



THE WATCH HILL CONSERVATOR
222 Watch Hill Road
Watch Hill, Rhode Island 02891

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THE WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2009 VOL. 2 No. 2 WATCH HILL, R.I.

De-phragging the Ponds

Phragmites australis, aka *common reed* or simply *phragmites*: their long stems support delicate, feathery tufts that wave gracefully in the slightest breeze. Small birds light on them, bob a minute, then move on. Wildfowl nest beneath them; deer and other mammals drink nearby; and aquatic life thrives in their shade. Their roots help to stabilize disturbed soils; they improve water quality by filtration and nutrient removal. It's all good.

All good, that is, until they multiply at such a great rate that they overtake a pond or stream completely, clogging water flow, crowding out other plants, and obscuring views. Watch Hill Conservancy Director and head of the Conservancy's Pond Committee, now Moderator of the Watch Hill Fire District, Ed Russell has seen this first-hand. "[Phragmites] were taking over Mickill Pond [located along Niantic Avenue, Watch Hill], step by step and we were going to lose it completely. If we had left it alone, we would have had a marsh. All of the fish and birds were being driven out, and ducks could no longer land." Working with the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) under the aegis of the Watch Hill Conservancy, Ed and his neighbors have restored the pond to good health, where water lilies again have room to grow, and ducks once more nest and feed.

Ed Olender's property abuts the pond between Westerly Road and Noank Avenue, where he saw that phragmites had taken over 20-30% of the pond surface. "It was clear," he said, "that that we as homeowners abutting the pond had to do something about it. We were fortunate in having neighbors who are all committed to cleaning up the pond. Today, in our third year, we have waterfowl and birds visiting that we never used to see, along with minnows. It is very exciting."

Philip Koretski, General Manager of Watch Hill's Misquamicut Club, describes a similar scenario on Maschaug Pond, on the Club's lower golf course, south of Ocean View Highway. "Phragmites had just choked the life out of the pond. We had zero visible water. But we followed Ed Russell's model, and have signs of a good habitat there again. The ducks are back, and we just expect it to get better."

What does it take to get from zero visible water to a viable habitat? Time and patience. Each project has taken more than three years. Any pond restoration effort must be approved and permitted by the CRMC, whose staff work in tandem with the Department of Environmental Management's Division of Fish and Wildlife. Olender recommends working with a professional biologist. He and his neighbors contracted with environmental consultant Linda Steere of Applied Bio-Systems, Inc. to evaluate the property, obtain permits, and provide follow-up with the CRMC.

Once approvals have been obtained (a process which can take several months), work can begin. In the first year of the Maschaug project, aquatic herbicides were sprayed in the fall by Narragansett Pest Control; when the pond froze, they cut the stalks ("harvested them like wheat," Koretski recalls), and disposed of them according to CRMC and DEM guidelines. The second year, phragmites continued to grow, but at a much slower rate and not as thickly. Since the last spraying, the pond is beginning to return to life, and wildfowl have been sighted for the first time in many years.

The deterioration of habitat by phragmites doesn't happen overnight. In small amounts, the plants can be beneficial, providing valuable food and habitat. But disturbances to ponds and nearby terrain, such as road improvements, development, and new pond construction, can provide the opportunity for the common reed to gain a foothold, allowing for rapid spread and even more rapid destruction of habitat. The infestation can be mitigated not only by eradication, but also by pro-active planting of non-invasive vegetation.



continued on page 2

THE WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY

222 Watch Hill Road
Watch Hill, Rhode Island 02891
(401) 348-6540

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For information about community events, lectures, concerts, nature walks, educational programs for children, and others, see the Conservancy's website at www.thewatchhillconservancy.org.

The Watch Hill Conservator
Joan Youngken, *Contributing Editor*
Design by Wendy A. Bolster,
Puffin Enterprises

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The Watch Hill Conservancy®

www.thewatchhillconservancy.org

SAVE THE DATE!!!!

WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY
ANNUAL MEETING,
SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, 10 A.M.

