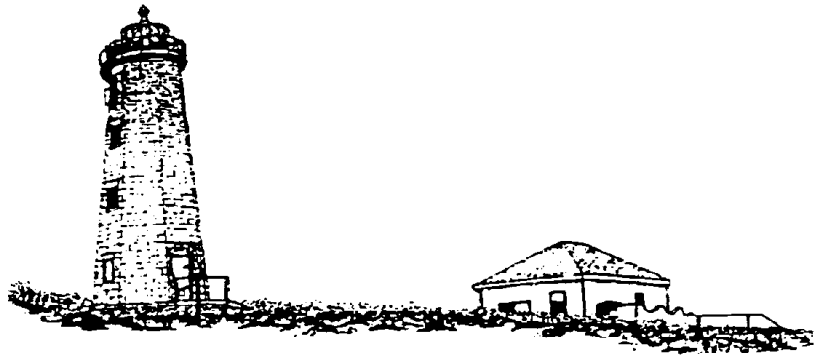


Benton Beach Beacon



April 2009

Spring Beach Work Day

Saturday, May 16, 2009
9am on.....

It is finally spring and time to turn our attention to getting Benton Beach ready for the new summer season. The beach has weathered the winter/early spring fairly well.

At last fall's work day, the decking under the canopy was taken up and stored for the winter with the dock pieces. Before we put it back down, we want to really dig out all the sand that has been accumulating under those decking pieces for years, so we will be doing a bit of shoveling. We also will be replacing many of the individual broken or warped deck pieces.

We also need to do the usual spring projects-putting up the canopy, tidying out the beach house and raking the seaweed off the beach. There is a good chance that David and the Boy Scouts may put down the dock before the work day.

Last summer we sanded then painted several of our older picnic tables a wonderful sage green, and we also stained our new round table before we put it away for the winter. We do have 2 remaining tables we may try to paint.

There are lots of other small chores, something for everyone. Bring gloves and a shovel, maybe a hammer, saw and drill if you might be able to help with the deck work. If you can't make it Saturday, but want to help, just check the poster in the beach house when you do get to the beach to see what chores may still need to be done.

Coffee and donuts will be provided Saturday morning and pizza at lunch time. Hope to see you there!!!

Kaplan Dock Update

by Ellen Benton Fales

As most of our family knows, we have been closely watching the progress of the house being built next to the beach at 101 West Lane, known to us as Turkey Point. Barry and Rikki Kaplan of Scarsdale, New York are building an approximately 12,000 sq. ft summer/weekend home, complete with pool and a nearly completed guest house. They had hoped that the main house would be finished by the end of 2009 and it will certainly be a very grand residence.

It came to our attention about a year ago that the Kaplans had submitted an application to DEP(Department of Environmental Protection) to construct a long fixed pier/dock on 8 foot cement pilings (120-140 feet, depending on the location) with a float at the end. Their primary purpose for the dock would be for boating, both their own boat and for overnight guests arriving by boat. Benton Beach Corporation obtained a copy of the application and plans a year ago. The application, crafted by a marine engineer, provided four possible locations for this dock. Three locations extended out in front of the house into the water around Turkey Point and the forth extends out into Benton Bay, originating from the smooth outcropping of rocks that you see to the left of our bay, just about in the middle, when looking toward Faulkner's Island. Although no decision had been rendered, DEP's preliminary thoughts were apparently to favor the site into Benton Bay. Family members at the beach last summer

may have noticed that the area near those rocks had been cleared and an expanse of grass planted leading from the residence under construction right to the rock outcropping. Indeed, the Kaplan's had apparently already run water and electrical service to the edge of that rock ledge in anticipation of approval for this site.

