

# Home for all Seasons

*A debut book traces an author's journey to self-awareness shaped by 50 years of Craigville summers in her family's Cape Cod cottage.*

By Susan Dewey

*With Honesty*, candid introspection, and humor, author Sally Buffington captures the life-long influence of summers spent in a treasured family homestead in, *A Place Like This: Finding Myself In A Cape Cod Cottage*.

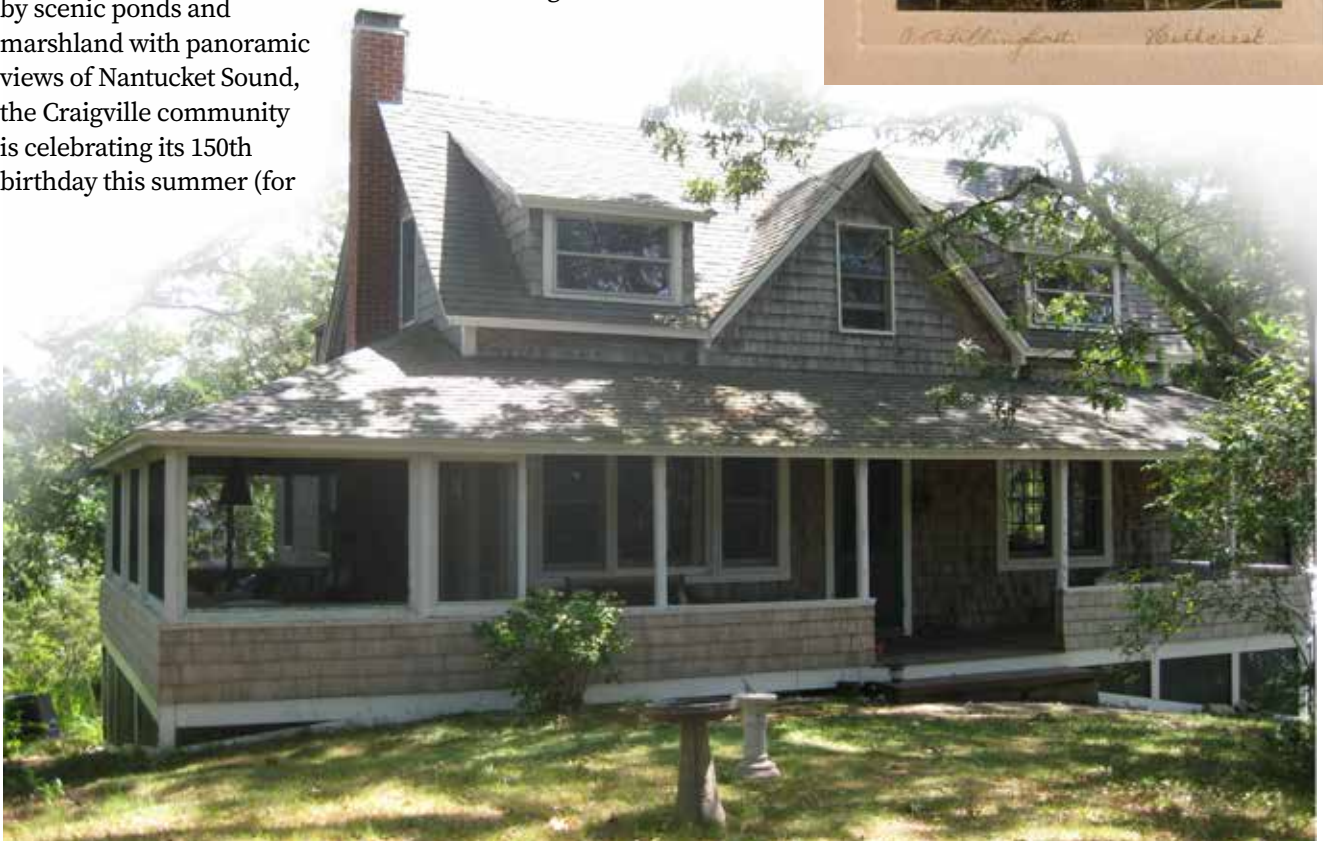
In 1968, Sally, who grew up in the Cape towns of Eastham and Brewster, married Andy Buffington, whose boisterous family spent every summer at Craigville, a vintage seaside community that is part of the village of Centerville.

On a wooded knoll surrounded by scenic ponds and marshland with panoramic views of Nantucket Sound, the Craigville community is celebrating its 150th birthday this summer (for

information, visit [craigville.org](http://craigville.org).) This tiny village of charming, cheek-by-jowl, gingerbread and New England farmhouses with porches on every corner, has long been known as a place that keeps to itself.

Craigville was initially the 1870s' location of the Christian Camp Meeting Association where religious retreats were held in a tent community, on the former site of a 160-acre farm. By the mid-1870s, more than 30 cottages had been built

around two hotels, a boarding house, and a large Tabernacle, which still stands today and has been the site of Buffington family weddings.



*For Sally*, an only child in what she describes as a “subdued and low-key family,” and an accomplished flutist who attended the New England Conservatory of Music, marrying into the clannish, yet outspoken and energetic Buffington family was sometimes overwhelming. Ruled by a mostly benevolent, yet powerful “Mom,” summers at Craigville were an immersion in the insider culture of old-fashioned New England families.

And yet, from the start, this imaginative, aware musician and eventual writer and photographer, knew that the influence of this place would nourish and endure all three generations that loved the cottage they called, simply, Craigville.