THE MISQUAMICUT CLUB
60 OCEAN VIEW HIGHWAY
WATCH HILL



With guest speaker TRUDY COXE

"Watching Watch Hill: Preserving the Past, Envisioning the Future"

Trudy Coxe has served as Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of the Preservation Society of Newport County since December 1998, having previously served as Massachusetts' Secretary of Environmental Affairs, Executive Director of Save the Bay, and Director of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association. With considerable experience in the fields of both environmental conservation and historic preservation, her perspective on the history and future of Watch Hill is sure to be of interest.

Please join us!

Once phragmites have spread to the extent that they qualify as invasive, there are several means of eradicating them. Excavation is rarely successful; deep digging to ensure that all roots are removed damages the very feature that is the object of restoration: the pond itself. By themselves, mechanical means such as mowing or harvesting are difficult and usually ineffective, as re-growth is rapid and harvested areas can infill quickly. Application of aquatic herbicides such as EPA-approved glyphosate, an ingredient in commercially-available Rodeo, is most effective. In most states, only licensed pest management firms are permitted to apply Rodeo, so declaring war on phragmites can be an expensive undertaking. The Rhode Island Habitat Restoration project website lists a number of possible funding sources for conservation organizations, municipalities, and, in less common

instances, for private landowners. Watch Hill pond owners are increasingly taking the initiative and assuming the costs, and the results are beginning to be noticeable.

The Watch Hill Conservancy has been a local advocate for the eradication of invasive species in Watch Hill ponds. As CRMC, DEM, and other agencies address this and other threats to coastal waters and ponds, local initiatives are essential and encouraged. They're satisfying as well. Russell is pleased with the results of the efforts at Mickill Pond. "We were successful in eliminating the phragmites from the pond, and have restored it to its original size and depth. The impact on the surrounding area has been very positive in that we have a vibrant pond; Mother Nature is doing the rest."

For additional information on phragmites and invasive aquatic species, see:



USDA National Agricultural Library: www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/aquatics/main.shtml

Rhode Island Habitat Restoration: www.edc.uri.edu/restoration/index.htm

Rhode Island CRMC: www.crmc.state.ri.us/invasives.html

Rhode Island DEM: www.dem.ri.gov/topics/water.htm

Ticked off about ticks?

Consider this: In southern Rhode Island, your risk of encountering a nymphal black-legged tick – one that could be carrying Lyme disease or worse – is as high as or higher than anywhere else in the state. It's been true every year since 1994, and will likely increase as deer increasingly appear in our gardens, mice continue to thrive, and warming trends extend the tick season.

Tick habitat and the corresponding number of cases of Lyme disease are creeping slowly north. While coastal Rhode Island has been a high-risk zone for two decades, parts of the state that were at low risk for encounters in 1994 are now at medium risk; there are currently almost no areas of Rhode Island outside the urban core that are considered to be low risk. In addition, researchers at Yale University have determined that the feeding cycles of ticks are influenced by climate, concluding that areas such as Washington County, with already high numbers of cases of Lyme disease, will see even more as conditions become increasingly favorable for ticks to multiply and for the development of more persistent strains of the bacterium that carries the disease.

Is there any GOOD news about Lyme disease? Yes!

Michael Warburg of Westerly, a trustee of the Apple Pickers Foundation, was recently quoted in the Providence Journal: "The only sure way to avoid Lyme disease is to prevent tick bites – a message that needs to be clearly conveyed to those at risk." Warburg presented URI's Center for Vector-Borne Diseases a large donation to enhance the Center's educational website www.ticken-counter.org. Already an engaging and informative site, complete with interactive maps and games, it will soon boast new animations and tools. Funds will also be used for other educational devices, such as a documentary to be posted on YouTube and a variety of outreach programs. Increased educational tools hopefully will result in higher awareness and more and better preventive measures.

