

ORLEANS
CONSERVATION TRUST



Henson's Cove Success
page 4

The Case for Grasslands
page 7

■ **ON THE COVER:**
Window on the Bay
page 5



The Heyelman Legacy

Page 10



Listen to lectures you may have missed! **Talks & Walks**, page 8

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On the cover: The soon-to-be new conservation area at 109 Portanimiticut Road. Inset: Kingfisher on Pleasant Bay. Both, © Hardie Truesdale.

Giving Thanks

Around this most family-centered holiday, we at OCT are grateful for our Trust family — our members and supporters. Another tradition we now observe is Giving Tuesday, and we hope you do too! If you prefer to do your giving by mail, be sure to watch out for our year-end appeal letter, landing in your mailbox soon. Thank you!!



from the president

*when I was a boy
summers were long
nature would dance
to a timeless song*

— Jeff Norgeot, from his poem
“Labor Day Thoughts”

Dear OCT members and supporters,

Orleans native Jeff Norgeot, who grew up on Pleasant Bay, writes poems inspired by the natural places and wild creatures he has known throughout his life. They are full of familiar place names: Hog Island, Paw Wah Pond, Dogfish Bar, Heyelman's Bog. Jeff hopes that his poetry makes readers think about our connections to the natural world and every part of it.

His lines quoted above ring true this year. Summer seemed to stretch far into October, giving us bonus time to enjoy our local landscapes even as it made us uncomfortably aware of the changing climate. There is no greater lesson on the interconnectedness of natural systems, as we've learned.

I hope you will enjoy, in this issue, stories of how Orleans Conservation Trust and its members connect with nature locally. And connect with each other: on our trails, where we can leave behind our indoor cares (including that virus!) and breathe deeply. A couple of summer outings are reported on page 6. We continue to come together in virtual space too, as at our lively Annual Meeting (see page 3). At Henson's Cove, a vital new acquisition links up with existing OCT land and will enable visitors to connect with the River, our salty artery into the heart of Orleans (page 4).

OCT's most important and cherished connections are our many long-term

relationships with members, who entrust us with their donations of land, treasure, and time. The Heyelman family of South Orleans



has made an extraordinary series of gifts over the years, as you'll learn in the profile of Rachia Heyelman on page 10 — and a future bequest will enhance the network of preserved lands in the Portanimiticut Greenbelt. I'm also struck by how many members and friends of the Trust give in memory or in honor of our faithful supporters — more than fifty gifts this year were made in memory of dear friend Ken McKusick. Cheers to all the donors who sustain this wonderful local land trust; their names start on page 12.

We offer our thanks to trustees who completed their service to OCT this fall: Sharon Davis served since 2011 and Jamie Demas since 2017. The Trust has benefited immeasurably from their talents and dedication. And we welcome two new trustees, Jeanne Berdik and Jim West, who bring fresh energy and gifts to the board.

Finally, the land-saving work of OCT could not be done without our extraordinary professional staff and all our trustees. Special thanks to Executive Director Steve O'Grady, Land Stewardship Coordinator Alex Bates, Administrative Assistant Pam Schultz, AmeriCorps Cape Cod service member Jami Baker, and to each trustee. With their help and yours, we will go on to make new connections with the natural world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin F. Galligan".

Kevin F. Galligan
President

Note: Jeff Norgeot's book *Through My Eyes: A poetic guide inspired by Cape Cod nature*, is available at www.jeffnorgeotpoems.com

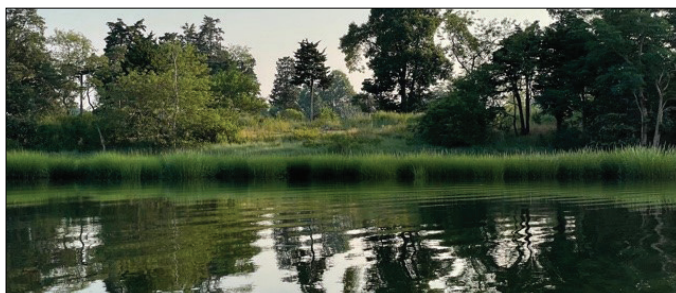
Prescott Keynotes OCT Annual Meeting

At day's end on August 30, members, trustees, and staff of the Orleans Conservation Trust gathered at screens for OCT's **51st Annual Meeting**. Although we had planned an in-person event, concern about the Delta variant of Covid-19 redirected us onto the safer virtual path once more. Like it or not, we've all gotten much better over the past year at navigating these online events: attendees clicked the "raise hand" or "chat" buttons to ask questions, voice approval, thank speakers, or add information.

