

# The History of Quisset Ridge and Development of Racing Beach

by Susan Fletcher Witzell

Three large houses crown the ridge that rises to the west of Woods Hole Road between McCallum Drive and Ransom Road in Quisset. Their histories have been entwined for over one hundred years although today they are being adapted to the needs of three very different organizations. Before the houses were built, the land on which they stand was farmland, stretching along the Buzzards Bay moraine and down toward Oyster Pond with fields and orchards.

By the time of the publication of the 1880 Barnstable County Atlas, Falmouth and Woods Hole reflected the trend along the eastern seaboard in the 1870s for the construction of summer homes on former farmland and in small seaside villages. The Atlas shows the farm and orchard of S.P. Davis below the ridge, his neighbors the Robinsons and their two houses across the County Road (Woods Hole Road), and a house and land belonging to N.D. Turner to the east. Further to the northeast was the property of Abner P. Briggs and the very old Weeks farm.

The Weeks farm was part of several parcels granted in 1677 to William and John Weeks. The family of John Weeks built a three-quarter Cape Cod house, a barn and outbuildings in the hollow on the western portion of the farm. John also had the right to cut firewood on Quisset Neck after 1704. The Weeks holdings also included much of the land along Buzzards Bay from Quisset Harbor northward, including the Flume Pond just south of Gunning Point. Some of the land on the farm contained good soil but most of it was glacial moraine, barely suitable for raising cows, sheep and pigs. An inventory of the estate of John Weeks done in 1730 lists 40 steers, 5

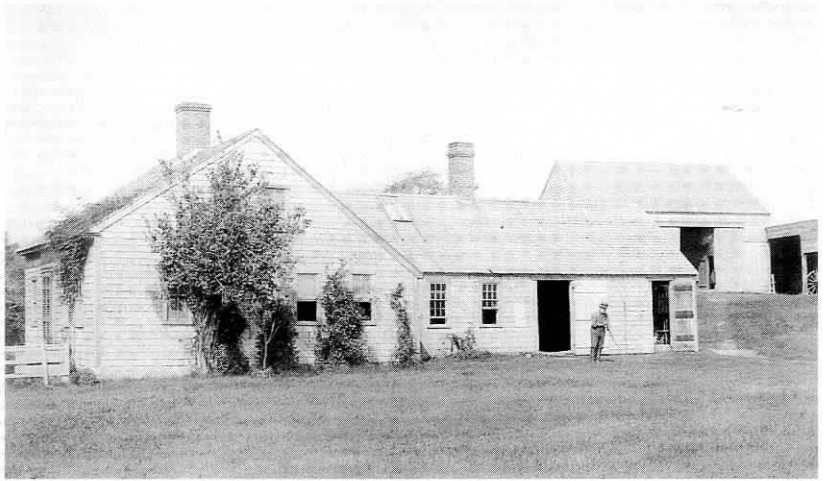


Detail of the Barnstable County Map, 1880. From *The Book of Falmouth, A Tricentennial Celebration, 1686-1986*. Falmouth Historical Commission, Falmouth, Massachusetts, 1986, Mary Lou Smith, editor.



Selleck Osborn Weeks, tintype<sup>2</sup>, late 19th century. Courtesy Falmouth Historical Society.

cows, 2 heifers, 6 yearlings, 39 sheep, a mare and a colt, as well as swine. The later inventories of the family list various amounts of wool. There were several sources of water: Weeks Pond (later renamed Miles Pond), and a marsh and pond in the hillside to the east, dammed into a small reservoir and flowing downhill under the house. In 1896 the farm was owned by Selleck Osborn Weeks.



The Selleck Osborn Weeks farm house, from a cabinet card<sup>1</sup> of 1865. Courtesy Patricia Condon Lauber.

In the 19th century, the western part of the ridge and land around it was owned by Samuel Palmer Davis and was part of his farm.

In 1886, Davis advertised that the property was for sale: 40 acres of land, a house, outbuildings and farm implements. No trace of the Davis buildings remains but, walking through the woods these days, one can see the walls that defined his fields and property, and remnants of farm implements, plows, wheel rims and chains are still to be found.

Davis sold his property to Robert Bleakie and John S. Bleakie, a wool manufacturer from Hyde Park in the Boston area. In 1898, the Bleakies built "Glenockie," a 25 room shingled house on the western part of the ridge with wide views of Buzzards Bay and Vineyard Sound. The house had diagonal corner dormers and a large central tower-like dormer with a second floor porch. The Queen Anne

