Land-Use History of Long Point
Land-Use History of Long Point Wildlife Refuge

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**Photographs and Maps**

**Cover background:** Historical US Coast and Geodetic Survey Map of Dukes County, courtesy of Dukes County Registry of Deeds.

**Cover photographs,** clockwise from top right: Schooners in harbor, 1912; Prescribed Fire, 1999; George Manter and eel trap, 1930s; Tisbury Pond Club members, 1913.

**Rendition maps** from the various time periods were drawn in ink by the author.

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Executive Summary
Humans have interacted with the landscape of Long Point Wildlife Refuge for thousands of years. This interaction continually changed as different people lived at Long Point and as cultural, governmental, and economic factors affected the way people used the land. The way people used the land is therefore a primary factor in determining the habitats we see today at Long Point. In addition, ancient Wampanoag names of the land, exciting stories, and interesting people create a rich historical context.

★ Before English settlers arrived at Long Point and around Tisbury Great Pond, the lands were a mosaic of meadow, native Wampanoag settlements, cornfields, woodlands, and other habitats likely undescribed by presettlement accounts.

★ Population densities of Wampanoags on Martha’s Vineyard were approximately 35 per square mile. Since the Tisbury Great Pond area was a native settlement with plenty of water sources and easy access to marine resources, the population density was likely higher at Long Point. By contrast with this density, population densities within the refuge boundaries from colonial times to the present were lower.

★ Native people used the resources of the lands and waters for many purposes, altering the landscape that, in turn, affected them. They cleared woods for firewood, burned the land, planted crops, and hunted and gathered. As the native people altered the landscape for thousands of years, plants and animals adapted to the landscape that was created. From these accounts we can learn about the tools they used for our own habitat management practices: prescribed burning, girdling, and clearing, for example.

★ The original place names at Long Point bring meaning to the landscape. Seconquit, Pasquanahommon’s Neck, Takenmy, Mussowonkwan, Wachepemepquah, Noepe, and many other names all describe the people and activities of the time. Pasquanahommon, for example, was a sachem of Tisbury, and Wachepemepquah is translated as planting field or cornfield, describing the area as agricultural during pre-settlement times.

★ Simon Athearn was the first European to own land at Long Point. He struggled constantly with Thomas Mayhew, the governor of Martha’s Vineyard, for his own rights as well as more democratic government. These struggles involved political issues that spanned the Atlantic Ocean as people vied to control land and other resources of the New World. Eventually, the town purchased and divided Long Point from the sachem Josias against Simon Athearn’s own title to the land. Nevertheless, Simon Athearn died a wealthy man.

★ Simon Athearn’s sons—Samuel and Solomon—bought shares of land at Long Point, eventually owning all of the three necks in the Long Point area. Solomon subsequently purchased land from Samuel, consolidating land totaling approximately 1,000 acres. Simon Athearn (Solomon’s son), and Thomas Walrond Jr. owned land at Long Point during the mid to late 1700s, with Thomas Walrond Jr. eventually owning all of Long Point, a well-developed farm at that time. Orchards of apples and cherry trees, grazing sheep and cattle, woodlots, English meadows, croplands, home sites, fences, and meandering roads all typified the farm.

★ Although plants and animals on Martha’s Vineyard did not evolve with livestock grazing, which was introduced in the late 1600s, grazing provides us with a useful habitat management tool that has affected the landscape greatly during the historical period.
Historically, the ponds around Long Point were heavily used. Fishing and shellfishing were common from presettlement times to the present as was gathering marine debris for various purposes, harvesting seaweeds to fertilize fields, and using plants in wetlands, whether for home construction or for feeding livestock. Tisbury Great Pond has been opened to the ocean for various purposes since at least the 1700s. Prior to that, natural breaks likely occurred, and Native Americans likely opened the pond for fishing purposes. Widespread recreation, however, has been a more recent use.

Shares in seines and fishing and shellfishing rights were historically common and were traded in deeds, along with access to the ponds. Regulation of all activities, including hunting, increased tremendously in the twentieth century, as resources became more and more scarce for a growing population.

The 1800s were a time of intensive land use, when the number of sheep and other livestock peaked, and when fields of various crops and cranberry bogs dotted the landscape. Whaling was a driving force during this time and employed a significant portion of the population, including people from Long Point.

Many roads have existed in the Long Point area, allowing access for the various property owners of the necks. The first roads date from 1707, one along Middle Point bottom and another still existing today, known as Watcha Path. Roads such as the Old Long Point Road no longer exist. Other existing roads—Thumb Point Road, Waldron’s Bottom, and Deep Bottom Road were recently created.

During the 1800s, tax increases, the rise and fall of the whaling trade, industrialization, technological innovations, transportation advances, and the westward movement of the frontier all began to affect Tisbury. By 1903, hunting clubs owned most of the land along the south shore of Tisbury, reflective of the riches brought about by American growth.

For the first half of the 1900s, the Tisbury Pond Club hunted at Long Point. Aging club members likely caused the club to disband. The hunters generously donated their land to The Trustees of Reservations, beginning the conservation movement on the south shore.

Since The Trustees have owned Long Point Wildlife Refuge, many scientific studies have taken place ranging from water quality studies to habitat monitoring. These studies are reflective of science-based management, which includes prescribed burning, Piping Plover protection, and shellfish management.

Over the twentieth century, the landscape has changed considerably as grazing ceased and wildlife suppression became the norm. People had lost their hands-on connection to the land, where land-use previously shaped the habitats.

These historical events all affected what we see today at Long Point, whether it is an old property boundary marked in the ground, an old home site, the old schoolhouse, or the rare habitats and species that depend on them.
The Land of the Wampanoag, pre-settlement to 1669, The First Purchase of Seconquit

Although scientists believe glaciers created the islands of Massachusetts thousands of years ago, another more sacred creation story exist—the story of Moshup. Moshup was a benevolent giant whose diet consisted of whales. He created the islands using his supernatural powers. This creation story begins the history of Martha’s Vineyard with the Wampanoag people. The Wampanoag were a people who gave meaning to the land by giving it place names. They used the resources of the land and sea for food, shelter, medicine, and ritual. The landscape itself reflected the Wampanoag uses, creating more open habitats around the Long Point area.

Almost four hundred years ago, Martha’s Vineyard was known as Capawack or Noepe, meaning “amid the waters.” The water and the necks of land of Long Point Wildlife Refuge also possessed native names (fig. 1). As in all names, they likely changed over the ages, as the Wampanoag language evolved and as people used the land differently over time. At the time of the first generation of settlers, Maukutoukquet ruled the land known as Takemmy, known today as Tisbury and West Tisbury. Mosoowonkwonk was also named Pasquanahommon’s Neck, named after one of Maukutoukquet’s sons, who inherited the southeastern corner of Takemmy. His younger son Keteanumin or Josias inherited the rest of Takemmy, becoming the new sachem, and sold much of Takemmy, including the land known as Seconquit, to the English settlers. Seconquit Neck was later called Long Point.

The native people of Takemmy extensively used the necks of Long Point Wildlife Refuge. Quansoo, Tississa, Pasquanahommon’s Neck, and other necks on the south shore in Takemmy are described in several original deeds as “plain,” “meadow,” “field,” “cornefields”, and “woodlands,” and Brereton in 1602 described necks of land and their open character: “It containeth many pieces

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1 Dr. Jay Seigel, personal communication
2 The boundary between Takemmy (Takammeh) and Nunpog goes from Tesquanomans Point (Dukes County Land Records, 5/423-4; NY records p. 68) at the top of Watcha Pond to the NE corner of Lake Tashmoo (Weechpooquasit Pond). From the records of Dr. Jay Seigel. The citation 5/423-4 is arranged as book number and page number, respectively and can be found in the County of Dukes County Court House, Registry of Deeds. All subsequent references will follow this format. 6/160 spells the sachem’s name as Maakutoutquet.
3 Seekaquatwau-pog is known today as Long Cove Pond. Big Homer’s Pond was named Pasquanahommon’s Pond, later shortened to Nahommon’s Pond and likely anglicized to Homer’s Pond. Pasquanahomon’s Neck or Mussoowonkwonk was also known as Uppenanakenames-et, 6/190, 7/339, 8/231 and 1858 map courtesy MV Historical Society. Tisbury Great Pond was known as Ukquieset. (In: Travers, map, p. 1).
4 6/160. Josias’ name is also spelled Kechamune. Seconquit’s meaning is “at the mouth of a stream or “emptying out” (Banks, II, p. 23).
5 Long Cove Pond was also known as Seconquit Pond and Seekaquatwau-pog and was a cove of Tisbury Great Pond, not a separate pond as it is today (1858 map of Tisbury, MV Historical Society). Long Point was also known or spelled as Seconquit (1858 map), Seconquetta, and Sakunk-et (in Banks, II. W. T. p. 18). 1/307, 1/462, 1/271, 2/94, 2/96, 7/339. Another name for this land was Monawquete (6/160).
6 A deed on August 2, 1669 (1/33) describes the original purchase of Tississa and the necks to its west: “all meadow upon the neckes of land on the south side of the island in his bounds.” Another deed from June 27, 1668 (Land Records Vol. A, p. 86) describes the area around Tisbury Great Pond as “ye plain and ye meadow, cornfields, woodlands.” These records are prior to any settlers in Takemmy. Another deed from January 4, 1699 describes a “field” on Pasquanahommon’s Neck (Land Records Vol. B, p. 598), which was also called Mosoowonkwonk, meaning a “mowing meadow,” Banks II, p. 25).
Figure 1: Rendition of Long Point in 1671, showing place names, native settlements (fires), hunting grounds (arrowheads), agricultural areas (corn), and various habitats ranging from grasslands to Scrub Oak shrublands.

or necks of land...On the outside of this Island are many plaine places of grasse...in the thickest part of these woods, you may see a furlong or more round about.” Cornfields and settlements covered this landscape. Testament to this is Scrubby Neck’s native name—Wachepemequah—meaning planting field or cornfield and accounts of other early

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7 Brereton, 1966:6 in: Peters, 1977. This is likely, but not confirmed as the south shore of Martha’s Vineyard.
explorers and settlers of southern coastal New England. Tississa’s other name, Kuppiauk, means heavily wooded land, showing the diversity of habitats around Ukquieset or Tisbury Great Pond. The necks of Long Point were therefore likely a mixture of agricultural fields, open meadow, and woodland. Other habitats such as oak woodlands and Scrub Oak barrens of various forms likely existed on the necks as well.

