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An Important Conservation Tool at Risk!!

The federal tax deduction for the donation of some conservation easements is scheduled to expire at the end of 2009, according to a press release from the Land Trust Alliance. Rand Wentworth, LTA President, reports that the incentive was a key factor in the conservation of at least 535,000 acres in its first two years.

The Watch Hill Conservancy is one of 1700 nonprofit land trusts that belong to the Land Trust Alliance. Together they have conserved over 37 million acres of land nationally. The LTA and Watch Hill Conservancy urgently request that conservation organizations and individuals contact their representatives in Congress and urge them to co-sponsor the Conservation Easement Incentive Act (H.R. 1831) that will make the deduction a permanent fixture in the tax code.

For more information and to learn what you can do to protect this conservation tool, visit the Land Trust Alliance website at www. landtrustalliance.org/policy/taxincentives/federal

Photo, Puffin Enterprise



THE WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

August 2009 Vol. 2 No. 3 Watch Hill, R.I.

WATCH HILL 15s: Unique Cultural Treasures

When we think of the cultural heritage of a place, the first things that come to mind are the buildings, designed landscapes, and open spaces. The definition has recently been broadened by the National Park Service, the National trust for Historic Preservation, and professionals in the field to include site features such as specific trees and natural landmarks, and objects that are unique to a place or culture. The National Register of Historic Places now lists a number of boats,

including the yacht *Coronet*, currently undergoing restoration at the International Yacht Restoration School in Newport, the *Charles W. Morgan* and others at Mystic Seaport, and boats of all sizes and types around the country.

Watch Hill can lay claim to her own historic watercraft: the Watch Hill 15. In 1923, at about the same time the first Watch Hill Yacht Club clubhouse was being built, eleven club members commissioned a one-design racing sloop class from the famed Herreshoff Manufacturing Company yard (Bristol, R.I.) for racing off Watch Hill. Known as the Watch Hill 15 Class, these classic, sleek, sloop-rigged, spoon-bowed boats can be seen moored off the Watch Hill Yacht Club, sailing in

and near the harbor, and racing on Wednesdays evenings and weekends. WH 15s measure 24 ½' overall, with a waterline length of 15', hence the name.

Three of the original fleet survive in Watch Hill, and sail along-side many recent additions in fiberglass. According to the Watch Hill Yacht Club, in 1968, the first WH 15, originally christened *Josephine*, later named *Firefly*, was loaned by her then owner, David M. Pugh, to create the mold for a new fleet of fiberglass reproduction WH 15s. *Firefly* was fully restored in 1997 through the generosity of Charlton Muenchinger and James Schoonmaker, and is now in Bristol's Herreshoff Maritime Museum.

One way to tell the fiberglass WH 15s from the original wooden boats is by their rigs; the wooden models have longer booms and larger mainsails as a result. Also, the masts of the fiberglass boats are stepped further aft. Except for the taller, more modern rig, the newer boats are true to the original design. Like the originals, these boats are well-balanced and a delight to sail either single-handed or with family or a competitive racing



The Watch Hill 15 is an important survivor from an early period of one-design sailboat racing. The class was originally designed by Captain Nathaniel Herreshoff in the late 19th century as the Buzzard's Bay 15, commissioned by a group of Boston vachtsmen for the Beverly Yacht Club to be raced off Marion, Massachusetts at the head of Buzzard's Bay. It was an era of large, one-off designs in yacht racing and a growing interest in an alternative, lessexpensive, and perhaps more competitive sporting craft that could place individual and team sailing talent above the performance of individually designed boats. A fleet of

nearly identical boats would place the skills of those sailing at a premium. The boats would also be fun to day sail with families aboard, and could be easily maintained at summer homes along the coast. They would be appropriate for relatively protected coastal waters, such as Buzzard's Bay, Little Narragansett Bay, and Fishers Island Sound.

