



If you've driven down Sylvan Street recently you may have noticed a new addition to the lawn in front of the Noank Historical Society's Museum. This stone planter was moved from Riverview Avenue after the home's sale, and installed by Paul Bates in the summer of 2020. The following text, an excerpt from Mary Anderson's extensive notes on Noank's unique architectural features, describes this history of this piece and its connection to a number of similar stone features visible across Noank.

### Shirley's Shore Stones

*By Mary Anderson*

"When John Bates read Ashby Danford Anderson's article "Noank and Swordfishing," in the Newsletter on September 1991 on Captain Benjamin Latham's fishing, he remembered someone had told him about Charles Shirley going lobstering with Captain Latham sometimes. On those occasions when they both went out to check lobster pots, they towed an empty rowboat along, just in the event the tide would not be right for hauling pots when they got to The Race. In that case, they could go over to the southern shore of Fisher's Island and pick up shore stones.

Those shore stones—so much smoother than field stones—went into many special works around Noank. The wall encompassing the yard at 76 Pearl Street, which was Captain Latham's house, is an example of their use, and it was probably built by Charles Shirley. John directed me to another similar wall in front of the house just west of the Prospect Hill Road entrance to the Noank Cemetery. The monument on the Shirley plot in the Noank Cemetery is built with these stones. Charles Shirley was a well-known stone mason, who did the stone work on Grace Episcopal Chapel, now the Noank Historical Society Museum.

There are other examples of what might have been Shirley's work with these shore stones. There is the south side of the wall between the cemetery and the McKenna's house, formerly Matsdorff's. At the southeast corner on Main Street and Riverview Avenue, there is in the front yard of the house a two story planter made of these stones."

## The History of Haley Farm

*Written by Sidney Van Zandt & Priscilla Pratt for the Groton Open Space Association (GOSA)  
Reprinted with photographs from the Noank Historical Society with the permission of Sidney Van Zandt.*

The Haley Farm is situated in the Town of Groton, Connecticut, to the east of Poquonnock Bridge and west of Noank. It was part of Governor John Winthrop the Younger's original plantation known as Winthrop's Neck, which included what is now Bluff Point, most of Poquonnock Bridge, Haley Farm, Mumford Cove, and Groton Long Point.

It was granted by the town of New London in 1649. At some juncture the land was divided into the Great Farm or Bluff Point and the Fort Hill Farm. In 1789, Starr Chester purchased the Fort Hill Farm, which consisted of 570.5 acres. The farm stayed in the Chester family until 1833, when it was transferred to Noyes Barber. In 1852, the farm, minus the Groton Long Point parcel, was sold to Henry B. Lewis of Westerly. In 1869, the 400 acre farm was sold to Caleb Haley, a Center Groton native and New York City Fulton Fish Market dealer, for \$12,000. Mr. Haley, a "gentleman farmer," built the massive stone walls and raced horses using the oval around "Racetrack Pond" for training.

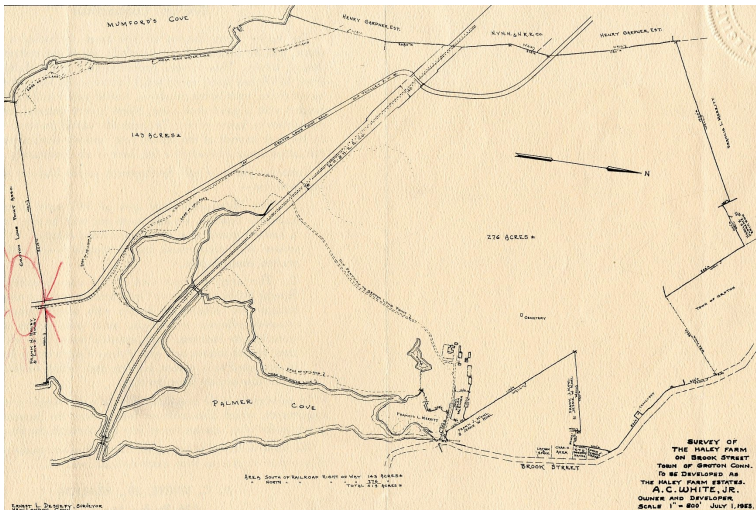
The horses were raced at Poquonnock Bridge, which had a racetrack. After Caleb's death in 1924, his son, Samuel, continued operating the farm, delivering milk to local homes, until his death in 1947. His daughter,