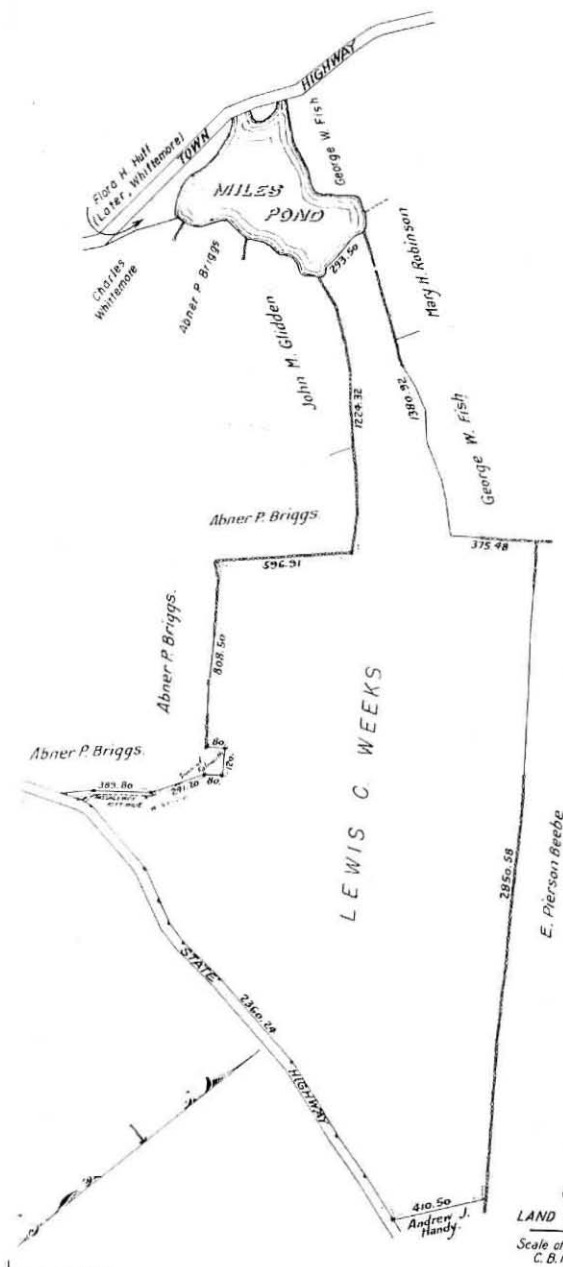
style house had a cobble stone and cut granite foundation and first story with round porches on each front corner. It had a small stable behind it and a long low barn to the east.



The original Glenockie, built by the Bleakie brothers in 1889, in a photo taken before the fire that occurred around 1900. From *A Trip Around Buzzards Bay Shores* by E. G. Perry.

Also in 1898, the Bleakie brothers created the privately owned Falmouth Water Company to provide their part of town with a reliable and safe water supply. Long Pond in

2439 A



Plan of Land in Falmouth  
Scale 100 feet to an inch.  
JAN. 1909.

W. A. Gifford, Surveyor  
Scale of Original Plan: 1" = 100'  
" " " This Plan: 1" = 400'  
DATA ADDED BY R. GRIFFIN 10/18/99

Copy of part of plan  
filed in  
LAND REGISTRATION OFFICE  
Mar. 16, 1909  
Scale of this plan 400 feet to an inch  
C. B. Humphrey, Surveyor for Court

Survey map of the Lewis C. Weeks farm and surrounding area, including standpipe location, January 1909, drawn by W. A. Gifford, Surveyor, and filed as Land Court Plan No. 2439A. Modified with additional data by Robert W. Griffin, October 1999.

Falmouth was chosen for its deep spring-fed water; the pond and surrounding land was given to the company by Joseph Story Fay of Woods Hole. A standpipe was constructed on the highest point on the ridge of the Weeks farm, known as Weeks Hill, to the east of the Bleakie residence. In 1902, the Town of Falmouth took over the Falmouth Water Company after considerable haggling with the Bleakies over the purchase price. In 1899, the brothers had given the town a horse and dog water fountain which was placed on the Village Green at the point opposite the Falmouth National Bank. This fountain, no longer in use, is now located at the Town of Falmouth Water Department on Palmer Avenue.

At the turn of century, Glenockie was severely damaged by fire and when it was rebuilt the design of the roof and upper floors had been dramatically changed to a more symmetrical Colonial Revival style with a hip roof and a Colonial style balustrade. The second story corner gables had been changed to round bays which echoed the round porches on the first level.

In 1907, the estate was purchased by Charles R. Whittemore, a partner with his brother John M. Whittemore in the Whittemore Shoe Polish Company of Cambridge. Charles was born in 1850

