

## CAKLE HILL PRESERVE



**Property Description:** This large open space of 17.1 acres, purchased jointly by the Town and Suffolk County in 2007, provides a habitat for animals and stormwater discharge. The property has limited trail access, but even in this limited way you can view a mixed deciduous forest and enjoy the fall foliage or even do some bird watching. Glacial rocks (a mass of rock, ice, snow, mud, and water that moves slowly down a mountain under the influence of gravity) are scattered about along the trail which makes for a wonderful peaceful setting.

**Access:** The only access to the Preserve is from Stearns Point Road. Look for a small path with a Community Preservation Fund sign nearby; park on the road and enter here.

**History/Prior Owners:** The history of the ownership of this property goes back, like many of Shelter Island homesteads, to the 1700s. Cackle Hill was part of the West Neck Farms that was partitioned in 1806 by a commission that was tasked to make "... Partition of all that certain Messuage & Tract of Land called the West Neck, situate lying & being in the Town of Shelter Island in the said County of Suffolk among the several Owners and Proprietors thereof according to their several Rights Shares and Proportions therein, as by the Records of the said Court reference being thereunto held may more fully appear..." (Liber A of Partitions, p. 148, recorded October 10, 1806 by the Clerk of Suffolk County, NY).

The commission at a Court of Common Pleas held at the County Hall in and for the Suffolk County on October 6, 1806, divided the interests of eleven partners in 1335.7 acres (see map). Mehitable King (nee Tuthill) was one of those ten partners whose 1 share in the partnership equated to a little over 63 acres. Cackle Hill Preserve's 17.1 acre parcel is part of those 63 acres. The acreage ran from the Bay south to West Neck Creek. According to an account by Lillian Loper:

Mehitable King of Riverhead, who held a share, received hers from her brother Daniel Tuttle as part of exchange for Ram Island which she sold him in 1784. Mehitable's share eventually passed to her son Luther. Through inheritance it came to Sarah Conkling of Riverhead and Sarah's son in 1905 sold the section to Mrs. Adelaide Jones. For many years Mehitable King's lands were occupied by one Salem Conkling as tenant. (Undated handwritten notes on West Neck Farm attributed to Lillian Loper— Shelter Island Historical Society)





The house at 120 West Neck Road was used by Adelaide Jones as a summer home until 1941 when she sold it to Henry C. Courten. Gregory and William H. Price Jr. purchased the property in 1943. They named the property Cackle Hill Farm for the 3,000-chicken egg farm they operated.

The Price family subsequently sold the property in 1980 to Paul Cavaco and Kezia Keeble who later sold the house to Jan and Bill Pike who subdivided the property and sold the 17.1 acre Preserve to the Town.

**Stories:** The widow Adelaide Jones was good friends with the flamboyant Polish stage actress Anna Held who often visited Widow Jones at 120 West Neck. At one time the house was actually referred to as the “Held House.”

Anna Held was discovered by Florenz Ziegfeld Jr. in Europe who brought her back to the United States to appear in the Ziegfeld follies and later became her lover. After leaving Broadway, she spent the years of World War I working in vaudeville and touring France, performing for French soldiers and raising money for the war effort. She was considered a war heroine for her contributions and was highly regarded for the courage she displayed in traveling to the front lines.

