

Malevolent Maine

Episode 17: The Lobsterman

Malevolent Maine is a horror podcast, and may contain material not suitable for all audiences. Listener discretion is advised.

INTRO

MARK: The mysterious disappearance of an airplane flying over Maine. A lycanthrope who stalks the woods around Wilson Pond. And a movie theater that shows only the most... disturbing films. These are the stories we're working on for the coming weeks.

Hello, it's Intern Mark, here. Malevolent Maine works really hard to uncover the truth about the weird and unexplained. We love telling stories about the paranormal and the downright weird, but we can't do it without your help. Every time you listen or tell your friends to check out an episode, every time you like or respond to our social media posts, everytime you review our episodes, you're helping to uncover the truth. We really appreciate that. And if you're so inclined, visit www.patreon.com/MalevolentMaine and join our Malevolent Mob. Special shout out to our newest patreon supporter: Alden Fouraker.

Thanks again, and keep listening!

The beach sand is cool under your feet and the ocean seems to sparkle in the full moon light. It's unseasonably warm and a great night for a walk on the beach. Suddenly you hear a chittering sound off to your right. Rising up from the dunegrass is a humanoid form, but its misshapen and distorted. You look down and the creature's hands... wait a minute, are those hands...or some kind of giant claws?

This is Malevolent Maine.

Guys, what was that?

I saw it with my own eyes

No, seriously, what was that?

It's just not scientifically possible.

I can't explain it.

Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God.

This stuff is wild, man. It's real wild.

But... what was that?

Be careful with this one, MMers, it might cause some shell shock. Our story comes out of the Downeast portion of Maine. Downeast refers to the eastern coastal region of the state, covering Washington and Hancock Counties. It's a beautiful region known for its lighthouses, coastal fishing towns, and Acadia National Park, where Cadillac Mountain is the first part of the United States to see the sunrise. Downeast got its name from the direction sailing ships would travel from New York and Boston - downwind and towards the east. It's home to towns such as Calais, Machias, and Bar Harbor.

Today's story begins at least in Eastport, and it comes to use from a listener, Mary Wilkes. Wilkes emailed us about a story she heard from her mother, who in turn heard it from Mary's grandmother. She claims that on nights when the moon is full, fishermen will leave a bucket of fish, clams, or whatever seafood they have available out by the front door of their

homes. This is to ward off a creature the locals have come to call the Lobsterman.

We sent Tom to Eastport to investigate:

TOM: So I spent a few days in Eastport this summer. Eastport is technically an archipelago - that is, an island chain or a collection of small islands. It is connected to the mainland by a causeway, just an old stretch of cracked blacktop. It's Maine's smallest city, with just over 1,200 people, and technically the nation's easternmost city.

The people there are friendly, and like many Maine towns are used to summer tourists. When I explained who I was and what I was doing there, though, most people grew tight-lipped. It wasn't until I talked to Marc Finn, the owner of a small pottery and art shop catering mostly to the aforementioned tourists, that I found my first clue. Finn's grandfather had been a fisherman and he was known to tell some wild stories about his time on the ocean, especially when he had been drinking a little. Finn said one night, during a particularly bad storm, his grandfather told him the story of Atticus Hurd.

Atticus Hurd, as near as records indicated, was a fisherman during the 1930s and 40s. By the 50s, when Marc Finn's grandfather would have been in his fishing prime, Hurd would have been an old sea dog, pushing seventy years old. His boat, the Carcinus, would be seen trawling the waters off Eastport. Like its captain, it was old and had seen better days, but still serviceable. Hurd was known to be short-tempered and crotchety, which only got worse in his old age. According to public records, the Carcinus was found run ashore the morning of August 5, 1956. It had sustained significant damage and was deemed a total wreck. There was no sign of its captain, and it was presumed that Hurd had been swept overboard. A search was attempted, but no trace of Atticus Hurd was ever found.

But, as Tom discovered, the story of Atticus Hurd wasn't as simple as a case of a deadly mishap at sea.