Juliet Haley, inherited the farm, which she sold to A. C. White Jr. of Springfield, MA (Alcor, Inc.) in 1953. He developed the area south of the railroad tracks and north of Groton Long Point and called the development "Mumford Cove Estates."

Mr. White only intended to develop the Mumford Cove area and placed the remaining 250-acre Haley Farm up for sale as one unit. In 1965 a request was made public by Algernon-Blair, Inc., who had an option on the land, to change the zoning from residential to multi-family for Coast Guard apartments. At the same time the Planning and Zoning Commissions were facing decisions on three other large multi-family proposals in Groton. The citizenry, particularly in the Noank section of Groton, voiced opposition to the Haley Farm zoning change.

The Planning Commission passed the application. Over 300 people then attended the Zoning Commission hearing. Individuals opposed to the zoning change met at the home of Mort and Eva Wright and hired Attorney Belton Copp who made the case that this was beautiful land and that the developer was making the proposal to make money. Attorney Copp added that "we say only that there are other sites—maybe not with the potential of economic gain—but there are other sites available for such a use." Local legislators Lillian Erb and Fred Little

introduced a bill proposing purchase of the farm for open space as an adjunct to Bluff Point Park purchased in 1963 (then only 250 acres) that had the support of the State Department of Natural Resources (changed to the Department of Environmental Protection in 1971). The zoning board rejected the Algernon-Blair plan for a zone change to multi-family housing by unanimous vote.



*Announcing*

**THE HALEY FARM ESTATES**  
Groton, Connecticut

The Haley Farm Estates of 400 acres, including a mile of shore, will be developed as a carefully zoned and restricted residential colony. This unusual property, held in the Haley family since 1869, has many exceptional features. Its long shores, protected coves, undulating meadows, restful valley and commanding heights with a panoramic view, offers a very unusual setting for the particular home owner. To those who would prefer to measure by the acre instead of the square foot, and whose thinking is of a miniature estate instead of a lot, here is an opportunity.

Tentative plans include development on the basis of two separate parcels:—

1. The Mumford's Cove area of 143 acres permits extensive beaches, a yacht basin and will be offered to a limited group as a small uncrowded colony. An entrance with main roads and a sample beach will be started immediately.
2. The larger northern area of 276 acres bounded by Brooks Street and Palmer Cove presents unusual opportunities for substantial homes with ample grounds, situated adjacent to schools, main auto routes and suburban to business, with beautiful view, high elevation, varied terrain and with Palmer Cove's many acres of protected safe waters, bathing and fishing facilities, make this section most inviting.

In an attempt to do first things first, a water supply is of prime importance, which also more or less governs the location of the roads in the tract, giving access into and through the property.

We shall be happy to keep you informed as our plans progress, if you care to give us your name and address.

**A. C. WHITE, JR., REALTOR**  
496 Bridge Street  
Springfield, Mass. Telephone 2-5109

Mr. White's brochure advertising the Haley Farm Estates, 2010.065.003, gift of Chip and Mary Anderson



Local support for purchasing the Farm as open space came from numerous sources. Petitions were circulated and a letter writing campaign was promoted as well as participation in hearings in Hartford. The Town Planning Commission went on record opposing the legislation, as they felt the land was prime residential area. The Regional Planning Agency felt the Haley Farm would be better as a development. When the Town Council met to decide whether or not to support the bill they learned that the bill had died in committee.

They then voted to support a general open space acquisition bill for southeastern Connecticut, which did not mention specific sites. Meanwhile, Alcor, Inc. sold the Haley Farm in 1966, now 250 acres, to Palmer Cove Estates of the O&G Construction Co., New Haven, CT. Efforts were made without success to have the town put the land as open space in its master plan to be eligible for federal funds.