A relatively high density of native people lived on Noepe, as compared to other areas of New England, likely creating a more altered landscape. When settlers first arrived, approximately 3,000 to 3,500 Wampanoags lived on Noepe, with the highest densities around the periphery of the island. Based on archaeological data and early accounts of settlers, we can begin to picture how the native people interacted with the land and water of Noepe. Planting crops, gathering, fishing, hunting, clearing of the land, and using fire for various purposes all create a rich picture of a culture changing the landscape through heavy use of the land.

Fire was one tool the Wampanoag people used: to cook food, to stay warm, to perform rituals, and to modify the landscape. Commonly found in native middens were strikers, used to start fires, and hearths were also discovered. Brereton in 1602 described that the native people carried iron-pyrite anvils and strikers, or flint in a purse of sewed leather. If we can believe the accounts of early settlers, the native people frequently used fire. Several settlers note large areas of woodland regularly burned, with mention of hunting grounds kept open and “fresh and sweet” with fire. Thomas Morton in 1632 wrote that “the Salvages are accustomed to set fire of the country in all places where they come; and to burn it twize a

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10 Pollen data from Long Cove Pond shows a large oak and pine component in this area (approximately over 20 percent each, with approximately 10 percent grass pollen at the most), pre-settlement. Care must be taken in its interpretation due to the dispersal range of the pollen for each species (much lower dispersal range for corn and other grasses than for pine, for example). The greatest influence for pollen readings would be the immediate surroundings, making the landscape as a whole difficult to interpret. Stevens, A. 1996. The paleoecology of coastal sandplain grasslands on Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts. Ph. D. Thesis. University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
11 Freeman, p. 50, and Cook, S. F. 1976. The Indian population of New England in the seventeenth century. Publications in Anthropology, no. 12: 1-91. Berkeley: University of California. Cook’s numbers show a density of 35 people per square mile compared with four in southeast Massachusetts and 50 on Nantucket. Other mainland areas in New England show low densities ranging from 0.5 in Maine to ten in the Connecticut River Valley. From: Whitney, G. G. p. 101 (Citing Cook, 1976). This population density is equivalent to that of Martha’s Vineyard in the late 1700s and early 1800s, when carrying capacity issues were cited.
13 Brereton, 1903, p. 10 in Ritchie, p. 6.
Fire for food, warmth, and ritual also affected the landscape. Since wood was their only source for fire, which was used daily, large areas near more permanent agricultural settlements would have been used as woodlots. The combination of firewood gathering and fire created landscapes described by settlers as “open and parklike,” or “the trees, though tall, were generally not very thick and that there was no underwood save in the swamps, where the native’s fires did not penetrate,” or trees “growinge a greatt space assonder...as our parks in England,” or, as another example, “in the thickest part you may see a furlong or more about.” Based on these accounts, fire and clearing were major factors affecting the landscape of New England and likely Long Point Wildlife Refuge.

Hunting was another aspect of the Wampanoag life. Even though the native population had adjusted to a coastal environment and shifted their diet accordingly, the White-tailed Deer was still a primary component of their diet. Larger deer were selectively hunted using the bow, made from red cedar or other strong, pliable woods, and arrows, made from stone arrowheads and straight wooden shafts, or other deer were caught using a spring noose trap. Other animals found in native settlement sites include Gray Seal, Raccoon, Red Fox, Gray Squirrel, ducks, loon, Whistling Swan, Red-bellied Turtle, Black Bear, Gray Fox, Great Auk, Heath Hen, Bobcat, Box Turtle, Canada Geese, Beaver, and Muskrat. These animals were used for food, tools, clothing, and ornamentation. For example, awls made from the radius of Bobcat, a carved bone pendant, a perforated anterior plastron of a Box Turtle, a seal canine grooved for suspension, beads from bones, barbed bone points, bone needles for sewing, and beaver incisors with chisel shaped edges all were found in midden sites on Martha’s Vineyard.

Helping with the hunting and tracking of these animals were domesticated

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15 W. A. Patterson and K. E. Sassaman. 1988. Indian Fires in the Prehistory of New England. Pages 107-135 in: Holocene Human Ecology in Northeastern North America. Ed. George P. Nicholas. Plenum Publishing Co. A 1634 quote by William Wood, quoted by Byers (1946:19) in W. A. Patterson and K. E. Sassaman (1988) also supports the timing of burning in the fall: “for it being the custome of the Indians to burne the wood in November, when the grasse is withered, and leaves are dryed, it consumes all the underwood, and rubbish, which otherwise would overgrow the Country, making it impassable, and spoil their much affected hunting so that by this means in those places where the Indians inhabit, there is scarce a brush or bramble, or any cumbersom underwood to bee seene in the more champion ground.” Likely other areas were burned in the spring or summer as well; it is unlikely the same site could be burned twice in one year due to a lack of adequate fuel build-up (Tim Simmons, personal communication).


18 Evidence shows that frequent burning “would have been most advantageous to agricultural tribes of southern New England.” “the economic importance of burning varied directly with population density. The ethnohistorical record indicates that agricultural tribes were concentrated in coastal and riverine areas of Southern New England, so we may expect that our most abundant sedimentary records of fire would show strongest evidence for burning in this subregion.” This is important because of redundant fires: a high frequency in a given area due to densely settled sedentary population will affect the landscape to a greater degree. In: Patterson, W. A., and K. E. Sassaman, p 118.

19 Ritchie, multiple pages.


21 Ritchie, multiple pages, esp. p. 117.

22 Ritchie, pp. 77 and 110. We must note that many of these animals may have been hunted elsewhere and brought to Martha’s Vineyard through trade. Existence of Red-bellied Turtle and Black Bear remains, therefore, do not imply its existence on the island. For example, it is unlikely that Beaver would find enough suitable habitat on Martha’s Vineyard, given the lack of river and stream habitat, yet beaver incisors were found.
dogs.\textsuperscript{23} At night, waterfowl were attracted to the light of pine torches and subsequently clubbed.\textsuperscript{24} Whales were also hunted, and the native population taught the settlers their methods of whaling. For whaling, hunting seal, traveling, as well as fishing, the Wampanoag used boats constructed from a single log and large enough for ten to twelve people. They used short oars, broad at the end to guide their boats through the water. These boats or dugouts were hollowed using sharp stones and fire.\textsuperscript{25}

In addition to birds, reptiles, and mammals, fish and shellfish were also harvested, comprising a significant part of the Wampanoag diet. Many species of shellfish were cooked in their shells or dried and preserved.\textsuperscript{26} Ample shellfish were found in the many ponds of the south shore, although signs of overharvesting were found, evidenced by a decline in shallow water clams and a corresponding increase in deeper water, harder to harvest scallop and oyster.\textsuperscript{27} Cod up to four feet long, herring, Atlantic Sturgeon, Striped Bass, and other fish were caught using various techniques. Herring were caught as follows: “A passage was opened from the sea into the pond and through it the fish entered. There are many coves on this pond. At the entrance of the coves, the Indians placed hurdles underwater in a horizontal position; and when the fish had run over them into the coves, they went in their canoes, lifted the hurdles upright, by means they prevented the escape of the fish, and with their spears stuck them in the mud.” Eels were caught using eel pots made of wood withes or supposedly by walking barefoot in the marshes and grabbing them as they squirmed underfoot.\textsuperscript{29} Fishing using hooks, nets, spears, bow and arrows, and fish weir were also techniques the Wampanoag used.\textsuperscript{30}

The native people of Martha’s Vineyard also used plants, through cultivation and gathering, for medicinal uses, food, shelter, tools, and travel using wooden boats and paddles. Gathered foods included fiddleheads, raspberries, blueberries, huckleberries, grapes, strawberries, cranberries, acorns, and likely a wide assortment of other foods.\textsuperscript{31} Trees, as described before, were used for firewood, but also for wooden bowls and trays.\textsuperscript{32} Sapling trees bent at both ends and sunk into the ground were used to make the framing for their homes, called wetu.\textsuperscript{33} This frame was then double covered with thick mats made from cat-tail, flag, and bull-rushes.\textsuperscript{34} The homes had a hole in the center of the roof as a chimney and ranged from ten to sixty feet in diameter.\textsuperscript{35} The homes were constructed simply, so that they could move as the seasons or other conditions dictated.\textsuperscript{36} In the homes were found earthen pots; heavier tools such as choppers, adz, plummetts, atlatl, celts, anvils, whetstones, and hammerstones, all made

\textsuperscript{23} Ritchie, Pratt site, a burial site of a dog was found.
\textsuperscript{24} Travers, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{25} Cogswell, 1841, pp. 45 and 48 in Ritchie, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{26} Ritchie, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{27} Ritchie, Pratt site. The abundance of clam shells in the Pratt midden decreased, with a corresponding increase in the number of oyster and scallop shells. Species list, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{28} Rev. James Freeman. 1807. \textit{A Description of Dukes County}.
\textsuperscript{29} Travers, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{30} Ritchie; Cheever, 1848, pp. 35, 69, 71, 73, in Ritchie.
\textsuperscript{31} Massachusetts Historical Commission, Boston, 1984: pp. 2-5 from: \textit{Community-wide Archaeological Survey of West Tisbury}.
\textsuperscript{32} Cheever, 1848, pp. 39-40, in Ritchie, p 6.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Wampanoag Way: An Aquinnah Cultural Trail}. Aquinnah Cultural Center, Inc. Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head, Aquinnah.
\textsuperscript{34} Cheever, 1848, pp. 39-40, in Ritchie, p 6.
\textsuperscript{35} Ritchie, Cunningham site, p. 124 and several eyewitness accounts.
\textsuperscript{36} When moving to another site, they would simply bring their mats with them. The Wampanoags moved several times a year, usually living at one site during the warmer months and another more sheltered site during the winters. Judging by the middens Ritchie found, they would return to the same place year after year, generation after generation. Cogswell, 1841, pp. 48-9, in Ritchie, p. 6.
of stone; hand baskets made of crab shells, wrought together; broiled herring; deer heads, hooves, and antler tools; acorns; fish, including broiled herring; claws; platforms upon which people slept; and seeds. These seeds would be sown in their fields, such as those of Wachepemepquah. To maintain fertility of a site, the native people had several options: they could either fertilize their corn crop with herring, intercrop beans and corn, and leave fields fallow either short- or long-term. Squash and other vegetables were also harvested as were berries from brambles they kept near settlements. Tobacco was cultivated and smoked in pipes, likely for both ceremony and enjoyment. As you can see, native life was shaped to a large degree by the natural bounty of Capawack. The natives’ lives in turn shaped the landscapes of the island.

