



Sound Waves

A Monthly Newsletter from Save Our Sound

AUGUST 2026

Alliance News & Notes



One of the questions we are asked most often is, "What exactly is a National Historic Landmark?"

It's an important question because **National Historic Landmark** (NHL) designation is at the heart of the Alliance's mission. Simply put, it is the highest level of historic recognition awarded by the federal government to places that possess exceptional value in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. Fewer than 2,700 places nationwide have earned this distinction, each recognized for its outstanding historical, cultural, architectural, or natural significance.

Here on the Cape and Islands, we are fortunate to be home to several National Historic Landmarks that reflect the region's rich history and enduring national significance. The **Kennedy Compound** in Hyannis Port, a six-acre waterfront estate that served as President John F. Kennedy's beloved summer retreat was formally declared an NHL in 1972. On Martha's Vineyard, **Wesleyan Grove** in Oak Bluffs preserves one of the nation's finest collections of colorful nineteenth-century "gingerbread" cottages, while the **Flying Horses Carousel**, also in Oak Bluffs, is the oldest operating platform carousel in the United States. Just across Nantucket Sound, the entire **island of Nantucket** was designated an NHL in 1975 in recognition of its extraordinary maritime history, remarkable architectural preservation, and unique cultural landscape.

We believe Nantucket Sound deserves to stand alongside these nationally recognized places. The Sound is an irreplaceable part of our nation's story, shaped by centuries of maritime history, the enduring cultural traditions of the Wampanoag Tribes, thriving coastal communities, commercial and recreational fishing, and one of the most ecologically important marine environments in all New England.



While the process to achieve NHL designation requires patience and persistence, we remain steadfast in our commitment to the permanent protection of Nantucket Sound. I am confident that we'll get there together.

We are able to continue this vital work thanks to the generosity of our supporters, whose donations make our research, advocacy, outreach, and education possible. If you have not already done so, we encourage you to **make a tax-deductible gift** to support our ongoing efforts. With your help, we will secure the lasting recognition and protection that Nantucket Sound deserves.

Thank you for believing in our vision to preserve this remarkable place for generations to come. I hope you enjoy the rest of your summer.

Warm regards,

Audra Parker

President & CEO

A SUMMER OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



It's been a busy and rewarding summer for the Alliance as we've had the opportunity to connect with supporters across the Cape and Islands who share our commitment to protecting Nantucket Sound.

Following a wonderful gathering earlier this summer at the **Nantucket Yacht Club**, we were delighted to welcome friends and supporters to **Nauticus Marina** on Cape Cod for an evening of conversation on a beautiful July night. These events provide an invaluable opportunity to meet with community members, answer questions about our work, and share updates on our ongoing efforts to secure **National Historic Landmark** designation for Nantucket Sound.

Whether speaking with longtime supporters or introducing new people to our mission, these gatherings remind us how deeply the Sound is valued by those who live, work, and recreate on its waters. Every conversation helps build awareness, strengthen our coalition, and reinforce the importance of permanently protecting this nationally significant cultural and historic landscape.



We're looking forward to continuing these conversations at our upcoming event in Hyannis Port this August and thank everyone who has joined us this summer to support our efforts. Together, we are building a stronger voice for the permanent preservation of Nantucket Sound.

The photos featured here were taken during our Summer Gathering at **Nauticus Marina**. We invite you to visit our website (www.saveoursound.org/gallery) and view the full photo gallery -- and relive highlights from a memorable evening with friends and supporters of Nantucket Sound.



Sound Spotlight



*This month, we put a spotlight on novelist and essayist **George Michelsen Foy**. George is the author of fourteen novels, including his latest, *The Winterpoor* (released in September 2025). His non-fiction has been published in *Harper's*, *Rolling Stone*, *The New York Times*, *Men's Journal*, and *Slate*. His latest non-fiction book was "Run the Storm." Other non-fiction works include *Finding North: How Navigation Makes Us Human* and *Zero Decibels: The Search for Absolute Silence*. George was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in fiction as well as prizes in *Epiphany Literary Journal*, *Cutthroat Journal's*, *Fiction Factory's* and *Forward's* fiction contests. At various times in his career, he worked as a factory-hand, agricultural laborer, commercial fisherman, and as chief cream-pastry transporter for a cakes factory in West London. He was*

educated at the Sorbonne, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and Bennington College. A former officer on British coastal freighters, he teaches creative writing at New York University, and holds a US Coast Guard coastal captain's license.

