



Little Compton Landscapes

Newsletter of The Sakonnet Preservation Association

Winter 2014

Faria Family Continues to Farm on SPA's Latest Acquisition

In July of 2013, Sakonnet Preservation Association received a bequest of 9.7 acres on Willow Avenue from the estate of Alan Trueblood. Since 1985, Alan, wishing to have his land used for agriculture by someone local, had leased it to Gabe Faria for the cultivation of landscaping plants. SPA has now signed a lease agreement with Mr. Faria that ensures he can continue to use this land as part of his Windy Hill Nurseries' 20+ acre operation. Recently, Sheila Mackintosh met with Gabe to talk about his work and the time he spent as a child living on Willow Avenue. His family lived in the adjacent homestead as they farmed the land he is now leasing from SPA.

Gabe Faria was born in Tiverton on a Neck Road farm, and the family moved to "Willow Farm" in Little Compton when he was four. At the time, Willow Farm encompassed approximately 40 acres from the east side of Willow Avenue westward toward what is now the Young Farm. The Faria family raised about fifty dairy cows that included milkers, calves, and heifers, plus chickens and a pig for the table.

Although his family lived on Willow Farm for only seven years, Gabe has retained a strong tie to the place where he learned to drive a tractor and raise vegetables. He



Gabe Faria

tells how, at age five, he drove the John Deere B tractor with a hand clutch up onto a stone wall. His father backed it off and promptly told Gabe to get back on the tractor and finish the job. During summers when he was nine to eleven years old, Gabe filled his bicycle basket with vegetables he had grown at Willow Farm. He pedaled to South Shore and sold the basketful for between \$2.25 and \$2.50. As a young man, he employed this same marketing strategy to pay for dates with his then girlfriend, now wife,

Carolyn. By then, his means of transport was a 1946 Ford Coupe. Gabe filled the trunk of the car with corn and drove around the neighborhood selling it.

When Gabe was 11, the family of eight that included a brother and four sisters, left Willow Farm for a larger farmhouse on Peckham Road. While still in school, Gabe worked occasionally for "Bink" Peckham. He was paid 85

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Sakonnet Preservation Association

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President's Letter

There are a number of ways we choose to fill our tanks with the high octane energy it takes to do land conservation work. One of them is to attend the national conference of the Land Trust Alliance — a "Rally" held every year somewhere in the U.S. These gatherings of 1,500 or more fellow conservationists from the Americas as well as other continents create an atmosphere of collegiality and an intense immersion in the challenges and rewards of our work. It is a wonderful opportunity for learning, comparing notes and making connections. Providence, RI will host the 2014 conference this coming September. Our June newsletter will provide more detail.

The September 2013 "Rally" was held in New Orleans. The curriculum and plenary speaker were so enticing that Board vice-president Sheila Mackintosh and I decided we must go. For three days we attended a day-long seminar and workshops on topics ranging from legal and tax issues to living up to the promise of perpetuity that our work entails. The food was good, the workshops and seminar excellent, the company fantastic, and the plenary speaker — essayist, world traveler and naturalist Barry Lopez — swept us onto our feet. We returned filled with good ideas and confident that SPA's conservation practices hold up well against the very best.

Our spirits were buoyed by the words of Mr. Lopez who let the entire gathering know, eloquently and in no uncertain terms, that the work we are doing in the world has profound meaning and consequences for all living things. The vast gathering of attendees was treated to observations such as these:

*You are not in my mind people tidying up the damaged world or the simple doers of good deeds. You're warriors. You're facing up to what most of us want to avoid. You're looking after the fate of people you've never met. I hear often about the courage of soldiers, but I want to say, meaning them no disrespect, that the kind of courage you display, so much less heralded and publicly hardly noticed, is exemplary.**

His speech was followed by a thunderous standing ovation, and we came home energized, informed and carrying his meaningful message to the work at hand.
– Abigail Brooks

*Barry Lopez remarks from the Land Trust Alliance's Rally 2013: The National Land Conservation Conference, New Orleans, LA, Sept. 18, 2013. Lopez is an award winning and prolific writer whose works include: *Arctic Dreams*, *Crossing Open Water*, *About this Life and Resistance*.

Faria *(continued from page 1)*

cents an hour to grade and bag potatoes until nine o'clock at night. Frank Davis paid \$1.25 to do the same job so Gabe went to work for him. Although Gabe tried other work after he graduated from high school — working for Sylvania in Needham, MA and Northrup in Norwood, MA — it became clear that working indoors in a coat and tie was not for him. So he took the risk of starting his own business, Greenlawn Landscaping, in 1969. In 1971 this became the Windy Hill Nurseries on West Main Road that we know today. Along the way, Gabe took horticulture courses at URI and learned much from other RI nurserymen who were very helpful assisting him with various techniques. This was a kindness and generosity he appreciates to this day.



Gabe Faria with 1946 Ford Coupe

The landscaping business is a family affair for the Farias. Gabe's wife, Carolyn, has been a full working partner for many years. Their son Christopher and his family now live on the Peckham Road farm. Chris, who worked for his father until 2001, now operates his own landscaping business, Fieldstone Gardens. He shares the farm property with Windy Hill Nurseries and with his sister, Donna, and her husband who have greenhouses there.

SPA is so appreciative of Alan Trueblood's generous donation. Gabe and Carolyn will keep growing their landscape plantings on Willow Farm, open space will be maintained there permanently, and a piece of Little Compton's long tradition of farming continues.

