



SANDWICH CONSERVATION TRUST

E-Newsletter

June 2020

Dear Members and Friends,

First, on behalf of SCT trustees and I, may you, your family and friends stay well and see your way through this remarkably difficult time. Like all non-profit organizations, we are trying to figure out how to stay active and meaningful to our members and the public in general. Some days ago as I was thinking of how to call attention to the restorative value of conservation land, the following message came from Mark Robinson, Executive Director of the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts. It eloquently states everything I was thinking of, and much more:

Welcome to Cape Cod open space!

It's been waiting for you, just sitting there quietly minding its own business of filtering water, growing trees and plants and sheltering wildlife. Waiting for a time in your life when you needed it most. When you could not visit friends and family at their homes. When your only choices were to remain inside 24/7, take a break and stroll around the neighborhood, or head out into the woods or beaches, some of you for the first time, solo or with others.

Like much of America right now, Cape Cod is seeing a surge in the use of our many nature preserves and hiking trails. Others have commented on proper hiking protocol (six feet, dogs on leash, etc.) or on the occasional abuses (overcrowding, dumping).

But I want to celebrate the simple fact that by this awakening many more Cape Codders are finally acknowledging the immense value provided for physical and mental health by our vast portfolio of protected open spaces. Everything from our 30,000-acre National Seashore to our state parks to our town beaches and conservation areas and even the small diverse areas near you preserved by your local non-profit land trust. These set-aside natural lands add up to more

than one-third of the land mass of Cape Cod. They did not magically appear. They are the result of the collective effort of all of us, hard-won victories meant to stave off the complete suburbanization of our Cape.

Between 1984 and 2019, the past 35 years, Cape Cod citizens spent almost \$400 million to preserve more than 10,000 acres. Most of that was paid for through the Land Bank Act and now the Community Preservation Act, the three percent surcharge we pay on our property tax bills, supplemented by state funds. All 15 Cape towns voted for these programs and now we witness the results of our investments.

It sounds like a lot of money and it is. But it pales in comparison to the tens of billions spent on developing real estate on the Cape during that period. Some of us recall the height of the boom in 1986 when the town of Barnstable alone approved more than 900 housing units. Picture three new concrete foundations being poured every day for a year. We almost lost our Cape, which one developer claimed he hoped to make into the “next suburb of Boston.”

The small town of Brewster has itself spent tens of millions of dollars to preserve land. But that wise leverage in keeping the town rural just may also keep it from having to spend hundreds of millions on the municipal wastewater systems that its neighboring communities are facing now. And Brewster has terrific walking trails. Find out what a Punkhorn is and go walk it!

Towns and land trusts have created many new hiking paths and published maps highlighting how to find these trail systems for your enjoyment. A quick internet search for Cape Cod Pathways will get you started. Go, be safe, respect others and explore your legacy!

(Mark H. Robinson of Cotuit has helped Cape Cod preserve open space since 1984. He is director of The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, Inc., a network of 30 land trusts and watershed associations.)

Thank you, Mark, for this timely and uplifting message!

I would also like to thank SCT members who responded to our last newsletter by sending along dues and donations. We especially appreciate the support at this time of “belt-tightening”!

As a feature for this letter, I thought it might be of interest to show how we can draw on resources normally associated with “local history” – in other words, old photos, maps and anecdotes, to help us understand preserved land more completely. I thought I would start with the Goodell Preserve in East Sandwich, as an example. You may recall this preserve as one of the locations where we will be working to control the invasive phragmites reed. At first glance it might seem like “just a piece of salt marsh”, but it becomes more interesting as we dig into its history.

I hope you enjoy this photo essay. Future e-newsletters will have similar features on SCT preserves as a way to keep in touch and inform. Thanks again for your interest and support. May you stay safe and enjoy the outdoors!

Sincerely,

John N. Cullity
President

A Closer look at the Goodell Preserve

By John N. Cullity



Every parcel of conservation land has its preservation story. Town properties are usually purchased. Conservation trusts also purchase but are often the recipients of gifts of land. There are various reasons for an individual or family to donate land. Sometimes a parcel is given in memory of a loved one who had a special connection to the land. The Goodell Preserve is an inspiring example of this.



*The 16.5 acre Goodell Preserve has no trail system but is distinguished by offering wide-open marsh views to the passer-by on Rt. 6A or Jones Lane. Salt marsh views have typically become blocked by walls of phragmites reed. This early June view shows the first growth of *Spartina alterniflora*, the marsh grass once considered valuable by farmers. It was cut by scythe in late August into September, with much of it cocked, or carefully stacked, on circular groups of posts. Barring storm damage, these stacks would be transported to the farm in early-mid winter.*



The arrow points out the location in East Sandwich, not far from Sandy Neck, seen in the distance.



