



The Henry L. Ferguson Museum

Newsletter Vol. 32, No. 1 • Spring 2017

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From the President

It is that time of year again. The daffodils are out, the robins are flitting in my yard, and I am planning my summer months at Fishers. I am very excited about this year's line-up of Museum programs and events. With the generous sponsorship of Altus Partners and Chubb, our director Pierce Rafferty has assembled a great annual exhibit about the photographers of Fishers Island. There were so many images competing for inclusion that this year's show is just "Part One"—covering the decades between 1880 and 1940. Among other things, visitors will be intrigued by changes large and small to landscapes and structures.

We also have a great group of speakers scheduled. Russ Cohen, expert forager and wild food enthusiast, will teach us about wild edibles, both during his lecture and on a Penni Sharp Nature Walk. Who knows what we might find on Fishers Island to eat! Dr. Brian Jones, the Connecticut State Archaeologist, will speak about Native American life in Connecticut over the millennia. Archaeologist Dr. Kevin McBride, Director of Research at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum, will reveal the scope of his recent work at coastal sites on Block Island, both on land and underwater. Eric Jay Dolin, author of "Brilliant Beacons," will chronicle the dramatic history of lighthouses and their keepers in the United States. Focusing on current issues, Dr. Tundi Agardy, founder of Sound Seas, will discuss her work with marine conservation and the importance of marine biodiversity. Last but not least,

Pierce will regale us with an often humorous narrative of how the outside world has viewed our beloved community for the last 250 years.

In addition to our speaker series, we have a full summer schedule of children's programming to entertain and inform our younger members. The different events will cover a variety of topics, including animal diversity, bird adaptations, classification, gardening, owls, insects, and archaeology.

I also want to bring attention to the important work being done by the members of our Land Trust Committee, who are striving to both protect ecologically important parcels from development, and to manage areas for conservation goals that are held in the Land Trust. The Land Trust Committee has initiated a number of projects to tackle invasive species, the number one threat to the ecological integrity of the island. Please see Bob Miller's report on this work on page three.

As you might imagine, all of this programming and conservation work is only achieved through the incredible dedication and hard work of a number of volunteers and the generosity of our members. The vitality of our Museum depends on the strength of our membership. If you enjoy our exhibits, take your child to a nature program, walk our network of trails, enrich yourself at our speaker series, I strongly encourage you to become a member.

I look forward to seeing you this summer!

—*Elizabeth McCance, President*



Photograph by Mrs. William D. Gaillard. Courtesy of the Gaillard Family.



1st Floor Main Gallery:
Photographers of Fishers Island, Part One: 1880s to 1930s

1st Floor Foyer:
Children at Play on Fishers Island
Photographs by Mrs. William D. Gaillard

1st Floor Natural History Gallery:
Geb Cook's Wetland Battle with Phragmites

2nd Floor Main Gallery:
A Sampling from the Museum's Collections

2nd Floor Side Gallery:
19th Century Paintings of Fishers Island



The Henry L. Ferguson Museum 2017 Annual Exhibition
Photographers of Fishers Island, Part One: 1880s to 1930s

Exhibition sponsored by:



AltusPartners
THE POWER OF OBJECTIVITY

CHUBB®

Join us for the opening reception on Saturday, June 24th, 5 to 7 p.m. All welcome!

Land Trust Report 2016/Spring 2017

by *Bob Miller*

2016 was an active and productive year for the Land Trust. We received contributions of two parcels of environmentally sensitive land—one with an area of over one acre on the East End Road donated by Henry and Margaret King, and the other with an area of almost three acres donated by Chris Rafferty and Kathleen Lamborn. Both parcels constitute legal building lots, and, as with all Land Trust properties, the Museum has legally undertaken to protect these parcels in perpetuity in their natural state and to protect them from development.

In 2016, the Museum also focused more intensely on the stewardship of the more than 330 acres that it owns. The Museum had the majority of its properties surveyed by two interns who recently graduated from the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. Our interns rendered a comprehensive assessment of the existing ecological communities on these Land Trust properties that will assist in our stewardship efforts. Invasive plant species are present in varying densities throughout the Museum's Land Trust holdings, as they are in all of Fishers Island. For this reason, the Museum established a Land Trust Committee consisting of both Board members and non-members who have a particular interest and/or expertise in addressing the control of invasive plants, as well as other stewardship issues. The current members of the Land Trust Committee are: Donald Beck, Barry Bryan, Dave Burnham, Ken Edwards, Justine Kibbe, Steve Malinowski, Elizabeth McCance, Bob Miller, Terry McNamara, Megan Raymond, and Joe Woolston.

Projects initiated by the Committee over the winter of 2016/2017 included the clearing of invasive vegetation on the sanctuary behind the Museum along Belle Hill Avenue and West Street and extensive invasive removal projects on Isabella Beach Road and on the east end of Clay Point Road. While portions of the property near the Museum building and on Clay Point Road are almost barren because of the necessary ground cover removal, native plants will be introduced and then monitored to facilitate effective invasive species management. Monitoring and maintenance of all the Land Trust properties to manage invasive vegetation is a key concern of this Committee.

It should be noted that heretofore almost all Land Trust management activities have been conducted by volunteers. While we will continue to rely on the many volunteers who assist in trail clearing, signage, and other projects—and we especially appreciate the assistance that the Fishers Island Fire Department provides in burning the grasslands at Middle Farms—the major restoration projects now under way are conducted by Island contractors on the basis of sealed bids. Fortunately, work to date has been financed by generous donations from the McCance Foundation and from private individuals. Donations to the Museum for land stewardship purposes will be greatly appreciated as we move into this new phase of our efforts to maintain the Island's natural beauty and ecological integrity.