### Local Action Continues

Many informational meetings were held to see what could be done to "Save the Haley Farm." The Groton Open Space Association (GOSA) was officially formed in December 1967. Sidney F. Van Zandt chaired both of these organizations. The State had indicated it would buy the Haley Farm if the Association would raise funds to show local interest. Basically, GOSA took over the raising of the Town's portion of an open space grant with 25% Town, 25% State, and 50% Federal funds. The cost was \$400,000. Our goal was \$100,000.

The Connecticut Forest and Park Association, Inc., a

private conservation organization with John E. Hibbard as Executive Director, agreed to a joint venture of the Groton Open Space Association in cooperation with the Connecticut Conservation Association and The Nature Conservancy's Connecticut chapter to begin a statewide fund drive to raise funds to "Save the Haley Farm." A brochure was printed with photos depicting the farm's beauty and text describing its history.

After two years of vigorous activity, \$25,000 had been raised towards the \$100,000 goal but the State felt it

could add no more of its funds. In October 1969, however, Mr. White took legal action against O&G Construction. They were in arrears on their payments and back taxes. Mr. White regained ownership of the Haley Farm minus the upper 50 acres that were retained by O&G. Mr. White then offered the remaining land (198 acres) to

the State for \$300,000. The State then contacted the Groton Open Space Association in December 1969 with the proposition that the State would buy the Farm if GOSA could raise \$50,000 by March 1, 1970 (2 months). The challenge was accepted.

A supplement to the original brochure was printed and circulated announcing that the goal had been reduced from \$100,000 to \$50,000. Appearances on TV shows, panel discussions, meetings with local groups and organizations, conferences with individuals, and ads in the newspapers were the start of an active publicity campaign. An anonymous matching gift challenge to the residents of the Noank Fire District in the amount of \$3,000, which became known as the "Match 3000," initiated a lot of activity.



Local organizations and church groups held smorgasbords, spaghetti suppers, and cake sales. Youth groups and individuals organized pony rides, car washes—anything and everything to raise the money. A rock concert to raise funds for the Haley Farm was promoted by Amby Burfoot, local winner of the Boston Marathon, and by the Fitch Senior High Conservation Group, headed by Johnny Kelley, also a Boston Marathon winner and teacher at Fitch. This concert generated a lot of support and publicity when the City of Groton Government made the group comply with overly strict demands in order to hold a concert in the Municipal Auditorium. (This was about the time of Columbia University and other student upheavals). The actual concert had volunteer support from the Groton Jaycees, beverages for sale donated by Pepsi-Cola, with other volunteers running the booths, policing the parking lot, and helping with the event.

### **Fund Drive Goes Over Top**

By early February, 1970, the Town Council adopted a resolution in support of both the state's goal of acquiring the farm and of the citizen's fund drive. The fund drive went up and over the goal of \$50,000 before the March 1, 1970 deadline. The State Bonding Commission released \$100,000 and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation of the Department of the Interior released \$150,000. The papers were signed over to the State on July 17, 1970.

"Life" magazine included the Haley Farm and Sidney Van Zandt in a special feature entitled "Battles Won" that was in the July 4, 1970, issue as well as a "special" environment issue dated August 3, 1970.

When the State acquired the property, the farm buildings were removed because of their poor condition. The house had burned down in the late 1950s. Photographs and dimensions of the farm buildings were recorded before demolition, thanks to a Reader's Digest grant applied for by the Groton Senior Girl Scout Troop. The farmer who was leasing the property for

grazing cows and horses was no longer allowed to keep them there. Once the animals were no longer on the farm, the fields began reverting to brush and woods at an alarming rate.

Various Boy Scout projects helped to clear cedars, sumac and bullbriars from the edge of the fields to expose some of the stone walls. In 1985, the Groton Open Space Association, using interest from the additional funds raised, hired a farmer to cut the open fields and each year to try to expose more stone walls. This yearly cutting continues, so that a degree of openness has been maintained. At present, people enjoy the farm in its undeveloped state for hiking, jogging, dog walking, and cross-country skiing.