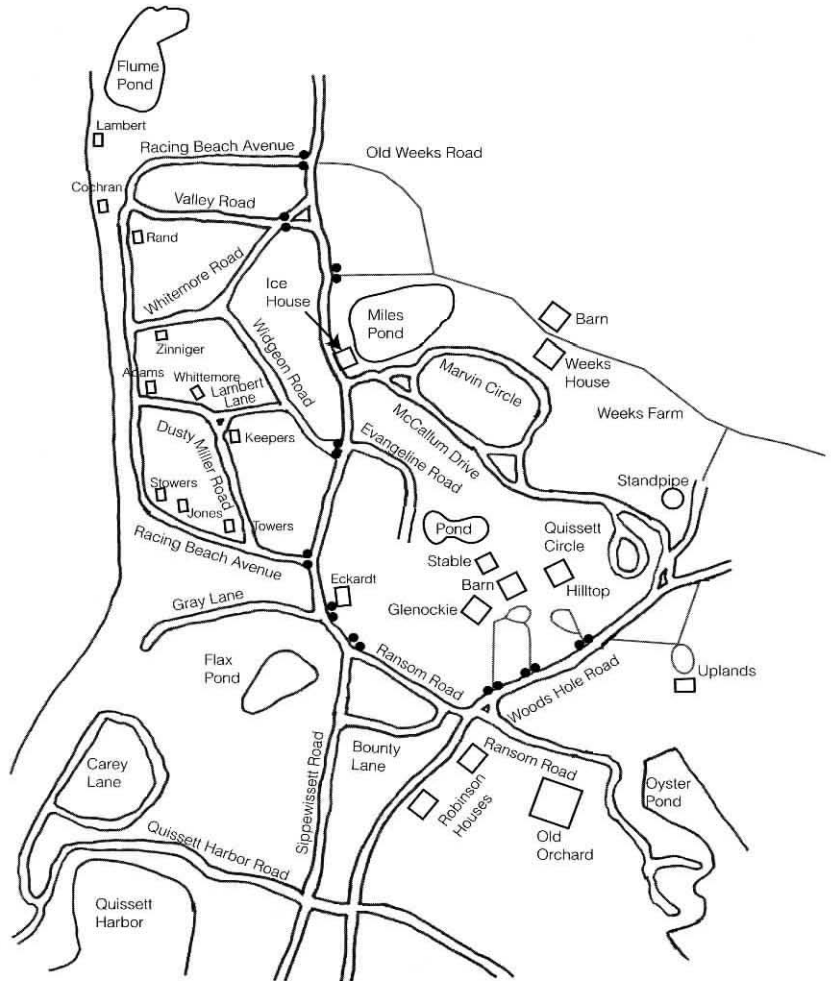
in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. He was educated at the Waltham New Church School and Worcester Military Academy. His first wife was Ella Holmes of North Bridgewater with whom he had two sons and three daughters. An active golfer and a passionate sailor, he belonged to the Beverly Yacht Club, often winning yachting championships.

Charles converted the Bleakie barn to another summer home and purchased the easternmost house, later called "Hilltop," from Miss Helen Turner (presumably the heir of N.D. Turner), also in 1907, for his sons. The Whittemore family and the three houses dominated the ridge in Quisset until after World War II. They added additional land to the west towards Quisset Harbor (through which Ransom Road currently runs) to create a walled woodland park for deer, pheasants and peacocks. They built "portable cottages" on Quisset Harbor Road in 1908 for Captains Perry and Besse who sailed their Buzzards Bay 40 *Young Miss* and their catboat.<sup>3</sup>

Charles Whittemore was also a great lover of horses. In about 1915, the Whittemores added a very large four story structure to the original modest stable. It has been often stated that it had room for 150 horses but this is clearly impos-

sible given the size and construction of the building. Carriage sheds were located across the drive from the stable, of a design similar to the Quaker carriage sheds at West Falmouth Meeting House.

The Whittemores later purchased hundreds of acres of land extending north behind the ridge and beyond the former land of Samuel Palmer Davis all



Map of Quisset north of Quisset Harbor using current road layout, noting location of early Racing Beach and Quisset ridge houses. The cobble pillars and gateposts are shown by pairs of dots.

the way to Buzzards Bay, some of it from the Eldred family of Quissett Harbor, as well as some of the former Weeks land along the beach.

A survey map done by W.A. Gifford in 1909 shows that the owner of the Weeks farm was Lewis C. Weeks, a nephew of Selleck Osborn Weeks, and one can see that the area immediately to the southwest from the Main Road to Miles Pond was still owned by Abner P. Briggs. Another lot adjacent to Miles

western end of the Samuel Palmer Davis farm and the edge of the little kettle pond behind the ridge. The cartway has been covered over by parts of Marvin Circle, McCallum Drive and Evangeline Road but its deeply sunken surface is still visible in the woods beyond Evangeline Road going towards Ransom Road.

Another owner on the northwest side of the Weeks farm was Flora H. Huff. On the northeast side of the pond land was owned by Mary H. Robinson and George W. Fish, manager of the Quissett Harbor House, who often acted as a farm agent for Selleck Osborn Weeks, shipping his cranberries to New York to be marketed through his cousin, Thomas Dunham Fish. The Eldred family owned cranberry bogs behind the shore at Racing Beach and probably the Weeks bogs were also behind the shore further towards Flume Pond. George W. Fish owned the land where the stone and wood gate is on Sippewissett Road at the edge of Miles Pond, as well as the land to the north.



Gateway at the end of Racing Beach Avenue and Sippewissett Road, 1999.

*Photo by Susan Fletcher Witzell*

Pond was owned by J.M. Glidden, the former treasurer of the Pacific Guano Company in Woods Hole, which had gone out of business in 1889. Charles R. Whittemore owned a small piece on the west side of the pond, connecting with the rest of his land.

Long stone walls marking the bounds from the County Road (Woods Hole Road) to Miles Pond enclose the land owned by Lewis C. Weeks and Abner P. Briggs. A cartway ran south from the Weeks farm through the Briggs land and over the hill to skirt the

The old road from the Weeks farm towards the shore of Racing Beach and Flume Pond was further to the north by approximately 600 feet, through Mary H. Robinson's land. This road site and the stone wall where it emerged onto Sippewissett Road have been obscured by new houses and the fill around them. The land east of Fish's land and going up to the County Road east of the Briggs land was owned by E. Pierson Beebe. The cartway which ran from Beebe's land through the Weeks farm and towards Quissett Harbor mentioned before was known as





Annie Ransom Whittemore's house, built in 1929 on Dusty Miller Road as first house of Racing Beach development; later owned by the Hanna family. Photo by John Hanna, 1950s. Courtesy Cornelia Hanna McMurtrie.

the Beebe Road, even though its history began long before the Beebe family came to Falmouth.

