

POST TRAVEL PLUS



Cafe Miranda offers everything except lobster. Bob Rosenberg



The Olson House inspired painter Andrew Wyeth. Bob Rosenberg

By BARBARA ANN ROSENBERG

THE coastal town of Rockland takes the meaning of Maine lobster to a new level. You can hardly travel anywhere in the area without bumping into a restaurant, shack or roadside cart offering lobster in one form or another.

There's even a huge, appropriately weather-beaten metal statue of a lobster just off the main street as you stroll down a gentle slope toward the harbor. This rusty lobster is a town landmark.

When people make an appointment in New York, they might say, "Meet you under the clock at Grand Central." In Philadelphia, it's "Meet you at the eagle" (at Lord & Taylor on Chestnut street in what was formerly Wanamaker's).

In Rockland, it's unquestionably "Meet you at the lobster."

Once known best for its fisheries and less-than-fragrant sardine canning plant (now closed and torn down), Rockland has become a destination for pleasure boaters. The picturesque harbor is also a favorite among saltwater anglers and for people who just enjoy feeling like true "downeasters" (as Maine coastal folks are often called).

Everything in Rockland is not lobster-related. There's an outstanding museum, the Farnsworth on Main

Get into the claw-set

The coastal town is a destination of anglers, boaters and lobster lovers

Street, that has a fine selection of 19th- and 20th-century works by American artists including Andrew Wyeth, John Marin and Marsden Hartley. The museum closes Mondays after Columbus Day.

To see one of Wyeth's main sources of inspiration, drive through Maine's beautiful countryside to Cushing, about 30 miles from Rockland. Stop at the Olson House, a stark home the artist painted over and over again. The Olson House is open to the public from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily Memorial Day through Columbus Day.

Enroute to the Olsen House, you'll pass huge, startling figures made by



The huge wood sculpture by Bernard Langlois. Bob Rosenberg

the late Bernard Langlois, an eccentric sculptor whose work sits in the front and side yards of his house.

But Maine is really about water and fishing. Visitors can take a cruise on the Three Cheers, an immaculate Coast Guard-certified lobster boat. You sit in com-

fort as the captain takes you around Rockland Harbor and Penobscot Bay while hauling in traps, explaining what constitutes a "keeper," and pointing out outstanding lighthouses.

Nearly as dear as lobster to many Maine visitors is the opportunity to browse in the many antique shops. Rockland has its share.

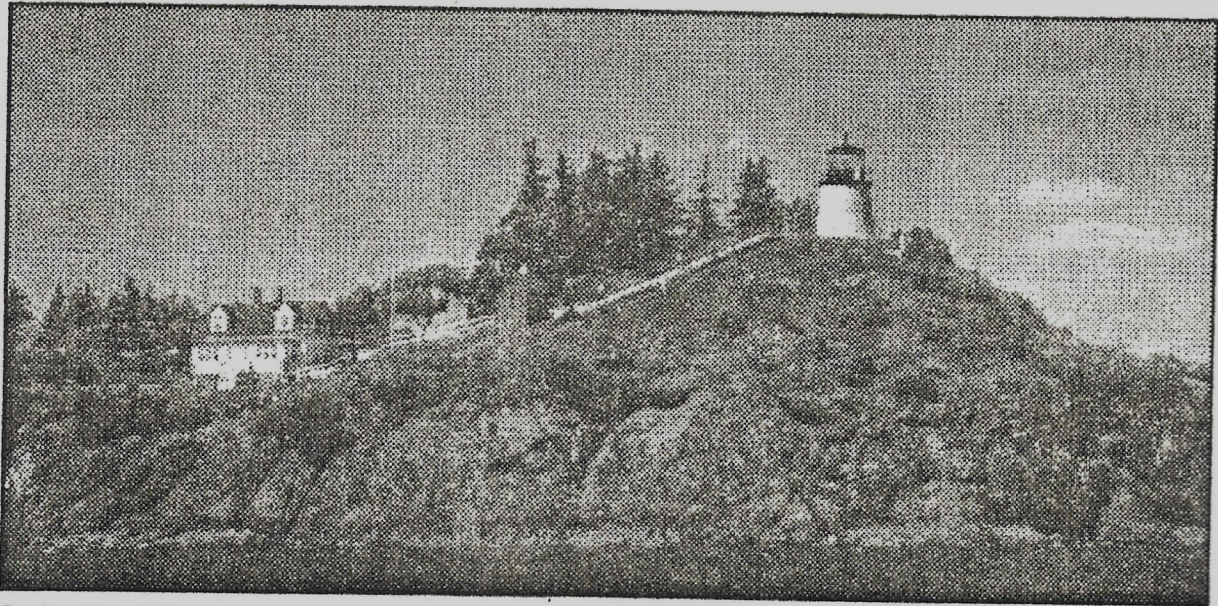
But about 35 minutes inland, in Coopers Mills, is one of the quirkiest antique destinations in the country. Elmer's Barn has an incredible mixture of junk and treasures.

According to Elmer, "I

FAST FACTS

The 1996 Maine Lobster Festival takes place from Aug. 1 through 4. For information, call (800) LOB CLAW. For information about Maine Windjammer cruises, call (800) 745-5651. For information about Rockland, call (207) 596-0376.

up in Rockland, Me.



Owl's Head lighthouse in Rockland seen from a Three Cheers cruise.

Bob Rosenberg

buy junk and sell treasures." There are three floors of chairs, picture frames, clocks, and nearly anything else you might be looking for. Last year he sold a stuffed zebra, two mooseheads, a player piano and a totem pole.

The Victory Chimes, the only original three-masted schooner in the Maine Windjammer fleet, is berthed in Rockland, from where it sails on three- and six-day Maine cruises from June to October.

In Shore Village is a unique collection of historic

lighthouse artifacts at the Shore Village Museum. Here you see a fascinating collection of the now-extinct fresnel lenses taken from manned lighthouses, plus working foghorns, search-and-rescue gear, buoys, bells and boats, all housed in a little banner-draped house on Limerock Street.

Next door is the Limerock Inn, a delightful study in Victorian architecture. Guest rooms are distinctively furnished by innkeepers Kathy and Jerry Dougherty and Denise and

Thom Perkins, who take turns caring for guests.

Breakfasts feature seasonal fruits (including wild Maine blueberries) in homemade pancakes. Around five p.m., guests are invited to tea (or something stronger).

For a break from "down east" staples, there's a charming, little eating spot called Cafe Miranda, on Oak Street, in a tiny clutch of shops with a parking lot in front, which offers an international array of everything but lobster. (Closed Mondays).