



# The Heron

Spring 2004

*The Newsletter of the Mattapoisett Land Trust, Inc.*

## *The Field Property: A Mattapoisett Family Legacy*

By Tom Richardson

In an agreement to be finalized this spring, 64 acres of land owned by the Field family of Mattapoisett Neck will be permanently protected from development under a Conservation Restriction to be held by the Mattapoisett Land Trust (MLT). The property includes 37 acres of forest, 7 acres of open fields, a fresh water pond, and over 20 acres of salt marsh along the northeast shore of Brandt Island Cove and extending inland nearly to Molly's Cove on Mattapoisett Harbor. The land has been assessed as "core habitat" (the most viable habitat for rare species and natural communities) by the Massachusetts BioMap project, and serves as home to the endangered spotted turtle.

Property owner Bill Field has agreed to sell the development rights to the MLT at well below the assessed market value. The property will continue to be privately held by the Field family, who will be able to use it as they have in the past. However, the Conservation Restriction stipulates that the land must remain "as-is" in perpetuity.

The Field agreement, which has been in the works since 2000, represents a joint effort by the Field family, The Trustees of Reservations, the MLT and the Coalition for Buzzards Bay. The Trustees served as the original architects, drawing up the necessary legal documents and passing matters along to the MLT. The latter is currently raising the necessary funds to complete the purchase as part of an overarching coastal land-protection project coordinated by the Coalition for Buzzards Bay.

As for Bill Field, his wife Elizabeth, their three children and four grandchildren (representing the sixth generation of Field to live on the property!)— all of whom live either on adjoining lots or just down the road — the decision to permanently protect the land from development was not a monetary one. But that's not surprising when you consider that many of them, most notably Bill himself, were born and raised here.

For the Fields, the property is a legacy.

On a recent visit, the soft-spoken, 67-year-old patriarch of the Fields family took me on a tour of his familiar stamping grounds. We started at Bill's gray-shingled house and headed down to the marsh, passing a small flock of sheep (Bill raises and sells them) and a party of nattering guinea hens, then an ancient apple orchard flanked by lichen-spotted stone walls and an outbuilding containing a 1964 wooden Brownell sportfisherman that Bill is in the process of restoring. In the salt marsh, the damp ground was brown and barren, the new growth a spartina having yet to poke through last season's flattened detritus — but it was coming. The local ospreys had recently arrived and were busily repairing their nest on a stand that Bill had erected years ago. In the clear water of the tidal creek that wound deep into the marsh, tiny grass shrimp were darting along the mussel-strewn banks. And in a few weeks, Bill's son would be harvesting oysters, quahogs and scallops on the shellfish grant, he works in Brandt Island Cove. To wrap up, we took a short hike along a well-trod trail that snaked through the coastal forest of scrub-oak, pine, holly, bittersweet and bull briar before returning to the house.



Gary Johnson

*"The Field property includes forest, open fields, a fresh water pond, and salt marsh"*

*Continued on pg. 2*

## The Field Property can't.

It's becoming increasingly rare to find such large tracts of undeveloped coastal land in New England, particularly one that has been owned, not to mention inhabited, by the same family for so many years. The Field family has owned the Mattapoissett Neck property since 1900. It was originally part of a 350-acre parcel purchased by Bill's great grandfather, William DeYongh Field, a Boston politician who also owned land in Northfield, Massachusetts. William Field bought the Mattapoissett land in four separate parcels from local farmers, although the recorded history of the property dates back to the late 1700s, when it was owned by then-governor John Hancock (he of the famous signature).

William's son, Horace, eventually inherited most of the property, taking on the role of "gentleman farmer," according to Bill. In addition to his job as a state legislator (he traveled between Boston and Mattapoissett by train each week, long before such lengthy commutes became commonplace), Horace maintained a handful of milking cows, horses, chickens and various other farm animals in Mattapoissett, and raised Shetland ponies for trailriding on the property.

When Horace died, the property passed along to Bill's father, John, who served as a local selectman for many years. Over the years, John sold off all but 70 acres of the land, which he deeded to Bill in 1972.

Bill was born and raised on Mattapoissett Neck, and has many happy memories of roaming the fields, woods and marshes as a child with his two sisters, Polly and Penny. A longtime

hunter, Bill received his first shotgun at an early age, and recalls spending many hours shooting waterfowl on the local ponds and marshes.