In 1936, George W. Griffin did a survey map for Edgar McCallum who had purchased the Briggs and Glidden land. At that time the Weeks farm was owned by Nathan B.E. Hartford, Jr. In 1947, Captain John Peterson bought the Weeks farm from Earl Boardman. The original house was in poor condition and was demolished. The barn was retained and its dry stone foundation repaired with concrete and mortar. The upper barn structure existed until the 1990s when heavy snow caused it to collapse.

Charles Whittemore died in 1923 in Newton. His second wife, the former Annie Ransom, made the Quissett estate her permanent home in 1924. Several years later she began to promote the land holdings known as Racing Beach as a refined and restricted development for summer homes, building roads, installing water mains and selling lots through her agent Charles R. Stowers.

A legend has come down to the present day which says that Racing Beach was named by the Native Americans who enjoyed racing horses along its long straight expanse of sand. In the Proprietor's Records recording the original deeds for possession of the lands in Suckanesset (Falmouth) in 1688, the land deeded to John Weeks included "ye race-beach." It is possible this refers to a swift current or race of water since the area ends with a pond called Flume Pond. The road names used in the original development: Beach, Oak, Bay View Avenue and Glen were later changed (with the ex-

ception of Valley Road and Racing Beach Avenue) to Dusty Miller, Lambert Lane, Whittemore and Widgeon. By 1940 about thirty five lots had been sold, many of them in pairs, with an average price of \$1200.

Annie Ransom Whittemore had the first house in the Racing Beach development built for herself in 1929. The Tudor-Colonial Revival style home built on Dusty Miller Road (then called Beach Road) was designed by the architectural firm of Hutchins and



The Rand house on Racing Beach Avenue, built in the 1930s.

*Photo by Susan Fletcher Witzell*

French of Boston. Eight more houses had been built by 1937, mostly designed to be summer residences. Other houses on Dusty Miller were two Dutch Colonials with gambrel roofs and a three-quarter Cape Cod. On Racing Beach Avenue there was a full Cape with large 12 over 12 windows, a two story Craftsman house with porches, a small one story house with a cobble foundation and a small Colonial at the very end of the avenue above the beach. On Whittemore Road, a center hall Colonial-style house was built in 1938. In 1937, Dr. Eckardt built a gracious Colonial Revival house on the hill above Sippewissett across from Gray Lane. The end of the Beebe Road cartway with its granite posts became the entrance to the Eckardt driveway. The cottage located on the southwestern corner of Racing Beach Avenue, which was owned by the land agent Charles Stowers, was built in 1945.

A pair of round drum-like cobble and cut granite entrance pillars was a characteristic feature of the



Gateway and stone pillar at Widgeon Road entrance to Racing Beach, 1999.  
*Photo by Susan Fletcher Witzell*

development's roads opening to Sippewissett and also the driveway entrances of many of these early Racing Beach houses; more dramatically cut granite and cobble entrance pillars from the Bleakie era were also at the entrances of each of the three Whittemore houses on Woods Hole Road. Forrest Johnson, Mrs. Whittemore's chauffeur and caretaker, built many of these entrance pillars, as well as retaining walls in several gardens and at the entrance to Widgeon Road. Along Sippewissett Road, entrances to four of the Racing Beach Roads were distinguished by white painted wooden farm gates hung between the cobble stone pillars which were planted with Walsh rambler roses. Three of these still exist: the gates at Widgeon Road and the very north end of Racing Beach Avenue are shadowy presences in the overgrown woods. On this last cobble drum, long neglected white 'Lady Blanche' rambler roses bloom every summer. At Valley Road the gate is kept in perfect repair. Usually wide open, it is



Granite and cobble post at Ransom Road and Sippewissett Road, 1999.  
*Photo by Susan Fletcher Witzell*

closed on weekends during the summer to keep non-residents from using the beach.

Mrs. Whittemore died in 1949 after a long illness. Her Racing Beach house was purchased by Professor John Hanna of New York City and made into a home for his wife Reni and their four children in 1949. The house had been left completely furnished with Annie's paintings, collections, oriental rugs and possessions, including a beautiful library of leather

bound books and classic literature. Behind the house was a large rounded sunken garden with walls constructed by Forrest Johnson. The house is still owned by one of the Hanna daughters, Cornelia Hanna McMurtrie, who has lived in it for 50 years.

Forrest Johnson became the land agent for Racing Beach in 1949. He was a formidable man who had great influence on what occurred in the area. Johnson and the Racing Beach Association tried to encour-

## Recollections of 60 Years at Racing Beach

*An informal talk given by Mrs. Lawrence L. Howard (the former Mary Jean Eckardt) at the Annual Meeting of the Racing Beach Association in July 1998, just after she had sold her family home.*

Our house was built in 1937. My parents bought the property – just under two acres – from Mrs. Whittemore for \$5,000. And the house cost \$25,000. We first lived in it in 1938, when I was 12 years old.