Two master thesis studies were commissioned by GOSA—the first in 1972 by Stephan Syz entitled "The Vegetation of the Haley Farm State Park, Groton, CT, with Recommendations for Land Use." The report was his Masters thesis in Botany from Connecticut College. The second was a 12-week study of the uses of Haley Farm and Bluff Point conducted by nine students at the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. One of the nine students, Phillip Hoose, was hired by GOSA to conduct an in-depth study over the summer of 1977.

### **Unfinished Business Finally Completed**

The upper 50 acres still owned by O&G Construction was always considered a matter of unfinished business, particularly by Charles N. and Priscilla W. Pratt, original founders and directors of the Groton Open Space Association, who continued over the years a leadership role in realizing the vision of a completed Haley Farm. In 1996, GOSA was reorganized, incorporated in the State of Connecticut, and in 1997 received 501(c)3, tax-exempt status from the federal government. The Save the Haley Farm Fund that was held in escrow by the Connecticut Forest and Park Association was transferred to GOSA. A fund drive was held to add to the fund so that the yearly mowing of the Haley Farm could continue.



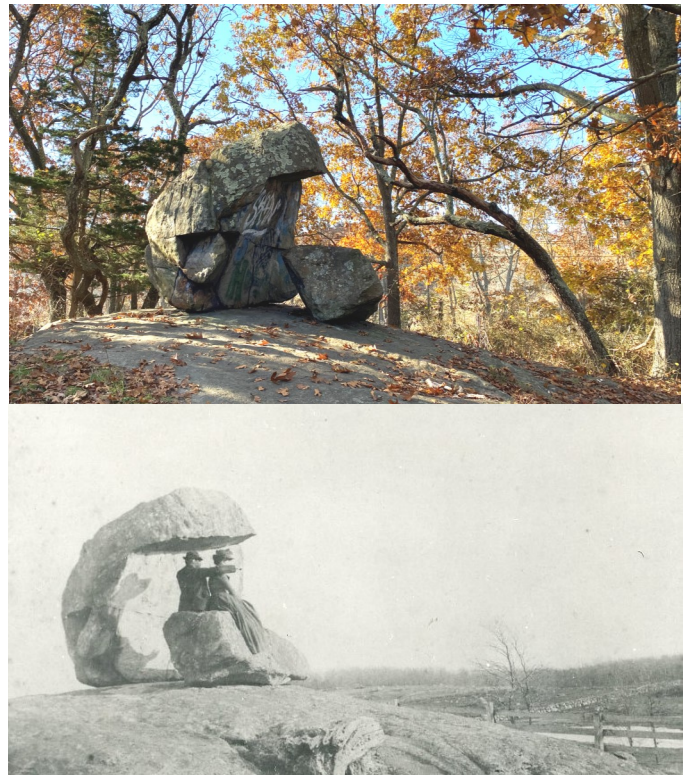
GOSA had kept the issue of the remaining 50 unpurchased acres alive at both the town and the state levels by repeated advocacy since 1970, when the original purchase of 200 acres from Mr. White had been made. Three attempts to develop the property were successfully opposed by GOSA and other concerned citizens and groups. One was for 48 houses on the O&G property; another was for a 95-unit cluster development on both the O&G property and the adjacent Briggs property; and a third was an attempt to obtain a 50-foot right of way across town property to open up both the Briggs and the O&G lands for intensive development.

In May of 2000, GOSA received a letter from the agent for the Guerra-DeAngelis Trustees (O&G), Mr. Fouad M. Hassan, in reply to yet another GOSA letter of inquiry, that the issue of acquiring the 50 acres for open space could be seriously explored again. GOSA forwarded this information to the DEP, and followed up with another letter to Mr. Hassan, requesting more specific information. On July 17, 2000 Mr. Hassan, who was now also representing Bowen Briggs, wrote GOSA, with copies to the Town of Groton and the State of Connecticut DEP, offering specific terms to sell. The time was right and successful negotiations began between the DEP, Guerra-DeAngelis Trustees (22 heirs), and Bowen Briggs, who owned 7 abutting acres. Issues of price and availability of state funds that had kept the parties apart for so many years were resolved.

