

PITA NEWS LETTER

Sponsored by Plum Island Taxpayers and Associates, Inc.

Bringing Plum Island Together

Fall 2020 Issue 2



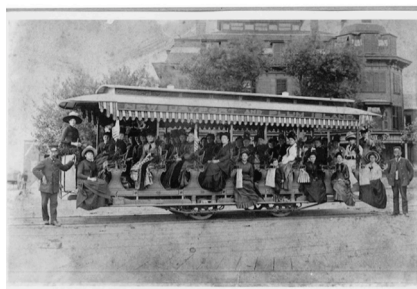
A HISTORY OF PLUM ISLAND PART 2

By Michele Simone

Please note: Part 1 was published in our May 2020 Newsletter

TROLLEY IN FRONT OF PLUM ISLAND
HOTEL IN NEWBURY, MA

DATE UNKNOWN



After the revolutionary war concluded, a gentleman named Moses Pettengill returned to Bromfield St. overlooking Joppa Flats and resumed life; fishing in the summer and hunting in the fall. During the winter months, he and his brother Eleazer made shoes in their kitchen. It was the shoes that kept them sustained financially. Eleazer married a woman named Sally Beckett in 1795 and had a baby. They named the baby Moses. This caused a lot of speculation among their neighbors about the baby's paternity. But regardless, all three were happy living together and the first thing they did was build a larger home with two dining rooms, two living rooms and several common rooms to house their farmworkers. The main feature of the grand house was the spectacular view of the north end of Plum Island.

The baby grew and came to be known as Squire Moses. Squire Moses had farm

PITA membership- it's time to Renew for 2021 or join

It's our Fall membership drive and we really appreciate your support! We are asking for renewals for 2021 to continue our efforts.

See the President's Letter and membership form on our web site.

If you've not done so, it's only \$25/year individual membership or \$35/year family membership.

Now you can renew Membership and join online - **via PayPal at Plumislandtaxpayers.org**

Some benefits of PITA membership:

- Huge Townsend propane discounts
- PITA hall rental discounts, and
- Knowing that you supported our island projects.

holdings that consisted of salt meadows on the island. In 1829 he purchased the entire northern end of Plum Island for \$600 from the Proprietors of Newbury. He then arranged to have it and Joppa Flats become a part of Newburyport. Moses' son Warren loved to leave the mainland farm and head to Plum Island every summer where they would set up tents and spend their days cutting hay, and their nights playing cards and drinking great quantities of hard cider. In the fall they would load the dried hay onto Warren's wagon and he would sell it up and down the Merrimack River. In the off-season, Warren would cut lumber and deliver the "stickes" to

Plum Island History continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- HISTORY OF PLUM ISLAND PART 2
- PRESIDENTS LETTER AND MEMBERSHIP FORM: RENEW PITA MEMBERSHIP
- LOCAL ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: PAGE 4
- HOME ON PLUM ISLAND POEM PAGE 3

EVENTS

- ON DECEMBER 5 PITA WILL SELL XMAS TREES AT PITA HALL
- ALL OTHER SPONSORED EVENTS AT PITA HALL /RENTALS ON HOLD TEMPORARILY DUE TO COVID-19

- Join PITA at plumislandtaxpayers.org
- Rent PITA Hall inexpensively as a Member
- Find PITA now on FaceBook to contribute photos, comments and @PitaTwita for local up to date happenings.

Xmas Trees for Sale Dec 5th

Come see your neighbor's outdoors. We are selling Xmas trees and wreaths again at PITA Hall on Dec 5, 8am until they are gone. Reasonable cost and free delivery to Plum Island residents.

LUCKY PURCHASE!

By Richard Rocko

Opportunities fall at the right time. I've wanted my own pizza shop for years. That chance came in August. I have been working in this line of work for 25 years. Working with Lucky, he offered to sell Jasmines in Seabrook, but I wanted to buy PI Provisions. I had endless sleepless nights, thinking of how to purchase this store without enough money. On July 3 my sleepless nights came to an end. One of my coworkers and I purchased a lottery ticket and we won! I called Lucky and purchased the store. My dreams came true, now I am doing what I wanted to do for a long time.