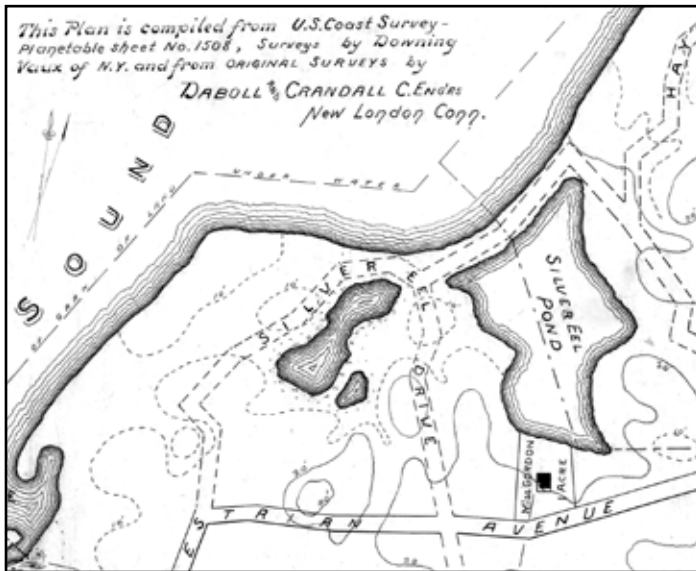
Section of Land Trust sanctuary behind Museum after initial clearing.



Land Trust property on Clay Point Road after clearing.



Site of invasive clearing on Land Trust property, Isabella Beach Road.



Detail of Plan Showing Section of the West End of Fishers Island, N.Y., c. 1897. Note the ponds to the west of Silver Eel Pond. The Government later filled them in with displaced earth from emplacement construction. The named roads were never built as shown.

Island History

by *Pierce Rafferty*

After purchasing the western tip of Fishers Island for fortification purposes in September 1898, one of the U.S. Government's first tasks was to create a landing dock for supplies. Silver Eel Pond drew immediate attention as a favored site. A letter to the Chief of Engineers, dated December 13, 1898, revealed the pond's advantages: "The necessity for the work arises from the fact that there is no landing of any character on the Government Reservation, and none on the island at all, which is practicable for landing materials for the work. Cutting into Silver Eel Pond is proposed, because it is not only cheaper than to build a dock out into the Sound, but affords a perfectly land-locked harbor in which vessels can lie and discharge in any weather."

After receiving the go ahead from Washington, labor crews began preliminary cuts to open Silver Eel Pond in December 1898. The channel was fully dredged in February 1899. The following newspaper article was published in the *Naugatuck Daily News* on March 23, 1899:

Silver Eels Becoming Scarce

Salt Water Drives Them from Famous Pond at Fisher's Island.

New Haven, March 23.— The Famous silver eels of Fisher's Island will soon be no more. Silver Eel pond is known to most fishermen and sportsmen in this vicinity. It is located on this side of Fisher's Island some way back of the Munatawket house.

It is quite a large body of water and a peculiar kind of eels have made their home in it. Silver eels are long and thin, with a white stripe running underneath. They are not better eating, although some persons prefer them to the regular salt water eels.

Since the government began to build fortifications on the island many changes have been made. Among other things a channel has been cut about 70 feet wide from the sound into Silver Eel pond, a distance of perhaps 70 feet. Then a wharf was built at one side of the pond. The bank was abrupt, and little work was required to make a wharf with 12 feet of water. The pond was dredged so it affords a fine harbor and landing place for boats bringing supplies and materials for government work.

The tapping of the sea salt water into the brackish waters of Silver Eel pond, and the silver striped inmates could not stand the change. Some sought to escape by way of the channel, others remained. A fisherman crossing the pond lately saw dozens of eels lying at the bottom with their silver stripes uppermost, showing that they were dead. Other fishermen, spearing for eels in Little Hay harbor, have brought up silver eels from out of the mud or in dying condition. They no doubt were some of the number which had left the pond by way of the channel and had dug into the mud to escape the briny waters of the sound.



Looking past dock on Silver Eel Cove to the Sound opening, circa 2001.

Nature Notes

Excerpted from: *Birds, Plants & Fish of Fort H.G. Wright* by the late Edwin Horning [1998].

Silver Eel Cove:

Island climate; plants, animals, and folks around the docks

"Silver Eel Cove" (where the Fishers Island ferries dock) was a pond before 1898. The land was purchased by the United States Government, the Fort was begun, and the present entrance to the cove was opened to the waters of Fishers Island Sound. A new environment was created and new forms of living creatures would henceforth be found in Silver Eel Cove.

The water temperatures of the surrounding sea have a moderating effect on the air temperature of Fishers Island. Air temperatures on the Island in winter are 5-10 degrees warmer than those on the nearby mainland. And in the summer it is 5-10 or more degrees cooler. This is because water has more "thermal inertia" than air; for example, water temperatures in Silver Eel Cove in 1997 varied from a low of 41 during January to



Great egret (*Ardea alba*) feeding in Silver Eel Cove. Photograph by Justine Kibbe. Note the two rockweeds in background: bladder wrack (*Fucus vesiculosus*) above the bird's back, and knotted wrack (*Ascophyllum nodosum*) on rocks to right.

a high of 72 in September (a range of 31 degrees Fahrenheit), whereas the air temperature varied from 6 degrees in January to a high of 88 on July 15, a range of 82 degrees. It's great after being in New London on a hot summer day with 90-degree temperatures to return to the Island's 80 degrees.