Over the past year, we have tried to keep informed as to the status of the application. Joel and I met with the Kaplans' last July, who welcomed our assistance. The Kaplans favor the sites that extend out in front of their house, as, of course, we do also. We provided information to the Guilford Harbor Management Commission, who reviewed the application last summer, as to our experiences with boating in our bay as well as water depths and pictures of the bay at low tide. The Guilford Harbor Management Commission, in Aug, 2008, recommended AGAINST locating the dock into Benton Bay and sent this recommendation to DEP. In Dec, 2008, DEP asked the Kaplans and their agent to redo the application, focusing on the proposed site farthest from our beach, a site at the far Southeast corner of their home, near their guest house. The application is currently in the re-do stage and will probably be re-submitted to DEP this month. We have been in close contact with DEP to try to keep up to date on the status of the application. It may take several more months for DEP to review the revised proposal and issue a decision, of which the Corporation will be notified.

The Oyster Bed

by Holly Whelan



There are many oyster shells at Benton Beach. Pick one up and think about the words from the well-loved book *Gift from the Sea* by Anne Morrow Lindbergh.

“There are many oyster shells on the beach and yet each one is individual. You never find two alike. Each is fitted and formed by its own life. The oyster shell is a good one to express the middle years of life. It is made of interdependencies and

shared experiences. It is woven of memories, conflicts, triumphs, and disappointment. It is woven by family, friends, work and play. The oyster shell is humble and awkward. It is comfortable in its familiarity. It is symbolic of middle age, the second flowering and second growth. It is a period of shedding shells: the shell of ambition, the shell of material accumulations and possessions, the shell of the ego. We can easily belittle the afternoon of life and pretend it never comes. We can push the clock back and try to prolong the morning, over reaching and overstraining ourselves in the unnatural effort. Stand still and confidently face the new stage of living.”

Memories of the Barn and Farm

by Ellen Benton Fales, as related by Marjorie Spalding

Milk Deliveries

When Milton was in his teens but before he was old enough for his driver's license, I would help him with the milk deliveries. Dad would be driving the school bus. Milton and I would set out very early in the morning. I would drive the pick-up truck and Milton would get out at each house, run up to the door, place the milk bottles on the doorstep and collect the empty bottles. Sometimes we would do a couple dozen deliveries. Then I would drive Milton to school and drop him off. I would drive home with the empty bottles and Mother would wash them out.

Watering the Cows the old fashioned way

I remember a few times when Dad was sick and could not get to the barn and I had to make sure the cows had enough water in their bowls in each stall. On a few of these occasions the electricity was out. That meant that there was no well pump. I would have to walk to the well, which was located at the northern edge of the barn pasture up near the old Bain property. I would lower a bucket on a rope into the well and bring the water up by hand, then lug each bucket back to the barn, repeating the process for each cow's bowl. It sure took a long time!

Cooling off in the Hay Mow

When we were teenagers, Dorothy and I were helping up in the hay mow, at the top of the barn, one hot summer day. As the hay came in to us via the front of the mow, we would have

to use pitchforks to put it toward the back. It was summer and hot to begin with, and even hotter up in the mow. The hay was getting everywhere, making us itchy as well. We decided to take off our blouses and there we were, pitching hay in our bras. We thought that was pretty funny and no one came upon us, fortunately!

Good Samaritan Todd Chemacki

by Joel E. Helander

Todd Chemacki, who is the great grandson of the late Eliot H. Benton and the grandson of Marjorie & Delman Spalding, was recently honored as one of the "Heroes of South Central Connecticut" by the American Red Cross.

In his official capacity as Conservation Officer for the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Todd responded to an emergency at a pavilion at Hammonasset Beach State Park on June 8, 2008. A beautiful day turned ugly when a thunderstorm rolled in with pouring rain, high winds, hail, and lightning.

Todd and his duty partner actually witnessed the beach pavilion being struck by lightning and rushed to the site. Several of the 40+ persons on the pavilion were injured and one person lay unconscious. They rendered immediate first aid care to the victim in cardiac arrest until emergency medical services personnel arrived. Although the victim of lightning strike was fatally electrocuted, Todd received an "Adult Good Samaritan" award for his brave participation at a tragic accident scene.