Plum Island History continued

the mast works. The stickes are the reason Newburyport's main streets that run up the hill from the river are so straight and wide. They had to be able to accommodate the oxen hauling the tall trees to the mast works on Federal Street or up the hill to the old Boston and Maine freight yard.

The way Moses made his real money was by mining for sand on Plum Island. He hired workers to push wheel barrel after wheel barrel of sand up a narrow plank and dump it into sand schooners. They sold the sand to builders in Boston who were building elegant houses in the Back Bay. Unfortunately, the houses began to crumble because the Plum Island sand contained too much salt that made their mortar unstable. Nobody knew at the time that would happen.

In December 1839, three destructive storms created dramatic changes that would develop in the next few years. The storms cut a channel through a portion of Salisbury Beach at the mouth of the Merrimack. It created an island in the middle of the river. For a brief period there were two channels into the harbor. Eventually, the mouth of the South channel filled with silt and sand. As it expanded north it formed what we now call the basin.

This new area of land which continued to increase was called New Point, and it kept that name for many years. New point became the subject of a lawsuit decades after it attached itself to Plum Island. In 1883 E. Moody Boynton acquired a title to the land from the Salisbury proprietors and was the rightful owner. Mr. Boynton sued the Pettengill heirs, claiming the new point of land was the same piece of property that had been severed from Salisbury Beach during the storms. A number of local residents familiar with the mouth of the river were called to provide eyewitness accounts of the events that followed the 1839 storms. There was agreement that the severed land existed as an island for a brief period but most witnesses recall that it eventually washed away. Other testimony indicated that the formation of new point was a gradual process starting as a reef that worked its way north from Plum Island. The court decided in the Pettengill's favor, citing an old Massachusetts law that gave the property to the owner of the land to which it was attached.

In 1883 a dike was constructed across the entrance to the basin. The reason for the dike was to prevent the Merrimack River from reverting to its original outlet, which is believed to have been near the head of the basin. One affect the dike had was to create new and safe swimming areas at all times of tide. The dike remained functional for a number of years, but was not kept in repair. Traces of it are still visible today at low tide.

The construction of the jetties at the mouth of the river began in 1881, and for a number of years there was a ton of activity in the area. The purpose of the jetties was to increase the depth of water at the river's mouth and to prevent the accumulation of sand on the bar. The plans were for two stone jetties to be built each 50 feet wide at the base and 15 feet wide at the top. Both jetties were to be at least 4 feet above the surface of the water at high tide. The north jetty was to be extended 1/2 mile in the southeast direction from Salisbury Beach. The south jetty was to run northeast from Plum Island to within 1000 feet of the north jetty.

The work was finally completed in 1900. The stone that was used was brought to the

Plum Island History continued on next page

PITA Board of Directors

Ron Barrett, President

Jerry Klima, Vice President

Frank Pierce, Treasurer, Hall Manager

(open position), Secretary

Ron Perkins, Director

Lynne Petty, Director

Susan Grillo, Director, Membership

Lee Lane, Director

Kincade Webb, Membership

Visit PITA's Website!

- Current events, well sort of...
- Rent PITA Hall
- Renew Membership/Donate to PITA
- Advertise
- Download the Newsletter
- See Photos
- Volunteer Opportunities

Please renew your PITA membership for 2021

It's only \$25/year individual or \$35/year family membership.

Now you can renew and join online - via **PayPal at www.plumislandtaxpayers.org**

Accountants CARR, STAPLES & ACCARDI, P.C.

Paul Accardi (978) 372-8910

Plum Island History continued

mouth of the river in barges. Most of it came from Rockport although some stone came from the quarry in Merrimack. In 1914 the north jetty was extended and in 1932 both jetties required work to overcome settling. Additional repairs were made in the 1960s. The effectiveness of the jetties has been a subjective controversy over the years, but they remain a familiar landmark on the island and attract many fishermen.