Wampanoag people have lived with the plants and animals of Martha’s Vineyard for thousands of years. Native Americans were living in eastern Massachusetts 11,000 years ago, five thousand years before the island of Capawack was formed. The oldest site on Martha’s Vineyard is dated as 4,300 years old, yet settlement could have happened much earlier. During this time, the Wampanoag civilization adapted to its surroundings and evolved based on new technologies. Major transitions began to occur approximately 3,000 years ago, with the creation of more permanent camps along the coast or inland watercourses, marking the beginning of the Woodland Period and the end of the Archaic stage. At this time the Wampanoags were primarily hunters and gatherers. Approximately one thousand years later, the bow and arrow came into use and subsistence became more specialized, focusing on marine foods—fish, shellfish, seal, and whales. In the Late Woodland Period (1,000 to 450 years before present), agriculture became widespread, and native tribes became correspondingly more sedentary. A more sedentary population would likely lead to a higher frequency of fire and land-use in a given settlement area, creating a more human-influenced landscape. Between 1669, the first sale of Seconquit and 1691, when the last native population “quit claim” of the necks of Long Point, the native population slowly lost control of Seconquit, through sales and town control. In addition, the native population appeared to have left Pasquanahommon’s Neck as late as 1705. A small tribe, however, persisted on the south side of Deep Bottom cove, although in 1849 only four families remained.

Division of Land and Power Struggles, 1641 to 1707
In the early colonial years, governments needed to be established, towns needed to be built, forests needed to be cleared, and land needed to be purchased. The New World was a power vacuum, where all resources were for the taking. On Martha’s Vineyard, a power struggle ensued as Thomas Mayhew attempted to fill this power vacuum. The struggle was between him and Simon Athearn, both of which would claim Seconquit as theirs.

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38 Cheever, 1848, pp. 35, 69, 71, 73, in Ritchie, Whitney, p. 102-103. Whitney notes shifting agriculture on Cape Cad and in Rhode Island, where fire was used to bring the fields back into cultivation.
40 Based on the Bull Brook site (Byers, 1954-55) and the Wapanucket No. 8 site (Robbins and Agogino, 1964).
41 Using radio-Carbon dating. Ritchie, p. 26. Potentially, much older human remains have been found in Squibnocket, although haven’t been published.
44 Patterson, W. A., and K. E. Sassaman, p 118.
45 1/307 and Tisbury Town Records, p. 25.
46 Land Records, Vol. C. p. 482: “near the place where an Indian house stood in the year 1705.”
47 Travers, p. 54.
In 1641, Thomas Mayhew, Sr. Purchased title to Martha’s Vineyard from both Sir Fernando Gorges and William Alexander, Earl of Scotland, who both claimed the island under separate charters. A document from August 22, 1664, gives Thomas Mayhew the right to hinder the sale of Land in Takemmy, without the consent of the sachems, Josias in the case of Takemmy. Another document in 1668, signed by Mayhew, gives William Pabodie, Joseph Standish, and James Allen the authority to buy land for Tisbury. This authority was given after Mayhew thoroughly negotiated with the Wampanoags. One year later, Mayhew further consolidated his power over land purchases in a third document: an agreement that sale of land in Takemmy still owned by the Indians required the consent of Thomas Mayhew. By 1671, “the proprietors of Tisbury were now in possession of all the present bounds of West Tisbury except the Christian town and the meadows or necks eastward of Tississa to the bounds of Edgartown and to the South of the Mill Path.” This same year, the first division of land occurred in the plain surrounding the Mill River, where the soils were fertile. Fifteen shares were created: 12 plus one for a mill, one for a minister, and one for John Eddy, “if he comes.” Simon Atearn was one of the twelve original shareholders.

Simon Atearn, who came to Edgartown in 1651 at the age of nine as a servant of Nicholas Butler, was an active participant in the democratic process, fighting for his rights to purchase land and to control town affairs. His democratic spirit led him to challenge Mayhew on several occasions, including the purchase of Seconquit. Against the will of Mayhew, Atearn purchased land, beginning with Tississa in 1674. For his purchase of Tississa without “confirmation from the Lord Proprietor or approval of the town,” Simon Atearn was taken to court and Tississa was turned over to the town in return for ten pounds. He retained one share, his home site, for two pounds, then proceeded to purchase others’ shares. In 1681, Josias the sachem sold to Simon Atearn the neck of land between Deep Bottom Cove and Long Cove—Seconquit. In 1683, Josias sold the same land at Seconquit to the town of Tisbury. This created another controversy. Simon Atearn replied: “I Simon Atearn of the town of Tisbury entrench upon record my dislike of any grant gift sale or disposal of any land which I have right into or in part and again I enter my protest.”

Simon Atearn’s quest for democracy did not simply end with land disputes, but also included more worldly matters. At this time, Dukes County was part of the colony of New York, after New Amsterdam was seized from the Dutch by a British fleet in 1664. The Duke of York, brother of King Charles II received a grant, which included Martha’s Vineyard. On July 8, 1671, Thomas Mayhew received charters for Tisbury, Chilmark, and Edgartown from the Governor of New York, Francis Lovelace. Two years later, the Dutch Returned to New York, renaming it to New Amsterdam. Seeing the authority of Thomas Mayhew taken away, Simon Atearn and others signed a petition suggesting that Mayhew “submit his office to the

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48 Banks, I, p. 80-84
49 Takemmy was called Tisbury and includes the land now divided into Tisbury and West Tisbury.
50 1/239; Banks, II. Annals of West Tisbury, p. 7.
51 1/402.
52 Banks, II. Annals of West Tisbury, p. 13. The Mill Path is now the Edgartown-West Tisbury Road. The fact that the proprietors of Tisbury did not own the Necks of Tississa, Seconquit, and Scrubby Neck set the stage for future land conflicts between Simon Atearn and the town.
54 Banks II., Annals of West Tisbury.
55 Banks, II. Annals of West Tisbury. Simon Atearn also owned land in North Tisbury, including a mill on Mill Brook and home site.
56 1/307. At the time, Long Cove Pond was connected to Tisbury Great Pond by a creek and was considered one of its coves.
57 1/271.
58 Tisbury Town Records, p. 16.
voters” after one year. After Mayhew refused, they petitioned the Massachusetts Bay Colony to take over the island, to no avail. On October 31, 1674, New Amsterdam once again became New York, and Simon Ahearn was fined for his role in the “Dutch Rebellion.” The fight for control of Tisbury continued after Thomas Mayhew died in 1682, as his grandson Matthew continued the Mayhew rule. In 1685, the Duke of York became King James II, a Catholic ruler of the Protestant land of England, and a new governor, Sir Edmund Andros, was selected for a new dominion, which included all colonies north of Pennsylvania. Andros, under the rule of James II enforced the Navigation Acts, which disallowed any trade with Europe and bankrupted many merchants. He only ruled a few years as William and Mary peacefully replaced James II in 1691 and returned Protestant rule to England and her colonies. The Navigation Acts were no longer enforced and each colony resumed control of its territory. On June 6, 1691, Simon Ahearn wrote the newly appointed governor of New York, describing unfair taxes and arbitrary power exerted by four justices of one family—the Mayhews. Later that year, William and Mary transferred “Capawick” to Massachusetts; Simon Ahearn then immediately wrote the governor of Massachusetts as well, describing the unjust situation. Finally, he was able to convince the governor of Massachusetts that Joseph Norton should be appointed Justice, the first non-Mayhew, ending the complete control of the Mayhews.

Land at Long Point, once purchased from the Wampanoags, was turned into commons and subsequently divided. Each neck of land, which included Seconquit or Charles’ Neck, Pasquanahomon’s Neck or Mussoowonkwonk, and Scrubby Neck, was divided into sixteen shares, commonly held. Apparently the Wampanoags were still living, using, and claiming the necks, even though, their sachem had sold them. Finally on February 2, 1692, several Wampanoags “quit claim of Seconquit and ye necks,” and the town appointed John Manter and Peter Robinson as attorneys to defend the “meadow gras and hay on Seconquit, Peanaskenamset and Mossoonkhonk” from Indian use (improvement). This date marks one of the last days the native populations influenced the Long Point landscape, and the last Indian home was recorded in 1705 at Pasquanahommon’s Neck. Now that the necks were under town control, grazing rights and shares were given to town proprietors and sold on the open market. In 1707, Charles’ Neck was divided in half, with sixteen shares comprising

60 “One of the ringleaders in the late resist of the Government.” Edgartown Court, Jan 8, 1674. He was fined 25 pounds.
63 1/129 and 1/271 were the last purchases of land at Long Point, December 24, 1681 and January 6, 1682. In these deeds the town purchased Mussoowonkwonk and Scrubby Neck from John Papameck and Josias, respectively. John Papameck was uncle-in-law to sachem Maukutoukquet (Jay Seigel, personal communication).
64 Charles’ Neck was probably named after Amos Charles, an Indian of Tisbury (Indian Converts, p. 156). The sixteen share divisions are referred to in many deeds for this area. On October, 1687, Charles’ Neck or Seconquit “and the two neckes adjoyning eastward from said neck” (i.e. Mussoowonkwonk and Scrubby Neck) were divided by the town into sixteen shares of commons each. Tisbury Town Records, p. 5.
65 This is after a discourse with the native people who lived in these necks. Tisbury Town Records, p. 23-25. Peter Robinson was sold “all ye meadows or mowable land” in the Mussoowonkwonk area as sold to him by Josias (5/373).
67 2/94, 2/96 are examples of the sale of shares.
the full ownership of the neck. Although Simon Athearn was not given any of the divided shares at Seconquit, his son Samuel was given shares, owning four shares at this time.

