



Photographer Biography

Ballard – Willis Humphreys Ballard (1906-1980)

“Bill”

Photographer

Father: George Robert Ballard (1875-1928)

Mother: Grace Thompson (Humphreys) Ballard (1875-1918)

Birth Date: December 20, 1906

Born at: Portland, Maine

Spouse Name: Blood: Ruth Farnham (Blood) Ballard (1909-1990)

Spouse Parents: Roy E. Blood and Lenore B. (Farnham) Blood

Wedding Date: October 10, 1931

Wedding Place - Maine

Occupation: Photographer: See: Anchor Light Studio

Childhood Home:

Home:

SWH: 066 Clark Point Road – Ballard

66 Clark Point Road, Southwest Harbor, Maine

Death Date: May 25, 1980

Death Place: Bar Harbor, Maine

Cemetery: Evergreen Cemetery, Portland, Maine

Children:

Ballard - Diane Eleanor Ballard (1932-2008)

Lawrence Farnham Ballard (1936-)

Born - April 18, 1936 - Southwest Harbor, Maine

Married - June 30, 1962 - Judith Irene Washburn of Brunswick, Maine

Divorced 1970/71

Married - September 11, 1976 - Gayle Elizabeth Boland of California (1948-2008)

See "W.H. Ballard Maine Photographer: A Life of Ingenuity & Art" Written and Edited by Meredith Hutchins, Designed and Produced by Charlotte R. Morrill, A Southwest Harbor Public Library Imprint, 2013.

Willis Humphreys "Bill" Ballard came to Southwest Harbor in 1934. A professional photographer for 43 years, he maintained his Anchor Light Studio at his home on Clark Point Road.

Bill was the son of a pharmacist and a sea captain's daughter. As a young man he served as purser on the Casco Bay Steamship Line. He then joined the Eastern Steamship Line, where he quickly became head purser.

Willis married Ruth Blood (1909-1990), daughter of Roy E. and Lenore B. (Farnham) Blood, on October 10, 1931 in Maine. He soon left the steamship line to study photography with his brother-in-law, Portland area photographer, Ralph F. Blood. In 1933, after the death of photographer Charles A. Townsend, he bought the Townsend business from Townsend's widow in Belfast.

Striking out on his own, Ballard settled in Southwest Harbor, where he opened his photographic studio in the small house on Clark Point Road that he designed in 1934. His grandson, Rob Michael writes, "The front door of the house was originally centered on the front facade as it was built as a true Cape. He used the living room for portrait work and found the location of the door to be a problem so late in the 1930's he had it moved to its present location. He then installed a permanent wooden rod across the living room with a heavy drape to provide a back drop for his portraits which was still in place when my mother sold the house in 1992. I spent many a session sitting there for family portraits."

Ballard's first commissioned work was for Thomas McIntire, owner of the Jordan Pond House, for whom he developed a line of scenic postcards, which were sold at the Pond House for five cents apiece. He designed an elegant photographic placecard and printed them for the McIntires to sell.

Bill Ballard printed each individual postcard himself by hand. He bought used equipment and built his own desk for making the prints, printing over 50,000 postcards. His family helped him to curl each postcard with a hand operated machine (a long forgotten, but necessary part of post card production).

While he earned his bread and butter from wedding, graduation and baby portraits, he most loved climbing the Mount Desert hills and exploring the Maine Coast with his heavy Graphlex camera and tripod. Ballard photographed Mount Desert Island's beautiful scenery for over 40 years.

During World War II, he served as civilian photographer on Army and Navy boatyard work in Southwest Harbor and nearby areas of Hancock County.

A man of great character, integrity and gentleness, he was also a perfectionist in his work. He developed his own black and white photographs and each was carefully inspected for dust, dirt or other flaws before being sold.

Ballard's work has appeared in such publications as The New York Times, Down East Magazine, Maine Coast Fisherman and yachting. It has been exhibited at Rockefeller Center, the Pan-American Exhibition and the University of Maine, among other places. It has also been purchased by area banks and public buildings for display* and has been bought by many private collectors.

In 1980 Willis was diagnosed with liver cancer and died on May 25, 1980. He left behind thousands of fine photographs of artistic and historic value. The Southwest Harbor Public Library owns many of these images. Mr. Ballard, a former Southwest Harbor Library trustee, gave the library many images, including copies of work done by earlier, often unknown, photographers along with many of Charles A. Townsend's prints and glass plates. In 1991 the library trustees purchased 1250 Ballard negatives of

Mount Desert Island scenes with \$6,600 from private donations. Since that time local residents and the Ballard family have kindly added to the Ballard Collection.

The Department of Art at the University of Maine exhibited a collection of Ballard photographs in January and February of 1967 in Orono, Maine. The show was titled, "The Maine Coast." Willis Ballard provided the following mini biography for the exhibition:

"I'm a native of the Deering district of Portland, Maine, and received my education there. I had a dash of salt in my veins, so, after graduation from studies, I took to coastal steam—shipping and was a ship's purser for four years, followed by three more in the company's Boston offices.

"I had nothing more than an amateur interest in photography, and did a little of my own processing from time to time. One day I photographed a burning yacht off the coast of New Jersey, and a New York City tabloid covered its entire front page with the print. Oddly enough, the experience didn't increase my photographic ardour, [Sic] and the \$10.00 fee failed to impress me enough to cause any desire for free lance work.

"When the coastwise shipping business commenced to show signs of waning, I left for Maine during 1933 to work for a few months with photographer, Ralph F. Blood of Portland, my brother-in-law, whom I have long considered as having the most discerning eye for a scenic view. I learned the valuable rudiments from him and, in early 1934, settled my family at Southwest Harbor and opened the Anchor Light Studio, where I still operate a general photographic business, specializing in landscape work, photographic postcards (of which I am sure I have hand-developed my first million), greeting cards, and publicity scenics. During World War 2, [Sic] I was a civilian photographer on Army and Navy boatyard work in my area of Hancock County. For some years, I was a member of the Photographers' Association of America, and a number of photographs were accepted for their annual exhibits."

Blood: Ralph Farnham Blood (1905-1972)
Townsend - Charles A. Townsend 1871-1932)
Charles A. Townsend, Photographer