

Capt. Albin Angell
Higgins Beach Lobsterman



By Rodney Laughton

Higgins Beach has been called home by many interesting people, but the memory of Al Angell has lived on, even now, some forty years after his death. He has been called a symbol for Higgins Beach and has become somewhat of a folk hero. He was certainly a beloved member of the community. This is evident in the warm smiles that appear on the faces of those who knew him as they reflect on their memories of "Cap Angell".

Albus R. Angell was born July 13, 1870 on Angell Avenue in South Portland. The street was named for his father who was one of the first to settle there. (It is off Shore Road near the Cape Elizabeth line.) Al was educated in local schools and as a young man held a variety of jobs. For a short time he was the assistant light house keeper at Spring Point Light in South Portland. He worked for the Cumberland County Power and Light Company and he helped build the concrete foundations for gun placements at Fort Williams, and Fort Preble. He even worked as a motorman for the local trolley line. It should be noted that he was a charter member of the Willard Hose Co. in South Portland. (This was an era when local fire departments were being established.)

In 1912 at the age of 42 he answered the call of the sea and followed in the footsteps of his father and brother deciding to make a living as a fisherman. He bought a small cottage on Vesper Street, which he named "Havachat". His trap line extended from the mouth of the Spurwink River to Richmond Island. In his prime he tended 100 traps that extended some 8 miles. This was no easy matter, he rowed his dory and pulled his traps by hand without the aid of a mechanical winch or motor of any kind. He had a ready market for his catch from the Summer visitors to this community. He lived at the beach year round, fishing from April to December. He spent the rest of the year building and repairing traps. He also made decoys, some of which remain as treasured possessions of those who own them.

Ray Lynch reminisced of Al's, 80th birthday. It was a surprise party, held at the original Higgins Beach Club House; the building known as The Ledges today. Ray and his friend Ken Colby went to Al's house on the pretense of taking him out for a ride, but they turned in by the store and many of Al's friends and neighbors were there to greet him. A small band played on the stage and Al was given a chair in the middle of the dance floor where everyone took turns giving gifts and expressing their good wishes. Ray said when they escorted him home there were presents on his doorstep left by those who could not attend the party. One of Cathy Kennedy's childhood memories of Al Angel concerned a kiss on the cheek that he gave her each spring when she arrived for the season with her parents from Massachusetts. It was a kiss that as a child she did not like for Al usually needed a shave and his whiskers were stained with tobacco juice! She also remembered seeing a small room in his cottage that he called "my lady's room". It had been his wife's room and he had kept it as a sort of shrine to her. This old man of the sea had kept her hair brush, comb and other personal affects just as she had left them before her death. She was the former Eliza Ingalls from Prince Edward Island. Steve Dougherty recalled buying five lobsters for \$1.00 and he mentioned that Al also kept a supply of clams for sale. When an order for lobsters was placed a specific time was arranged for pickup and Al would fetch the lobsters fresh from the river where he kept them in a submerged pound.

Al had a boat house on the marsh near Kent Street and for many years this was the only structure in that area. It has been remodeled into a cottage and is surrounded by other cottages giving no notice of its former duty. The creek in that area is commonly known as Angell's Creek.

He was photographed by Eastern Illustrating, and the photos produced as post cards. These photos are the most common of him and show up quite regularly at flea markets and antique paper shows.

Shortly before his death he was featured in an article by the Portland Newspapers. In that article he stated that the largest lobster he had ever caught weighed 19 pounds and he had sold it for \$3.

Al Angell had lived at Higgins Beach for forty years, he was laid to rest in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, South Portland.

