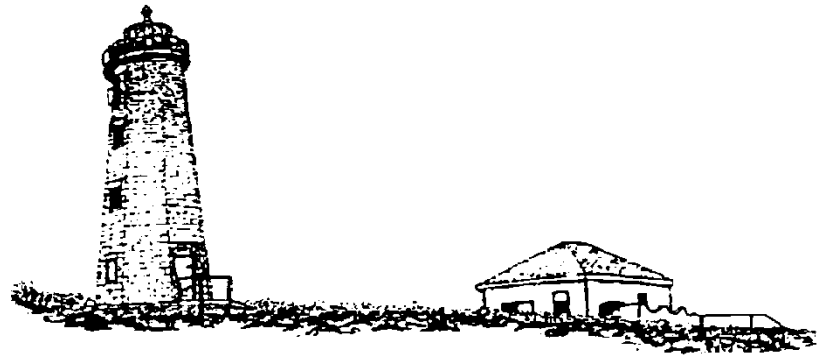


# Benton Beach Beacon



June 2017

## Benton Family Bassinet

By Holly H. Whelan

The Benton Family Bassinet was presented at the 2016 BBC Annual Shareholders Meeting, along with the earliest photo we have from 1893, where baby Ruth Benton (4-5 months of age) is in the bassinet, and her older brother Grandpa Eliot Benton (3 yrs of age), is standing

aside the bassinet. As of this shareholders meeting, 5 more photos have been gathered and were shared, 3 being Grandpa Benton's great grandchildren (Kate Fales Gemme, Benjamin Whelan, Tyler Whelan) and 2 being photos of his great-great grandchildren (Peter Ott, Danielle Ott), all with them in the bassinet. Several other great grandchildren have also reportedly used the Benton Family Bassinet, including Tim Chemacki, Todd Chemacki, Eric Spalding, Bryce Spalding, Hope Helander, Joya



**Clockwise from top left:** Kate Fales Gemme (June 1984), Tyler Whelan (August 1987), Peter Ott (June 1996), Benjamin Whelan (April 1986), Danielle Ott (May 1999); **Center (left to right):** Eliot H. Benton and Ruth Benton (1893)

Helander, Olivia Benton, and Maxwell Ruiz. To date, 13 of Eliot Benton's lineal descendants have been cradled in our Benton Family Bassinet as infants. As we passed 'the mic' around the family circle, stories and memories were shared.

This family bassinet is a "Victorian White Cane Bassinet With Stand". The 2 cane loops on one end look like there might have been a hood attached. Although we don't have a full history of this family bassinet, we do know that it is at least 124 years old, given that the earliest photo we have (thanks to Joel who received this photo from Aunt Marjorie Benton Spalding) is from 1893. Baby Ruth Elizabeth Benton (Birthdate: Oct. 15, 1892, approximately 4-5 months of age) is pictured in the bassinet, with big brother Grandpa Eliot Benton (Birthdate: Sept. 16, 1889, approximately 3 years of age) standing aside his baby sister in the bassinet. We like to think that Grandpa Eliot Benton may also have been in the bassinet as a baby as well. Interestingly, we do not have any photos or stories of his children having used the bassinet, which would have been Marjorie (Benton Spalding), Milton (Benton), Dorothy (Benton Perkins), Carolyn (Benton Helander), Edwin (Benton) and Roger (Benton). At this meeting, Uncle Edwin did not recall having any memories of seeing either the bassinet itself or any photos of the bassinet, so perhaps it was tucked away safely somewhere or used by other Norton/Benton Family members for a period of time. Neither do we have any photos or stories about Grandpa Eliot Benton's 22 grandchildren using this bassinet, at least not yet.

But the good news is that at some point in time, Aunt Marjorie Benton Spalding began storing the Benton bassinet for family sharing, and it was therefore used by several of Grandpa Eliot Benton's great grandchildren. To date, 9 Benton great grandbabies have been in the bassinet, and listed here by birthdate: Timothy Chemacki (12/6/69), Todd Chemacki (8/9/72), Eric Spalding (4/26/84) Kate Fales Gemme (6/5/84), Benjamin Whelan (4/20/86), Tyler Whelan (8/6/87), Bryce Spalding (11/22/87), Hope Helander (10/5/89), Joya Helander (3/4/94), Olivia Benton (6/6/99), Maxwell Ruiz (6/7/01). Additionally, two Benton great-great grand babies have slept in the bassinet, including Peter Ott (6/7/96) and Danielle Ott (5/18/99). The current eyelet lace skirt and flannel rosebud bumpers and bedding on the bassinet was added in 1986 by Holly, prior to Ben's 1986 birth.