President Kevin Galligan welcomed all and convened the business meeting. Members had voted online to approve the slate of new and returning trustees, and to endorse key Trust documents: **the amended Declaration of Trust** and a new set of Bylaws. A quorum was present at the meeting to confirm those votes.

Departing briefly from the agenda, Galligan made a special announcement: "I am thrilled to share with all of you that the **acquisition of 4 Braddock's Way**, our major fundraising effort this year, was finalized just last Friday, August 27" — well ahead of the mid-September target for closing. (See page 4.) He thanked members for their generous support of the campaign, noting in passing that membership had increased since the last annual meeting by more than 200.

Executive Director Stephen O'Grady next presented a lively and thorough report on the past year's activities — which included four new land acquisition projects ("We'd rather not have four in a single year, but we can't control when opportu-



"When you see this many people working together over so many years to save a species, it gives you hope for the future."

nities come up.") He also highlighted our stepped-up work on **ecological restoration of OCT lands**, efforts to make our properties and trails more user-friendly, and the Trust's partnership with the Cape-wide Pollinator Pathways program. Treasurer



Bob Prescott shares his presentation at the virtual meeting. Above: A terrapin's eye view of the Henson's Cove shoreline.

Steve Koehler then delivered an encouraging report on **the Trust's strong financial position**, offering some details on how OCT funds its land purchases, where we get and spend most of our revenue, how we handle investments, and a snapshot of the 2021 budget.

Every few years, we're lucky enough to have **Bob Prescott** stop by to give OCT members an update on long-range efforts to rebuild the Orleans population of threatened Northern diamondback terrapins. Prescott, a former OCT president and director emeritus of the Wellfleet Bay Audubon Sanctuary, celebrated the steady rise in nesting sites and hatchling numbers, while warning that the species' foothold

on our shorelines is still "precarious." Of course, the most important local shoreline for these animals is the one surrounding Henson's Cove; Prescott thanked OCT for making it possible to create new "terrapin gardens" at the Braddocks Way property. He ended on a note of optimism: "When you see this many people working together over so many years to save a species — it gives you hope for the future."

Another plus of the virtual format:

Anyone who couldn't be there in real time can access **a recording of the Annual Meeting at bit.ly/3nbO7Yn**. Bob Prescott's talk begins at around 53:15.

Meet Jami Baker of AmeriCorps Cape Cod

Once again OCT has received an infusion of youthful energy courtesy of AmeriCorps Cape Cod. **Our new Individual Placement**, Jami Baker, hails from Kansas City but clearly has saltwater in her blood: she has worked previously in Mississippi and Florida and is a novice herpetologist with a



special affinity for turtles, as well as "spatial ecology, estuaries, vernal pools, and habitat use." Jami will serve through next July, sharing

her time with Sipson Island Trust (OCT holds a CR on the island). "I hope I can carry on the good work of past AmeriCorps members in Orleans," she writes.

Strong Support for Expanding Henson's Cove Preserve

From humble beginnings came great things on Henson's Cove. In 1976, Theda Henson decided to convey four small, disjointed wetland parcels to the Orleans Conservation Trust. Founded just six years earlier, the Trust had accepted barely a dozen land donations and was still establishing its footing in the community. Its board could not have imagined that, 45 years and ten land protection projects

later, their successors would celebrate the completion of the magnificent 23-acre **Henson's Cove Conservation Area** (HCCA).

Public support for OCT's recent purchase of 4 Braddock's Way rivals that of any past acquisition. More than 250 donors answered the call, giving upward of \$800,000 to make it possible within a short window of opportunity. "When we had to adjust staff hours to keep up with the volume of donations, we knew we'd find a way to get it done," said Executive Director Steve O'Grady. Trust President Kevin Galligan pronounced the feat "amazing!" To bolster the outpouring of local support, the Trust sought grants from generous private foundations,