Fence Repair Workday

by Ellen Benton Fales, photos courtesy Holly Whelan

A Fence Repair day held Sat, April 4th was a wonderful success. Family members gathered together in the morning at Joel's, then spent the day making tremendous repairs to two areas of pasture line. First, the long line of fencing that runs parallel to the Beach Road out toward the creek was successfully repaired, with many poles replaced as well as painstakingly braced, and brand new heavy duty barbed wire was run the length of the new fence line. Eliot, Forrest, Tim and Todd were the principal masterminds



From Left to Right: Eliot Benton, Tim Chemacki, Forrest Helander, Todd Chemacki

and workers on this area. This had been the site late last summer where a lone cow escaped and wandered up the beach road for a time. A friend of Joel's who happened to be staying in the cottage singlehandedly herded the cow back through the gate, and somehow, the cow did not remember her escape route to do it again.

The second area of fence repair was on the far western side of the grazing meadow, where the cattle spend a lot of time beneath the cedars on the old Roger Benton property. The cattle had completely broken through a weak section here on two occasions last year. A line

of fencing of approximately 75 feet was replaced, requiring numerous poles and brand new wire. This area had been shrouded in briars right up to the fence but thanks to Eliot Benton's clearing of the briars the week before, we were able to get right in to the area and begin work first thing in the morning. The workers on this line were Mike, Dan and Sandy Schaefer and Andrew and Ellen Fales. A hearty lunch of homemade ham, turkey and roast beef grinders, chips and homemade cookies was delivered to the workers at noon. All in all, a tremendous day of work by so many has given us two fence lines that will last for many, many years to come.



Eliot Benton installs a cross-brace.



Tim Chemacki hammers a post while Todd Chemacki (left) and Forrest Helander (right) steady it.

Benton Barn Is Saved

by Joel E. Helander

In the din and confusion of the transformation of Uncle Milton's former property at 345 Vineyard Point Road into a palatial country estate, there has been one pronounced victory: Benton Barn is saved!

The new property owner (since June '08), Mark Gregoretti, has spared no expense in the pre-construction phase by razing the house, clearing and re-configuring the land, re-building stonewalls, blasting, and running underground utilities up the hill.

Although Benton Barn has been saved from inevitable demolition, it has not, unfortunately, been saved on the site. However, it is still a bittersweet victory for the barn and also the Town of Guilford's new Demolition Delay Ordinance.

Under the new ordinance, the Town's Zoning Enforcement Officer notified (February 12, 2009) the Guilford Preservation Alliance and the Town Historian about a demolition permit application for the barn. Objections to the demo were respectfully tendered and a meeting of all parties, including Mr. Gregoretti and the general contractor, was held at the barn on February 14. Jonathan Wuerth, a restoration contractor with a specialty in old barns, attended the meeting for the purpose of examining the timber frame of the older section of the barn, which is the two story hay barn. Despite the loss of sills and badly compromised exterior siding, Mr. Wuerth concluded that a substantial portion of the timber frame had structural integrity and was worthy of salvage. In exterior dimensions, the original hay barn measures 24 x 36.5 feet.

Within a few days, Mr. Wuerth and the general contractor hammered out a written agreement whereby Mr. Wuerth will dismantle the barn for its eventual re-erection for an unknown client in an unknown location. The work of barn dismantlement began on March 25. It is a careful, if not arduous process, but Benton Barn is being saved for resurrection.

Benton Barn: A Symbol of Americana

by Joel E. Helander

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The May 2004 issue of Benton Beach Beacon carried a feature story on "Benton Barn: A Symbol of Americana," which is now being reprinted on the occasion of the barn's demise in Sachem's Head. The barn's resurrection will be reported in a future edition of the Beacon.*

Uncle Milton Benton's weather-beaten barn at 345 Vineyard Point Road, Sachem's Head, is truly a symbol of Americana. As the historian Eric Sloane has written, the "barn was born of American soil and fitted to an American landscape for specific American needs."

There is an iron-like quality of the old wood of Benton Barn. There is a cleanness of the adze-cuts in its timber frame, hewn from oak and chestnut. Everywhere, the barn has the imprint of the builder's hand. It is built for soundness and endurance, for wind and weather. It is more than just an old barn, but the remnant of an old barnyard. It is a stark reminder of the families who shed blood, sweat, and tears to live off the land in the manner of their forefathers.