While you are on the dock, look at the seaweed or algae growing on the pilings. There are three main kinds of algae: the green, the brown, and the red, all of which grow in Silver Eel Cove. Attached to the pilings are at least three kinds of brown algae. One kind is kelp, which comes in long greenish-brown strips. Botanists call it *Laminaria*. There are two smaller kinds with knotted fronds: the rockweeds, one of which is *Fucus vesiculosus* and the other *Ascophyllum nodosum*. The "knots" are gas-filled floats which keep the fronds up in the sunlight despite the rise and fall of the tide. Among the red algae is an edible one called "dulse," also known as *Rhodomenia palmata*. It is reddish and shaped somewhat like a hand with projecting fingerlike fronds. Among the greens are other edible algae called sea lettuce or *Ulva lactuca*. All of these algae must be attached by a "holdfast" to something solid like a piling or a rock. Other places to find them are on the rocks northwest of Silver Eel and at Race Point.

In September and October, people with rods, bait, and other gear appear on the docks, for it is fishing time. They come to catch tinker mackerel, snapper blues, butterfish, flounder, fluke, weakfish, eels, porgies, and others. Schools of fish fishermen call "bait fish" come into Silver Eel Cove, sometimes followed by the bigger fish that the fishermen want to catch. The most numerous of the bait fish are the Atlantic silversides. At times squid appear in large numbers. Striped bass lurk in the waters under the dock, as Bob Evans discovered when he lived nearby and scanned the water at night. Lobsters also live in the Cove, and have on occasion been caught by inventive fishermen.

Birds that come into Silver Eel Cove during the winter months are double-crested cormorants, red-breasted mergan-

sers, mallards, black ducks, gulls, and others. On a cold winter day in the early 1960s, with an earth science class, I watched as a herring gull dove and killed a horned grebe. One of the class members raced to the spot and waded into the water to retrieve the grebe. It is now a specimen in the Museum. A fishing bird which may be seen during any month of the year at the cove is the kingfisher; it is often perched on a dock, boat, or other spot where it can see fish in the cove. This bird sometimes alerts us to its presence by its rattling call.

Another fishing bird present in large numbers during July and August is the common tern, which does not arrive on the Island until early May, back from South America. Wilfred Sinclair, an early manager of the Ferry District, once said, "I know that it is summer when I see a tern." In late July, August, and early September the common terns perch on the pilings and docks, make flights over the water, hover briefly, then dive to catch fish. Often fish are brought back to young perched on a dock. The young terns were probably hatched on Great Gull Island, and flew to Silver Eel Cove with their parents. If you watch terns as they hover and dive, it is easy to see when they are successful or not.

Other birds nest around Silver Eel Cove. Barn swallows swoop over the water and under the dock where they nest; the young must be able to fly when they leave the nest for the first time. Starlings nest in holes in the pilings. Bob Evans found a Green heron's nest hidden between pilings near the ramp at the south end of the Cove. During the early 1990s, a flicker nest was found in a cavity in a stump along the road leaving the ferry dock. In a tree next to the former headquarters building where the Youth Fellowship now is, a family of crows had their nest. Crows are most secretive at nesting time and nests are not often found. In the loft of the building where Harold Cook now has his shop, rock doves (or common pigeons) nested for many years. Swans have nested in the wrack on the little beach at the entrance to the harbor.

It is always possible that you will see unusual animals around the docks. One day Bob Evans saw a river otter sitting under the dock at the southernmost end of the cove. Bob watched the otter dive and catch a fish, return to its spot, and eat the fish. Under this same dock during a winter in the 1950s, Lee Ferguson one day pointed out a bird that I had never before



The Razor-billed auk (*Alca torda*) is a colonial sea bird that comes to shore only to breed. Lee Ferguson and Ed Horning saw one in Silver Eel cove in the 1950s, the last recorded sighting on Fishers Island, other than remains that had washed ashore.

Nature Notes

The Snakes of Fishers Island - Part II by Terry McNamara



Docks on Silver Eel Cove with Pump House in background, circa 2001.



Black-crowned night heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) in pines near the Pump House, Silver Eel Cove. Photograph by Justine Kibbe.

seen. It was one of the northern members of the alcid family, a razor-billed auk. The poor bird had gotten into a patch of oil. Lee said that he had seen another oiled auk in the same place before seeing this one. A garter snake was once seen swimming across the Cove in the late 1980s. Charles Stepanek once found a dead gray fox in the area.

As you leave Silver Eel Cove, note a grove of exotic elms just east of the road. They are Turkestan elms, *Ulmus pumila*. There were probably planted around 1910-1920, as the fort was being first developed. In September and October these non-native trees come alive with bird life. At that time, yellow-bellied sapsuckers come from the north, seeking food. This member of the woodpecker family perches on the side of a tree and drills 10 or more holes in a row across the trunk. They are often seen on apple and other fruit trees, but this elm is favored. The sapsucker dines on the sap, and insects attracted to the sap, but so do other birds including such migrating warblers as the black-throated blue, the yellow-rumped, and the Cape May warbler (a very rare one). Hummingbirds have been seen partaking of the sap. Insects such as flies, wasps, bees and butterflies sip at the sap wells of elms. Every autumn I look here to see the first of the sapsuckers. Sometimes I hear a cat-like “meow.” It is the sapsucker.

Editor's note: The grove of Turkestan, or Siberian Elms referred to in the last paragraph is located on the Kibbe property across from the Lamb property. The traffic pattern to the ferry was then clockwise, so the elms were then on your left as you exited the ferry area.