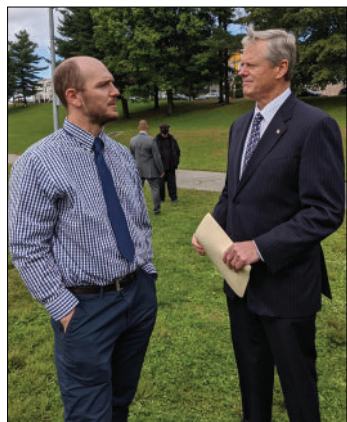
Above: Looking across Henson's Cove to the newly acquired parcel at 4 Braddock's Way. OCT will remove the dilapidated boathouse and restore the shoreline. Below: OCT's Steve O'Grady chats with Governor Charlie Baker at the state Conservation Partnership Grant awards event.

and the Commonwealth's Conservation Partnership Grant Program provided \$85,000 to get us to the finish line.

"Now the fun starts," says OCT Land Stewardship Coordinator Alex Bates. While much of the newly preserved acreage is high-quality, open-understory native woodland, **about an acre along the cove is degraded and needs significant habitat restoration**. Historic land use, including grazing, is the likely cause of nutrient-rich soils that now support many familiar non-native species. "We'll be working on a multiyear restoration with Wilkinson Ecological Design,

who know the site well, having helped OCT with a very similar restoration project just across the cove," Bates adds. Also in the plans is extending a walking trail through the property, after the grassland restoration is underway.

The property has tremendous conservation value. We have documented abundant wildlife in the area, from coyotes and fishers to a rare **meadow jumping mouse** typical of healthy grassland habitat. The range and intersection of habitats (estuary, saltmarsh, grassland, woodland, and shrub swamp) provide ample feeding, nesting, and overwintering opportunities for a diverse range of creatures. "It's impossible to take the same walk twice at Henson's Cove—there's always something new to see," says O'Grady.



continued on page 5

Portanimicut Greenbelt Update

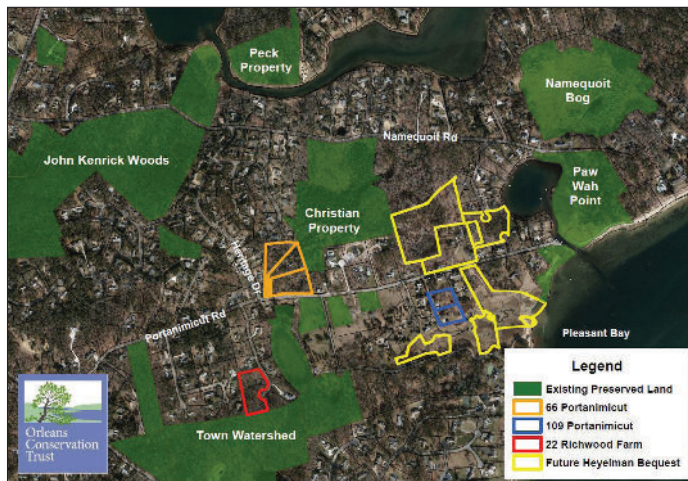
Meanwhile, our progress to expand the Portanimicut Greenbelt remains steady. In May, Orleans voters approved the Town's partnership with OCT to preserve **66 Portanimicut Road**. The Town will own one of the three lots at that address, which will provide parking and a trailhead to access Town-owned conservation land next door. The parking area is expected

is accepting donations for this acquisition; the \$150,000 price reflects a significant discount by owners Terry and Julie Martin.

And we're closing in on our fundraising goal to purchase two marshfront lots at **109 Portanimicut**, which afford breathtaking views over Pleasant Bay toward the barrier beach and islands. (See cover photo and page 10 story about Rachia Heyelman,



Above: Reflections in the tidal creek that runs through Deacon Rogers Meadow to Little Pleasant Bay. Photo © Hardie Truesdale. Left: Ospreys nested along the Portanimicut Greenbelt this year. Photo © Hardie Truesdale.



“Now and then OCT has lost conservation opportunities to the hands of developers, so it’s nice when we have the chance to ‘undevelop’ a property.”

sometime in 2022 —and we will surely plan a celebratory walk from the new trailhead!

Just to the south is **22 Richwood Farm Lane**, which OCT plans to purchase in January. This project protects a vernal pool (certification with the state is underway) and is especially important for protecting groundwater, since it falls within the state-identified recharge area for the public water supply. The Trust

who has been instrumental to this purchase.) We at OCT are eager to begin the work needed before the property is fully opened to the public: two old cottages will be removed to restore the land to its natural state. “Now and then OCT has lost conservation opportunities to the hands of developers, so it’s nice when we have the chance to ‘undevelop’ a property,” says O’Grady with a smile.

