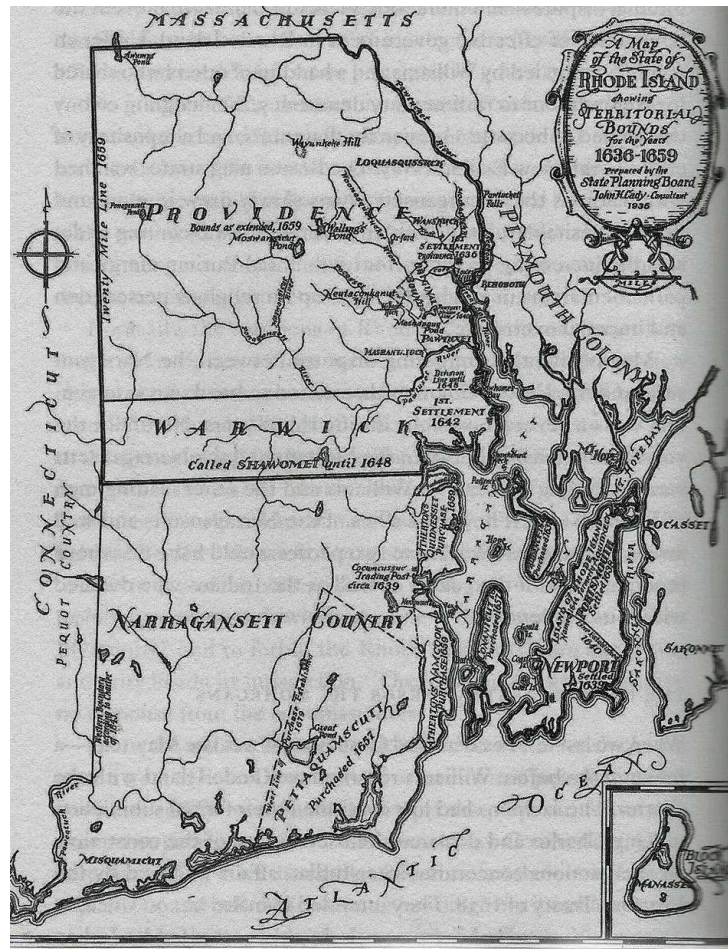


Green Hill Story

Version 3/20/2025

Green Hill has become a summer destination for some and year-round home, for others. It was not always so. Trying to fill in the gaps of its history is no easy task. We decided to begin with the Narragansett Indians who peacefully occupied the area of southern Rhode Island taking advantage of rich soil and ample water. They cultivated corn, squash, beans, berries, tobacco and other crops and used the southern shore as their summer residence. Their rivals to the west, the Pequots, were war-like and often raided their settlements and was perhaps the reason for why so much of the land had been cleared in order to help alert and protect against attack.

In 1658 four settlers from Rhode Island and one merchant from Massachusetts purchased a considerable tract of land consisting of what is now South Kingstown, Narragansett, a portion of North Kingstown and Exeter. Known as the Pettaquamscutt Purchase, they met at Pettaquamscutt Rock, a place where Narragansett sachems used to conduct their treaties. The rock overlooks Narragansett Bay and the Narrow River and is now part of South Kingstown Park off Middlebridge Road. The price was 151 Pounds and terms were modelled after the Roger Williams purchase some twenty years earlier for land for his trading post and community in Wickford (then called Cocumscussoc). It is doubtful that the Narragansetts thought of it as a real estate transaction! After the transaction, the Narragansetts then occupied land west of the purchase; King Philip's War (of the Wampanoag tribe) in the 1670's changed the relationship among the Narragansetts, other tribes and the colonies.



John Hutchins Cady's meticulous map of Rhode Island, 1636 to 1659, showing territorial boundaries and major land purchases.

From Warren, James, *God, War and Providence*, Scribner, 2018, p.156.

The land itself was not exactly governed by any entity. For years the colonies in Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts disputed their respective jurisdictions. The Narragansett planters held large tracts to start plantations much like those of the Southern colonies using slaves, indebted servants to work the land. In addition to raising crops, much of the land was used to raise dairy, cattle, hogs, sheep and poultry. On one plantation alone the number of sheep was inventoried at over 600. The corn they inherited from the Narragansetts became the basis for Johnny Cakes.

These planters also raised a popular horse known as the Narragansett Pacer, whose gait was smooth over rough terrain and had the stamina to last over 50 miles a day--so popular that George Washington purchased two horses. They also sold land parcels to others. The booming plantation era peaked in the mid 18th century. By then the number of slaves who worked in the plantations had grown to 625 before slavery was abolished around the time of the revolutionary war. More land was subsequently traded in the ensuing years. Wool and prize-winning cheese, cider and wheat were also well known. In the 19th century Green Hill was occupied by dairy farms, sheep herds, orchards, and hay fields. In the 1800's the farms ranged in size from 50 to 199 acres. Roads were essentially paths from one farm to another. It might take passing through eleven gates to go to the Perryville Baptist Church from a farm in the Green Hill area. Potato farms made an appearance in the 1930's but later in the 1950's the government discouraged growing potatoes as a way to maintain market prices. Gradually the fields turned to housing development and turf fields for lawns.