In last year's newsletter we discussed the two most common snakes that you are likely to encounter on our island: the Northern Black Racer and the Eastern Garter Snake. There are two other species of snake that inhabit Fishers Island. You may have encountered the Eastern Ribbon Snake (*Thamnophis s. sauritus*). It closely resembles the ubiquitous eastern garter snake as the ribbon snake is a slender, medium-sized snake with three well-defined yellow stripes on a dark, brown to black body. It is found in a variety of habitats but always in proximity to shallow water. Like the eastern garter snake, the eastern ribbon snake is one of the first to appear in the spring and stays active April to October. They are semi-arboreal, often found in bushes and shrubs, and are active during the day.

To determine that you are observing a ribbon snake as opposed to a garter, you can use specific keys and a general sense of their markings and relative proportion. On the ribbon snake the supralabials (the first row of scales above the mouth) are white and tend to be set off from the brown head

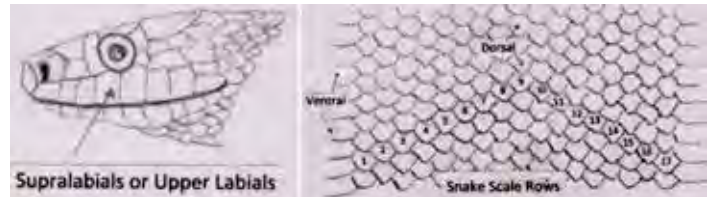


Figure 1

Figure 2

by a thin black line. The garter snake, by contrast, often has dark bars on its supralabials (see figure 1). The lateral stripes of the ribbon involve scale rows 3 and 4 as opposed to 2 and 3 in the garter snake (see figure 2), but you'd have to handle the snake to make this observation. Once you've seen a few of each type, it's easier to tell the difference. The ribbon snake is much slimmer and has a much longer tail, about a third of its body length. Its markings are much “neater” and more distinct. The ribbon snake is also swifter and more agile than the garter.

Eastern ribbon snakes average about 26 inches in length, though they do grow all through their lives and have been recorded up to 38 inches. The young are born in August in a litter of 2 to 20 snakes averaging 8 inches long. As an adult, the snake feeds primarily on amphibians. Most feeding is done in the morning or early evening, when the snakes prowl for food. Once the prey is discovered, the ribbon snake crawls rapidly after it, seizes it in her mouth, and swallows it.

Many wading birds and small mammals eat this snake, as do black racers and turtles. The species is considered a very good indicator of high quality wetlands because of its dietary requirements. Due to their habitat preferences, road mortality is not significant. When first disturbed, this snake attempts to escape by diving into water and swimming away or vanishing into the vegetation. When handled, they will thrash about and



Eastern ribbon snake (*Thamnophis s. sauritus*).

spray feces and musk from their anal glands, but they rarely bite.

The final member of our exclusive Fishers Island serpentine group is the Northern Ring-necked Snake (*Diadophis punctatus edwardsii*). This handsome 10 to 14 inch snake is smooth scaled with a slate gray or blue gray body. It has a black head, a yellow, golden or orange neck ring, and a yellowish underside. Your chances of observing this creature while walking the trails are slim, for although they are common, they are very secretive.

The snake is principally nocturnal. During the day it can be found under rocks, logs, bark or debris—but mostly under rocks. They use heated rock for thermoregulation in lieu of basking in the sun like the larger snakes. They're often communal, so when you turn over rocks there's a good chance there will be more than one present. They prefer woodlands and are rarely found more than a few meters from them. A walk on dirt roads in forested areas will often yield carcasses flattened by automobiles during the night.

Ring-necked snakes emerge from hibernation toward the end of April and mate soon afterwards. The female lays a clutch of 2 to 10 white elongate eggs, 7/8 inches long with a diameter of 1/5 of an inch, with one end tapering more than the other. The newly hatched young average about 5 inches and, as with all snakes, will continue to grow their whole lives,



Northern ring-necked snake (*Diadophis punctatus edwardsii*).

which can last up to 10 years. The record length for a ring-necked snake is over 27 inches.

A ring-necked snake feeds on salamanders, frogs, other snakes, slugs, insects, and earthworms. It seizes the prey in its mouth and chews on it until it stops struggling. Although they are completely harmless to humans, ring-necks do have a weak venom. They use their enlarged back teeth to introduce the toxic saliva into the prey. These snakes rarely bite when handled but will release an offensive smelling musk and feces when disturbed. Like all small snakes, ring-necks are viewed as a food source by a large variety of predators.

Hopefully you will encounter some of these snakes during your explorations this summer. If you do discover a clutch of eggs please report it to the Museum by email or phone call.



Close up of head of Northern ring-necked snake (*Diadophis punctatus edwardsii*).

Island History

Going to Isabel Beach, Anyone?