There were eight other houses on Racing Beach – Towers, Jones, Miss Keepers, Mrs. Whittemore, Adams, Rand, Lambert, and the little house up on the bluff. The Zinniger house was built the same year as ours, making 10 in all. Each house sat up on its own hill or rise, with few, if any, trees around it, and you could see them all from the beach.

The beach was beautiful, sandier than now, and with little dunes up against the road. They were covered with

beach grass, and had small pockets of sand where you could lie almost hidden from the beach and from the road. There were a lot more shells than now; you could find whelks, moon snails, false angel wings and many others. I have no idea why they have disappeared. There were also puffers and crabs in the water, and when you went in, you had to keep your feet moving in order not to get nipped.

*Continued on next page*



The Eckardt house on Sippewissett Road, early 1940s, from a postcard. Courtesy Mary Jean Howard



age the building of Cape Cod style houses on the lots sold after this point. Johnson's own house on Valley Road was a modest Cape Cod and was typical of many built in the area during the 1950s and 1960s. All house plans had to be approved by a building committee. In recent years this committee has abandoned the original insistence on a traditional house design.

Evangeline Road, on the opposite side of Sippewissett from the main part of Racing Beach, was laid out with lots in 1929 but was not developed until the 1960s and was originally called Lawrence Road. When the Post Office began home delivery and did away with all duplicate road names, Lawrence Road was changed to Evangeline Road after Forrest Johnson's wife, Evangeline Lawrence.

I don't know which hurricane destroyed the dunes. But I remember the 1938 hurricane very well. With no warning of a storm, it grew terribly windy, and my mother and I decided to walk to the beach. When we got there, much to our surprise, the water was lapping at the road. No big waves at that point, just the highest tide we had ever seen. We kept walking, and when we turned to come back, the water was ankle deep on the road and pouring into the swale on the other side. We didn't think much about it at the time, but later when we heard two women had been swept to their death watching the waves on Oyster Pond Road, we decided we had not been too smart.

At supper that evening, two figures came up the path, Mrs. Whittemore and her maid. The water had reached her driveway, and she took refuge with us for the night.

Hurricane was not a word in our vocabulary before 1938, and while I've weathered a few since then, that will always be the defining one for me – not only because my memory of it is so clear, but also because of the terrible damage and loss of life that was suffered in this area.

From the 40s, I remember the war, the airplanes using the Weepeekets for bombing practice – we could watch them from our patio, the convoys forming off Quissett Harbor, growing by a few ships each day, and then one night the faint throb of many motors, and the next morning the convoy was gone.

And I remember the man we saw in the bushes near the entrance. He seemed to be changing a film. We had been warned to report suspicious behavior, and report him we did. After the war we learned a spy had been caught in this area. He had been reported by several persons for taking pictures of various beaches. We were excited and pleased to think we had been part of a spy-catching operation and had made a small contribution to the war effort.

I remember Forrest Johnson, Mrs. Whittemore's caretaker and chauffeur. With cigar in mouth and police dog at his side, he took care not only of Mrs. Whittemore's property, but also the roads, the beach, everything. He put out a raft – down at the northern end – in the spring, and took it in in the fall. You could walk to it at low tide, but at high tide it was a good swim and a good spot for diving.

All land formerly part of the Whittemore estate received deeded rights to use a certain portion of Racing Beach on Buzzards Bay. Of the nearly one hundred lots laid out in Racing Beach many have never had houses built on them. Several lot owners managed to get around the protection of wetlands which was made into law in later years and built on illegally filled land right along the beach. But most of the lots which were laid out in the original develop-

ment plan over marshes and other fragile coastal features have become reserved as wetlands or protected by purchase or donation of the land to the Salt Pond Areas Bird Sanctuaries, Inc.

In 1928, land agent Charles Stowers sold land to Sam Cahoon, the owner of a very successful fish market in Woods Hole and a wholesale fish dealer who had many fishermen working for him. This

I remember annual meetings when the Association was in its early years and the meetings were held at people's homes. Although we lived across Sippewissett Road, we were invited to join as full members, no doubt because there were so few others. Those meetings were to be dreaded – there were four or five strong-minded men who seemed to love to argue with each other, almost to the point of blows, over issues long forgotten. Thank goodness we are a more agreeable group now.

Following my father's death, my mother and I moved here year round, and I found the beach as interesting and delightful in its winter moods as in the summer. The sound of the water is different in winter, and the beach changes almost daily from sandy to rocky and then back. When there was ice in the Bay, I have walked on it out to the rock that only shows at low tide.

I remember the vegetation and wildlife of this area as being quite different from what it is today. We had an expansive view of the water from our house, whereas now we are surrounded by trees. There were open fields where some of your houses now stand, and we picked blackberries and wild grapes

there. Deer, pheasants and quail marched across the lawn and ate the corn we put out for them.

As some of you know, I am a swimmer from early June to late September or even early October. On a modest average of 60 swims a year – for 60 years – I figure that I have bathed in the waters of Racing Beach close to 4,000 times – and I've never had a bad swim yet!

