

CHRISTINA OLSON

In 1890 Katie Hathorn was the last surviving child of a long line of Hathorns who made their home in the large white house located near the end of Hathorn Point in Cushing. It was a very cold winter that year and a young sailor from Sweden, Johan Olauson had to spend the winter in Cushing since the schooner he was working on was icebound. Johan met Katie while staying in Cushing and they fell in love. They married two years later and Johan changed his name to John Olson. The couple took over the running of the Olson farm. In 1893 their first child was born, named Anna Christina after her father's mother.

The family grew and three younger brothers joined Christina. The farm was a busy place where their father raised excellent crops of potatoes and corn, sheep were raised and John also cut and sold ice to local stores. Christina and her brothers attended the local schools but her mother soon noticed that Christina's had a weakness in her legs and fell more often than the other children. Katie sewed kneepads to protect her daughter from her many falls. As Christina grew to be a young woman she attended social functions that were common for small towns of that time. This included dances at the Grange, church socials and a variety of social club events. But by the age of twenty-six Christina found it increasingly difficult to stand without outside support. Her parents sent her to Boston City Hospital. She hated her stay in the hospital where the doctors told her that her condition would not improve and that she should return to Cushing to live a quiet country life.

Christina's mother died in 1927 and her father followed in 1935. By 1935 Christina lived alone in the Olson House with her brother Alvaro. But neighbors and the growing families of Christina and Alvaro's younger brothers, Sam and Fred, often visited the house. She continued to be involved with local social functions where her baked goods were highly prized. During the long Maine winters Christina wrote long letters to friends who summered in Cushing. One of her young friends was Betsy James. At seventeen years of age Betsy James brought a young artist by the name of Andrew Wyeth to meet the Olsons. Wyeth was immediately taken with the old farm and with the brother and sister who lived there. Andrew married Betsy in 1940 and they spent summers together in Cushing where Andrew often visited the Olson farm. Wyeth did many drawings, watercolors and tempera paintings of the farm and Christina over the nearly three decades that he knew the Olsons.

Christina's disability increased with age. When she was fifty-three, she was unable to stand and stopped walking, resorting to only crawling to get where she wanted to go. *Christina's World*, painted in 1948 by Andrew Wyeth immortalized Christina forever in the minds of millions of people.

Christina Olson died in January of 1968 one month after her brother Alvaro's death in December of 1967.