The popularity of smaller, more easily managed boats for family "knock-about" fun and round-the-buoy racing grew in the early 20th century with sailboats such as the Buzzard's Bay 15s and the Watch Hill 15 fleet. Similar length sailboats were raced in Long Island Sound, including the hard-chined Star class (22' 7 ½" overall with a 3'4" draft) designed in 1911. Stars became a large and popular one-design class, racing at yacht clubs up and down the East Coast and in protected waters around

Photo by Matt Roberts, www.trip2beach.smugmug.com

the globe. The 25' Wianno Senior, first built by the Crosby Boatbuilding Company (Osterville, Mass.) in 1914, became popular in the waters of Cape Cod, Buzzard's Bay, and Martha's Vineyard. President Kennedy had one of these, Ventura, at Hyannis, but did not actively race.

By 1923 the Herreshoff yard had gained an international reputation for excellence in design and construction. The WH 15 design came near the end of the yard's long run of crafting some of the finest boats in all sizes, from 8' dinghies to 200' behemoths. Herreshoff had by this time designed a number of defenders of the America's Cup for syndicates of the New York Yacht Club. He had established the yard as one of the nation's premier yacht builders and himself as a leading designer of fast and relatively light-weight innovative racing machines, both small and large.

Watch Hill Yacht Club's continued use and preservation of the Watch Hill 15 class stands as a great accomplishment. Few other discrete, single yacht club-oriented, historical one-design fleets remain anywhere such as this fleet.

For more information about the Watch Hill Yacht Club and the Watch Hill 15s, visit www. whyc.net [RCY]

Line drawing by Robert A. Green, Jr. Image courtesy of The Watch Hill Yacht Clul

NEW BUILDING STANDARDS POINT THE WAY TO GREENER BUILDINGS

For more than a quarter century, there has been a lively dialog between the historic preservation and environmental conservation communities. Can the restoration or adaptive re-use of historic structures be "green" (i.e. environmentally sound or beneficial)? Is it more efficient to demolish an inefficient building than to retrofit it? Although the best answer is still "it depends," an increasing number of applications for LEED certification indicates that there is a new synergy between preservation and energy-efficiency.

The U. S. Green Building Council, a non-profit offshoot of the construction industry, has established the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ to provide standards and networks designed to encourage the sustainability of buildings and practices, thus reducing their negative impact on the environment, the structure, and its occupants. A range of standards, from restoration to new construction and from commercial interiors to houses, provides widely accepted means of achieving that goal.

Property owners earn points for addressing specific environmental impacts: sustainable sites; water efficiency; energy and atmosphere; materials and resources; indoor environmental quality; and innovation and design. The number of points accrued determines the level of certification: Certified, Silver, Gold, or Platinum.

Working with a LEED-certified architect can help ensure that any construction or restoration project integrates LEED standards from planning to ribbon-cutting. Does retaining historic fabric offset any inherent inefficiency in the materials? (Maybe.) Will replacing old windows with new so-called "energy-efficient" ones save money and energy in the long run? (Probably not. Unless the existing windows are beyond repair with in-kind materials, annual savings may not offset the cost of replacement windows for decades.) Can an historic structure be retrofitted with state-of-the-art heating and cooling systems without compromising its historic character? (Yes, more often than one would think.) A trained LEED professional can help a property owner through these and other questions and determine if LEED certification is appropriate for

The current LEED certification process can be lengthy and often daunting, and admittedly adds upfront costs for planning, design, engineering, and construction. While these costs are usually offset in the long term by increased efficiency and a healthier building, in a tight

economy a property owner must be committed to the highest possible level of environmental responsibility to consider the certification

Does this mean a property owner should ignore LEED standards? By no means. Whether or not applying for LEED certification is appropriate for a given project, awareness of the standards and the means of meeting them can ensure a greener building, one that incorporates stewardship of resources, retention of historic fabric and design and the cultural values embedded in them, and provides a healthy environment for occupants.

If not LEED, then what? ENERGY STAR is a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy, and offers product ratings, guidelines, and rebates to homeowners and businesses who employ "best practices" in protecting the environment. How effective is it? According to the ENERGY STAR website, "results are already adding up. Americans, with the help of ENERGY STAR, saved enough energy in 2008 alone to avoid greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those from 29 million cars — all while saving \$19 billion on their utility bills." From appliances to water heaters, computers to geothermal heat pumps, ENERGY STAR offers information for shoppers about specific products, estimates savings if that product is purchased, or locates rebates through ENERGY STAR

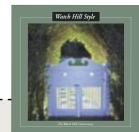
Kermit the frog was right: It's not easy being green. LEED and ENERGY STAR are two programs that provide standards and guidelines, making the job much easier.

