

# Sippewissett Association

## Newsletter

### Cape Cod Mosquito Control Project



Many frequent travelers on Sippewissett Road have noticed green trucks parked along the roadside bearing the label "Cape Cod Mosquito Control Project." Sometimes people are seen nearby standing knee-deep in a flooded ditch with rakes and shovels. What's going on? What are they up to?

The Mosquito Control Project was founded in 1930 by State legislation responding to an outcry by business leaders who saw proliferating mosquitos as an important impediment to tourism and second-home business growth in Massachusetts, and especially on Cape Cod. They were less aware then than we are now of the role of mosquitos as potential carriers of important human disease, such as Equine Encephalitis and West Nile virus.

The Cape Cod Mosquito Control Project is not a county organization. It is funded annually by the 15 towns of Barnstable County through the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, the administrative parent of 11 mosquito control districts. The Cape Cod District currently has 26 employees working year-round, plus summer help. In our area, they monitor about 75 stations from Quissett Harbor to Woodneck Beach, in ponds and wetlands wherever conditions may support mosquito breeding.

One Project activity is to assess the presence of mosquito larvae in the form of wrigglers, which thrive in stagnant water. A long-handle dipper is used to take pint-size samples which

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*The Sippewissett Association membership encompasses 14 subdivisions bordering on the 2.8 mile-long Sippewissett Road, plus homes built directly along Sippewissett Road. We intend to publish short histories and commentaries on each of the subdivisions in future newsletters. This article about Racing Beach was written by Susan Witzell, Archivist, Woods Hole Historical Museum, a resident of Evangeline Road, in collaboration with Arthur Gaines, Oceanographer Emeritus, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, a resident of the nearby Sippowissett Subdivision, and President of the Sippewissett Association.*

### Racing Beach Perspectives

In the Proprietor's Records recording the original deeds to lands in Suckanesset (Falmouth) in 1688, certain land deeded to John Weeks included "ye race-beach." Speculation surrounds the use of the term "race." It is certainly not a reference to Native Americans racing horses along the beach, since Wampanoags did not have horses in the 1600s. Instead, perhaps "race" refers to the swift tidal flow in the occasionally open inlet to Flume Pond (just beyond the north end of the present "Racing Beach").

The development of the area north of Quissett Harbor now known as Racing Beach has its roots in the 19th century farm owned by Samuel Palmer Davis, west of and bordering Woods Hole Road near the present Ransom Road. Following a succession of owners, by the early 20th century the land was owned by Charles R. Whittemore of Newton, a partner with his brother John M. Whittemore in the Whittemore Shoe Polish Company of Cambridge. Whittemore expanded the property holdings farther westward and northward to the shore of Buzzard's Bay with purchases from the

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## Mizell/Hoskins Trailhead at Kelly Woodland ~ Update

A major 2015-16 program of the Sippewissett Association was support for acquisition of the Kelly Woodland conservation lands. The first phase of the project was completed in June 2016, with joint acquisition of the Kelly lot by The 300 Committee Land Trust and the Buzzards Bay Coalition. This 3.13-acre parcel, though small in itself, joins the 400-acre Beebe Woods, to the east, with the 28-acre Flume Pond Conservation Area, to the west, to form a protected wildlife corridor linking interior Town woodlands with the water's edge at Buzzard's Bay.

The second phase was inspired in late 2016 by Dr. Merle Mizell, a Board Member of the Sippewissett Association, who recognized the need for a parking facility to make access to these lands a practical reality. Accordingly, he provided generous financial support to provide for the needed engineering and construction costs.

The Mizell / Hoskins Trailhead will provide a modest parking facility, an information kiosk, bench, bike rack and marked trails for walkers to explore the new trail system. The trailhead name celebrates Dr. Mizell's family's lifetime love of this area as well as the dream and dedication he and Dr. Hartly Hoskins have shared for Sippewissett for over 50 years. A trail system already exists for the Flume Pond Conservation area, and draft plans are underway for trails to link with those in Beebe Woods.

Passers by will see the stakes marking out the planned parking facility; construction is expected to begin soon.