Henson’s Cove continued from page 4

Northern diamondback terrapins are the resident species of greatest concern, their nesting activity closely monitored by a team of Mass Audubon volunteers. The threatened turtles had another successful summer, with 23 documented nests—the most since OCT and Mass Audubon teamed up in 2010. Some of this year’s nesters appeared to be just reaching reproductive age (we can tell by the number of eggs); those females likely were hatchlings in the

early years of the program. This was an important discovery and especially gratifying for long-term volunteers.

Resilience to climate change is another key reason to protect coastal ecosystems like this one. Once restored, this highly functioning native ecosystem will provide species with favorable conditions to persist and adapt to changing regional climates. Further, the shoreline will serve as a buffer to coastal storms and will allow for ecosystem transition as sea level rises.

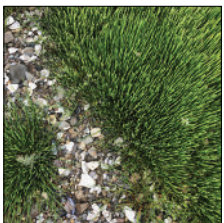
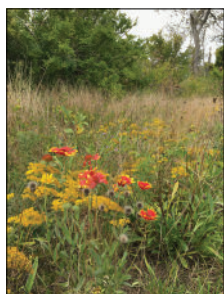


Paddlers on Little Sipson, with “big” Sipson Island in the distance.

Island Excursions

Walking to Pochet by OCT member Kris Nasinnyk

In September, I joined OCT’s Steve O’Grady and Alex Bates and 23 other walkers for the Celebrate Our Waters hike to Pochet Island in East Orleans. Pochet (“Po’chee” to locals) is an Indian word meaning “dividing place,” denoting a border between the Monomoyick and Nauset tribes. It’s no small feat to reach the island by foot, over soft sand on the south side of Nauset Beach. We crossed the footbridge to the island at a favorable low tide—at high tide, we would have waded through a foot of water! On



the island, mostly restored to sandplain grassland, meadows, trees, flowers, bees, and butterflies abound. Spectacular views of Nauset Beach and Pleasant Bay nearly brought tears to my eyes. Our guides were members of the Payson family, who have owned Pochet Island for centuries. Now spread out around the world, they maintain

the land and graciously welcome visitors to walk the sun-dappled trails. Their scattered cottages lack plumbing or power other than solar; visiting one historic homestead, I felt that the peaceful setting must have been much as the Payson ancestors experienced it. This was my second time on the walk, and I’ll do it again!

Kayak to Little Sipson

Early in August, under lowering skies, a small fleet set out from the Town Landing on Route 28 for a vigorous paddle across Pleasant Bay to Little Sipson Island. As always, Bob Prescott led the pack across the water and along the shorelines, pointing out typical littoral plants, birds, and

invertebrates on OCT’s first purchased property. For the first time ever, the trip featured a stop at the recently protected “big” Sipson Island, where OCT holds a Conservation Restriction—the island was opened to the public since OCT last hosted this outing. We made it back to the mainland just as the first raindrops fell.



Far left: Meadow garden on Pochet Island, tidal garden on Little Sipson. Top: Cottage on Pochet. Above: Bob Prescott with edible salicornia. Left: Heading out from the Town Landing.

The Case for Grassland Habitat

by Alex Bates

Grassland habitat is essential to many wildlife species but in recent decades has become rarer, on Cape Cod and throughout New England. Here on the Cape, a type of coastal grassland known as *sandplain grassland* supports thriving biological communities that include songbirds, owls, hawks, coyotes, deer, raccoons, rabbits, opossums, box turtles, and snakes.

Widespread in the Northeast in the mid-19th century, grassland now ranks among the habitat types most at risk. It's a historical phenomenon: before colonization, wind and salt spray along the coast, along with fire management practiced by indigenous peoples, created a mosaic of grassland and shrubland habitat on the Cape. Once Europeans began clearing and grazing the land, grasslands expanded dramatically. Older photographs of Orleans often depict strikingly treeless landscapes.

As agriculture declined, forests began to regrow in the natural process of ecological succession. The disappearance of grasslands accelerated after World War II, when residential development boomed and wildfire suppression encouraged the regrowth of woody vegetation. As a result, more than 90 percent of coastal grassland and related habitat in the Northeast has vanished since the mid-1800s.

