

# Sippewissett Association

## Newsletter

www.sippewissett.com

### Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris

*Karl Audenaerde*

No, we're not about to revive the 1968 musical. However, now that I have your attention, I want to report that our beloved Bahama Mama is alive and well and living in Falmouth. For those of you whose memory is joining mine on its way to who-knows-where: she is the piping plover female that stole many hearts by her persistence in having her family here in Falmouth.

She was presumably born on a Buzzards Bay beach in the summer of 2009. In February 2010 she was captured and banded on North Andros in the Bahamas, and she had her first nest in 2010 in South Dartmouth. In 2011 she nested on Wood Neck Beach, and has been returning to Falmouth ever since, recently preferring the stretch of beach along the bike path between Surf Drive and the Trunk River.

Last year, on November 22, she was observed on South Blanket Flats (North Andros, Bahamas), and on February 4 of this year on Kamalame Cay, also on North Andros. This year she arrived in Falmouth on or about April 6 and built her nest on the Trunk River site. Three eggs hatched on May 31, and the chicks were happily running around the same day. So far there has not been a repeat of the previous two years' performance when the whole family, including the two-day-old chicks, walked all the way to the Moors' Association Beach. But DPW is prepared for that possibility and has installed chick-proof fencing along Surf Drive.

If you want to go and look for them, please remember a few things. Wait till they are bigger! Of course, bringing your dog along is an absolute no-no as even the best-behaved dog on a leash triggers the predator alert in the male plover. And, unless you have a serious tele lens, if you are close enough to take a picture, you are way too close! If it's unsea-



sonably cold, raining, or more than 80 degrees, the birds are stressed enough already without our presence.

Visible differences between the sexes are minimal to non-existent, but Bahama Mama is easily recognized by the colorful bands on her legs (black-orange-dark blue on the left, white on the right). Again, if you're close enough to see these without binoculars, you're way too close. And by all means, stay out of the fenced-in area.

Last year a chick was stepped on and killed on Wood Neck Beach. They are so small and blend in so well that this can happen a lot easier than you would think. So one last admonition: watch your feet, and listen for the calls of the adult birds!

The chicks are expected to fledge around June 28 and shortly after that the family will take off. The female may do so before then, leaving the male alone with the task of protecting his brood

**Update:** recently the family made the anticipated trek to Moors Beach. One chick has been lost (predation?), everybody else is doing great.

## Peterson Farm

Arthur G. Gaines, Jr.

In 1998 the Town of Falmouth purchased the 88-acre Peterson Farm for open space. The land runs from Ice House Pond (aka Miles Pond, formerly Weeks Pond) near Sippewissett Road, all the way to Woods Hole Road. The land was purchased for \$3 million, one-third of which was raised by The 300 Committee Land Trust. The Farm rises from about elevation 10 feet at the Pond to over 110 feet in dramatic moraine landforms, now crisscrossed by more than 2 miles of trails. The Farm is immediately adjacent to the larger 387-acre Beebe Woods to which there are several trail connections.

Its predecessor, known as the Weeks Farm, was one of the oldest farms on Cape Cod. The Weeks land was among parcels granted to William and John Weeks in 1677 extending from Quissett Harbor to Gunning Point. The farm was worked by John Weeks and his descendants for more than 250 years. Sheep and wool provided most of the Weeks farm's early income, with fruits, vegetables and other livestock playing a role over the years. The estate inventory of John Weeks compiled in 1730 lists 40 steers, 5 cows, 2 heifers, 6 yearlings, 39 sheep, a mare, a colt and several swine. Between 1865 and 1896 the farm was owned by Selleck Osburn Weeks; early photographs of him and the house and farm still exist. A Land Registration Office map dated 1909 lists Lewis C. Weeks as the owner.

As markets evolved, family members turned to other endeavors. By 1936 the farm had passed to Nathan Hartford, and then was sold to Earl Boardman, a swordfisherman by trade. The old Weeks farmhouse had been aban-



*The Selleck Osburn Weeks farm house, from a cabinet card of 1865. Photo from Patricia Condon Lauber, reproduced from Witzell, *Spritsail A Journal of the History of Falmouth and Vicinity*, 14(1): 21.*

doned and later was removed. A remnant of the dooryard can still be found as overgrown lilac bushes along an old stone wall ("When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd") and day lilies and lily of the valley can be found near where the house stood. Timbers of the nearby barn finally collapsed in 1990 and now only its stone foundation remains. A row of overgrown plum trees still exists east of the barn foundation. Written records of the Weeks farm are sparse and Weeks descendants still living in Sippewissett have little memory of farm operations.