### Notable & First Spring Sightings of 2017

Reported by: Steve Chalmers (SC), Jennifer Gaines (JG), Bob Grosch (BG)  
Nancy McDonald (NM), Phil Stanton (PS), Susan Witzell (SW)

Species	Location	Date	Obs
Fisher	Marvin Circle	March	SC
	Beebe Woods	4-May	NM
	Ice House Pond	6-May	SC
Spring Peeper	Falmouth	February	PS
	Kelly Woodland	March	JG
	" (chorus)	1-Apr	JG
	Duck Pond	6-May	SW
Red Fox	Cape Codder	30-Mar	JG
	Haynes Avenue	April	JG
Osprey	Shore Drive	23-Mar	PS
	Racing Beach	26-Mar	JG
	Little Island	23-Mar	NM
Towhee	Evangeline Road	14-Apr	SW
Baltimore Oriole	Haynes Avenue	30-Apr	JG
		29-Apr	BG
Orchard Oriole		28-Apr	BG
Catbird	Haynes Avenue	28-Apr	JG
	Evangeline Road	28-Apr	SW
Hummingbird	Evangeline Road	28-Apr	SW
(Ruby Throated)		28-Apr	BG
	Haynes Avenue	29-Apr	JG
Swan	Ice House Pond	29-Apr	SC
Indigo Bunting	Haynes Avenue	4-May	JG
"Usual" terns		April	BG
		May	NM
		1-May	JG
Pine Warbler	Evangeline Road	15-Apr	SW
	Haynes Avenue	5-May	JG
Rose Breasted Grosbeak	Evangeline Road	1-May	SW
	Haynes Avenue	6-May	JG

## Mosquito Control Project *(continued)*

then are examined for developmental stages of mosquitos. When they are present in sufficient concentrations remedial actions may be taken, such as application of a bacterial anti-mosquito inoculation. Chemical pesticides are not used. Another common remedy is to clear drainage blockage in existing ditches to allow resumption of active flow.

At certain stations adult mosquito traps are deployed using CO<sub>2</sub> or light as attractants. Mosquitos captured in this way are identified and some are sent for analysis to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health for Equine Encephalitis and West Nile virus.

Main sites for ditch clearing in our area are: a) those leading to Flume Pond from the Kelly Woodland area, and b) those leading to Buzzards Bay through a complex of ditches originating at Ice House Pond. In both cases these ditches pass under Sippewissett Road (built in the 1890s).

At the Kelly Woodland (recently acquired by The 300 Committee) fresh water from a 2.5 acre wetland, populated by Red Maples, enters an artificial ditch and passes via a conduit under Sippewissett Road to the 28 acre Flume Pond Conservation Area, also owned by The 300 Committee. Crossing the wetlands the ditches drain to the open waters of Flume Pond.

In the Racing Beach Development water exiting Ice House Pond, (at 14 ft. elevation, crosses beneath Sippewissett Road and enters ditches transiting a swamp (containing Tupelo and Red Maple trees) now under conservation protection as the "Forest Johnson Conservation Area" owned by Salt Pond Area Bird Sanctuaries. The ditch then crosses under Widgeon Road and emerges into a steep-walled artificial ditch crossing private property (the Mosquito Control enabling legislation empowers Mosquito Control

programs to operate on private property). From there the ditch enters a large flooded grassland characterized by shallow peat deposits and freshwater plants over boulder-studded ground moraine. Continuing westward the ditch passes beneath Racing Beach Road in a conduit that leads to a large concrete structure seen offshore in the intertidal zone of Buzzards Bay. The current structure replaces (in the 1990s) a much older "Caleo Gate" of unknown vintage which served to help prevent saltwater backflow into the cranberry bogs behind the beach. The current structure allows some backflow so this structure and associated ditches must be monitored and cleared of sand and seagrass frequently to prevent flooding of low-lying houses.

The large wetland to the north is drained southward through ditches passing under an E-W branch of Racing Beach Avenue and under Valley Road to join the aforementioned ditch draining into the Bay. Where these ditches pass under the roads there are facilities to control flow so that flooding of Flume Pond when open to the sea will not penetrate to the fresh wetlands.