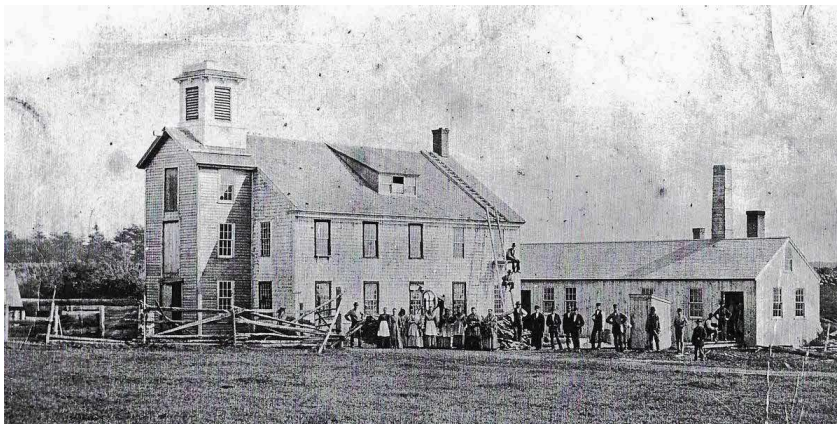
South Kingstown was established in 1729 and was divided later into districts of which Green Hill was one. It included Green Hill pond to the west and Ward's Pasture to the east (bordering the Perryville district) and as far north as the hills above The Old post road bordering Tuckertown. There were two mills make wool cloth in the area. The early version was a one- story building perched on a hill above the dam that caught the currents from the Factory Pond Brook run off that empties into Green Hill Pond. Started by a Browning in the 1820's but burned down in 1837.

Three years later the Green Hill Mill, begun by Congdon and Miller, was erected on the same location and functioned from 1840 to 1908, but it too burned down in 1930. In the last twenty years, it was

owned and operated by William Barney, the former manager, who lived next door in the Browning Long House. It produced wool cloth and employed locals who built houses along the Old Post Road within walking distance to the mill. This mill was powered by steam from a wood burning stove.

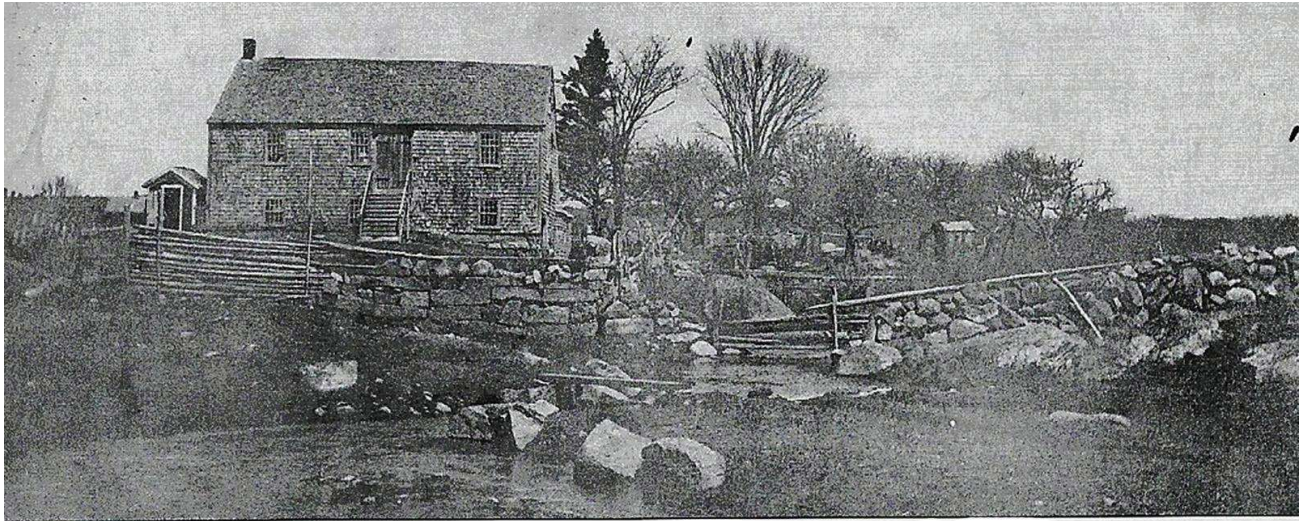


The Long House, circa 1780. Carmichael Browning built the house near the mill pond on Green Hill. The picture shows the back of the house with two lean-toes. The front of the house has two stories.
From Updike, D. B., Old Houses in the South County of Rhode Island 1932, National Society of the Colonial Dames
The Merry Mount Press, Boston, 1932



The Green Hill Mill in the late 1800s with dye house to its right and workforce on display

Yet another mill, the Seine Mill, was located closer to Factory Pond south of present day Route 1 but at the time accessed by a road from Green Hill Beach Road that now leads to the county water management area. It made the twine for fish netting woven by women for the fishermen. The Samuel Perry corn stone grist mill along Moonstone Beach Road began in 1703, bought by Wanton Carpenter in 1874; then the Robinson family. Bought and now preserved by the South Kingston Land Trust in 1964. Another woolen mill, known as Holburtons' also existed for a time located across the street from where Daddy's Bread now operates. This mill made socks for the Civil War Union soldiers.



Samuel Perry Woolen Mill taken in 1871 Established in the 1700's along Moonstone Road across from Daddy's Bread, the mill made stockings for Civil War soldiers. It Burned down in the 1920's.

From Cotter, Betty J., Images of America: South Shore Rhode Island, Arcadia Publishing, 1999,

