The Interesting and Delightful Pott’s Point Preserve: Something for Everyone
Writing and photos by Lynn Smith

At the very end of Harpswell Neck an incredible treat awaits those who make the journey. The beauty and diversity could challenge scenic sites state-wide. Among the many jewels in Harpswell, Pott’s Point stands out.

One day my husband and I met a man named Herb on the beach by Dick’s Lobster, who was curious about our actions and stopped to chat. We were clearing the beach of navigation hazards; namely, driftwood, so we can recycle these into furniture and art. Herb told us the story of the preserve. He said the Archdiocese of Portland bought the property for the eventual site of a retreat. However, after a few years of paying taxes on the property, they decided to sell. At this point, the residents of Pott’s Point Road approached Harpswell Heritage Land Trust (HHLT) with an interest in preserving the land. Neighborhood residents raised the money and it was purchased by HHLT in 2000. The result is protected public access to a spectacular site.

Junior Ranger Activity Book Launched for Harpswell
By Doug Warren

“I am pleased to discover how excited the youngsters were to learn about the natural world. Thanks to the efforts of an enterprising and gifted young Harpswell native, however, HHLT has a new tool to help ensure that the connection between nature and the community remains strong through the years. A 68-page, full-color “Junior Ranger Activity Book” will be published this spring that will introduce young people to 10 trails, parks and preserves in Harpswell, while also exploring elements of nature that make these places special and fascinating.

And there will be plenty of fun along the way! The activity book is the brain child of Emma Levy, 18, a Mt. Ararat High School graduate and Williams College freshman. During the summer of 2015, Emma volunteered at HHLT’s preschool Nature Day Camp and was pleased to discover how excited the youngsters were to learn about the natural world. She decided to develop a handbook for a junior ranger program, modeled on those she’d enjoyed as a child at various national parks, as the Capstone project for her senior year at Mt. Ararat. The result is a thoroughly researched, very engaging production chock-full of information and enjoyable activities.

For example, the section on HHLT’s Curtis Farm Preserve offers an informative map and description, along with space for junior rangers to imagine what they might see on their visit and a place to list the “treasures” they actually find. Then there’s an explanation of glacial erratics, the scientific term for the giant boulder known as “the Pebble” found at Curtis Farm. (There’s also a formula for estimating the weight of that big hunk of granite.) And there’s a detailed look at invasive species that junior rangers might encounter at Curtis Farm and elsewhere, and a clear explanation of the dangers they pose.

“It was definitely a lot of work and rather overwhelming at times,” Emma explained. “But it was very much worth it in the end. I particularly loved getting to trek through the preserves with my mom and dad on countless gorgeous weekends. The time I spent trying to imagine what kids might find most exciting or interesting about that particular spot really encouraged me to experience and explore the natural places of Harpswell in a way I never had before.”
Pott’s Point

Continued from page 1

rocks exposed by years of waves and wind action. Scientists will wonder about the “floating” superior mirage islands and copious “smoke” tendrils rising from the sea. Boaters will dream of mastering the “Snake Pit”, one of the most challenging navigational waters in Casco Bay. The lobster connoisseurs will build an appetite watching the numerous lobster boats motoring and hauling offshore. The whimsical will enjoy the “sailor’s valentines” that periodically show up. The architects will wonder at the mystery of the mysterious cairn builders who craft masterpieces, but are never seen. If one looks carefully, he or she will spot the old man of the sea “carved” and worn over ages.

To get to Pott’s Point Preserve, drive to the southern end of Harpswell Neck Road (Rt 123). Park by the side of the road, without blocking access to the boat ramp or neighbors’ houses. Walk around a half mile down private Pott’s Point Road to the very end then follow a short trail through shrubs to the preserve. Be prepared to carry in and out all trash, and be aware that there are no restrooms. But be assured: the effort is more than well worth the trip!

A Look at Life on a Farm From the Past to the Present

By Christine N. Farrell

Have you ever wondered what it was like to be a farmer in the 19th century on the coast of Harpswell? To try to make a living from the earth and from the sea? To feed yourself and your family throughout the whole year, even during the long dark Maine winters?