1. What does Nantucket Sound mean to you?

The simplest answer is home. My brother and I were born in Cape Cod Hospital, quite literally a stone's throw from Hyannis harbor; one of those family stories is my mother's fond tale of looking out the window at the cranberry bogs while I was getting introduced to the world; and I can't help feeling the Sound soaked into my bones as a result. Though we moved around a lot as kids, our ideal of home was that mix of pine needles, sand, beach plum and salt marsh—the smell of resin, mud, seaweed—among which we swam and floated around in rowboats and sailed. Beach-combed as well, or pretended we were Arctic explorers when ice floes built up in the bays, in winter. Our family home has always been near the Sound.

2. What are your favorite spots to visit in and around Nantucket Sound?

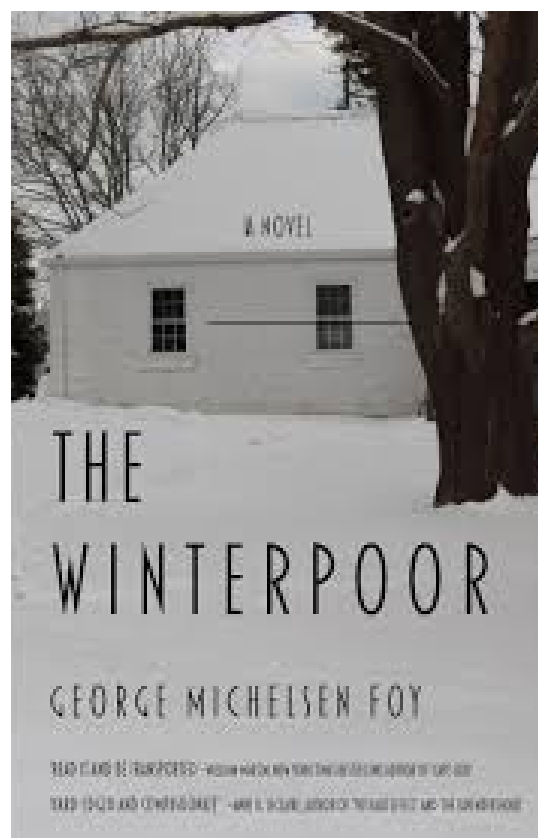
It's hard to beat Cotuit Bay. I live nearby now and probably my favorite place is off Sampson's Island, especially in the off-season; it's a little bit of barrier-beach wilderness (an Audubon bird sanctuary as well) to offset the encroachment of well-heeled sea-burbia. But I sail in the Sound enough to be familiar with, and even (sort of) love, the shoals: like Horseshoe Shoal, which we used to fish; Eldridge and Wreck, that I thread to and from the Vineyard, if I'm not running west of Succonessett, where the tide runs clear as green glass over the sand only four feet below the boat's keel. Of course I don't like the shoals so much when the wind gets snotty and you really don't want to find yourself too close to the breakers, with the tide running hard. I should

mention the scraps of salt marsh you find at the mouth of Little River, in parts of West Bay, where sea, air and land creatures meet—raccoons, herons, sandpipers, fiddler crabs, killifish, quahogs; it's partly what my last novel was about.

3. Your books often explore themes of navigation, silence, and survival. What is it about these ideas that resonates so strongly with you?

While I was interviewing him for one of my books a biologist told me, "The prime characteristic of life is not metabolism, it's movement. All living things move." To move usefully means to find out where you're going, which in turn means navigating: to find out where you're going, you have to know where you are. This is the joy and pain of being human: we seldom know exactly where we are, in all sorts of ways, so we must navigate to find out. (Which is why occasionally you'll find me on Loop Beach, in Cotuit, trying to shoot the sun with a sextant). Unfortunately, we are being tricked by tech giants into trading these basic skills for ease, as GPS, AI, bots and smartphones take over our exploration functions.

