

COVER STORY



Photos courtesy of BRIAN GOETZ

ABOVE, BELOW RIGHT: The view from the Oceanic Hotel on Star Island in Rye.

CATCHING *the last of* SUMMER

Star Island, Boston Harbor hotel are two spots for savoring the season



By PEGGY NEWLAND
 Correspondent

Summer goes too quickly for us in New England. Especially after eight months of snow, ice, electricity outages, and the sullen torment of spring mud and rain. I decided to add the month of September to my summer schedule and find some outposts of stolen sun, lobster boats, city harbors and rocky slabs of beachside solitude.

Star Island, Rye

I'm in a Fellini film. As my ferry from Portsmouth chugs away for the outlying islands of Appledore and Smuttynose, cheers begin by "the Pelicans" – college kids working the island for the summer. Pelicans jump up and down, blow bubbles toward the departing ferry, and dance along to themselves, no music needed. A girl, dressed in flowing purple scarves, dives expertly into the chill of the bay and comes up, laughing; she's a mermaid with scarf fins.

We file off, the load of us from the mainland, down the long pier, up toward the white clapboard of the hotel, with its wraparound porches and granite out-buildings. Someone blows a bugle from the cupola on the rocky outcropping as if to announce our arrival, and three women in goddess attire say, "Welcome."

It's September on Star Island, and I've found an island of castaway summer, even as the cicadas scream their warnings of fall.

IF YOU GO

STAR ISLAND: www.starisland.org. The Oceanic Hotel. 430-6272. Private cottages, motel rooms, and hotel lodging with shared bathrooms. Showers every other day in the bathrooms.

BATTERY WHARF HOTEL: www.batterywharfhotelboston.com. 1-877-794-6218. Ask for the "Keep the Catch Excursion," and bring your questions for Captain Fred. Includes waterfront-view room, a 2½-hour lobster adventure, and a lobster bake at your own private, outdoor fire pit. Captain Fred gives the tour Saturdays at 1 p.m.

The Oceanic Hotel – built in 1873 by John Poor, and then rebuilt in 1875 after a fire – is a throwback retreat "to the sea and for the spirit." With creaky floorboards, faded photos of heavy-skirted women and men in sailor caps, bedrooms with wide views and shared bathrooms, and a pink parlor with an upright piano, this is a place of stored memories.

Blackboards in the lobby explain the long lists of activities offered: Sunrise meditation, choir practice, yoga on the beach, yoga on the grass, drumming circles, open art barn, historical tours of gravestones, seal watch to Appledore, and organized rows across the harbor to the walking trails of Smuttynose. I decide to find a nook for the sunset and I pull a wicker rocking chair toward a group of women knitting scarves in shades of orange and pink. "Just like the

sky," one tells me, as we stare over the sea toward Portsmouth.

Lanterns are lit for the evening and the dusk is colored with fireflies. Taking a stroll past the granite cottages and a memorial statue for Captain John Smith (yes, that John Smith), I smile at a woman playing a homemade hand organ with a stuffed monkey duct-taped to her shoulder. Past the music barn, I nod at a man in cut-off jean shorts as he strums a ukulele. A choir from Michigan practices hymns in the rock church on the hill, and on a ledge, a woman in yoga pants twirls a baton loaded on both sides with water balloons.

"It's good exercise," she tells me as the water balloons slosh.

The next morning, I wake early and walk along the seaside paths, through a tunnel of twisted summer vine, and out to the rocks facing east. Others join, but we stay in silence, as we each find our own patch of ledge for the sunrise. Seagulls screech above us as the tide races into coves and backward, and it's an ocean symphony. The sun rolls its orange eye up from the horizon, and soon, it's warm – a gift of mid-September heat.

Then a bell tolls and someone shouts, "Coffee cake!" It's breakfast time and apparently, there's homemade coconut cinnamon cake, granola, bacon, fresh yogurt and unlimited coffee. But first, I grab a towel. It's time to jump off the dock and come up laughing. Perhaps I'll find the mermaid.

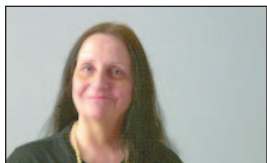
SUMMER | PAGE D-5

Agency's quest for clean rags recalls memories of 'Rag Man'

"The Rag Man would sit up on the buck board of his horse-drawn wagon and ride slowly through our street at least once a week. He would yell out in a monotone 'Rags, Rags.' He would take rags, newspapers, metal, tin, etc., and in turn pay you in cash what he felt the material was worth."

"Old Newark Memories," Charles McGrath, during World War II

A Mailbag reader with some slightly stained cotton cloth items asks if a group emulating this early recyclable movement is



CHRIS GRAHAM
 Chris' Mailbag

around today.

Seeking recycling source

"I figured if anyone in the area could answer this question, it would be you and your Mailbag readers. Is there any agency around that collects clean rags?" writes Diane W., of Nashua (LTR 3,222). "We have

several cotton articles of clothing with slight stains on them, so I wouldn't consider donating them to be worn, but I hate to discard them if they could be used for another purpose.

"I'm sure I'm not the only person who hates to throw away slightly stained clothes that could be put to good use by someone else. I know when I was a kid my mom knew someone who collected them, but that was a long time ago. Hopefully one of your readers can enlighten us."

"Enjoy your column! Thanks for any info you can share!"

If you can help Diane find an outlet, reach out to her at 402-1611.

Scooter lift offered

"I have, to donate for a disabled person, a lift for a scooter that was given to me," says Donna R., of Nashua (LTR 2,800). "It originally was for a Rascal scooter. It's mounted on a wooden base with wheels to be able to be moved from car to storage. I do not have any literature to go with it."

"It would have to be picked up, as both my husband and I are in wheelchairs. It is made to be attached to a car to

carry a scooter or possibly a wheelchair."

While a scooter provides mobility to places otherwise inaccessible, access to the scooter is the first step to getting out and about! If this lift would help you get around, call Donna at 882-3148.

Furnishing a home

"I am hoping you could include my husband and I in your column. We are moving into an apartment ... after being homeless for a few years," writes Bryanna B., of Nashua (LTR 3,223). "We need curtains, blankets, towels, wash-

cloths, and a washer and dryer (electric). If anyone would like to purchase a Market Basket gift card for food, it would also be greatly appreciated."

The Mailbag also received a request from Tammy T., mother of Bryanna's husband, Johnathan, regarding the couple's needs. It always helps to have a caring mom. If you can help, call the couple at 1-207-205-9716.

Starting over

"It's a long and painful story, but I'm starting over,

MAILBAG | PAGE D-2