Conversations with current farmers tell us about life today as a farmer. For the past, one can turn to records maintained by the Harpswell Historical Society.

Joe and Laura Grady run Two Coves Farm on the site of what was once known as the Dunning Farm. James Dunning acquired it in 1831 from Isaac Alexander, and other family members added land to bring the farm up to its current size of 88 acres.

Life in the 19th century was not easy. To survive, the Dunning family raised cows, horses, sheep and hogs. Hay was grown to feed the animals; wool was gathered from the sheep; hogs were sold for meat; milk was collected from the cows and butter was churned for sale to the community.

Life was full and busy in those days. Continued on page 7
Land Conservation
The Lands Committee and staff continue to pursue new land conservation opportunities, including our first preserve in the Cundy’s Harbor area. We’ll keep you updated as this project moves forward.

Otter Brook Success!
It is always exciting to complete a major fundraising campaign to protect habitat and public access in Harpswell. With a big thank you to more than 150 families, the Town of Harpswell and several foundations, HHLT was able to raise the money needed to protect 71 acres along Otter Brook. We especially appreciate the 2016 Town Meeting vote to contribute $75,000 to the project. Harpswell people clearly treasure the wild and scenic places that make our town special. Now that we’ve purchased the new preserve, next steps include designing a trail network and parking. We hope to open trails this fall. The property will be open for walking, snowshoeing, hunting, fishing and observing birds and other wildlife. Besides being another fantastic place for you to enjoy the outdoors, Otter Brook Preserve also helps to conserve a variety of habitats for wildlife, and protects clean water. Let the trail building begin!

Stewardship
The Stewardship Committee and our stewards have an ambitious work schedule this year to improve our preserves and trails for public use and habitat.

Liberty Farm Trail
A new trail will open this summer to bring visitors from Harpswell Neck Rd to Middle Bay Cove. This is a access point for clammers, and we built the trail to make it easier for them to reach the shore, as well as to offer a pleasant walk for anyone who are interested. Parking for the trail is in a gravel pull off by the east side of the road just south of the Skolfield Shores Preserve parking lot.

Giant’s Stairs Trail Parking
The Town of Harpswell has created space for four cars to parallel park by the side of Washington Ave on our McIntosh Lot Preserve. This will hopefully help alleviate the lack of parking for the popular Giant’s Stairs Trail.

Removing Invasives
Invasive plants threaten our native habitats and wildlife by outcompeting essential native plants. To address this threat, HHLT, in collaboration with the Harpswell Invasive Plant Partnership (HIPP), is removing invasive plants at Curtis Farm Preserve, Houghton Graves Park (with support from the Newman’s Own Foundation), McIntosh Lot Preserve, Johnson Field Preserve and Otter Brook Preserve. Additionally, we have planted native shrubs at Houghton Graves Park to improve habitat and scenic values.

Community Outreach and Education
Short Courses
We are excited to be offering two short courses this spring as in-depth learning opportunities for adults with very knowledgeable instructors. The six-session Short Course on Harpswell’s Coastal Habitats will delve into plankton, rocks and marine mammals. The three-session Short Course on the Ecology of Place will explore how we can observe a place to interpret its history and ecology. Funding support comes from the Alfred M. Senter Fund. Details can be found on our website.

Humans on the Land
From March to August 2017 we welcome the public to learn about how humans interact with and change the land, and how the land changes them. This program series delves into the interesting history of Harpswell, from Native Americans to farmers to vacationers. We hope you’ll join us to learn! Check the back of this newsletter for details about upcoming events.

Continued on page 6
Thank you to all of our 2016 donors!
Harpswell Community School
With support from the Holbrook Community Foundation, HHLT continues to enrich learning at Harpswell Community School with hands-on, place-based science programming. Spring programs include following Great Blue Herons, citizen science, raising and releasing Atlantic Salmon, phenology and what animals need to survive.

Voices of Conservation
This winter, Harpswell Coastal Academy students explored what conservation means through listening to community members who have made a difference in the conservation of nature, history, fisheries and more. The stories collected through this collaborative project can be found online at www.harpswellstories.org.

