
Introduction

O*h, That's Another Story: Images and Tales of Sag Harbor* recalls the memories of a 300-year-old industrial village and the inevitable waves of change that have forged a strong, resilient, sometimes raucous community. Sag Harbor is well loved by its residents and by vacationers who make it their second home. Five wars, four catastrophic fires, and recurring economic booms and busts have been met with persistence, goodwill, and the quick wit of local inhabitants. Over the long haul their efforts, individual mores and cultures have blended to create an environment that is diverse, respectful of tradition, and at the same time tolerant of strangers and new ideas.

With paintings of twentieth-century scenes and the daily banter of a lively community, we present the backstory of this lively village. Sag Harbor's tales are offered in the words of those we interviewed and are based on their personal memories. Every story has another version, one that has evolved and been embellished over decades of telling, and will be told again and again in new ways. We have heard other versions of some of these tales but honor and quote the people we talked to in person.

Our first thought of a book about Sag Harbor came to Whitney and me on a walk around our village. We were chatting about the amusing stories we had heard over the years and the fact that many of them might disappear as Sag Harbor, the gritty factory town, evolved into an upscale resort in the twenty-first century. In the next minute we had decided to collect as many of these tales by interviewing our friends and neighbors and combining them with Whitney's paintings in a book.

Whitney Hansen has been painting scenes of Sag Harbor since she came here in 1965. Her technique starts with a woodcut. The basic shapes are carved into a pine board and then colors are applied to each

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area. While the colors are still wet the design is printed on a sheet of textured rice paper, the grain of the wood leaving wavy patterns on the inked paper. The print is hung to dry on clotheslines strung about her studio. Whitney then adds color, texture and detail using fine brushes and oils and the print becomes a painting. The results are informal images of everyday life laid down in rich colors and layered texture. This loose, impressionistic style expresses the quirky character and patina of the rough factory buildings, small shops and old wooden houses of this three-hundred-year-old village.

Over the course of five years we have conducted fifty formal interviews with Sag Harbor residents, written and received emails, and listened well while in line at the post office. During several conversations a spouse or family member joined us and in a few instances we talked to groups of two or more people who were good friends. Sag Harborites are great talkers and sometimes the stories overlapped, which prompted more tales. They are generous, happy to tell us just about anything.

Well, not quite. If we touched on an unpleasant family spat, mentioned serious crimes, or scandal, the eyes would roll and we were met with, “Oh, that’s another story.” And the people of Sag Harbor are gracious, not just granting us time and faith, but also lunch or tea. It is their spirit and generosity that sustained the community through hard times, their cleverness and ingenuity that ensured the village’s survival. It is their legacy that people from elsewhere—from “away”—find so welcoming and it is their hard work that made Sag Harbor what it is today.

Alexandra Eames

Sag Harbor NY

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