

CAPE ANN Museum

Cape Ann landscape inspires *Learning to Swim* exhibition at Cape Ann Museum Green

Exhibit on display from August 14 through September 12, 2021



[Right] Elaine Wing, Niles Beach, 1995, oil on canvas, Gift of Robert L. and Elizabeth French, 2009 (2009.51.19). [Middle] Joy Halsted, Cold Water #1, 2010, acrylic on canvas, gift of the artist, 2016 (2016.051.1). [Left] Doris Prouty, Lanes Cove. 2017. Applique quilt. Lent by the Prouty Family.

GLOUCESTER, Mass. (August 2021) – Cape Ann has many places to learn to swim -- beaches, harbors, quarries, ponds, and swimming pools. Generations of people on Cape Ann have swum in these waters and generations of artists have depicted them. As summer in New England continues, the iconic pastime is getting an interactive celebration through the lens of painters and photographers.

[Learning to Swim](#) is an exhibition that pairs an interactive map where locals can share their memories of learning to swim with artwork and archival photographs from the Museum's collection that depicts these popular swimming spots. Opening at the Cape Ann Museum Green's Janet & William Ellery James Center on August 14, the exhibit will run through September 12. Paintings by Joy Halsted, Elaine Wing, Norma Cuneo, Jessica Tam, Bernard Chaet, Jeff Weaver, and Dorothy Arnold look at the water through the lens of an artist while photographs from the Museum's archives capture the joy of swimming through the ages.

"The landscape of Cape Ann is defined by granite and water," said Oliver Barker, the Museum's Director. "For many residents, one of their earliest memories is where they first learned to swim, and we are excited to engage this community and showcase their stories through this exhibit."

During the mid-19th century, swimming became popular in the country and on the North Shore. Prior, beaches were often viewed as dangerous spots, where shipwrecks washed ashore, pirates landed, and hurricanes struck. That perception changed as urbanization spread, leisure time expanded, and transportation improvements allowed people the means to get to a beach or a lake. Social norms also changed, making it increasingly proper for men and particularly women to reveal their bodies, or at least suggestions of their bodies.

On Cape Ann, public access to the water has always been a concern -- and a prerequisite for learning to swim. For decades, town landings and community footpaths have been threatened by encroachments

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and abutters intent on privacy. Today, it is not just privacy concerns that are imperiling the chances of learning to swim and being able to enjoy swimming at our pleasure. Increasingly climate change is figuring into the equation with rising sea levels and strengthening storm surges eating away fragile coastal habitats, flooding beaches and access areas. This exhibit hopes to raise awareness and encourage the Cape Ann community to think about what can be done to safeguard those special places where people learned to swim so that future generations can continue to enjoy this pastime on Cape Ann.

On Aug. 13, the Museum will host an opening party for the exhibition, and members of the new Teen Arts Council will work with attendees to do self-portraits for the forthcoming *Quilted Together: An Exhibit of Community Portraits* at CAM Green's Janet & William Ellery James Center beginning Sept. 24. More than 300 drawings have been collected for the show which runs through Nov. 5.

For more information about the exhibit and other events happening at the Cape Ann Museum, visit www.capeannmuseum.org.

The Cape Ann Museum, founded in 1875, exists to preserve and celebrate the history and culture of the area and to keep it relevant to today's audiences. Spanning 44,000 square feet, the Museum is one of the major cultural institutions on Boston's North Shore welcoming more than 25,000 local, national and international visitors each year to its exhibitions and programs. In addition to fine art, the Museum's collections include decorative art, textiles, artifacts from the maritime and granite industries, three historic homes, a Library & Archives and a sculpture park in the heart of downtown Gloucester. In Summer 2021, the Museum opened the 12,000 square foot Janet & William Ellery James Center at the [Cape Ann Museum Green](#). The campus also includes three historic buildings – the White Ellery House (1710), the recently acquired Babson-Alling House (c.1740), and an adjacent Barn (c. 1740), all located on the site at the intersection of Washington and Poplar Streets in Gloucester. CAM Green is open Thursday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and Sunday 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 pm.

The Cape Ann Museum is located at 27 Pleasant Street in Gloucester and is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission is \$12.00 adults, \$10.00 Cape Ann residents, seniors and students. Youth (under 18) and Museum members are free. Cape Ann residents can visit for free on the second Saturday of each month. For more information please call (978)283-0455 x110 or visit www.capeannmuseum.org.

For a detailed media fact sheet please visit www.capeannmuseum.org/press.

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