

## Martha's Vineyard Land Bank Property Histories

Note: As part of their evaluation, purchase, and management of the property that it acquires the Land Bank undertakes a variety of historical research, much of which goes beyond the standard title search normally undertaken. In particular, ecologist Julie Russell compiles a significant amount of background information from archives, newspapers, maps, and other sources on the history of ownership, land use, and vegetation history that adds much insight into the modern condition of the land and aids immensely in its management for ecological, recreational, and interpretational goals. The resulting archives, which vary immensely by property, are available at the Land Bank offices in Edgartown upon request. Julie, Land Manager Matthew Dix, and Director James Lengyel also have immense knowledge about each of the properties.

The material assembled below deals with just a few of the properties that were of particular interest at various times during the background research on this book and various investigations that we led. The notes are idiosyncratic and incomplete, but include details that I found especially useful ecologically or intriguing from a perspective of Island and conservation history. A good example is the fact noted below that Francis Foster once made the promise (very publically in a major press release and in his will) of donating his 600 acres of land between State Road and Lamberts Cove to Massachusetts Audubon only to rescind this vow quietly shortly before his death.

### Presbury Norton Farm

May 21, 1948 *Martha's Vineyard Gazette* – Buttonwood Farm

Quote: Frank Norton, came at the age of three to farm, working the land, cows needed to keep thickets out.

[Adjacent farm owned by Francis Foster] – This became the Sterling-Reeve Land Bank property.

Norton Farm—60 acres cultivated field, rotated and pasture; 40 acres woodland; plus rented land.

Frances Foster acquired it in 1916 – to natural woodland added pines, white, scotch and red and some spruce.

*Boston Transcript* July 5, 1927

600 acres owned by Francis Foster (was owned by Horatio Norton) gifted as a bird sanctuary, County Commissioner. Along state road 1 mile. Nearly all of the Ice House and part of Seth's Pond. Heavily wooded. Later rescinded—was in his will. He decided that the land didn't support that many birds and they didn't need the habitat.

1969 – Sold to Long View Realty \$275,000 – 200 acres, heavily wooded.

Horatio G. Norton's Will, November 10, 1845 to John P. Norton, Eliakim Norton and Matthew Merry, executors.

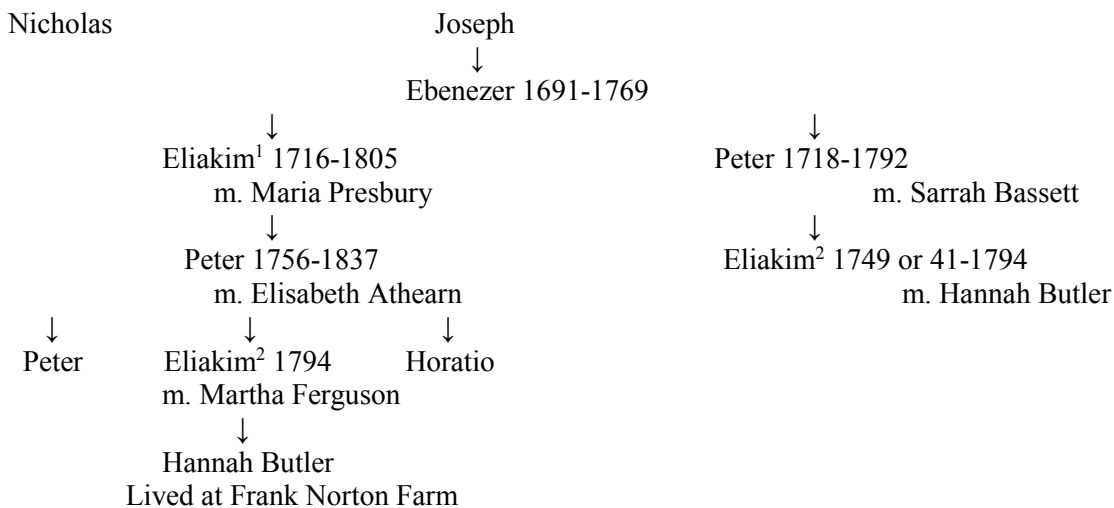
Dwelling House, farm and Chaise House	\$900	
60 acres Pasture and woodland	\$17/ac.	1020
90 acres Pasture and tillage	\$7/ac.	630
2 acres Meadow	\$75/ac.	150
1 acre of swamp	\$20/ac.	20
10 acre of woodland	\$7/ac.	70
10 acre of woodland	\$1.50/ac.	15
Marsh Meadow at Long Point, Chilmark		320
Pew – Meeting House – Holmes Hole		80
½ pew – Congregational Meeting House, Tisbury		20

