

Prior Owners & History



The property was part of West Neck Farm, an agricultural partnership established in the mid-1730s that owned the west side of the Island from the Heights to Shell Beach. West Neck Farm had about 23 partners, a number from Southold, in 1739. Upon its partition in 1806, it had eleven partners, mostly Island people; interests had been transferred by sale and inheritance. It was managed as a stock farm; wood was sold, flax and wheat raised and pasture hired out for livestock both winter and summer. In the 1806 partition of the Farm parcels running from the Bay to West Neck Creek that included the property were

allocated to Mehitable Tuthill King, Benjamin Conklin and Sylvester Dering.

In the late 1700s and early 1800s the beach area and its adjacent upland served users of the intermittent Boisseau's Ferry between Stearns' Point and Hog's Neck in Southold, such as the visit of Dr. Timothy Dwight, president of Yale College in 1804.¹ That use probably did not increase significantly after the Town laid out the first road on the Island in 1828. The ferry-to-ferry road ran along present-day South Ferry Road to North Ferry Road to West Neck Road to Shore Road and then along the shore probably to the present-day Quinipet Camp dock area. Use

decreased and indeed the "road" along the shore was forgotten after the railroad came to Greenport in 1844 and Jonathan Preston began regular ferry service between Greenport and the Island's Bridge Street area in 1852. However, the "road" was revived after Mr. Stearns put up a fence around his property on Stearns' Point and the Town litigated and succeeded in forcing removal of the fence across the road.²



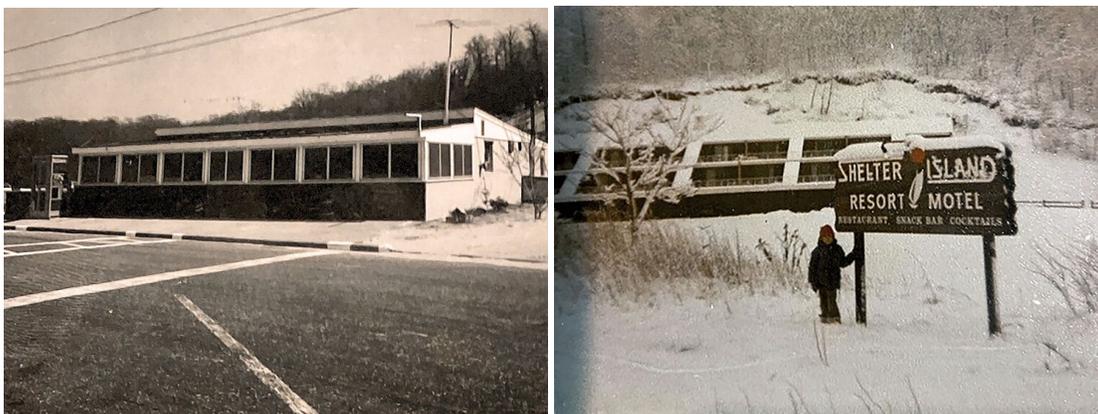
¹ Ralph Duvall, *History of Shelter Island 1652-1952* (supp. ed. 1952), pp. 107-108. 23

² *Ibid*, pp. 125-126, 202.



The arrival of summer visitors following the Methodists in 1872 brought a much different use of the shore area at its northern end, across from Weck's Pond, sunbathing and play. After Meinhardt's Hotel opened on Stearns Point Road in 1886, guests and visitors came to enjoy the beach. In 1906 Louis Behringer took charge of the hotel and in 1945 incorporated it as the Shelter Island House. The Behringer family provided basic services at the beach, a dock, changing booths and ultimately a snack bar. The area became known as Louis' Beach.

Charles Strobel purchased the beach area and the area across the road west to Weck's Pond in the 1950s from the Heights Association and operated a snack bar and scallop shop.



In 1964 Ceil and Charles Kraus purchased the upland and separately the beach from Charles Strobel and continued the snack bar and scallop shop; later they added a restaurant and motel. The Kraus family rented the beach area to the Town for a token amount with the condition that the Town provide lifeguards and

insurance. The County mandated sanitary services and people were using the restaurant's facilities. In the 1960s this arrangement became troublesome, and ownership of the beach was questioned. Litigation was begun. In the late 1970s the Kraus family, in the spirit of good community relations, made a bargain sale to the Town, receiving \$10,000 (the title company providing \$2,500) and the Town receiving title to the beach area.



The Kraus family sold the restaurant and motel about 1997 and it was renamed "Sunset Beach." However, the beach fringe to the west remained in private hands.



The western beach fringe passed through many hands after the 1806 partition of West Neck Farm. In 2000 the Town purchased its first westerly fringe lot from Henry Courten (485 ft.); in 2002 it purchased a lot from Janice Pirotti (110 ft.); and in 2005 it purchased an adjoining lot from Stuart Parr (120 ft.). All were purchased with CPF funds; the 2000 Courten purchase was the Town's first use of such funds. With these three lots the Town almost doubled the length of Crescent Beach.

Food trucks have been a constant sight on Crescent Beach over the years. Mert's Beach Wagon (c. 1937) was the place to go for a cooling, refreshing Canada Dry soda, cigars, cigarettes and candy, or maybe some Horton's ice cream. A different wagon took over in the 1950s and, today, it's the "Roaming Islander" serving the same needs.

