

# Escape Road

TO BLOCK ISLAND

SUMMER

YOUR  
GUIDE  
TO  
BLOCK  
ISLAND

2024

## **Escape Road to Block Island, an Introduction**

**Some say that a vacation starts the moment you make the booking. It exists in your mind as a time apart – an escape from the demands of everyday life. Perhaps that’s why the road to Point Judith, where the Block Island ferry leaves from, is called “The Escape Road.” (Yes, that’s its real name.)**

**While any vacation is an escape - a time set apart - an Island vacation is something more. It is time set apart, in a place that is, itself, set apart. And that, I think, is what makes time on the Island so magical. Let me explain. Block Island is 13 miles off shore in the Atlantic Ocean. The air is different, cooler. The pace is different, slower. And the Island itself – with its magnificent birds and wildlife, vibrant sunrises and sunsets, green fields and sandy beaches that sprawl uninterrupted for miles – enchants visitors and locals alike. The Island evokes in us an altered way of being. This altered state is often referred to as being on “Island Time.”**

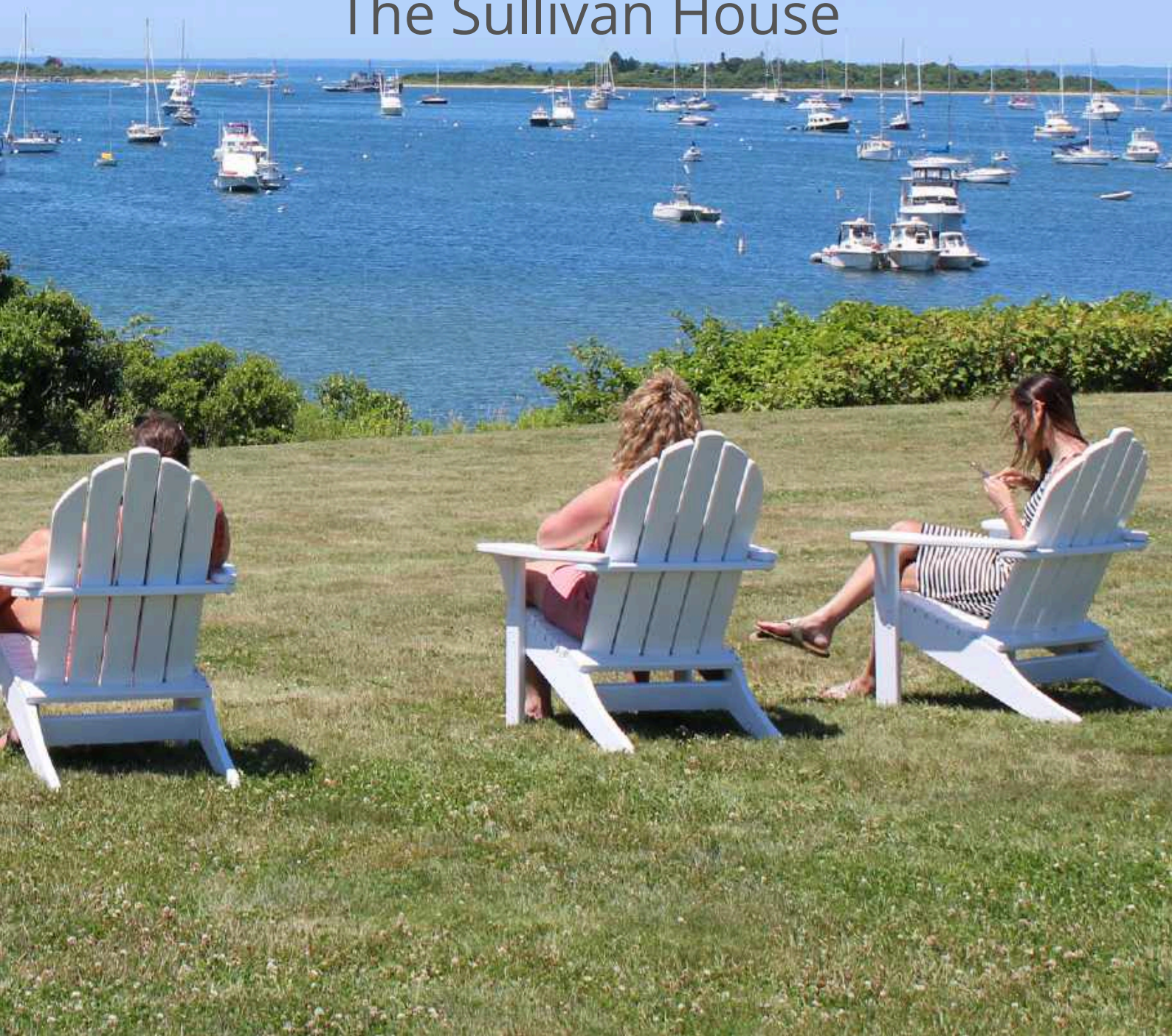
**Island Time means different things to different people. The official definition, if there were such a thing, might be something like this: time spent surrounded by the sea which alters the human condition. Some people affected by Island Time report being overcome by the urge to do nothing but relax while others experience a surge of energy resulting in behaviors such as kayaking, biking, hiking and swimming. Most report having deeper sleep and richer dreams.**