Our local sandplain grasslands—the name reflects their characteristic droughty, nutrient-poor soil—may appear barren, but they support many locally and globally rare species. Certain plants evolved to thrive in these seemingly hostile conditions; they include little bluestem, Pennsylvania sedge, poverty grass, switchgrass, asters, bearberry, and wild indigo. To help protect and expand this critical habitat, OCT



Top: Part of South Orleans and Pleasant Bay in the late 1800s when the land was still largely treeless. Photo by H. K. Cummings. Left: Henson's Cove Conservation Area after restoration. This land had been heavily overgrown with invasive species. Below left: Cleared land near the trailhead at Mill Pond Valley Conservation Area. By spring, it will look very different. Below right: Steve O'Grady on restored grassland at OCT's Mauch Gift.

actively manages 14 acres of grassland and early successional habitat at properties around Orleans. We mow annually and burn occasionally to reduce woody vegetation and create favorable conditions for grassland-dependent species.

Several small-scale grassland restoration projects are underway, most recently at the Mill Pond Valley trailhead on Mill Pond Road. Invasive species were cleared, and the land will be seeded this fall with a mix of native grass and

wildflowers and a cover crop of winter rye. Though it may seem counterintuitive for a conservation organization to nearly clear-cut land, leaving it temporarily barren, the habitat after restoration is far more beneficial to our native wildlife.

Case in point: the imperiled diamondback terrapins at Henson's Cove nest in a once-inhospitable area, overrun with invasives before OCT cleared and restored it in 2010. We'll restore more land on the newly added acreage this winter.

Winter/Spring 2022 Speakers

Join us for the latest in our series of **entertaining and informative** talks by **local and regional experts**.

Watch our website for news about whether programs are in person or online, and dates/times where not published. Can't make one of our online lectures? **They are all recorded**, so you can catch up at your leisure. Go to orleansconservationtrust.org/programs-speakers/ and scroll down to list of Past Programs & Speakers.



Coastal Waterbird Conservation in Massachusetts

Lyra Brennan

Assistant Director, Mass Audubon Coastal Waterbird Program

Mass Audubon's Coastal Waterbird Program partners with agencies and local communities in outreach efforts, management, and research to protect coastal birds and the barrier beaches they depend on. Lyra's talk will cover key actions (and challenges!) that have resulted in significant increases in piping plovers, terns, and oystercatchers in the state.

Tuesday, January 25

6:00 pm via Zoom



Snowy Owls and Their Kin

Norman Smith

Raptor Specialist

Since 1981, Norman Smith has studied snowy owls at Logan International Airport, observing, banding, and color-marking. He's collected data on their lives and behavior and used satellite transmitters to learn more about their movements. More recently, his research has expanded to include the much smaller saw-whet owls. His work was featured in a 2019 segment on PBS's *Nova*. Find out what we know, and what questions remain.

Tuesday, February 8

6:00 pm via Zoom



The State of the Bay

Carole Ridley

Coordinator, Pleasant Bay Alliance

The Pleasant Bay Alliance was formed by the towns of Orleans, Chatham, Harwich, and Brewster to coordinate a resource management plan for the Pleasant Bay ACEC (Area of Critical Environmental Concern) and watershed. Its work promotes the health of the Bay and safe public access. Carole will discuss the importance of a living shoreline and healthy saltmarshes for protecting the Cape's largest estuary. She'll share recent findings on nitrogen levels in the Bay, and will discuss ongoing challenges and management strategies.

Tuesday, March 15

6:00 pm via Zoom



To Boldly Grow: Finding Joy, Adventure, and Dinner in Your Own Backyard

Tamar Haspel

Author, journalist, oyster farmer

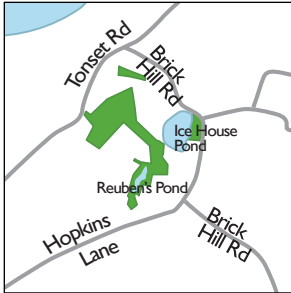
Journalist and self-proclaimed "crappy gardener" Tamar Haspel is on a mission: to show us that raising or gathering our own food is not as hard as we might think. After she and her husband moved from Manhattan to two acres on Cape Cod, they began raising chickens, growing tomatoes, foraging for mushrooms, even hunting for meat, relying mainly on ingenuity and creativity. Tamar's book *To Boldly Grow* chronicles her journey from cluelessness to competence; her talk will help us discover a more direct connection to what we eat.

