



# Little Compton Landscapes

Newsletter of The Sakonnet Preservation Association

Winter 2011

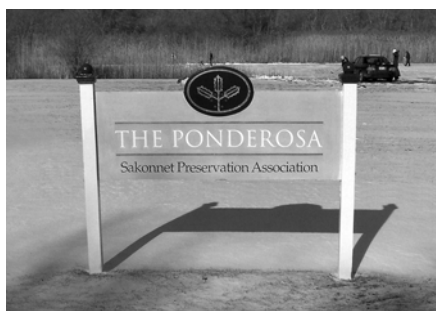
## The Ponderosa – a Community Asset Supported by Volunteers

Winter is the season most people visit SPA's Ponderosa property. Only two to three feet deep, it freezes early and is safe for skating. Avid hockey players can be seen testing the ice and shoveling off any new fallen snow. The pond has been a skating haven for generations. Recreational and educational activities, as well as artistic inspiration, take place on the Ponderosa all year long for all ages. And it serves as excellent habitat for upland and aquatic animals and insects.

An exciting new activity for children is planned for the Ponderosa this April. On behalf of the Little Compton Grange, Walter Elwell was granted permission to sponsor a "Kid's Only" Trout Fishing Opening Day, and the Rhode Island Fish and Wildlife Service has agreed to stock the pond with trout for the event.

Of all properties owned by SPA, The Ponderosa requires the most maintenance. The Association has relied on many for its upkeep since it was purchased in 1981 from Manuel and Jennie Camara. The **Little Compton Maintenance Department** has mown it since 1984, and countless community volunteers have assisted in other ways.

In 2010, the field area of the property needed repair to assist with continued mowing by the Town. In April, **Lynne**



**Brousseau** cut the field grass which was then raked by members of the **Kinnane, Gallagher and Hurley families, Steve Reuter**, and Association Board members. Lynne continued to mow the field until it was dry enough for the repair work, overseen by **Chris Wilkie** at the end of May. Then **Tom Manchester**

rototilled the field; **Adolf Haffenreffer** bulldozed and leveled it. The parking area, also deemed in need of repair, required topsoil and gravel which was partially paid for by a grant from the **Little Compton Municipal Trust**. **David Sisson** hydroseeded the field, and then Lynne mowed the new grass until the Town resumed doing so in August.

This winter, Steve Reuter has plowed the road into the lot and the parking area next to the pond after every storm. And on New Year's Day, **John Hurley** could be seen putting his finishing touches on the Ponderosa sign that has been in need of refurbishing. As an all volunteer land trust, we don't know what we would have done without these generous people and others we may have neglected to name!

We'd like to thank all who have helped make The Ponderosa the community asset it is and encourage everyone to visit the property to enjoy its natural beauty whatever the season may be. – Heather Steers, *Chair of the Stewardship Committee*





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Preservation Association**

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## ***President's Letter***

We are thrilled to announce that our organization has just learned of its accreditation by the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission! We are the second land trust in Rhode Island to receive such recognition and one of only seven volunteer organizations in the country to achieve this honor.

Many people ask why accreditation is important. The best analogy we can think of is The Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval. For many years, this symbol has represented the highest standard for measuring the reliability, quality, and trustworthiness of products we buy. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission's accreditation does something similar for land trusts. It reviews the practices of land trust applicants against the highest standards set by the national Land Trust Alliance and accredits those that meet these standards. The accreditation seal, awarded by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent. Donors of land to be preserved, financial supporters, and other land conservation organizations that wish to collaborate with us, can be assured that their interests will be well protected and cared for by our organization.



We invite you to join us to celebrate this achievement on Saturday, May 21st, from 4-6 PM, when we will open the indoor and outdoor spaces we share with the Commons Gallery and Art Café, at 7 South of Commons Road. An exhibit of local landscape art, along with food and music, will be offered at this gathering to honor our respect and gratitude for the natural beauty of Little Compton and our commitment to continue working for its protection. – Abigail Brooks

## Sakonnet Point Perspectives – A Unique Collaboration

Sakonnet Preservation Association has joined with the Little Compton Historical Society and The Friends of the Sakonnet Point Lighthouse to present each of our perspectives on Sakonnet Point's rich history this coming summer. This joint venture, entitled "Sakonnet Point Perspectives," will include an exhibit, and activities at both the Historical Society and Sakonnet Point, highlighting the vital role this part of our town has played in the lives of so many townspeople.

As intriguing oral histories have been gathered, and photographs, paintings and memorabilia have begun to emerge, there is building excitement about what this unique partnership has to offer. Rehabilitation of the historic lighthouse is in progress with its stories to tell. The archives of the Historical Society house a fine collection of Point history.