Consolidation of Land by the Athearn Family, 1707 to 1733

Simon Athearn and his wife Mary lived to see his nine children become productive citizens of Martha’s Vineyard and New England. Two of his sons, Samuel and Solomon, continued to be active in the Long Point area, purchasing most shares for the necks of land between 1707 and 1733. Simon Athearn also exerted influence in this area, and Alexander, a son and heir of Josias the sachem, gave him the right to improvement of any sort of land in Takemmy according “to the accustomed Right and power of the Sachem…with the improvement of all sorts of wood and timber and benefits of the water and beach and drifts of the seas cast thereon.” Likely this did not afford him any additional land rights in the mind of his fellow colonists, who continued to use and own the land. Nevertheless, sachems still nominally claimed Takemmy as late as 1735. In 1715, Simon Athearn died intestate, his estate divided by his survivors, leaving a legacy for his family.

Simon Athearn’s estate shows his broad holdings of land. His mansion was at the Great Neck west of Tississa, and he owned woodland between “Pine Hill” and the home of Jabez Athearn near today’s Priester’s Pond. He also owned common lands, “the sixteenth part of [Tisbury common lands],” land in Tississa and Charles’ Neck, and land on the plain of the Old Mill River. In Chilmark, he owned salt meadow, and in Edgartown he owned some land as well. The value of this land and buildings was 1,234 pounds, likely around 1,000 acres of land. In addition, his survivors were given a total of 750 pounds. Considering that half of Scrubby Neck, complete with structures, was sold for 150 pounds, this sum of indicative of a very wealthy man. On his land, grazed 302 sheep, twelve cows, two pair of oxen, six steers, two heifers, a bull, eight yearlings, six swine, and one mare. Some of his interesting possessions included two harrows, one plow, pitchforks, hoes, a cart, a grindstone, 60 pounds of sheep’s wool, two looms, three spinning wheels, a pair of wool cards, and more luxurious items such as looking glasses, a pewter platter, napkins, two large Bibles, and brass candlesticks.

Between 1707 and 1719, Samuel Athearn concentrated on purchasing shares of land at Seconquit, where he already owned four of the sixteen shares. He purchased shares one by one and owned over ten shares in 1719.

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68 On April 4 the settlement of division of lands at Charles Neck occurred. The land at Charles Neck was divided into two: by a north-south highway or middle line, with an east-west fence as a secondary boundary marker. The east side was six shares: 5.5 shares went to Ebenezer Allen, and 0.5 shares went to Joseph and Isaac Norton. The west side was divided into ten shares. The first four shares, south and next to the fence went to Samuell Athearn; the fifth share went to John Manter, the sixth share went to Benjamin Eddy, and shares seven through ten went to Samuell Look, Jeremiah Whitten, Joseph Daggit, and Benjamin Eddy. Banks, II. Annals of West Tisbury, p. 15.

69 His wife was Mary Butler. They married when she was fourteen. Two daughters moved to Rhode Island. Banks III, p. 21.

70 1/132.

71 Zachariah Peskiney, son and heir of Josias, and Peter Nahomon, son of Samuel Pashquau Nahommun (Pasquanahommon), reaffirm the division lines of Takemmy that their fathers established years before (6/160).

72 1/24, Probate Court, Dukes County Courthouse.

73 1/50, Probate Court, Dukes County Courthouse.

74 1/50, Probate Court, Dukes County Courthouse.

75 Land acquisitions were as follows: 3/105, 3/142, 3/145, 3/143, 14/41. Also, Samuel was given “all the lands in Charleses neck belonging to said estate as it is purchased…” 1/24, Probate Court.
Between 1713 and 1716, Solomon Athearn purchased land at Scrubby Neck and Pasquanahomon’s Neck. John Allen sold seven shares of land at Pasquanahomon’s Neck to Solomon, beginning his acquisitions in 1713. In a deed from book two, page 317, Simon Athearn sold seven shares of land at Scrubby Neck and eight and a half shares at Mussoowonkwonk to his son Solomon. On February 14, 1716, Experience Luce sold to him an additional eight shares at Scrubby Neck, including buildings, fences, and wood. At this point, Solomon owned all of Scrubby Neck and Pasquanahomon’s Neck.

Finally, between 1719 and 1733, Solomon Athearn purchased much of the land at Seconquit. His brother Samuel sold him approximately 300 acres of land, swamp, and meadowland at Seconquit. Inholdings at Seconquit included lands owned by James Allen and John Manter. In 1733, John Manter sold his land to Solomon, almost completing his ownership of Seconquit as well. He, his wife, and his one son and five daughters then led a life of farming on this open land of meadows. To this date, the only mention of woodland in all the deeds from the Long Point area is at Scrubby neck. By this time, however, any woodlands could have been cleared, despite a small population in the area.

Roads, houses, and other signs of civilization appeared on the landscape. In 1699, Mill Path, which connected New Town (West Tisbury) with Edgartown, in order to bring milled products to the harbor at Edgartown, was constructed. By 1707 a cart path and a middle way were described at Seconquit. The cart path began at the Mill Path, heading southeast to Scrubby Neck above the heads of Deep Bottom Cove and Seconquit Pond and ending in Edgartown. This cart part would be known as Watcha Path several years later. The middle way was a boundary line for the division of lands in 1707 as was a ditch. At least several buildings and houses existed at Scrubby Neck and Samuel Athearn had a houselot in the northeast corner of Seconquit. This is the house that Solomon purchased from Samuel in 1720, after which Solomon lived there. Many of the deeds at this time also mention fences. Therefore, in 1733 we see a working farm complete with roads, fences, and buildings, owned by Solomon Athearn and covering almost three necks, likely over 1,000 acres, with only a couple of small inholdings.

Thomas Walrond Jr. and Colonial Life on the Necks of Tisbury, 1734 to 1802

By the time of this death in 1802, Thomas Walrond Jr. owned and farmed all of Seconquit and Nahommon’s Neck as well as part of Scrubby Neck (fig. 2). In 1734, Thomas Walrond Jr. was twenty-four years old. His father Thomas came from Newport, Rhode Island, settled at Seconquit, and married Mary Athearn, daughter of Simon Athearn. Thomas Jr. was a

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76 Formerly owned by Ebenezer Allen, Robert Cathcart, and originally purchased from Samuell Nohomon, son of Pasquanahomon.
77 The date is torn and reads January 4, 17___.
78 3/188. Samuell and Sarah Cob sell a remaining half share at both Pasquanahomon’s Neck and Scrubby Neck to Solomon that same year, 3/159.
79 3/417.
80 5/422.
81 3/188.
82 Tisbury Town Records, p. 15. The middle way was likely Thumb Cove Road (see 9/440).
83 First described on July 17, 1761, 9/97. This road was officially laid out by the proprietors of Tisbury in 1743.
84 Property boundaries were often laid out as ditches. A plow would create a ditch on either side of the property boundary, leaving the soil mounded on the property line. Peters, E. L. 1977. Land Tenure and Subsistence on Martha’s Vineyard: An Introduction to a Study of the Pond People. Eric L. Peters. BA Thesis Colorado College.
cordwainer or shoemaker, though likely only in the earlier part of his life. Although he had no children, Thomas Jr. had a brother Joshua and the young Jonathan Athearn, son of Simon Athearn II, lived with him for most of his life. The population of Martha’s Vineyard during this time expanded from about 1,000 residents to over 3,000 by 1802, with over half the population living in Tisbury. This growth was reflective of a highly productive colonial economy.

Shoemakers such as Thomas Walrond Jr. were part of a colonial economy focused on living off the land and waters of Martha’s Vineyard. Other tradesmen—coopers, blacksmiths, weavers, and carpenters, for example—supported the lives of farmers and seafarers. Coopers made barrels, kegs, butter boxes, and casks, made of Beetlebung, hickory, and willow. At this time, these vessels, whether holding butter or cheese, salted herring, wheat, or whale oil, were important for storage and transportation in the daily lives of many Vineyarders. Blacksmiths made tableware, utensils, and tools as well as repaired farm tools and shoed horses. Processing of wool and corn were also important, hence, fulling, carding, and grist mills turned their moving parts with the power of the Mill Brook and Tiasquin River. The first mill was established in 1669. During the early to mid eighteenth century, the Cottles, Looks, and Athearns owned mills. Thomas Walrond Sr. worked as a miller in one of these mills of Tisbury. In the bogs, bog iron was harvested and exported. Trees were felled for firewood, fencing, brick kilns, furniture, tools, and tan fat, made

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86 Banks, III, p. 493.
87 Simon Athearn II was the son of Solomon Athearn.
88 Probate, 9/111
89 Banks, II, Annals of West Tisbury, p. 7 and Freeman, p. 47.
90 Now called the Tiasquam River. Also spelled Tisaquin (Travers, map, p. 1).
from tree bark and used in the tanning process.\textsuperscript{92} Other plants were harvested in the wild and cultivated for food, medicine, or beauty—Sassafras, blueberries, cranberries, Witch Hazel, Jewelweed, fruit trees, tobacco, snapdragons, lupines, and native wildflowers such as arbutus, asters, Butterfly Weed, and goldenrods.\textsuperscript{93} Salt works were established in Edgartown to

\textsuperscript{92} William Butler describes collecting bark in his diary of 1792. He also described building fences, harrowing corn, cutting and carting wood, removing hide hair with lime, plowing, planting corn and potatoes, carting manure, driving cattle, and washing and yarding sheep. Butler, W. Martha’s Vineyard in 1792—A Diary. \textit{Dukes County Intelligencer}, 8(2) and 8(4).

\textsuperscript{93} Coon, N. Plant Life and the Island Colonists. \textit{Dukes County Intelligencer}, 8(4).
preserve fish and meat. Still most people at this time were employed as farmers, especially in Tisbury and Chilmark, and 20,000 sheep grazed the island in 1775. By the end of the century, growth of a farming economy had slowed, as much of the forests on the island were cleared, and signs of reaching a carrying capacity of the land were noted.

Although Martha’s Vineyard was largely self-sufficient, Islanders still had to import products and larger-scale events affected their lives. The island primarily imported spices, sugar, tea, coffee, breadstuffs, and rum. Exports to help pay for these imports include wool, wool stockings, mittens, blankets, whale oil, salted herring, clams, corn, and bog iron. Wool could not be exported to England, to protect English jobs, and tea, coffee, and sugar were taxed. In addition to these taxes, the town of Tisbury voiced its grievances against England, primarily regarding sovereignty with regards to ownership of land and the rights that arise from ownership. Such sovereignty was not possible under the royal charters. The Revolutionary War affected Islanders by paralyzing their 12 whaling ships and through Grey’s Raid. Between September 10 and 15 1778, 4,333 troops under Sir Charles Grey raided Martha’s Vineyard, taking 2,752 sheep and 97 cattle in Tisbury and 10,574 sheep and 315 cattle on Martha’s Vineyard. Luckily, not all attempts to steal livestock in Tisbury were successful:

In 1776, Mr. Manter was tending his sheep with another gentleman at Long Point in West Tisbury, when an English ship anchored off shore. The captain sent several men in a small boat ashore to steal some of the sheep for fresh meat.

