and ability of John and Rosella Eason in his report: "John is 65-years old, full-blooded negro, well as average man of that age, rather intelligent. Can do mason work, but lazy and won't work. Wife 65, negress, complains of being sick all the time and unable to work (?)." Pease consistently included a description of the race of each family member, such as for the McKinney family: "James is white and his wife an octoroon." For Frank Gomes and family, Pease noted "Frank is 68 years old, a Portuguese, well and strong. Wife is younger and feeble minded." Others are described as weak, lazy, or half-breeds. Pease also made note of who were parents of children outside of marriage and who might have "intimate" relationships. He recommended that the State of Maine purchase Malaga Island to "prevent people from settling, and turn off the undesirable ones." He then made recommendations as to methods of eviction, with no help for finding new homes. Some, he suggested, should be institutionalized in the Maine School for the Feeble Minded. Pease recommended that the two-and-a-half year old child of Lizzie Marks be sent to a Mrs. Hunt in Portland. "She wants the child". Interestingly, Pease recommended that a few of the older residents be left on Malaga Island, as several were "in poor health, and probably won't live long anyway." He also suggested that the Tripp family could stay on the island and that the children could be accommodated with school privileges on mainland Phippsburg. While not all of his recommendations were followed, many were. This report documents the state's view of the Malaga Island residents as a problem to be dealt with; not as individual people.[8]

That same year, Governor Frederick Plaisted visited Malaga Island, along with his Executive Council, to see the island's condition for himself. The governor reported that he was encouraged by the progress of the children in school, but was not convinced the community would ever accept a middle-class style of living. During his visit, Plaisted remarked, "the best plan would be to burn down the shacks with all their filth. Certainly the conditions are not creditable to our state, and we ought not to have such things near our front door, and I do not think that a like condition can be found in Maine, although there are some pretty bad localities elsewhere."[9]

Soon after the governor's visit, the State of Maine ruled that Malaga Island was owned by the heirs of Eli Perry, formally of Phippsburg. The Perry family members filed papers to have the islanders evicted.[10] The Malaga Island Settlement Association tried negotiating a purchase of the island and an agreement was close before the Perry family changed their minds for unknown

[7] Annual Town Report for Phippsburg, 1903-1904, p. 21

[8] Maine Executive Council, Order of the Council #132, "Conditions on Malaga Island". Collection of the Maine State Archives.

[9] *Brunswick Times Record*, July 21, 1911

[10] Scott C. Perry, et al v. James McKenney, et al., Sagadahoc County Supreme Judicial Court, October 1911

reasons.[11] On December 9, 1911, a doctor and member of Governor Plaisted's Executive Council signed papers committing eight Malaga Island residents to the Maine School for the Feeble Minded which had opened only three years earlier.[12]

Near the end of 1911, the Perry family sold Malaga Island to the State of Maine for $400. Governor Plaisted and his Executive Council then ordered the eviction of the Malaga Island community. Residents were told they must vacate the island by July 1, 1912. No alternative homes were provided or suggested, but when Agent Pease arrived on Malaga Island on July 1st, he found all the houses were gone – dismantled and removed by the residents themselves. To complete the eviction, the state exhumed the burials on Malaga Island, combining the remains of seventeen individuals into five caskets, and moved them to the cemetery at the Maine School for the Feeble Minded. By the end of 1912, the state sold Malaga Island for $1,650 to Everard A. Wilson of Belfast, a friend of Dr. Gustavus C. Kilgore, the chair of the Executive Council.[13] No one lived on Malaga Island after 1912.

In the years following the eviction, the former residents of Malaga Island settled in the many communities surrounding their original island home. Some, like the McKinneys, moved to the Sebasco area of Phippsburg, on the mainland directly across the water from Malaga Island. Others moved to Bath or Brunswick. The Easons lived in Cundy's Harbor. All settled where they could find land or relatives who would take them in. Many faced discrimination from their new communities. The Tripp family lived on a boat and was forced to move from one coastal town to another, finding it difficult to be accepted or welcomed in any coastal town.

