

OLD NURSERY WOODLANDS PRESERVE



Property Description

The 24.37-acre property is the second largest of the Town's CPF preserves and it is hidden in the geographical center of the Island. It is "over the back fence" of the homes, stores and other structures that on the east are along St. Mary's Road, on the south East Thomas Street, on the west North Ferry Road and on the north Manwaring Road. No street or road crosses it. The property consists of meadow, virgin forest and overgrown nursery stock. The property was purchased for use as passive parkland aquifer recharge. The property consists of two adjoining parcels in which the County and Town each acquired 50% undivided interests: 18.87 acres in 2001 from the Peconic Land Trust and 5.5 acres in 2003 from the heirs of Kathryn E. Rasmussen.

Access

From the parking area on St. Mary's Road and Burns Road intersection, hikers can use the westerly path into the woods, and from North Ferry Road, the path beginning on the north side of Card's Cabins' northerly entrance. Also, at the present time hikers use the path on 16 Manwaring Road just west of the Binder compound (formerly, the "A-Frames"), across from Sylvester Manor's Windmill Field. No vehicle entry is provided. Within the property there is a well-established trail system.



Prior Owners & History

The property is part of the 1,000 acres that George Havens purchased from Nathaniel Sylvester II in 1700, and it passed to his son William Havens and to others. According to a 1909 map, its principal owners were Scudder Smith and T. M. Haisey and it passed through others thereafter.

Blaise Laspia's Shelter Island Nursery on St. Mary's Road used the larger parcel for many years for nursery stock; it does not include the area formerly occupied by the nursery's buildings on St. Mary's Road, which have been removed, and is privately owned. The smaller parcel was held as virgin woodlands.

The nursery was advertised in the Southampton Press on March 18, 1982 as the "Largest Grower of Retail Seashore Plants on the East End."

As you walk through the property don't be surprised when you come across a beautifully manicured area. The old nursery stock is being lovingly maintained by a friendly neighbor. You are welcome to walk through the area.

Stories

- Craig Wood, in the Shelter Island Reporter, 3/16/2019, wrote about his family and visit to the Preserve: "I feel elevated and simultaneously humbled looking up at a stately oak. Recently, my family was walking through the Old Nursery Woodlands Preserve and came across a specimen of untold years. We had a moment of joy (and a great photograph) when three of us, holding hands, extended our arms and could barely reach around the giant trunk to enclose its 15-foot circumference."

- Richard Lomuscio, Shelter Island Reporter, 12/25/2015, wrote about his family's Christmas on the Island 46 years ago: "I went over to Blaise Laspia's nursery with my son, Rich. He had a nice selection, though not very big. And at \$25, they cost more than the cut ones. I rationalized the small size by saying that the ball of soil would raise the height of the tree. So I bought it and stuck it in the wheel on the trunk lid. It fit perfectly."

“During the short drive back, my son, who standing in the back seat and looking out the window, said "Tee, tee!" I thought he was excited about just having a tree when I glanced in the mirror and noticed that the tree was gone. So we turned around and I found the tree in the middle of the road. I tied it on the car this time.

“We arrived back at the bungalow where my wife was playing pioneer woman, baking bread and pies and stringing cranberries and popcorn to place on the tree. She was also keeping the coal level up. The house stayed warm.

“We decided on a suitable place in the living room for the tree, which did not look that small inside the house because the ceilings were low. We spent the rest of the day decorating it. * **

“It was a memorable time. That Christmas tree from 41 years ago still stands in the front yard on Midway Road. I planted it before we left, leaving the cranberry and popcorn strands on for the birds to eat.



• According to an article in the Southampton Press, November 20, 1986, page 55: Blaise Laspia held one of the most popular Christmas celebrations on the East End. They served some of the most exotic food like buffalo, reindeer, Norwegian shrimp. It became a matter of finding the wildest, far-out food - deer, rabbit, quail, moose and elk. After an article in Newsday, the Laspias were hosting hundreds of people, most unknowns. When Mrs. Laspia received a call from a Vatican based organization that apparently had attended in the past and wanted to know when the next one would be—it was the breaking point. The Laspias canceled the party in 1985.

Center woodland in spotlight ahead of hearing

Open Space Snapshot | 5.5 acres along Route 114 is the first installment in series on preserved town properties

BY TED HILLS | STAFF REPORTER

One of the most cherished aspects of Shelter Island is how much of it has remained relatively unchanged for so long. Over the years, the town has made an effort to ensure that large portions of the Island will be preserved — free from development — for generations to come. Preserving open space regulates development and alleviates the demand on the Island's already delicate sole-source aquifer by prohibiting residences or businesses from being built on the land and drawing water. Plus these open spaces can also provide people with areas to hike and explore.

This fall, the Reporter will be examining the various properties that the town has acquired to preserve as open space beginning with the Nursery Woodland Annex (previously known as the Rasmussen property) along Route 114.

WHERE IS IT?

The Nursery Woodland Annex is 5.5 acres of wooded land jointly owned by the town and Suffolk County. It's located on the east side of North Ferry Road near the Shelter Island IGA. Its northern border is about 500 feet south of Manwaring Road and it extends just under 300 feet south. The land extends about 800 feet east toward the adjacent nursery property which spans about 30 acres and is jointly owned by the Town and Suffolk County.

WHAT'S IT LIKE?

Some areas of the Nursery annex are heavily wooded with mature trees and thick undergrowth, particularly one low-lying area along the property's border with Route 114. Other areas are more sparsely vegetated, dotted with trees and short greenery. There is a very rough trail that starts near the southwest corner of the property, adjacent to Card's Cabins, and leads to the nursery property.

WHAT'S ITS HISTORY?

The woodland was originally owned by Kathryn Rasmussen, and toward the end of her life she decided she would like to donate the land to the town to be preserved as open space. The Town Board approved the property's acquisition on December 8, 2000, according to Town Hall records, though the



TED HILLS PHOTO

A rough trail cuts through the Nursery Woodland Annex property. The stewardship management plan will go to a hearing this Friday.

transfer of ownership wasn't completed until just over two years later. Suffolk County and the town agreed on a 50-50 percent partnership to purchase the land for \$200,000 each.

The primary goal of the acquisition, Town Supervisor Jim Dougherty told the Reporter, was to regulate development and preserve the aquifer. Not only could residential homes have been built on the property but about 2.5 acres of the land along Route 114 is business zoned, so a store or two could have popped up there as well, which would "really change the feel of the area," said Mr. Dougherty.

HOW WILL IT BE USED?

A proposed stewardship management plan will go to a Town Board hearing at 5 p.m. this Friday. The proposed plan includes maintenance services, such as litter and debris collection and the removal of diseased or dead wood and states that no permanent or temporary toilets of any kind or imperme-

able surfaces are to be constructed. Lastly, it says that no public paths, trails or other improvements are to be constructed except with Conservation Advisory Council, Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board and Town Board approvals.

The proposed plan says that its major objectives are to use the premises as passive parkland for aquifer recharge and for public use and enjoyment "as is compatible with the natural, scenic, historic and open space character of the property," as well as to preserve the property's natural features.

Mr. Dougherty also mentioned that as far as he's concerned, the management plan should be very limited: "We have Mashomack which is a fantastic resource with a number of very well-cleared trails and lots of great educational resources," he explained. Mashomack can serve as a region for people who want to hike through well-cleared trails, he argued, while a space like the Nursery Woodland Annex can remain un-groomed for those who want an experience more off the beaten path.