May date and location TBA

Winter/Spring 2021-2022 Walks

Get to know the **open spaces** of Orleans on our **popular guided walks**. They're **free, fun**, and appropriate for **all ages**.

Space is restricted, advance registration required. Call OCT or register on our website.

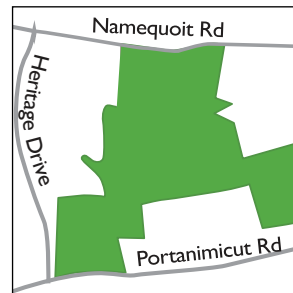


Ice House/Reuben's Pond Conservation Area

1.5-mile walk around two freshwater ponds, focused on migrating waterfowl that stop over here.

Meet at 245 Tonset Road, Orleans

Saturday, December 4
10:00 – 11:30 am

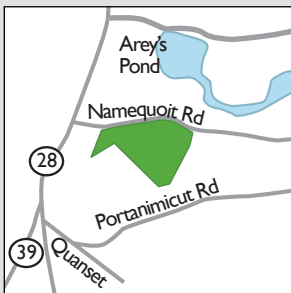


Christian Conservation Area

1-mile walk through old field, wooded forests, and along the edge of a cedar swamp on this town property.

Meet at 80 Portanimitic Road, Orleans

Friday, April 8
1:00 – 2:00 pm

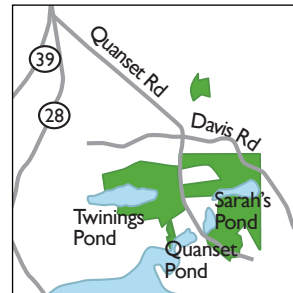


John Kenrick Woods

Take a historically rich walk of about 1 mile through a pine grove and see specimens of the rare American chestnut.

Meet at 35 Namequoit Road, South Orleans

Monday, January 10
11:00 am – 12:30 pm

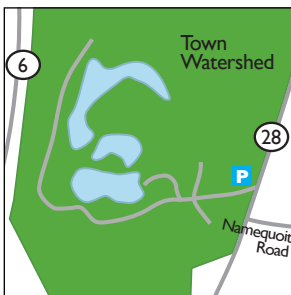


Three Ponds (Meadow Bog, Sarah's Pond, Twinings Pond)

2-hour walk through more than 80 acres of OCT-protected land, highlighting the connection between lands and waters.

Meet at 135 Quanset Road, South Orleans

Friday, May 13
1:00 – 3:00 pm

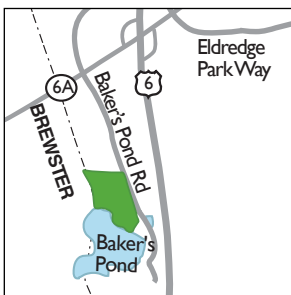


Orleans Watershed

Get a taste of the 500 acres that make up the Orleans Watershed on this 1.5-mile walk.

Meet at 350 South Orleans Road, Orleans

Tuesday, February 15
1:00 – 2:30 pm



Baker's Pond Conservation Area

1.75-mile walk on adjoining conservation lands around the "great pond" that straddles Orleans and Brewster.

Meet at 80 Baker's Pond Road, Orleans

Thursday, March 24
9:00 – 10:30 am

Embracing the Land's History

Learn about the jack-of-all-trades who lent his name to the John Kenrick Woods and about Kenrick's outsized role in Orleans, as a businessman and longtime selectman. Discover clues in the landscape that shed light on the Kenrick family's ventures as we celebrate the connection between historic preservation and protection of open space.



John Kenrick Woods

Register for each walk and find trail maps on our website, orleansconservationtrust.org

Window on the Past

Rachia Heyelman's Legacy of Conservation

by Diana Landau

The Heyelman family of South Orleans has been generous to Orleans Conservation Trust. Over the decades, several important properties came our way courtesy of Rachia Heyelman and her late brother, Charles Abbott Heyelman. They include Hosea's Swamp, abutting the wellfield on Quanset Road; a parcel in what became the Meadow Bog Conservation Area; and the 22-plus acres of Namequoit Bog, a former cranberry bog that has transitioned into a biologically diverse wet meadow habitat.