1 yoke oxen	63
3 cows	45
1 steer three-years-old	19
1 heifer	10
2 yearlings	12
1 calf	3.50
64 sheep	72
and then lists of equipment	

Peter Norton's Will, July 18, 1837 Father of Horatio G., Eliakim, John P., Peter J., Alfred, Elizabeth Mary [married Mathew Merry] Nancy Luce, Lucretia James (deceased)

Land Tisbury, some in Edgartown.

Gave to Norton 1/2 tract woodland, various other woodlands.



Lambert's Cove Cemetery – 5<sup>th</sup> row on left.

Land Bank has all the deeds.

1839 Various notes from the Deed – Horatio Norton to John P. Norton and Eliakim Norton.

- Homestead of Peter Norton
- West cherry orchard
- Swamp field; marked white oak by fence wall
- Cow pasture; old fence on Savage's line
- Road to Christian Town
- Old House Pond; water fence
- Two lots of woodland.

1839 Various notes from the Deed – John P. Norton and Eliakim Norton to Horatio Norton  
Old House Pond; Savage's line

Run of water  
Tract of wood land; old cart path  
Ruins of an old fence  
Old road called the cord wood road  
Other lot of woodland  
Piece of Marsh Meadow – Chilmark Long Point

1836 Land improved by Edmond Cottle = Cottled land.

September 18, 1918 Map – Francis Foster’s land shows Lot B along road as 38.59 acres. Woodland; shows Savage’s Path. Survey Map.

February 27, 1959, newspaper-*Martha’s Vineyard Gazette*

Fire destroyed home of great age. Frank Norton house – once owned by Squire Eliakim Norton, original grant to Nicholas Norton. Squire Eliakim (#3) power – farmer, stock raiser, financier, 2000 sheep and property +/- Island.

April 23, 197, *Martha’s Vineyard Gazette*

Buttonwood Farm – one of the most beautifully situated farms on the Island – sold by Robert C. Norton. Fields and woods in the family 50 years. Farmhouse 13 years – community contribution to Robert C. Norton’s father Frank after the fire.

Sold to: 79 acres Robert Thomason, plans to sell lots in 4 acres. Owns Lambert’s Cove Inn and Mansion House. 16.06 acres surveyed for Robert Thomason (narrow piece connecting to D. Foster/M. Jorgensen whose land appears to be on R. Thomason purchase.

) – Parcel 6 and Parcel 2 with buildings – 3960’ frontage.

Sold 13 acres to Maitland Edey (“boat builder and musician”) plans to build a house.

Two acres and farm – Walter Robinson of Edgartown

John D. and K. S. Hall, Stratford, CT, bought land together in 1970. Katherine Sterling Hall subsequently received the land from John de Wolf Hall (husband), “for love and affection” (divorce settlement).

Katharine P. Sterling – 100 Buttonwood Farm Road, Map 8, Lot 1, 97 State Road, M10 L194

#### **[DRF – Other Notes on Buttonwood Farm Area]**

*MV Times - October 18, 2007* Emily N. Magnuson, obituary

Emily **Norton** Magnuson, a lifelong resident of West Tisbury, died on Oct. 12, at Martha's Vineyard Hospital.

Mrs. Magnuson was born at home at **Buttonwood Farm** in West Tisbury on April 25, 1917, the youngest of four children born to Frank and Florence C. Baker Norton.

She graduated from Tisbury High School and attended St. Luke's Nursing School in New Bedford for a short time. She returned to the Island and worked at the Mansion House before marrying Carl E. Magnuson in 1938. They lived in their house on State Road until his death in 1975 and she continued living there until she entered Windemere Nursing in 2004.

As her two children, Linda and Eric, grew older she began working summers at the Homeport Restaurant in Chilmark as their salad chef. When the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School opened in 1962 she started

working as a cook in the cafeteria and worked there for 25 years.