For more information about the LEED program, visit the website of the U. S. Green Building Council at www.usgbc.org.

For information about ENERGY STAR, go to www.energystar. [JY] Photo, Richard C. Youngken

"Watch Hill Style is a luscious book that perfectly captures the character and visual delights of this treasured place; it's summer between the covers. Beyond the pictures, the book introduces us to the architects and designers who have created the Watch Hill style and the vocabulary of building styles and parts they employed. Current and future cottage owners will find Watch Hill Style indispensible to maintaining the special qualities of one of America's most distinctive destinations."

-Wendy Nicholas, Director, Northeast Regional Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



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6

A new threat to New England trees: the Asian Long-horned Beetle



Illustration courtesy United States Department of Agriculture

Approaching Watch Hill, visitors and residents alike are struck by the variety of trees that line the streets and roads, provide privacy for summer homes, or serve as focal points in gardens and designed landscapes. Oaks, beeches, maples, evergreens – these and others provide shade and variety of color and form yearround. It's easy to take them all for granted, but hard to imagine Watch Hill today without them

The preservation of New England's trees in forests, rural areas, cities, towns, and designed landscapes is of paramount importance. As organisms that sequester carbon, they have a mitigating effect on global warming. Their products, from lumber to maple syrup, are important to the regional economy. They are character-defining elements in our communities, contributing to a sense of place, and embody associations and emotions that resonate in many ways. Any threat to New England's trees poses a risk to the cultural landscape, the forestry, nursery, landscaping, and associated industries, and the climate.

But the trees of New England, including those of Watch Hill, face a new and potentially disastrous threat. Asian Long-horned Beetles (ALBs), introduced into the United States in shipping crates from China only two decades ago, have already either killed or necessitated the removal and destruction of many thousands of infested maples and other species.

This distinctive insect is easily identified: its body is about an inch long, with random white dots. Its "horns" are as long as the body on the female, and twice as long on the male. Like termites, these pests do their damage under cover, deep within the trunks of trees, but, unlike termites, they can easily be seen.

Their favorite host is the sweet wood of maple trees, where a single female may make as many as 35-90 holes, laying an egg in each one. (Other hosts include horse chestnut, poplar, willow, elm, mulberry, and black locust.) The larvae burrow deeper into the wood, creating tunnels throughout the trunk and branches, feeding on sap and maturing through the winter. Each adult beetle makes dime-sized exit holes as it leaves the tree during mid- to late summer. Invisible under the bark is the nearly hollow trunk left behind, a weakened tree devoid of the nutrients it needs for life support.

This pest has no predator, and cannot be eradicated by any known chemical pesticides. The only means of preventing infestation is to stop the ALBs in their tracks as soon as they're sighted, by felling, chipping, and burning the infested trees, killing both insect and host tree. A recent infestation in Worcester, Massachusetts, less than 65 miles from Watch Hill, necessitated the destruction of 22,000 – 23,000 trees by mid-June of this year, and the number continues to rise.

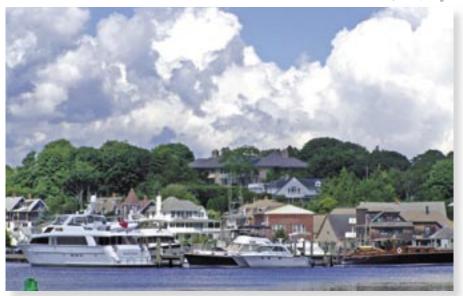
ALBs can fly considerable distances, but tend to remain near the tree where they hatched, leaving only when the host can't support any more adults. They are tenacious hitchhikers, however, and have been found in wooden shipping crates, green lumber, firewood, and brush or twigs being transported to dumping sites, far from any known active infestation.

This pest has no predator, and cannot be eradicated by any known chemical pesticides.