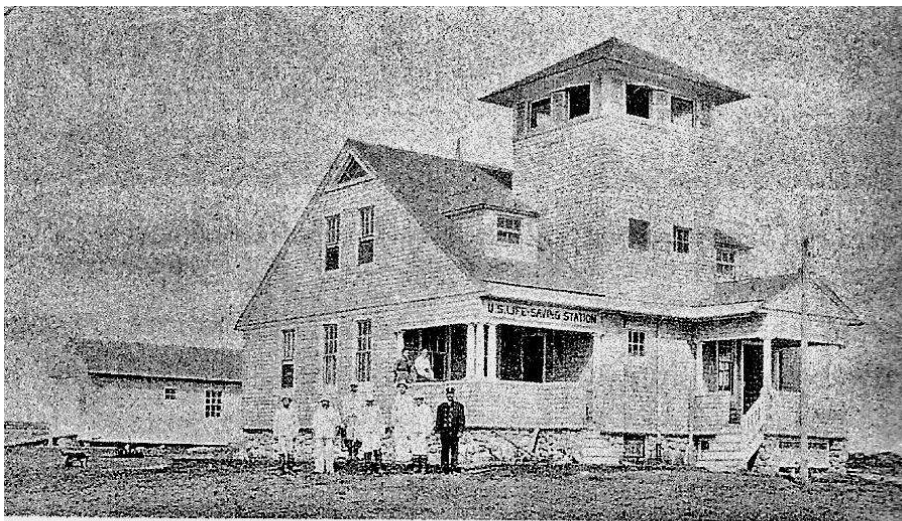
Green Hill itself had an area west of Green Hill Beach Road and to the east of Charlestown that was known as Burnside, named after the Civil War General Ambrose Burnside who is said to have a house where he often stayed. He was later to serve as Governor and Senator of Rhode Island. Just west of Green Hill Beach Road along Matunuck School House Road was once Green Hill's first and only Post Office (known as the Burnside Post Office) with attached small store from 1883 to 1903. Thereafter it became a boarding house known as the Finn Camp run by the Johanson's that catered to Scandinavians. Across the street they built a sauna that was often the object of several generations of teenagers who hid in the reeds as they watched the naked participants plunge into the pond to cool off. A school house nearby once educated the children of the families who worked in the area.

In the 1895 census there were 100 persons living in the Green Hill area with seven cottages along the beach. The 1900's marked the beginning of summer residences along the Rhode Island shoreline. Don Spencer, who was born in 1905, reminisced about his family's habit of spending long summers at Green Hill before and after he was born. They rented the Babcock House in Ward's Pasture. It was a remote place then. Wakefield was a half day trip by horse and buggy to buy staples. All meats, fish, vegetables and dairy were supplied by the Brownings. And electricity was not available. The few summer cottages then located along the shore line were wiped out by the 1938 Hurricane. The bulk of the land area was occupied by farmers who raised cows and sheep, hay and corn. Potatoes were only grown for personal consumption. Right-of-ways to the beaches were scattered along the area so that farmers could bring their ox drawn carts to pick up seaweed to fertilize their crops. One such pathway

off Browning Rd exists just south at Ward's Pasture. Many of the farms were owned by Browning descendants over nine generations beginning in the early 1700's. One of the farms was located just west of Green Hill Beach Road on which the Browning Mansion still stands, although no longer as large as it once was. The sculptor, Troy West, lived there but the potato fields were sold to a developer. Some of West's sculptures are placed in a park at the southeast corner of Green Hill Beach Road and Matunuck School house Road. Other families included Healey, Babcock and Foster. All were Quakers originally; their burial ground is set aside along Old Post Road north of Route 1 but the meeting house is no longer standing. It also is the start of the DuVal Trail, maintained by the South Kingstown Land Trust; it is known for wild blueberries, laurel and ocean views a top the terminal moraine.

Some farmers made their living by fishing in Trustom Pond, Green Hill Pond and Ninigret Pond where the fish, oysters and clams were plentiful. One of the Brownings recalls catching two or three barrels of mostly perch to sell to schooners and others. A barrel held 250 pounds. To keep Trustom Pond with proper salinity the community gathered together in April and October when volunteers dug three-foot wide trenches to keep a breach-way open. By the 1970's pollution halted the health of Green Hill and Trustom Ponds. The latter no longer had a reliable way to maintain the salinity.

A number of ship wrecks washed up along the Green Hill and Charlestown Beaches. One, in particular, occurred in 1893 when a four-masted schooner in-route from Maine to New York City washed ashore on a stormy February night. They were rescued by a near-by Life Saving Service. The US Life Saving



Green Hill Station, USCG Historian Office Photo

From Karoujan, Verolujan, *The Life Savers: Rhode Islands Forgotten Service*, CreateSpace, 2012

Service was established by Congress in 1878. It had grown out of a number of local volunteer and state groups along the coast. In 1915 these stations became the forerunner of the US Coast Guard. The number of boating mishaps and the flourishing shipping trade along Block Island Sound and the New England coast prompted the government to build eighteen Life Saving Stations; one of which was established at Green Hill in 1912 but was abandoned after 1934, the year prohibition was

abolished. An additional duty fell to the coast guard during prohibition (1920-1933) to lookout for bootleggers along the coast. Often the bootlegger when the threat of being boarded was imminent, threw the contraband into the sea. It was not uncommon for residents to find bottles of liquor washed ashore. (The Charlestown Rathskeller was a speakeasy in those years.)

Don Spencer recalls when the Green Hill Station was built; the building materials were brought by horse drawn wagon from Matunuck School House Road through the Browning farm land, through

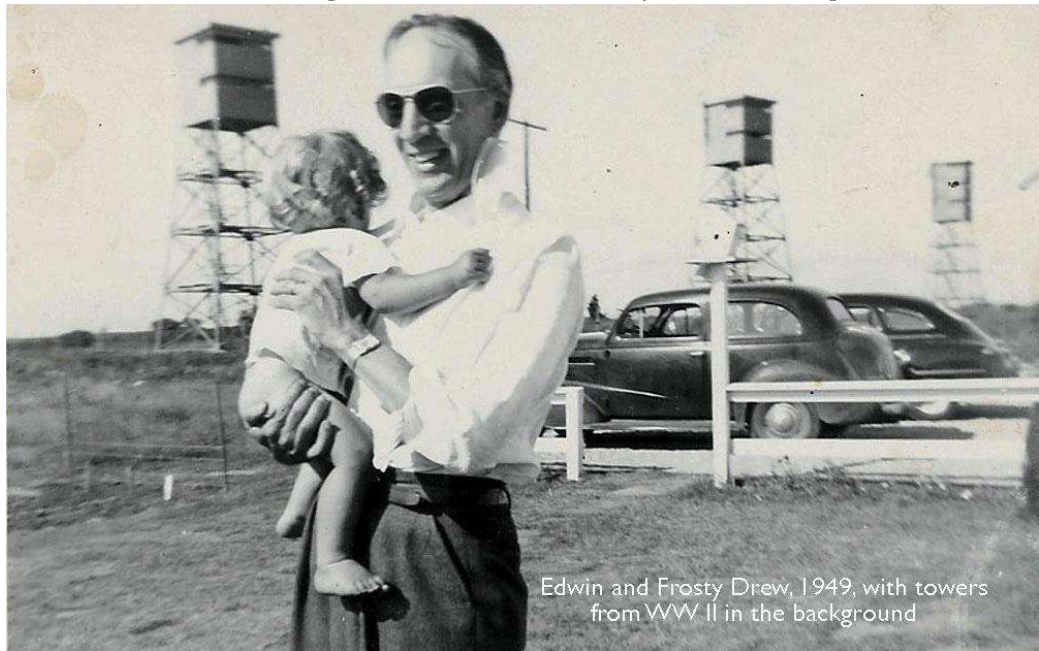
Ward's Pasture and then down to the building site. The station was located at the northwest side of the Beale's lot next to the Green Hill Association parking lot. It survived the 1938 hurricane and was sold for \$1 when a resident moved it across the dirt road. It consisted of a three-story building of which the top floor was a look-out tower. On the property was a boat, a coastal weather tower and rescue equipment. A live-in staff of about ten had duties that consisted of four hour shifts standing (no sitting) while in the tower to search for distressed ships during the day and take beach patrol at night.