For decades, generations of descendants felt the need to hide their Malaga Island ancestry. The term "Malagite" became a racial slur commonly used on Maine's coast. Descendants experienced prejudice and slander through the years since 1912, causing many to deny any connection to the notorious island. But time has passed, helping attitudes to shift among both the Phippsburg community and islanders' descendants. Now scattered across the nation, current generations of Malaga descendants are discovering their family histories and connecting with one another through social media. Families are more openly discussing their histories and actively researching their own ancestry. As individuals discover more information, much is shared with other members of their extended family community, including photos of ancestors long forgotten. In 2011, the Darling family gathered in Phippsburg for the first family reunion in almost a century. Over one hundred people attended.

Purchased by the Maine Coast Heritage Trust in 2001, Malaga Island is now protected as a nature preserve. The island continues to be used by nearby lobstermen to store their traps and fishing gear. Visitors can explore the island by landing at the beach on the northern shore, then walking a nearly one-mile loop trail that traverses the island's forested interior. Scenic ledges, located along a trail at the south end of the island, afford a panoramic view of eastern Casco Bay. A plaque at the north end designates the island as a stop on the Maine Freedom Trail.

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[11] Although the state determined that the island belonged to the Perry heirs, scholars of Malaga Island's history continue to have doubts about who held title to the island when it was sold. To date, no documentation has been found to support the state's decision.

[12] Pineland Archives. Collection of the Maine State Archives.

[13] Maine Executive Council, Order of the Council #133, #390. Collection of the Maine State Archives.

A significant step toward healing the wounds of Malaga Island's difficult history occurred at the dedication ceremony for the Maine Freedom Trail island marker in September 2010. Maine's Governor John Baldacci attended the ceremony and was the first governor to set foot on Malaga Island since Governor Plaisted in 1911. At the dedication ceremony, Governor Baldacci issued a formal apology to the descendants of the Darling family, roughly eighty of whom were in attendance that day. At the ceremony, the governor said, "I'm sorry… I'm sorry for what was done. It wasn't right and we were raised better than that." That moment was the first time an acting Maine governor acknowledged the state's action in 1912 and recognized it as wrong. Earlier that year, the 124th Maine State Legislature passed a resolution recognizing with profound regret the state's actions in the displacement of the Malaga Island community in 1912. Governor Paul LePage continued the now official position of regret when he reiterated the state's apology and concern for the descendants of Malaga Island at the opening event for the *Malaga Island, Fragmented Lives* exhibit in May of 2012.

The Malaga Island archaeological artifacts are now in the collection of the Maine State Museum and are accessible for research. Although scholarly research of the Malaga Island community continues, the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the eviction of the Malaga residents in 1912 and the important discussions engendered by Malaga Island have led to the development of the exhibit and this publication. The centennial anniversary and subsequent exhibit have sparked numerous discussions and educational opportunities across the United States. Performances of the play *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy*, based on the Newbury Honor Book of the same title and based on the Malaga Island story, have opened across the United States in a variety of theater venues. School groups visit the exhibit, read literature related to the Malaga Island story, and engage in lesson plans which remain available on the Maine State Museum website.

The *Malaga Island, Fragmented Lives* exhibit has been an exercise in the collaborative process of museum work. In order to ensure that the exhibit was as balanced and fair as possible, the Maine State Museum worked with several organizations to create the final exhibit product. For this project, the Maine State Museum partnered with the University of Southern Maine, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, NAACP Portland Branch, Phippsburg Historical Society, Malaga Island descendants, and private scholars and documentarians who had previously explored the Malaga Island story. The exhibit and accompanying educational programs were a true collaboration, with interested parties choosing artifacts, reviewing label text, and participating in educational events for schools and members of the general public.

Most importantly, the exhibit has served as a central point for descendants of the Malaga Island community to gather and learn about their ancestry. Many descendants have only recently discovered their own connection to Malaga Island and are yearning to learn more about the experiences of their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. At the exhibit opening event in May 2012, descendants were able to gather and in many cases meet one another for the first time. These connections have continued to grow and thrive, as participants come to understand what their ancestry means to them as individuals and to their families. Malaga descendant Shirley Wells commented, "My eyes filled with tears when I first stepped foot into the … exhibit. I was … overcome with emotion. Everything I have researched and learned about

seemed to sink in. Happy I was there with my dad to witness this together, but sad to learn how terrible it was that our ancestors were treated so badly."