We'd like to continue sharing stories and any additional photos of Grandpa Eliot Benton's lineal descendants that have been cradled in the Benton Family bassinet in years past, and likewise hope that in the years ahead, this treasured heirloom will welcome many more babies into our family.

As of this 2016 BBC Shareholders Meeting, the Benton Family Bassinet will be stored at Ellen Benton Fales Sachem's Head home at 314 Vineyard Point Road in Guilford, and hopefully this will be a treasured heirloom utilized by many more family members over the years ahead.

## Our Canine Friends

BBC Board of Directors

Sandy paws and salt water frolic on beaches can create heaven on earth for many of our canine friends. We all appreciate this, yet like many state and national parks, as well as town and association beaches, dogs are not allowed on Benton Beach premises.

The Board of Directors of Benton Beach Corporation realized this at their fifth meeting of the organization, May 3, 1984, when it was voted to prohibit dogs from the beach premises. The BBC rules and regulations, which were adopted to increase our fun and enjoyment through a system of order, have reflected the dog prohibition for 33 years.

In recent years, the Board relaxed the prohibition for six (6) months of the year, October 1 – March 30, in forging a reasonable compromise to accommodate our wonderful canine friends. This compromise embraces the periods of exceptions observed by many other beach organizations.

Few things are as sacred to Americans as their pets. They are virtual members of the family. Pets travel with us and become constant and loyal companions. Many admit that losing a pet is as difficult as losing a family member.

However, swimming beaches and adjoining premises (i.e. our parking lot) deserve sound policy on dogs and pets for the assurance of the fun and joy of beachgoers stated in BBC policy objective. Family members and their guests are reminded to heed the prohibition on dogs, April 1 – September 30.

The Board respectfully asks that everybody follow the good will of the policy for our canine friends, just as they would for the other provisions of BBC rules & regulations.

## “So Far”

By Carolyn Ruth Benton (Helander)

*Written Entry from her Diary, 1941, Age 18*

In Sachem’s Head, which is not far from the centre of Guilford, stood a large old white farmhouse, probably once built from the forest nearby. A large veranda stretched across the entire back of the house, which was covered with morning glory vines; behind it were stable and chicken houses; the yard was littered with noisy geese and peeping baby chicks; in front of the house was a lawn with a tree in the centre; and encircled by a driveway; gigantic elm trees cast their shadows over a large croquet lawn, extending further into a thicket of beautiful evergreens. In the distance could be seen the sparkling waters of Long Island Sound. A passerby would have to guess but once, that this house was full of joy and excitement. There had been excitement in this house at other times, but this seemed to be just as thrilling, for a third daughter was born. (Carolyn).

The years passed by quickly and at the age of four, I had two younger brothers, this making the sixth in the family, three boys and three girls.

After I passed my fourth birthday, my troubles commenced. My two younger brothers were perhaps two of my minor troubles, but my major difficulties were more serious than that. I had three narrow escapes that I vividly remember. One day when I was on our beach with my father and grandfather, I was walking over a pile of rocks when I fell and landed at the bottom with a huge rock on my foot. My leg and foot were very badly crushed, but I recovered in a short time.

Shortly after this, when I was five years old, another accident happened of that same nature. I was riding down hill on the back of an empty hay-riggin, when I lost my balance and fell onto the moving wheel. My leg caught in the spokes and I was jerked into an upside down position. Seeing this happen, my mother, who was in the kitchen washing dishes, rushed to my aid with

her wet hands. She blocked the wheels of the vehicle, as the wagon was only halfway down the steep incline, while my father disentangled me. Despite the fact that he had to remove the wheel to extricate my injured legs, I miraculously did not have any broken bones. But for weeks afterwards, I had to be wheeled about in a go-cart.

The year I started school, still another miracle happened. On Friday nights, my father, who drives the school bus, always stops at our neighbors. There were only a few of us left in the bus and we became very uneasy in those few fine minutes. To pass the time away, we thought it was a good idea to play tag. Around and around the bus we ran, one after the other; into the road and on the neighbor’s lawn. What fun it was! Presently a car came, and we met in the middle of the road. I fell down, and the car ran into a boulder at the side of the road, as a result of trying to avoid hitting me. Luckily, I only suffered from the shock. Those three incidents seem to stand out most of all in my younger days.