Benton Barn is tucked strategically in a little glen beside an old ice pond and stone well. Although the twin silos and open cowshed are gone, its beautiful proportions remain. Who was this barn builder who built with such architectural honesty? Where does this barn belong in the history of Guilford and New England?

Lest we believe for a minute that these sentiments (and appreciations) are over-stated, we can turn to the inclinations of Elton L. Helander, a city-bred boy, on his first visits to Sachem's Head. The years were 1946-1948, when he was dating Carolyn Benton. Elton documented Benton Barn and the seasonal functions of a farmer by using a Kodak camera with Kodachrome slide film. Of the barn, he later painted a February snow scene in oils, which still hangs in the Helander home. Clearly, Elton Helander was charmed by the barn's appearance. Perhaps he viewed it as a picture of Americana. Perhaps he knew that in order to find the spirit of early America, one first looks to the country. In the city, no one whistles yesterday's tunes.

And lest we believe for a minute that Benton Barn is not really celebrated, we can turn to the venerable halls of Yale Peabody Museum in



New Haven, CT. For 59 years, a color mural with Benton Barn as its focal point has been viewed by hundreds of thousands of visitors. The mural is the background painting for a diorama in the "Hall of Southern New England." It was painted by J. Perry Wilson (1889-1976), an artist widely known in museums of natural history. In recent weeks, when Edwin & Kasha Benton were admiring the diorama on the third floor of the museum, a staff member overheard their remarks about its location. Evidently, Peabody staff had never learned where this model barn stood and expressed great joy in knowing. The following Sunday, as I rode my bicycle past Uncle Milton's driveway, my attention was arrested by a gentleman down on his knees near the barn. At first, it appeared that somebody had fallen. But not so. It was Mr. Copeland MacClintock, invertebrate paleontologist at Peabody, who had received special permission from Milton Benton to examine the barn. For Copeland and his associate, this barn was an exciting, new discovery. Coincidentally, as Copeland and I introduced ourselves, we both realized that we had corresponded on the subject of Eastern Box Turtles for some time -- never realizing our common bond with Benton Barn.

By Grandpa Benton's own account (Eliot H. Benton) in a taped interview (8/24/1968), Benton Barn was built as an outbuilding for the farmhouse at 370 Vineyard Point Road. In the tradition of the nineteenth century, it was built before the farmhouse, (to provide first for the livestock), but oddly enough, the barn was built on the opposite side of the road and at some distance from the house. There is a good reason for this, according to Grandpa Benton. He stated that John Benton (his grandfather's brother) planned to locate the house near the barn, perhaps on the flat ground near the beginning of Milton's driveway. The shallow ledge required blasting, which became so difficult that the entire venture was abandoned and they relocated the

house to the south (present) side of Vineyard Road. Grandpa Benton always spoke of the Benton brothers working together on the construction of their three houses in Sachem's Head, so it might be assumed that barn-raising involved the same cooperative venture. The brothers were Dan L. Benton, Jr., Richard Benton, and John Benton.

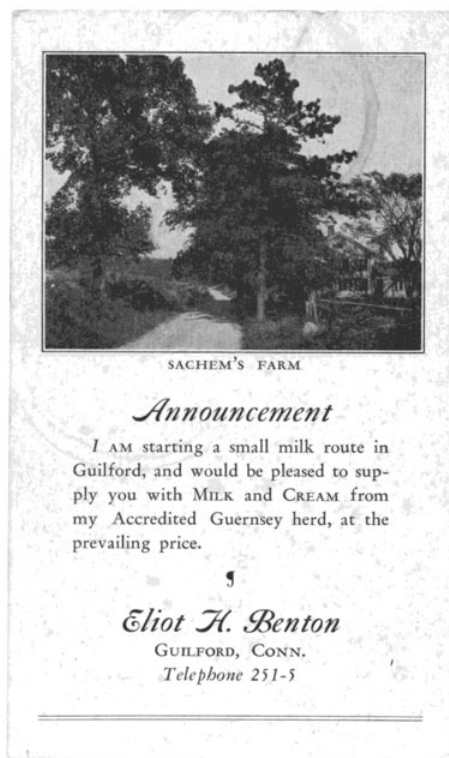
The two story portion of Benton Barn, which is the hay mow, originates to circa 1850 and the sons of Dan L. Benton, Sr. The John Benton farmhouse was built in 1851 at the time of John Benton's marriage. Many of us can remember the old cowshed (on the barn's east end) that collapsed during Hurricane Gloria. Along in the 1960s, first cousins had fun and frolic playing here, crawling along a catwalk of planks that had been laid at ceiling level. A set of oxcart