She is survived by her daughter, Linda M. Hearn and her husband Glenn; and her son, Carl Eric Magnuson Jr., and his wife Debby, all of West Tisbury. She is also survived by her grandchildren - Mark Hearn, Susan Collins, Laura Caruso, Sara Dexter, and Eric Magnuson - and ten great-children.

Her graveside service was held in the West Tisbury Cemetery, on Oct. 15.

*West Tisbury Conservation Commission November 30, 2010*

Map 8 Lots 22.12&22.14 respectively and 81 State Road Map 10 Lot 194.2/SE79-304: Public hearing on a Notice of Intent filed by the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank for property located at 165 & 200 Merry Farm Road. The proposed project includes the clearance and maintenance of 500+/- linear feet of walking trail within a Bordering Vegetated Wetland and Buffer Zone including ground-level and raised boardwalks or view platforms. Also proposed is the removal of invasive species covering approximately 2 acres. These properties are known as the John Presbury Norton Farm and Wompesket Preserve. Matthew Dix outlined the work. The site plan was reviewed.

Issues Discussed:

John Presbury Norton Farm: New trails will connect existing trails through a section of Isolated Land Subject to Flooding. Boardwalk will be constructed using 4 x 4 black locust boards resting on the ground.

The performance standards for Isolated Land Subject to Flooding under the state and local regs were reviewed with the applicant.

On Wompesket Preserve: Removal of invasive species including Russian Olive and Honeysuckle.

Work is in the Buffer Zone.

Areas of invasive species will be mowed and over seeded with Little Blue Stem and Switch Grass.

Russian Olive stumps will be taken out.

Maintenance mowing will be done

Work will be done when the ground is dry or frozen.

Majority of the work done by farm tractor/no excavator.

NHESP letter reviewed. Under MESA regulations, habitat management work is exempt from the MESA regulations provided that stump removal, scarification and access with heavy machinery must take place between October 1 and March 31. Work can not be done between April 1 to Sept 30th.

### **Southern Woodlands Reservation**

Corey Kupersmith, New Canaan, CT/Greenwich, CT, Down Island Golf Club, Inc., Millennium Par Holdings LLC. "The Preserve at the Woodlands" 92.3 acres (to the north of the Reserve).

Formerly Webb's Campground – along Barnes Road.

Current Reserve excludes "The Preserve at the Woodlands"

180 acres \$18,622,940 ~ 190.3 acres purchased from Kupersmith by MVLB in 2005

Fetherstone Farm abuts to the south.

Former owner retains emergency movement over Chaise Way can top trees on View Easement Area "E" – part of Parcel D.

Parcel A restricted to residential and others uses  $\leq$  26 residences.

Ruth Webb, age 83 died May 24, 1996, from Somerville, poultry farmer, formed campground on Barnes Road ~ 1957 and ran it for 25 years.

Harold Webb from Oaks Bluff – 9<sup>th</sup> generation. Webb Homestead – Barnes Road – 1660; worked at Lagoon Pond water works. Oak Bluff-Vineyard Haven electric cars turned at Webb's.

1972 - campground sold to two Waltham women.

PAL assessment of the archaeological values of the land. Bergeron Site – top of knoll – Late Archaic → Woodland.

Down Islands Golf Course proposing 18 holes. Kupersmith proposal.

*Historical and ecological description of the property*

234 acres (228 woodland), 1784, 1888, 1930 maps – all show the land as long forested. [DRF- Ancient woodland]

Part of historic “Great Woods” 200-300 acre tract of woodland, south of the Gore.

Some pitch pine expanding into oak.

Area of old houses near head of springs and Wampanoag village – near Stepping Stones Brook – divided two sachemships and Tisbury/Oak Bluffs.

Runs from Barnes Road to County Road. Barnes Road to Chaise Road – Darius Norton Farm  
All historically was woodland that flanked farmland on Upper

Three ancient ways – includes Old Back Road to Oak Bluffs, Chaise Road Way to Farm Neck.

*Management*

Southeast corner – could be managed for primitive camping.

Maintain and expand grassland for farmer.

Create forestry plan to reduce fire possibility.

Garage – Land Bank maintenance shop.

**Middle Line Woods**

41.9 acres 20 acres - \$475,000 - 1999, 27 acres - \$632,000 – 1999.

Management Plan – Julie Russell and Matthew Dix

Has been woodlands for 66 years.