The Goodell Preserve, seen in this 1985 aerial, is north of the serpentine upper Scorton Creek. This marsh was once part of Meadow Spring Farm, which ran from this location nearly a mile over Scorton Neck to Cape Cod Bay. Scorton Neck is essentially an island, once heavily used by Native Americans and evidence suggests this to be the last area in town where wigwams were known to exist, during the 1760s. There are numerous springs of fresh water.



This aerial view was taken in 1951. Note the core of the farm, with buildings and fields, with the salt marsh framed by Rt. 6A to the north, Jones Lane to the west, and upper Scorton Creek to the south. Meadow Spring Drive was not constructed until the early 1970s. Sandwich Archives photo.



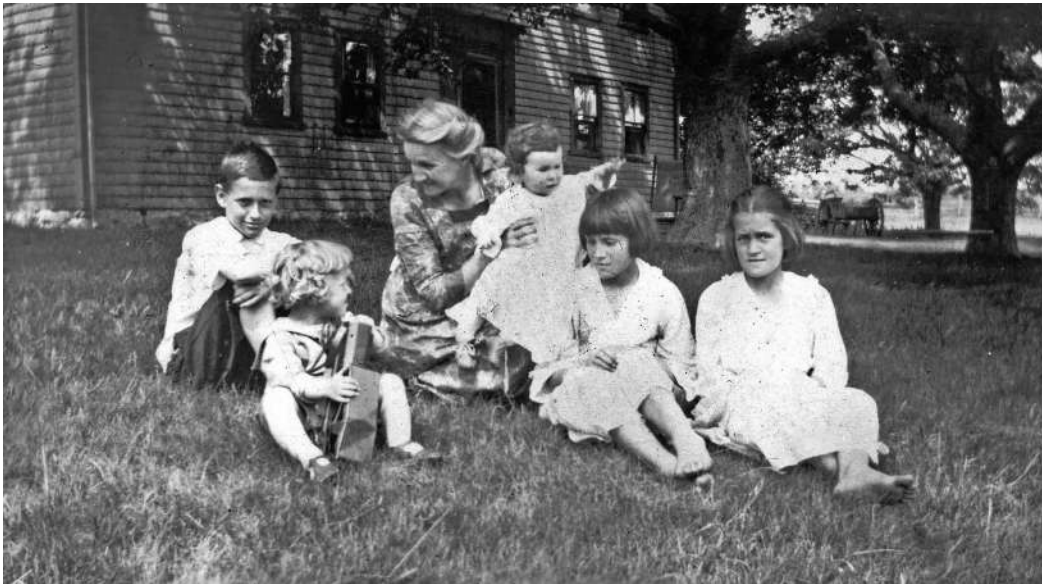
The same view as portrayed on the U.S. Coastal Survey of 1861, showing the treeless nature of the land. Buildings, orchards, fencing and other details are shown on this wonderful map.



Meadow Spring Farm about 1890, with Robert and Dorcas (Hoxie) Armstrong. Robert was born in Scotland in 1838 and arrived in this country in 1853. His widowed mother “dropped him off” at this farm, as the family story goes. He lived with Quakers Solomon and Charity Hoxie, and eventually married their daughter Dorcas.



A circa 1912 view of Meadow Spring Farm looking south towards the salt marsh, a bit of which can be seen. At that time the farm was run by David and Alice Armstrong.



The Goodell Preserve is so named in loving memory of Irene Elizabeth Armstrong Goodell (1912-1952), daughter of David and Alice. In the 1920 photo are L to R: Robert L. Armstrong, John D. White, Alice W. Armstrong, Rosanna White (Cullity), Dorcas Armstrong, Irene Armstrong.



June 30, 1996 – In a simple on-site ceremony the two daughters of Irene Armstrong Goodell present the marsh to the Sandwich Conservation Trust. L to R: Roberta M. Goodell, Judith G. Rock and SCT President John N. Cullity, who also happens to be a descendant of Robert and Dorcas Armstrong. In their Dedication the sisters wrote:

“Irene’s knowledge of, interest in, and affection for the natural world were demonstrated in her extensive flower gardens, and hiking, camping, and bird and flower identification walks with her family. Hers was the last generation of Armstrong-Hoxies to live on the farm, where her father, by putting special contraptions called bog shoes on the horses, used to harvest salt hay from the marsh. Her daughter Roberta thought it appropriate, then, when the estate was being settled, to take title to the marsh land and to convey it, on behalf of her children, to the Sandwich Conservation Trust in her name.”

The SCT remains very thankful to Roberta, who lives in So. Thomaston, Maine, and to Judith, also a Maine resident, who passed in 2013. They gave an enduring gift to us all.



The Sandwich Conservation Trust isn't the only group keeping an eye on the Goodell Preserve marsh. This spring a pair of ospreys nested on a newly-built stand. As nursery ground for fish and other marine creatures, salt marshes are enormously productive habitats.

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