wheels in the end bay of the cowshed were a source of curiosity. According to Grandpa Benton, the barn originally had a second cowshed on the same perpendicular as the first shed, but on the other (west) end of the barn. The 1852 Irvine wall map of Guilford confirms the original configuration of the barn with its two cowsheds. At some unknown date, both cowsheds were joined together as one long building.

Like older dwelling houses, barns have an evolution of their own, telescoping up and out to accommodate the needs of their owners. The narrow one story extension on the west end of the barn, nearly even with Milton Benton's driveway, dates to

circa 1860, when Horatio L. Scranton's owned the John Benton Farm. It is properly called the cow barn, as opposed to the larger hay barn. Scranton was the proprietor of the grand Sachem's Head Hotel, 1859-1865. He owned the farm for the purpose of supplying dairy products and other fresh provisions to grace the dining tables of his establishment.

The farm returned to Benton family ownership and was a wedding gift for Herbert Benton, the



father of Eliot H. Benton. In 1888, the Grand List of Guilford shows that Herbert was assessed for "10 neat cattle". Doubtlessly, they were housed in the cowsheds. Milton Benton states that his Grandfather Herbert told him personally of his harrowing experience during the Blizzard of 1888. The blizzard "dumped" snow for two days in March. By the second day, Herbert devised a scheme to make his way to the barn to care for the cattle. He took a large coil of manilla rope and fastened it to the shop outside the farmhouse. He played out the rope as he fought his way through blinding snow. Before reaching the barn, he reached the end of the rope and didn't dare continue for fear of being lost. He returned to the farmhouse with the security of the lifeline, yet distress of neglecting the livestock for that unforgettable day.

About 1900, Hebert Benton established the retail milk business that son Eliot later expanded. A small herd of dark red devon cows supplied milk enough for the needs of the family and two winter customers: Ernest Barker and the Fiskes. In summertime, when the cottagers returned to Sachem's Head, milk sales soared.

Father and son, Herbert and Eliot Benton, opened up the cow barn on the south side along in the 1920s for the installation of a manure carrier. This consisted of a bucket on little wheels, suspended on a cable that was extended to an outdoor pole.

Along in the 1930s, Eliot H. Benton built up an accredited Guernsey herd of cows and advertised for a milk route in Guilford. His fine reputation gave him the patronage of about fifty families. This retail business coincided with the arrival of electricity (1930), which allowed use of "surge" milking canisters, instead of the old hand-milking method. One-cylinder gasoline motors in the barn used for pumping water were retrofit with a vacuum pump to run the new

milking machines. Concrete floors were poured in the Benton cow barn and stanchions set into place. Eliot Benton arose every day at 5:00 a.m. and milked not less than a dozen cows. After breakfast, he cooled, bottled, and loaded up for milk delivery. Ice made the matter of refrigeration simple. Ice in the pond next to the barn was carefully marked in wintertime and cut into blocks. If packed in sawdust, the ice would last through summer.

At the time of the Hurricane of 1938, Eliot H. Benton extended the hay barn about twelve feet on the east gable end, using lumber salvaged from William H. Norton's barn in Leete's Island. This created more room in the hay mow. At haying time, it fell to the six children of Eliot and Mabel Benton to spread out the hay as it was pitched in through the top window.

Tightly-baled hay had not been introduced -- the mow was a large nest of loose hay.