Sally writes with an unaffected honesty and easy wit, capturing the daily ebb and flow of life in a summer cottage, where people from different walks of life were thrown together in an old house with limited room. From her gentle, easy-going father in law, Jim Buffington, who did so much for the community and its private, members-only beach club, CBA (Craigville Beach Association) that his name still decorates the club’s central pavilion, to the grandchildren who cherished their annual Cape Cod summer vacations, Craigville was a cherished place.

“This is not a Norman Rockwell family. We are all strong individuals who sometimes disagree,” Sally writes in *A Place Like This*, which is available at local Cape bookstores. “Goodwill gets strained by differing lifestyles thrown together. Babies do cry and children get bored and



Andy & Sally Buffington



The author  
Sally Buffington

fussy on long rainy days. Surely, I am not the only one who has taken long strolling walks on the beach road, to calm and defuse anger. But we come back and try again. There is a sense of long continuity to the place—which both reassures and presses in at times.”

❖ ————— ❖

*“I cherish many pictures of Craigville, but my favorite one is this: the porch in late afternoon, our lively figures silhouetted against the changing sky charged with light. The trees rustle with breeze and the birds call around us. We are laughing and talking over the day, drinks in hand, enjoying each other.”*

❖ ————— ❖

As the subtitle of the book, “Finding Myself In a Cape Cod Cottage,” promises, Sally’s memoir traces the engaging maturation of this independent-minded artist, who often felt like a fish out of water in a family where three brothers were the unwavering focus of a mother who once stated firmly that she “preferred boys” over any female family members.

It was often a challenging experience for Sally, who made the summer pilgrimage with Andy from their winter home in La Jolla, California to the Cape for more than 50 years. She had to navigate the sometimes-intimidating shoals of daily life with a family used to long established norms of behavior, all enforced by the seemingly unbendable will of “Mom.”





“Mom was given to a great deal of candor and was not very tactful at times,” says Sally when reached in her California home. “It was quite a change for me because my family was so reserved. It made for a great contrast when I married into the Buffington family, where it seemed there was a party every night with everyone expressing their views and talking all at once.”

And yet, as a thoughtful observer, Sally grew into a perceptive, confident writer unafraid to share her views of life, not only with her family, but with the world far beyond Craigville’s shady streets. Over the decades, she crammed notebooks and journals with poems, impressions, and essays, several of which she published. This creative output helped her become a confident person despite being occasionally hindered by an environment where a woman’s



*Festive Buffington family members on the Craigville cottage’s front porch (circa 1910) including George (standing far left), Mabel (seventh from left, on railing) and Andy Buffington’s grandmother, Mary (far right, back row in striped dress) with members of the Wilcox, Wetherell, Cort, and Davis families.*

place was definitely considered to be on the domestic side of things.

“It is ironic that the strong people in the family were definitely the women,” Buffington shares. “We were the ones keeping everything going. Because we stepped up, life at Craigville kept on flourishing.”

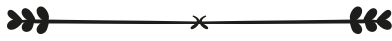
In 2011, the Buffington family was initially wary of Sally sharing the family’s life beyond their Craigville front porch when she first told family members that she was writing a book.

“They were pretty skeptical at first—I don’t think they quite

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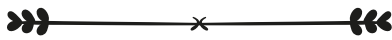
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*"I am part of this place, part of  
Craigville: a compound of house  
and family, people and land..."*

*Like a complex parent whose  
rooms and customs and history  
stand in for personal qualities,  
the cottage has nurtured me and  
brought me up...In its gather-us-  
all-together way, the cottage is  
and has been a mother to me, to  
us all, a constant in our lives."*



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believed I would really complete it,” Sally says. “And since I was 3,000 miles away for a lot of the time when I was actually writing the book, I think they kind of forgot about it.”

Sally notes that once she finished the book after years of near constant effort, she did ask family members to read her story. “I showed it to my niece and to my husband,” she relates, noting that her husband was “100 percent supportive of my writing the book. Andy backed me up in every possible way. Still, as a scientist—an astrophysicist—he is always totally concerned with accuracy. He made sure the book was factual.”

Sally expresses that she hopes to write another book, perhaps about the differences—and the similarities—of living on two of America’s coasts. “I loved it, bouncing back and forth



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*“In this house of family ties and rubs, I revel in being part of the place, and in being a member of the family tree. Craigville is some of all of these things, and at the same time, a homestead.”*



between the two coasts,” she says. “Still, even though I really love California, I was always happiest when I was heading East.”

With its occasionally poetic prose depicting the beauty of a unique coastal world and introspective, yet entertaining depictions of a thoroughly New England life and family, this book is the perfect read for all Cape Codders—those whose families have shaped this summer world for generations, and the newcomers who come to find a bit of themselves in a very special place like this. 🏠

Sally Buffington will be returning to Cape Cod this summer for book signings in area bookstores. *A Place Like This* is available at Titcombs Bookshop, Sandwich and The Brewster Bookstore, Brewster. For more information, visit [sallybuffington.com](http://sallybuffington.com).

*Former Cape Cod Life editor Susan Dewey, whose maiden name is Buffinton (with no g), is no doubt related to Andy Buffington, since their family trees are from the same New England neck of the woods. She, too, married into a family with an old Cape Cod summerhouse, where she lives year round with her family, just around the corner from Craigville.*

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