Boardman sold the property to John R. Peterson in 1947. Peterson operated a seasonal hotel, known then as the Cape Codder Hotel, a mile or so to the north on the coast. He leased the hotel in 1936 and purchased it in 1937. He used the farm, whose operations were overseen by a professional manager, to provide approximately half of his needed produce.

Peterson's son Scott, who still lives in Falmouth, says he worked on the farm from age 6 to 18, along with seasonal workers from East Falmouth and from Puerto Rico. Approx-



*Morning at the Sheep Pasture at Peterson Farm (photo by A. Gaines)*

## Dues are Due

It is time to renew your family membership in the Sippewissett Association. Our membership year runs from July 1 to June 30. As in the past, your check for \$30.00 made out to the Sippewissett Association, along with a completed membership form, should be mailed to:

Sippewissett Association  
 P.O. Box 501  
 Falmouth, MA 02541

You can also renew/join online ([www.sippewissett.org](http://www.sippewissett.org)) or you can hand deliver your check and form at our Annual Meeting on June 25, 2016, at the Hermann Meeting Room, Falmouth Public Library. Our effectiveness in the public forum is enabled by the strength of our memberships. Please renew or join us now.

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### Sippewissett Association—Membership Form 2016–2017

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

New member \_\_\_\_      Renewing member \_\_\_\_      Address: No Change \_\_\_\_

Winter Address (+dates): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Zipcode \_\_\_\_\_

Winter Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Summer Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Summer Address (+dates): \_\_\_\_\_

Mid-June mailings delivery?    Winter address \_\_\_\_      Summer address \_\_\_\_

#### **Additional Contributions: I am making an additional contribution to support:**

Water quality testing: \$ \_\_\_\_\_      Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Volunteer Opportunities:**

Board of Directors \_\_\_\_\_ Writing \_\_\_\_\_ Socials \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Drive \_\_\_\_\_ Mailings \_\_\_\_\_ Water Quality Monitoring \_\_\_\_\_

### 2016 Annual Meeting – June 25

Our 2016 Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday June 25 at Falmouth Public Library, Hermann Meeting Room (09:30–Coffee and conversation; 10:00–Call to Order). Enter through the Meeting Room doors opposite the school. In addition to the business meeting and election of new Board members we will have reports on Wood Neck Beach, the Kelly Woodland acquisition, coastal access, roadside trash, and progress on vehicular speeding and motorcycle antics. New topics will explore improved cell phone reception in our neighborhoods and high-speed internet access.

Hope to see you there!