Mr. Manter and his friend took their guns down to the shore, hiding behind the dunes. They fired at the men trying to come ashore and they made it so hot for them that they turned around and returned to the ship without the sheep.

Shortly afterwards, they heard cannon shots as the ship fired on them as it left. One shot landed in Long Creek, which Mr. Manter retrieved. Long Creek was a creek that ran between Long Cove and Tisbury Great Pond.

Besides events such as these, the farms of Tisbury’s south shore remained self-sufficient and vibrant during the eighteenth century.

The hero of the day, George Manter, owned land at Long Point, along with Thomas Walrond Jr., Simon Athearn (son of Solomon), and others. Once again, land ownership was shifting, with Solomon Athearn aging, and a new generation of farmers purchasing land. George Manter, along with Joseph Daggett, owned Middle Point and a small tract along Long Cove

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95 Although Tisbury managed to be self-sufficient in wood, Edgartown had to import most of its firewood. Freeman, p. 14. Also, a letter from 1762 noted that “the Island has now as many inhabitants as the Land will comfortably support; so that if there should be any further increase of Inhabitants it seems they must be supported by Whaling, Fishing, and seafaring business… In Peters, p. 30 as quoted in Banks, I, p. 278.
96 Van Tassel, p. 18. Also wood in the case of Edgartown.
97 Freeman, various pages.
99 Banks, I, p. 367-383. This amounts to 50 percent of the sheep found on the island in 1775.
100 The Cannon Ball Story, courtesy of Marjorie Manter Rogers. “This cannon ball has been in the Manter family since 1776, when it was fired from an English ship at George Manter, great-great grandfather of fmr. Police Chief George Manter.”
On July 27, 1761, Simon Athearn purchased tracts near Deep Bottom Cove and Long Cove Pond, north of George Manter’s land at Middle Point, and an area called “Long Point” from his father Solomon. This is the first mention of Long Point as a place name; previously it was referred to as a long point of the neck called Charles’ Neck. At this time, Thomas Walrond Jr. was beginning to consolidate his land at Seconquit. By 1764, Simon Athearn and others had sold him all of the land in the eastern half of Seconquit, comprising today’s Long Point Wildlife Refuge, and interest in the new divisions north of Watcha Path and South of Mill Path. Simon Athearn, meanwhile, owned the entire western half of Seconquit. A “path or way” running south down Thumb Cove bottom divided their land, and rights to this way were noted in the land records. Considerable turnover of the land appeared common at this time, as people would sell land and sell a piece of it a few days later. When he died in 1799, Thomas Walrond Jr. had owned all of Long Point Wildlife Refuge for over thirty years.

The farmland at Long Point was richly developed at this time. A woodlot, exclosed by a fence to keep out livestock, provided firewood for the farm. A newly built homesite at Scrubby Neck contained a well, cherry trees, and rows of apple trees in an orchard, through which a cart path meandered. Most of the land was open; cattle, goats, and sheep grazed in the pastures and likely in forested areas as well. These grazed areas as well as cultivated areas were likely burned to encourage the growth of grasses or to release nutrients into the soil. Growing corn by rotating land under cultivation was the common practice of the day and at best, Thomas could only cultivate 10 to 20 acres of cropland, leaving large areas in fallow or pasture. Thomas Walrond Jr. also maintained a woodlot at the Woody Bottom, the bottom north of Tyres Cove. Swampland covered the head of Long Cove Pond, which was still connected to Tisbury Great Pond through a creek, into which the famous Manter cannonball fell. Another homesite existed near Deep Bottom and Watcha Path and included a corn house and a barn. Upon the division of Thomas Walrond Jr’s estate on January 11, 1799, Thomas sold land to Thomas Walrond Jr. At this time it is also spelled Sekunquett, 9/488.

At this time it is also spelled Sekunquett, 9/488. 1743, December 6—Division of Tracts of land between the mill path and the heads of the neck (i.e. between Edgartown-West Tisbury Road and the north side of the necks. Three divisions, each with sixteen shares, the sixteen shares numbered east to west beginning at bottoms. 2nd division is between Waldron’s Bottom and Deep Bottom (note the name and spelling). Share 8-12 is Thumb Cove Frost Bottom (Tisbury Town Records, p 114-22). 9/440. Simon Athearn quits claim to Thomas Walrond “all his right, title, and interest, and concern which he now hath ever had or ought to have on the east side of said line, as also the cartway, or path…” For example, on October 9, 1765, Simon Athearn sold land near Deep Bottom to Thomas Walrond Jr. On October 13, Thomas sells this same land back to Simon (9/446). In 1769, Simon then sells this same land back to Thomas (9/685). Probate, 9/111.

“This...the fence that encloses the woods on the East side of the middle point Pond...” (Probate, 9/111). This is the first mention of a woodlot at this location. Today, older trees still exist at this location and future references indicate that these woods were a working woodlot from at least 1799 to the time of the Tisbury Pond Club.


Whitney, p. 167. Pyne, S. J. 1982. Fire in America: A Cultural History of Wildland and Rural Fire. Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp. 47 and 51. Pyne describes that early settlers often used the same techniques as the native population: “the forms of fire used in America for hunting, herding, farming, and logging, however, more closely resembled the practices of the New World natives than those of Old World ancestors.”

Whitney, p. 235.
1802, Noah Walrond, his nephew, and Jonathan Athearn became the two landowners at Long Point Wildlife Refuge.\textsuperscript{113}

**The Rise and Fall of Whaling, the Decline of Farming, and the Effect of Industrialization, 1803 to 1903**

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the south shore necks of Tisbury were still remote, self-sufficient farms, yet tax increases, the rise and fall of the whaling trade, industrialization, technological innovations, transportation advances, and the westward movement of the frontier were powerful factors that changed the very fabric of life at Long Point. By 1903, these factors led to a shift from farmland to hunting grounds, as wealthy seasonal residents created hunting clubs along the south shore.

In 1803, Thomas Jefferson negotiated the Louisiana Purchase with the French, expanding the nation into the Great Plains, where rich soils awaited homesteaders arriving in the mid nineteenth century. The Northwest Territories of Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin, at this time, were surveyed and were attracting settlers; Ohio was already a state as were Tennessee and Kentucky. As settlers moved west, infrastructure was built—the Cumberland Road and the Erie Canal being some of our earliest examples—which facilitated westward expansion, the harvesting of timber products, and the clearing of land.\textsuperscript{114} By 1825, after the construction of the Erie Canal, a period of canal building commenced, ending around 1850. This was mirrored by an era of rail construction, beginning in 1830 in the northeast. In 1869, the Union Pacific Railroad was completed, joining the country east to west. At this time, a cattle boom accelerated settlement of the Great Plains and by the 1880s the best land had been settled and the Corn Belt was created.\textsuperscript{115} The settlement of the plains not only drew waves of immigrants westward, but also changed the relation of people to the landscape in New England: poor and depleted farming soils in New England could no longer compete with large-scale farming in the fertile plains, now that a transportation infrastructure was established between farm and city. The discovery of natural resources such as petroleum and gold and an abundance of forests also accelerated westward settlement.\textsuperscript{116} Finally, in 1896, the automobile was invented, facilitating more individual transportation which would affect our land-use patterns in the twentieth century.

\textsuperscript{112} 9/685.
\textsuperscript{113} Probate, 9/111.
\textsuperscript{114} Prior to the construction of canals, navigable rivers were the main source of transportation that was economically viable. Whitney, G. G. 1994. *From Coastal Wilderness to Fruited Plain: A History of Environmental Change in Temperate North America from 1500 to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 175.
\textsuperscript{115} Whitney, p. 257.
\textsuperscript{116} www.usda.gov/history2.
Industrialization also had a profound effect on the relationship between humans and the landscape. The most dramatic effect was a shift from rural to urban settlement, as people moved near factories for work.\textsuperscript{117} Lowell, Massachusetts and other industrial sites in New England began the boom between 1820 and 1850, with a focus on textiles. By the end of nineteenth century, cities were expanding so rapidly, with a corresponding decline in human

\textsuperscript{117} During the nineteenth century, farm and mining workers declined from over 80 percent of laborers to less than 40 percent, while manufacturing and service jobs increased substantially. \textit{The Economist}, December 31, 1999, p. 22
interaction with nature, that Charles Eliot, a landscape architect from Boston, founded The Trustees of Reservations, in order to preserve land for public use and enjoyment. Another result of the Industrial Revolution was an increase in wealth, providing a means for leisure that was not possible for many in an agricultural society. Agriculture, nevertheless, also became more industrialized as steel plows were mass manufactured by John Deere and Leonard Andrus beginning in 1837. By the 1870s, refrigerator railroad cars were developed, facilitating transportation of perishable goods, and by the turn of the century, agriculture was undergoing a large-scale shift towards more fertilizer use and increased mechanization and commercialization. During this period, Edwin Drake drilled the first oil well in Titusville, Pennsylvania and Rockefeller formed Standard Oil to produce kerosene for lighting purposes and other oil-based products. As a result, whale oil quickly lost favor as a light source, helping with the downfall of the whaling industry.

Whaling began to boom after the 1807 Embargo and the War of 1812, but this boom would not last long as several events, such as the commercialization of kerosene, would lead to the collapse of the whaling industry. Whaling by colonists first began in 1640 in New York City and slowly spread to other towns such as New Bedford, Nantucket, and Edgartown. By the middle of the nineteenth century, there were 329 whaling ships in New Bedford alone. This employed thousands of people, from whalers to provisioners and factory workers. Whales were used primarily for their oil for use in lubrication, leather tanning, and lighting but also for their baleen, filtering teeth made of keratin, which were used for carriage springs, fishing rods, women’s hats, and parasol ribs. Since whales are up to 50 percent fat by body weight, each whale could provide many barrels of oil. In addition, high quality oil found in the spermaceti organ, located in the head region, was used to make white spermaceti candles. By the beginning of the Civil War, the whaling industry began to decline. During the Civil War, many whaling vessels were lost to Confederate ships or were sunk outside Confederate waters to prevent blockade running. Whales had declined in number, making each voyage longer and harder in order to bring home a profit. Petroleum performed many of the same functions as whale oil and began to replace it. Thomas Edison’s invention of the electric lamp in 1879 and the development of steel products used to replace baleen by the first decade of the twentieth century also led to the demise of whaling.