Through its collections and educational programs, the Maine State Museum remains committed to ensuring that the story of the Malaga Island community remains a part of Maine's history and is not again forgotten.

PLATE 1

John and Rosella Eason, with grandchildren Leonard and Harold Tripp, in front of their house on Malaga Island,
July 20, 1911
Maine State Museum collection

The homes of the Eason family and Eliza Griffin were located on the same large shell midden on Malaga Island. Their objects intermingled through the years, just as their lives did on the small island. Archaeological evidence shows that both households had simple objects to meet their needs, with the occasional beautiful trinket to enjoy. Census records document that John and Rosella Eason lived on Malaga Island for several decades. John worked as a carpenter and stonemason, which is evident in the tools and nails found at his home site. He was well known locally for his good singing voice. Living with them were Rosella's son, Robert Tripp, his wife Laura, and their four children.

PLATE 2

John Eason repairs a building on Malaga Island, circa 1910
Courtesy of Peter K. Roberts

PLATE 3

Eason house, Malaga Island, circa 1910
Courtesy of Peter K. Roberts

PLATE 4

Eliza Griffin house, Malaga Island, circa 1908
Courtesy of Peter K. Roberts

The Easons shared a shell midden with Rosella's sister, Eliza Griffin, who lived in what was once a ship's cabin. To earn a living, she took in laundry from hotels and mainland families. Journalist Holman Day reported in 1909 that Eliza was very successful at her laundry business and brought in more money than the fishermen. The many buttons found at her house site are reminders of her hard work.

PLATE 5

Students inside the school room in “King” McKinney’s house on Malaga Island
1907
Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society

Missionaries George and Lucy Lane of Malden, Massachusetts opened the first school on Malaga Island in 1906, operating it from one room in the McKinney home. Their daughter Cora was the teacher. By the next year, the school grew to fourteen students and the class moved to a larger room in the McKinney house. Benches were built and books purchased through private donations; James McKinney built a blackboard.

PLATE 6

Malaga Island school, July 1911
Maine State Museum collection

By 1908 a new school building opened on Malaga Island with Evelyn Woodman of Scarborough serving as the full-time teacher. The island school was so successful, at least one mainland student paid tuition to attend.

PLATE 7

Students entering the Malaga Island school, circa 1910
Courtesy of Peter K. Roberts

PLATE 8

Griffin house, Malaga Island, circa 1908
Courtesy of Peter K. Roberts

The Griffins may have been the first family to settle on Malaga Island. As Darling family descendants, several branches of the Griffin family called Malaga Island home through the years. Henry Griffin fished to provide for his wife, Fatima (Tina), and their children. The Griffin household artifacts are some of the oldest found within the house sites on Malaga Island and include numerous fishing hooks.

PLATE 9

McKinney house, Malaga Island, circa 1907
Courtesy of New England Historic Genealogical Society

James Eli McKinney (or McKenney) was known as the “king” of Malaga Island, a distinction commonly given to the best fisherman in an island community. Numerous newspaper articles as well as government reports describe McKinney as the island spokesperson. His neighbors on the mainland remembered Jim as an excellent fiddle player who often played for them. Salome, his wife, allowed missionaries to operate a small school from her home, acknowledged as the best house on the island, as was well described in a period scrapbook. Photographs document the interior of the McKinney home, a fine coastal Cape Cod-style house. The archaeological evidence shows that the McKinney family house held some of the best ceramics and decorative architectural features, reflecting the family’s important status within the community.

PLATE 10

View from a tarpaper house on Malaga Island
looking toward the Phippsburg mainland, circa 1910
Courtesy of Peter K. Roberts

PLATE 11

Malaga Island resident William Johnson, pictured in the *Casco Bay Breeze* newspaper
August 24, 1905
Courtesy of Maine Historical Society

William Johnson was a Civil War veteran, having served in the famed 54th Massachusetts regiment. Johnson arrived on Malaga Island some years after the Civil War, when he married island resident Lucy Marks in September 1893.