When he was 18, Bill enrolled in art school in New Bedford for two years, then moved to Lexington, Massachusetts, where he was hired by the Polaroid Corporation in 1960. A year later he married Elizabeth, a Fairhaven native whom he had dated for several years. During the '60s, the couple had three children and assumed that they would end up living in the Boston suburbs for the rest of their lives. Then, in 1972, Bill received an unexpected phone call from his father. John Fields informed his son that he was planning to sell the remaining 70 acres of Mattapoissett property -- unless Bill wanted them. Bill didn't hesitate to take the offer, which is how he found himself returning to his hometown. It's a decision he has never regretted, and one that residents of Mattapoissett's natural and scenic places now have reason to celebrate.



Tom Richardson

*"Bill Field has placed his 64-acre parcel of land on Brandt Island Cove under a conservation restriction to be held by the MLT"*

## Join the Mattapoissett Land Trust!

Membership Renewal - We only exist with your help!  
Fill out and mail in your support!

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Seasonal Address (If Applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Dates \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership Categories:

- |                                     |       |   |        |
|-------------------------------------|-------|---|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$ 30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor                                     | \$ 250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family     | \$ 50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron   | \$ 500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting | \$ 75 | <input type="checkbox"/> Founder  | \$1000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining | \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends of Salty \$5 (children under 12 years) |        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate  | _____ |   |        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other      | _____ |   |        |

Please make your check payable to:

Mattapoissett Land Trust, Inc.  
P.O. Box 31, Mattapoissett, MA 02739

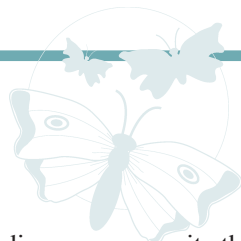
## We would like to hear from you!

Whether your contributions come in the form of tax-deductible financial gifts or through volunteer services, your support matters! Your annual membership contributions support the operating expenses of the MLT. Mowing, inspections, forestry services, trash pick-up, legal and accounting advice are all part of what keeps the organization vital and growing. In addition, whether you are concerned about preserving the scenic beauty of Mattapoissett, maintaining its biodiversity, or fear the degradation of Buzzards Bay waters from septic systems and chemical run-off, there are many ways you can volunteer your time and services, allowing for the enjoyment and education of future generations.

To become a member of the MLT, renew your membership, learn more about upcoming events, and find out about volunteer opportunities, check out our new website: [mattlandtrust.org](http://mattlandtrust.org), or email us at [mattlandtrust@earthlink.net](mailto:mattlandtrust@earthlink.net). We would like to hear from you and welcome any suggestions or comments!

## Who We Are:

### Blanche Perry



Members of the MLT represent a diverse community that shares a common mission—the preservation of Mattapoissett land and open spaces for present a future generations. In an effort to illustrate our members' backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs, we have introduced a regular “spotlight column,” beginning with introductions of MLT board members. This issue we've chosen to focus on our newest member, Blanche Perry:

“I am fortunate to have been a lifelong Mattapoissett resident. If I hadn't been a 'townie', I probably would have selected Mattapoissett as a place of choice to make my home. Having grown up here, I have had a continuous look at the growth of our lovely town.

Growing up, I attended Center School for the first nine years of my schooling, and, since there was no high school in Mattapoissett, was bused to Fairhaven High School. After graduation from Fairhaven, I went to Ithaca College in upstate New York and earned my Bachelor of Science Degree in Physical Therapy. I later graduated from Assumption College with a Masters of Arts in Rehabilitation Counseling. I am now retired from St. Luke's Hospital, where I worked for 27 years and was the Director of Rehabilitation Services for 10 years.

My late husband, Louis Perry, and I raised four daughters here and I still reside in the same Cape that we bought in 1967. I am surrounded by trees and enjoy seeing the deer, fox, and raccoon, particularly once I learned how to keep my garbage

can lids tight, foiling the latter's escapades!

My tenure with the MLT has been less than one year. I share with the other members the responsibility for being caretakers and stewards of the lands in the town. Consistent with my membership in the Mattapoissett Housing Partnership, I hope to work toward the development of a “green belt” of serenity and to help preserve the beauty and resources of our town, while pursuing ways to allow growth. Developing affordable housing is inevitable. I believe that working in concert with the various regulatory boards in town, we can maintain the “special” character that Mattapoissett enjoys.



## Featured Creatures

### Spring Peepers:

Have you heard the spring peepers yet? Often considered to be one of the first signs of Spring, this little frog is only .75 - 1.5 inches long, but has a very powerful high-pitched whistle that can be heard over long distances. Its color ranges from tan to brown to gray with large toe pads and a characteristic dark “X” marking on its back. Peepers are abundant in wooded areas in or near flooded ponds and swamps, where they will form “singing choral groups”, making loud sounds that sound similar to jingling sleigh bells.