Recycling: Beyond the Bin

It is worthwhile to visit the Central Landfill and Rhode Island Resource Recovery facility in Johnston that handles the recycling and trash from all 39 cities and towns in the state. An alternative is to watch videos on its website that give a virtual tour. You can see the fantastic system of the Materials Recycling Facility as it sorts the recyclables we put in our home bins and into the dumpsters at our town transfer station. The videos also tell what is and isn't recyclable. By going to the website <https://twitter.com/RIRRC> and clicking on "photos and videos," you can follow the path of recyclables, yard waste and trash from delivery truck through to preparation for sale or into the landfill. You can also learn what to do with toxic and electronic trash.



Little Compton can be proud that its per capita rate of recycling for 2013 ranked third best in the state, resulting in a profit sharing return of \$4,236 to the town. This was achieved despite a drop of nearly 7½% from the town's 2012 recycling rate which netted a return

of \$12,631. Some of the reduction in return was due to lower earned income at Rhode Island Resource Recovery from the sale of recyclables, a fluctuating market. But we obviously can do better, and we must if we are to keep the landfill from reaching its limit. A full Central Landfill will require shipping our waste out of state, a costly alternative for us and for our environment.

Eyes on the Ground: A Visit to the Reis, Amarantes and Lloyd property with Conservation Biologist Carol Trocki

"Colebrook Wood, a chief source of firewood for Little Compton settlers since the town's first days,..." is how Janet Taylor Lisle described the native oak, holly, laurel and red maple woodlands lining Colebrook Road

in her book, *A Home by the Sea*. From the early days of Colonial settlement until the last third of the 20th century, this forested and swampy terrain had been nearly devoid of human habitation. And much of its interior, away from Long Highway and Colebrook Road, remains relatively intact today.

It is divided into ancient woodlots that march northward for a mile and a half with survey descriptions and boundary markings to challenge the most sophisticated survey engineers and their 21st century equipment. Sakonnet Preservation Association acquired a sixteen

acre portion of these woods over the course of five years between 1986 and 1991, naming the contiguous lots for the donors, George Reis, James Amarantes, and Carrington and Isabelle Lloyd.

Conservation biologist Carol Trocki was contracted to develop a management plan for SPA that includes "baseline documentation" of the property's attributes — soil types, flora and fauna, and historical uses — supplemented by her gorgeous photographs, informa-



tive maps and historic aerial photographs. In her plan she describes the special qualities of this uniquely undisturbed, large native landscape important for area-sensitive

wildlife that stretches well beyond our holdings. The southern part of our property is historically significant as a portion of the 'Primus Collins Lot' once owned by its namesake, a black slave freed by Captain Edward Richmond. According to Carol, "no invasive species were noted on the property during the site visit in October 2013." As you can imagine, these words are music to a conservation organization.

Carol spells out how SPA might best undertake responsibility for caretaking this beautiful property. Nipping invasive

species in the bud before they get established, monitoring for any encroachment activity from neighboring developed properties, protecting its wetland functions from disturbance or contamination, and paying attention to the impact of deer will help keep the land in its pristine state. Encouraging permanent protection of additional woodlots to the north could further protect this important native landscape.



Where Have All the Monarchs Gone?

In the spring of 2013, we began planning an event for September when large numbers of monarch butterflies are known to appear during their annual migration through Little Compton. The timing was designed to coincide with the date in 2012 when thousands of these elegant insects had chosen to rest at the P.T. Marvell Preserve and the uplands of Goosewing Beach, creating a fairyland of orange and black beauty adjacent to South Shore Beach. Thirty of us gathered early at the Marvell parking lot this past September 21 and were escorted to the Goosewing uplands by Geoff Dennis, who had photographed the previous year's spectacle. We walked and we talked and we looked for over an hour for monarchs. We saw one.

Word had come to us that Audubon of RI's annual butterfly count in July had resulted in a total of three monarch sightings as compared with nearly three hundred in 2012, so we were prepared to see few. Nonetheless, it was stunning to see how few. Since then, numerous articles have

appeared in local and national newspapers about this alarming decline

(see a recent NYT's article at <http://nyti.ms/1b59FMj>). Suspected causes include the eradication of milkweed on which newly hatched monarch caterpillars depend for food, the use of certain types of pesticides, withering drought in our agricultural heartland, and the dramatic loss of winter habitat in the Mexican mountains where the butterflies gather annually.

Numbers of monarchs can vary from year to year, but this was the most precipitous drop on record. Bird, bee, butterfly, frog and salamander numbers are sending us a message we need to decipher if we are to protect the world of diversity for future generations. With these losses in mind, we are reminded that conservation practices are becoming more critical by the year.



2013 SPA Annual Meeting Topic Gets Attention

Our July 2013 Annual Meeting speaker, Dr. Jon Boothroyd, RI State Geologist, spoke about the impacts beginning to be observed from sea level rise in coastal communities such as ours. At the well-attended meeting, he described some scenarios that scientists are predicting, possibilities we must understand and prepare for as storm activity increasingly erodes our shoreline. Coastal wetlands and marshes are particularly vulnerable, and they are a key component of our fishing industry as hatcheries. Insurance companies are dramatically raising premiums in coastal areas based on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) updated mapping of potential impacts.

How we address the incursion of seawater as it moves inland will be the subject of continuing community meetings around this state. These sessions are being sponsored by the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), with help from scientists at URI's Coastal Resources Center and Sea Grant Program, Save the Bay, NOAA and other organizations. Dr. Boothroyd's power-point presentation from our Annual Meeting is available on our website (sakonnetpreservation.org). The statewide program being led by CRMC can be viewed on the websites: www.seagrants.uri.edu/coast/beachsamp and [/climate/habitat](http://climate/habitat). Please plan to participate in local community meetings focused on this important topic.



Sakonnet Preservation Association

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YES, I WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A NEW MEMBER.

Enclosed is my tax deductible membership contribution.

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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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