TOM: The way Marc Finn had heard it from his grandfather was that Atticus Hurd was unwilling to admit that age had caught up with him. He saw younger men, with newer boats taking more and more of the fish he, himself, used to haul. This made him angry and he searched for a way to prolong his own life or restore his youth. One night, during a storm, he sailed out and performed a ritual designed to return him to his prime. The story Marc heard from his grandfather was that something went horribly wrong. Hurd was swept overboard and his ship ran aground, but with his ritual incomplete something happened to Hurd. He was changed, transformed by the dark magic he had tried to enact, and the thing that washed ashore was no longer recognizable as Atticus Hurd.

Which leads us back to Mary Wilkes and the story she heard from her mother. Wilkes passed onto us the story she heard about why local fishermen leave buckets of fish outside their doors on the night of the full moon.

According to the story that had been passed down to her, a creature was known to come out of the surf on those nights and prowl the town looking for food. The story goes that in the old days, several young people went missing before the town began the ritual of setting out buckets of fish.

The creature was said to be the size of a man and to walk on two legs like one. It wore the tattered remains of a simple, homespun brown robe or shawl, and a hood to hide its face. The rare glimpses of its body that could be seen through the holes in its robe was said to be a brownish red color and hard looking. Its arms ended in deformed hands that looked more like claws or pincers, one seemingly larger than the other. Any unfortunate person caught outside after dark on the night of a full moon who encountered this strange creature counted themselves lucky that they survived to tell the tale.

Mary Wilkes said her grandmother, Arlene Stoddard, called the creature the Lobsterman, a name the citizens of Eastport tried not to speak of for fear of attracting its attention.

Could Atticus Hurd, in an attempt to regain his lost youth, have performed an arcane ritual which when it went awry transformed him into some sort of crustacean-like creature? Based on Marc Finn's grandfather's story, that seemed like the most likely outcome, but was there any proof to this or was it simply a local tall-tale of a superstitious community?

Armed with a name and Mary Wilkes' story, Tom investigated a little further.

TOM: Eastport doesn't have a lot of nightlife, but I figured my best bet to get any information on the Lobsterman was to talk to the locals when they were a little more... relaxed. The first bar I went to was more of a tourist spot, and most of the people I talked to there were vacationers or college kids home on break. I asked around and found out the locals mostly spent their time at the Old Sow Pub.

Old Sow is the name of the Western Hemisphere's largest tidal whirlpool. Located just off the coast between Eastport and New Brunswick, Canada, the whirlpool supposedly got its name for the strange grunting noises it makes, which sound surprisingly like a pig. At 250 feet across, it is one of the largest whirlpools in the world, though its relative slow speed means it is typically not dangerous to larger boats. It is also known for its history of weird occurrences and stories of strange sightings that have occurred there over the years.

TOM: Right. The Old Sow Pub was dark and had that cramped, almost underground feeling of many dive bars. When I got there, there were about a dozen locals sitting at the tables and at the bar. The bartender was wiping down the counter with a white towel, and everyone stared at me when

I came in. I swear, it was like walking into a scene in a movie. Luckily, I had the company credit card and after buying a round for everyone, the locals seemed to warm up a bit.

We'll have to talk about what constitutes a business expense before Tom goes on his next investigation.

TOM: I started asking a little bit about Atticus Hurd. A lot of people knew the name and the story of the wrecked Carcinus [**Car-sin-us**], but that was all. But one man - who told me if I used his name, he'd, and I quote, "break off both my thumbs" - mentioned something about the old Hurd cemetery being somewhere off the Deep Cove Road. I filed that away for later.

Gradually I brought the talk around to the Lobsterman. A few of the locals admitted to knowing the stories. This was the first confirmation from anyone in town outside of Mary Wilkes that the Lobsterman was real. I also got a name, Simon Bagwell, from one of the patrons. The woman I spoke with was out on a smoke break and didn't want to speak out of turn, but she told me that Bagwell had a run in with the Lobsterman just last year and I should talk with him.

We decided that Tom would try to find the Hurd cemetery. We didn't know what information we would find there, but it might at least confirm a few of our suspicions. I decided to see if I could track down Simon Bagwell.