Though the fieldwork can be strenuous, Mosquito Control staff enjoys the outdoors and the wildlife. Superintendent John Doane, who has worked at the Project since 1973 (he started as a summer employee before that) points to many successes over the years, although thanks from the public seem sparse. He says mosquito problems are often related to stagnant water in gutters, old boats and any outdoor household receptacle that can hold water. These are easily remedied by the homeowner.

*We are grateful to Gabrielle Sakolsky (Assistant Superintendent and Entomologist) for meeting with us, providing information, and reviewing this article.*





**Racing Beach** *(continued)*

venerable Weeks and Eldred families, descendants of which still reside in the area. (Douglas Cooper lives on Lambert Lane, and his mother Judith Eldred Cooper lives nearby in Sippewissett. William Weeks resides in Sippewissett and another branch of the Weeks family owns Fieldcrest Farm at the head of Sippewissett Road.)

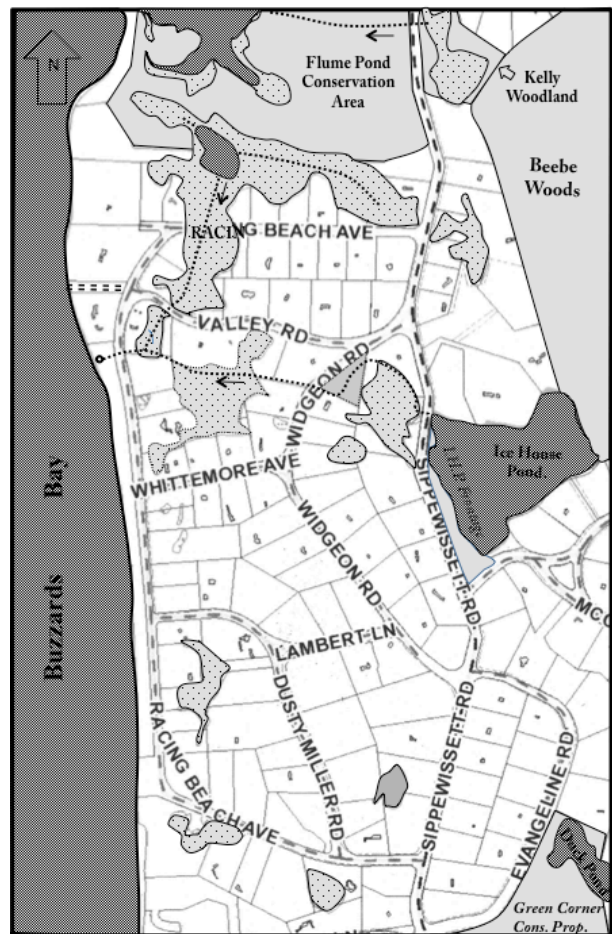
After Charles Whittemore died in 1923 in Newton, his second wife, the former Annie Ransom, made the Quissett estate her permanent home and within a year she began to promote her land holdings along Buzzards Bay, west of the new Town Way (Sippewissett Road), as a refined and restricted development for summer homes, building roads, installing water mains and selling lots through her agent Charles R. Stowers.

The land to be developed posed certain challenges. While the beach facing Buzzards Bay presented a most attractive summer feature, the spacious backshore behind the dune ridge was not ideal for development. Mostly it was low-lying, occupied by wetlands (much of the wetland area had been farmed for cranberries by the Eldred ancestors), and subject to storm flooding. Furthermore, a profitable plan must provide beach access for all building lots, not only those few closest to the beach. The higher portions of land in the glacial moraine were dry and free of flooding danger, but removed from the shore, and occasional steep slopes would affect building and road plans.

The resulting development layout addressed some of those issues. Racing Beach Avenue encircles the development and provides the desired beach access to all lot owners (although the road sits atop the entire dune ridge and would violate the 1972 Wetland Protection laws of today.) Most of the lots which were laid out in the original development plan over marshes and other fragile coastal features have become reserved as wetlands or protected by conveyance

to the Salt Pond Bird Areas Bird Sanctuaries. A pair of ospreys still returns every spring to the nest platform in one of these marshes where they raise one or two chicks yearly.

Valley Road may follow the course of an ancient way running from the Weeks Farm (now Peterson Farm) to a dock at the shore of Buzzards Bay. Evidence supporting this speculation includes a) this course minimizes wetlands which would have had to be filled for vehicle passage; b) the Town Assessor’s Map shows a separate, narrow lot extending from the end of Valley Road to the water’s edge; and c) aerial photos of this site show a large deposit of rocks extending out into the Bay, which would be consistent with ruins of a wooden crib structure once containing rocks.