So many people now have no idea where they are in the most physical sense—they rely on their smartphone and Google Maps to tell them; they stop looking, listening, exploring. The reason I'm interested in silence boils down to the same thing: we are entertained, brutalized, dumbed down by endless noise, physical and informational; whereas finding out about the world and our place in it means being able and willing to listen. Which means, in turn, absence of noise: in other words (relative) silence. And coming full circle to the Sound, when the noise and confusion of Route 28 get too much, I can walk along Craigville Beach; or sail to Nantucket and hear nothing but sea and wind as—fanatically ignoring chart displays—I try to stay east of Halfmoon Shoal. I know this sounds overly romantic, but I don't think it is. Looking and listening are basic to our species. Sorry to go on for so long—you did ask!



4. What can readers expect from your last book *The Winterpoor*? Where did the inspiration for writing it come from?

Real people: year-round locals trying to survive in the Cape's boom-bust economy. I wrote the novel because I wanted to give voice to the life-forms, both human and animal, who don't get much publicity compared to the beach-blanket-bingo clichés of the Cape and Islands: in the book you'll find a print-maker, estranged from his wife, forced to work for a waterfront museum that serves as a fig-leaf for cynical developers; a tidal creek off Hyannis Harbor, once full of eels, seahorses, scallops, slowly being strangled by nitrate pollution. Raccoons. A town planner. Arctic terns. A homeless Norwegian. A mentally disabled boy. These are all based, in one form or other, on a whole cast of characters I know or have known on the Cape's southside, and other living creatures of Nantucket Sound. It sounds like a troop of losers, but they are not. They're survivors, and the book is kind of optimistic in that it shows how they keep going.

5. You've had an incredibly varied career. Of all the jobs you've held, which one surprised (or taught) you the most?

I have had a lot of jobs, but one I remember in particular was in a factory in North London, where I operated a vacuum press that molded plastic 3-D calendars with raised squares on which you fitted square shapes to mark date and month. It was a classic, Charlie-Chaplin-in-*Modern Times* kind of dumb, repetitive work, but I loved it because my coworkers were, every one of them, so damn nice. Instead of rebelling against the system that made them do this they rallied together to help each other, sharing lunches, chatting over tea, punching each other's timecard if one was late (it was the first time in my life I had to clock in). I didn't want to leave that job, but I'd been hired on a temporary basis.

6. What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Interesting question. In a sense, as a writer who's always looking around observing and thinking about what he's writing or might write next, I don't have "spare" time. For instance, I virtually never travel for the sake of tourism. Once I've seen this cathedral or that museum I'm saying to myself, "OK, fine, done that, I want to get back to work." Often what I see outside the research ends up in what I write anyway. Four years ago, I went to the Dodecanese Islands in Greece because a good friend had been inviting me for over twenty years. I ended up using her island, Symi, to start another book. I draw a lot (I used to be a political cartoonist, for the late-lamented Register newspaper), but somehow that seems to sprout from the same soil as writing, since it's based on observation of people and things to draw that, yet again, tend to end up in my books. Even sailing, which I do a fair bit of, is a form of research because it's both my other trade (I used to be watchkeeping officer on a tramp freighter, and a commercial fisherman) and because seafaring is a life-discipline that deeply informs my work.

I wrote a book about navigation that argues finding your way is the most important of basic life-skills and I believe that. Still, there is stuff I do that isn't writing or research, and my absolute favorite, and what makes me happiest, is hanging with one or both of my kids (and a couple of new kittens). Second: seeing friends. Third has to be reading, although that's more of a necessity for any writer; and I'd have to add, running in the woods of the Eagle Pond sanctuary in Cotuit, or walking Meadow Point, Crocker Neck—we are lucky to live near sanctuaries like these. A long way fourth come skiing, watching movies, drinking wine, eating or cooking good food ... that kind of thing.



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