

Benton Beach Beacon



April 2011

Benton Family Fence and Field Workday

Saturday, April 30th, 8:00 am on...

This year, we are again planning a combined one-day family effort to accomplish fence repair and do needed invasive-rose bush cutting and spraying in the meadow. We are planning two work groups. Those willing and able to do the fence repairs will work on an area along the beach road where the cows escaped this past summer. We do not think it will take too many new poles, but definitely needs new wire. The second group will rake off rose bush stems as Bill Leete's mower cuts them, then spray the heart of each bush, in an effort to open up the meadow for the cows.

A lunch feast will be provided to all workers so if you can't come early but want to help with lunch, that is great, too.

We are planning to meet at Joel's house around 8am.

Posts, wire, wire hardware, quick setting cement, levels will be provided. For those working actively on the fence line, if you have shovels, post hole diggers, crowbars, wire cutters, come-along, chain saws, bring these and put your name on your tools. Meadow workers, bring a rake, gloves, snips, and empty spray bottles if you have them.

Questions, call Ellen at 401-783-2429 or Joel at 453-1111

BBC Spring Beach Workday

Saturday, May 14th, 8:30 a.m.....

(Downpour date Sunday, May 15th)

Spring is here and it is time to get the beach ready for the summer months. There are the usual projects, including putting the dock down, cleaning out the beach house, putting the canopy up, raking the beach and general tidying. We will be staining the round picnic table.

Coffee and breakfast treats will be available first thing in the morning. If Sunday is a better day for you, come and check the poster in the beach house to see what chores still need to be done.

All cleaning supplies and paints will be provided. If you have a metal rake, gloves, or a wheelbarrow bring them along!

Looking ahead: The annual Benton Family Picnic will be Saturday, July 23rd, at the beach. Mark your calendars for this day and the most fun of the summer!!!! More information to come!!

Fire!

by Edwin Benton

It was the year 1948 sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas, barely a month before Mother would die from a strangulated hernia (January 5, 1949).

Father and Mother had raised six children. I was the last to be still living at home. My older brother and two of my older sisters were married. The other older sister was a kindergarten teacher in West Hartford. My younger brother Roger was away in his first year of college at the University of Connecticut.

The time was late evening. Mother, Father, and I had gone to bed; farmers and their families retire early because their way of life demands early morning chores.

Our house did not have a modern heating system with those wonderful dials called thermostats. We had a coal-burning furnace with one 3-foot by 3-foot grate in the living room floor which supplied heat for the entire house. Coal was expensive and the cost factor for wood was only labor. The previous year, Father had installed a wood stove in the parlor. It was vented through the wood and plaster wall into the masonry chimney directly behind the stove and the partition. This appeared to be a cost saving innovation and gave us additional heat, although I am sure a glass of water in our bedrooms would still have a skim of ice by morning, at least when the thermometer was hovering around zero.

I was asleep downstairs in the small room Milton had vacated a year earlier when he commenced his new life of marriage. Around 11:00 Mother woke me and said she feared the house was on fire. She said Father refused to wake up and said it was her imagination. Mother convinced me something was indeed wrong, although whatever was going on was quite subtle.

I pinpointed the problem to be the large upstairs bedroom where my three sisters formerly slept. We hooked up a hose to a downstairs spigot and screwed on a shutoff valve to the other end. Carrying a hammer and flat bar, I pulled the hose up the back stairs to the inside wall of the girls' bedroom. I was now located exactly above the wood stove of the parlor below and I was next to the chimney which was behind the lath and wood plastered wall in front of me.

I pried off the baseboard; not smoke but fire erupted into my face. Backing away, I immediately applied water into the void between the chimney and the wall where the fire was coming from.

Mother called the fire department when she witnessed my fire fight. The fire engines came in a remarkable short length of time but Mother and I had already subdued what would have been a catastrophe with loss of the house and probably our lives. Our savior was Mother's persevering instinct.

The damage was amazingly minimal. My singed eyebrows and eyelashes grew back, but the partly burned wood beams which erupted with such fierceness when I allowed the oxygenated air into that enclosed area show the burned scarring to this day.

Sachem's Head Benton Barn: Photos Framed in Barn Boards

by Ken Spalding

The Benton barn in Sachems Head was built around 1850. In 2009 it was torn down. Just before it was razed, Joel Helander and I were able to salvage some of the boards from the barn. David Ott helped arrange for a local cabinet maker to make frames from some of the boards.

Joel found two photos of the barn from the 1940s and worked with a printer to print copies of the photos. He had the photos matted and mounted in the 7 barn board frames that were made.

One photo was taken in May of 1944 by J. Perry Wilson, famed mural painter, who used the photo to help paint the barn as part of a mural for the Peabody Museum at Yale University. The other photo was taken by Elton Helander in February of 1947.

Now we are making these photos available to other members of the family. The first framed photos cost \$100 each. We hope that we can replicate this price for others.

I have tried to reach as many family members as I can through email, directly and indirectly, but I know not everyone has learned about this opportunity. So far 24 framed photos have been ordered.

You could get a framed photo, a printed photo without a frame, or digital images of the two photos. You would pay only for the actual costs. For example, the digital images would not cost

you anything if I can send them to you via email. **If you would like to know more about the barn photos and frames, please contact me.**

Ken Spalding

Email: spaldings4@msn.com

Phone: 207-685-9012

Postal mail: 143 Lord Road, Wayne, Maine 04284

Return of the Ospreys

by Joel Helander

One of the thrilling harbingers of spring in the land of Benton Beach is the return of the ospreys! A pair has been in seasonal residence in the southeast corner of Uncle Edwin Benton's former house lot (now Andrea & Peter Feig's) since 1996.