PLATE 12

Wallace family at the Basin in Phippsburg, circa 1910
Courtesy of Peter K. Roberts

PLATE 13

Group of Malaga Island students, circa 1910
Courtesy of Peter K. Roberts

PLATE 14

Harold McKinney (left) and Johnny Murphy (right) on Malaga Island, circa 1910
Courtesy of Peter K. Roberts

PLATE 15

Murphy family, Malaga Island, circa 1910
Clockwise: John Murphy, Holman Murphy, George Murphy, Louisa McKinney Murphy
Courtesy of Peter K. Roberts

PLATE 16

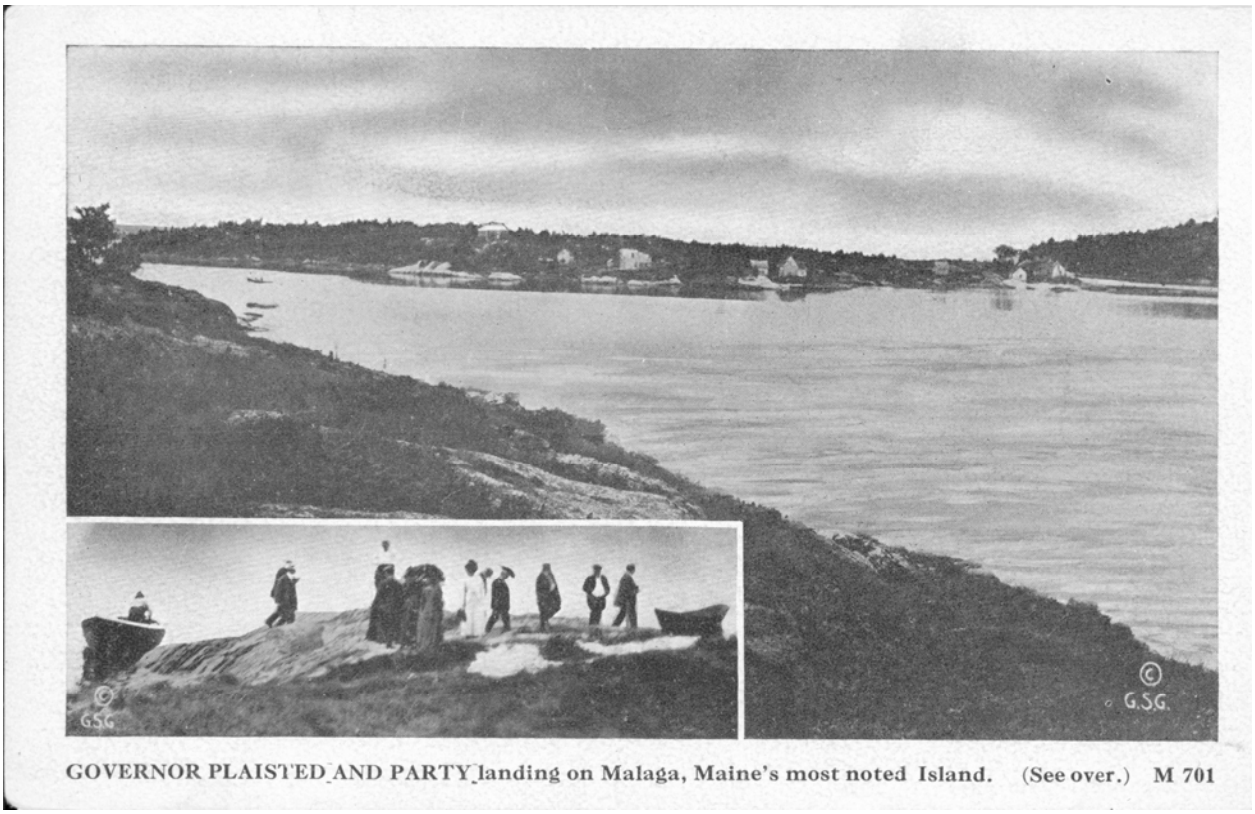
The Deuce of Spades postcard, circa 1908
Maine State Museum Collection

The notoriety of Malaga Island in statewide and regional newspapers gave Phippsburg a bad reputation, just as the tourism industry was beginning to grow in Maine. The stories of Malaga Island, and the actions of both the town of Phippsburg and State of Maine to evict the community, were reported throughout the New England region. Views of Malaga Island residents were popularly sold as postcards. Pictured here is Pearl Tripp (child) with an unidentified woman.