On the home front, those of us who work or play outdoors can take advantage of a relatively new weapon in the war against ticks; the insecticide permethrin has been approved by the EPA as a safe and effective against ticks when applied to clothing. Sprayed on shoes, socks, and pants, it kills ticks on contact or soon after, and is harmless to most people. Sprays containing permethrin, however, are not effective if applied to the skin; interaction with skin oils diminishes the potency of the active ingredient.

Thomas N. Mather, Director of URI's Center for Vector-Borne Disease, emphasizes the importance of individuals taking responsibility for waging war on ticks in their own back yards. "If we hope to achieve real tick relief," he writes, "every one of us must take the action that we can. Scientists need to research

solutions; lawmakers need to address policies and make important changes to stem the upward spiraling of tick encounters; citizens need to become informed and motivated to take appropriate actions to protect themselves and their families."

Simple actions can have huge results. Mather recommends protecting yards by stopping ticks, deer, and mice, the hosts of the bacterium that causes Lyme disease, in their tracks. Ticks live in shaded, moist areas like woodpiles, brushy areas, stone walls, and low plantings. Eliminate or avoid those places. Contact a professional pest control applicator to spray tick habitat with bifenthrin or permethrin. Cardboard tubes with permethrin-impregnated cotton placed in mice habitat can reduce risk tremendously; mice will use the cotton as nesting material, killing ticks on contact. Deer fencing will deter deer from coming into a yard. Remove temptation: both deer and mice are attracted to bird feeders, and can leave ticks where they're easily transferred to humans.

Most of us who spend time outdoors know of someone who has had Lyme disease or another of the tick-borne diseases...or have had it ourselves. Those numbers can come down. Awareness of the potential severity of these diseases, research and education about the life cycles of ticks, the effect of habitat change on the transmission of disease, and other factors have captured and kept the public's attention, with an impact on the number of cases reported and early treatment of those cases. Continued research and educational efforts, combined with preventive efforts on the part of individuals, can make the difference in how we use and enjoy the outdoors, in our own yard and garden, golfing, hiking, or in any of the myriad outdoor activities that make summer in Rhode Island such a special time. [JY]

Save the Dates

June 25 – August 27, 6-8 p.m. Thursday night concerts at the Village Park sponsored by the Watch Hill Business Association, in conjunction with the Park Commission. See visit-watchhill.com/calendar.htm for full schedule.

June 27, 6-9 p.m. Watch Hill Conservancy Annual Gala. Misquamicut Club Beach Club. Call 401-348-6540 or e-mail thewatchhillconservancy.org for details.

July 11, 9:30 a.m. Watch Hill Fire District Annual Meeting. Watch Hill Firehouse.

July 14, 5 p.m. "Watch Hill Style I," the first of two illustrated programs by Richard C. Youngken and Chaplin B. Barnes, celebrating Watch Hill's unique architecture and landscapes. See many images not included in the Conservancy's newest book. Watch Hill Chapel Undercroft.

August 8, 10:00 a.m. Watch Hill Conservancy Annual Meeting. Misquamicut Club, 60 Ocean View Highway. Guest speaker: Trudy Cox, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, Preservation Society of Newport County. "Watching Watch Hill: Preserving the Past, Envisioning the Future." Call 401-348-6540 or e-mail thewatchhillconservancy.org for details.

August 18, 7 p.m. "Watch Hill Style II," the second of two illustrated programs by Richard C. Youngken and Chaplin B. Barnes. A reprise of July 14 program, with variations. Watch Hill Chapel Undercroft.

Napatree Point Naturalists Programs

Please call 401-439-9891 or email napatreenaturalist@live.com for more information about the following programs for children, families, or individuals.

July 5-9. Horseshoe crab monitoring and tagging. Sponsored by the Watch Hill Conservancy and the Watch Hill Fire District. This ongoing project needs volunteers.

July 7 – August 20, 8:30-11:30 a.m. The Napatree Point Conservation Area Investigators Program, sponsored by the Conservancy and the Fire District. This free program for kids 8-13 will run every Tuesday and Thursday morning through August 20 at Napatree Point Conservation Area. **Registration is required.** Each session is limited to eighteen kids.