### Diamondback Terrapin:

Look for Diamondback Terrapins in the waters off Mattapoissett. They've been spotted in Marion Harbor, as well as Aucoot Cove. They are believed to be the only turtle in the world to live exclusively in brackish waters, such as tidal marshes, estuaries and lagoons. These turtles average 5-7 inches in length and have pronounced, diamond-shaped growth rings on their shells. Females reproduce when they are between 8 and 13 years old. In the summer, they move from marsh creeks onto beaches and dunes to lay their pinkish-white eggs in 6-inch-deep nests in the sand. After 60-120 days, the inch-long hatchlings emerge from the nest and enter the nearest water. In the 1800s, the terrapin was considered a delicacy, and although protective legislation is now in place, the terrapin's population is not likely to rebound from this previous overharvesting. Today, threats to the diamondback terrapin include: destruction of its coastal marsh habitat; automobiles (that run over turtles crossing the road to lay eggs); boat propellers; and raccoons, muskrats, skunks, and crows that eat the turtle's eggs.



## Kids Corner

### Earth Day is Every Day in Mattapoissett

During the week of April 12-16, guest speakers introduced students in Grade 4 at Old Hammondtown School to four of the ecosystems in Nasketucket Bay State Reservation (NBSR). A property purchased by the state in 1999, with assistance from the MLT and Fairhaven Land Trust, students will prepare for a field trip to the NBSR on Monday, April 26. Students will take notes and draw observations of their designated ecosystem. In the following weeks, the classroom teachers will relate these experiences to science, and the Art teacher, Diane Perry (a MLT board member), will work with the students to create 3-dimensional displays of a vernal pool, a meadow, a beach and a forest ecosystem. Their creations will be shared in the school foyer during the month of June, and then on display at the Marion Historical Museum. The project is funded by a 'KIDS Consortium' grant through the Community Service Learning office at the Old Rochester Regional High School. The MLT is providing volunteers and publicity. The major goal of the project is to expand awareness and foster proper care of a wonderful natural resource in our area.



Mattapoisett Land Trust, Inc.  
Post Office Box 31 • Mattapoisett, MA 02739

## Calendar

Saturday, May 1, 10 a.m. - noon

### Happy B-Earth-Day Party!!!

Join us as we celebrate Earth Day, Arbor Day, National Water Week, and the 30th Birthday of the MLT! Festivities will kick off with the planting of a Princeton Elm, a Native American species, at the Old Dexter Mill and Pond (Tub Mill Brook property\*). Other activities under the big tent will include: a display of Arbor Day contest posters completed by Old Hammondtown 5th graders; fun activities for children, designed to educate on water pollution; a plant swap; and refreshments generously provided by area businesses. And what better way to celebrate a B-Earth-Day than to come dressed as your favorite tree, plant, or living creature?! \*The Dexter Mill on Tub Mill Brook lies on the north side of Route 6 at Mendell Road. Parking is available at the Town Barn on Mendell Road. **Rain or Shine.**

Saturday, June 5, 11 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

### MLT Annual Meeting

Come join us for our Annual Meeting at the Friends Meeting House on Route 6. We'll kick things off with a walk of the near-by Martocci property, followed by a potluck lunch, with drinks and desserts provided by the MLT. The Annual Meeting, with election of board members and officers will get underway at 1 PM, and will include a presentation by Hila Lyman, from the Falmouth Garden Club, on tips for environmentally friendly gardening and lawn-care techniques (Did you know that 20% of the nitrogen polluting the bays and estuaries comes from lawn run-off?!). Bring comfortable walking shoes and a potluck dish to share.

**Rain or Shine.**

July 17 - 18

### Harbor Days Celebration

Come check us out at the Annual Harbor Days Celebration!



*The Heron* is published bi-annually by the Mattapoisett Land Trust. The MLT, formed in 1974, is a non-profit, tax-exempt charitable organization incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Its purpose is to preserve open space for the enjoyment of current and future residents of Mattapoisett, as well as to educate the public about the sound use of natural resources, and to work with other organizations having the same goals.

Our membership consists of annual contributors -- our primary source of revenue -- and a volunteer board of directors: Bob Atkinson, Ruth Bates, Brad Hathaway, Elizabeth Leidhold, Paul Osenkowski, Luana Josvold, Jenny Mello, Blanche Perry, Diane Perry, Susan Reid, Elizabeth Richardson, Allan Schubert, Sue Watgen and Gary Johnson, President.

The Mattapoisett Land Trust is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization. All contributions are fully tax deductible.

**Mattapoisett Land Trust, Inc.**

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