The Museum has sought for years to locate details on the shipwreck that gave Isabella Beach its name. Henry L. Ferguson's history of the island, "Fishers Island, N.Y.: 1614-1925," published in 1925, had only the sketchiest reference to the wreck: "The schooner Isabella Blake, after which the beach is named, went ashore in about 1870." Recently, while doing an internet newspaper archive search of all connections that Noank, Conn. has with Fishers Island, Pierce Rafferty uncovered some surprising information. The March 11, 1867 issue of the *Philadelphia Enquirer* revealed that "Schr. Isabel Blake, ashore on Willoughby's Point, Fisher's Island, is full of water, and will prove almost a total loss; she has been stripped of sails, rigging, &c. The vessel struck on Sunday night, and almost immediately filled with water, and the officers and crew were compelled to stand in it until Monday morning. Capt. Hart's wife stood in the cabin up to her shoulders in water for nearly sixteen hours, and when taken out she could hardly stand and was nearly frozen; those on board were rescued by a vessel on Monday forenoon, and taken to Noank, Ct., where they were cared for by Deacon E. Rogers and others, and then sent to Boston, their destination." Further research has confirmed the wrecked schooner's name was *Isabel Blake* not *Isabella Blake* and that she was carrying coal as cargo. The wreck occurred on the night of Sunday, March 3, 1867. "Willoughby's Point" referred to in the newspaper article was likely Wilderness Point. *In any case, it's interesting to note that we've been calling Isabella Beach by the (slightly) wrong name for 150 years.*

(Nearby) Island History

South Dumpling Island

by Robert P. Anderson, Jr.

My earliest memory of the name South Dumpling Island, almost 70 years ago, was hearing my father Robert P. Anderson entertain guests in the main cabin of our ketch *Kestrel* with stories of the olden days in Noank. From my bunk in the fo'c'sle I shuddered at his description of the wreck of the great steamship *Atlantic* on November 27, 1846 at North Hill, Fishers Island, just south of South Dumpling. Nearly fifty souls died in the frigid water that night. One of the victims was a Belgian lace merchant, whose cargo in barrels washed up on the shore, eagerly picked up by boats of Noank scavengers and the lace distributed among Noank homes. My grandmother still treasured hers.

My father loved telling about his early job as mate for the Noank lobsterman Wayland Morgan, whose pots were set near South Dumpling. One day Wayland received some very bad news: the New York Fish & Game Commission decreed that every boat fishing in New York waters would be required to have a name. He'd been lobstering there for a good many years, and his boat had never had a name, and he was darned if he was going to obey this highhanded order. Eventually, though, he decided he had better comply. So on the very last day for registration Wayland went to the Suffolk County office and entered the shortest name he could think of, *It*.

Over the years the waters around South Dumpling became a favorite destination of our boat. Sailing to and from Noank required crossing the strong tidal currents of Fishers Island Sound, either flood or ebb, and a light wind made the trip challenging and uncertain.

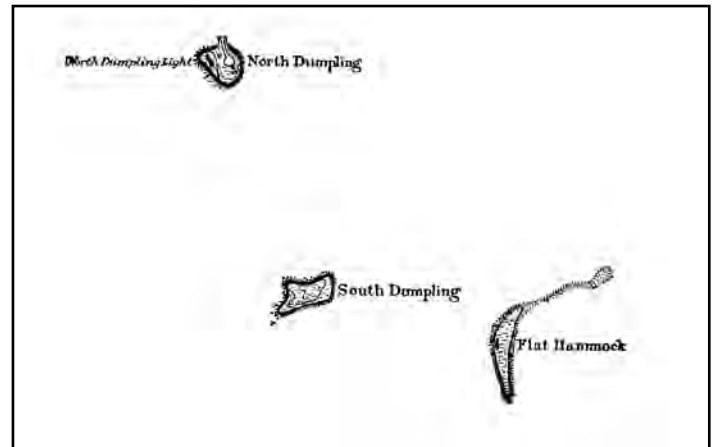
While courting my wife Mary in Minneapolis, Minnesota during the late 1950s, I discovered a print of North and South Dumpling islands in a most unlikely place: the back of playing cards from United Airlines. The painting was by Y.E. Soderberg, whom I knew, and it represented for me the charm of my homeland in which I was hoping to interest Mary.

During the two years 1962-64 Alfred L. Ferguson, III served as law clerk to my father in his last year as Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut. Since his Second World War years in southern England, my father had wholeheartedly adopted the custom of afternoon tea, where an informal familiarity existed among the judge, his law clerk and his secretary. At one of these daily events in 1963, Al Ferguson, knowing of my father's lifelong residence in Noank, mentioned casually that his grandfather Alfred L. Ferguson was going to sell South Dumpling Island. Instantly Pa responded, "I'll buy it!"

The record owner of the island was the West End Land Company, Inc., a New York domestic corporation of which Alfred L. Ferguson was the President. In due course, a bargain and sale deed executed on February 20, 1964 was delivered

by Mr. Ferguson, Sr. to my father and subsequently recorded in the Suffolk County Land Records at book 5507, Page 584. A \$2.20 documentary stamp disclosed the \$2,000 sale price.

Our family used South Dumpling for occasional picnics but no overnights. My father would anchor our sailboat about half way to Flat Hammock Island, and from there we rowed to South Dumpling. My father periodically spoke of having a wharf built on the east side of the island to facilitate tying up his boat there, but fortunately nothing ever came of it. I was concerned about inevitable vandalism and favored leaving the island as it was.



Detail from *U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Fisher's Island, New York, 1882.*

As the years passed, the habitats for gulls, terns, cormorants, egrets and other waterfowl became increasingly "developed" for human habitation, and the remaining nesting sites at places like South Dumpling were concentrated into fewer and fewer natural areas. The resulting intensification of roosts for birds began to be evident as their droppings changed the soil chemistry beneath the trees. Quite rapidly the trees died, until now (2016) no large trees remain on South Dumpling. In roped-off grids on the west side of the island, the staff of Project Oceanology in Groton observed and recorded what was happening.