**Whatever Island Time means to you, this guide is designed as an invitation to summer activities that both Islanders and visitors enjoy. It is, of course, only an introduction. In the end, you will find your own path and discover your own way of being on Island Time.**

**Rosalie O’Brien Kivlehan  
The Sullivan House**



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## Part I

### What to Do

Block Island is an outdoor adventurers' paradise. We've selected our favorite experiences for this guide – including going to the beach, kayaking, hiking and biking. But this is just the beginning - there's also horseback riding, sunset sails on Great Salt Pond, fishing charters, surfing lessons, and much more. Just ask us; we are happy to help you plan your Island adventure.

#### **Beach Bumming – Crescent Beach**

Block Island is famous for its pristine beaches. Its main beach, Crescent Beach, is 2.5 miles of white sandy paradise. The heart of Crescent Beach, the Fred Benson Pavilion, is located at the base of The Sullivan House property. Guests can rent their beach chairs and towels, provided by the The Sullivan House, and walk with ease to one of New England's best beaches. And the beach is not only for daytime fun; in the summer, guests enjoy Wednesday night Blues on the Beach sessions (see Events section).

#### **Kayaking – Great Salt Pond**

There's nothing as peaceful as gliding through the waters of the Great Salt Pond in a kayak or Stand Up Paddle Board. Largely sheltered, the Great Salt Pond offers ideal conditions for beginner and seasoned kayakers alike. The marshy waterways in front of The Sullivan House are home to a variety of magnificent wildlife including egrets and herons. Moving into the main waters of the Great Salt Pond, kayakers get a close up view of yachts and boats of all kinds that anchor in the harbor. Explore other areas of the Great Salt Pond like beautiful Andy's Way, the Beane Point Bird Sanctuary and the recreational waters on the northern side of the Pond.

The Sullivan House has private, on-site access to Great Salt Pond. We provide our guests with a unique opportunity to explore the beautiful waterways of Block Island by kayak or paddle board.

#### **Hiking – Greenway Trails**

There are approx. 25 miles of hiking trails that are open to the public, free of charge. Many of these trails take in spectacular vistas – either walking along the coast and looking out to sea or wandering inland trails that give a unique perspective on the Island's wildlife and plants. Full color maps of all 28 trails are available (\$2) at the Tourist Office in Old Harbor and at the Nature Conservancy Office on High Street.

#### **Biking – The Block Island Bicycle Tour**

Block Island was made for biking – it even has an official bike tour which takes in the whole Island. The 16 miles of bike trails encompass "the Neck" to the north of the Island and the loop of the whole West Side. If 16 miles sounds like too much of a trek, break up the tour over a few days. The Sullivan House provides guests with bikes for rent and maps of bike routes – all the tools you need to explore the main streets and back roads of Block Island.



