



Little Compton Landscapes

Newsletter of The Sakonnet Preservation Association

Summer 2008

SPA Annual Meeting Celebrates Conservation Successes of 2007

There is a new venue for the Sakonnet Preservation Association's Annual Meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, July 8th. The Sakonnet Golf Club Board has graciously agreed to allow us the use of the club's Playhouse. With the Stone House Club under wraps at this writing, we are fortunate to find another place that can accommodate our membership and the public. We will present our Annual Report, elect new members to our Board and honor those retiring, thank our major donors of financial support and conservation easements, and launch our Stewardship Campaign.

We invite you to come hear our speaker Carol Trocki, the wildlife biologist we use to create the baseline documents and management plans that are a vital guide for protecting the conservation values of the properties we acquire. Carol



Wildlife biologist Carol Trocki.

will share with us her beautiful photographs and will talk about some of the highlights of her experience on the ground in Little Compton. Her enthusiasm is contagious, and her perspective from scrambling through the undergrowth and into our wetlands with her toolbox of biological knowledge is unique. She will highlight the profound beauty and precious natural resources we sometimes take for granted, and perhaps introduce some of us to aspects of our landscape we never knew existed.

So come join us to celebrate the conservation successes of 2007. The event is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served and there will be a cash bar. Doors open at 6:00 PM.

— Rosemary Colt

SPA Annual Meeting

**The Sakonnet
Preservation
Association**

presents

Carol Trocki

TUESDAY

July 8, 2008

6:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Join the SPA for refreshments and a cash bar at the Sakonnet Golf Club Playhouse Sakonnet Point Road

Members, as well as the entire community, are welcome.



**Sakonnet
Preservation Association**

Officers

Abigail Brooks, President
Heather Steers, Vice-President
Sarah Whitehead, Secretary
Bob Wolter, Treasurer

Directors

Abigail Brooks
Ron Bogle
Christopher Burns
Rosemary Colt
John Farr
Nan Haffenreffer
Steve Horowitz
Peter Lozier
Sheila Mackintosh
Richard Ross
Jack Selvaggio
Suzie Shaw
Heather Steers
Terry Tierney
Sarah Whitehead
Bob Wolter

Advisors Council

David V.D. Borden
Nicholas T. Long
Stetson Eddy
Roger Y. Greene
Karen Richmond

Newsletter Editor

Rosemary Colt

Design

Chris O'Toole

SPA

P.O. Box 945
Little Compton RI 02837
Phone/fax: 401-635-8800
Office: 7 South of Commons

Dr. Ames B. Colt Speaks at the SPA Public Information Meeting

The first Chair of the R.I. Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team, Dr. Colt spoke at the annual Sakonnet Preservation Association sponsored public information meeting at the Little Compton Community Center on April 3rd. Colt's job is to analyze how local communities and state agencies sometimes partner well and sometimes clash over the management and protection of open space and aquatic resources including wetlands, watersheds, drinking water reservoirs, rivers, streams and last but not least, Narragansett Bay.

Colt, a legislative appointee who answers to the Governor, is developing a comprehensive plan to bring together state agencies charged with protecting the state's aquatic resources with the goal of improving collaboration. The plan will establish the basis for defining and implementing interagency policies for ecosystem-based



Abigail Brooks with Dr. Ames Colt and SPA Board member Richard Ross.

management and sustainable development of Rhode Island's fresh and marine waters and watersheds, a timely task given the importance of the state's water-reliant economy.

As Colt's remarks made clear, the intricacies of the relationships between the federal government, the state and communities like Little Compton make such a planning effort a considerable challenge. As it happens, Little Compton's water resources are in good shape, although there was some discussion of private wells that may be threatened by pollution in the future and the challenge of protecting wetlands. Also on the local level, Colt stressed the direct imminent threat that climate change — specifically, the rise in sea level — poses to seaside communities like Little Compton and what must be done to compensate for this.

Colt closed with a quote from Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. that he believes expresses the best attitude to take toward the challenges faced by Rhode Island and yes, Little Compton: "Problems will always torment us because all important problems are insoluble: that is why they are important. The good comes from the continuing struggle to try and solve them, not from the vain hope of their solution." — *Rosemary Colt*

President's Letter: Why Do We Choose to Conserve Our Land?

The woodlands that I have granted to preservation have been a peaceful refuge for all the years that I have been in Little Compton. Keeping this small area undeveloped is my contribution to maintaining part of the natural, quiet beauty of our town. My thanks go out to all those involved with the Sakonnet Preservation Association for their work to help fulfill the shared love of continuing our open spaces. — PAUL BAZZONI

The experience of working with someone interested in donating their land for conservation purpose is an amazing and highly personal one. For those of us privileged to have the kind of exchanges that take place around these transactions, it is moving to spend time with a landowner sharing their deeply held feelings about what their land means to them.

