
Letters From New England

October 4, 2009

From Fish to Beans



There was something magical about the light. Eastern shore, Gloucester, Massachusetts

We left Gloucester on Sunday – a grey overcast morning – and set out for Freeport. But not before circling over to the Eastern shore to take a look at the water. We almost didn't leave Gloucester that day: there was something magical about the light.

One summer, years ago, I traveled up the New England Coast shooting pictures wherever I found them. Gloucester provided more photos than any other location. While there, I stayed at a small motor inn called the *Anchorage*, which was located just a stone's throw from the harbor. Standing on the back deck in the very early morning I



took this picture. Notice the rocky ledge in the center: there's a house sitting on it now! I suppose the fishing is good.

The harbor was a busy place during the day. Depending on their size, boats were either scurrying about like water scooters on a pond, or lumbering their way to and from berths to off load their cargoes of fish, or head out to sea for another catch. The noisiest component was not the boats or the dock machinery, but the gulls. Big and quar-

relsome and ready to let the next bird know who was boss on this dock or rooftop.



Today the fishing industry represents only about fifteen percent of Gloucester's economy. The fish are no longer out there and what's left are protected by strict regulations that limit both the catch and the season. It is very difficult to make a living fishing out of Gloucester nowadays.

We got to Freeport in time for our seal cruise among the islands of the Casco Bay, but the cruise was cancelled for lack of interest – not ours: theirs. And *unfortunately* the only thing left to do was to go shopping at LL Bean's.

Several hours later (I believe it was close to 8:00 PM) and several dollars shorter, we began looking for something to eat, and found a great tavern – Jameson's – right next door. Ann's chowder was so thick with clams she could eat it with a fork. Turns out that in 1820, Jameson's Tavern was the place where the final papers were signed separating the province of Maine from Massachusetts, and bringing Maine into the Union as one-half of the *Missouri Compromise*.

Tomorrow we're headed to the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath, just about a half hour's drive East of Freeport.

Garrett (with Ann)