## Part II

### What to See

#### *Sites “Down the Neck”*

*At the bottom of The Sullivan House road, take a left and head “down the Neck” which is an enchanted area of pristine sandy beaches and beautiful woodland walks. There is a Food Truck on the left before you hit the entrance to Scotch Beach.*

#### **North Light, Settlers’ Rock & Sachem Pond**

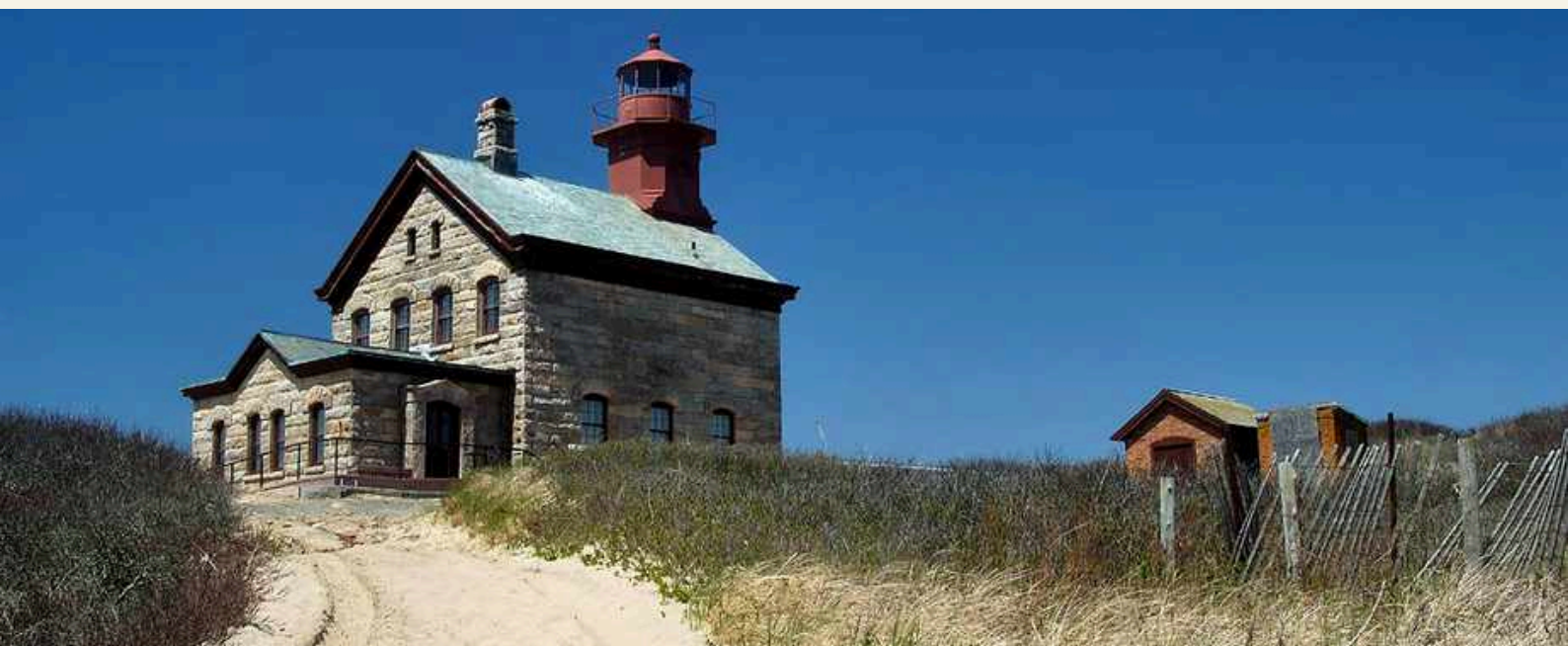
At the northern-most point of the Island is the **North Light**. Leave your car or bike in the parking lot and walk the beach to the lighthouse. Built in 1867, the lighthouse is made of granite and iron. When open, there is a small museum. There is no access to the tower. In the parking lot, you will see **Settlers’ Rock** which has the names of the settlers who came to the Island in 1661. Notice there are no women recorded on the rock. Notice too that several Island families trace their lineage to the settlers. So there must have been women somewhere...alas historical accuracy is not exactly a hallmark of Island lore. Just beyond Settlers’ Rock is a stretch of beach called Cow Cove where the settlers are said to have first landed and swam ashore with their cows. **Sachem Pond** (pronounced Sock-em) is formerly a fresh water pond, now gone brackish. It is known for warm calm waters, and a variety of wildlife.