Legal documents were exchanged and signed, and on May 28, 2002, two months short of 32 years after the purchase of 200 acres from Mr. White, deeds for

both the O&G and the Briggs properties transferring ownership to the State of Connecticut were recorded at Groton Town Hall.

After persistent and determined effort, the Haley Farm battle had finally been won. The Haley Farm State Park now has 267 acres preserved for open space, including 12 acres, the “Racetrack Pond” area, purchased by the State from Mumford Cove Association in 2001. A recently completed pedestrian bridge crosses the railroad tracks at the southern end of the park and joins Haley Farm with Bluff Point Coastal Reserve for a total of 1000+ acres, a jewel of a complex for the enjoyment of all.



Canapie Rock or Jemima's Rock at Haley Farm in the early 1900s and 2020.

### *In Memoriam*

Mary Anderson—1936-2020  
 Ann Conti—1941-2020  
 Ken Cote, Sr.—1943-2020  
 Frances Greenleaf—1923-2020  
 Michael Gothie, Sr.—1939-2020  
 Martha Perry—1935-2020  
 Marcia Robinson—1930-2020



## Our Tribute to Mary Anderson (1936-2020)



Mary Anderson (center) with the Noank Belles, Sea Fever 1973.

The Noank Historical Society lost our former president and longtime curator, Mary Anderson, this past October after a long battle with cancer.

Mary's involvement with the historical society spans back to its very beginnings in 1966. She was a charter member of the organization as well as a familiar face in the annual Sea Fever show. In 1978 she officially joined the board of directors, and has remained a major force in the society

ever since. Just two years after joining the board she was elected its president; a position that she held for 15 years, from 1980-1995. Following her time as president, Mary served as the curator of the Sylvan Street museum—managing the museum's collections, meeting with donors, researching and designing exhibits, contributing articles to the newsletter, recruiting and training volunteers, and overseeing the dedicated Tuesday working group among a myriad of other tasks. She also made significant contributions to Noank's historical record as editor of the book "The Captains B.F. Rathbun of Noank," and co-editor of "Noank: Celebrating a Maritime Heritage."

One of the greatest strengths that Mary brought to the historical society was her knowledge of historic architecture and passion for architectural preservation. During her presidency Mary spearheaded the project to save and restore the Latham/Chester Store. Her efforts were so successful that in 1993 she was formally recognized by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, and received the Connecticut Historic

Commission Volunteer Recognition Award and the Connecticut League of Historical Societies' Award of Merit. Nearly 30 years later this building has continued to be a major asset to the historical society as the site of our quarterly programs, annual potluck supper and summer artist show. In addition, Mary has conducted extensive research on Noank's unique architectural heritage and conducted many house tours and walking tours through the village on the society's behalf. Her notes are available to future generations of Noankers at the Sylvan Street museum.

Mary has been described repeatedly as an irreplaceable presence in our organization. It is impossible to express how much of an impact she has made on NHS, or how much she has contributed to the Sylvan Street museum and greater Noank community over the years. She will be sorely missed by all who had the pleasure to know or work with her. We offer our condolences to her husband, Chip, and her family.



Mary Anderson with former NHS archivist Elizabeth DuRocher working in a new donation at the Sylvan Street Museum, 2012.

The Noank Historical Society is encouraged by the continued support and generosity of our members. Contributions allow the organization to preserve Noank's history and artifacts. Sincere appreciation is extended to those who donated generously by answering our annual appeal or adding a contribution when renewing their memberships this year:

Charles Anderson	Lois Constantine	Thomas Leary	Nick & Judith Salerno
Lynne Anderson	Ann Conti	Lynne Marshall	Carol Shephard
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Paul Connor	Christine Lane	Bob Rogers	John Zuccardy

### We appreciate the thoughtful donations made:

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