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*Testimony of Rep. Allison Hepler in support of*  
**LD 976, Resolve, to Restore Accessible Public Transportation to  
Swan Island in Perkins Township**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife*

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Allison Hepler and I represent the towns of Arrowsic, Georgetown, Phippsburg, West Bath and Woolwich. I am here today in support of **LD 976, Resolve, to Restore Accessible Public Transportation to Swan Island in Perkins Township.**

As you have heard – or will hear – today, Swan Island is a very special place in a very special part of the Kennebec River at the head of Merrymeeting Bay. It is currently managed by IFW as the Steve Powell Wildlife Management Area and, in the words of IFW's Management Plan, "This unique area serves as a wildlife management area, wildlife refuge, and a public educational and recreational facility."

There are many good reasons to help IFW restore accessible public transportation to this island, but I'm a historian so I'm going to speak a little bit about the significance of its history, and the historical remnants that still remain on the island.

Pre-colonial indigenous people who lived on the island camped there in the summer and harvested the wild rice that can still be seen on the southern end of the island. The first Europeans to see Swan Island were likely French explorers sailing with Samuel De Champlain when he visited the Kennebec in 1605. The island also hosted shipbuilding and ice harvesting industries.

The visible history that remains – the history you will see when you visit – comes from two early settlers, one a Loyalist, Silvester Gardiner whose daughter and husband lived in what is today known as the Gardiner-Dumaresq House. It was built in the war-torn years of the late 1750s and is the oldest surviving house on the island, it's remarkable that it still stands.

Another prominent home that still stands was built by Samuel Tubbs, one of General Washington's commanding officers. It became known as the Tubbs-Reed house in the 1830s. These buildings capture the imagination of visitors wondering what it was like to live here 200 years ago.

Finally, for those of us who are excited about the nation's 250<sup>th</sup> birthday, or semiquincentennial, Swan Island holds an additional attraction, the ghosts of Col. Benedict Arnold and his crew from Boston stopping at the island on their way to Pittston, just upriver, to pick up 220 battoes, with which they would attempt an attack of Quebec.

We hope that real, live "ghosts" from the Arnold Expedition Historical Society will land on Swan Island this summer by battoe.

My point is that Swan Island is a state treasure, not only for its natural resources, but for its historical ones as well. Swan Island offers a landscape of the past. And I hope we can find a way to safely welcome the public.

Thank you.