#### **The Maze & Clayhead Preserve**

Heading north down Corn Neck Road on the way to the North Light, keep your eyes peeled for a wooden post that marks the trail on the right hand side. It is across from a yellow farmhouse. If you pass Mansion Road, you have gone too far. Called “**the Maze**” this trail has it all – an oceanside cliff walk and beautiful woodland paths. Just follow the signs along the route and choose how big a loop you want to do. For more info on trails, go to [www.blockislandinfo.com](http://www.blockislandinfo.com)

#### **The Labyrinth**

Heading north down Corn Neck Road on the way to North Light, the Labyrinth is an interesting stop on your left-hand side. Look out for weathered grey stairs that go over the stone wall; there’s also a sign marked “Labyrinth.” Leave your bike on the roadside and walk the path in. There you will find a circular pathway lined with stones. Designed as a walking meditation, the labyrinth invites visitors to escape – however briefly – from the hustle and bustle of life. In the center is a bench where you can look out over Sachem Pond and commune with nature.



## ***Sites on the West Side***

***From town, head past the statue of Rebecca up Spring Street. Follow the circular route and take in many of Block Island's breathtaking sights. Wait! Who's Rebecca?***

### **Statue of Rebecca**

Block Island is delightfully devoid of official monuments...with the notable exception of Rebecca at the Well. Temperance folks built this fountain in 1896 in hopes that people would enjoy fresh water in lieu of beer. Rebecca has suffered numerous indignities, including having a pumpkin placed on her head most Halloweens.

### **1661 Animal Farm**

A terrific stop for everyone - the Abrhams/Draper family have cultivated a unique experience for the young and young at heart. See lemurs, llamas, kangaroos, camels and more! It's free and low key. There's a food truck on site.

### **Southeast Light**

Built in 1874 in a unique Gothic Revival style in brick, lighthouse buffs will love the Southeast Light! During the summer, tours are usually available. Climb the winding stairs to see the great light itself and the amazing view from its tower. Learn about the storied past of this historic site, famous shipwrecks and the life of the lighthouse keepers through time. There is a shop in the lighthouse, and a food truck on the grounds. [www.southeastlighthouse.org](http://www.southeastlighthouse.org)

### **Block Island Wind Farm**

America's first offshore windfarm was established in 2018 off the coast of Block Island. There have been many issues with the project, and only time will tell if it's good for the Island. See the windmills up close and learn windfarm and the surrounding waters on a boat tour with an experienced local guide. Go to [www.fishtheworld.us](http://www.fishtheworld.us)

### **Mohegan Bluffs**

Just down the road a spell from the Southeast Light is one of the most scenic spots on the Island – the Bluffs. Walk down the narrow dirt pathway to a viewing platform about 150 feet above sea level. From there, you will see dramatic clay cliffs and wide open ocean. On a clear day, you will see Montauk in the distance. There is a stairway down to the beach – with 140 steps. Just remember to save some energy for the climb back up!

### **Rodman's Hollow**

230 acres of protected land, Rodman's Hollow offers hiking trails galore. A 3.7 mile loop trail is perfect for biking or walking. For more info and trail maps, go to [www.biconservancy.com](http://www.biconservancy.com)



## **Part III**

# **A Quick Guide to Beaches**

### **Crescent Beach**

At the bottom of the Sullivan House road, walk across the street (aka Corn Neck Road) and over the dune to beautiful Crescent Beach. This is Block Island's main beach with dunes, black sand, white sand, driftwood, seashells, and miles of beautiful ocean. Perfect for swimming.

### **Fred Benson Pavilion**

So, who was Fred Benson? Fred was an African-American, born in Boston and sent to an orphanage at age 3. He came to the Island at 8, without parents, and lived with an Island family. He worked at various jobs throughout his life....I remember him as the man who gave the tests for driving licenses. He was, I think, in his 90s by this time. He taught me and countless kids how to tie knots. He had an office where the bank now is. At some point in his old age, he won the lottery! And he shared his winnings with Island folks.