Needless to say, I will miss Racing Beach a great deal, its smells of salt air, of *rosa rugosa* and honeysuckle, and wild grapes in the fall, its sound of gulls and terns and waves breaking and water lapping at the shore, and above all, the sight of the beach itself, changing from day to day, from season to season, yet always the same.

Racing Beach was a wonderful place to be 60 years ago, and it is a wonderful place today. I hope it stays that way for a long long time to come.

1999 addendum: After I gave this talk, the Association kindly voted to make me an honorary member, so I am still enjoying the beach and am closing in on my 4,000<sup>th</sup> swim!

land, at the southern corner of Miles Pond (formerly Weeks Pond), contained the remnants of an old ice house. Sam tore down the old building and obtained permits to construct a new ice plant in the same location. After five years of natural ice making and several winters when ice did not form thickly enough for harvesting, Sam obtained permission to expand the building and to install ice making machinery at the plant. When it was installed in 1933, the noise from the machinery was annoying to the residents in the area, including Mrs. Whittemore.

Sam Cahoon then installed exhaust pits which successfully dampened the noise. Nevertheless, Sam was suddenly given an order from the building commissioner to close the plant. Immediately, Sam and his wife collected 615 signatures on a petition for a special town meeting which was presented to the selectmen at an informal hearing. At this meeting it was decided that if the petition was dropped the abutters would withdraw their objections and this was done.

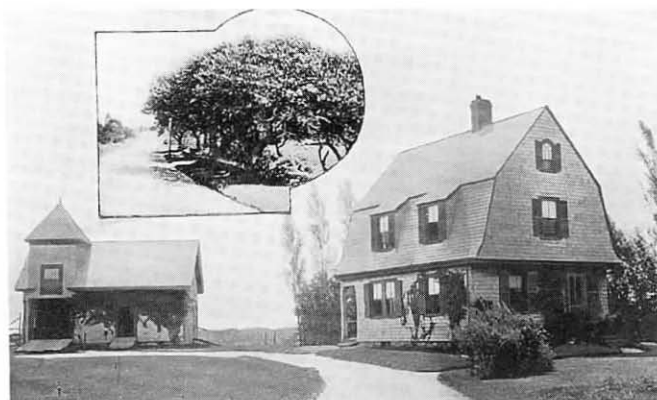
In 1935, a special town meeting was called and an article was voted upon and passed to change the zoning of that corner of Miles Pond from residential to light industrial. Immediately, Annie Whittemore and her lawyer, Sidney R. Wrightington, went into action. Thus began an infamous court case which aroused much excitement in the town of Falmouth and which pitted the popular Sam Cahoon against Mrs. Annie Whittemore. Mrs. Whittemore sued the town clerk to strike out the wording in the record which made the zoning change. She declared that the meeting was illegal because there were not enough seats for those who might have supported her point of view. She sued the Building Commissioners, Ray D. Wells and John R. Augusta, for issuing the building permit for the ice house.

From 1935 to 1939 Mrs. Whittemore's counsel kept the issue in the courts. Defending the Town of Falmouth was John P. Sylvia, Jr. Sam Cahoon's written account of the history of the ice plant says that the closing of the plant would mean the end of his wholesale fish business, put many fishermen out of work and cause great distress for their families. In three town meetings the Town of Falmouth tried to legalize the ice house plant. The votes were always heavily in favor of Sam Cahoon.

A 1949 obituary of Annie Ransom Whittemore in the *Falmouth Enterprise* summarized the case: "While Mrs. Whittemore was once victor before the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, the town finally won its case and Mr. Cahoon was permitted to operate his plant. In 1941, Mrs. Whittemore again opened her suit charging that the town's effort to make the plant into a light industrial district was 'spot zoning' and illegal. Finally in 1943, it was decided by Superior Court at Barnstable, that the ice house served public welfare and convenience." The long legal fight had absorbed much of Annie Whittemore's wealth.



Former Zinniger house on Whittemore Road, Racing Beach, built in 1937.  
Photo by Susan Fletcher Witzell



Old Orchard on Ransom Road. From *Residential Falmouth, Homes, New and Old, a 1897 Souvenir for the Sojourner*.

Sam Cahoon died suddenly in 1952. The ice house continued to operate during the 1950s for a few years but then stood idle. In 1964, Sam's wife Elsie gave the deed to the plant to her daughters: Cynthia C. Smith, E. Frances Shepherd and Rebecca C. Ames. The plant was leased for a while for the storage of ice by a man from Tiverton or Providence. On August 4, 1966, a neighbor, driving by on his way to the movies with his wife, discovered a small fire at the ice house set in a carefully constructed pile of kindling. He tried unsuccessfully to find a shovel or a bucket in an effort to put out the fire but by the time he sent his wife home to call the fire department, the flames were racing up the sawdust-laden walls.

The ice house burned to the ground in a spectacular fire. After the fire, Sam's daughters contracted to have the debris removed and the site returned to its natural appearance. Only a driveway and several pieces of concrete indicate where the ice house once stood. That corner of Miles Pond has become a popular swimming hole. A rare oriental tree, *paulownia*

*imperialis*, or Empress Tree, also graces the edge of the pond with wisteria-like lavender blooms and large green-brown pods which follow the flowers.