On May 2, 1978 my father died residing in Groton, and in due course my brother Frederic and I were appointed Co-Executors of his will. Although South Dumpling passed to us through his estate, we could not dispose of it until we satisfied the New York Estate Tax and completed ancillary probate through the Surrogate's Court of Suffolk County. At that time the island's value was appraised at \$11,900.00. The tax department's questions about the island's residents were answered, "water rats and seagulls", and about its plants, "bayberry, rosa rugosa, sumac and poison ivy."

Being used to the helpful, courteous personnel in the Connecticut probate courts, I was in for an unpleasant surprise. In addition to incomplete instructions, necessary forms withheld and nonsensical procedures, I had to disavow my profession as a Connecticut lawyer before they would allow me to settle my father's estate. I became so exasperated with New York bureaucrats I resolved to give the island away and spare my children from having to deal with such people. My brother agreed.



South Dumpling Island, May 7, 2017. Photograph by Sophie Malinowski.

The Mashantucket Land Trust, comprising the Towns of Groton, Ledyard, Stonington and North Stonington, was our natural choice for a donee. The environmental movement was gaining strength, and I was aware of instances when organizations seeking to protect the natural environment were denied standing in court because of not having a pecuniary interest in the subject of the litigation. If Mashantucket were to own South Dumpling, no one could claim it lacked a pecuniary interest to protect.

At this time there was a very powerful urban planner in New York named Robert Moses. Notorious for pushing the construction of highways, bridges and tunnels, he was seen as a dangerous enemy of conservationists. In truth his guiding philosophy seemed to be that if any project were possible to do, it should be attempted. From the mid-1960s through the 1970s, he vigorously promoted the idea of a cross-sound bridge—most prominently one that linked Oyster Bay to Rye. Each of his proposals was thwarted by political and citizen opposition. In 1979, the prospect of a cross-sound bridge surfaced again. One of the proposed routes would spare Long Island drivers the bottleneck in New York City by building a giant causeway from Orient Point, Long Island that bisected the west end of Fishers Island and neighboring South Dumpling before traversing northward to the vicinity of Groton Long Point. Ownership of South Dumpling by the Mashantucket

Land Trust would certainly “jam a stick in the spoke” of that project, and so we proposed a gift to the land trust.

However, before Mashantucket could accept South Dumpling, its certificate of incorporation had to be amended to allow it to acquire and hold land outside of Connecticut. This was accomplished in the spring of 1979.

On May 29, 1979 ancillary probate of my father’s estate and payment of the New York Estate Tax (\$194.19) were completed, and full title to the island passed to my brother and me.

We conveyed South Dumpling to the Mashantucket Land Trust, Inc. by a quit-claim deed dated November 30, 1980 and recorded in the Suffolk County Land Records at Book 9036, Page 379.

As a postscript not connected with the island, on June 6, 1995 the land trust formally changed its name to Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc. as it presently is known. South Dumpling continues offering a habitation for waterfowl, despite the absence of trees, and remains a favorite destination of our Noank Sloop, *Winsome*.

Robert “Chip” Anderson, an attorney at the law firm of Waller, Smith & Palmer, New London, Conn., is a life-long resident of Noank, Conn. He maintains and sails an engineless wooden Noank Sloop.



Man standing on south shore of South Dumpling Island, Fishers Island Sound, 1895. Photo by James S. Casey.



The Board of Trustees would like to extend its heartfelt thanks to all who gave during 2016. We are grateful to each and every one of you!

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*Please excuse any inadvertent misspellings or omissions.
* Deceased.*

A Sampling of Additions to the Museum's Collection in 2016

Please note that although space constraints prohibit a complete list, we greatly appreciate all of your donations.

Gary and Stephanie Annino. Ten books on nautical and maritime themes.

Mary L. Breuning. Three photos documenting 1938 Hurricane damage on Fishers Island; 1940 Time Table for Fishers Island Navigation Co.; letters and telegrams relating to Miss Dorothy Crowe's employment at the Fishers Island School in the 1930s. (Mrs. Breuning is her daughter.)

David and Gail Edwards. Hanging double-burner kerosene lamp with glass shades, circa 1900. This lamp is believed to have hung in the first Fishers Island Schoolhouse, today's Library.

Jeff and Catherine Edwards. Acme News Service photo of young Bonbrights at the H.H.C.'s golf course, 1926.

Ken Edwards. Book entitled *Whiticar Waterway Tales: A Personal Narrative*, by G.C. Whiticar, 2007. Signed and inscribed by author.

Charles B. Ferguson. Genealogical record book for the Ferguson family compiled by Henry L. Ferguson.

Harry and Susie Ferguson. More than five hundred vintage photographs documenting Fishers Island (1890s to 1950s) with a few associated New London, Conn. dock scenes; ephemera (including promotional brochures, social registers, awards, stock certificates, matchbooks, and automobile passes); and correspondence, legal documents, and financial records for Fishers Island businesses and social clubs.

Herrick Family. 18 books, primarily with nautical and art themes, from the library of the late Daniel Herrick, donated in his honor.

Betty Edwards Johnson. Book entitled, *The Face of Connecticut: People, Geology, and the Land*, by Michael Bell, 1988.

Bobby and Susie Parsons. 49 issues of *Nautical Quarterly*.

Sharon and Tim Patterson. 11 books on nautical and marine themes.

Kandi Sanger. Scrapbook album relating to the filming of the Warner Brothers movie "The World According to Garp" on Fishers Island in 1981.

Greg Sharp. Books, maps, and papers assembled by Penni



Military airplane flipped by 1938 Hurricane, Fort H.G. Wright. Donated by Mrs. Mary Breuning.