There's much more to say, but we'll just say for now that he was a genuine gentleman.

At the Fred Benson Pavilion, there are bathrooms, showers, food and drinks, rental beach chairs and umbrellas, and a parking lot. It is also the headquarters for the lifeguards. This is the only place on the Island where the beach has amenities.

Here's a brief introduction to the various sections of Crescent Beach. Let's start from the south (next to town) and head north. To walk the whole Crescent Beach takes about 45 minutes.

### **Surf Beach**

In front of the old Surf Hotel, now the Block Island Beach House. This beach is accessible from town (wooden staircase across from the National Hotel) and through a gap next to the Blue Dory Inn across from the Island Free Library. There's a breakwater you can walk along, and watch the boats come and go. Walking north, you will see surfers catching a few gentle waves. A good place for learning surfing. In fact, the Diamond Blue Surf Shop offers lessons and kids surf camps.

### **Baby Beach**

Where local families go for their beach time.

### **State Beach**

This is the only beach on Block Island with lifeguards. It also the only beach that offer amenities such as bathrooms, showers (for a fee), chair and umbrella rentals. They also sell food, snacks and drinks.

### **Scotch Beach**

The theory is that as you move north up the beach, the waves get bigger and the crowds get thinner. Scotch beach has an entrance and small parking area off Corn Neck Road. There is a food truck on Corn Neck Road, across from the entrance. The food truck offers food, drinks and treats – and is a popular stop heading to and from the beach.

### **Mansion Beach**

Bigger waves, fewer people, easy to get to on foot walking north on Crescent Beach – but harder by car or bike.

### **Clayhead**

Keep walking and you'll get to Clayhead – a cliffy, more rocky area. Good waves and a favorite for people looking for space to themselves.

# Off the Beaten Path

## Beaches on the South and West side of the Island

People say there's a nude beach....I don't know where it is and I certainly don't want to find it... What I do know, is that the other Block Island beaches are not as sandy or inviting as Crescent Beach. You must use caution - remember, it's the open sea and there are no lifeguards anywhere but State Beach.

### Black Rock Beach

Experienced surfers, in particular, like to go to Black Rock Beach which is difficult to get to. You can get there through Rodman's Hollow, and by going down Snake Hole Road. By bike or on foot, it will be an arduous journey. Swim with caution.

### Mohegan Bluffs Beach

At the base of the Mohegan Bluffs, there is a rocky beach that attracts some people. There is a wooden staircase that you can walk down (remember....you also have to walk up). Swim with caution, and never ever attempt to climb the bluff as sections can give way.

### Looking for access into Great Salt Pond?

Heading north along Corn Neck Road, go left at Dinghy Beach (where the Food Truck is) or further north, go left onto Andy's Way.

## Beach Got You Hungry?

### The Block Island Pizza Truck

is right across from the entrance to Scotch Beach serving wood-fire style pizza, soft serve ice cream, salads, cold drinks and more...

**Order Online (or in person)**

**[www.BlockIslandPizzaTruck.com](http://www.BlockIslandPizzaTruck.com)**





# Part IV

## Events

**Stay tuned as events to take shape for the 2024 season...here's what we know so far....**

### Farmers' Market

Every Wednesday and Saturday morning, the Farmers' Market sets up shop. Browse a wide range of Island-made products, including home-made scones, t-shirts, fresh flowers, vegetables and fine arts. It's a nice atmosphere to browse in this outdoor local market. Free. [www.bifarmersmarket.com](http://www.bifarmersmarket.com)  
Date: every Saturday and Wednesday Time: 9 – 11.30am Place: American Legion Park

### Glass Float Project

An Island-wide scavenger hunt. Join Islanders and tourists alike in combing our beaches and walking trails; if you're lucky, one of 550 distinctive glass globes could be yours! Free.  
[www.blockislandinfo.com/island-events/glass-float-project](http://www.blockislandinfo.com/island-events/glass-float-project)  
Place: That's the BIG question! Hint: globes are never hidden in the dunes or on the side of bluffs; if hidden along Greenway Trails, they will be within one foot on either side of the trail.