In the 17th and 18th centuries Plum Island could only be reached by boat and it was a bit too isolated to attract large numbers of people. The first attempt to promote Plum Island as a resort came in 1806. A group of Newburyport businessmen formed a corporation and decided to build a bridge over Plum Island river and a toll road from the corner of Ocean Avenue to the center. In late fall of that year, a small hotel was built near the beginning of Old Point Road. It's believed the construction workers who were building the bridge stayed in the hotel. Records show for many years the toll road was used primarily by guests of the hotel and by farmers who took their hay wagons across on their way to the salt marshes.

The hotel was managed by Benjamin Clifford and it quickly attracted summer visitors and sportsmen. Its function as a hotel was interrupted briefly during the war of 1812 when it served as a barracks for soldiers stationed on the island. It returned to its original function and for several decades the hotel remained the only significant non-government building at the northern end of the island.

Access to the island was not always easy even though there was a new road. In severe weather the bridge over the Plum Island River was highly vulnerable. It was destroyed during a big storm in 1832 and was not rebuilt for several years. In order to transport guests to the hotel a canal was dug from the river to the hotel and a ferry service was provided. Traces of the canal that ran parallel to today's road can still be seen.

In the summer of 1876 there were as many as 10 steamers running the river carrying passengers from as far away as Lawrence and Haverhill. Some of these operated on a regular schedule stopping along the way to pick up passengers bound for Newburyport or Plum Island. There was also a ferry that transported people between Plum Island point and Salisbury Beach.

At that time the number of cottages on the point could be counted as less than 10. The government house and the lighthouse were exactly where they are today.

Plum Island History continued on page 5

Home on Plum Island

With the ocean to the east and the basin to the west,
every day is a celebration of creation,
for every day is different.

At dawn we watch the Sun peak over the horizon
as if invisible hands are slightly covering its face.
Then rising from the Sea, the Sun lights up the day.

Time unfolds not by the clock, but by the tides
and we mark the seasons by cloud formations,
bird migrations and the position of the
Sun and Moon in the ever-changing sky.

At dusk as the Sun paints a masterpiece across the sky,
we stop what we are doing and revel in the magic.
Sunsets are a time of quiet contemplation,
a moment of reflection which renews our spirits daily.

Although the winds of change blow continuously and
the waves of every day existence forever hammer on
the shore, we are putting down roots.

Sinking deeper and deeper into the sandy soil,
establishing a connection that even
the most powerful storm cannot dislodge.

For like the beach grass and the flowering plum tree
we are nourished by Plum Island's Sun and Sky and Sea.



Heidi Spinella



*Celebrating 35 years of living on Plum Island, Heidi & her family
cherish the Island's Sun and Sky and Sea and are
grateful to everyone who feels the same way.*

Candy L. Way



**Fine Artist
Studio - Gallery**
Ipswich, MA
(978) 420-5206

candyway@comcast.net
<http://candywayfineart.com>

Kate Batchelder
Senior Loan Officer
NMLS#462418





40R Merrimac St
Ste 301
Newburyport, MA 01950
Office 978-225-6611
Cell 978-518-2343
eFax 866-869-5304
kate.batchelder@fairwaymc.com



ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: INTROSPECTION

by Sandra Turner



Michele Simone
Co-Owner with Kevin Simone
Simone Renovation And Design
SimoneRenovationAndDesign.com
Info@simonerenovationanddesign.com
(978) 652-8210

A packed bag still sits in the corner of my studio, filled with collage papers, paints, brushes along with the excitement and anticipation of spending time in an art residency program.

The thought of a group of artists living and working together in a communal environment, away from the distractions of technology and the responsibilities of everyday life, seems but a distant dream.

The emails came in slowly, at first sounding hopeful that programs will be able to continue as planned. Then eventually, one by one, giving way to the grim reality that even a possible extension into the fall was not going to be possible.