PLATE 17

Unidentified woman with children on Malaga Island, circa 1910
Courtesy of Peter K. Roberts

PLATE 18



Governor Plaisted and party landing on Malaga, Maine's most noted island postcard
1911
Courtesy of Maine Historic Preservation Commission

Governor Plaisted visited Malaga Island in 1911, along with his Executive Council, to see the island for himself. The governor reported he was encouraged by the progress of the children in school, but was not convinced the community would ever accept a middle-class style of living.

PLATE 19

Postcard, "Malaga Island, Maine. A portion of Governor Plaisted's party landing at the harbor of "Ex-King" Murphy." Inset: "The School on Malaga", circa 1912
Courtesy of Peter K. Roberts

PLATE 20

Button
circa 1900
Maine State Museum collection

PLATE 21

Fish hook
circa 1900
Maine State Museum collection

PLATE 22

Frozen Charlotte doll
circa 1890
Maine State Museum collection

PLATE 23

Head from a milks glass covered dish shaped like a chicken
circa 1905
Maine State Museum collection

PLATE 24

Fragment of a shell-edge decorated pearlware plate
1800s
Maine State Museum collection

PLATE 25

Lock
late 1800s
Maine State Museum collection

PLATE 26

Child's ring
circa 1900
Maine State Museum collection

PLATE 27

Decorated teacup
mid-1800s
Maine State Museum collection

PLATE 28

Ironstone plate
1800s
Maine State Museum collection

PLATE 29

Rockingham bowl
late 1800s
Maine State Museum collection

PLATE 30

Bowl
early 1900s
Maine State Museum collection

PLATE 31

Crock
late 1800s
Maine State Museum collection

PLATE 32

Spoon
1800s
Maine State Museum collection

PLATE 33

Malaga Island, Fragmented Lives exhibit
Maine State Museum
May 19, 2012 – May 26, 2013

