

7 Key Insights From The York Harbor Cottage Project

1. **Big did not survive.** The largest of the cottages, mostly located on Eastern Point, were more prone to fires and economic downturns. They were some of the first cottages to go.
2. **Hidden in plain sight.** At first, it appeared that much of the information about the cottages of York Harbor, their owners and architects had been lost. However it was there – but in a very fragmented form. The challenge was to aggregate and to re-establish the connections that had been lost. The context was missing. We needed to compare York Harbor to other summer colonies, the nature of business that the cottages owners were engaged and the understanding of what the architects were designing at the time.
3. **Architecture is organic.** The initial designs for the cottages took advantage of the ocean views and cool air of the coast of Maine. A social transformation was unfolding that allowed for more open floorplans and large wrap-around porches. The first cottages were designed in a simple, informal style. The later cottages (River Cottage by Guy Lowell and Millbury Meadows by John Russell Pope) took on a more formal posture and represented 'social islands.'
4. **The summer colony as a system.** The owners and the architects in York Harbor, as in other summer colonies, had a number of underlying business and social eco-system. These systems provided established relationships that allowed the colony to operate.
5. **Lobster and Lawyers, both found on the coast.** The York Harbor Colony had a disproportionately high number of lawyers as summer residents. When a large number of lawyers are put into a confined space, the results are predictable.
6. **Many famous architects – but one that dominated.** This research has uncovered more than 27 architects or architectural firms that did designs in York Harbor during this timeframe. However, EB Blaisdell, the local architect was responsible for more than 60+ cottages, churches, clubs or other structures. Beyond his talent, Blaisdell had the willingness to work and learn from other famous architects and this made his designs better. He grew up, married, ran a business and was embedded in the York community. He had a passionate interest in seeing the colony succeed. Other architects did one-off projects for their clients and moved on.
7. **Citizen Historian – a new model.** In the past historical research was done by an individual with a financial grant. Today technology has enable a wider group of people with different backgrounds, to work on gathering information in a 'crowdsourcing' approach to research.