### Blues on the Block

#### **Free concert, on the beach across from The Sullivan House, 5pm - 7pm**

Grab a beach chair, and your dancing sandals, and head down for a few relaxing hours of music and fun.

Wednesday, July 3, Tyler-James and the Long Fives

Wednesday, July 17, Neal & the Vipers

Wednesday, July 31, The Dave Richardson Band

Wednesday, August 14, Otis & the Hurricanes

Wednesday, August 21, F&B Blues Band

### Sound Waves

#### **Free movies, on the beach across from The Sullivan House, 8pm-ish**

Grab a beach chair, some snacks, and head down for a fun movie under the stars.

Tuesday, June 25, Blue Crush, 2002 PG-13

Tuesday, July 9, Jaws, 1975 PG

Tuesday, July 23, Honey I Shrunk the Kids, 1989 PG

Tuesday, August 6, Barbi, 2003 PG-13

Tuesday, August 20, She's the Man, 2006 PG-13

Tuesday, September 3, The Karate Kid, 1984 PG

### Independence Day Celebrations

Fireworks – July 1 after dark. Parade – July 4 at 11.30am from American Legion Park through town.

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Throughout the summer, there are several lectures, presentations and walks hosted by **The Block Island Maritime Institute**, **The Block Island Historical Society** and **The Block Island Nature Conservancy**.



## Part V Getting Here

**Block Island is 13 miles out to sea. It is a real island (as opposed to Rhode Island and Long Island), and only accessible by plane or by boat.**

Interstate Navigation. The ferry from Point Judith, Rhode Island is the main way to get to BI, and the only way if you would like to bring over your car. Always make a reservation for your car. If no reservation is available, you can go "standby" but a reservation is far less stressful. Schedules change with the season, so be sure to check the website before finalizing your plans. During the high season, Interstate runs a fast ferry, which makes the crossing in a half hour, as opposed to an hour. There are no cars on the fast ferry. [www.blockislandferry.com](http://www.blockislandferry.com)

New England Airlines. This regular plane service operates from Westerly, RI and takes about 15 minutes to get to the Island. Parking is free in Westerly, and flights run frequently, especially during the summer. [www.block-island.com](http://www.block-island.com)

New London Fast Ferry. During the summer, a fast ferry runs from New London CT. This ferry does not take cars, and the crossing from New London takes just over an hour. [www.goblockisland.com](http://www.goblockisland.com)

Montauk Ferry. During the summer, Viking Fleet runs a passenger-only ferry to Block Island from Montauk, Long Island. [www.vikingfleet.com](http://www.vikingfleet.com)

### Some Useful Links

**The Block Island Chamber of Commerce: [www.blockislandchamber.com](http://www.blockislandchamber.com)**

**The Block Island Tourism Council: [www.blockislandinfo.com](http://www.blockislandinfo.com)**



## Part VI

### A Brief History of The Sullivan House

The Sullivan House is a much-admired architectural gem. It was built in 1904 for Col. LU Maltby, the owner of the Continental Hotel in Philadelphia. In 1929, he sold the house to Cornelius Sullivan.

Sullivan was a Wall Street lawyer and his wife, Mary Quinn Sullivan, was an artist and art teacher in the New York City public schools and at Pratt. They were both children of Irish immigrants.