Though seemingly minor a disappointment compared to what many are facing, when coupled with the loss of social contact and interaction with other artists, I found myself quite isolated and alone in my studio. The desire to continue with my present body of work was swept away along with the cancellation of my studio classes and opportunity of local exhibits disappearing. I was left with an overwhelming heaviness of heart feeling I hoped to express.

A work in process, I share with you my art below.
(acrylic on canvas 16 x 20)



INSTITUTION FOR SAVINGS

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES TOGETHER SINCE 1820.

Main Office: 93 State Street, P.O. Box 510, Newburyport, MA 01950

978-462-3106 Fax 978-462-1980

24-Hour Automated Telephone Banking

Toll-Free 800-437-6703



Bruce Lawson

978.210.7464

bruce@brucefun.com



Balloons • Bubbles • Face Painting
Corporate Events, Parties, & Celebrations

www.BruceFun.com

Kim O'Rourke

Independent Beauty Consultant

20 Jackson Way, Plum Island
Newbury, MA 01951-2113

Cell 978/491-8303

Fax 978/462-7595

Email MK.Kimor2019@yahoo.com

www.marykay.com/korourke1

Contact me for a complimentary facial

MARY KAY



**ADVANCED
PRODUCT
CONSULTANT**

Plum Island History continued

Around this time, the remains of a woolly mammoth revealed itself on Plum Island in the area between parking lots one and two in the Parker River Wildlife Refuge. The Newburyport Herald reported in 1879 that "on Sunday some gentlemen observed protruding from the sand a large bone. Tools were procured, and, on digging, their labors were rewarded by the discovery of a skeleton. The skull was between two and three feet wide, and they uncovered a length of backbone of over seven feet . . . They describe the skull in form as like that of an elephant, and the leg bone as of enormous solidity when it belonged to the animal buried there. From the condition of the bones they must have been covered for ages, as they were ready to crumble." At this time, although there has been much speculation and discussion about it, we still do not know where the bones ended up.

The building of private cottages began in the fall of 1880. Newburyport native and Boston merchant named Michael Hodge Simpson built a large summer home. The home, located on a high dune just south of the center still stands today. The Pettengill's had done little with their land beyond selling sand at the point to Boston construction companies. In the 1880s, they begin to offer lots for lease, and within a decade camps and cottages were built. Many of them were substantial. The Pettengill leases contained one restriction however; no alcoholic beverages could be sold.

During the 1880s Road traffic had greatly increased. People were being transported from Market Square in horse cars. In 1883 the Newburyport Herald reported that over 200 carriages passed over the Plum Island Turnpike and 1000 or more people gathered on the Sands.

In spring 1886 tracks were laid down on the length of Plum Island Turnpike, linking Plum Island to Newburyport and beyond. The new railway line made its first trip on May 9, 1887 carrying 50 invited guests. The sidewalks of the south end of Newburyport were filled with people cheering with excitement as the four open horse cars went by. The coming of the trolley line marked a new era for Plum Island making it accessible to anyone who wished to spend a day at the beach. The trip from market Square to the center took 20

minutes and cost five cents. Many families now spent vacations and even whole summers at the island since the regularly scheduled and frequent trips made it possible to commute to work.



For a while, travel by trolley car and by steamboat overlapped but shortly after the turn of the century, steamboats were no longer able to compete financially, and they disappeared from the river. The trolleys survived until 1922 when the tracks were taken up and rail service was replaced by buses and

Plum Island History continued on page 7

Advertise in the PITA Newsletter and get free posting on our Web Site

PITA Member - \$25 /year
business card, \$50 for
expanded size

Non-Member - business card
\$50, for expanded size \$75

BARRETT TRANSPORTATION
Newbury, MA
Tel: 978-462-8579
Cell: 508-641-1500
Ron Barrett

FISH
WINDOW
CLEANING
BRIGHTEN YOUR WORLD
978.834.6239 (Office)
978.792.5527 (Office 2)
5 Market Square Suite B3
Amesbury, MA 01913
dbaker@fishwindowcleaning.com
www.fishwindowcleaning.com/3050
Commercial and Residential - Independently Owned & Operated

FISH Offers a 10% discount for PITA members

VOLUNTEER

Become a volunteer for PITA projects or help organize events at PITA Hall.