Across Woods Hole Road from the Whittemore estate was an old apple orchard and a small Dutch Colonial house with a very tall gambrel roof known as "Old Orchard." This was also purchased by the Whittemores and the house used for some of their staff. When Ransom Road (named for Annie Ransom Whittemore) was put through from Woods Hole Road to Sippewissett Road, the section on the south side of Woods Hole Road, which had been further developed with small houses during the 1920s, also became part of Ransom Road.

The former Bleakie barn, converted to a three story house with a long front porch by the Whittemores, was run as a guest house during the 1960s by the Elliot family. It has become an alcohol and drug abuse



The Miller House, once the Bleakie barn, crowns the ridge west of Woods Hole Road with SEA, formerly Glenockie, to its left and The Woods Hole Research Center, formerly Hilltop, to its right. 1999. Photo by Susan Fletcher Witzell



Hilltop as it appeared before 1900. From *A Trip Around Buzzards Bay Shores* by E. G. Perry.

rehabilitation residence run by the Gosnold Program. Initially known as Emerson House, it served women, but presently it is used for men in the program and is called The Miller House.

“Hilltop” was built in 1875 for Nathaniel D. Turner. Mr. Turner was probably a friend of Joseph Story Fay and may have come to the Falmouth area because of his influence. When Hilltop was photographed around the turn of the last century, it had dark trim and the roofline was dramatically different from what it is today. Like the original Glenockie, it had large diagonal corner gables (dormers) breaking the rectangular symmetry of the hip roofline.

In 1907, after purchase by the Whittemores, it is likely that the Turner house was enlarged, the staircase changed from a right angled design to a straight

run from the front to the rear of the house, the front sunporches added as well as open porches beyond and the roofline changed to be more of a hip-roofed Colonial Revival style similar to the second Glenockie, the main Whittemore house.

After the dissolution of the Whittemore estate, Hilltop became a year round guest house on eight acres of land. It had seventeen rooms, which included eleven bedrooms and seven baths. It was advertised by Mrs. Miriam Scannell with summer rates of \$6.00 to \$8.50 per day for two people and off-season rates of \$2.50 per person. The brochure for the house emphasized its magnificent views and near-

ness to bathing, theater, fishing and sailing, golf and tennis. Later the house was owned by Laura Reardon, who ran a guest house.



The main Whittemore house in 1909, as rebuilt by the Bleakie brothers after the fire that occurred around 1900. From the Marshall family albums, on loan to the Woods Hole Historical Collection.



From 1928, when Mrs. Whittemore built her house in Racing Beach, to the 1950s, there does not seem to be a record of what happened to the original Glenockie. Perhaps it remained in the Whittemore family or was rented out. In the 1950s, it was purchased by Talbot Howe. He intended to use the house for an inn but the Town of Falmouth would not allow this even though there was a guest house two houses away. Howe rented out the house for use as a summer home. The land adjacent to the Whittemore house along Ran-

som Road all the way to Sippewissett was also part of Howe's purchase. He had bought land on the other side of Woods Hole Road in 1947, an older estate and house bordering Oyster Pond called "Uplands" by its original owners, the Piper family. Howe renamed the estate "Treetops."

Howe's grandfather was a U.S. Senator from the state of Wisconsin, as well as being a U.S. Postmaster General and a Superior Court judge in Wisconsin. His son, James Howe, moved the family to Massachusetts and accumulated great wealth from investments in the copper industry. Talbot Howe and his wife, the former Doris Kaufman, were very artistic and musical. The charming and charismatic Howe was a fine singer and pianist and a great patron of the arts and a collector of paintings and objets d'art. Howe

used the old Whittemore estate carriage sheds behind the stable to store antique cars and sleds but eventually the sheds, the tennis court and the stable were neglected. Doris Howe died in 1965 and, until Howe's death in 1970, he was cared for by his neighbor across the road, Laura Reardon, who owned Hilltop. When Talbot Howe died, Treetops house was also allowed to fall into disrepair and unfortunately burned to the ground in 1977.



Treetops, the estate of Talbot Howe, Oyster Pond and Vineyard Sound in the background. From *Residential Falmouth, Homes, New and Old, a 1897 Souvenir for the Sojourner*.

Of all of Howe's property, only the main Whittemore house was maintained. In the 1960s it was used by the Bureau of Fisheries during the construction of their new facilities in Woods Hole. The Fisheries carpenters used one of the floors in the stable for a workshop dur-

ing this time. In 1968, the main house was bought by Captain Paul A. Johansen of the Steamship Authority and remodeled. In 1970, a fire caused by the remaining old wiring destroyed almost the entire structure. The Johansens did not rebuild and after much vandalism, the house was razed in 1972, leaving only the magnificent stone foundation and first story wall.

The property was divided into a number of parcels. Three acres including the house site were sold to Cornelius J. Hickey, Jr. Eleven acres were purchased

by Dr. Charles D. Johnson and his wife Joyce Johnson. The Johnsons' portion included the stable and the carriage sheds, as well as the woods surrounding the southeast end of the kettle pond. During the reincarnation of the four story stable to a house, the Johnsons removed the walls of the original stable built for the Bleakies but kept the beautiful cut granite foundation for garden walls. Most of the carriage sheds, also in poor condition, were demolished; a small section was repaired and put to use.