The adventures of East and West Island clean-up by Sakonnet Preservation Association volunteers have renewed interest in that extensive habitat and its colorful history. The land was donated to the SPA by Jessie O'Connor in 1983. The remnants of the once flourishing West Island Club and the fine birding and fishing on the islands continue to draw visitors.



*Sakonnet Harbor circa 1919* (Photo courtesy Kelley family archive)

With funding assistance from the Newport County Fund and the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities, we are preparing an exhibit at the Little Compton Historical Society. In addition to the exhibit, there will be educational programming, archival recording, and an illustrated publication that give fitting testimony to how much Sakonnet Point's natural resources and beauty have both enriched and sustained the lives of our year-round and summer residents.

– Abigail Brooks



### Sakonnet Preservation Association

P. O. Box 945, Little Compton, RI 02837 • Phone/Fax: 401.635.8800

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A NEW MEMBER.  
Enclosed is my tax deductible membership contribution.

<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$20
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$25
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$35
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$250
<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor	\$500
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$1,000+
<input type="checkbox"/> Special Gift	\$ _____

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Permanent Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Summer Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Summer Address \_\_\_\_\_

## Congress Renews Tax Incentive to Help Conserve Your Land

Congress recently renewed, through 2011, an incentive that enhances the tax benefits of protecting your land by donating a voluntary conservation agreement. If you own land with important natural or historic resources, donating a voluntary conservation agreement can be one of the smartest ways to conserve the land you love, while maintaining your private property rights and possibly realizing significant federal tax benefits.

These new incentives make it easier for average Americans, including working family farmers, to donate the development rights on their land. The incentive:

- Raises the maximum deduction you can take for donating a voluntary conservation agreement from 30% of your adjusted gross income (AGI) to 50%;
- Allows you to deduct up to 100% of your AGI if you qualify as a farmer; and
- Increases the number of years over which you can take deductions from 6 years to 16 years.

These changes allow many modest income landowners to deduct much more than they could under the old rules, bringing increased fairness to the tax code.

What do you need to know to enter into a voluntary conservation agreement? Here are the facts:

- A voluntary conservation agreement, also known as a conservation easement, is a legal agreement between a landowner and a nonprofit land trust, like The Sakonnet Preservation Association, Inc., that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect important conservation values. It allows you to continue to own and use your land and to sell it or pass it on to heirs.
- When you enter into a voluntary conservation agreement with a land trust, you give up some of the rights associated with the land. For example, you might give up the right to subdivide your land or build additional houses, while retaining the full right to use the land.

Future owners also will be bound by the agreement's terms. The land trust is responsible for making sure the terms of the agreement are followed.

- Voluntary conservation agreements vary widely. For example, an agreement to protect rare wildlife habitat might prohibit any development there, while one to protect the scenic and historic values of a farm might allow continued farming and the building of additional agricultural structures. An agreement may apply to just a portion of the property and conservation agreements do not require public access.

- A conservation donation requires not only a willing donor, but a qualified conservation organization to accept the donation. That organization needs to be able to show that the donation closely fits its particular charitable mission. A land trust will not accept a donation that does not fit its mission and purposes.

- A voluntary conservation agreement can help a landowner pass land on intact to the next generation. By limiting the land's development potential, the agreement lowers its market value, which in turn lowers estate tax and local property taxes. Whether the agreement is donated during life or by will, it can make a critical difference in the heirs' ability to keep the land intact.

- If a conservation agreement benefits the public by permanently protecting important conservation resources and meets other federal tax code requirements, it can qualify as a tax-deductible charitable donation. The amount of the donation is the difference between the land's appraised value with the agreement and its value without the agreement.

- A landowner should get professional financial planning and legal advice before making such a major donation.

### ***Enhanced tax benefits will expire December 31, 2011***

– Sheila Mackintosh, *Chair of the Land Protection Committee*



## BOOK REVIEW: Holdfast – *At Home in the Natural World*

What is it that holds us here in Little Compton? We visit or we stay from reluctant wet Mays through unpredictable Augusts into dark, frosty Januarys. What tugs us back? It's a question we all ask ourselves at times — when the aisles at Wilbur's are crowded, or the winds on the beach drive us back inside, or a fresh start somewhere else looks very appealing.

Particularly on days like this, when the wind chill factor is minus four, I wonder what it is about this place that won't let go of me, why I miss it when I'm away, why the only thing I like about Florida is the temperature. A reading of Kathleen Dean Moore's *Holdfast* helped me remember.