Two events in the 20th century impacted Green Hill: The Hurricane of 1938 and World War II. Because the hurricane that affected all of Rhode Island was unanticipated, the destruction it wrought was devastating. It certainly changed the Green Hill landscape; most of the existing cottages were destroyed. The warnings from the Weather Bureau came just a few hours before it hit landfall that afternoon on September 21. The tidal surges from the hurricane were lethal—augmented by full moon high tides and the effects of the autumnal equinox. One hundred eighty-five cottages along Charlestown Beach were swept away. Downtown Providence was as much as thirteen feet underwater. Telephone lines were down and trees were unearthed. Winds were clocked at 125 miles per hour with gusts close to 200 miles per hour. The recovery was slow. A twenty-five-year moratorium on constructing any new building along the shoreline was imposed.

In 1954 Hurricane Carol struck but with less damage. It had a storm surge of 14 ½ feet high waves and raised havoc with cottages along Succotash Road in East Matunuck.

Soon after World War II was declared, the army came to Green Hill. Barracks were designed to resemble a farm house and constructed along the north side of Hilltop Avenue along with three look

out towers. As Barbara Drew recalls, "Every night a truck came from Camp Burlingame loaded with vicious attack dogs. The men that were trained to take care of the dogs patrolled the beach from Moonstone to Charlestown..." Beaches were closed to civilians



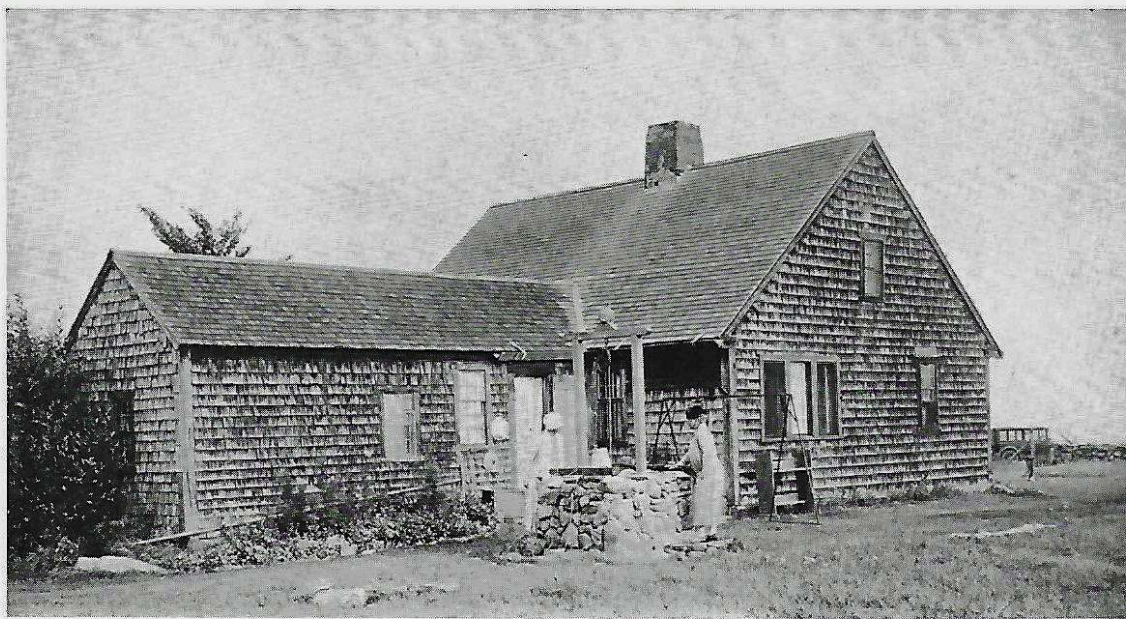
Edwin and Frosty Drew, 1949, with towers from WWII in the background

after 5 PM when the patrols started. German U-boats were often spotted along Block Island Sound and there was fear of a land invasion. Every night was a black-out night with a civilian warden who made sure there was civilian compliance or an arrest might be made. Nearby in what is now Ninigret Park, the Navy had an airbase to help train pilots to land on aircraft carriers. Two of those Navy pilots were George H. W. Bush and Joe Young. The latter became intrigued with the landscape he flew over

Green Hill and Trustom Pond. After the war, he bought acreage from farmers which became three separate developments that are called Land and Sea. One of them was bought from Jeremiah Browning who sold him his 42-acre farm bordering Matunuck School House Road for \$1,000; Mr. Young developed 34 acres and sold the remainder for over one million dollars to the U.S government in what was to become part of the Trustom Pond Wildlife Refuge.