PITA is looking for the following volunteers:

- Secretary
- Hall manager assistant
- Web help
- Newsletter editor and writers
- Activities organizer
- Suggestions - if you want to be involved in any way

Send an email to: info@plumislandtaxpayers.org or contact one of our board members (listed on page 2, contact info on our web site at www.plumislandtaxpayers.org)

LOMBARDI OIL & GAS

Delivering Comfort to Our Community

LombardiOil.com 978.465.7200



Heating



Service • Installation • Fuel



Air Conditioning

HOME INSPECTOR



Joseph Cmar
MA#723 NH#229
CT#653 NY#7580
ASHI certified 203974
NACA certified inspector

Cell 914-522-4134
Home/office 978-499-3964
jocemar@comcast.net

Radon • Water • Pest Inspections



Rent PITA Hall

<i>Weekend Rates</i>	
Member	\$325
PI Resident Non-Member	\$375
Non-Member	\$450
Commercial	\$550
Weekday Monday-Thursday (\$100/half day)	\$200

MERCY MEALS Please NOTE: free use of the Hall to Island residents for mercy meals, and recognition of your loved one on the PITA sign.
Contact Frank at fpierce1@comcast.net or call 978-463-0670

Michael D. Paige

Attorney-at-Law

Post Office Box 893

Newburyport, MA 01950

Telephone: (508)-405-0673

Facsimile: (978)358-8459

Email: mpaige@paigelawoffice.com

Year-Round Plum Island Resident

Free Initial Consultations

Plum Island History continued

private cars.

The hotel that had been built had been refurbished and enlarged into an impressive structure. The addition of another story had increased its capacity to 48 rooms. For entertainment, there was bowling in a building opposite from the hotel. There were also band concerts followed by dancing. The dancing became such an attraction that a pavilion was built nearby on the oceanfront. Although the hotel at the center was the largest hotel, there were also two other small hotels at the point. The Bay View House, one of the first buildings on the island, was renowned for its clambakes. The clambakes were relished by people who enjoyed the up river excursions taking them from Haverhill and other towns to the island. The proprietor George Torrey also ran the ferry from Plum Island to Salisbury. Another hotel that was famous for its shore dinners in the early 1900s was the Oliver House, which was on Northern Blvd. The house existed until 2013 when it was torn down after the owners were unable to renovate the structure. The Oliver house was originally built at Black Rock and moved across the river by a barge during the late 1890s. A private home now sits in its old location.

In 1913 the center suffered the first of two devastating fires. On July 9, 1913 a fire started beneath the platform of the refreshment booth run by Charles Noyes; ancestor of James Noyes who was one of the first English people to establish Newbury. Despite the efforts of the life-saving station and the help of many volunteers, the blaze swept across the trolley tracks, igniting and leveling the pavilion as

well as a double cottage on an adjoining lot.

That same evening at about 10 PM, a fire destroyed half the length of the wooden bridge stopping all land traffic and forcing the temporarily marooned island residents to come and go by boat. Both fires were attributed to the careless disposal of cigarettes or matches.

Less than a year later, on the morning of May 21, 1914 disaster struck the recently renovated hotel. Thomas Barney (who had recently purchased the property) and his staff were in residence preparing for the seasons opening. When the chef Frank Dyer entered the kitchen to start breakfast, he was not alarmed by the faint smell of smoke because he knew that a fire in the kitchen range had been allowed to die out overnight. Once the fire started, even though they telephoned for help from Newburyport, streams of water from the fire equipment had little effect on the flames. The firemen and the people helping them were helpless in the face of the strong wind that was blowing. In less than two hours the hotel, a large barn, a carriage house and an ice house (not yet filled) were in ashes, destroyed because of a defective flu in the kitchen chimney. Immediately following the fire, Barney expressed his hopes of rebuilding, but they never materialized and the hotel became history. Although the hotel was not replaced, a new Dancehall was built in 1915 and for many years it attracted hundreds of young people who wanted an evening of dancing. On May 18, 1933 the Dancehall was also destroyed by fire. Mr. Kelleher, who later became mayor of Newburyport, replaced it with a new ballroom called Jack-O-Land. It offered roller-skating during the week and an orchestra for dancing on the weekends.

