

"Uncle Add" Brackett, The Fisherman-Evangelist.

All But Sixteen of the Dwellers on Monhegan Converted Thru "Uncle Add" a Half Century Ago—A Saver of Life as Well as of Souls During His Term at the Manana Station—Has Had Hair-Raising Experiences.

[Written for the Lewiston Journal by
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NEARLY half a century before Billy Sunday and his famous sawdust trail became internationally renowned, "Uncle Add" Brackett, a Maine coast fisherman, accomplished a remarkable evangelistic feat at Monhegan Island, which has placed his name in the history and romance of that beautiful isle of the sea.

In the early '70's, when summer visitors at the island would probably have been regarded with suspicion by the fisherfolk, "Uncle Add," who was then acting as operator of the fog-signal station at Manana, Monhegan's sister island, converted 85 of the 101 Monheganites to the Advent or Bible religion.

At the little island schoolhouse Mr. Brackett held religious meetings for some time before the islanders, who were then principally Baptists, came forward and accepted the faith of the preacher.

"Uncle Add," who is now retired from the active life of the sea and lives in quietude with his helpmate at the Maine coast village of New Harbor, claims that the "reformation" was not effected thru his influence. "I merely gave the Scripture," remarks Mr. Brackett with modesty, "and the spirit moved them." The sixteen islanders who did not pledge themselves to the Advent faith were beyond the reach of the spirit, the fisherman-evangelist declares. His preachings have apparently been lasting in their influence, for today nearly every native of Monhegan holds most reverently to the Advent Christian belief.

Mr. Brackett has had a varied career, his evangelistic pursuits being of an avocational nature. When President Lincoln called for volunteers at the outbreak of the Civil war, this son of a fishing family, who was then scarcely 19 years of age, enlisted with the 20th Maine regiment. Under the colors which the late Gen. Joshua Chamberlain bore to victory at Round Top in that decisive battle of the Rebellion, Brackett won considerable distinction for his bravery.

One day, in the heat of a skirmish, a shell exploded near the soldier boy, practically blinding his eyes with dirt and powder. Several weeks' treatment at an army hospital in Philadelphia saved him from total blindness, but failed to restore his sight to its former keenness.

About five years after his discharge from the army, "Uncle Add" moved his family from Bristol, his native town, to Manana Island, where he took the position of operator of the fog-signal. During his service at the station, which covered a period of about two years, Mr. Brackett says that the government repair ship did not make a single call at the island, he himself making all the necessary repairs. His duties involved 48 hours of continuous work, at the end of which he was relieved by the first assistant lighthouse keeper from Monhegan.

Mr. Brackett says that, while he was at Manana, a meteor which appeared to him to be nearly half as large as the island on which he lived, landed in the water about half a mile to the westward of Monhegan. The flaming body from the heavens, which caused a considerable commotion when it struck the sea, hissing and sizzling, terrified some islanders who were shingling the roof of the schoolhouse to such a degree that they left their work and hurried home to make preparations to protect themselves and their families from other more frightful and perilous eventualities, of which the meteor might be a forerunner. The former fog-signal operator says that the monstrous boulder would easily have sunk a good-sized



"UNCLE ADD" BRACKETT.

vessel if one had been in its path.

Saving a woman's life was among Mr. Brackett's acts of heroism during his term at the station. One day, as he was landing on the shore at Monhegan in his dory, he heard a feminine voice from the hill exclaim, "I am going to jump overboard," and a moment later he saw the woman running for the rocks. "No you ain't either," shouted "Uncle Add," heading off the despondent one and seizing her in his arms. Despite the fisherman's tight hold, the woman, persistent in her plans, broke away from Brackett hardly before he knew it, ran to the cliff overlooking the island harbor and jumped overboard. After having a good taste of salt water, she screamed for help; and Capt. Brackett swam out and brought her safely to the beach.

Mr. Brackett also helped to save a two-masted vessel which was loaded with lumber and bound for New York. He sighted the craft when she was quite a distance from the island and immediately came to the conclusion that she was water-logged. Knowing that no time must be lost, as there might be several lives on board the ship, "Uncle Add" secured the services of Capt. Ben Davis and Newell Trefethen, two other Monhegan fishermen, and the three took a boat and started for the disabled vessel. Upon reaching her, they found that the crew had been taken off by some rescue party, probably from a nearby life-saving station. Brackett and his companions brought the half-submerged craft to Duck Rock.

Altho quite fortunate in not figuring in any wrecks during his career on the sea, Mr. Brackett has braved

several thrilling moments. While hauling his trawl one day a fish hook caught in the back of his hand. The weight of the gear on the raw flesh pulled Brackett overboard. Before reaching bottom, however, he bit off the twine with his teeth. Being an expert swimmer, he then made the surface of the water and got aboard his boat again with little difficulty.

"I remember one trip which nearly cost me my life," says "Uncle Add," in relating his most hair-raising experience. "About 40 years ago, in the month of November, Ben Davis, Newell Trefethen, Mansfield Davis, Fairfield Davis, a Mr. Weaver and myself, left Portland for Monhegan in our boat was hurled by the breakers against a fish-house and smashed to pieces. Yes, sir, I tell you that was a narrow one for us."

Mr. Brackett moved from Monhegan to New Harbor, several years ago, and has lived at the latter fishing village ever since. He followed the sea up to his retirement from active life. He is a characteristic old-timer and loves to tell of the days when he could land as good a haul of fish as anyone of the fleet. Altho well up in the seventies, "Uncle Add" is still remarkably spry for a man of his age.