July 8, 9:00-10:30 a.m. "Catching up with Horseshoe Crabs at Napatree Point Conservation Area," sponsored by Westerly Parks and Recreation in conjunction with the Conservancy and the Fire District. This program for all ages will focus on horseshoe crab biology and management activities. Meet at the entrance to Napatree Point Conservation Area. This program is free and limited to 20 families. **Registration is required.** Please register with Westerly Parks and Recreation at www.westerlyrec.com.

July 20-24. Horseshoe crab monitoring and tagging. See details above.

August 5, 2:00-3:30 p.m. "Exploring Napatree's Nursery," sponsored by Westerly Parks and Recreation in conjunction with The Conservancy and the Fire District. This program will focus on the animals and plants that live in the lagoon at Napatree Point Conservation Area. Meet at the entrance to Napatree Point Conservation Area. Free and limited to 20 families. **Registration is required;** contact Westerly Parks and Recreation at www.westerlyrec.com.

August 12, 7:30 -9:30 a.m. Early morning nature walk sponsored by The Nature Conservancy in conjunction with the Conservancy and the Fire District. Meet at the entrance to Napatree Point Conservation Area.

August 15, 9:00 a.m. Saturday Morning Walk. Leader: ornithologist Peter Paton, URI Department of Natural Resources Science. Sponsored by the Conservancy and the Fire District. Registration is preferred, but not required.

August 19, 1:30-3:00 p.m. "Exploring Life on the Rocks at Napatree," sponsored by Westerly Parks and Recreation in conjunction with the Conservancy and the Fire District. Age 8 and up. Meet at the entrance to Napatree Point Conservation Area. Free and limited to 20 families. **Registration is required;** contact Westerly Parks and Recreation at www.westerlyrec.com.

Watch Hill Memorial Library and Improvement Society Programs and Events

July 4, 4:00 p.m. Annual Children's Bicycle Parade. Decorating begins at 3:30.

July 7. Watch Hill Garden Tour.

July 17, 10:00 a.m. Children's Mystic Aquarium Show at the Library

July 31, 5:30 p.m. Photography Show Reception, Watch Hill Chapel Undercroft

August 1-9, 12-4 p.m. Photography Show. Chapel Undercroft

August 14, 10:00 a.m. Children's Tea Party at the Library

September 6-7, 10 a.m.-12:00 noon. Pantry Donations for Area Shelters

LIBRARY Hours: July 6 – September 4, 9:00-1:00 p.m. daily

STORY TIME Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00 a.m.

Log onto www.whmlis.com for previews of upcoming events

Watch Hill Lighthouse Museum

July and August. Open Tuesdays and Thursdays 1-3 p.m. Grounds open 8:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.

Watch Hill Chapel

June 21 – September 13. Sundays 8:30 a.m. Roman Catholic Mass. Sundays 10:00 a.m. Union Service.

July 19, Aug. 23, 5:00 p.m. Hymn sings.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

FOR MEMBERSHIP IN
THE WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY

Member name: _____

Preferred mailing address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

INDIVIDUAL: \$25

No: _____ Total: \$ _____

BUSINESS: \$75

No: _____ Total: \$ _____

FAMILY: \$100

No: _____ Total: \$ _____

SUPPORTER: \$250 - \$499

No: _____ Total: \$ _____

SPONSOR: \$500 - \$999

No: _____ Total: \$ _____

PATRON: \$1,000 - \$2,499

No: _____ Total: \$ _____

BENEFACTOR: \$2,500 - \$5,000 or more

No: _____ Total: \$ _____

OTHER CONTRIBUTION Total: \$ _____

Mail to:
THE WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY
222 Watch Hill Road
Watch Hill, R.I. 02891

Please include names of family members 18 and under. If you are making gifts of memberships, please include the names and addresses of those to receive these gifts.



Watch Hill Style:

“...stunning...informative...a delight!”