In 1920 the heirs of Moses Pettengill agreed to sell their Plum Island land to J. Sumner Draper of Milton, Massachusetts. The property, except for 50 acres deeded to the US government at the northern end, was sold later that same year to the Plum Island Beach Company for the purpose of development. At the time of the sale, that part of the island contained approximately

Plum Island History continued on next page

METZYS
CATERING

#MAKEITMETZYSATPITA

**OUR FAMOUS TACO BAR AND MANY
OTHER OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE!
REACH OUT TO CHELSEY KUILAN:
978-992-1451
CKUILAN@METZYS.COM
TO BOOK YOUR NEXT EVENT.
METZYS.COM/BOOK**

REAL ESTATE SALES/RENTALS
OVER 40 YEARS EXPERIENCE MA and NH
DIANNE BURNS
BROKER/INVESTOR



**434 MAIN STREET
HAVERHILL, MA 01830**

978-815-3228
Fax: 978-465-3852
dianrealty@aol.com
www.dianneburns.com

Plum Island History continued

315 houses for which the owners were paying rent.

The new company surveyed the land, laying out lots and streets. Evaluation was placed on each lot and owners of cottages were given the opportunity to purchase the land or to sell their cottages to the corporation. Not everyone was enthusiastic about the new development. The lots were small and many of the cottage owners who had previously taken for granted their open space and ocean views now found themselves surrounded by new cottages. As usual history repeats itself and it is much of the same today. Although the new houses of today can hardly be categorized as cottages.

PLUM ISLAND

Off Newburyport, Mass., at the Mouth of the Merrimack River

Last Sunday was hot everywhere, but people came to Plum Island and bought lots.

Now is the time to buy. Your own common sense will tell you that when the churches are built, the automobile road finished, the hotel erected, that all values on the island will increase. Come to Newburyport by train and take trolley to the island. Get off at our office.

Moderate prices now. Easy terms with provision against loss of income, and a free and clear deed in case of death. People are leaving noisy beaches to buy here.

Don't wait until another Sunday. Come a week day. Our salesmen can wait on you more satisfactorily. Safe boating and bathing. Big white clams. Fine fishing. Cheap living. Comfort with economy. Buy before the Westerners and Southerners get here. Where else can you go within 50 miles of Boston and get a decent lot at a living price?

Free church sites to any denomination. Form a colony.

**No Mud, No Rocks, No Dust, No Dirt,
Just Fine Clean Sand**

Bring Your Luncheon and Make a Day of It

PLUM ISLAND BEACH COMPANY

MARK TEMPLE DOWLING, Pres. J. SUMNER DRAPER, Treas.
GEORGE I. ROBINSON, JR., Sales Manager, 27 Ames Bldg., Boston

OTHER OFFICES
At the Island—In charge of MR. COOPER and MR. POACH. Haverhill, 15 Washington Square—In charge of MR. ADAMS.
MR. LOTHROP and MR. PITKIN. Beverly, 13 Pickett St.—In charge of MR. GATES. Lowell, 13 Merrimack St.—In charge of
MR. WILFORD. MR. McRAFFY and MR. BEDARD. Worcester, 809 State St.—In charge of MR. GARDUET and MR.
CUMMINS. Cambridge, 224 Massachusetts Ave.—In charge of MR. McNALLY.
Find Agents Wanted. Brochure sent to your customers. You will be satisfied.