Sharp during her time as president of the Henry L. Ferguson Museum (2003 - 2014), and as a member of the Fishers Island Habitat Committee.

Stanley family. Circa-1950 etching by Charles B. Ferguson depicting the Winthrop House, Fishers Island, with inscription: "To Nina and Talc—25 years later from Alice and Charlie."

Rev. Candace Whitman. Four children's books: *The Night is Like an Animal*, by Candace Whitman, 1995; *Zoo-Looking*, by Mem Fox, illustrated by Candace Whitman, 1996; *Now it is Morning*, by Candace Whitman, 1999; and *Snow!* by Christine Ford, illustrated by Candace Whitman, 1999.

HLFM Acquisitions in 2016:

Books include: *Connecticut, Mapping the Nutmeg State through History: Rare and Unusual Maps from the Library of Congress*, by Vincent Virga and Diana Ross, 2011. *H is for Hawk*, by Helen Macdonald, 2014. *King Philip's War: the History and Legacy of America's Forgotten Conflict*, by Eric B. Schultz, 1999. *List of All Existing U.S. Lighthouses*, 2009, by Bob and Sandra Shanklin. *Watching Nature: A Beginner's Field Guide*, by Monica Russo, 1998.

Objects include: Dry point of sailboats in West Harbor entitled "Fisher's Island" by WPA artist George Constant, circa 1930s. Ribbon for 26th Regiment C.V., Civil War veterans' reunion at Lyles Beach, Fishers Island, N.Y., August 19, 1885. Watercolor of West Harbor, "M.R.P. 1936" written in pencil on reverse, artist unknown.

Photographs include: Eight 4x5 negatives shot on Fishers Island in February 1945 for a PM Magazine story about the possible secession of Fishers Island from New York State. Misc. Acme News Service photos showing members of the summer community at play and at horse shows on Fishers Island in the 1920s and 1930s.



Production scene from the movie "The World According to Garp," Fishers Island, May 1981. Donated by Kandi Sanger.



Miss Madora Thompson takes the barrier at Fishers Island Horse Show, Sept. 1, 1930. Acme Newspaper. Museum Acquisition.

Fowler Family Donates Rare Book to HLFM

Four members of the Fowler family—Angela W. Fowler, Lucius L. Fowler, H. Winthrop Fowler and Cecily F. Grand—have donated a rare 397 year old library catalogue to the Museum. *The Catalogus Universalis Librorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana . . .* (JAMES, Thomas), was printed in Oxford, England, in 1620 for the Bodleian Library by John Litchfield & Jacob Short, University Printers. It is a first edition.

The Bodleian Library, one of the oldest in Europe, has operated for more than four centuries as the main research library for Oxford University. This volume was the second Bodleian Library catalogue ever published and the first library catalogue in which books are arranged in alphabetical order by author. The donated copy belonged to John Winthrop, Jr. (1606-1676), first colonial governor of Connecticut and first European owner of Fishers Island. His signature, “John Winthrop 1631” is on the title page.

The Fowlers and the Museum are in agreement that should this volume ever be deaccessioned any funds generated by a sale would then be used to help fulfill the Museum’s mission. The Board of Trustees thanks the Fowler family for this very generous and thoughtful donation.



Title page of book donated by Fowler Family. Note signature of John Winthrop, Jr.



The Bodleian Library. Line engraving by J. Le Keux after F. Mackenzie, 1836.



Duke Humfrey's Library, Bodleian Library, Oxford, England.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of The Henry L. Ferguson Museum is the collection, preservation and exhibition of items of Pre-History, History and Natural History of Fishers Island and, through its Land Trust, the preservation in perpetuity of undeveloped property in its natural state. It is organized for the education and enjoyment of the Island's community and visitors and for the protection of habitat for the Island's flora and fauna.

Museum Speakers and Programs 2017



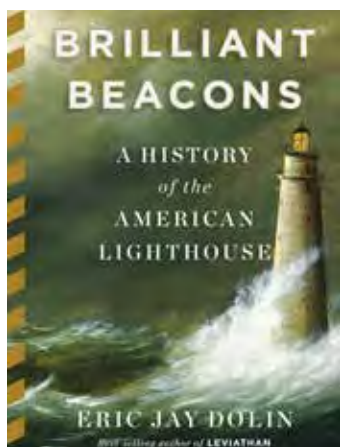
"Beaks, Feet & Feathers" on July 5th.

Beaks, Feet & Feathers. Explore the amazing adaptations of birds. Play games and participate in the hands-on "Bird Beak Buffet" activity. Nest building provides a unique perspective on how difficult it can be to create a bird nest! A Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center (DPNC) family program for ages 5 & up. **Wednesday, July 5, 2017.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: The Museum. *Suggested donation: \$5.00.*



"Little Sprouts: Gardening for Kids" on July 12th.

Public Relations: 250 Years of Outside Views of Fishers Island. An often humorous illustrated talk by Museum Director Pierce Rafferty. **Sunday, July 16, 2017.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor. (Please note that this same lecture will also be given on August 27, 2017.)



Brilliant Beacons: A History of the American Lighthouse by Eric Jay Dolin. For three hundred years America's lighthouses have kept countless ships from wrecking, saved untold lives, and contributed mightily to the growth and prosperity of the nation. *Brilliant Beacons* tells the dramatic story of these beloved coastal sentinels and the keepers who faithfully kept the lights shining and the fog signals blaring. Noted author Eric Jay Dolin will be covering this fascinating history in his illustrated talk.