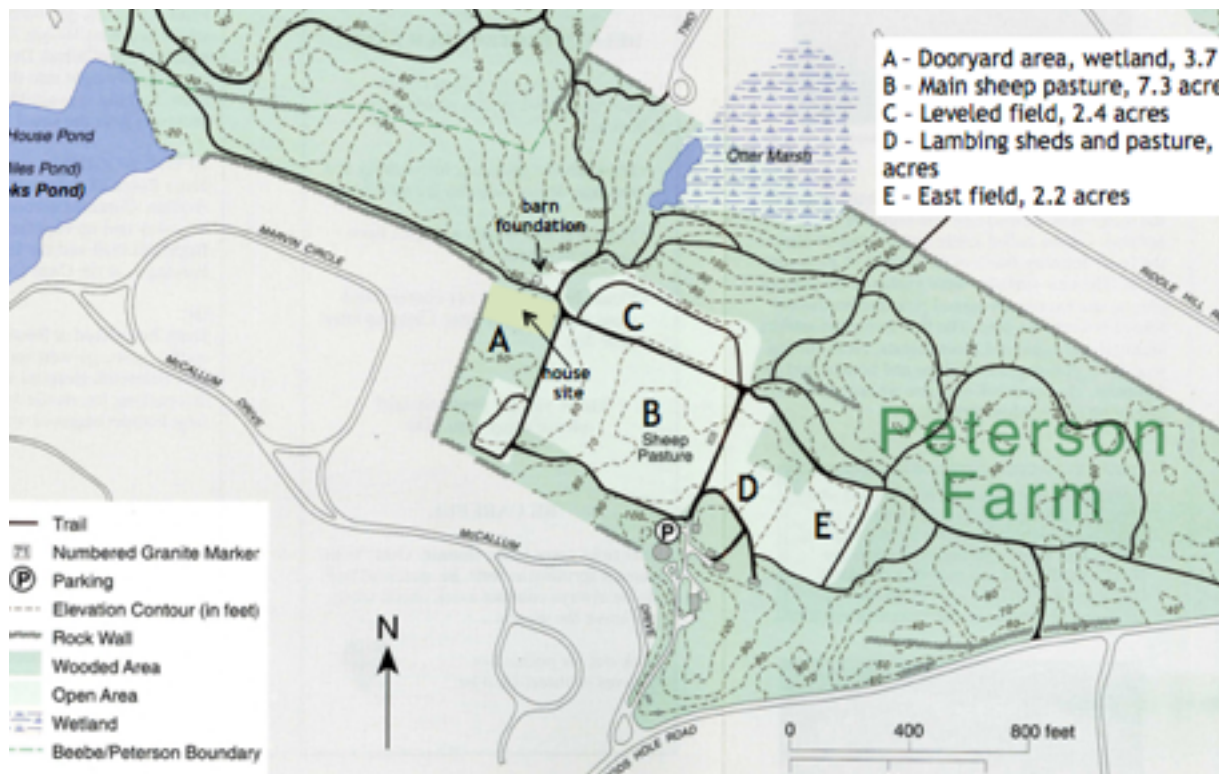
imately 14 acres were under cultivation. Crops included sweet corn (late crop), berries (strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries), eggplant, tomatoes, and seven varieties of lettuce. Some of the blueberry bushes are still present near the old house site. John Peterson was especially proud of his unique variety of strawberry, which was entirely red in its interior. An additional crop was Gladiolas, thousands of which decorated the hotel rooms.

Water was supplied to the farm by overflow from the Otter Marsh at the north edge of the farm. The 5-acre marsh sits on a perched water table within a steep-walled hollow, or amphitheater, in the moraine. Natural overflow across a sill at 70 feet on the low side of the amphitheater, pours across the lower farmland as a small stream before percolating back into the groundwater in a wetland at 50 feet elevation. This seasonal stream at one time ran under the farmhouse and was accessible through a trapdoor in the floor. At present the streambed crosses the footpath beneath a short wooden plankway accommodating passage by walkers during the wet season. The Marsh overflow was stabilized by two low dams, one of which seems to be

very old and the other, incorporating huge boulders, more recent. During the Peterson era, a superior bacon and sausage product was provided to the hotel from up to 40 pigs kept near the dams. The pigs were fed slops from hotel kitchen and gurry from a local shark fishery.

During the dry season Peterson pumped irrigation water from Ice House Pond all the way to the upper fields, using a Fairbanks Morse pump. A section of irrigation pipe and a valve can still be found in the old barn foundation, where such equipment had been stored. Ice from the pond was provided to the hotel by Sam Cahoon, who had operated an ice-house there since 1928. The main use of the ice was in Cahoon's Woods Hole fish market and aboard a fleet of vessels that supplied it. For over a decade, however, Cahoon also supplied ice to the hotel in 300-pound blocks, eventually ground into various grades for chilled drinks and iced shrimp plates.

Cahoon died in 1952 and operations in his ice-house ended a few years later; in 1966 the vacant structure burned to the ground. The small parcel where it stood alongside Sippewissett Road is now owned by The 300 Committee Land Trust. Although



Peterson sold the hotel in 1980, it was operated under new management until 1988 when it was torn down and replaced by the Cape Codder Condominiums. The Peterson Farm, itself, remained idle for nearly 20 years, although as cleared land and ecotones it continued to support a diverse wildlife, and its trails served walkers and birdwatchers.

