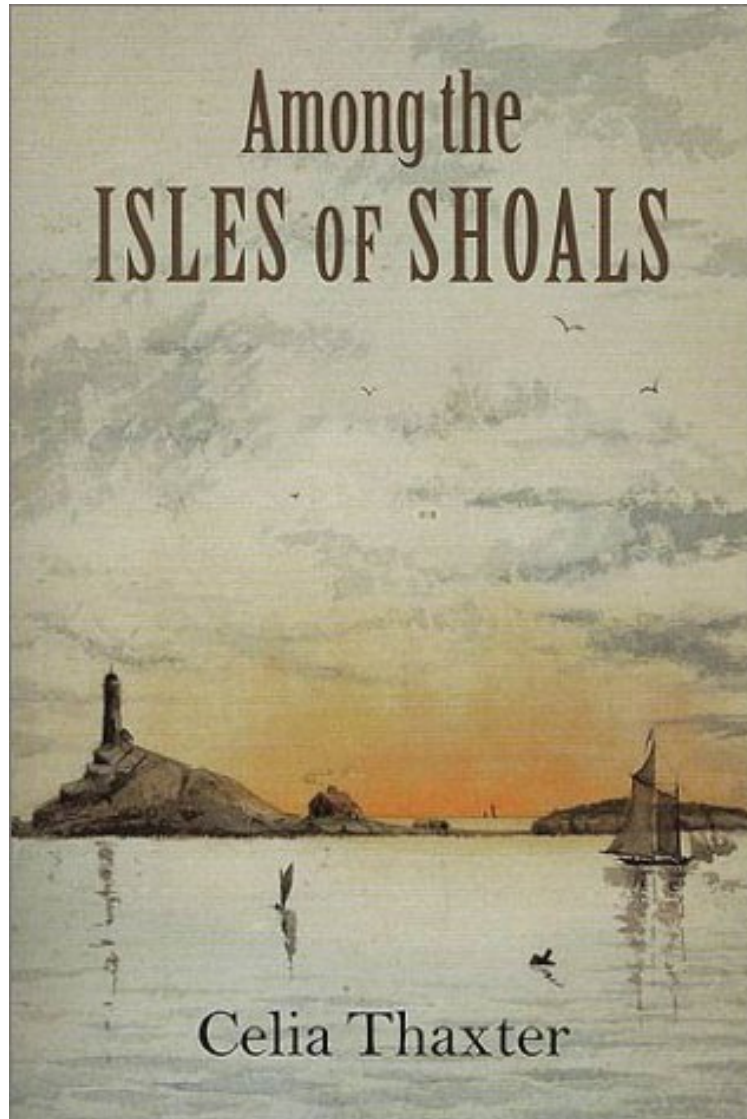


(Pdf free) Among the Isles of Shoals (Revisiting New England)

Among the Isles of Shoals (Revisiting New England)

Celia L. Thaxter

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Celia L. Thaxter : Among the Isles of Shoals (Revisiting New England) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Among the Isles of Shoals (Revisiting New England):

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A delicious escape from the worldBy Kathleen ValentineOriginally written as a series of newspaper articles the text appears as one long narrative for some reason which is a bit disconcerting at first but once you get used to it you find endless treasures both elegant and hilarious. Thaxter grew up on Star Island and is known both as an artist and for her fabulous flower gardens. She lived most of her life on the Isles of Shoals, those jewel like islands that glitter on the horizon nine miles off the coast of New Hampshire. Some

years back I took a ferry out to Star Island and then across to Appledore Island but have never been to the rest. There are nine of them altogether. Nine made into eight by a connecting breakwater or seven when the tide is low and land connects two more. The islands are home to the Star Island Hotel which is now a convention center owned by the Unitarian/Universalism Church (whose earliest known cemetery is my backyard) but which was once a popular resort managed by Celia Loughton Thaxter's father. Her book is wonderful. She opens by describing the islands, both their geography and their history and then goes on to cover every aspect of life there. She rails quite furiously at how modern technology is ruining life there and how the newly built homes of settlers are an eyesore and destroy the charm of the ancient cottages. Since she wrote this in 1873 it is quite amusing to imagine how she would see her beloved islands today. Her love of the islands is on every page. She amuses the reader with descriptions of the people, many of whom have lived their all their lives never stepping foot on the mainland. She describes their peculiar speech patterns, the odd, rolling gait that many of the men have developed from spending most of their time aboard ships. She discusses their habit of giving one another nicknames and odd local colloquialisms, rails against the drunkenness that has blighted the islands, and praises the women who seem to keep busy when the men are drinking. "Blessed be the man who invented knitting," she writes, "It is the most charming and picturesque of quiet occupations, leaving the knitter free to read aloud or talk or think while steadily, surely beneath the flying fingers the comfortable stocking grows." In discussing mating rituals she recounts the native custom when a young man is besotted by a young lady he hides behind a tree and chucks rocks at her as she passes. If she turns to look at him that means she is interested. She tells of violinists who think that possessing a violin is all that is needed to make music and thus squawk out the most ear-splitting noise and give it pretentious, high-faulting names. In one charming passage she rhapsodizes about the sight of fishermen "Saxon-bearded, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, and bronzed with shade on shade of ruddy brown" and goes on to say "the neutral blues and grays of the salt-water make perfect backgrounds for the pictures these men are continually showing one in their life aboard the boats. Nothing can be more satisfactory." Celia! You naughty girl! But amid the ghost stories, stories of wrecked ships, lost treasures, and amazing rescues are her descriptions of nature and there she is at her very best. She writes of storms and squalls, seals and snowy owls, songbirds and butterflies, the brilliant colors of island vegetation, and the beauties of the islands through the months from bleakest winter to sparkling summer. This is a beautiful book - one that I'll keep and read again when I need a break from the mainland and the 21st century. It is a lovely little vacation in another era among the Isles of Shoals. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Jane St Denis Loved it!! 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Local history By Steve S. Well written. had to keep reminding myself this was written in the 1800's. Good overview of the islands and reflections of life in those times.

Celia Thaxter was already a popular poet when she began to publish the essays of *Among the Isles of Shoals* in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1869; they were an immediate sensation. Charles Dickens called Thaxter's essays admirable and Horace Greeley declared, "The best prose writing I have seen for a long time is Mrs. Thaxter's *Isles of Shoals* in the *Atlantic*. Her pen-pictures are wonderfully well-done." Published as a book in 1873, *Among the Isles of Shoals* remained equally popular, printed not only in hardcover but also in a fifty-cent guidebook edition which was sold in railway stations. Now generally considered to be Thaxter's masterpiece, *Among the Isles of Shoals* is available once again in this new edition. Thaxter herself was raised on the Isles of Shoals, a group of nine small, rocky islands off the coast of New Hampshire, and she lived there off and on for much of her life. This lyrical volume seamlessly blends natural history, oral tradition, and personal observation to create a work that one critic says feels somehow distilled from the islands themselves. The bleak landscape of the Isles of Shoals has changed little since the time that Thaxter wrote this tribute, but as the *Hartford Courant* noted upon its original publication, whether the traveler goes to these isles or not, if he has this little volume in his pocket, wherever he is he will have a most charming companion.

Among the Isles of Shoals . . . a paean to the trials and joys of island living, has a timeless quality that makes delightful reading today. *Smithsonian*