The boom of maritime villages due to the rise of whaling and other seafaring activities, increased tourism, and greater trade affected Tisbury, as Holmes’ Hole became a vibrant port that required greater services to maintain. Greater services provided by the town meant higher taxes. Residents of more agricultural lands, on the other hand, did not demand additional services, yet were still required to pay the higher tax rate. In many cases, this higher tax rate drove farmers out of business, leading to an abandonment of farms throughout Tisbury. In addition, a change in wool trading laws in the middle of the nineteenth century led to a sharp decline in sheep grazing, one of the principal farming activities on Martha’s Vineyard at the time. Nathaniel Shaler, a geologist at Harvard, purchased some of these abandoned farms in the late nineteenth century. He recognized the problem was in an

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118 [www.usda.gov/history2](http://www.usda.gov/history2).
119 [www.whalingmuseum.org/whaling](http://www.whalingmuseum.org/whaling). Baleen is found in whales that filter feed, such as the Bowhead Whale.
120 [www.whalingmuseum.org/whaling](http://www.whalingmuseum.org/whaling). A theory of the spermaceti organ is that a whale would change its buoyancy by changing the spermaceti oil between liquid and solid states, through heating and cooling. A whale could then dive to greater depths for a longer time.
121 Due to over hunting, many whales are still endangered, though recently several species have recovered: Blue Whale 500 to 2049 between 1979 and 1991; Humpback Whale 88 to 607 (same times). The Right Whale has not recovered, however and numbers around 550.
122 [www.whalingmuseum.org/whaling](http://www.whalingmuseum.org/whaling).
123 Now called Vineyard Haven.
124 Glenn Motzkin, personal communication
inherently flawed tax system and called for the division of Tisbury into two towns. In 1892, the Town of West Tisbury was incorporated, with a lower tax rate appropriate for a farming community.

These results of the transforming factors of taxation, the decline of whaling, industrialization, and westward settlement, infrastructure development, as well as depleted soil fertility in many parts of New England, therefore, led to farm abandonment and turnover, less viable agriculture, a split of Tisbury into two towns, a commencement of recreational and seasonal visitation in 1835, with the first camp meeting at Eastville, and a distinct change in the use of land at Long Point Wildlife Refuge. During the nineteenth century, Long Point depicted a community in transition, where agriculture was still a way of life, yet transforming factors still ultimately affected Long Point in the end.

During the whaling boom, Tisbury became a source of both supplies and whalers. The mills of Tisbury provided flour, baked and sold as bread to whalers. Dr. Fisher, a wealthy resident of Edgartown, realized the potential of this market and purchased 600 acres of land in Tisbury and built or purchased five dams along the Mill Brook. He also contracted with farmers to grow wheat and built a road that connected his mills to Edgartown. Unfortunately, wheat did not grow well in the relatively poor soils of Martha’s Vineyard and was not very profitable; the industry closed after his death in 1876. Sixteen years earlier, the population of Tisbury peaked with 1,803 people and a productive farming community. Five thousand five hundred and sixty-eight sheep grazed its meadows and 553 tons of English Hay were produced. For Martha’s Vineyard, 60 percent of cranberries and 80 percent of firewood were harvested in Tisbury. Half of the island’s butter production and 4,200 pounds of cheese were also produced in Tisbury in 1850.

At Long Point and elsewhere, sons of farmers left the land to pursue adventure at sea. Consequently, traditional inheritance of land by a son did not occur. For example, John Johnson purchased most of Seconquit and lived on the land. His son John Johnson Jr., however, lived a life of adventure as a first officer of a whaling schooner called the Hattie E. Smith, which was built in Edgartown. He was awarded a medal of honor for saving a crew from the Italian ship Vinienzo Gallatola off Cape Hattaras during a storm. At the wreck, eleven men were “clinging to the lee rigging, while every sea that dashed against the hapless bark went over her bulwark just beneath the men who were holding on for dear life.” Despite the crashing surf, first officer Johnson took a small crew and saved all eleven men in two trips, just before the Gallatola crumbled into the sea.

Due to the intense and capricious nature of the sea and a decline of the number of whales, many whalers sought any luck they could get. A good witch living at Scrubby Neck sold spells to whalers, especially captains who were about to sail. One captain, however, would not buy her good spell. As he was about to sail, the witch went to the captain’s dock and said he would “see plenty of whales, but not get any of them.” For days, the whalers had no luck and every day a white bird would fly by. It was thought to be the witch so the captain melted a

125 The Vineyard Gazette has archives concerning debates about this issue.
127 The Dr. Fisher Trail leads through the Manuel F. Correllus State Forest and is now considered an ancient way. Community-wide Archaeological Survey of West Tisbury.
128 Community-wide Archaeological Survey of West Tisbury.
130 Community-wide Archaeological Survey of West Tisbury.
132 Republican Standard, Nov 16, 1905; Box 72B, Dukes County Historical Society.
silver dollar and made a bullet, with which he shot the white bird. He then recorded the time in the ship’s log. When they returned, they found out that the witch had died that very time. Possibly the death of the white bird marked the demise of the whaling industry as well.

The Athearns and Walronds continued to own the land at Long Point, living as farmers. In the 1860s, John Johnson arrived at Long Point, eventually buying most of the land. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Noah Walrond and Jonathan Athearn, heirs of Thomas Walrond’s estate, owned the land at Long Point, eventually selling the land to the next generation of Seconquit farmers: Thomas and Warren Walrond, sons of Noah, and William and Jonathan Athearn Jr, sons of Jonathan. All of these sons had homes in the Long Point area. On June 18, 1833, Noah Walrond sold the land he inherited at Middle Point to his son, Warren Walrond. Noah, who lived adjacent to Watcha Path, also sold his homestead and areas around it to Warren and Thomas Walrond. Thomas, who then lived at this homestead, ultimately purchased 120 acres after multiple transactions. William Athearn purchased land from his brother Jonathan at Nahommon’s Neck, where he established his homestead and at Long Point along the western shore of Long Cove. Smaller tracts of woodlots and meadows were subsequently sold to one another and Benjamin Atbearn Jr. as well, each person consolidating lands for their needs. After the death of Jonathan Athearn Sr., William Athearn sold “meadow and orchard land and being all my interest in and to the lands belonging to the homestead of Jonathan Athearn (Sr.)” to Jonathan Athearn Jr., who was consolidating land around Nahommon’s Neck and Scrubby Neck. After the death of William Athearn, John Johnson purchased all of the land comprising Long Point Wildlife Refuge west of Long Cove Pond from William’s heirs and the 120 acre homestead of Thomas Walrond. Meanwhile, north of the Watcha Path, the Flint Remedy Company purchased seven of the twelve divisions north of Seconquit. Flint Remedy filed a subdivision plan in 1902, converting 120 acres into 2,345 lots with paper roads bisecting the entire area. Their plan was to convey these lots one by one to purchasers of their patent medicine. This prospect failed, so the lots were eventually sold in bulk. This plan marked the first subdivision in the Long Point area. To date, the subdivision still remains only on paper.

Reflective of the more intensive land-use during the nineteenth century, Long Point’s natural resources were being heavily used, and a vibrant community existed there. The swamp at the head of Long Cove was now a cranberry bog, with two bridges---a little bridge and a large bridge passing over Long Cove north and south of the bog, respectively, and a dike to control water flow. The farmlands of the Walronds and Athearns surrounded this bog.

The homestead of Thomas Walrond was on the east side of Deep Bottom Cove down to Thumb Point and included a home, a barn, a corn house, an orchard, a bean field, open pastures and meadows, and a woodlot. Upon his death, Warren Walrond, who lived at Middle Point, owned 45 acres of woodland, 25 acres of pasture and tillage land, two acres of low meadow, and three acres of English Meadow. On this land he had a dwelling house a barn

133 Vineyard Gazette: May 16, 1975. Note: no dates or names are given for this “news story.”
134 Noah was the son of Joshua Walrond, Thomas Walrond Jr.’s brother.
135 24/437 and 24/438. This land comprises the land Noah inherited from Thomas Walrond.
136 27/301-303, 29/129, 30/502, 36/29, 36/27.
137 31/341-343.
139 31/346.
140 45/389, 45/391, and 57/333. Note the change in spelling from Walrond to Waldron occurring at this time.
141 102/446, 103/528, 103/534, 103/536, 103/538, and 103/540.
142 57/333, and aerial photographs from the 1900s show the dike south of the bog.
143 27/302 and 1883 map.

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and small outbuildings. On the meadows were 25 sheep, with a hog and poultry living around the house.\textsuperscript{144} As in the colonial days, farmers would burn their pastures to increase productivity; many towns in southeastern New England had regulations regarding this burning, indicative of its ubiquitous as well as dangerous use.

William Athearn’s land at Long Point consisted of English meadows near his home at Nahommon’s Neck,\textsuperscript{145} meadow, pasture, a Quince orchard, and tillage land, 65 acres of woodland called “Long Point Woods,”\textsuperscript{146} 125 acres of land at Charles’ Neck, and 100 acres of unimproved land. Interestingly, pastureland was worth 460 percent more per acre than unimproved land at this time—a premium was placed on the labor required for land improvement. One hundred forty-six sheep grazed these pasture lands along with two cows, one heifer, and two horses.\textsuperscript{147} In the center of the pastures and hayfields at Long Point was a “stackyard”, likely for stacking hay for winter consumption.\textsuperscript{148} The schoolhouse for the “Watchey District,” established in 1841, was located on William’s land, and provided a classroom for 16 students in 1841.\textsuperscript{149} Jennie Athearn, daughter of Jonathan Athearn Jr., was a teacher at this school and taught John Johnson Jr., several Athearns, Sarah Burt, and Louise Russell, among others.\textsuperscript{150}

Jonathan Athearn owned sheep and cow pastures as well as wood lots at his Oakdale Farm on Scrubby Neck and Nahommon’s Neck, also called Cranberry Cove Point. At their old Oakdale Farm house, they were self-reliant and entertained themselves by playing music.\textsuperscript{151} When Jonathan Athearn died, Jennie Athearn, who remained unmarried her entire life, continued to live in his house. Jonathan owned 118 sheep, two steer, three cows, one horse, one yearling, an ox wagon and cart, and a horse cart. Based on the number of sheep he and his neighbors owned, and looking at the total number of sheep on Martha’s Vineyard at the time, Long Point was less heavily grazed than other areas. The grazing intensity, however, maintained the land in an open state, as most of Long Point was open land during this century, save for three woodlots.