A few internet searches and a couple of rounds of phone tag later, I found myself talking to Bagwell, a self-proclaimed, "old duffer" who lives just outside of Eastport, on the mainland, in the little town of Perry his entire life.

Last September, after the flatlanders had left for the summer, Simon was coming home from a night at the Old Sow. He was driving up Route 190, or the County Road as it's known in Eastport, where the road winds real close to the shore, when his

pickup got a flat tire. A real "popper" as he explained it. He pulled over to the side of the road, but didn't have a spare tire. It was late, but the weather was warm for September, and Simon wasn't too far from home, so he figured he would walk.

It never even crossed his mind that it was a full moon. He started walking along the side of the road. He was close to the shore and the shoulder was soft and sandy. He hadn't gone too far from the truck when he heard something walking down along the shoreline. He thought it might be an animal of some sort, but whenever he stopped, the footsteps down on the sand seemed to stop as well, only to continue when he started up again. He called out, thinking it might be another person, but he got no response.

Simon kept walking, picking up the pace. Whatever it was down on the shore seemed to match his speed. Simon got to a place where the road started to pull away from the shore. As the ground turned from soft beach sand to harder gravel, Simon claimed to have heard a scuttling sound, like a dozen little legs all clicking-and clacking over the ground. Simon started to jog but the thing began to pick up speed, coming closer and closer to him.

Simon ran as fast as he could, but he knew the creature was gaining on him. There was a salty, briny stench in the air, and suddenly the night grew much colder than it had been. Just as he was sure the thing that followed him was about to reach him, headlights splashed across the road. It was a trucker heading north.

Simon whirled around quickly and saw a blur diving back into the darkness on the side of the road. It was huge, he said, larger than a man, and dressed in some kind of simple, ragged brown robe. Simon swore the creature had some sort of brownish-red shiny skin that looked, "like armor or a shell." Then it was gone.

"I knew right what it was," Simon told me, "It was the Lobsterman. Before that night I never believed in it, but I'll tell you what, it's real and it scared the pants off me."

Simon Bagwell couldn't confirm whether or not the thing that stalked him had claws for hands or what, if any face looked out at him from beneath its tattered hood. When I sent him a picture of Atticus Hurd he claimed to have never seen the man before. He did admit, however, that he had been terrified and that he only caught a quick glimpse of the creature. This was solid proof that the Lobsterman did in fact exist.

Meanwhile, back in Eastport, Tom found the Hurd family cemetery. It was tucked back away from the road down a little overgrown path. It was small, maybe a dozen feet on each side. There were six graves, most of them old and stained. The ocean could be glimpsed through the trees from the back of the graveyard.

The stone for Atticus Hurd matched our records, claiming the date of his death as August 4, 1956. The inscription was an interesting one. It simply read: "May he rest."

Beside his grave was one for his wife, Clara Stoddard Hurd. She had died fifteen years prior, from pneumonia. There were several other relatives, Atticus's father, grandmother, and who we believe was his uncle. But the most alarming stone in the cemetery was the one on the other side of Atticus's.

Here's Tom to explain:

TOM: Right next to Atticus Hurd's stone was another one, the same exact cut and style. The name on it was Connor Hurd, born in 1935, and died August 4, 1956. That's the same day as Atticus. Which is a little strange, right?

Connor Hurd was Atticus's son. After the death of Clara, their relationship became strained. Atticus was a blue collar fisherman who never had time for anything he couldn't put his

hands on. He worked hard, rarely smiled, and spent his scant free time in silent thought.

Connor, by all accounts, was very different from his father. He was only twenty-one at the time of his death, but their feud was well known. In one of the old journals Tom found at the Peavey Memorial Library in downtown Eastport - a brick building that looked more like a castle than a library - a mention is made of an argument overheard between the elder Hurd and his son by a nearby neighbor. The author, Thomas Pierce, brother to the mayor of Eastport at the time, said he overheard shouting coming from the direction of the Hurd home. He wrote that Atticus could be heard berating his son.

Connor was an aspiring artist and poet. He wrote several poems for the library, one of which was still framed on the wall when Tom visited. I've asked our producer, Megan, to read the poem, titled, "Tempest".