Another jewel that's about to enter the Trust's protection thanks in large part to Rachia Heyelman is 1.8 acres at 109 Portanimicut Road, which will likely be known as the Window on the Bay Conservation Area. (See page 5.) Further, Rachia has made it known that she will leave a remarkable bequest to OCT: more than 20 acres of the remaining Heyelman family land in the neighborhood surrounding Paw Wah Pond. In time, we hope, a trail on this land will connect the shoreline of Little Pleasant Bay to the more westerly OCT and town lands on Portanimicut Road. On a sun-drenched October afternoon, OCT Executive Director Steve O'Grady and this trustee sat down for a conversation with Rachia about her personal history with this landscape—where, perhaps more than anywhere else in town, you may feel as if you've journeyed into the past.

"This is my home. This is the place that I love, which is why I want to see it preserved."

Rachia Heyelman is speaking from a lawn chair on the future OCT preserve at 109 Portanimicut Road. But her gesture takes in a wide swath of territory around the east end of this bucolic road in South Orleans, where she was raised and where her parents long operated a hilltop lodge and cottage colony. At one time the family owned upward of 60 acres in the neighborhood—much of which Rachia, who turns 86 this November, is in the process of putting into conservation.

Asked if she thought her strong conservation ethic was inherited, she parses the question carefully. "My mother was more in the business of buying land and building cottages," she says. "But before she passed away, I was already pushing the conservation idea, and she was happy about that."

Rachia's mother, Thelma, was a Nickerson, "one of those old Cape Cod names." Through her, Rachia can trace her ancestry back ten generations to a young passenger on the *Mayflower*, one



This page: Rachia Heyelman at 109 Portanimicut Road, and part of the cottage on that site that she calls Red Shutters. Photo © Hardie Truesdale. Facing page, top: Postcard advertising the Ocean Bay View Lodge, courtesy of Rachia Heyelman.

Joseph Rogers. It was he who purchased this piece of land from the Monomoyicks around 1658. "He wanted it for the salt marsh, so they could cut hay for the cattle."

Few know the early history of Orleans as well as Rachia. "They didn't bring cattle into the marsh, but they cut the hay and loaded it on flat-bottomed barges at low tide, then floated back in on the high tide." Later the marsh became known as Deacon Rogers Meadow: that Rogers was "my three-greats-grandfather," says Rachia, and a deacon at what's now the Federated Church on Main Street. It passed down through various Rogers, Higgins, and Nickersons—with pieces occasionally sold or traded to neighbors. Rachia points out where one of them, around 1903, built a dike across the head of the meadow. "They wanted to turn it into a cranberry bog, but it never worked out. Too much salt, or the tides may have flooded it."

The Family Business

Born in 1900, Rachia's mother was working as a live-in teacher in Havana when she met Frank Heyelman—an Australian who

was employed by a Scottish firm that made sugar machinery. For a time, the couple wintered in Cuba and summered in Orleans, sometimes staying at Yellow Shutters—one of two cottages Rachia's grandfather built at 109 Portanimitcut. After they settled in Orleans, Charles was born in 1925 and Rachia in 1935.

While Frank traveled for his engineering work, Thelma ran a summer inn, starting around 1940. "In those days, you could look downhill in both directions to the water and all the way to Hog Island, so they called it Ocean Bay View Lodge," Rachia notes. "I sort of grew up on it—her having people in the house. Sometimes I'd be sleeping in a different bedroom each night. Eventually my mother got tired of feeding people, and after the war we concentrated on the cottages."

After World War II, when farming began to give way to residential development, "my mother and I realized what was going to take place, so we purposely bought as much of the surrounding land as possible." Her parents' first acquisition, back in 1930, was Hosea's Swamp, a beautiful white cedar swamp apparently named for the wife of the last full-blooded Monomoyick in the area. Later they added the woods behind the lodge and eventually several pieces of land stretching down to Paw Wah Pond. "The woodland behind me," Rachia gestures eastward, "was bought in 1953 using money that had been put aside for me to go to college. I still went to college. But I always wanted to come back here. I hated the idea of being in some place far away from the Cape, working in some office."