Pairs of round, drum-like cobble and cut granite entrance pillars were an ornamental feature of the development at roads opening to Sippewissett Road. Some of these roads are no longer connected and the pillars stand abandoned in the shadowy vegetation. Some of the pillars were planted with Walsh rambler roses (developed in Woods Hole) and one still supports long-neglected white 'Lady Blanche' rambler roses, which bloom every summer.

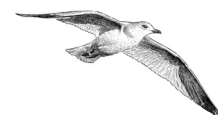
One of the first lots sold was to Mr. and Mrs. George E. Lambert, on December 19, 1925. Mr. Lambert was a successful Boston commercial artist. The Lamberts eventually built a modest 8-room gambrel-roofed Colonial on the lot, the last one along the bluff at the very northern end of Racing Beach, overlooking the Bay and wetlands near Flume Pond. Nine more houses had been built by 1937, mostly designed to be summer residences. By 1940 about thirty five lots had been sold, many of them in pairs, with an average price of \$1200.

In 1928-29 Annie Ransom Whittemore built a Tudor-Colonial Revival house for herself on Dusty Miller Road near Lambert Lane. This house was designed by the architectural firm of Hutchins and French of Boston. Mrs. Whittemore died in 1949 after a long illness and the house was purchased by Professor John Hanna of New York City and made into a home for his wife Reni and their four children. The house had been left completely furnished with Annie's paintings, collections, oriental rugs and possessions, including a beautiful library of leather bound books and classic literature. The house is still owned by one of the Hanna daughters, landscape architect Cornelia Hanna McMurtrie, who has lived in it for 70 years. Professor Hanna's grandson, Douglas H. Jones the current Chairman of the Falmouth Board of Selectmen, lives nearby in Quissett.

Mrs. Whittemore's chauffeur and caretaker, Forrest W. Johnson, became a major force in the operations and promotion of Racing Beach. He became the land agent for Racing Beach in 1949, and later for the nearby Sippowisset development as well. A formidable man, Johnson had great influence on what occurred in the area. His own house on Valley Road, originally a modest Cape Cod, was typical of the design he encouraged. Many of similar design were built during the 1950s and 1960s. Near Johnson's house stands an engraved boulder marking a nature reserve dedicated to his memory.

Evangeline Road on the opposite side of Sippewissett Road from the main part of Racing Beach, and also Whittemore property, was laid out with lots in 1929 but was not developed until the 1960s. Originally called Lawrence Road the name was changed when the Post Office began home delivery and did away with all duplicate road names. Lawrence Road became Evangeline Road after Forrest Johnson's wife, Evangeline Lawrence. All land formerly part of the Whittemore estate received deeded rights to use a certain portion of Racing Beach on Buzzards Bay.

In 1951 a Racing Beach Association was formed to maintain the private roads and look after community interests. Membership, which costs \$350/year, is optional, but most home owners there are members. Racing Beach is still largely a summer or weekend home community but there are more year-round residents than in the past. Of the nearly one hundred lots laid out in Racing Beach many have never had houses built on them. There have been a few tear-downs and a number of older homes have been renovated, but the gracious feeling of the development has remained to this day.



## Sippewisett Association - Newsletter

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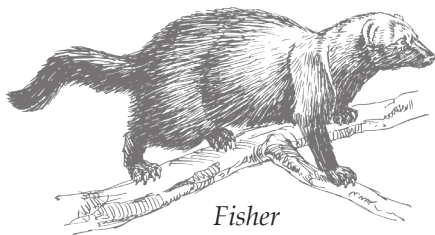
### Calendar

#### **June 24, 2017 (Saturday) ~ Annual Meeting**

10 AM, All are welcome  
Falmouth Public Library  
Hermann Meeting Room  
Coffee at 9 AM

#### **August 13, 2017 (Sunday) ~ Summer Social**

2-5 PM, All are welcome  
Residence of Anne Giblin and Ken Foreman



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### **Sippewisett Association**

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Falmouth, MA 02541

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