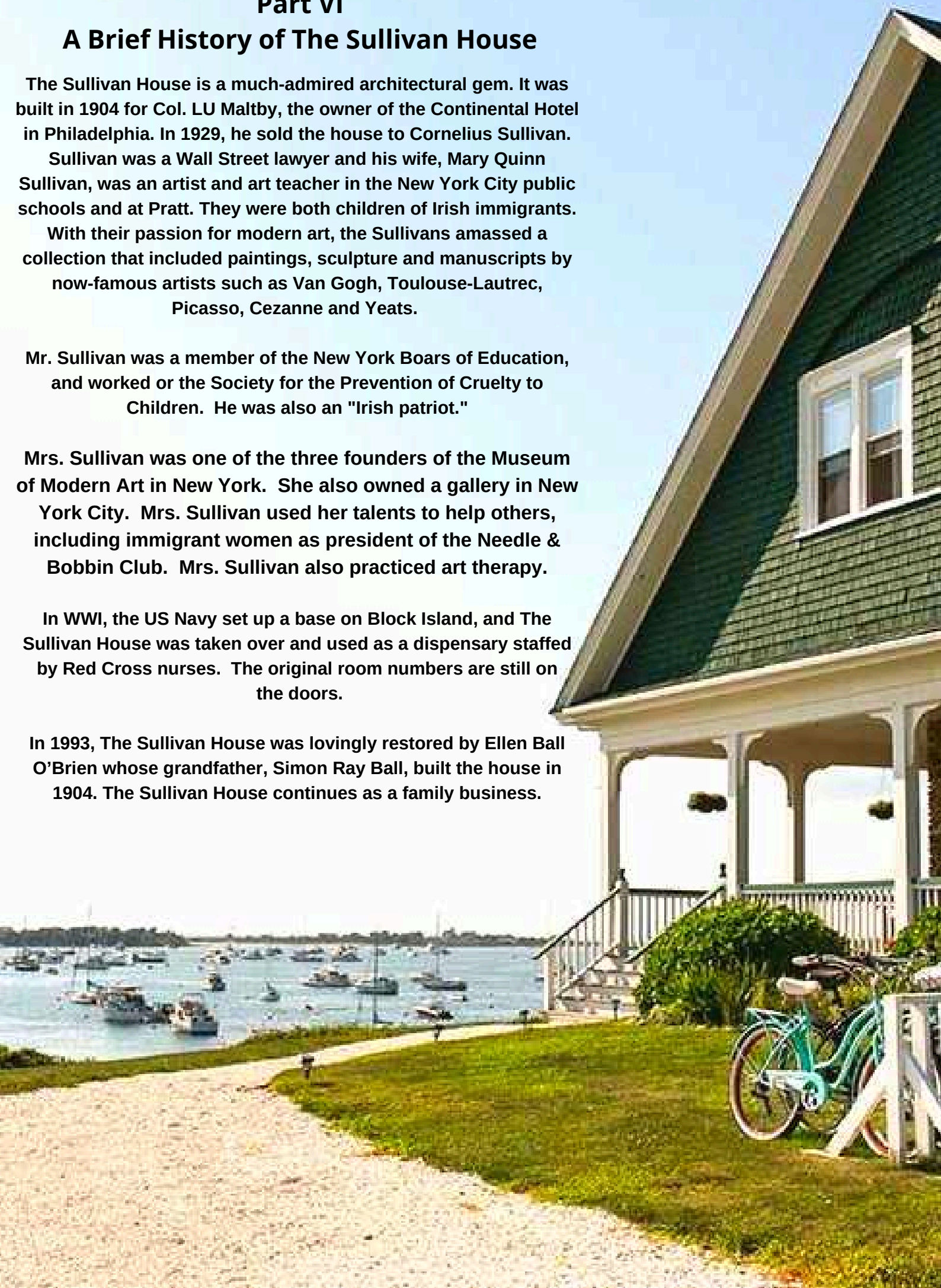
With their passion for modern art, the Sullivans amassed a collection that included paintings, sculpture and manuscripts by now-famous artists such as Van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec, Picasso, Cezanne and Yeats.