The US Department of Agriculture is conducting an extensive survey in and around Worcester and in parts of northern and central Rhode Island, seeking to identify trees that will need to be eradicated in order to prevent further infestation. In addition the Rhode Island Tree Council is coordinating volunteer "neighborhood watch" surveys in other parts of the state. Watch Hill is not currently scheduled for either program, but is by no means immune to the risk of infestation. What can we do to protect our trees?

- 1. Know the enemy, and recognize its damage. Be able to identify the beetle itself, and evidence of its presence in trees: frass (a sawdust-like powder) at the base of a tree indicates working beetles tunneling in the tree. A large number of distinctive, perfectly round exit holes mark where adults have left to seek higher concentrations of food in another tree.
- 2. Don't pick up "hitchhikers." Do not bring firewood home from campgrounds; it may be harboring ALBs.
- 3. Buy firewood locally; know the source. In June, the Rhode Island State General Assembly approved a bill sponsored by Rep. Michael A. Rice and Sen. Susan Sosnowski that would establish the Asian Longhorned Beetle as a nuisance in Rhode Island and make it a crime to bring the species into the state. Violators will be fined up to \$25,000.
- 4. Contact the pros. If you see any ALBs or indication that a tree might be infested, immediately contact APHIS, the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, at www.aphis.usda.gov. [JY]

Photo, Richard C. Youngke



Maples and other deciduous trees soften the skyline of Watch Hill

RESIDENT CANADA GEESE AND MUTE SWAN: BEAUTIFUL NUISANCES

Geese and swans can be show-stoppers in the landscape. Who doesn't look up when they hear the honks of a migrating flock of Canada geese, or stop a moment to admire swans as they glide silently along a pond or river? Both have been inspiration for art, music, and story in many cultures for centuries. From the metaphorical ("The Ugly Duckling") to the magical ("Swan Lake") to the endearing ("Make Way for Ducklings"), these birds are part of our childhood and cultural life.

But there's a darker side to their beauty and all of the positive associations they carry. In excessive numbers, and in the wrong place, geese and swans can be a nuisance at best and a danger at worst. They foul ponds and lawns, deposit as much as a pound of fecal matter per bird per day, over-fertilize lawns, and carry disease. According to David Swayne of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Gary Whittaker of the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, in a recent article at slate.com, "... birds are known to carry every single one of the 144 varieties of influenza virus, [and] most scientists believe that all forms of the virus originated in birds and every flu is on some level a kind of bird flu."

Canada geese are described by the Rhode Island DEM as "a valuable natural resource that provides recreation and enjoyment to bird watchers, hunters, and the public." But in recent years, as their population has grown, they have become a problem in city parks, on lawns, golf courses, and other open, grassy areas. They are protected by state and federal regulations, but certain measures may be undertaken to control them.

Geese are the greatest nuisance during molting season (late spring and early summer), when they can't fly. They gather where they find food and safety: on open spaces adjacent to nesting areas protected by grasses. In Watch Hill, as the molting season ends, migrating birds on the Atlantic fly-way appear, adding to the numbers. Grassy spaces near Mickill Pond alone may serve as temporary home to as many as 70 geese, creating a mess of guano and feathers, and making it impossible to enjoy the lawns for recreational purposes.



Mute swans, too, can be a nuisance, even in much smaller numbers. They can be aggressive, attacking pets and children, especially when feeding. They may claim as much as ten acres for breeding ground, chasing off native species that must find safe nesting ground elsewhere, where they in turn disrupt the ecological balance. They like to nest in phragmites, another reason to eradicate that reed. (See "De-Phragging the Ponds, Watch Hill Conservator, June 2009). Their survival rate is high, and will likely continue to climb as warmer winters provide the conditions for a good food supply longer into the season. They pull up more aquatic plants than they eat, killing plants which would otherwise be available for other species.

Property owners can try a number of measures to control Canada geese and swans. Many areas fall within the jurisdiction of the Department of Environmental Management, so permits may be required.

Birds can be discouraged by creating a vegetative buffer at water's edge; they cannot or will not cross it. They will not be tempted by most ground covers, so ivy, junipers, or other non-grass cover may send them elsewhere for food. Fencing at the pond edge may discourage them from waddling up to the lawn, but be sure they can't simply walk around the ends. Mylar tape, noisemakers, predator decoys, and approved goose repellants may be effective, as will barking dogs, especially border collies or others trained to herd, not kill. For details of these and other techniques, see "Dealing with Resident Canada Geese" at www.dem.ri.gov.