PLATE 34

PLATE 35

PLATE 36

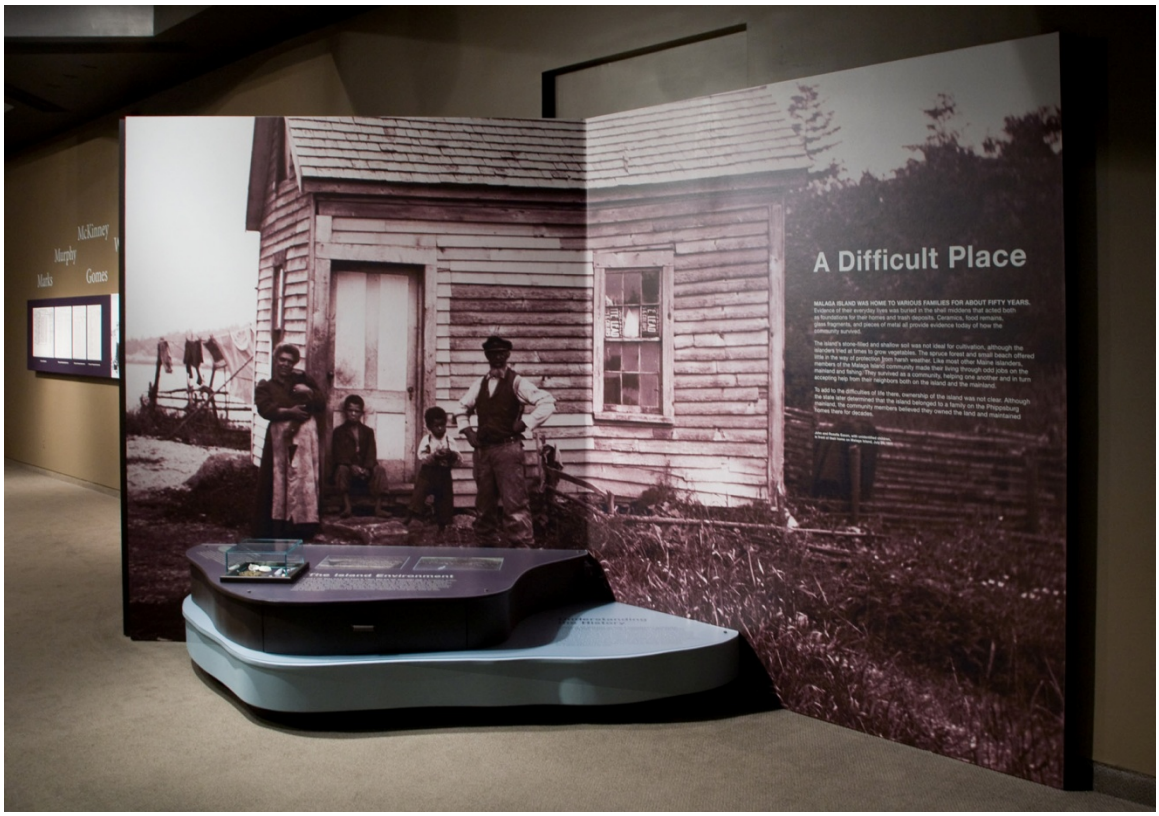


PLATE 37

PLATE 38

PLATE 39

