



The Jackson Laboratory

HIGHSEAS: AN ENDURING LEGACY

As Eva Van Cortland Hawkes looked out over a turbulent sea one morning, she chose a name for her home: “High Seas”. Years later, newcomers marvel at the magnificent view as they arrive for The Jackson Laboratory’s Summer Student Program, to begin ten weeks of research and discovery.

Professor Rudolph E. Brunnow of Princeton University built this mansion in 1912. The granite was quarried locally, but the tapestry bricks were bought in Philadelphia and shipped to Bar Harbor packed in boxes of straw. Bar Harbor craftsmen served on the building project as architect (Fred Savage), mason (John Preble), carpenter (Howard Marshall) and cabinet maker/finisher (Lester Hanson). Their work was solid and first-class, withstanding multiple tests of time and use.

Professor Brunnow has become part of Bar Harbor’s colorful past. Legend has it that Professor Brunnow laid out the Precipice Trail. He fell while mountain-climbing on the Precipice and was not found until the following morning. As a result of his injuries, he developed pneumonia and died at Highseas. Adding to the mystery of his past, locals prattled that he had been a spy for the Germans during World War I, keeping a secret room at Highseas for covert activities. These rumors were never substantiated.

In 1924, Mrs. Eva Van Cortland Hawkes purchased the mansion for \$25,000. Her family wealth came from the New York Central Railroad, the American Tobacco Company, and real estate holdings in New York City. She was a descendant of Gouverneur Morris, one of the signers of the Articles of Confederation. Her ex-husband, McDougall Hawkes, was an engineer who built the old Battery Park in New York. Their daughter had died at age thirteen from congenital defects. Mrs. Hawkes summered in Bar Harbor alone.

“ *Elegance in research comes from talented people; it is also very much fostered by the right working environment.* ”

– KENNETH PAIGEN

A large staff of servants attended Mrs. Hawkes in the home she called High Seas: a butler, two footmen, a downstairs maid, cook, kitchen maid, laundress, upstairs maid, personal maid, cleaning woman, chauffeur, night watchman, and gardener. Historians recount the scene of Mrs. Hawkes dining on a simple bowl of soup, served by her butler while a footman stood in the background. She enjoyed entertaining, and spared no expense: during World War II, she held parties for both the American and English navies while they were at anchor in Bar Harbor. Champagne flowed freely, and the Lobster Newburg was prepared in 30-gallon tins. Her caterer was always Mr. Wolf of Bar Harbor.

In 1947, the Bar Harbor fire only grazed Mrs. Hawkes’ summer home — the gardener kept the hoses on “the big house” throughout the crisis, and only the garage and butler’s house burned down. Mrs. Hawkes was ill in New York at the time, and never learned of the fire. Upon her death, three nephews inherited the estate, which they conveyed to



The Jackson Laboratory in 1951. Mrs. Hawkes' fondness for young people was evident; she had given most of her library to her gardener's daughter before the fire. Unfortunately, the books burned along with the gardener's apartment in 1947. The rest of Mrs. Hawkes' personal property went to the Philadelphia Museum, where there is a room set aside in her name.

Young people have benefitted from Mrs. Hawkes' legacy since 1951. Because Summer Students had been coming to Bar Harbor since the mid-1920s, it is impossible to overestimate how much of an improvement Highseas was for this program. As late as 1947, tent colonies had housed our students throughout their stay. The grandeur of an old residence may have been transformed into a casual residence hall, but future Nobel Prize winners and countless scientists-in-training have passed through Mrs. Hawkes' home in the past 66 years.

In a piece he wrote for a Jackson Laboratory publication, Professor Kenneth Paigen discussed the word "elegant" as the highest praise a scientist can bestow on a colleague. Elegant research implies innovative thought, expert execution, meaningful data and brilliant conclusions. "Elegance in research," Dr. Paigen wrote, "comes from talented people; it is also very much fostered by the right working environment."



One of the Summer Students' dormitory rooms

Every summer, 34 outstanding students from all over America arrive in Bar Harbor—uncertain of their futures, wondering if science will be a part of it. They work side-by-side with Jackson Laboratory scientists, and become familiar with the rigors and excitement of biomedical research as they work on a project that is theirs alone. They become friendly with a diverse community of students who share an ambition to change the world through biomedical research. And at days' end, an expansive view of Frenchman's Bay awaits the students at Highseas: from a balcony, a sitting room, or perhaps their own bedroom window. It is, somehow, symbolic. It is definitely inspirational. The Jackson Laboratory is privileged to be a part of this house's rich history, and we are delighted to share it with you.