Above all, do not feed the wildfowl! Left alone, they will seek out the nutritional foods they require. Low nutrition foods such as bread and crackers will sate their appetite, but lead to malnourishment. Feeding also encourages them to congregate or remain where they are a nuisance, degrade the environment, and create unsanitary conditions.

For more information about resident Canada geese, mute swans, and other wildfowl, see the State Department of Environmental Management at www.state.ri.us/DEM and the Rhode Island Sea Grant Fact Sheet at http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu. [JY]



Photo, Puffin Enter

In Watch Hill, as the molting season ends, migrating birds on the Atlantic fly-way appear, adding to the numbers. Grassy spaces near Mickill Pond alone may serve as temporary home to as many as 70 geese.



WATCH HILL YACHT CLUB CABANAS

served well, but have not aged gracefully. Time and weather have taken their toll, requiring the Club to choose between renovation and new construction. Of the two, the latter carried the day, and in 2007 an architect was engaged to design a new facility to replace the present structure. The decision is consistent with policy III.6 of "Watch Hill 2012," a vision statement and planning document drafted and adopted by the Watch Hill Conservancy and the Watch Hill Fire District. Policy III.6 specifies that the Yacht Club and cabana owners will be encouraged "...to consider a redesign of the WHYC beach cabanas to improve their appearance in any rehabilitation of the building ..."

After over a year's effort in planning and design, the Club has determined to replace the existing 56-unit plywood and asbestos complex with a new set of cabanas in a design more in keeping with the visual character of this prized location near the Yacht Club and the Misquamicut Club Beach Club. The land is leased from the Watch Hill Fire District and the design of the new complex requires its approval. A conditional approval was granted in December 2008 based upon plans and elevation drawings presented in November.

Nestled on the shore of Fishers Island Sound, the initial eastern set of cabanas was built in 1955 in a relatively modernist style designed by the Rockwell King deMoulin architectural firm, a well-known South County firm which designed both summer cottages and

The new design attempts to remedy some of the current building's visual inadequacies.

The Watch Hill Yacht Club cabanas have beach clubs. The deMoulin firm also designed a new clubhouse for the Yacht Club after the 1938 hurricane destroyed the first, and a new beach club for the Misquamicut Club after the second club building was destroyed in Hurricane Carol in 1954. The first set of Yacht Club cabanas was added to in subsequent years, extending the complex to the west. It has been generally acknowledged that the cabana complex is the least favored of the three deMoulin commissions and it is the only one still standing. Both the Yacht Club and the Beach Club have been completely rebuilt within the last five years. Of concern to many who value the visual qualities of the harbor and Napatree Beach is the long, gray, plywood boxcar effect of the current facility as seen from the harbor, considered clean and modern in its day, but stark and drab in sharp contrast to the varied textures and roof lines of nearby buildings today.

> The current cabana complex appearance, as designed by the deMoulin firm, is determined by the placement of the 56 nearly identical cabana units on a long, narrow deck under a nearly flat roof. The roof is nearly flush with the horizontal, north-facing wall, and features a deep overhang on the ocean side, providing shelter and shade to the cabana units. The ocean facade is actually the front of the complex, where each unit opens onto a broad-roofed deck facing the beach. Unfortunately, the long side facing the harbor, visible from Bay Street, the Village Park, and the access way to Napatree Point Conservation Area, is the back or service part of the structure. This "form follows function" approach can be severely criticized today for walling off the beach from the harbor and turning its back to the park, other harbor features, and the public view.