In the late 1920's John B. Carpenter bought a parcel of land then owned by Samuel Davis that had remained fairly intact from Matunuck School House Rd, from the east of Ward's Pasture to the west by Green Hill Pond. The land was originally owned in the early 1800's by Othniel Foster, a school teacher and farmer from the Worden Pond area. He wanted to be closer to the ocean for the seaweed rather than cart it to his original farm near Worden's Pond. It passed through a generation and was known as the Collins Farm when Mary Foster Collins died in 1901. There was no town road established to the ocean until 1936. Even though it was originally ordered by the town in 1890 it had not been extended beyond where the town park now stands. The Collins House located at the corner of Matunuck School House Road and Green Hill Beach Road was later owned by the Lampheres; their barn and dairy farm were across the road. None of those structures exist today.

Ward's Pasture maintained its own identity where the original 1788 farmhouse known as the Babcock House still stands along with the subsequent corn crib and barn. Interestingly the milk was kept



The Babcock House, circa 1788. The House at the top of Ward's Pasture was built in 1788. In 1829 Sam Ward bought the property, which has descended intact, without subdivision, to his great-granddaughter, Julia Ward. The Ell containing the milk room is said to have the original shutters.

From Updike, D B., *Old Houses in South County of Rhode Island*, National Society of the Colonial Dames, The Merrymount Press, Boston, 1932

in the well in a part of the pantry to keep it cold. The property was sold to Sam Ward in 1829 and kept in the family. In the 1800's the land was connected by an oxen cart path to one of the Brownings' farm. A story about a helper of one of the Brownings

who was visiting Ward Pasture gives a flavor of the openness of the land. He was attacked by a bull then dragged on the ground between its horns for a distance before he took hold of the bull's forward legs and threw himself to safety. Julia Ward, Sam Ward's great-granddaughter, sold the property in the mid-60's

to the Holdens. Neighbors bought a portion of the property and donated it to the South Kingstown Land Trust.

The property that Mr. Carpenter bought in 1928 was mostly pasture land that he divided roughly into parcels: 1) The Hill at Green Hill from Border Ave North to Matunuck School House Rd; 2) a parcel from Ward's Pasture to Green Hill Pond; 3) a strip of land from the Brogie motel along Browning Street to the ocean. The Coast Guard had buildings on what is now Coast Guard Avenue. Mr. Carpenter was a well-respected realtor and real estate appraiser in Rhode Island and the New England area. His family roots were in Rehobeth, a village north of Seekonk, where his father was a country doctor. He insisted that each home built on the property not be over two stories high and that he have final approval of the house plan submitted. To serve the new residents he formed the Green Hill Water Company in 1948. It was run by the Lamphere family who had a farm on land that stretched from Matunuck School House Road to the northeast corner of Carpenter Drive. There they raised chickens, boarded horses and ran a large dairy farm serviced by milk trucks that regularly took the milk to market. Some residents dug wells on their own but many relied on the water service operated by the Lampheres. The water company had a well at the bottom of The Hill near the farm on Carpenter Drive. The water was piped to a holding tank on the top of the hill. It was with a sigh of relief when the Town of South Kingstown brought water into the area in 1968. While the Lampheres operated the wells Mr. Carpenter received the complaints that regularly came. Many residents left the beach around 4 PM to catch a shower before the water level would yield but a trickle. The Lampheres owned or leased the land when Mr. Carpenter bought the parcel from the Davis family. However the Lampheres are listed as owners of the land and the water facility on South County tax books in the 40's. By 1948 the Green Hill Water company was listed as owner of the equipment. The property on the hill became the home of their son George Lamphere, known as eccentric. When Judy and Fred Becker bought the property in the late 1970's after his death, they tore the house down, they noted that poison ivy was growing into the interior of the fireplace!

Mr. Carpenter built his first house on the dunes near the Charlestown line. Like others his home was destroyed during the Hurricane of 1938. At the time of the hurricane he and his family were vacationing in Canada. Their home along with other dune homes disappeared during the storm. When they returned they watched in distress as a swarm of people were carting away silverware, dishes and other items left behind. They eventually rebuilt a house high on the hill in 1943 where their victory garden during world war II was bountiful; much of the produce was given to the soldiers stationed here. Barbara Carpenter Drew and Ed Drew (deceased in 1960) spent summers with their family and her parents in the same house where John and Sue Drew and family now live. Ed Drew was a well-known big band leader. His bands played on boats, at the Biltmore in Providence and at the Ocean House at Watch Hill. The Drews had three children, John (born 1938), Alice (born 1941) and Frosty (born 1948), who suffered the consequences of polio for whom Barbara built a swimming pool as a source of exercise for him, now filled in. The later has since passed on; a Nature Center and Observatory bearing his name was erected in Ninigret Park, near Ninigret Pond.

Barbara Carpenter Drew, known to her family as "Baba", used to regale the grand children with funny anecdotes about her younger years at Green Hill. One story involved her early foray into the ad biz when she proudly rode her pinto pony, Pete, around the area in the late 1940's to advertise to the area residents that Groucho Marx was appearing in Theatre by the Sea. The theater was begun 1933 in what

was an old barn owned by yet another Browning family. Damages from the 1938 Hurricane closed it down until 1947 when it reopened.

At the time of World War II there were but three houses built on the hill. The parcels varied in size from 7500 to 12, 500 square feet. Some bought two lots. Dick Hodges recalls his grandfather bought two adjacent lots on Bayberry Street in 1930 when a lot cost \$100. He eventually built a house on the site in 1974. When Betty Kelley bought her lot on Slope Avenue in 1958; hers was the third house to be built on the street. Mr. Carpenter was meticulous about setting restrictions on what was built on the lots he sold. In addition to the restrictions, he insisted on final approval of the proposed house design and none could be built higher than two stories.