On the south shore beaches and around Tisbury Great Pond, Thomas, Warren, William, and others would fish for bass, bluefish, and other fish or collect seaweed to fertilize their fields.\textsuperscript{152} Many people at this time would also seine for herring, set up eel traps, or catch shellfish. Warren Walrond, for example, owned a share in a seine; others owned shares in fishing rights to the various south shore ponds.\textsuperscript{153} Eel traps, similar to those of the native people’s eel pots, were made of oak withes or strips and were set perpendicular to the ocean along the pond. In the fall, eel would move perpendicularly to the beach to find a passage to the ocean and would subsequently swim into a trap. Along the south shore, small huts were established to provide shelter for the many sailors escaping shipwrecked vessels.\textsuperscript{154} All these

\textsuperscript{144} Warren Walrond, Administration, I/1358, Probate.
\textsuperscript{145} 31/341.
\textsuperscript{146} 57/333, described as an active woodlot. This is the same woodlot mentioned in Thomas Walrond’s will in 1799 (Probate 9/111).
\textsuperscript{147} William Athearn, Administration, I/1312, Probate.
\textsuperscript{148} 29/119
\textsuperscript{149} 57/333, Tisbury Town Records, p. 574. The Watchy District was voted in by Jonathan Athearn, Thomas Walrond, and Warren Walround (note spelling).
\textsuperscript{150} Vineyard Gazette, May 1926. Box 11 B Dukes County Historical Society.
\textsuperscript{151} Vineyard Gazette, May 1926. Box 11 B Dukes County Historical Society.
\textsuperscript{152} 31/342, mention of rights to cross land to take seaweed and pond grass. Most estate inventories mentioned fishing gear.
\textsuperscript{153} Warren Walrond, Administration, I/1358, Probate. Mention of fishing rights was mentioned in several deeds. In addition,.
\textsuperscript{154} In: Freeman.
uses of the land and waters undoubtedly created a vibrant appearance to Tisbury’s south shore community in the nineteenth century.

**The Hunting Clubs of the Great Ponds, 1903 to 1968**
In the early part of the twentieth century, the transforming events begun in the nineteenth century changed the south shore necks dramatically. Wealthy industrialists set up hunting clubs (fig. 4), oystering companies set up shucking shacks along the shores of Tisbury Great Pond, fishing shacks lined the south shore, and agriculture and grazing slowly ceased in the Long Point area, with the Tisbury Pond Club owning several sheep.

*Figure 4: Tisbury Pond Club clubhouse (left), with outbuildings, 1912. The Long Point Woods are in the background and the grasslands are kept low through sheep grazing.*

Watcha Club became the first hunting club in the Long Point area, arriving in 1903. The club began by acquiring land from Benjamin Athearn, Sarah Russell, and Clinton Waldron. The land included the southern portion of Scrubby Neck, south of the land owned by the heirs of Jonathan Athearn. Most of “Watchey,” between Watcha and Oyster Ponds, was also purchased as was land in Edgartown. The clubhouse for the Watcha Club was set up west of Watcha Pond, about a quarter mile from the ocean.

The Tisbury Pond Club bought their first land at Long Point in 1912, purchasing most of Seconquit within two years. Their first purchase includes 470 acres of land owned by John Johnson, which he purchased from Thomas Walrond, Jr. and the heirs of William Athearn. Two years later, Susan Johnson, widow of John Johnson, sold “Long Point” to the Tisbury Pond Club. Their clubhouse was at the home of John Johnson, near Middle Cove Pond at Long Point.

Three pieces of key land were not yet purchased by the hunting clubs: the Cranberry Bog lands at the head of Long Cove Pond, the land of the heirs of Jonathan Athearn at

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156 Plan of the Watcha Club Property.
157 130/420 and 130/422.
158 138/151 and Plan 3976C, West Tisbury.
159 This is the location of the current Superintendent’s home.
Nahommon’s Neck, which were divided among family members, and several parcels near Watcha Road. The Watcha Road Parcels of Scrubby Neck were owned by Alpheus Athearn and Allen Athearn and were sold by their heirs to the Watcha Club. William E. Athearn, whose heirs sold the bog to the Tisbury Pond Club, owned the cranberry bog. The heirs of Jonathan Athearn who owned the land at Nahommon’s Neck were Lina Davis Call and Jennie Athearn. Lina Davis Call sold her partial interest to the Watcha Club, whereas, Jennie Athearn’s executor, Ernest Flanders sold her interest in this land to the Tisbury Pond Club in 1930. Two years later, the two hunting clubs divided the land. This included a restricted area where hunting and other uses were disallowed. Supposedly this restricted area was established due to intense pranks between the clubs, such as blowing cigar smoke over the property line to scare the ducks away.

The entire area between Tisbury Great Pond and Oyster Pond was now in the hands of hunting clubs. The number of ducks on Martha’s Vineyard at this time was described as much higher than elsewhere, likely due to both over hunting elsewhere and excellent habitat. One hunter who came to the island in 1908 was Harry I. Tripp, known as “Trippy”. Trippy was an early keeper for the Tisbury Pond and Watcha Clubs. He trained the live Canada Geese decoys or “flyers.” They were likewise released and would fly with the wild birds until they got hungry and returned to where they were fed, which was in shooting range of the blinds along the edges of the ponds. Other live decoys were tethered, with feed placed around them. Trippy and members of the Tisbury Pond Club would ship shot birds and trapped eels in barrels to New York, Falmouth, and Boston. By 1913, however, the Weeks-McLean Migratory Bird Act outlawed market hunting; rumor has it that Trippy and others continued to hunt commercially after the act became law. Prior to hunting, he had worked for Barnum and Bailey and drove a team of horses for their cookhouse wagon. On the south shore, he lived alone all year, supposedly shooting Heath Hen for lunch and periodically getting snowed in. The members of the club, however, came to their hunting clubs for vacation from the city, arriving for the first time on September 24, 1912, with their chocolate lab puppy, Julia. They hunted for sport and partied in the clubhouse, eating duck for dinner. Prior to eating grace was said: “O Lord, from errors ways defend us lest we mistake thy will for luck. Give us, at dawn, a flight stupendous. Don’t send us coot, but geese and duck.” In 1912, 185 waterfowl were shot at the Tisbury Pond Club, including 99 Bluebills, 29 Black Ducks, 23 Redheads, 16 Coot, 12 Baldpates, and 11 geese. The species they killed changed dramatically year-to-year, based on what species were present on the ponds. Between 1912, and 1919, when they kept a log, 1,861 birds were shot on 334 shooting days, with an average of almost six birds shot per shooting day.

Throughout these years, the caretakers of the ponds maintained the club house, the blinds, and the “flyers.” Marshall Norton and Daniel Manter, the two caretakers after World War II, went seining and duck hunting together. While a caretaker, Marshall Norton lived at Thumb Point, then part of the Tisbury Pond Club’s land. Supposedly Marshall Norton listened to the members of the pond club when they talked about the stocks they were purchasing and then purchased the same stocks. Eventually, with his capital gains, he was able to purchase about eighty acres of the western portion of the pond club, from Thumb.
Cove and Thumb Cove Bottom west to Deep Bottom Cove.169 When the Edgartown-West Tisbury Road was paved, the quickest route for Marshall Norton and other south shore residents became a grassy corridor called Deep Bottom, through which they began to drive and create a road.170 Beginning in the early 1950s, Daniel Manter served as caretaker for three decades. He was a builder, ran a fishing business, and was active in West Tisbury life. In addition, he was a member of the West Tisbury Grange, participated in church projects, and was on the fire department.171 For more comfort, Daniel Manter, built a new clubhouse for them and John Johnson’s home—their old clubhouse—was burned.172

In order to increase the availability of food for the ducks, such as Canvasbacks and Black Ducks, the caretakers supposedly planted wild rice on the pond shores. In addition, now that the old creek had disappeared under the advancing dunes, a ditch was built connecting Tisbury Great Pond with Long Cove Pond, in order to regulate the water level for ducks feeding on the pondweeds in Long Cove Pond.173

In addition to hunting, oystering, eeling, fishing, haying, and bathing were all uses of the great ponds. Tisbury Great Pond and other great ponds have been opened since at least 1715, the earliest date recorded. That year, Mrs. Johnson D. Whiting rented a team of horses and a driver for $1.85 to open the pond to the ocean. By the 1900s, the opening of the pond was legally mandated in “An Act to Provide for the Drainage of the Lowlands and Meadows around certain Great Ponds in the County of Dukes County.” Two of the main reasons for opening the ponds were to maintain the lowland meadows and to allow anadramous and catadramous fish to enter and leave the ponds.174 Lowland meadows provided a source of Black Grass, which was excellent fodder for livestock.175 Flooded Black Grass, however, would eventually die and decompose, creating mud flats. Eel and herring also required the opening to move between their breeding and feeding grounds. Later, other interests would include, preventing flooded cellars, oyster spat propagation, swimming, crabbing, and harboring boats. “Sewers” were elected to oversee the opening of the pond, with these interests in mind. To simplify matters, the Manter Nail was created. The high water mark of Tisbury Great Pond was reached at the level of the nail. The pond was generally opened when it reached the Manter Nail, which was hammered into a spillway at Muddy Cove, and the pond would flush to four feet below the nail.176 To open the pond, a team of horses or oxen would plow a cut through the beach until the force of water from the elevated pond level would break through and flush the pond as well as the groundwater lens connected with the pond. The pond would close naturally during storm events or as the long shore currents filled the break with sand, after which the pond would refill and the groundwater level would rise. Behind the opening, sand bars would develop so next year’s openings would be cut to the east, where deeper waters existed. By the time the cut was as far east as it could go, deep water necessary to open the pond existed once again to the extreme west.177 Only anecdotal