Harpswell Day, Lantern Walk, Native Plants and Other Popular Events
Since the fall, we’ve held several popular and successful public programs to engage people of all ages. In October, we celebrated traditional handcrafts and subsistence skills with Harpswell Day, a collaboration with the Harpswell Historical Society. In December we celebrated the winter solstice with a lantern walk. And in early April we came together to learn how and why to include native plants in our yards. Videos of four presentations on native plants are available on our website. For the most up-to-date information about our many events, sign up for our email newsletter, which you can do on our website (www.hhltnow.org).

Thank you to our donors
Continued from page 5

In memory of Walter Norton, cont.
Georgette Miller and Keith Brown
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Celebrating the winter solstice at Houghton Graves Park (Paul Avis photo)
A recent sold-out screening at the Frontier Café in Brunswick of an important new film – “Community Conservation: Finding the Balance Between Nature and Culture” – really drove home the vital role land trusts play in connecting people with the places in which they live.

Shot throughout four seasons, the hour-long documentary profiles four active land trusts in different regions of Maine: coastal, inland, western mountains and Downeast. While Harpswell Heritage Land Trust is not specifically mentioned in the film, HHLT Outreach Coordinator Julia McLeod does make a cameo appearance.

“The purpose is to educate and advocate for the advancement of community conservation,” said filmmaker Mark Ireland, owner of MI Media. “We hope this film spurs both public interest and support, while also encouraging other land trusts to initiate and engage in their own community projects.”

At its deepest level, community conservation addresses the traditions and needs of all community members, providing access to preserved land and creating projects that build constituencies across diverse communities. The four land trusts at the heart of the film provide great examples of community conservation: The Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust (BTLT) works with gardeners, both local and from away, as far away as Africa, at Crystal Spring Farm. Other projects range from supporting shellfish harvesters to working with the faith community. At Downeast Lakes Land Trust, community members serve local school children and crafts people, as well as hunters and fishermen. The Androscoggin Land Trust partners with various organizations to create access and programs for the growing immigrant community in Lewiston/Auburn. The Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust runs an Eco Camp that utilizes tourist dollars to help fund the cost for local children. The trust also owns and maintains a community campground.

The beauty of Maine – from the coast to the mountains, farmland to deep forests – is richly captured in the documentary. Hikers, kayakers, immigrant farmers, children, fishing guides, balsam tree-tippers, canoe-builders and others tell the stories of local communities finding balance in nature.

Ireland, a Brunswick native, spent 15 years at Maine Public Broadcasting, where he produced, directed, shot and edited numerous documentaries, as well as other broadcasts and features. After launching his career as an independent producer, Ireland created a number of nonprofit and educational projects.

“I had done a couple short projects for BTLT, and this lit a spark about finding a way to advocate for land trusts in Maine that are actively involving their local communities in their projects,” Ireland said. He received a grant from the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation, which funded about 85 percent of film’s production costs. Ireland is currently seeking business underwriters to complete the production budget.

The message of “Community Conservation” is being shared, initially, through community screenings like the one at the Frontier Café. Distribution of the documentary online to environmental organizations will follow, Ireland said, along with the sale of DVDs and broadcasts on Maine Public May 25 and 27. For more information on the film, go to www.mimediamaine.com

Life on a Farm
Continued from page 2

Before school every day, the Dunning boys had to milk the cows (by hand, of course), feed the animals and then walk to school. In the summer months, sheep were moved to Birch, White or Ragged Islands for grazing. Without machinery, the horses were used throughout the year for tasks ranging from collecting and moving hay to clearing the snow.

No indoor plumbing existed. Clothes were boiled in a large copper bucket, then scrubbed and rinsed in a hand wringer. Heat came from wood and coal stoves located on the main floor. Rocks were warmed in the stoves during the day for inserting into cold beds at night.

According to Clem Dunning, who was born in 1916, in the springtime the children made “May baskets,” which were hanging baskets filled with candy and left surreptitiously at neighbors’ doors. Clem loved his life as a farmer.

After Clem died, Walter and Helen Norton purchased the land to save it from development into house lots.