PLATE 40

PLATE 41

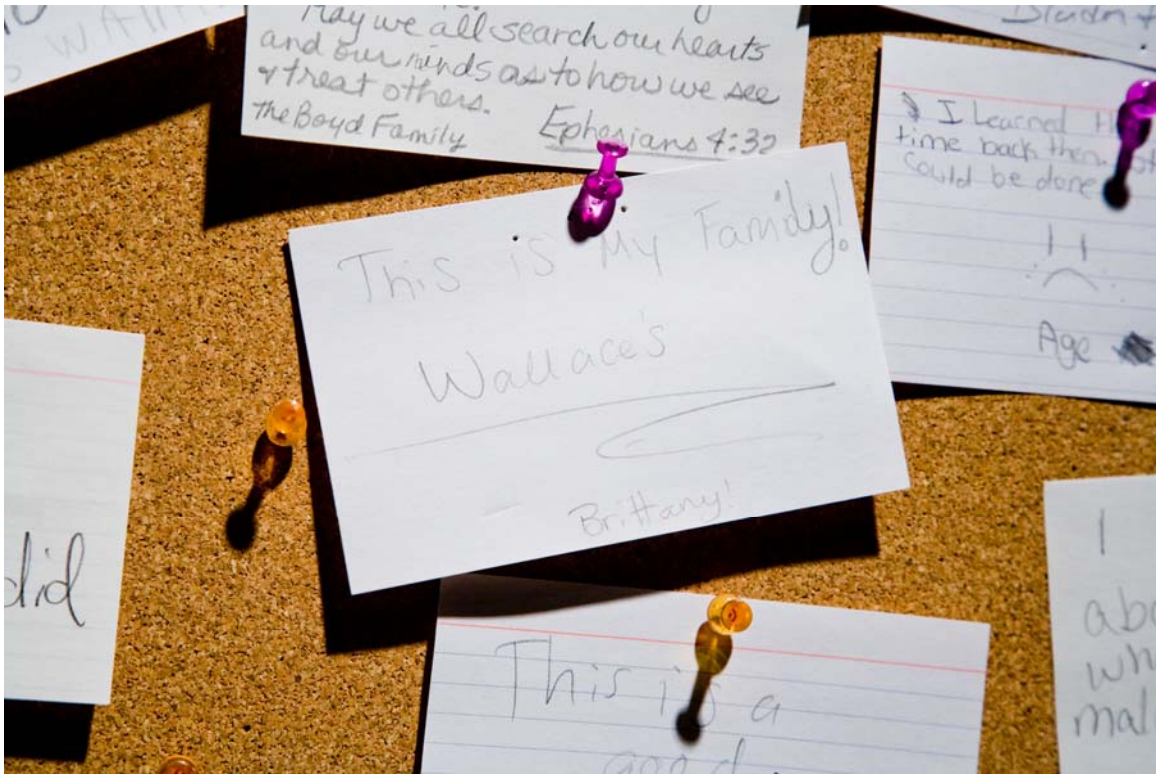
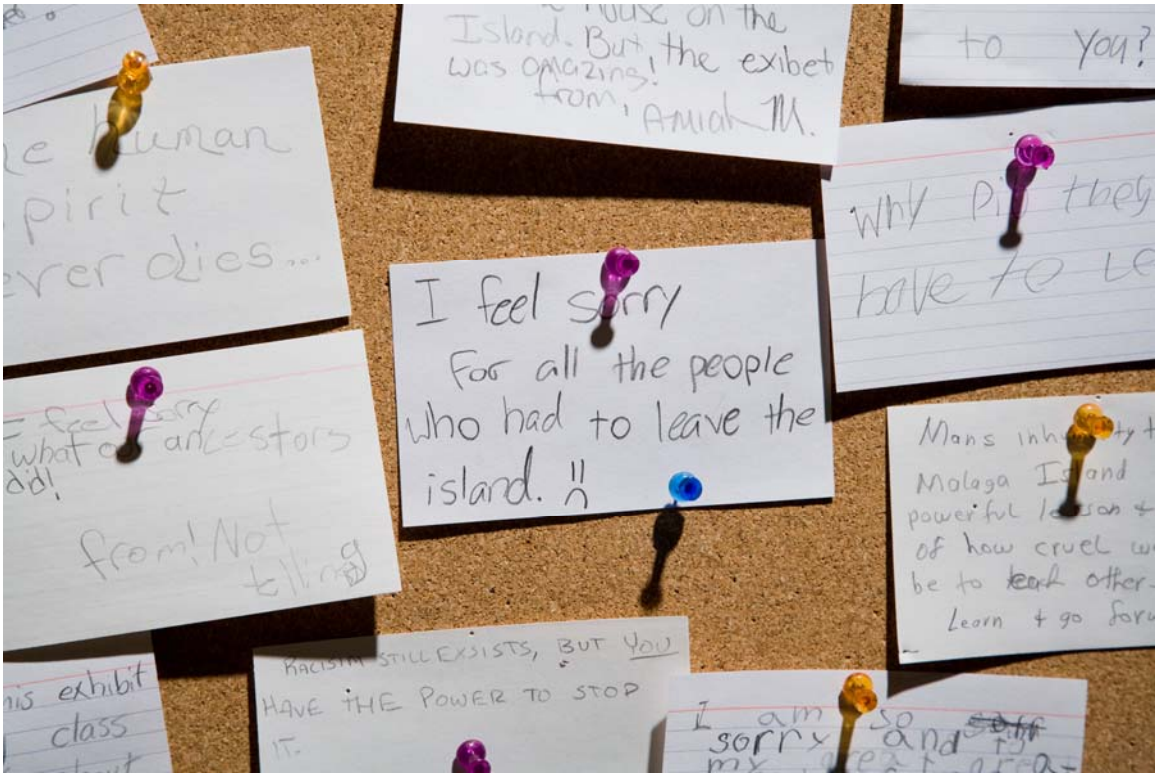