## Peterson Farm Today

Since 1998 the Farm has been managed as Town open space by the Falmouth Conservation Department, with stewardship by The 300 Committee Land Trust. Maintaining the open fields (75% of the Peterson land remains forested) and the walking trails are the central priority, although field A has partially become overgrown. Field C, leveled for agriculture in the past, and the other fields are grazed by a herd of sheep, an activity spanning three centuries; their guardian llama, Scamp, keeps coyotes and dogs at bay. The sheep are owned by a veterinarian who lives nearby and trains her Border Collies at herding. Usually numbering 30–40, the sheep are rotated from field to field throughout the year, depending upon the condition of the grass, with a total of 14.5 acres available for this purpose. The lambing season in late winter, centering on small buildings in field D, has become a highlight for young and old visitors.

Without grazing or mowing, the pasture would soon revert to woodland. As fields they provide valuable habitat for grassland birds, such as woodcocks, bobwhites and bluebirds, along with patrolling owls and hawks, all of which have become less common as grassland habitat in New England has disappeared. Butterflies abound, seeking red

clover, grasses, goldenrod, aster, milkweed and nettle.

The woodlands consist mostly of oak (five species) and pine (scrub and white). Flowers abound throughout the spring, summer and fall. In April the pink or white Trailing Arbutus peeks out from low cover emitting its gentle fragrance for those willing to kneel on the cold ground; in late May the stunning Lady's Slippers emerge. Summer brings bright pink patches of sheep's laurel and the pond edge is lined with the graceful and fragrant white plumes of sweet pepperbush, and tall scented swamp azalea. In winter, the ground cover wintergreen hangs its red berries beneath shiny deep green leaves. Several species of Club moss, a plant shaped like a miniature evergreen tree, appear through the woods, and lichens hug bare rocks and tree trunks.

The Pond and Marsh of this conservation land provide delightful habitat diversity. Inhabitants include snapping turtles, spotted turtles and spring peepers. River otters frequent the area, but are seldom seen except on the winter ice.

The Peterson Farm is a marvelous amenity, offering walking activities and destinations, wildlife observations, a contemplative historical site, and a pastoral experience. The farm provides stability to our neighborhood,

and enhances our quality of life and property values.

**Acknowledgements:** I have borrowed shamelessly from *Trail Guide: Peterson Farm & Beebe Woods*, published by The 300 Committee Land Trust and Highfield Hall, Inc. Copies are available at the Trust office, 157 Locust Street, Falmouth. I have also depended upon "The History of Quissett Ridge and Development of Racing Beach" by Susan Witzell, published in *Spritsail* :14(1): 20–36 [winter 2000],



*Volunteers from Barnstable County AmeriCorps Cape Cod (Bourne House) assemble at the Peterson Farm to clear brush and remove invasive plant species. At far left (rear) is Jack Sidar, Stewardship Coordinator for The 300 Committee Land Trust. Not shown is Alex Brandt, Falmouth Conservation Department (photo by A. Gaines).*

## Save the Date!

### 2016 Summer Social

The summer social this year will be held  
Saturday, August 6, 2 to 5 p.m.  
at the home of Anne Giblin and Ken Foreman  
108 Sippewissett Road.  
Renew and make new friendships with your  
neighbors on Sippewissett Road  
for a pleasant afternoon of conversation  
and light hors d'oeuvres.

published by the Woods Hole Historical Collection. I am grateful to Scott Peterson for sharing his knowledge and memories of the family farm. Finally, I must thank my wife Jennifer, whose knowledge and ruthless editing of the article has improved it significantly.

### The Sippewissett Association

P.O. Box 501

Falmouth MA 02541

## Kelly Woodland Acquisition Near

In 2015 the Sippewissett Association pledged support of The 300 Committee Land Trust goal to acquire ½ acre of Kelly property linking Beebe Woods with the Flume Pond property, and thus creating the first protected wildlife corridor connecting the Town forest with Buzzards Bay. In the course of negotiations the Kelly family, longtime champions of conservation, agreed to include 2.6 acres of adjacent wetland in the deal, bringing the parcel to 3.1 acres. We are pleased to announce that our members have contributed \$40,000 to this effort, nearly 20% of the total price. We believe the closing could be as early as the end of June.

The new acquisition will provide a small parking space and walker's access to a section of the Woods not commonly accessible. The lands protect more than 500 feet of wooded roadside along Sippewissett Road. Drivers passing this land will notice a new 300 Committee sign posted there. Further information on the Kelly Woodland can be found in our Summer 2015 Newsletter.