Plum Island Beach Company issued illustrated brochures to promote the resort and maintained an office near the center for prospective buyers. Lots were offered for as little as \$350 with an easy pay plan for buyers. Construction of the road now called Northern Boulevard began in June 1920. Just slightly over 100 years ago. Now that the island was easy to access by car, it began attracting people beyond the local area, and the island underwent another period of tremendous growth.



**Blue Ribbon
Water**

Bill Cooper

bill.cooper@blueribbonwater.com

Mobile 978-992-8172

Direct 978-993-4355

blueribbonwater.com

"Bringing Cleaner, Healthier, Local Water to Every Faucet"

In August 1920, Father Ryan of Newburyport's Immaculate Conception church revealed plans to build a church midway between the point and the center. Two years passed before the church was completed and the first mass was offered on June 26, 1922.



Plum Island Lighthouse and Maplewood Cottage.

During the 1920s and 30s the area between the point in the center grew into a thriving summer community with rental cottages available to those who did not own their own place. Charles Barker's cottages, which were identical, were particularly well known. Most of them were located on the basin side and each included a dory in the rental price. At the time, the island had its own newspaper and for a while it had a two-team baseball league to provide entertainment on Sundays. Around 1925, electricity came to the island.

In the mid-1930s Dr. Author Hewitt built a casino directly opposite the newly rebuilt Dancehall. The casino contained a bowling alley, flying horses, ice cream stand, and a penny arcade. There wasn't a serious attempt to turn Plum Island into an amusement center, and it continued to be a family oriented summer resort. The Dancehall, Jack-O-Land, and the casino eventually suffered similar fates to those of the previous buildings on the same sites and were destroyed by fire.

On the point, boat rentals, bait and party boat fishing were available. Sport fishing for tuna by harpoon or rod and reel quickly became an important yearly event in which many local fishermen participated. Growth south of the center was slower but the marshes west of the dune called High Sandy also played a fleeting yet important role in the development of the airplane.

In 1915 the life-saving service and the US revenue cutter system merged to form the US Coast Guard. The two stations

Plum Island History continued on next page

Plum Island History continued

were highly active during prohibition years from 1920 to 1933 when attempts were made to smuggle liquor on offshore ships into the Ipswich and Merrimack Rivers. High-speed patrols went out each night from both stations.

With the passing of sailing ships, the need for two stations declined. The Knobbs station was kept open during World War II but closed soon afterwards. A few years later it became Camp Sea Haven, a summer camp for patients with polio that was once enjoyed by hundreds of children. It operated in the '50s and '60s, and later those associated with cerebral-palsy care took over the facility.



Aerial view of Camp Sea Haven, ca. 1950s.

The camp, located on the beachfront about 4 miles south of the refuge's entrance gate, was closed in 1988. The property was bought by the Refuge and the buildings were removed. The last Merrimack River station located on Plum island was vacated when it was threatened by erosion, and a new station was built further up the river in the center of Newburyport in 1973.

There were many camps and cottages along the part of Plum Island that is now known as the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge. In 1942, the sanctuary was formed with the goal of becoming a wildlife refuge for over 300 species of fowl. The sanctuary is also home to deer, coyote and other wildlife. Areas of the Refuge like Hill's Cove, the Knobbs and Grape Island had homes built on them that existed until the government bought the land by eminent domain. One by one, all of the old homes that were there were demolished and burnt. The very last home was demolished in 2015. The refuge attracts thousands of birders and photographers every year. Hikers, beach worshippers, hunters, fishermen and bird watchers all find their happiness within the 6 miles of this special area. Many of the beaches on the refuge close for almost half the summer for plover nesting, since they are endangered. This is a popular topic locals like to gripe about. Another gripe worthy topic would be the greenheads. There is a popular phrase, "Greenheads don't bite, they suck!" If you don't know what greenheads are, come and visit in July, and you will find out.

As you approach the island, on the right hand side of the marsh, across from the popular restaurant Bob Lobster sits The Pink House.



