

THE FIELD IS WHITE

Sunday, 20 August 1837, the day after his arrival on the Fox Islands, Wilford Woodruff was invited to preach at the Baptist church, built in 1808 on Pulpit Harbor. He records in his journal the significance of that event:

Mr. Newton accompanied us to the Meeting house the congregation assembled at the appointed time, and amid peculiar feeling I arose & addressed them from Gal 8:9 this was the first time that I or any Elder of the church (to my knowledge) ever arose before the inhabitants of one of the Islands of the Sea to preach unto them the fulness of the everlasting gospel & Book of Mormon.



The following is Wilford Woodruff's journal account of the town of Vinalhaven--consisting of the North and South Fox Islands--recorded 20 August 1837, the day after his arrival:

Vinalhaven is in Lat. 44. North. Long 69.10. East. Pop. 1800. Maine Vinalhaven includes both North & South Fox Islands. The inhabitants are generally wealthy, healthy, intelligent, industrious, generous, and hospitable to strangers. The people get most of their wealth & living by fishing. The Town of Vinalhaven fits out rising of 100 licensed sail beside small craft. North Fox Island is 9 miles long & 2 miles wide. Pop 800. they have a Post office, one store, a Baptist church & meeting house & four school houses & a grist mill. The land is rather rocky and rough yet there is many good farms which produces goat wheat barley, oats, potatoes, and grass which is the staple production. The principal timber is fir, spruce, hemlock & birch. Sheep are the principal stock upon the Island. Rasp, and goose berries grow in great abundance.

South Fox Island comes as near being without any form or void as any land I ever saw, It would be difficult for the best historian to give an exact description of it. It is about 10 miles long & 5 broad and it is one universal mass of rocks formed into shelves, hills & dales cut up into necks & points to make room for the cooves & harbours that run through and through the Island. Pop is 1000. They get their wealth entirely by fishing. Their principal stock is sheep. There is some small parts of the Island under cultivation, but it is at the expense of great labour and toil. Many of the inhabitants of this Island fish at Newfoundland & bring their fish home & dry them upon their own flakes & prepare them for market. they supply the market annually with great quantities of dried fish, Mackerel & boxed herren. There is two stores, three tide saw mills. six school houses & a small branch of the methodist church & a priest. The timber is Pine, fir, spruce, hemlock & birch. much of the timber & whortlebury bushes grows out of the cracks of the rocks. Rasp and goose berries also grow in great quantities upon this Island

There is great quantities of fish inhabit the waters, cooves & harbour around these Islands Thus stands a brief account of the town of
VINALHAVEN

North and South Fox Islands North Haven and Vinalhaven



AUTHOR'S NOTE

When an author attempts to write a play that is historically truthful, he often ties a series of historical events together loosely with a mere string of plot. On the other hand, when an author pursues emotional truth--the motivational factors behind historical events--facts are often sacrificed. THE FIELD IS WHITE is a search for emotional rather than historical truth. The numerous locations are compressed into a single one; the length of time compacted into a few scenes; the numerous adventures concentrated into a handful; the many characters involved reduced to a few representative ones. The play portrays these people and their influences: the colloquial flavor and customs of these early settlers in the "melting pot" of America, the religious fervor of the times, the impact of the gospel upon them, their relationships, their loyalties, their motivations, their consciences. Rather than focussing its emphasis upon the harvesters--much is already known about Wilford Woodruff's extraordinary success in the mission field--THE FIELD IS WHITE emphasizes the "field".

--Joan Oviatt

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