Sunday, July 9, 2017. Time: 4 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor. **Reception and book signing to follow.**

Little Sprouts: Gardening for Kids. What does a plant need to grow? Learn about the life cycle of a plant and do seed tai chi. Plant a seed in a pot that we make out of newspaper and learn about the importance of worms. A DPNC family program for ages 5 & up. **Wednesday, July 12, 2017.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: The Museum. Suggested donation: \$5.00.



"Public Relations: 250 Years of Outside Views of F.I." on July 16th & Aug. 27th.

Animals! Animals! Meet a variety of live animals and discover similarities and differences between them. Are they covered in feathers or fur? How do they move? Where do they live? What do they eat? Answer these questions and more as you explore the wild animal kingdom. A DPNC family program for ages 5 & up. **Wednesday, July 19, 2017.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: The Museum. Suggested donation: \$5.00.



"Animals! Animals!" on July 19th.

Foraging Fishers Island: What's Wild and Edible. An illustrated talk by naturalist and wild foods enthusiast Russ Cohen. Mr. Cohen recently completed his 42nd year of teaching courses about wild edibles. **Wednesday, July 19, 2017.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor. (Please note also the related nature walk that Russ Cohen is giving on July 20th.)



"Foraging Fishers Island" talk on July 19th & walk on July 20th.

Nature Walk with Russ Cohen, naturalist and wild foods enthusiast. Fishers Island is home to over 70 species of edible wild plants, some of which are more nutritious and/or flavorful than their cultivated counterparts. Join Russ Cohen, expert forager and author of *Wild Plants I Have Known...and Eaten*, on a two hour ramble through a shaggier part of the Island to learn about at least eighteen edible species. As each species is encountered, Russ will present information on identification tips, edible portion(s), season(s) of availability and preparation methods. Russ will also provide general guidelines for safe and environmentally-responsible foraging. This "Penni Sharp Nature Walk" is sponsored in memory of Penelope "Penni" Sharp, the HLFM's president from 2003 until 2014. **Thursday, July 20, 2017.** Time: 10 a.m. to noon, approximately. Place: Meet at the Museum. Limited to 30 people. To assure a spot, please sign up by contacting the Museum by phone 631-788-7239, or e-mail, fimuseum@fishersisland.net.



"Owl Prowl" on July 26th.

The Native American Archaeology of Connecticut. An illustrated lecture by Connecticut State archaeologist Dr. Brian Jones. Ninety-seven percent of the history of Connecticut occurred prior to the arrival of Europeans, yet this period remains a mystery to most in our region today. Dr. Jones' lecture will shed light on Native American life-ways of the past, revealing how Connecticut provides an important laboratory for the global study of human adaptation to changing social and natural environments. **Sunday, July 23, 2017.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor.



"Alive or Not" on August 9th.

Owl Prowl. Get up close and personal with a live owl, dissect owl pellets and learn about owls' unique adaptations for nocturnal life. A DPNC family program for ages 5 & up. **Wednesday, July 26, 2017.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: The Museum. Suggested donation: \$5.00.



"Inspect an Insect" on August 16th.

Alive or Not? Categorize different objects as living or non-living. Learn about the characteristics that distinguish living things from non-living things as you interact with live animals and plants. A DPNC family program for ages 5 & up. **Wednesday, August 9, 2017.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: The Museum. Suggested donation: \$5.00.

Marine Conservation and Economic Growth Are Not at Odds: Cases from Here and There. An illustrated lecture by Dr. Tundi Agardy, executive director of Sound Seas, a marine conservation policy group. A widely-respected advocate for marine biodiversity and conservation issues, Tundi will make the case for why conservation can be and should be the foundation for marine resource use and "blue growth." **Sunday, August 13, 2017.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor. **Reception to follow.** The 2017 Smith Vaughan Lecture on a natural history subject.



“Recent Archaeological Discoveries at Block Island Coastal Sites” on August 20th.

Inspect an Insect: Using hand lenses and microscopes, young sleuths will investigate the common features that all insects share. Participants will also learn about different families of insects as they explore a collection of different species. A DPNC family program, ages 5 & up. **Wednesday, August 16, 2017.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: The Museum. Suggested donation: \$5.00.

Recent Archaeological Discoveries at Block Island Coastal Sites. Archaeologist Dr. Kevin McBride will present an illustrated lecture on the exciting finds that have recently been made both on land and underwater. **Sunday, August 20, 2017.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor.

Dig it! Archaeology for Kids. After uncovering hidden artifacts, you will be able to share and discuss your fantastic finds with fellow junior archaeologists. A DPNC family program for ages 5 & up. **Wednesday, August 23, 2017.** Time: 2 to 3 p.m. Place: The Museum. Suggested donation: \$5.00.



“Dig it! Archaeology for Kids” on August 23rd.

Public Relations: 250 Years of Outside Views of Fishers Island. An often humorous illustrated talk by Museum Director Pierce Rafferty. **Sunday, August 27, 2017.** Time: 4 p.m. Place: The Museum, 2nd Floor. (Please note that this same lecture will also be given on July 16, 2017.)

Nature Walks: During July and August, Nature Walks will start at the Museum on Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. (*note new time*) unless changes have been posted. Terry McNamara will lead the walks. Posters will be put up on the Post Office bulletin board each week that will reveal the subject and general location of the next walk. However, all groups must meet first at the Museum as walk locations sometimes change.

Museum Hours: Sunday, June 25th to Labor Day:
Tuesday through Friday: 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
Saturday: 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; Sunday 11 a.m. to 12 noon.
Closed Mondays.

For special appointments: Please call or e-mail the Museum.

Off Season Hours: To be posted.

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