

Introduction

This Anthology, this labor of love you hold in your hands, arose from a longing to capture the essence of a beloved place—before it was too late.

For Montauk was “having a moment.” The once off-the-radar hamlet had not only become more popular than anyone wanted it to be but was now a brand (the name of a beer, a line of furniture, a setting for TV romances). Dismay and nostalgia were in abundance, a fierce desire not to allow this unique place to be ruined by new money, noisy partying, or the pressures of growth. Suddenly everyone was talking about how they wanted the “old Montauk” back, the laid-back, non-glitzy, flipflop-and-sweatshirt Montauk, the Montauk where you could park in town on a summer day and afford a meal out.

Montauk felt more precious than ever. The time was right to reflect on what draws us to this place—the people, the stories, the meaning it holds on a deeply personal level. *Montauk: A Literary Celebration* does just that.

Surprisingly, before now, there has been no compendium of poetry, fiction, and essay focusing on Montauk, despite the fact that it has long been home to many writers and an inspiration to many who have visited. And in choosing the work for the book—whether new or already published, from well-known or debut authors, local or from far away—we saw emerge a mosaic of themes and subcultures that says “Montauk.”

The heart of the book is, of course, the sea. Its inherent danger is captured in three masterful tales: Dave Krusa’s “Winter Trip,” which recalls Conrad and Hemingway; Paul Tough’s harrowing story of fisherman John Aldridge overboard; and Tom Clavin’s riveting exploration of what led to the sinking of the *Pelican*. Russell Drumm, Kay

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Liss, and Alice Kaltman draw us into the culture and thrills of surfing, while the ocean is the muse for poets Susan Bruce, Jo Carney, Janet Sangenito Fagal, and Maureen Julian.

Others write of the land and nature (essayists Mariann Calendrille and Larry Penny, poets Bill Akin, Maggie Bloomfield, Stacy Donovan, and Audrey Morgan). Some reveal less-familiar aspects of the outdoors—horsebackriding (Ed Johann) and hunting (Cal Stewart)—or an inside peek at iconic places: the Lighthouse (Marge Winski, Lisa Michne, Stephanie Krusa), St. Therese’s church (Susan Dingle), Liars’ Saloon (Crystal Jarrett; Nancy LaGarenne), Gosman’s (Joseph O’Connor, Anna Lipin, Tom Oleszczuk). In Ann Podracky’s flash fiction and in the reminiscences of the rough-and-tumble Montauk of long ago (Bill Akin, Perry Duryea III, Sima Freierman, Virginia Garrison, Tim Gilmartin, Janis Hewitt, Patti Leber, and Debbie Tuma), Montauk’s history shines through.

Perhaps inevitably in a work dedicated to a place that’s facing tremendous pressure to change, a mournful tone is pervasive throughout (Céline Keating, Tony Knott, Joan Porco, Heidi Rain). But the sense of loss is tempered by humor (Jessica James, David Phenix, Michael Schenkler) and deep appreciation (Dave Davis, Gert Murphy, Patria Baradis Pacis, Evelyn Spiegler).

Arching above all is a sense of wonder at this tiny peninsula that holds near-mythic stature for those who love it, captured in the final essays by Tom Bogdan, on the meaning of Montauk, and Willa Johann. Sparked by watching Shakespeare performed at Third House under the stars, Johann’s essay ends the anthology on an ecstatic note, with Montauk as our very own “Midsummer’s Night Dream” of imagination and possibility.

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As a gift to this place we love so well and the struggle the next generations will have in preserving it, 100% of the royalties from the sale of this book will go to environmental educational programs of Concerned Citizens of Montauk and Third House Nature Center Inc.

Céline Keating

Ed Johann

Montauk, May 2016