Two beech groves – one north of shrub swamp; one on north side of 250' hill. Beech = next stage of succession – takes centuries to take over oak forest. Fire is only weapon that oaks have against beech.

Black locust – only know invasive.

Point sample with 2 m<sup>2</sup> plots for understory. Trees 39' tall, 9" dbh, 102 ft<sup>2</sup> BA, 66 trees/acre.

~ 12 holly. Clethra 91%, Huckleberry 39%, Dangleberry 18%.

Middle line – separated Wampanoag natives and Thomas Mayhew, Jr. lands, Wascosims to Menemsha Pond. Old footpath connects to Old Holman Road ancient way roads used to transport raw clay from Harris family mineral rights (family owned mineral rights throughout) on the north shore to be shipped off Island or used on Island for brick works at Menemsha Hills or Great Rock Bight.

### **Peaked Hill Reservation 3-11-2002**

Management planning by Adam Moore – Land Bank, land superintendent, 1998-2001; Julie Russell – Land Bank ecologist since 1999.

132.5 acres, 91 owned.

Portions recovered from unsuccessful development. Headwaters – Roaring Brook, Fulling Mill Brook, Mill Brook.

Eastern Box turtle.

Plan to use pasture and meadow for Agriculture - 10.8 acres meadow.

Will plant Atlantic White Cedar – “Reintroduction: [sic] to Martha’s Vineyard.

Broad Hill with three high points. Former pasture throughout.

59.2 acres mixed oak ~75-years-old

1.3 acres pitch pine – pitch pine has reached its final days

12 acres green briar

1.6 acres shrub

10.8 acres meadow – from attempted housing development was woodland – cleared for use as horse pasture; pond formed – drained by the Land Bank.

Autumn olive.

#### *Land history*

Map – Peaked Hill Pasture Realty Trust.

Was in Wampanoag lands until the mid-1660s – purchased by Thomas Mayhew. Gay Head = “land under the hill” – Peaked Hill.

Wood cleared for tar pit [interesting not much pine shown there] on east side of Peaked Hill since 1726.

Unimproved pasture 18-19<sup>th</sup> century; summer grazing land for winter stock from West Tisbury and Chilmark.

Horses, cows, oxen, cattle, swine, and sheep especially.

Owen Hillman (Edgartown judge) – acquired 1860s – 40 acres built to 160 acres; leased land for grazing.

James Adams kept Guernsey heifers there until the mid-1920s, worked on stonewalls. Drove animals from West Tisbury. Died 1920s – land out of use - ~ 1925 to present oaks. No field evidence for older trees.

1941 – owned by Owen Hillman’s granddaughters – one was John Whiting’s mother.

Radar Hill – U.S. Army Signal Corps – 1946 – 12 bunkers, metal fence, cold war use 1952-59 – radar tower. Fox holes, mortar pits, machine gun nests, metal fences, concrete bunker.

Preston Harris – Chilmark – researched the name “Peaked Hill” – refers to shape of sails – rocks on top looked like sails to mariners “Peeked” now “Peak-ed”, two syllables.

Possible uses - grazing, astronomy, firewood, hunting Atlantic White Cedar reintroduction - Land Bank has reintroduced of Atlantic White Cedar to Chappy Five Corners. [Adam Moore, now director of Sherriff’s

Meadow Foundation, which has also promoted the reintroduction of Atlantic White Cedar to its Cedar Tree Neck property. Pollen records, the absence of any recorded history of use, and the absence of Atlantic White Cedar from the Vineyard suggests that it actually was not native. It is native on Naushon where pollen, history, and its presence confirm this].

### **Pennywise Preserve 2000**

Management Planning - Adam Moore and Julie Russell.

118 acres with 61.3 abutting acres – east municipal, CR on town land  
\$1,017,000 of bonds.

Oak woodlands 74%, 10-40', 5" average dbh, and 29.6 acres depressions = frost bottom, 87.6 acres mixed oak, 30.7 scrub oak, shrub land, 0.4 ac. grassland.

Only Land Bank property with scrub oak bottom.

Lowest part of Pennywise on Tar Kiln Path – grass due to colder environment (frost bottom where cold air collects) and disturbed.

Four ancient ways in/near – Pennywise Path, Tar Kiln Path, Three- Cornered Rock Road, Dr. Fisher's Road.