Trudy Coxe

I can't imagine anything better than enjoying - on a daily basis - the glorious Watch Hill “cottages” that were created by acclaimed architects, designers, and builders at the turn of the 20th century. Alas, that's not my fortune, so I must admire and appreciate from afar. Fortunately, there is a near-perfect alternative to living there, and that's to pick up a copy of *Watch Hill Style*, the Watch Hill Conservancy's latest publication, authored by Richard C. Youngken and Chaplin B. Barnes. Leafing through its pages is a delight to the eye.

The book provides a tantalizing overview of Watch Hill's “mansions in informal summer attire.” It offers an appealing array of beautiful photographs, from nature views of this incredible seaside town to architectural design elements that give each of Watch Hill's houses its own character. The stunning photographs are accompanied by informative and insightful text, providing the reader with an excellent primer on the architectural history of Watch Hill.

You don't need a degree in art or architecture to enjoy and learn from this book. It's written for anyone who takes delight in pretty porches, or shingled roofs that are artwork in and of themselves, or windows, fanlights, and projecting bays.

Youngken and Barnes do a great job in explaining the three primary artistic trends on view in Watch Hill: the Shingle Style, Colonial Revival, and the American Arts and Crafts movement. And they help the reader understand that some of the best architects and landscape designers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were practicing here: architects Grosvenor Atterbury, Henry Wilkinson, William Ralph Emerson, Wilson Eyre, and John Russell Pope; landscape designers the Olmsted Brothers, Warren Manning, and Marian Cruger Coffin. What an impressive roster!

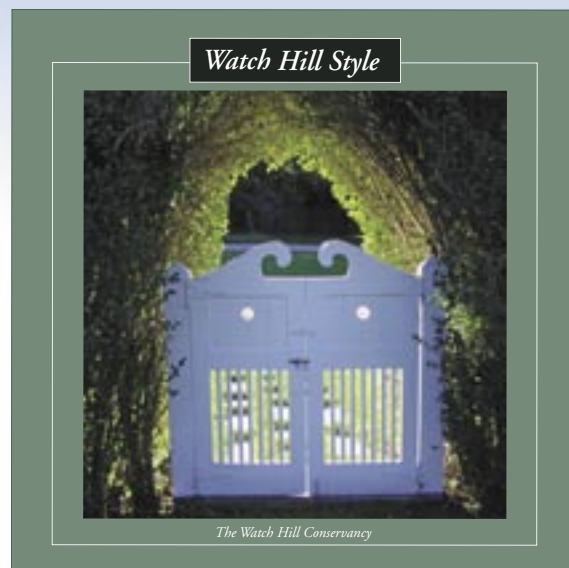
There's another important message in this book -- a message of preservation. Credit goes to all those who have owned and protected these cottages. Other neighborhoods around the nation could learn from Watch Hill's powerful ethic of and respect for conservation.

Watch Hill Style is a delight! I encourage everyone who loves architecture, especially neighborhood architecture, to take up this book, not once but again and again, to enjoy and embrace its sense of optimism for the preservation of historic neighborhoods.

Trudy Coxe is Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of the Preservation Society of Newport County.



Watch Hill Style, by Richard C. Youngken and Chaplin B. Barnes; photography by Deb Stallwood and Richard Youngken. Book design by Wendy Bolster. Published by the Watch Hill Conservancy, 2009. 56 pp.: Color; illus. \$25.00 plus s/h, tax where applicable.



Please remove this panel & mail or fax your order to The Watch Hill Conservancy.

Watch Hill Style

Please reserve _____ copies for _____ at \$25 each

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Daytime phone _____

_____ I will pick up my book(s) at the office of The Watch Hill Conservancy, 222 Watch Hill Road, Westerly, Rhode Island, after June 25, 2009. Please call 401 348-6540 in advance to be sure the office is staffed.

