A Sentimental Journey to Bar Harbor: Fifty Years of The Jackson Laboratory*

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'Thus the whole circle of travelers may be reduced to the following heads:

Idle Travelers,
Inquisitive Travelers,
Lying Travelers,
Proud Travelers,
Vain Travelers,
Splenetic Travelers.

There follow

The Travelers of Necessity,
The Delinquent and Felonious Travelers,
The Unfortunate and Innocent Travelers,
The Simple Travelers,
And last of all (if you please) The Sentimental Travelers (meaning thereby myself), who have travel'd, and of which I am now sitting down to give an account —--'

Laurence Sterne: A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy

White and Blue

Although I have returned to Bar Harbor many times thereafter, my initial impression of the place will not leave me. White and blue—the pristine whiteness of the new-fallen snow, and the deep blue of the sky, so reminiscent of the blue flowers on my mother’s pottery.

‘Those with freckled breasts are the first winter males,’ explained George Snell, as a flock of Common Eiders landed with a big splash in the cold waters of Otter Cove.

* Photographs by the author.
I could not believe my luck. Several hours earlier I had walked under the grey skies of Prague, apprehensive that government bureaucrats might change their minds about my trip and recall me from the airport or even from the plane (it had happened before!). But here I was, for the first time on the other side of the Atlantic, and with a man who by then was already a legend for me. For, although my destination was California, Bar Harbor simply had to be my first stop on the American continent.

Bar Harbor! Even as I write these lines, the name brings back memories of the wintry country.

Boulders, like a herd of walruses, basking in the winter sun.
Black tongues of rock crawling out of the ocean like Laocoön’s serpents.
Flocks of fishermen’s schooners waddling in the harbor.
Sleepy stillness disturbed only by the lonely laugh of a sea gull or the hollow tapping of a woodpecker.
Hibernating town, lonely track in the snow, deserted carriage road.
Downy purple crowns of birch trees among spruces and rocks.
And the sky gleaming like a blue backdrop illuminated from behind the stage...

It was to this country that fifty years ago, Clarence C. Little moved some 300 mice and established The Jackson Laboratory.