Shortly after 1940, Eliot Benton and son Milton added a large sloping roof addition (eaves extension) onto the cow barn. They laid up a cinderblock foundation and used second hand timber salvaged from the old Newhall Cottage, which was virgin, white pine boards.

H. Milton Benton, the third of Mabel and Eliot's six children,

fell to farming and stuck to it. He began milking cows at twelve years of age and at sixteen years took charge of milk deliveries for his father. At seventeen years of age, he plowed a two acre field when his parents were on vacation. About 1945, Milton and his father formed a partnership in the retail milk business. Eliot H. Benton & Son became a well known tradition in Guilford. Their cows yielded an average of 100 quarts daily. By 1959, when Eliot Benton retired, Milton had given up the retail route and was wholesaling 240 quarts daily to Maple Shade Dairy. The well-known oppressions of farming prompted him to retire from dairy farming a few years later.



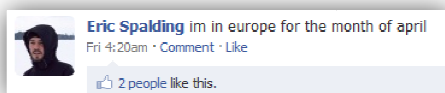
Milton Benton continues to regale his children, grandchildren, and extended family with true life adventures about Sachem's Farm. He is truly a bridge between modern farming and farming of yester-year, when horses -- not tractors, were used for heavy farm work and kerosene lanterns preceded modern electric lighting. Benton Barn is part of the legacy of the Benton Family as well as a symbol of Americana.

The Spaldings Go To Europe

by Ken Spalding

Bryce is spending his spring semester of college in Freiburg, Germany, from February 25 to July 25. On weekends he has had some interesting travel, such as wine tasting in France, mountain sledding in the Swiss Alps and sightseeing in Zurich. His semester in Germany has spurred the rest of the Spaldings to travel to Europe.

Eric is in Europe the last three weeks in April. He landed in Rome two days after the Italian earthquake and was in Rome on Good Friday. As this is being written, he is in Florence visiting a friend. After a short stop in Zurich he goes to Freiburg to visit Bryce, to Berlin to visit our German AFS daughter Paula, then to Hamburg and Brussels where he will visit friends and fly out of Brussels.



Sue and Ken will spend the month of July in Europe. They will fly into Berlin and spend time with Paula and her parents. They will see Katherine, another German AFS daughter, in Hamburg and spend more time with Paula's parents in their tiny town of Stroitt. After 6 days with Bryce, Paula's parents will pick Sue and Ken up in Freiburg and drive them on a two week tour of southern Germany, Austria, northern Italy and Switzerland. Hopefully, during this tour they will get to see Turkish AFS son Umut, who is now in Slovenia. On July 29, they will fly back to Boston from Zurich.

Sue, Eric and Bryce have all been to Europe before. It is Ken's first trip.

Editor's Note: AFS is the American Field Service. Find out more at www.afs.org.

Notes

Calendar of Events:

Please call Heather Collinson (860-663-3076), Benton Beach Corp Secretary, for scheduling a special beach event. This is not necessary for small, spontaneous gatherings. Please also note that scheduling **does not** grant exclusive use of the beach during the event.

May 16 (Sat) Beach work day

Jun 2nd, 3rd or 4th (Tue) Alpha Club picnic

Jun 27 (Sat) Fales Family picnic

Jul 11 (Sat) Justin Benton Smith picnic

Jul 25 (Sat) Benton picnic (Rain date Sun 7/26)

Aug 12-19 (Wed-Wed) Schaeffer/Fales camp out

Aug 21-23 (Fri-Sun) Chemacki & friends camp out & picnic

Electronic Version of the Newsletter

If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the newsletter in addition to or instead of the paper copy, please email Tim Chemacki at tim_chemacki@hotmail.com.

Mailing Addresses

If you have recently moved, please make sure the Benton Beach Corporation secretary has your current mailing address.

Content Submission

Please submit any articles or family updates to Tim Chemacki for incorporation into the next issue (*preferably by email*).

Timothy Chemacki
167 Bashan Rd.
East Haddam, CT 06423
Phone: (860) 615-4993
Email: tim_chemacki@hotmail.com