_____ Please mail my book(s) to the address listed above.

_____ book(s) at \$25 each	\$ _____
+7% sales tax for pickup/delivery in Rhode Island (\$1.75) per book	\$ _____
+ shipping/handling fee of \$3 per book to be mailed	\$ _____
Total Due	\$ _____

_____ Payment is enclosed. Please make check payable to *The Watch Hill Conservancy*.

_____ Please bill my credit card account: _____ MasterCard _____ VISA

Name on card _____

Account No. _____ Exp. _____ Security code (last 3 digits on signature strip) _____

Signature _____

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Please mail order form & payment to: *The Watch Hill Conservancy, 222 Watch Hill Road, Westerly, Rhode Island 02891, or fax order (with credit card information) to: 401 348-6541.*

THE ROLE OF CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS IN TOWN CENTER REVITALIZATION

Robert A. Lemire of Lincoln, Mass., a founder of the Lincoln Land Conservancy Trust and author of *Creative Land Development*, has been an inspiration for many land trusts across the country. His mantra, “Build what needs to be built; save what needs to be saved,” exemplifies the balancing act that successful land conservation organizations engage in, acknowledging that growth is inevitable, even desirable, as long as essential community character and identity are not harmed, and sense of place is not lost.

Watch Hill has long sought this balance, taking action historically through the private sector and the Watch Hill Fire District, and now through the Watch Hill Conservancy, to secure valuable parcels, allowing limited development to continue, and saving what needs to be saved while building what needs to be built. A recent private sector example is the new Ocean House project, where private interests were mobilized to retain a local icon of the community, understanding that if the original could not be saved, a reconstruction was more appropriate than a wholly new design or several new McMansions. Such initiatives in Watch Hill can be traced to the beginning of the cottage colony with the original subdivisions of land, the clearing of shacks along Bay Street and the harbor and the establishment of the Village park, the purchase of Napatree, and with other major conservation- and preservation-minded interventions. The proposed Conservancy program to remove utility poles in central Watch Hill and to relocate utilities underground is only the latest of such initiatives.

In a similar vein, the Westerly Land Trust, supported in part by the Royce Family Fund, has embarked on several projects in downtown Westerly along the Pawcatuck River and nearby, including restoration of the historic downtown Union Theater. The spirit behind these seemingly audacious moves is about revitalization of the urban core of the town for future living and working environments. The solid rationale for this boldness is to take the initiative where government alone cannot. Making downtown attractive for residential use takes the pressure off outlying open spaces. Making downtown more attractive than suburbia to young families is a proven strategy of the smart growth movement, effectively inverting the development trends of the last three decades. The Westerly Land Trust's initiative reflects the nationwide trend toward rediscovery of urban centers as attractive and vibrant places to live, as compared with what can be the banality of suburbia.

In Watch Hill, on a much smaller but very meaningful scale, the Watch Hill Conservancy has successfully pursued zoning design standards for Bay Street (technically the Shorefront Commercial - Watch Hill zoning district) securing a positive future for the Village's architectural character and ambiance. Maintaining this area as a vibrant commercial asset is vitally important; here mixed-use commercial and residential development can benefit the harbor, beach, and Merry-Go-Round area, providing summer visitors with a taste of the summer resort, while keeping the outlying cottage colony residential and less congested. Many would love to see some essential services and small scale food and fish markets return to Bay Street, but these “neo-traditional” dreams are as yet unfulfilled. Some are hopeful, however, that the area will attract a weekly farmers' market during the summer – perhaps at the north end of Bay Street.

Attractive development in the Bay Street area, under the new guidelines, will take design cues from the form and look of existing buildings, both historic and contemporary, maintaining the covered arcade feel along the length of the street. Residential density here is maintained at far higher levels than the surrounding single-family cottage neighborhoods, providing inn rooms for overnight visitors and the opportunity for condos or townhouse units, taking some of the pressure off outlying undeveloped lands. The new Ocean House, located in proximity to Bay Street, will offer similar opportunities with its residential condo units and overnight rooms.