The Pink House was built in 1925 as the ultimate "spite house". The house was built by a man divorcing his wife. As a part of their divorce settlement, she requested an exact replica of their home in downtown Newburyport. He did what she asked for, but since she failed to designate the location, he built it where it would be isolated from everything in town and without running water — out of spite. The house remained privately owned until it was sold to the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in 2011 for \$375,000. The house now sits on private federal property. The government planned to demolish the house and use the land as a parking area for school field trip bus parking. Once the community learned the house would be demolished, a group founded by local residents was formed to advocate for the preservation of the house. The group is still actively pursuing avenues to save the house.

Erosion has always been a concern for islanders, even back when the area was first settled by the English. It is worth noting, the English were concerned about erosion because they allowed their horse and cattle to roam and graze, which caused some destruction of the dunes. Once they realized their mistake, regulations were put in place to prevent further destruction. They sought to protect the dunes since they knew the shifting sands would overrun the very valuable salt meadows.

There have been countless storms that have blown through, and continue to blow through the Island, knocking many of the small summer cottages right over. In particular, on January 31, 1939 a tough storm pulled sand right out from under some of the cottages, leaving them balancing on the edge of a sand dune. Another treacherous storm on November 25, 1950 toppled over at least 5 cottages onto Northern Blvd. There are records of sandbagging at the Northern end of the island in 1973. A new

Plum Island History continued on next page



PLUM ISLAND TAXPAYERS AND ASSOCIATES
8 PLUM ISLAND BOULEVARD, NEWBURY, MASSACHUSETTS 01951

Plum Island History continued

seawall was built in 1975 to help with some of the erosion. Another tough storm came through in March of 1976 toppling over more cottages, and then the blizzard of 1978 hit. If you are a native of this area and of a certain age, you will most certainly remember that storm. Plum Island was hit and hit hard. The storm raged from Sunday, Feb. 5, to Tuesday, Feb. 7, and dumped more than 30 inches of snow on parts of the Island. Drifts made the snow accumulations much higher. Roads were flooded, the snow was high and residents themselves couldn't get off of the island. The National Guard sent carriers to evacuate people when it became clear regular vehicles could not make it out. Flooding had washed out many streets and forced the closure of the island's causeway to the mainland.

I could fill page after page of more dates and storms. Erosion continues to be a major issue. Homes have been lost to the ocean, and new building codes have been put in place to help the new structures built on the island, which are dramatically different from the modest beach shacks first built, survive the constant shifting and changing. But, new building codes or not, at times the sand will erode, and other times it will build up. When people build million dollar homes, they certainly hope it will stay in place, stay structurally sound and won't become lost to the ocean. This is the big gamble. The Department of Environmental Protection says the problem is the rate at which the shoreline is receding. They tell us it took about 100 years for the island to lose its first 100 feet of sand. It has lost its second hundred feet since 1994. The ocean is relentless, and the United Nations says as the planet warms and ice caps melt this is just one more sign of what's ahead. The data shows us frequency and intensity of storms has increased. These facts are enough to keep us hearty wind-blown New Englanders up at night.

Regardless of the erosion and storms, people flock to this very special island. It is just as beautiful during the winter months as it is in summer. Many local residents feel it's even more enjoyable in the winter because it's quiet, there is no traffic, and it's incredibly peaceful. It is a tight-knit community. You feel safe on Plum Island, and your neighbors notice the small things that help you know everyone is looking out for one another. The skies rival any other location in the world. Our sunrises and sunsets are breathtaking. No matter what you enjoy as a pastime, you will find something to love about Plum Island. Sun worshippers, fishermen, photographers, birders, bike riders, and treasure hunters, foodies all find something to enjoy here. The Native Americans knew it was a special place with great value. The English immediately saw its value and eventually, its pleasurable pursuits. Today, Plum Island is a destination where thousands flock each summer, and enjoyed year-round by the residents who are lucky enough to call her home.



Saffords Cottage, date uncertain- 1950?