MEGAN:

Tempest

By Connor Hurd

Sky like burnt ash reflected in his eyes
The waves rising and falling like angry blows upon the shore
There is angry salt whipped in the air
And ozone ready to split the world in half
And he is there, standing halfway between the land and the sea
One foot on the hearth and the other fathoms away
It will all break soon
Sweep off the horizon, all Anger. Rage. Power. Violence
It blurs the line between surf and sand
Two worlds that touch but can never be one
Swept together in one violent cataclysm.

Father and son did not get along, and by many accounts actually despised one another, but they were the last of their family, the only remaining Hurds. They lived together in the small home near their family cemetery, but they hardly ever spoke to one another.

Connor Hurd was discovered dead in the family home on the morning of August 5, when officials came to inform him of the discovery of his father's wrecked ship. The official cause of his death is unknown. There were no marks or injuries on his body, and he was known to be a healthy individual. No drugs or poisons were found in his system. The young man had simply dropped dead sometime in the night.

TOM: I went back to see Marc Finn to ask him about Connor Hurd. As a local artist he knew a little about him and even thought he had a few of his paintings somewhere in storage. They weren't very valuable, but he had kept them because of their connection to the community. He didn't know much about Connor, but he did have two pieces of information I found interesting. The first was that after the deaths of the Hurds, his grandfather, George Finn, had a falling out with some of the other fishermen. Marc said he knew it had something to do with Lyman Pierce, the mayor back then, but didn't know much else. The second piece was a rumor that had been passed around town at the time of the mysterious deaths. It was said investigators found a book of black magic or Satanic rituals in the Hurd house, not far from where they found Connor's body.

Black magic. Satanic rituals. Occult practices. These weren't exactly common practices in America in the 1950s. The Beat poets were the counterculture movement at the time, and while many considered Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and their contemporaries obscene and negative influences on the youth of America, they could hardly be described as occult.

As far as we could tell, no mention of this book of spells is mentioned anywhere in the official reports. It is possible the investigators believed the book belonged to Connor Hurd, who was a poet and artist, something that was almost completely foreign to the residents of Eastport at the time. However, there is a more insidious possibility.

The Skelimnic Manuscripts, fragments of a grimoire said to have been written by a 12th century monk, tell of a path to immortality that involves trading one life for another. According to the ancient text, in order to live forever, one must be willing to sacrifice someone close to them or to whom they have a strong connection. Only by willingly offering up something so valuable can the caster prove they are willing to shed the laws of time.

Is it possible that Atticus Hurd, himself, was the owner of the dark book? Could he have somehow discovered the ritual to prolong his life and chosen his own son as the sacrifice?

Here's Tom.

TOM: Right. So Atticus and Connor didn't get along, okay? Atticus resented his son for being more interested in books and painting than the physical labor he did. So if Atticus finds this spell book or whatever it was, and he sees that he has to sacrifice something connected to him, what if he chooses his son that he despises? So, he goes out on the Carcinus the night of August 4th. He performs the ritual and trades Connor's life for his own. Connor dies mysteriously back home and Atticus is granted immortal life. Only something went wrong. Maybe he muttered a word incorrectly or didn't draw a diagram properly, and a storm tears his boat apart and transforms him into the Lobsterman.

It's a fascinating story, and one Mary Wilkes readily supports. It would explain the Lobsterman sightings that have occurred since the 50s. It would explain the creature's anger, and the fishermen's desire to appease the thing that had once been one of their own.

It's a good theory... but something about it just didn't feel right.

By all reports, by 1956 Atticus and Connor Hurd had found a way to co-exist through mutual avoidance. Some of the anger that had existed between them seemed to have cooled as the two did their best to stay out of one another's ways entirely.

There's also the fact that Atticus was a man known to never read unless he had to. It seems a bit of a stretch that he would somehow seek out and procure an ancient book of spells.

And then there's that strange disagreement with the town mayor Marc Finn's grandfather got into after Atticus's death.