The effort to conserve Watch Hill's character combines cutting-edge land conservation strategies with smart planning. Saving and nourishing town centers and commercial cores is a meaningful part of the conservation effort. It is the “building what needs to be built” part of the balancing act. [JY/RCY]

Design review services now extended to residential areas of Watch Hill

Recently the Conservancy Board voted to extend design assistance to homeowners throughout the Fire District, providing free help with historic preservation issues regarding building additions or rehabilitations for older homes, and ideas for new design that is sympathetic within the existing context. The Conservancy's goal is to provide guidance on best practices to ensure that character-defining features are not lost or compromised. This effort arises from the Conservancy's successes with similar services offered to Bay Street area business owners, helping them through the town's new zoning standards. It also follows on the heels of research and publication of the Conservancy's new book, *Watch Hill Style*, a primer on the design elements that are combined in Watch Hill's signature summer cottage architecture. *Watch Hill Style* will be available from the Conservancy and area bookstores in late June. If you are interested in design assistance, please contact the Conservancy's office to arrange an appointment.



Photo, Richard C. Youngken

Designed landscapes of Watch Hill: an historical perspective



The high hedges, mature trees, and other plantings that grace Watch Hill's landscape have not always been part of the scenic character of the Hill. Written historical accounts, paintings, drawings, and early photographs tell us that in the hotel era – before and after the Civil War – the landscape was open and its rolling nature much more evident. The hotels loomed large in this somewhat wind-swept and barren terrain. Not long before, the rock-strewn fields had been farmed and grazed, the open landscape dotted with farmhouses and outbuildings.

Post cards and other views indicate that the early hotels did little landscaping, preferring to focus visitors' attention on the social life within, on the long sumptuous porches, on the beach, and on the water. Plantings were relatively simple in design, and sited close to entrances and public areas. The Ocean House had colorful flower gardens across Bluff Avenue and in front of its imposing colonnade. Other hotels had driveway circles and decorative front entrances with annuals in beds. Site features such as cobble and beach-stone walls, now ubiquitous throughout Watch Hill, appear in these early views.

The cottage era brought not only first-rate architects to Watch Hill; it also brought landscape architects of considerable renown, including the Olmsted Brothers who succeeded their father, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., in one of America's greatest design firms. The Olmsteds - father, sons, and associates - were responsible for public parks as well as private estates across the country. One can only imagine their thoughts on their first site visit, realizing that the "bones" of a good community landscape existed: interesting topography and water views from almost every lot. The Olmsteds were advocates of a rural landscape quality which later translated into naturalistic suburban neighborhood design based upon curved streets, natural contours, and other features. Often they created new land forms with built elements such as berms, ponds, and bridges to complement their designs. The Olmsteds designed the early landscape for the Misquamicut Golf Clubhouse and the gardens at Sunshine Cottage for Richard B. Mellon.

As the hotel era gave way to the trend toward private summer homes, hedges were planted to define edges and ensure privacy. Mostly of privet, they grew quickly and required annual trimming – sometimes several times a season. Many original hedges, now fully mature with sturdy trunks and dense growth, still line the street edges.

Photos by Richard Youngken©

Top vintage postcard published by Ed. N. Burdick, Westerly, R.I.
Bottom postcard published by The Rhode Island News Company, Prov. R.I.

Watch Hill's Village Park, designed by Marian Cruger Coffin, has recently been restored by its stewards, the Watch Hill

Improvement Society and the Watch Hill Fire District Park Commission, in a form close to Coffin's original concept, with "Chief Ninigret" near the location she chose. A landscape feature in and of itself, this bronze was cast by Enid Yandell in Paris in 1911 and has been located in a number of Watch Hill spots over the years, including initially at the intersection of Westerly Road and Ninigret Avenue. Creation of the Village Park took several decades in the early 20th century, beginning with removal of small frame commercial buildings along the harbor to create the open views enjoyed today from the arcaded buildings along Bay Street. Although the park may now seem simple and unexceptional, its concept was bold and transforming, essentially creating the harbor ambiance and "livability" that defines Watch Hill's commercial core, drawing residents and visitors to linger, relax, stroll, and enjoy the scene.

