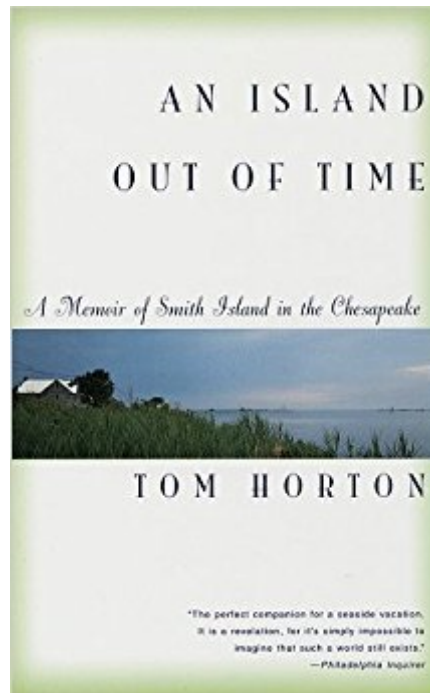




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An Island Out Of Time: A Memoir Of Smith Island In The Chesapeake



Synopsis

A small island, home to five hundred watermen and their families, is the subject of a study about a community that has remained true to its past while witnessing the decline of the natural world surrounding it. Reprint. 20,000 first printing."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Although the archipelago known as Smith Island sits in Chesapeake Bay, just off Maryland's eastern shore, it is in some ways a place lost in time and space. Lacking a police force, a high school, or a hospital, it still carries the flavor of another era. People earn a tough living from crabbing, which means 18-hour work days for six months of the year, and they still speak a heavily accented language that some scholars believe dates back to Elizabethan times. In 1987, Tom Horton, an environmental writer for the Baltimore Sun, moved with his family to this 300-year-old community. This thoughtful, well-written book is his record of the two years they spent there. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Lying 10 miles off Maryland's eastern shore, Smith Island has been a fishing community for more than 300 years. It is a tightly knit, highly religious, hardworking Protestant community with a population of fewer than 500. There are no police, no jail, no local council; here, the church fills the role of government services. Horton, a former environmental reporter for the Baltimore Sun, lived on the island for two years, interviewing inhabitants and taking part in local activities. He tells an eloquent story of people intimately connected to the island who live by catching crabs (100 million

pounds of blue crabs annually), oysters, terrapin and rock bass. He notes that boats are to the islanders what the horse was to the cowboys of the Old West. Horton writes about "propping" (foraging), a cat roundup, hunting and poaching, the seasons on the island. Looking to the future, he gives Smith Island another century before it is drowned by the bay. Readers who enjoyed William Warner's *Beautiful Swimmers* will be eager to read this memoir. Author tour. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A well written and interesting story spoiled only by the occasional, unnecessary and incorrect jabs at what Mr. Horton imagines is conservatism. If the author visited some of the smaller towns in Tennessee and many other places throughout the US, he would be surprised to find similar cultures. He does, for the most part, control himself and this doesn't spoil the book. If you love fishing, the shore or boats, I recommend it non-the less. I doubt the watermen are the main contributors to the decline of the fisheries. The increasing salinity due to the damming of the rivers feeding the upper bay is a known facilitator of the toxin that has killed off the oysters as well as added pollution due to population growth and the silt and fertilizer runoff from more industrialized farming. The watermen are a self-regulating industry, The more oysters and crabs, the more watermen and vice-versa. The islanders know this and are quoted several times in the book recognizing that "these things go in cycles".

Smith Island in the Chesapeake may be an island out of time, but Tom Horton's book is a timeless masterpiece. I was looking more for a book about the nature and environment of Smith Island, instead I found a book more about its people and history (although inevitably it contained descriptions of the natural environment here, which is so interwoven with the lives of the islanders), but I was not disappointed. Mr. Horton's experience as a journalist really allowed him to shine in this book, as many chapters are transcribed from interviews with the islanders. He captured the islander's "rhythms and soft brogue" exceedingly well. I've read a few books about regional culture and history, but I have yet to find one as vivid and flavorful as this one (you can almost smell the steamed blue crabs between the pages!). As you may have known by now, a combination of factors -- sea level rise probably caused by global warming, subsidence of the bay floor and erosion -- have been slowly gnawing away at the low lying islands such as Smith Island in the Chesapeake Bay. A combination of social and economic forces have made the island population dwindle (I did a quick search, the population as of 2010 census was 276, a sharp decline from even two decades ago when the author wrote the book (it was then 400+, already half its peak population). It surely is an

island out of time. But thanks to Mr. Horton, at least part of it will be indelibly preserved in Chesapeake literature. The author did not preach, and he is not an environmental extremist -- he shows an understanding and sympathy to some of the watermen's "illegal" fishing practices. But the questions he asked at the end of the book are thought-provoking -- is our planet not an island like Smith Island? We just draw from a bigger pool of resources. How should we live sustainably before this island of ours before it too will run out of time? I highly recommend this book to those who are interested in regional culture, history, as well as ecology.

This is a well written , poignant book concerning the daily and generational lives of individuals and families that have/had unique life experiences on Smith Island in the Chesapeake. At this point there are about 150 souls living on the island who continue crabbing and fishing and developing small restaurant enterprises that span generations with little change in focus or modus operandi.. As you read the book, you will concurrently step back in time and understand just how individuals live on Smith Island now and over time. There is a distinct possibility you will examine your own life style and ponder if you too could live life as a Smith Islander. Most could not or would not want the Smith Island way of life but there is definite segment of the populace that would savor it for any number of reasons. Make your own decision !

This is a wonderful book by a great author. I have lived all of my 60 years near the Chesapeake Bay, and I found Tom Horton's writing about the area, specifically, Smith Island, to be very accurate as well as entertaining. I truly enjoyed reading this book, and it is now on my bookshelf in it's rightful place next to William W. Warner's "Beautiful Swimmers" and James Michener's "Chesapeake". Thank you, Tom Horton.

A wonderful account of Smith Island, MD and the village towns via this very special place in the Chesapeake. Having vacationed there now, it really is well researched and well done!

I sent this book to my family as we were taking a trip to Smith Island. The book was invaluable as the trip to the island was uneventful. There was not one bit of info from the boat captain on our ride to the island. So thankful for the book

Enjoyed this book, went online looking for more books by Horton and have enjoyed them all. He lived among the people of Smith Island and his word pictures and information is excellent. Ranks

right up there with William Warner in my opinion. Warner and Horton inspired me to make trip to Smith Island. Next time hope to visit Tangier also.

Excellent read with great information about a place for which little practical information exists. Made us want to visit, which we did. We're grateful for the opportunity introduced by this book. Smith Island and its people are treasures.

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