> The new design attempts to remedy some of the current building's visual inadequacies. However, the precedent established in the 1955 design and the build-out of 56 eight foot wide individually-owned cabana units - facing the beach like soldiers lined up for review - have been a significant constraint on any creativity. In his design, architect Robert Lambert, of the Newport firm of Burgin Lambert Architects, employs a series of low gables over cabana units in a syncopated rhythm intended to break the monotony of the long wall. Also employed are pergolas and decks facing the harbor to break up the complex and add visual interest. The mass is divided into a series of buildings with five narrow passageways between them for access. The Fire District engaged architectural historian and planner Richard Youngken and Northeast Engineers to evaluate the design and recommend refinements in an attempt to minimize the visual impact. Following lively discussion, the long flanking roofs of the complex and the elevation of the deck above sea level were lowered from the architect's original design. Gaining more views of the Sound through the complex, however, proved more elusive due to the 56

> Overall the new gabled design offers more visual interest than the current building. Upon completion, the new Watch Hill Yacht Club cabanas promise to complement and enhance the architectural character of the Village. [RCY/JY]



Green begins on our own front lawns

In the near future, the "greenest" lawn may be a throwback to before WW II, when clover was a part of every healthy lawn, sprinklers were found only on the lawns of the wealthy, and weekends were not disturbed by the constant sound of lawnmowers and blowers.

Since the late 1940s, American homeowners have become obsessed with their lawns, quietly - or not so quietly - competing for the greenest, most weed-free

But the greenest lawn may not be ecologically green, as in having a low impact on the environment. Broad expanses of "perfect" lawn can't be easily achieved or maintained without herbicides for weed control, fertilizers for optimum growth, and gasoline or electric mowers, power clippers, trimmers, edgers, and blowers to control what grows where. A carpet of lush green often requires extensive watering; according to the U.S. Geological Survey, approximately 8 billion gallons of water are consumed daily for outdoor uses, and the majority is used for landscape irrigation. In fact, it is estimated that the typical suburban lawn consumes 10,000 gallons of water above and beyond rainwater each year. (Amy Vickers: Handbook of Water Use and Conservation, 2001)

In recent decades, green has become more than a color: it's a goal. Beyond the green of the ideal lawn, consumers and homeowners are seeking both old and new

ways to reduce their impact upon the environment. Greening, like charity, begins at home, specifically on the front lawn. How can environmentally-conscious homeowners ensure that their lawns are green in both senses of the word?

Begin with a good seed mix. The University of Rhode Island has been experimenting with grasses for more than a century, Bridget Ruemmele, Professor, Department of Plant Sciences in URI's College of the Environment and Life Sciences, an expert on grasses, noted in New England Condominium that "Kentucky bluegrass is the most popular and attractive species for any usage, including most New England residential properties. When buildings are shading the turf at some point during the day, a mixture of Kentucky bluegrass and fine fescues would be preferred. In the shadier areas, the fine fescues will eventually dominate, while the Kentucky bluegrass will dominate sunnier areas after one or more years of establishment. For properties where the grass will not receive much foot traffic, fine fescues can be used in greater quantities, especially if you're looking for a more low-maintenance turf."

URI's C. Richard Skogley Turfgrass Research Center is addressing the issue of "greener" lawns headon and finding that when it comes to grass seed mixtures, something old is new again. Clover, once considered a weed that had no place in an ideal lawn, is again included in some mixtures, mitigating the risk of planting monoculture lawns that may be subject to pest, disease, or drought. In addition, clovers as a nitrogen-converter may reduce the need for fertilizer. Clover does not need watering, remains green even in a drought, and does not need to be mown. You may already have some in your lawn, making it free, or it can be purchased inexpensively at any lawn or garden

Is it time to revisit our aesthetic criteria for beautiful lawns? Grasses are living plants that respond to changes in the weather, growing as much as several inches a week in rainy times, but resembling a bumper crop of shredded wheat in a drought. While this "dead" look may be unattractive, it's not usually fatal; mixed grasses usually recover without watering. Rather than sprinkling, be patient. It takes more than a short-lived drought to ruin a healthy lawn. "Don't be fooled by what may look like the perfect, emerald lawn," warns Ruemmele. "Unfortunately, what look like the most attractive, lush lawns are probably being over-fertilized and watered too frequently, setting them up for major pest problems in the future."

One of the most effective ways to reduce a property's ecological footprint is to reduce the amount of lawn by introducing or enlarging flower beds, hedges, shade trees, or other plantings, adding to visual variety and biodiversity while subtracting from the consumption of limited natural resources. [JY]





Greening, like charity, begins at home, specifically on the front lawn.