The more we dug into the past, the more we kept seeing the same names come up over and over again. The Hurds. The Stoddards. The Pierces. But that wasn't all. Sibley, Garland, and Pike were names that seemed connected, not just to the happenings of the 1950s, but to the history of Eastport as well.

Like many Maine communities, Eastport has long family histories. There are descendents of the town founders living there to this day. Many people take pride in being able to trace their lineage back to James Cochrane and his company who founded the settlement in 1772. Many of these families live on the same land or even in the same houses as their ancestors. Over time, these old families have become interconnected.

Cora Hurd, Atticus's wife, appears to have been the sister to Mary Wilkes' grandmother. Marc Finn's great uncle was Laurence Pike, who in turn was married to Bethany Pierce, sister to the mayor, Lyman Pierce.

It was as we were untangling these complicated family histories that we stumbled across an incredible discovery.

Atticus Hurd owned the fishing rights to several stretches of ocean that were known to be quite lucrative. As the industry began to modernize and more and more profits could be earned, those regions became particularly valuable. Atticus Hurd, with his old-style mentality wasn't able to reap all of the rewards.

There had been several offers made by other fishing captains to purchase those rights, but Hurd had rejected them. Those waters were his, and he meant to hold onto them.

In the wake of Atticus's death, and that of his son, Connor, those rights fell to auction. According to public records, Lyman Pierce purchased those rights.

A few notes about Lyman Pierce. Pierce was Bowdoin educated, the son of a fisherman, who had majored in business. While his younger brother, Thomas, inherited his father's fishing boats, it was Lyman who wielded the real power. He owned several properties in town, and parlayed his business acumen into small town politics. By the time he was forty, he was the mayor of Eastport, a position he won ten more times before finally retiring.

Lyman Pierce died in 2008, at the age of 98. His reported net worth was 2.3 million dollars. A series of investments, combined with his stake in the Pierce Fishing Company, led to an extremely prosperous life. After he retired from the position of mayor at age 67, he remained active in the town, and many considered him to be the true power in Eastport.

In 2020, during the height of the pandemic, Lyman Pierce's grandchildren sold the rights of the Pierce Fishing Company to a larger conglomerate. Part of the sale included the fishing rights Pierce had purchased in the wake of Atticus Hurd's untimely death, fishing rights that many said had made Lyman Pierce a very wealthy man over the years.

All of this serves as a semi-interesting, if opportunistic anecdote, but when you're in the line of work studying ancient curses and uncovering long forgotten crimes, you begin to see patterns where others might have missed them.

What if Lyman Pierce and some of the other old families, grown sick of Atticus Hurd holding out on them, sought a way to get rid of him so they could scoop up the fishing rights? There was

the disagreement and falling out between Marc Finn's grandfather, George Finn, and Lyman Pierce and his supporters. Could it have been over a plot to get rid of Hurd?

In a way it makes sense. The Pierces could have killed Atticus Hurd, made it look like an accident, and also murdered his son, paying local authorities to cover up the death. With no remaining Hurds left, Pierce could snap up the fishing rights and start turning the profits Atticus had squandered.

But that doesn't explain the Lobsterman. Is it possible that these two stories are unrelated after all? We were beginning to think so, but then Tom discovered something that changed everything.

TOM: So, I was looking through historical records stored in the library. After Lyman Pierce's death, a lot of his personal effects had been donated to the Peavey Memorial Library. There were lots of business ledgers, mayoral communications and notes, and a few personal items and correspondence. In one of those I found a particular notation that seemed to stand out. On an otherwise confusing page of stats and numbers and abbreviations, I found the phrase, "Brother Pierce" and beside the name was a circle with a second, smaller circle inside of it. I knew I had seen this somewhere before, so I snapped a pic and sent it back to the office.

Circles within circles. These were similar to the markings Lucas had discovered while investigating the story of Emory Camble, a doctor who had died under mysterious circumstances in Shapleigh in the mid-1800s. There, those symbols had indicated membership into an esoteric cult, the Hermetic Brotherhood of Cardinal Court. The number of concentric circles indicated the rank of the member, all of whom followed the teachings of an enigmatic figure called Brother Magus.