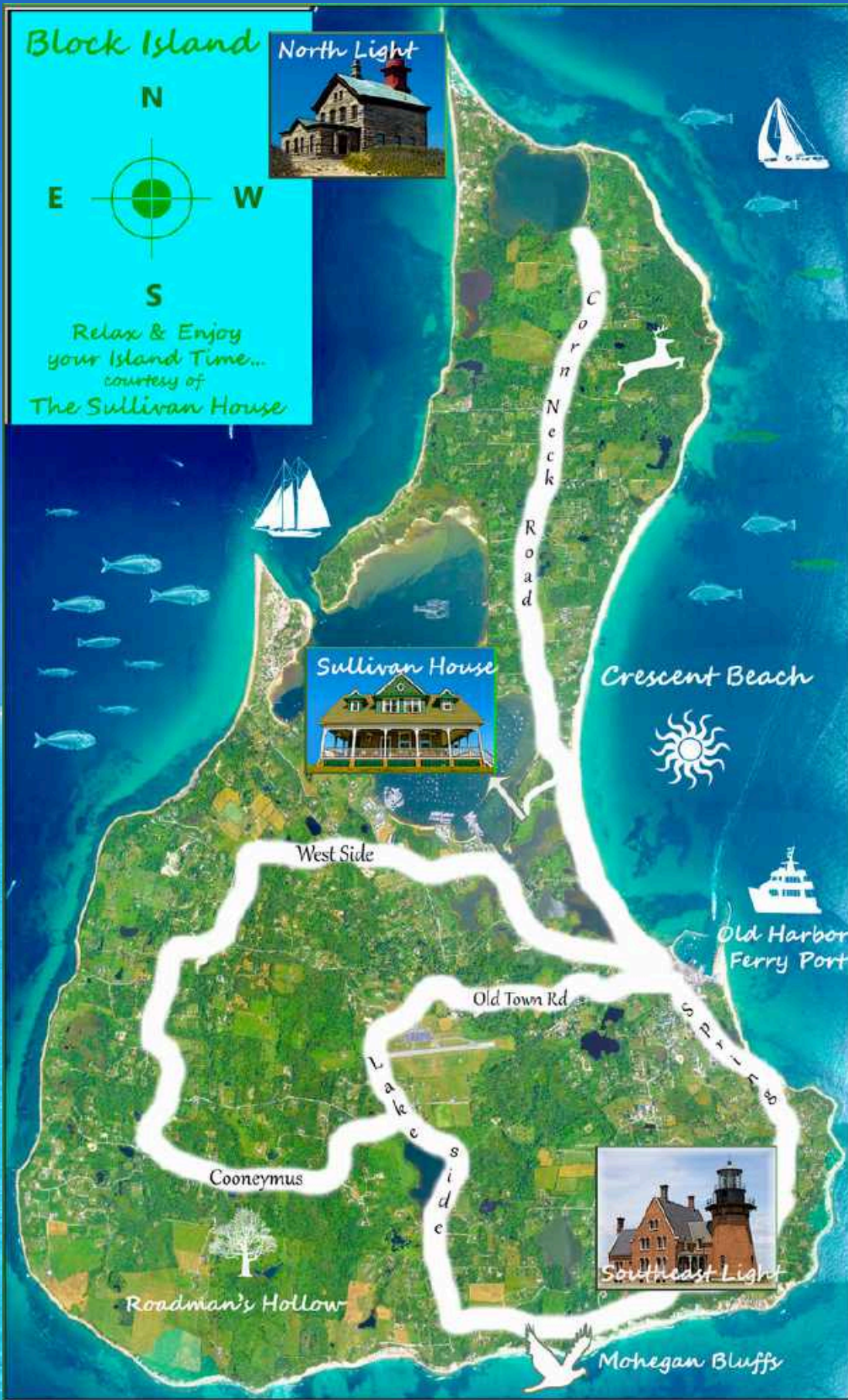
Mr. Sullivan was a member of the New York Boards of Education, and worked for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. He was also an "Irish patriot."

Mrs. Sullivan was one of the three founders of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. She also owned a gallery in New York City. Mrs. Sullivan used her talents to help others, including immigrant women as president of the Needle & Bobbin Club. Mrs. Sullivan also practiced art therapy.

In WWI, the US Navy set up a base on Block Island, and The Sullivan House was taken over and used as a dispensary staffed by Red Cross nurses. The original room numbers are still on the doors.

In 1993, The Sullivan House was lovingly restored by Ellen Ball O'Brien whose grandfather, Simon Ray Ball, built the house in 1904. The Sullivan House continues as a family business.





[www.TheSullivanHouse.com](http://www.TheSullivanHouse.com)