Hilltop, now The Woods Hole Research Center, 1999.

*Photo by Susan Fletcher Witzell*

Several other owners held the main house property without doing much with it and in 1985 the land was purchased by the Sea Education Association. After building a classroom and administrative building adjacent to the old house foundation and later adding dormitories for their students at the base of the hill, SEA finally constructed a modern building designed by Gordon Tully on the old house founda-

tion in 1993 which echoes the design of the historical structures that have preceded it, in particular, the second Glenockie.

Apparently when Talbot Howe sold the Whittemore house to Paul A. Johansen, the land along Ransom Road was not included. After the fire which destroyed Treetops and a struggle with Howe's contested will, the Green Company purchased all of the remaining Talbot Howe land which included the estate overlooking Oyster Pond and the land along Ransom Road. The Green Company was able to develop the Treetops property with a large group of condominiums but the land along Ransom Road, which was in Racing Beach and regulated by the Racing Beach Association, was not allowed to be developed on the same basis.



The James L. Madden Center for Maritime Studies, Sea Education Association, 1999, built on the foundation of Glenockie.

*Photo by Susan Fletcher Witzell*

Frustrated by the Racing Beach building committee and its rules for construction and house density, Alan Green

of the Green Company gave up 10 acres of the land behind SEA on Ransom Road to The 300 Committee and the Town of Falmouth in 1982. This is now a delightful wooded area called The Green Corner bordering on a small kettle pond, home to many turtles, frogs, fish and herons. The Green Company maintained three lots for sale near Woods Hole Road. In 1997, these three lots were purchased by SEA and are kept in a natural state. In 1999, SEA purchased the remainder of the Johnsons' land around the end of the pond except for the former stable which is still in private hands.

In 1998, The Woods Hole Research Center purchased Hilltop for the purpose of creating a new larger campus for their research staff and personnel. The new owners plan to renovate the house in keeping with

its historic appearance and to respect and preserve the natural beauty that attracted previous owners. The Woods Hole Research Center has hired renowned architect William A. McDonough to remodel the old building and design an addition that will embody ecological principles in its construction and energy use.

Each of these three grand houses on the Quissett ridge have given pleasure to different owners over a century that has seen many changes. We are fortunate that each house has found a new owner to give it a new function for the next century. The area has remained remarkably unchanged, in spite of new house construction. There are large areas of woods and wetlands, most of which have been preserved as conservation land. The old Robinson houses across



Sheep graze at the Town of Falmouth's Peterson Farm, 1999.

*Photo by Susan Fletcher Witzell*

from the former Bleakie-Whittemore estate are still there, painted barn red and looking delightfully antique. Racing Beach has become an area of mostly year round residents with some houses, new and old, being maintained as summer homes.

The Weeks-Peterson farm with its open fields and varied woodlands has become the newest major piece of conservation land in Falmouth. Its 88 acres adjoin the 400 acre Beebe Woods given to the town in 1972 by Josiah K. Lillie III from the former Beebe estate. Sheep again graze the hillside grasses on the farm and the old roads, cartways and a few remaining farm implements are there for all to enjoy in perpetuity.

Susan Fletcher Witzell was born in New York City and grew up in Summit, New Jersey. After graduating with a B.A. in Art and Art History from Milwaukee-Downer College in 1962 and doing graduate work in Art History and English at S.U.N.Y.-Buffalo, she worked as an art and photo editor at several major publishing companies in New York. She moved to Woods Hole in 1972 and worked as an engineering draftsman at WHOI for many years. She is co-author with Jane A. McLaughlin and Mary Lou Smith of *New England Views, The Photography of Baldwin Coolidge (1845-1928)* published by the Woods Hole Historical Collection in 1998. She has been a volunteer in the Collection's archives since 1992 and is currently the curatorial assistant to Jennifer S. Gaines. She and her husband Nick have made their home in the Racing Beach section of Quissett since 1977.

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## Notes

1. A cabinet card was one of the popular standard cardboard mountings for photographs on paper from the 1870s to about 1905. A cabinet card was  $4\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The smaller, more popular *carte de visite*, or visiting card, was  $4\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$  inches and mounted on a thinner cardboard. Both these types were produced from glass plate negatives.
2. The tintype, patented in 1856, was popular for informal and formal portraiture and "snapshots" done by studio photographers until the 1880s, although they were produced until the 1930s. It was a positive single print done on a small thin metal plate coated with a sensitized solution; there was no negative.
3. These cottages are clearly shown at the bend of the Quisset Harbor Road opposite the Quisset (Eldred) boyard on the Land Court plan Number 4794, February 1914, of the Whittemore land in Falmouth surveyed and drawn by the firm of E.B. & C.L. Hayward, Brockton, Massachusetts. Plan courtesy of Robert W. Griffin. They are no longer in this location (which is now occupied by a house) and were either demolished or moved by the Careys to the south side of Quisset Harbor Road between Quisset Avenue and Woods Hole Road.