Lucas had discovered that this secret society had started at Bowdoin College in 1854, the same school Lyman Pierce attended almost a hundred years later.

Could it be that Lyman Pierce was a member of the Brotherhood of the Cardinal Sun, inducted sometime while he was in college? Could he have used the occult knowledge he gained there to perform some sort of ritual that would steal the life of both Atticus and Connor Hurd? Could the book of black magic reportedly found in the Hurd house actually have been Lyman Pierce's grimoire?

The Skelimnic Manuscripts, the same ancient magical texts that spoke of prolonging one's life through sacrifice also contains a spell to steal the life of a foe. Through a complicated blood ritual, one may call upon the invisible forces to strike a mortal blow to one's enemy.

TOM: So what if Pierce and the others waited until the evening Atticus Hurd went out to sea, then performed the ritual and killed Connor while he was alone. Then they tried to do it again to kill Atticus. But something went wrong. Maybe they weren't strong enough to fully manifest the powerful forces a second time, or maybe they made a slight mistake. Maybe the Carcinus's proximity to the Old Sow whirlpool and its own strange energies caused the second spell to go awry. Somehow the magical energies transformed Atticus into the Lobsterman, who now prowls the shores seeking revenge on the fishermen who cursed him into this new, monstrous form.

It is almost impossible to determine if our new theory is true. We could, perhaps, attempt to interact with the Lobsterman, but aside from Simon Bagwell's story, most don't end with such a happy ending. Even if we were able to somehow capture the cryptid, there's no way of knowing whether its mind would still be intact some sixty-five years after its transformation.

None of Lyman Pierce's descendants would comment on our allegations. In fact, none of the people of Eastport would speak to this new idea. For now, at least, it seems we'll have to conclude our theory is only a working one.

Several weeks after Tom returned from his investigation, we received a package at our office. It was from Marc Finn, the artist and shop owner who had started Tom on his journey. Inside was a painting signed by Connor Hurd. It depicts a fishing boat, perhaps one similar to his father's, sailing into rough seas. There appears to be an eye in the sky, surrounded by black clouds. The more we looked at it, the more we were sure there were other eyes hidden in the storm clouds and beneath the darkened waves.

Marc Finn had attached a note. Here's Tom to read it:

TOM: I found this painting in the back room and thought it might be interesting to you. It's one of the few Connor Hurd's left. This one is called "Into the Eye of the Storm." It was in the shop for a few months, but customers complained that it made them feel uneasy. In the end I packed it away in the back. When you visited, it reminded me that I had put it back there. There isn't much of a market for Hurd's work, so it's yours, free of charge. Maybe it will help with your investigation or maybe you'll find it interesting. Yours, Marc Finn.

Finn was right. There was something unsettling about the picture. Eyes seemed to appear in a swirl or loop of detail, only to disappear the next time we looked at it. All of the eyes made it seem like we were being watched by something or someone.

We've decided to hang the painting in the lobby of our office. If you stop by you may see it.

As for the Lobsterman, Mary Wilkes says she's still worried about it, and she'll continue to leave a bucket of fish outside on nights when the moon is full. She says she doesn't know if

the creature is Atticus Hurd or if her ancestors had anything to do with the thing's appearance, and she says she doesn't really want to know. It's enough, she said, to know that it's out there, and that she knows how to keep herself safe.

If you ever find yourself in Eastport during the full moon, walking home from the Old Sow Pub, perhaps and you hear the sound of something scrabbling over the sand, we suggest you run. Whoever or whatever the Downeast Lobsterman is, it is dangerous. Your best bet is to stay inside and perhaps leave a bucket of raw fish on your doorstep.

Stay safe out there, Maine.

Malevolent Maine is Lucas Knight, Lucas Wilson, and myself, Chris Estes.

If you'd like to read more about our investigations check out our website at malevolentmaine.blogspot.com/

While there, don't forget to check our merch store. And, if you're so inclined, support us on Patreon at patreon.com/malevolentmaine

Thank you for listening to Malevolent Maine.

And as always, stay safe out there, Maine.