Plat map showing few houses around Loop Road in late 1940's
991919401940's

He was also known for his temper. The Deacon family recalls visiting their grandparents who had a house on the dunes near Charlestown in the 1930s. Their dog got loose and barked and growled at a man on horseback who happened to be Mr. Carpenter. Furious he got off the horse, took his dog into the car and kicked the car door shut. He was so concerned with being in control that he counted the knives and scissors when he came home each night and could have a melt-down if a light was on at bedtime. Yet he could be generous and fair. When Susan Babcock, who was the Drew family

babysitter for several years at Green Hill, first

married he arranged the mortgage for her so she could buy her grandmother's farm.

The Hill Association was started at the behest of Wally Henshaw's father, the Atwoods, Landrigans, Dimeos along with Mr. Carpenter in 1958 for those homeowners who live on "The Hill." It was confined to those living along Carpenter Drive and all roads that connect to it with the southern boundary at the one-time original a gate for the farm near Border Avenue to Green Hill Beach Road. The gate was originally used to keep through traffic out of what was then the Hill private road. On weekends, it had someone attend to its operation. The stone that held this hinged gate still stands, The Hill Association managed the parking lot which Mr. Carpenter deeded to the Hill Association. A wood patio was constructed for social events, since dismantled in the mid 1970's. Many old timers recall dances, hot dog roasts, fireworks and beach fires that were common in the summer. More recently, The Hill Association has provided a portable toilet in season.

Many of the summer people initially rented house and discovered a community that drew them here to eventually become permanent residents. Mike Counihan recalls spending summers in Green Hill since the age of three. His family rented a small cottage in 1944 for \$250 from Memorial Day to Labor Day. In this tiny cottage on Browning Street near what was to become Surf Side, the family managed their lives with Mike, a 3-month old sister and no hot water and a small pull chain toilet added on to the front

porch. His father saved the day by taking damp towels and laundry before they became mildewed to the laundromat in Providence, where he worked as night editor for the Providence Journal. The family eventually bought a house here; Mike, for a time became the neighborhood paper boy.

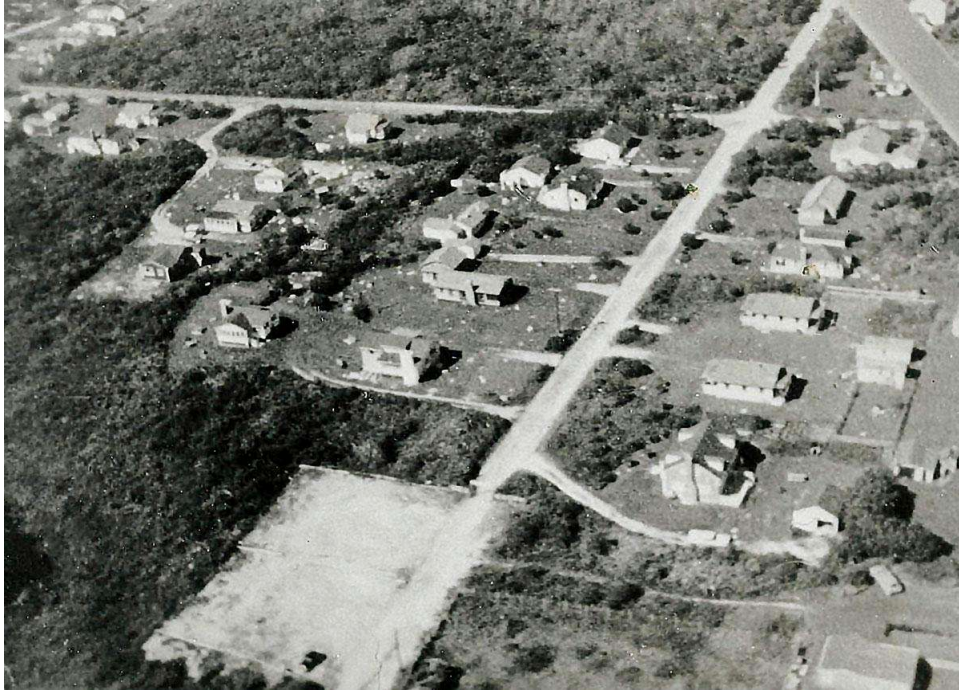
One man, in particular, Mr. Adams, was often mentioned. He lived in a home that the Kegley family now own. He was famous for his bird baths. Mr. Adams took neighborhood children to the beach to look for suitable rocks that might later be fashioned into bird baths using chisel and hammer. He sold the bird baths to neighbors for \$5; many still exist in the yards along Green Hill Avenue. Other neighbors took children fishing.



Over the years the beach has changed as sea levels have risen, sand has shifted and rocks been uncovered. There are some photos that were taken some 50 and 70 years ago that show how the area has change. After the hurricane, there was a 25-year moratorium on building construction near the ocean; it was lifted in 1978. Recently the beaches in the Hill area have experienced a good deal of erosion as sea levels have risen. While some of this can be attributed to climate change. The addition of large stone boulders along some shore-line properties used to prevent land loss have also had an effect on coastal sand distribution.