169 208/238. The land was bought from Barbara Royce, daughter of John K. Burgess, who left this land to her in his will (Norfolk Probate Court 99896).
170 George Manter, personal communication.
171 George Manter, personal communication.
172 George Manter, personal communication. Vineyard Gazette, May 11, 1956. The old house was moved by John E. Johnson in 1860 from the West Tisbury town center. It was one of the islands oldest houses.
173 Plan Book 9/86.
175 Daniel Manter, for example, cut acre of Black Grass at Quansoo for his cows. George Manter, personal communication.
176 Mal Jones also kept a marker, which is set at 42 inches above the low water mark. He notes that if the pond is opened at 36 inches, there is a much greater risk that the pond will fail to open.
177 This is an approximately 80 year cycle and is related to the rate of northward beach movement. After 80 years, the sand bars that were created have been overwashed by the barrier beach (Mal Jones, personal communication).
evidence of Native Americans opening the pond exists, yet the pond likely also opened naturally at a much higher water level every two to three years, possibly following intense rain storms.178

The regulation of pond uses increased during this time as well. At the turn of the Century, White Perch were stocked in Tisbury Great Pond due to their high value. A debate in the 1930s focused on commercial fishing versus open fishing access. For a period of time all leases were terminated. Finally, in 1950, great pond landowners were granted a lease for seining. The Vineyard Shellfish Company and the Quansoo Shellfish Company received leases from the towns of Chilmark and Tisbury for purposes of harvesting oysters. Kent Healy was one of those who came to work for the Quansoo Shellfish Company, which used oyster boats such as the Deborah June to dredge for oysters. Camps made of driftwood that washed ashore from boats carrying lumber or shipwrecks served as shucking shacks. Fishing shacks were established on the south shore for surfcasting. Clams were harvested using hydraulic pumping, which forced high pressure water into the sediments and brought the clams to the surface as the sediments settled; in short order clams were over harvested and the pond floor was altered considerably.179 For the beginning of the twentieth century, focus on the south shore had shifted to the resources of the Great Ponds and the ocean.

Not all of the focus, however. In 1941, Joseph Walker of Walker and Company purchased land in the northern section of Scrubby Neck. His company manufactured wool, keeping the tradition of sheep grazing alive. Jennie Athearn supposedly also kept a small flock of sheep during her later years.180

Fires also affected the landscape during this period. The Vineyard Gazette recorded the largest fires on the island, most of which were in the spring and affected the Great Plain in the center of the island.181 Four fires affected the Long Point area: one in 1900, which burned in the Scrubby Neck area in April; two in 1929, one of which burned from Waldron’s Bottom in the direction of Oyster Pond, the other which burned two barns at Watcha and all 300 acres owned by Bradley Martin; and one in 1946, which burned most of the divisions of land north of Watcha Path as it roared from Tisbury Great Pond in a northeasterly direction through the Great Plain.182

In addition to fire, storms were another disturbance that affected the land. In 1938, a hurricane blew down most of the old orchards in the Long Point area, symbolically ending the age of the traditional family farm that existed for over two hundred years.183 Since a strong 1635 hurricane, thirteen other hurricanes affected Martha’s Vineyard.184 Of course, by the time the hurricanes reached this far north, their intensity had diminished to tropical storm strength or less, yet intense flooding, wind damage, and salt spray damage likely occurred. Winter storms likely were just as intense, yet dormant season effects on the landscape would be quite different.

178 Freeman, 1807. Mal Jones, personal communication.
179 Mal Jones, personal communication.
180 Vineyard Gazette, May 1926. Box 11B Dukes County Historical Society.
181 Vineyard Gazette, folder on fires. Between 1903 and 1968, approximately fifteen fires ravaged the Great Plains, burning a total of 40,000 acres (approximately).
182 Vineyard Gazette, folder on fires.
183 George Manter, personal communication.
Slowly, the landscape changed (fig. 5), as the hunt clubs ceased grazing and other intensive uses of the land. Fire suppression became more and more effective as well, and fire was effectively eliminated as a factor on the landscape due to several national acts and their implementation early in the twentieth century.\(^{185}\) The woodlots grew into mature forests, and acted as a source of seed to colonize the abandoned pastures. Scrub Oak and heath species initially colonized the pastures as well as the areas that had burned. Areas with coarse sands, such as to the east and west of Long Cove Pond, remained grasslands longer—a sharp contrast existed between soil types and the rapidity of the landscape change; richer sites turned into oak forests much more quickly. Bottoms, with their coarse soils and short frost-prone growing seasons, changed much more slowly, for the trees and scrub oaks were more frost intolerant as compared with the grasses and ericaceous shrubs. Areas closer to the ocean were more affected by salt spray, which also delayed woody growth. These areas—frost bottoms, coarse sandy lands, and the tips of the south shore necks—all served as refugia for species that existed in the presence of human activities for hundreds or thousands of years. When humans were removed from the picture, many species dependent on human-induced disturbances declined or disappeared from the landscape.

Figure 5: Long Point in 1951. Lighter areas are abandoned fields and pastures, whereas darker areas are forested (the Long Point Woods, for example). The frost bottoms in the upper right appear as

\(^{185}\) Pyne, pp. 61-63. The Weeks Act in 1911 called for fire protection funding as did the Clarke-McNary Act in 1920. By 1947, the New England states signed an agreement to provide coordinated training and material assistance to prevent wildfires. At about the same time, prescribed fire as a tool to control wildfires began in 1928 to create and maintain firebreaks in New Jersey. Also note that the Massachusetts Bay Colony had the first known regulation of fire in the New World; colonists were not allowed to burn prior to March 1 (p. 164).
Finally, the hunting clubs were terminated and sold. The Watcha Club was sold to Richard Keeler and the Tisbury Pond Club members—Carl J. Gilbert, William B. Rodgers, and Frederick N. Blodgett—terminated their club, each retaining one-third interest in their land. In 1958, Richard Keeler sold 327 acres in Scrubby Neck to Arthur Hadley. These landowners would set the stage for the creation of Long Point Wildlife Refuge.

Recreation, Restoration, and Conservation at Long Point Wildlife Refuge, 1968 to the present

On December 27, 1968, Frederick Blodgett, Carl Gilbert, and William Rodgers each gave to The Trustees of Reservations one-thirtieth interest in the lands they formerly shared as the Tisbury Pond Club. This began a new era of conservation and public access on the south shore of West Tisbury. These generous hunters would then give The Trustees an additional one thirtieth interest in the next nine years, giving The Trustees full title to Long Point Wildlife Refuge. Concurrently, the population on Martha’s Vineyard grew rapidly. Conservation of the natural resources became an issue closely related to growth, but also to a distinct change in the way people used the land. Scientific management of natural resources increased in importance as Long Point and the waters around it required protection to conserve rare species and their habitats, fisheries, and recreation, for example. Today, The Trustees are looking back to understand how the land became what it is in 2000. From the past, we can learn about what to restore ecologically, what tools were used to alter habitats, and how we can be better stewards of the land. Restoration ecology is about how the past can shape the future.

In the 1970s, Long Point Wildlife Refuge was in transition between an exclusive hunting club and a place open to all. In 1975, for example, the town of West Tisbury was looking for south shore beach access. An agreement between the town of West Tisbury, The Trustees, and the Tisbury Pond Club allowed the town to create a road through Pasquanahommon’s Neck to the south shore, where they built a beach parking lot, which was open during the summer. Twelve hunting blinds still existed on the property, and the members of the Tisbury Pond Club continued to hunt during the fall.

Since, the mid 1980s, much ecological information has been gathered about Long Point Wildlife Refuge, which is home to one of the largest concentrations of rare species in the state. Many species of rare animals and plants have been discovered at Long Point, through thorough searches. Studies on paleoecology, the effects of prescribed burning on invertebrate populations, habitat monitoring, salt spray, plant inventories, breeding bird counts, herp studies, and studies on soils have all contributed to our knowledge of Long Point. In addition, years of Piping Plover and tern protection have also provided useful information.

Much information has also been gathered for the coastal salt ponds surrounding Long Point, although most of the data has related to either water quality or shellfish. The first water quality study was in 1977 by Rick Karney. This was followed by three studies in the 1980s: a study in 1986 stating: “failed septic tanks or undersized leach fields are contributing a regular

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187 236/134 and Case File No. 3.
188 371/127, 371/125, 314/301.
input of nutrients and human enteric bacteria to the system;” a watershed study in 1988 by Bob Woodruff and Craig Saunders looking at run-off contributing areas, well water sampling, and potential acquisition areas; and a 1989 plan by Don Liptack and Rick Karney to divert storm runoff pollution from Mill Pond. In the 1990s, several reports followed: a road runoff report in 1990, a report on water quality in 1992, and a 1992 study by Fugro-McClelland examining pollution problems in the Mill Brook and Tiasquin River.

The pollution problems in Tisbury Great Pond affected shellfish. Between 1982 and 1993, the pond has been closed and reopened to oyster harvesting several times. In 1984, 1985, and 1988, Tisbury Great Pond was closed due to high bacteria counts attributed to stormwater run-off from pastures, bird nesting sites, and other areas. After 1988, the oyster season was cancelled several times due to a high number of seed oysters and in 1993 due to poor quality oysters.

Since The Trustees acquired Long Point, intense growth and development has occurred around Long Point and on Martha’s Vineyard. Since 1970, the year-round population has doubled, and the seasonal population has increased to over 100,000. During the same period, the population of West Tisbury has increased almost 400 percent, making it the fastest growing town on the island. Developed acreage has increased as well, from 15,000 acres to over 40,000 acres. This rate of development is typical of low density sprawl, although the towns of Martha’s Vineyard have many regulations to ensure that the growth remains aesthetically pleasing and less offensive to the environment. Protected areas, on the other hand, total just over 15,000 acres. Around Long Point, land began to be subdivided and developed in the 1970s, mostly to the north. Slowly, houses began to fill the subdivisions, which today are almost built out. More and more, Long Point Wildlife Refuge was fragmented from other protected areas such as the State Forest.

**Conclusion: The Future**

The past determines what we see today, and what happened in the past can teach us how to create a better future. This statement is appropriate for Long Point Wildlife Refuge, as its rich past can guide us in the future. Land-use history and the interaction between humans and the landscape, in addition to being a focal point for The Trustees into the new century, can provide a rich framework through which one can view Long Point.

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190 *Vineyard Gazette*, various articles.