Thanks to the Nortons, today the land is protected by an agricultural easement held by Maine Farmland Trust. This means that farming is allowed but development is restricted, forever.

The Gradys lease the farm. Joe finds it “incredibly rewarding to work and live here. We inherited a lot of good will based on the respect of the community to Clem Dunning.” At Two Coves Farm, in some ways, life is similar to farming in the past. The animals need to be cared for. No pesticides are used, and guinea hens are used to keep down the harmful bug population.

The public is invited to learn more about the interesting history of the Dunning Farm at a public event on May 20. See the back of this newsletter or the HHLT website for details. Space is limited and advance registration required.

Thank you to the Harpswell Historical Society for conducting and preserving interviews with Clem Dunning.

Sheep from Two Coves Farm, visit the Town’s Cattle Pound for Harpswell Day. (Curt Chipman photo)
Summer Events and Programs

Most events are free. For details: www.hhltmaine.org.

How Thomas Alva Edison's daughter Vacationed at What is Now Houghton Graves Park on Orr's Island
Sat., June 17, 2-3 p.m. • Harpswell Heritage Land Trust

Summer Solstice Celebration
Thurs., June 21, Details TBA

History of the Dunning Farm
Sat., May 20, 3-4:30 p.m. • Two Coves Farm • Advance registration required

Short Course on Harpswell's Coastal Habitats
Various dates and locations, starting May 3 • Advance registration required

Harpswell Hiking Challenge
Sat. & Sun., June 3-4 • Various locations in Harpswell

History of the Dunning Farm
Sat., May 20, 3-4:30 p.m. • Two Coves Farm • Advance registration required

Short Course on the Ecology of Place
Various dates and locations, starting June 8 • Advance registration required

Identifying Dragonflies
Sat., July 22, 9:30-11 a.m. • Otter Brook Preserve

Family Campout
Sat.-Sun., Aug. 5-6 • Mitchell Field • Advance registration required

Casco Bay Art League Summer Show and Sale
Aug. 5-13 open 11 a.m.-6 p.m. • Harpswell Heritage Land Trust

History of the Dunning Farm
Sat., May 20, 3-4:30 p.m. • Two Coves Farm • Advance registration required

Annual Meeting: Native American Archaeology on the Maine Coast
Tues., July 11, doors open at 6 p.m., meeting starts at 7 p.m. • Cundy's Harbor Community Hall

Tide Pool Exploration
Sun., Aug. 20, 3:30-5:30 p.m. • Pott's Point Preserve

How Thomas Alva Edison's daughter Vacationed at What is Now Houghton Graves Park on Orr's Island
Sat., June 17, 2-3 p.m. • Harpswell Heritage Land Trust

Wildflower Walk
Fri., July 14, 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m. • Long Reach Preserve

Paddle to Helen and Walter Norton Preserve in Middle Bay
Sun., Aug. 13, 12:30-4:30 p.m. • Leaving from Lookout Point • Advance registration required

Casco Bay Art League Summer Show and Sale
Aug. 5-13 open 11 a.m.-6 p.m. • Harpswell Heritage Land Trust

Sunset Cruise
Tues., Aug. 8, 6-8 p.m. • Leaving from the Dolphin Marina • $60 for adults and $30 for children. Advance registration required

Annual Meeting: Native American Archaeology on the Maine Coast
Tues., July 11, doors open at 6 p.m., meeting starts at 7 p.m. • Cundy's Harbor Community Hall

The Tarr-Eaton House - A Journey in Harpswell History (1783 - Present)
Mon., Aug. 21, 7-8 p.m. • Harpswell Heritage Land Trust

Paddle & Lunch in Cundy's Harbor
Fri., Aug. 25, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. • Leaving from Bethel Point • Advance registration required

Tide Pool Exploration
Sun., Aug. 20, 3:30-5:30 p.m. • Pott's Point Preserve

Harpswell Family Outing collaboration with Harpswell Recreation and Harpswell Community Nursery School

Paddle to Helen and Walter Norton Preserve in Middle Bay
Sun., Aug. 13, 12:30-4:30 p.m. • Leaving from Lookout Point • Advance registration required