Studying the historic landscape of Watch Hill yields important information on popular plant material, unique and specimen trees, engineered drainage, retaining and boundary walls, sea walls, pond edging, terracing, and other landscape features. Unlike the built environment, landscape changes in every season and with every year, evolving as a natural system framed by built features. Often historic landscapes are evident only in their basic form and structure, perhaps retaining specimen trees and basic planting schemes, but with specific plantings changing over time. Future articles in the *Watch Hill Conservator* will explore the evolution of designed and natural landscapes as a function of a variety of forces: disease, pests, and invasive plants; changing conditions that are conducive to the success of some species and the death knell for others; and changes in taste and style in design and materials. [JY/RCY]



In the news:

Westerly Library and Wilcox Park Renovation Underway

The long-planned major renovation of the Westerly Library will begin by mid-summer, with the historic 1894 Broad Street building being reconstructed in phases over roughly a year. The \$8 million Campaign for the Westerly Library and Wilcox Park was launched three years ago and is in its final community fundraising phase. Major work has already been performed in the 100-year-old park, including the redesign of the entrance plaza to the west of the building and of the Esplanade; underground irrigation; path and perimeter wall reconstruction; and the installation of period lighting fixtures. The fish pond is scheduled for restoration at a later date. Both the building and the park, with its noted arboretum, are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Ties between Watch Hill and the Library are many. The Children's Room has long been enjoyed by Watch Hill families. Warren H. Manning, the initial designer of the park, was also responsible for important Watch Hill landscapes. The Library's Local History Room contains considerable archival and other historical material relating to Watch Hill. The Library operates the summer reading and story-telling programs as well as the lending library at Watch Hill's Memorial Library and Improvement Society's Memorial Building on Everett Avenue. And Watch Hill donors have been generous supporters of the Library and of the Campaign.

Westerly Ambulance Corps Serves Watch Hill and the Shoreline

For the past five years, the Westerly Ambulance Corps' *RESCUE 3* vehicle has been providing emergency medical services to the shoreline communities from Watch Hill to Weekapaug. Stationed south of Route 1 during the summer months, it has brought emergency medical services to those requiring it in the critical moments immediately after an incident, when heavy beach traffic can delay ambulances. Its Advanced Life Support EMT crews can be on the scene quickly, providing lifesaving interventions such as defibrillation, intubation, IV and cardiac drug support.

The Rescue 3 service was initiated in 2005 and fully supported for three years by the Alfred M. Roberts, Jr. Charitable Foundation, which also contributed and equipped the vehicle. Beginning in 2008, the service has been supported in equal shares by the Foundation and the Corps. In the summer of 2008, the vehicle responded to 82 calls, and on just one day in July, during a period of heavy surf and rip currents, came to the aid of nine victims of neck and back injuries and near drownings in Watch Hill and along Atlantic Avenue.

Just this spring, the Corps has fully modernized its 911 emergency dispatch center, which serves eight local fire departments, including those of Watch Hill, Westerly, Misquamicut, Dunns Corners, and three other Emergency Medical Service (EMS) and rescue organizations. As a result of the installation of this computer-aided design (CAD) upgrade, the center, which responds to some 8,400 calls annually, has moved from a paper and manual data entry process to an electronic format. This upgrade will increase the accuracy of responses, reduce the time needed to communicate detailed information to responding fire and rescue units, and increase the amount and quality of that information, making these shoreline communities a much safer place. The Roberts Foundation provided an initial grant to launch the program.

Not all residents of the community are aware that an annual \$35 membership in the Corps assures each subscriber family ambulance service for the year. For more information, call 401-596-4375 or visit www.westerlyambulance.org.

The Westerly Harbor Commission wants you!

The Westerly Harbor Commission is developing a Harbor Management Plan for the Town, and encourages participation in this public process. Meetings take place on the second Thursday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the Westerly Police Department. The Commission hopes to complete the Plan within the next few months.

Review of moorings, docks, ramps and other boating amenities is of particular interest to shoreline residents, as the Pawcatuck River and coves, Watch Hill's active harbor, Little Narragansett Bay, and the salt ponds all are within the planning area. For further information, contact Kim Rayner at kjrayner25@aol.com.