Out and Back Again

Like her father, Rachia loved to travel and has covered lots of ground. In the 1950s, she was drafted into the Army and served in Europe. Her appetite for sightseeing whetted, she later bought a Eurailpass and spent three months touring by train. "I managed to touch all the Western European countries." She has driven across this continent four times, "a different route each time. I'd sew together some old army blankets to make a sleeping bag and curl up on the backseat." Once she bought an old car from a neighbor. "He was afraid to drive it to Chatham. I drove it to California and back, mostly on back roads, trying to see as much as I could." She also drove through Mexico as far as Acapulco. "I turned left at the canal and left again when I got to Texas," as she puts it.

Rachia's wanderlust didn't abate until recently. While she was renting out the cottages, "I would be free from late October until early December—that's when I would go traveling. I've been to every state and to every Canadian province. Five years ago, I went up to Newfoundland, going over from Nova Scotia on the car ferry."

"The Exact Place I Wish to Be"

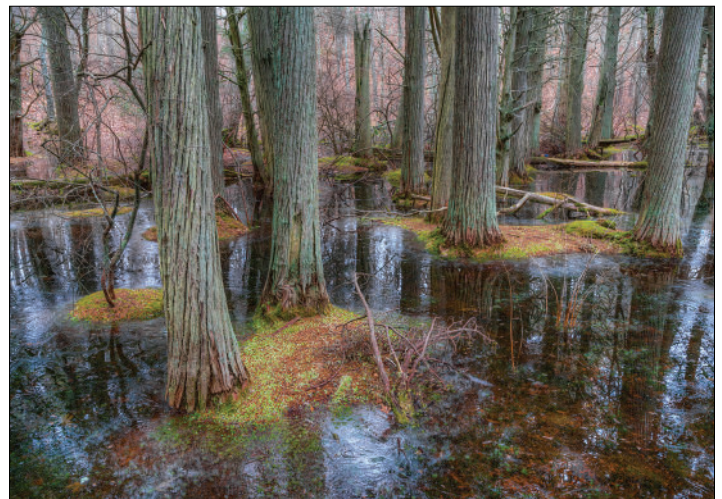
Rachia always worked at the family trade, keeping up the lodge and cottages, the landscaping around them, and clearing some of the surrounding land. After Thelma died in 1984, she became the full-time owner/manager. Her brother, Charles, had moved away but came back to share the work. "In the early 2000s, we upgraded the cottage kitchens. And every year in the spring I would go in,

varnish the floors or paint the porch floor on one cottage or another." She retired from innkeeping not quite a decade ago. "On my Christmas cards in 2013 I wrote a note to my guests: 'I've enjoyed the pleasure of your company and the work, but I am 78 years old and am slowing down.'"

Rachia is keenly interested in OCT's plans for the lands she is contributing to the Trust's conservation portfolio. Although she remains attached to some of the old buildings, like Red and Yellow Shutters, she understands why they may need to be removed and the lands restored. Of the 20-acre future bequest, she notes, "My will says that it is to be used exclusively for conservation, passive recreation, and wildlife refuge."

There have always been people and families in Orleans who lived very close to their local places, but Rachia Heyelman's roots in the Portanimitcut area may go deeper than any. And, like others, she saw that putting land in conservation is the best way to ensure that future generations can experience a beloved landscape or view. She feels fortunate to have known her homeland so intimately.

"Sometimes in the summer when I was especially busy—like after work—I'd look around and tell myself, this is the exact place I wish to be. And I almost feel as if I was part of the property. So, I've been very happy."



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From July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021, Orleans Conservation Trust received support from its members and the community in the form of unrestricted donations and restricted gifts, which specifically support land acquisition, land management, or educational programs. The Trust also received special gifts made in honor or in memory of someone designated by the giver.

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Every gift, in whatever amount and for whatever purpose, demonstrates your commitment to conserving land and plays a vital role in helping OCT fulfill its mission—to preserve land and educate the public in order to sustain our natural resources and the character of our community.

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Active in OCT for many years,

Jeanne Berdik spent her career



in nonprofit leadership, including developing public-private partnerships. She is a

director and incoming president of the Nauset Garden Club and chairs its Steering Committee for the Pollinator Pathways Cape Cod initiative. She is married with three grown children and six grandchildren.

Jim West was a senior executive at CHUBB Limited, where he worked for more than 20 years in several leadership roles including executive vice president. Since retiring in 2019, he splits his



time between Florida and Orleans. He volunteers with the Homeless Prevention

Council; with OCT, he focuses on land stewardship and invasive species control.

For more, see orleansconservationtrust.org/staff-trustees/

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