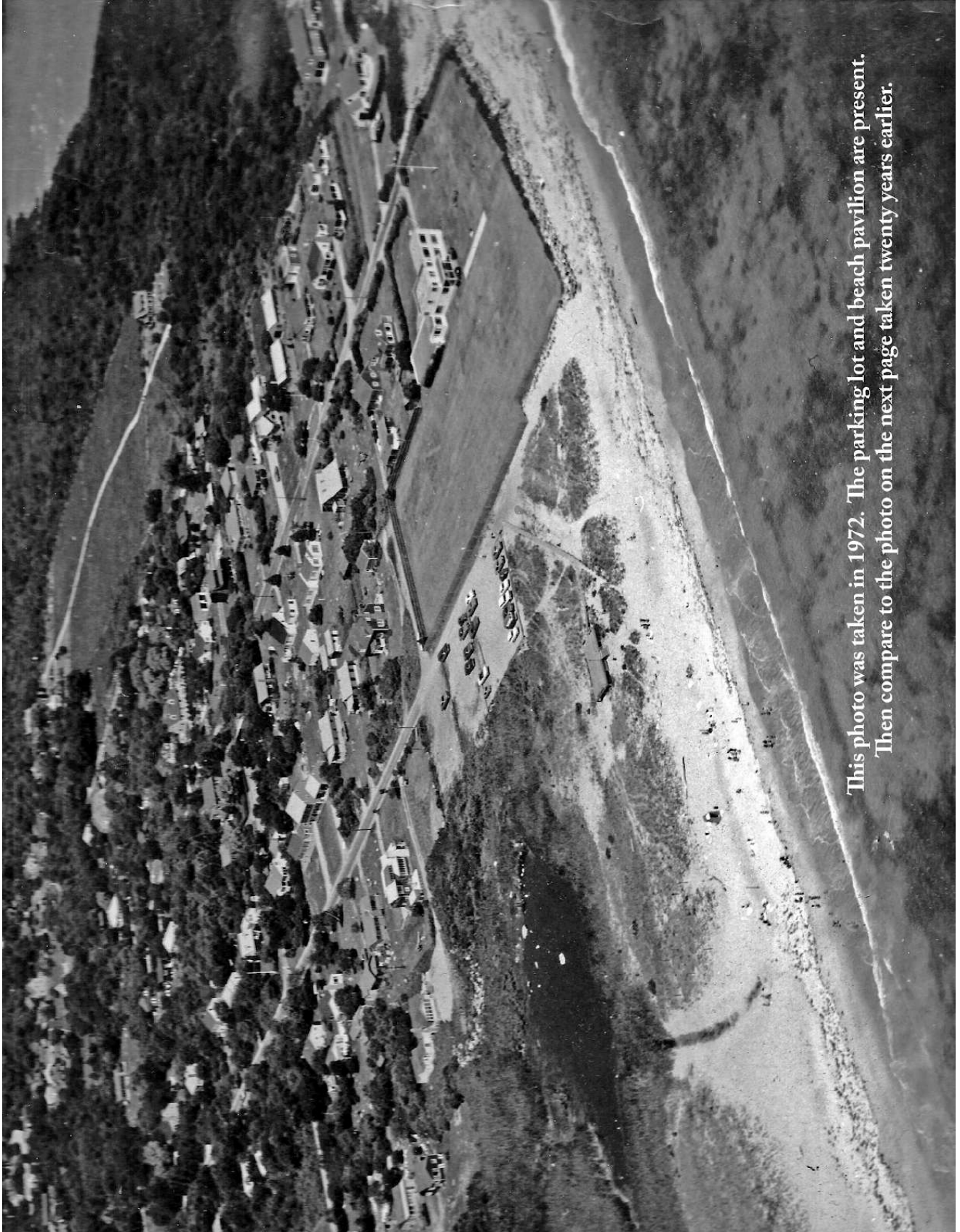
A view from Charlestown looking toward the Green Hill community. The Brogie Motel is still present as is the Green Hill

Beach Club's old location before the recent sea levels caused damage and new building were constructed. Photo taken some time in the 1960s



Above an aerial view in the 1960's, Browning Road is intersecting with Carpenter Drive and Coast Guard Avenue with the parking lot at its base. Below, a view of Trustom Pond and the beach in 1952. Notice that the lookout tower from WWII is still present





This photo was taken in 1972. The parking lot and beach pavilion are present.
Then compare to the photo on the next page taken twenty years earlier.

The Green Hill Civic Association was formed in 1940 to promote the well-being of the community and the environment that is shared. The membership now consists of 280 homeowners in the area bounded on the north by Matunuck Schoolhouse Road, on the east by Trustom Pond Wildlife Management Area, on the south by the Atlantic Ocean, and on the west by any property that abuts Green Hill Beach Road from Schoolhouse Road southerly to the Atlantic Ocean. In 1951 John Carpenter through the South County Real Estate company sold two parcels for \$10 each to the Association-- one of which bordered Green Hill Pond and the other, directly across Green Hill Beach Road. They were to become the boat launch and kayak storage area on one side of the road; the other, the basis for tennis courts. More recently bocce ball and horseshoes and pickle ball courts were added. The Association maintains a web site, deeded access to the beach at the foot of Green Hill Avenue and summer trash pick-up for the beach. The life guard that for years had been customary is a thing of the past. The approach to the beach has become daunting because of the recent deposit of rocks and uncovered boulders. Beach erosion has left no sand except at low tide. The Association now plans a series of social events during the summer.

The Green Hill Beach Club was established in 1961; its three acres with 800-foot beach front was originally bought by Bernie Poppe's father much after the 1938 hurricane. Bernie sold the property and then served as its treasurer and became its treasurer for 35 years. The parking lot and clubhouse were later added. Well known in South County where Mr. Poppe served as a tax assessor and zoning board member, he sold another parcel of land to the Town in 1998 which eventually became Green Hill Park in 2003. When Bernie Poppe was 17, His father, William Poppe moved his family to Green Hill from Rochester, New York, after the hurricane of '38 looking for construction work along the East Coast. The family included mother, father, Bernie, Billy (age 21) and his wife, Margaret (a high school student) and Norman (a 6th grader). They bought the Abiel Tripp Browning house at the end of Maple Avenue in the fall of 1939 from Charlie Bliss. It had been damaged by the hurricane. So they began to remodel the Baker Hotel to eventually have four apartments. When they officially moved in on January 1, 1939 there was liveable space for all of the seven members of the family. Three weeks later the house was destroyed by fire. They once again rebuilt this time it was a much scaled down version of the former structure.

Maple Avenue has an interesting history. In 1924 Eleanor and Howard Baker bought the Browning property, home and barn at the end of the then unnamed dirt road. The house became a twenty-four-room hotel with three fireplaces and four porches. The barn served as an entertainment area. It became known as Coq D'Or (The Golden Cock) or Madam Baker's Hotel. She hosted guests and began to also offer dining, dancing and parties on weekends. At the time, the pond was called nine-mile pond and the surrounding rustic 100-acre property was called Powaget. She sold off property lots during her tenure. Several attempts to persuade town counsellors to take on road repair and maintenance came to no avail. She had the pond dredged at the end of the road to improve swimming and boating. But the Depression brought with it financial distress. There were two attempts to attract summer camps.