When someone chooses conservation to protect their land, it is a major step with emotional, financial and legal complexities. What helps many land donors through the process is the deeply held conviction that conservation leaves a legacy not only for their own beneficiaries, but also for generations of visitors and future owners of this beautiful landscape in which we are fortunate to be living. Many acknowledge how their lives are enriched by the presence of wildlife, indigenous plants, streams and wetlands that mark the seasons and color the vistas they see from their homes, their walking paths and town roadways. The history of their personal experiences and memories, and their respect for historically significant features that represent connections to our community's past can influence the decision to conserve.

When my own parents chose to conserve the family property on which we children had spent our summers, I recognized that their land was a diary of my childhood. That landscape still brings back memories of times spent together as a family and with friends, building treehouses and playing hide-and-go-seek in the woods. What I encounter there floods me with recollection, and I am grateful to know this place is conserved so that I can still visit it knowing that others will experience their own pleasures and joys there.

Jim Marsh said this about his decision this past year to conserve his property on the corner of Burchard Avenue and Peckham Road:

Our house overlooks the nearly 10 acres we have placed in conservation. The home, said to date from 1690, surely must have been the first "permanent" dwelling for a mile or so around; certainly the nearest surviving structure from the same period is the Quaker Meeting House on West Main Road, a distance of about two miles. So I have often tried to imagine what the surrounding land looked like in 1600, 1700, 1865 and later. And, while the landscape has changed in a number of ways — forests and fields were cleared, walls were built, woodland has returned, houses were built while others burned or fell down — nevertheless, the sheer amount of change has not been substantial compared with cities and suburbs, and certainly it is not irreversible. There are hardly any roads today that didn't exist in 1750; there are no tall buildings, little paved acreage, no industrial parks, no superfund sites.

As I've taken this imaginary survey of our nearby landscape, I've realized how diminished our neighborhood would appear if, in the year 2150, what greeted me were dozens of rooftops and networks of roads or proliferating infrastructure of some sort unimaginable today but assaulting to the eye.

In a similar vein, Wendy Born expressed the following sentiments when she and her husband Chris chose to conserve 21.5 acres of their property on West Main Road, thus creating an unbroken chain of conserved properties stretching from Treaty Rock Farm to Taylor's Lane:

Chris and I were drawn to Little Compton 20 years ago by the beautiful expanses of land and the undeveloped shoreline. Having grown up in New York City, we knew East Hampton when it still had farmland! We watched the Hamptons change and also the New Jersey shore, so we were aware of what can happen with unfettered development. Years later, our desire to preserve the exquisite beauty of Little Compton inspired us to consider different vehicles for land preservation. The leadership

President's Letter (continued)

of the Sakonnet Preservation Association and the Agricultural Conservancy Trust encouraged our direction and guided us through the process...

Five of us from the Sakonnet Preservation Association Board were privileged to accompany Amelia Thomas around her fine property in the heart of Adamsville that she chose to conserve this past year. At the age of 91, she delighted us with humorous descriptions of enticing her grandchildren to help maintain trails in her woods by naming each trail for the individual who cleared them. "It worked better with some than with others," is what I recall her saying. She knows some of the intriguing history of her property and has kept cattle, and until recently sheep, in a meadow surrounded by beautifully maintained historic stone walls. She continues to garden, and recognizes the history and beauty of what she has chosen to conserve.

When I sat with her to go over the photos and biological description that forms the baseline documentation of her conservation easement, she could hardly get enough of what she was learning about her land from our wildlife biologist's observations and the photographs she took as a building snow-storm left its mark on the landscape. Amelia shared how she walks from time to time in the nearby Simmons Mill Pond

Management Area, where the smells and landscape are reminiscent of the island where she spent her early summers.

I recently read a piece by a woman who had revisited a landscape that held great meaning from her childhood. She experienced a mental return to "the girl who was in awe of the world around her and her place in it." The author, Laura Dave, describes going through a difficult time in her life and ends the piece with a paragraph that spoke to me about what places that remain intact can mean:

Maybe this is what we get in life, a few great loves: loves that return us to ourselves when we need it most. And maybe some of those loves aren't people, but places...that fill us up with light and energy and hope at moments when we feel especially tired or lost. That is the beauty of love in all its forms. We don't know when or how it is going to save us.