When I was thirteen, I lived a different sort of life, entirely for four weeks. Since I was a victim of the scarlet fever, I was not allowed to stay in my home because of the danger of giving it to the rest of my family, and because of my father’s milk business. Fortunately, however, I did not have to go to a hospital, for we owned a small cottage next door. Here my mother and I lived comfortably for weeks during a quarantine period. How well I remember my brothers and sisters hollering to me from outside the window. I couldn’t even sit up enough to look out the window for three weeks. It was very tiresome lying on my back, and following the lines of the same ceiling with my eyes. Day after day, it became very monotonous looking at the same scenery.

In the summer of 1938, I had a glorious time vacationing in the mountains of New Hampshire for three weeks. Here, the four of us took it easy and did as we pleased. Since we were high on a mountain, we enjoyed a gorgeous view for miles around us. The best fun of the whole vacation was pumping water at the foot of the hill and taking the pleasure trip to neighboring towns and cities. Every evening at sunset we were filled with much awe and inspiration at the beauty of the sunset.

Another thrilling moment of my life was first a few years ago, when my Aunt took me on a

train to New York for the first time in my life. I was so excited and thrilled that I had a pain in my heart when the train started up.

My first dance was still another breath taking moment. I can almost feel my heart throb now, as it did then. I thought my partner would never come. It seemed like hours that I stood in front of the mirror all dolled up, primping and prinking some more, while patiently waiting for the front door bell to ring.

When my two older sisters finished high school, and then went onto other schools to further their education, I became lonesome, being the only girl at home.

Now that one of my sisters has been married for two months, and the other one is to be married in May, I feel that changes are really beginning to take place in my family life.

During my eleven years of school, I enjoyed many good times. My school years have seemed so short. It is difficult for me to realize that I have almost completed the good old school days, and I regret it.

## Full Moon Dates

A visit to Benton Beach under full moon can become a spiritual adventure. Here are the 2017 full moon dates:

June 9  
 July 9  
 August 7  
 September 6  
 October 5  
 November 4  
 December 3

## Benton Beach Road: Over 200 years Old

By Joel Helander

Private Benton Beach Road leading to Benton Beach has hardly changed over the course of two centuries. It is the only frontage owned by Benton Beach Corporation, fronting on the

public Vineyard Point Road. After half-circling the base of “Beauty Mountain” (Learys), the narrow gravel road shoots through the lush Vineyard Meadow on a low causeway, crosses the Vineyard Creek on a stone bridge, and winds along the edge of upland until it ends at our waterfront beach. In length, it is about 3/10 mile.

The purpose of Benton Beach Road has not changed over the course of two centuries, which is to provide direct access to interior waterfront properties.

Salt meadow haying was one of the seasonal functions of farmers long ago. Even the back country farmers, like the farmers of North Guilford, owned a meadow strip. They mowed the prized silky grasses (free of weeds) with hand scythes and allowed it to dry before harvest. This chore often mustered many of the farmers into the meadow at one time, who hauled their loads back to the barns with wagons and carts. Teams of oxen provided the brute strength to do this, never venturing onto the spongy meadow, but staying on a solid meadow road such as ours.

The origin of Benton Beach Road dates to two brothers during the 18th century: Jordan Leete and Solomon Leete. They owned all the land south of the old Vineyard Road (now called Vineyard Point Road) and practiced the lost art of salt haying.

Thomas Leete, a son of Solomon, lived in Kyle & Bingo Schutz’s house at 149 Vineyard Point Road (near the former trolley crossing). Between 1792 and 1814, Thomas acquired upland on both sides of the meadow road that would later become Benton Beach Road. During this same period, Hooker Bartlett from Guilford Center acquired 11 acres of lowland or salt meadow in the rear or seaward side of the upland.

Bartlett was another farmer and needed access to his meadow. Leete deeded him this access, with a reference in the Guilford Land Records (1814) granting rights “to pass and repass on the causeway [road] at all times, with teams of cattle...” After Thomas Leete’s death (1830), subsequent owners of the “Vineyard Lot,” as it extended between Vineyard Creek and Vineyard Road, established a legal easement or right-of-way (1833) for the salt meadow owners.



Eliot H. Benton's Great Grandfather Dan L. Benton, Sr. purchased the Vineyard Lot (21¾ acres) in which the deed (1843) reserves the "right of passage to the highway from the lands lying in the rear." A U.S. Government topographic map of Sachem's Head (1885) reflects the meadow road right-of-way in the same location as in 2017, including old stone wall lines.