In 1932 and 1933 her hotel and barn became Powaget Camp, seashore camp for boys 8-15 years old that included sports, boating, swimming, horseback riding and crafts under the direction of Henry Reeves. Then by 1935 Powaget-by-the-Sea became a summer camp of the Boston Conservatory of Music (merged in 2015 as the Berklee School of Music) that featured instruction in music,

drama and dance as well as recreational activities. The men and boys were “provided dormitory accommodations” and the women and girls occupied the hotel. The barn provided additional space and an outdoor theater was added. Plays were performed on the weekends to attract the broader audience.

<p>POWAGET PLAYHOUSE GREEN HILL BEACH ROAD BOSTON CONSERVATORY OPENS ITS SUMMER SEASON with Noel Coward's Comedy Success "IT'S A WISE CHILD" Thursday, Friday, Saturday, July 25, 26, 27, at 8:30 Matinee Friday at 2:30 Short Musical Program Before Each Performance General Dancing Following All Evening Performances Tickets 55c and 75c, including tax Refreshments Telephone Narragansett 976-J-2</p>	<p>POWAGET PLAYHOUSE (GREEN HILL BEACH) Boston Conservatory PRESENTS NOEL COWARD'S COMEDY SUCCESS "HAY FEVER" Thursday, Friday, Saturday Evenings at 8:30 July 18, 19, 20 Matinee Friday, July 19, at 2:30—Musical Program Evenings at 8:15 Special Dinner Service at the Hostess House Before the Show Dancing After Evening Performances Refreshments Admission 50c and 75c—Narragansett 976-J-2</p>
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18,1935

Page 8 of The Narragansett Times, published in Wakefield, Rhode Island on Friday, July 5th, 1935

Westerly Sun, July

The Bakers continued to be financially strapped; the mortgaged property was threatened with auction. In 1933, she was accused of passing faulty check and put under the curate of Charlie Bliss who later bought the property in 1936.

In 1947 two real estate developers. Stephen Tourtellot and Charles Link purchased acreage that was to become Twin Peninsula. More acreage was bought the next year. They originally carved the parcel into one acre lots but the zoning board later allowed each acre to be carved into three 50' x 100' lots each with the option of buying contiguous lots of two or three per acre or just one of the lots in an acreage. By the 50's there was only one house built. Roads and a water line had to be established. The lots were not sold until 1965 when the developers split their holdings in half. The group of home owners in the area did not incorporate until 1987 as The Green Hill Acres Association.

The Green Hill Pond is a shallow pond connected to Ninigret Pond; unlike Green Hill Pond, Ninigret is effectively tidally flushed through the Charlestown breach way. Green Hill Pond once supported oysters, clams, crabs and fish have suffered pollution until the 1960's. For more than 60 years it has been closed to shell fishing and swimming because of pollution. Friends of Green Hill Pond was established recently to promote a plan to study the feasibility of making the pond viable again. Several factors have been identified as contributing to the rise in nitrogen and salinity. The densely inhabited shoreline residents bring wastewater, the geese population pollute the shoreline, fresh water tributaries into the pond such as Factory Brook are also polluted. It is thought that the main problem is the inadequate ability to tidally flush this 430-acre body of water. Studies are on-going with the support of Friends of Green Hill Pond, the Town of South Kingstown and state and federal agencies.

As this brief history has demonstrated the past is gone but not forgotten. Not so long-ago Moonstone Beach was well-known as a nudist beach, a more than one mile strip of beach, just east of Green Hill Beach and surrounded by Trustom Pond. Much of the surrounding land was owned by Ann Kenyon Morse who flew air planes commercially and was a test pilot during the war testing Hellcat fighters and Avenger torpedo bombers. Locally she was known as a national skeet champion, an accomplished

horsewoman, and prize-winning sheep herder. She used the property as a place to hunt. This avid conservationist set aside 365 acres in 1974 to the Audubon Society. When the Audubon Society could no longer manage 161 acres of its shoreline, both parcels were given to the U.S. Wild Fish and Wildlife Service in 1982 to make the beginning of the Trustom Pond Wildlife Sanctuary, now over 800 acres.

A battle then ensued. For many generations of New Englanders, Moonstone Beach was famous as a nude beach destination, the summer human traffic was not compatible with the nesting season for the lesser tern and piping plover. Court battles ensued with the attempts to close much of the beach. In 1987 the matter was settled when the piping plover was declared an endangered species. From that time on the beach was closed from mid-May to mid-September to the high-water mark. Later Rhode Island beaches barred nude bathing altogether. That is yet one other transformation over a short period of time.

The Narragansetts used Green Hill and its neighboring lands as their summer residence. The early settlers with the help of slaves farmed the land, raised livestock and fished. During the industrial revolution mills sprung up. Now the land has become a place for summer and year-round residents. Yet it was not so long ago that some year-rounders lived off the land and the sea—hunting deer, crabbing, fishing, clamming, and farming. The South County Land Trust and the State of Rhode Island continue its stewardship of the land. The efforts to conserve meadows, forest and farmland have made a difference. Hopefully a plan to restore and keep our ponds healthy will be next.

Sam Braun (Draft 3/2025)

This draft has had the help of many people. Susan Babcock has helped shape this account and kept track of the Browning and Babcock families who settled in this area for over 400 years ago. Enid Flaherty started interviewing some of the residents in the area some twenty years ago; she generously shared some of the memories they recorded. I have been fortunate to be guided by them, as well as John Drew, Mike Counihan, Dan Tanona and Ron Poppe. I welcome any input or corrections since this is a community effort that needs its history and documentation.