Dave's sentiments infuse the exchanges I have had from some of our land donors, and I recognize it from my own experience. So on behalf of our Board and membership, I would like to thank Dr. Paul Bazzoni, Dr. Christopher and Wendy Born, Mr. James Marsh and Mrs. Amelia Thomas for their generosity in placing permanent conservation easements on 41.5 precious acres of open space in Little Compton. — *Abigail Brooks*



**Sakonnet
Preservation
Association**

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A NEW MEMBER.

Enclosed is my tax deductible membership contribution.

- Student \$20
- Individual \$25
- Family \$35
- Sustaining \$100
- Patron \$250
- Sponsor \$500
- Benefactor \$1,000+
- Special Gift \$ _____

Sakonnet Preservation Association

P. O. Box 945, Little Compton, RI 02837

Phone/Fax: 401.635.8800

Name _____

Permanent Address _____

Town _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Summer Phone _____

E-mail _____

Summer Address _____

2007— A Year's Worth of Accomplishments for the SPA

I looked back in December of 2007 at the accomplishments of this all-volunteer organization with amazement. When I use the word “dedicated” to describe how energetically our Board and volunteers work, and what an “honor” it is to work with them, these words hardly come close to fully capturing what I am trying to express. The following list will give you a sense of how deeply committed this group is to making things happen. Every single Board member and community volunteer who helped had some part in these impressive achievements.

Together we:

- Closed on 41.5 acres of conserved land on the east, central and west sides of Town;
- Monitored every single conservation easement we hold;
- Installed membership software in the office computer that maximizes information and streamlines responses to donors;
- Rose to the occasion when our auditor wound up with an extended stay in the hospital at IRS reporting time;
- Updated our Strategic Plan;
- Completed management plans on five fee properties;
- Successfully renewed efforts to protect the buffers around Watson Reservoir;
- Found out how capable our bookkeeper is at adapting to more stringent auditing procedures;
- Moved to a more beautiful, light-filled and larger office;
- Ended the year with a financial surplus;
- Contributed to the protection of Treaty Rock Farm with The Nature Conservancy of RI, LC Agricultural Conservancy Trust, DEM, and Champlin Foundations as well as the Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program and generous private donors;
- Archived and securely stored our original documents;
- Brought a nationally renowned lawyer to town to address the public about the new tax incentives for conserving land;
- Started work with a representative of the Town's Tax Assessor's, the Assessor's Clerk and representatives of the LC

Agricultural Conservancy Trust on strategies for educating property owners about various conservation options and for documenting conserved properties on an annual basis;

- Helped update the Town's records on currently protected properties;
- Had our President, Larry Anderson, honored by the RI Land Trust Council with the prestigious Peter Merritt Award;
- Engaged a wildlife biologist to do baseline documentation who is both an antelope and a terrific photographer;
- Straightened out the sign at the Ponderosa;
- Got the Wilbur School involved in the Atlantic Salmon Federation's Fish Friends Program for 7th and 8th graders;
- Led an Earth Day Quest for students at the Ponderosa and took 2nd graders on a field trip to the Audubon Center in Bristol;

Not Bad!!! — *Abigail Brooks*

Classroom at the Ponderosa



On a beautiful Little Compton day, teachers Aimee Maclean and Sarah Jansen, along with Abigail Brooks and Rosemary Colt, led a group of Wilbur McMahon students on an SPA sponsored quest to the Ponderosa Pond. With clipboards in hand, the students interpreted clues to locate trees and plants. They then set forth to see what other flora and fauna they could find in and around the pond.

“Salmon in the Classroom” Teaches Much More

In the winter issue of this newsletter, Board member Robert Wolter reported on the “Salmon in the Classroom” program now underway in the 7th and 8th grades at the Wilbur McMahon Schools under the auspices of the Sakonnet Preservation Association. As it turns out, the students have learned history, mathematics, science and ecology in seeing the project through. The eggs were delivered in early March, hatched, and were “launched” in the Wood/Pawcatuck River System in western Rhode Island on April 29th. To get ready for the great day the students, led by their teacher Aimee MacLean, studied the life cycle of the Atlantic salmon as well as the relationship between time, water temperature and the development of the young salmon. They have also learned how the salmon became extinct in Rhode Island over 200 years ago when dams were built for industrial purposes, thus preventing adults from returning to their spawning grounds. Additionally, pollution has also been a factor in the loss of the species.



Wilbur McMahon teacher Aimee MacLean helps students Dillon Pauls and Jeff Lavoie learn about the life cycle of salmon.

Postal Customer

For Information:
401.635.8800

Our Mission
The Sakonnet Preservation Association, a non-profit land trust, is dedicated to preserving the rural character and natural resources of Little Compton for the lasting benefit of the Community.

Sakonnet Preservation Association
P. O. Box 945
Little Compton, RI 02837-0945



Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Little Compton, RI
Permit No. 48