Three abut east property – Pease's Path, Sandy Valley Road, Middle Line Path.

Pitch production – likely in and around Pennywise – kiln possibly at Pennywise Path, possibly at bottom. No evidence though. Pennywise likely a long-term woodland resource.

### **Quammox Preserve 2009**

Julie Shaeffer (Russell), Ecologist

30 acres on Chappy at foot of Washqua Hill, ¾ mile trail. Quammox Road – is a public way.

Successional trajectory – pines → oaks → beech. [DRF – how much of the pitch pine on Chappy is planted. Likely a lot]

1703 – 250 large livestock on Chappy. Settlers only moved in 1750.

1830 – Crapo map – shows 50 acres woodland; 300 acres scrub oak. Freeman 1971.

1938 photos – all but northeast corner of Preserve were open grass and shrub.

Pitch pine area – without fire or mechanical to reduce competition. Pitch pine will evolve into oak. Pitch pine generally older than oaks and so die sooner.

Established grassland – has most species and most rare and watch-listed species- bristly foxtail, bushy rock rose, sandplain blue-eyed grass, yellow thistle and butterfly weed.

### **Three Ponds Reservation 2004/2009**

Julie Shaeffer – Ecologist; Matthew Dix – Land Manager

Brine's Buttonbush, Cape Poge Ponds - 329 acres

Chappy Five corners, North Farm, Landing Place, North Neck Midlands, Hickory Cove, Brine's Pond.

Plan includes ~ 20 acres grassland.

Reservation originally assigned to natives on North Neck.

### **Poucha Pond Reservation 2000**

Julie Russell – Ecologist; Adam Moore – Land Manager  
147 acres. Agriculture field, mixed oak, pitch pine, shrub swamp, salt marsh.

Pitch pine woodland - was field when Edo Potter was young – 28 acres, once agriculture field – decadent, mature and in death throes – 1999 heavy snow damage, ladder fuels.

Pitch pine – serotinous; fire dependent – hurricane or fire could push to pitch pine, slowly could go to oak.

Move it in one direction or other through silviculture. Recommend – clean downed timber, eliminate ladder fuels, perpetuate pitch pine through patch cuts.

Oak woodland – older – was wooded in early 1900s.

Land Use – Agriculture, woodland and salt marsh; road from Edo’s to hay field and to Wasque.

Owned by Judge Clark, farmer from Katama side of Chappy.

Early 1900s dike put in to control flow of Poucha to Cape Poge Pond – three hunting camps from Wasque to Poucha Pond. 1932 live decoys banned. Flume installed to keep fresh water in Poucha. Opened in spring so herring in 1920s and 30s shipped off the island.

1959 – Vote by town to open dyke, put in bridge for scallops, which have decreased.

### **Farm Pond Preserve 1996**

27.2 acres, 9.7 acres owned, small ponds; linear area.

Quay’s Corner 0.58 acres

### **Wapatequa Woods Preserve 2004**

46.6 acres and 13.8 APR

Stoney Hill Road and Road to Wapateque Road, collapsed ice tunnels and ice blocks.

Only real variation – old fields and old road beds. Mostly old woodland – in successional lull.

Ancient Way – Sailor’s Burying Ground Road – also closed across private property.

### **Tisbury Meadow Preserve**

Includes Robert Culbert paper on grassland birds, monitoring and management on Land Bank Properties.

### **Ripley’s Field Preserve 1991**

56 acres

Ancient Ways, vernal pools, 45” tall windmill for duck pond.

### **Blackwater Pond 2006**

106 acres

Blackwater Brook and Pond separated. Nunnepog and Takemny sachemships, important landmark for Wampanoags. Ocean to Blackwater Brook to the middle of Watcha Pond ~ town line.



Bought 76 acres for \$3,800,000 in 2001 via TPL.

Blackwater Brook is dammed for cranberries – North and South Duarte’s Ponds (both cranberry), Turtle Pond, Ben Chase Swamp, Homestead Pond (near private house) and Blackwater.

1902 earthen dam formed Backwater – reservoir for Duarte’s.

Southern Duarte Pond has White Water Lily.

Lamberts Cove Road area – know for cranberry bogs. Thought that Capt. James Smith of Vineyard Haven began Duarte’s Pond bog in 1882.

Duarte came from the Azores in 1945.