PLATE 42


I feel sorry
For all the people
who had to leave the
island.
RACISM STILL EXSISTS, BUT YOU
HAVE THE POWER TO STOP
IT.
I am
sorry
and
class

Timeline of the Malaga Island Community Eviction

1860s	Malaga Island community established. Henry and Fatima Griffin, with their family, were probably the first to settle on Malaga Island.
1865	The eugenics movement began in England. Advocates believed immoral and criminal behavior was hereditary.
1870s	Maine saw a drastic decline in the ship building industry, leading to a greater demand in seacoast communities for financial assistance. For example, 267 people received financial assistance from the town of Bath in 1872. Five years later that number increased to 600.
1880s	Beginning in the 1880s, Maine's fishing industry saw a dramatic decrease in fish stocks. For example, from 1885 to 1886, mackerel catches dropped from 124 million pounds to 30 million pounds.
1890s	The hotel and boarding house industry for tourists began to grow in the Phippsburg area.
1891	In a period of economic decline and greater financial needs, Phippsburg allotted $669.03 (2.7% of the total town budget) to support for the poor. Malaga Island residents accounted for more than 78% of that amount.
1903	Phippsburg petitioned the Maine State Legislature to declare Malaga Island within the town of Harpswell's borders, therefore making Harpswell responsible for financial support of the island's residents. The state declined the petition, declaring Malaga Island to be within the town of Phippsburg.
1905	The State of Maine took jurisdiction of Malaga and nearby islands. Malaga Island residents became wards of the state and under the jurisdiction of the Governor's Executive Council. The council hired George C. Pease of Phippsburg to act as state agent to oversee the supply of food, clothing, and medicine to the people of Malaga Island.
1906	Missionaries George, Lucy and Cora Lane from Malden, Massachusetts first visited Malaga Island. That same year, the Lanes opened a school in one room of the McKinney house. Eight students attended the first year; fourteen students the next year.
1908	A one-room school house was built on Malaga Island through private donations.
1908	The Maine School for the Feeble Minded opened in New Gloucester, Maine.
1909	Holman Day's article, "Queer Folk of the Maine Coast" appeared in *Harpers Magazine*, a national publication. The Malaga Island community was featured in the article.
1910	Real estate prices along Maine's coast were greatly on the rise. By 1910, nearly all of the islands near Malaga in the New Meadows River were privately owned as summer vacation homes.
1911	State Agent George C. Pease submitted a report using racist terminology to describe the various families living on Malaga Island. He recommended that the State of Maine purchase Malaga Island to "prevent people from settling, and turn off the undesirable ones." He then made recommendations as to methods of eviction, with no help for finding new homes. Some, he suggested, should be institutionalized. While not all of his recommendations were followed, many were. This report documents the state's view of the Malaga Island residents as a problem to be dealt with, not as individual people.
July 1911	Governor Plaisted visited Malaga Island, along with his Executive Council.

August 1911	Formally named as Malaga Island's legal owners, the Perry family heirs filed a lawsuit to evict the island residents. The Malaga Island Settlement Association tried negotiating a purchase of the island and an agreement was close before the Perry family changed their minds for unknown reason. Although the state determined the island belonged to the Perry heirs, researchers continue to have doubts about who held title to the island when it was sold.
December 1911	The Perry family sold Malaga Island to the State of Maine for $400. Governor Plaisted and his Executive Council ordered the eviction of the Malaga Island community.
December 1911	The state institutionalized members of the Marks family and Mrs. Anna Parker in the Maine School for the Feeble Minded, later known as Pineland.
1912	Publication of the popular Eugenics book *The Kallikak Family* by Henry Herbert Goddard. Goddard is credited with introduction of the term "moron" as well as an advocate of the use of intelligence tests in hospitals, schools, the legal system, and the military. He spent his childhood in Vassalboro, Maine.
June 1912	The State of Maine paid the Malaga Island residents for their homes, an average $100 per household.
July 1, 1912	The state set July 1st as the deadline for the eviction of Malaga Island. State agent George C. Pease arrived on the island that day to find that all residents had already left.
November 1912	Malaga Island cemetery remains were exhumed by the state and moved to the cemetery on the grounds of the Maine School for the Feeble Minded. The remains of 17 bodies were combined into 5 caskets and buried beneath a row of white markers.
December 1912	The state sold Malaga Island for $1,650 to Everard A. Wilson of Belfast, a friend of Dr. Gustavus C. Kilgore, the chair of the Executive Council. No one lived on Malaga Island after 1912.
1997	Lottie Marks Blackwell, the last surviving resident of Malaga Island, died at 103.
1998	Gerald Talbot, a former Maine legislator and past president of the NAACP Portland Branch, began an effort calling for an apology from the State of Maine for its actions regarding the African American community on Malaga Island.
2001	Maine Coast Heritage Trust purchased Malaga Island from T. Ricardo Quesada. MCHT now manages the island as a publically accessible nature preserve.
April 17, 2010	The 124th ME State Legislature passed a resolution recognizing with profound regret the state's actions in the displacement of the Malaga Island community in 1912.
September 12, 2010	At a dedication ceremony for the Maine Freedom Trails marker on Malaga Island, Governor John Baldacci formally apologized to the descendants of Malaga Island, on behalf of the State of Maine, for the eviction and ill treatment of their ancestors. Governor Baldacci was the first Maine governor to set foot on Malaga Island since Governor Plaisted in 1911.
May 19, 2012 – May 25, 2013	*Malaga Island, Fragmented Lives* exhibit on view at the Maine State Museum in Augusta, Maine.

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