In a series of 21 essays, Moore explores questions about connection and separation in human relationships through the eyes of a philosopher, naturalist and teacher who finds her own answers in her environment. The book's unifying metaphor is that of "a holdfast, a fist of knobby fingers that stick to rock with a glue the plant makes from sunshine and salt water, an invisible bond strong enough to hold against all but the worst winter gales." In an age of specialization and compartmentalization, of stimulation and distraction, of distance and anonymity, Moore identifies our collective yearning for something to cling to as the tides of change wash over us. She suggests that what might hold us fast is our remembrance that we, too, are part of the natural world, a remembrance that is rooted, like a holdfast, in what remains familiar.

While her children "dart from one continent to another, changing time zones and airplanes as easily as they

change their clothes," Moore stays connected to them through memories of shared experiences of wild places. Comfort, she says, comes from knowing that your children are grounded in the constancy of their natural world.

I finished *Holdfast* on a plane trip back to Rhode Island, and although I relished every excursion I took in my reading of the book, its greatest gift to me was

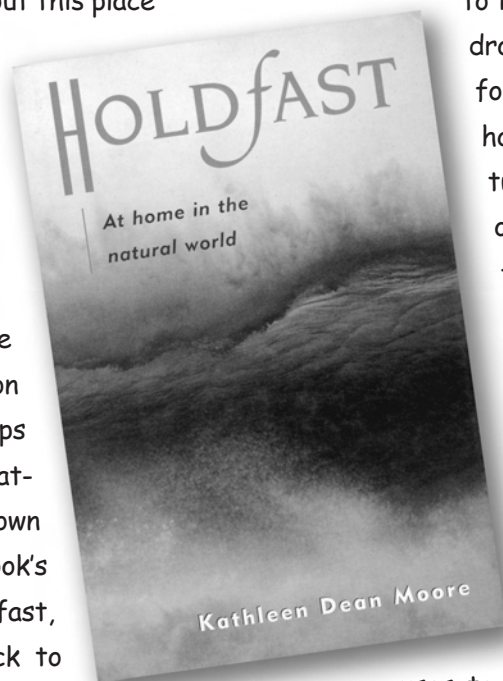
to ignite my eagerness to be home. As we drove south on Route 77, I was on alert for my holdfasts, and they pulled me home. Bales of hay in fields. Open space tumbling down to the ocean. Ice skaters on the Ponderosa. Frozen fields on farms protected from development. The winter beauty of Quicksand Pond.

***What holds us fast to Little Compton is what we need to protect from becoming "landscapes of irretrievable loss."***

The phrase from the book that haunts me is "landscape of irretrievable loss," a phrase Moore

uses to describe the mountainsides along the Oregon coast denuded by clear cutting practices. What holds us fast to Little Compton is what we need to protect from becoming "landscapes of irretrievable loss." When I think of the "holdfasts" that I share with my children, I remember Moore's words: "Sometimes the natural world gives you a gift so beautiful, so precious, that all you can do is stand there and cry."

There is still more we can do to preserve the beautiful gift of the Little Compton landscape. *Holdfast* reminds us why. – Jana Porter



## Dundery Brook Greenway Trail: Your Support is Needed

Please join SPA in supporting The Nature Conservancy's effort to build a nearly 1-1/2 mile walking trail that includes a 3,000 foot long boardwalk that will connect with an existing 4,100 foot long grass path. The trail will follow portions of the Dundery Brook from the Commons area through swamp and woodland to a pond and historic meadow on the Conservancy's Bumble Bee Farm Preserve. This rare opportunity to open a wetland property for public use depends on the support of townspeople. A boardwalk will be created for nearly the entire length of the new section of the trail in order to protect the fragile wetland habitat upon which we depend for our supply of clean drinking water.

Your financial support is essential for bringing this dream into being. Please consider contributing as generously as you are able by sending a check (made out to The Nature Conservancy of RI/Dundery Brook) or cash, *specified for this project*, to either: Sakonnet Preservation Association,



*An example of what the Dundery Brook Trail boardwalk will resemble.*  
Photo from collection of trail builder Peter Jensen

PO Box 945, Little Compton, RI 02837 or to The Nature Conservancy of RI, 159 Waterman St., Providence, RI 02906. If you have any questions about the project, do not hesitate to call us at 401-635-8800.

[sakonnetpreservation.org](http://sakonnetpreservation.org)

401.635.8800

For Information:

The Sakonnet  
Preservation Association,  
a non-profit land trust,  
is dedicated to preserving  
the rural character  
and natural resources  
of Little Compton  
for the lasting benefit  
of the Community.

Our Mission

Sakonnet Preservation Association

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