Later owners of Benton Beach Road, Benton Beach, and the Vineyard Lot, including the old Benton Farmhouse at 370 Vineyard Point Road, were Dan's son, Dan L. Benton, Jr., his grandson, Lewis Herbert Benton, and then his great grandson, Eliot H. Benton. We can appreciate Eliot's long life (1889–1981) as an industrious dairy farmer who, with his first wife Mabel and second wife Florence, nurtured six equally as remarkable children: Marjorie Benton Spalding, Dorothy Benton Perkins, H. Milton Benton, Carolyn Benton Helander, Edwin E. Benton, and Roger W. Benton.

When Eliot Benton sold the eastern end of his Sachem's Farm (known as Vineyard Lot in the 19th century) to son Edwin in 1954, he had the wisdom and foresight to establish the 25 foot wide Beach Road right-of-way so that future owners would have the assurance of beach access.

Originally established as a meadow road, it was overhauled as a beach road during this period (1953–'54) by Milton. Ever since, the old road bed has been carefully maintained. In 1962, leftover concrete was poured onto the shoulder of the meadow causeway; drainage pipes have been strategically laid; regular installments of processed stone have levelled sunken areas; pot holes have been plugged with garden rocks; and the culvert/bridge at the tidal creek has been rebuilt with granite abutments and stabilized with underground chains. Most importantly, the causeway section of the road has been gradually raised up nearly 12 inches because of rise in sea level.

Past is prologue. Yesterday's future is today's present. Benton Beach Corporation, our self-styled family land trust, owns the last acres of Sachem's Farm. We begin to realize that the value of Benton Beach properties, for generations to come, depends upon the winding strip of land known as Benton Beach Road.

Precisely for this reason, the family vigorously defended a frivolous lawsuit filed against BBC by an abutting neighbor, based on the mistaken belief that a wire farm fence along the Beach Road was a boundary fence. There ensued a protracted action in New Haven Superior Court, but we prevailed with the judge's 1998 decision

in which we prevailed on all four counts. Adjudication of the case in our favor reaffirmed BBC's lawful ownership of a 25 foot strip of frontage at the beginning of the Beach Road.

Many of us appreciate Benton Beach Road for more than a route of vehicle access. It is a 3-season hiking and biking trail; a cross-country ski trail in winter; a vantage point for enjoying wildflowers, wildlife, and the ecosystem of a healthy salt meadow; and a place for relaxing pilgrimage.

Long live Benton Beach Road!

## Notes

### Calendar of Events:

Please contact Ellen Fales for all beach requests at (401) 783-2429, or [ebfales@aol.com](mailto:ebfales@aol.com) (preferred). You may also text her at (401) 932-5895. All Calendar of Events activity will also be posted on the BBC website. Scheduling is not necessary for small, spontaneous gatherings. Please also note that scheduling **does not** grant exclusive use of the beach during the event.

**June 17 (Sat), 2pm-11pm** Summer solstice party, hosted by Emily Ott, 25 family and friends

**June 24 (Fri), 12 noon – June 26 (Sun), 8pm** Jennifer Benton Ruiz and family campout, 15 people

**July 4 (Tue), 12 noon-6pm** Picnic hosted by Edwin Benton for family

**July 7 (Fri), 4pm – July 9 (Sun), 4pm** Friends and family campout hosted by Eliot Benton, camping 10-20 people, party Saturday up to 40 people.

**July 15 (Sat), 1pm – July 16 (Sun) 3pm** Overnight campout hosted by Kathryn Benton.

**July 29 (Sat)** Annual BENTON FAMILY picnic, starts 2pm, high tide at 4:42pm

**August 4 (Fri), 12 noon – August 6 (Sun), 6pm** Sharon and Tim Chemacki friends campout, 15-20+ people

**August 11 (Fri) 12 noon – August 16 (Wed), 12 noon** Fales-Schaefer family campout, up to 12 people

**August 25 (Fri), 12 noon – August 27 (Sun), 6pm** Campout for friends hosted by Kathryn Benton, up to 10 people overnight and 30 people at picnic on Saturday

### Benton Beach Website

Electronic versions of the newsletter, board of director meeting minutes, the calendar of events, photos, and other notices are all available on the Benton Beach website, [www.bentonbeach.com](http://www.bentonbeach.com). The website is password protected. The username and password should only be shared among family members.

Username: `bbcfamily`

Password: `sticktogether`

### 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*).

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