That was the year that two of the magnificent birds were first spotted on Uncle Edwin's homemade nesting platform. It was April 13, 1996 and the nesting pair of ospreys labored diligently for two weeks to build a nest.

My friend and tenant at 370 Vineyard Point Road, Humbert, has a ringside seat of osprey activity from his second story apartment. If you want to know anything about natural osprey behavior, just ask him. His living quarters is a virtual observatory over the seaward landscape. Humbert reports that the return of the osprey in Vineyard Meadow usually occurs during the week of March 23–27. This year, it was exceptionally stormy on March 23, but a lone osprey first appeared on March 24! As Mr. A. suggests, with a twinkle in his eye, the first arrival—a female—“probably stayed at a Big 6 in Baltimore for the night of the 23rd.”

Humbert further reports that within a couple days, the male osprey had joined the female and they went “fishing.” As true fish hawks, they typically have a daily routine of diving for fish in Long Island Sound, which is why they invariably nest in or around tidal meadows. A particular joy for our ospreys is that they seem to enjoy the sport of diving for sunfish and bass in one of the two freshwater ponds behind 370/396 Vineyard Point Road. They retrieve fish for their chicks here, flying back to the platform to chop them up for bite sized meals.

Our ospreys love to roost. They will often land on the stubbed tops of the pepperidge grove

next to the easterly pond or on one of the meadow fence posts. And often, too, they can be seen from Benton Beach soaring high overhead (75–150 feet), swooping and circling like majestic winged sentries.

According to Julie Victoria, a DEP wildlife biologist who is assigned to Connecticut's “non-game and endangered species division,” the Connecticut population of ospreys made a resounding comeback in the 1990s. Interestingly, they were anything but endangered 350+ years ago when the shoreline was being settled by English immigrants. At that time, offshore Faulkner's Island had earned the name of Massancummock (pronounced Mash-e-quan-auk) which, translated from the Native American tongue, meant “place of the great fish hawks.” Apparently, the English mis-identified the ospreys as Peregrine Falcons, applying the name of Falcon Island, which later corrupted to Falconer's or Faulkner's Island.

Osprey chicks ordinarily hatch by Memorial Day and are fledged (flying) by the Fourth of July. Humbert reports that he “can almost see the terror in a baby's face” when pushed out of the nest by the parent osprey. He clarifies this by reporting that the parent bird “urges “ the chick out.

The antics of our ospreys promise to amuse and delight all through the summer. We are proud of “our ospreys” behind Benton Beach. Don't forget to pack the binoculars when you visit!

BentonBeach.com Website

by Tim Chemacki

In case you had not yet heard the news, we now have a website! While the site is just getting started, the goal is to offer timely news alerts and updates independent from the newsletter plus downloads of the newsletter and meeting minutes. We're also experimenting with an online photo gallery.

You can access the site at <http://www.bentonbeach.com>. The website is password-protected and is intended only for descendants of Eliot H. Benton and their families. The login username and password to view the site are shared by everyone. Please do not share these login credentials with anyone outside the family.

When you access the website, you will be prompted to enter a username and password. Enter the following for each:

User Name: bbcfamily

Password: sticktogether

We are also looking for 1-2 volunteers who can post and edit content to the website using the Wordpress web log ("blog") software. No web programming experience or artistic ability is required.

If you are interested in volunteering as a website editor, want your own *yournam@bentonbeach.com* email address, or just have questions or comments on the website, please contact Tim Chemacki at:
tim.chemacki@bentonbeach.com.

Notes

Calendar of Events:

Please call or email Kate Fales, Benton Beach Corp Secretary, for scheduling a special beach event (phone: (401) 932-5894, email: kate.fales@gmail.com). This is not necessary for small, spontaneous gatherings. Please also note that scheduling **does not** grant exclusive use of the beach during the event.

Apr 14 (Thu) Campfire hosted by Sarah Cabrera; 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm; 10 ppl.

Apr 16-17 (Sat-Sun) Cub Scout Campout hosted by David Ott; 12:00 pm Saturday – 10:00 am Sunday

Apr 30 (Sat) BBC Fence Day; Starts at 8:00 am

May 14 (Sat) BBC Work Day; Starts at 9:00 am

Jun 11 (Sat) Maxwell Ruiz Birthday Party hosted by Jennifer Benton Ruiz; 20 ppl.

Jun 21 (Tue) Alpha Club Picnic hosted by Lynne Ott

Jun 25-26 (Sat-Sun) Campout/Birthday Party hosted by Todd Chemacki; Birthday Party-50 ppl.

Jul 4 (Mon) Church Club Picnic hosted by Edwin Benton; 30-35 ppl.

Jul 9 (Sat) (Rain Date: Sunday, July 10th) Region 6 CT Probate Judges Picnic hosted by Joel Helander; Starts at 2:00 pm

Jul 16-17 (Sat-Sun) Campout hosted by Todd Chemacki; 20 ppl.

Jul 21 (Thu) Women's Retirement Group Picnic hosted by Lynne Ott

Jul 23 (Sat) Annual Family Picnic

Aug 12-14 (Fri-Sun) Campout hosted by Tim and Sharon Chemacki

Aug 19-26 (Fri-Fri) Campout hosted by Ellen Fales and Sandy Schaefer

Sep 3 (Sat) Fales Family Picnic hosted by Ellen Fales

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@bentonbeach.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: SPACE71GUY (772-237-1489)

Email: tim.chemacki@bentonbeach.com