

# Joe's Driving Range

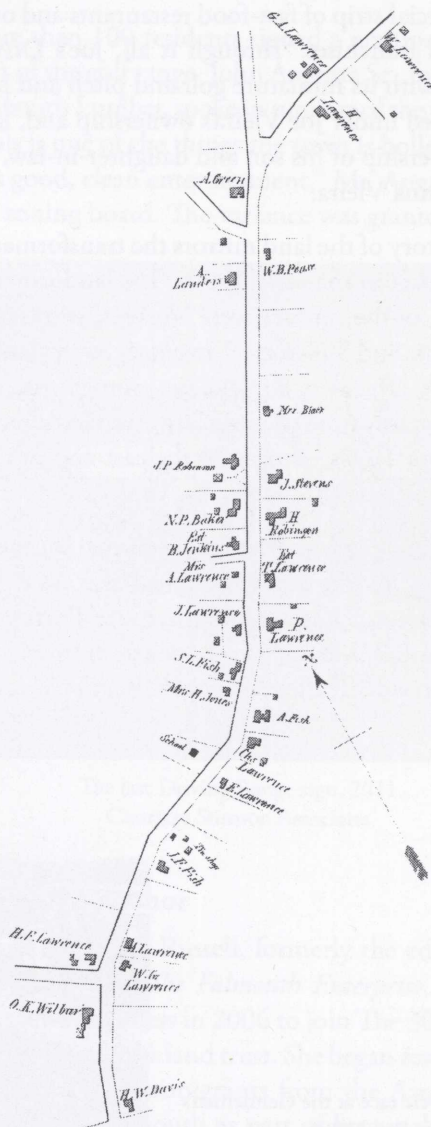
By Margaret Hough Russell

*Margaret Hough Russell honors both Teaticket Village and the 300 Committee in the two lead articles that she wrote for this issue of Spritsail. For The Book of Falmouth, published in 1986, Raleigh Costa wrote a vivid history of Teaticket in which he emphasized the qualities of improvisation, cooperation and hard work that characterized its residents. Russell found that the qualities described by Costa were still very much present today. Indeed she found that those characteristics were essential for the transformation of Joe's Driving Range into Teaticket Park.*

*Like The Book of Falmouth, The 300 Committee was created to celebrate Falmouth's tricentennial in 1986. In the years since then The 300 Committee has grown in size, skill and strength. This evolution is apparent in Russell's description of the mutually respectful collaboration between committee members and members of the Teaticket Village Association. It is an inspiring story.*

From a cultivated field to pasture where cattle grazed, to a driving range and now a public park, a 10.7-acre property in the center of Teaticket has remained open land for more than a century. The 300 Committee Land Trust purchased Joe's Driving Range in 2011 and placed a conservation restriction on it. The property will remain a natural landscape in perpetuity. The new Teaticket Park not only provides public green space in the most densely built-up village in Falmouth, it also provides a direct link to Teaticket's farming and Portuguese heritage.

That Joe's Driving Range remained a family business for 60 years, until The 300 Committee was



Teaticket from *The Barnstable County Atlas*, 1880

in a position to acquire it, is truly serendipitous. Joe Vieira bought the first two of several parcels in 1951, just a decade before other property owners fronting the main street – many land rich and cash poor – began to sell their land to developers. Teaticket changed rapidly from a quiet village of Portuguese-owned businesses and homes to a commercial strip of fast-food restaurants and other national franchises. Through it all, Joe's Driving Range, with its miniature golf and pitch and putt, continued under Joe Vieira's ownership and, later, the ownership of his son and daughter-in-law, Bill and Donna Vieira.

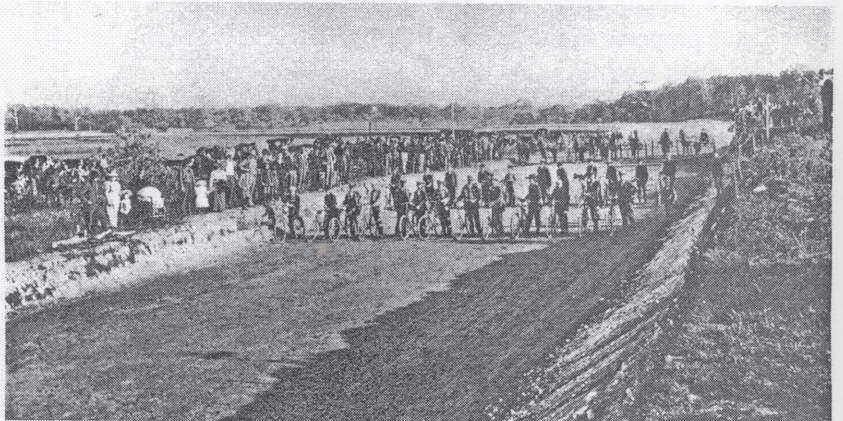
This history of the land mirrors the transformation of Teaticket in the early 1900s. The landowners at the turn of the century were Yankees, with names from Falmouth's history: Lawrence, Swift, Jenkins and Fish. The first Portuguese immigrants, who were primarily from the Azores, arrived in Falmouth in the late 1800s, settling in the east end of town where land was affordable.

It wasn't long before Portuguese-owned businesses sprang up. By the late 1920s, Teaticket, as well as Davisville and East Falmouth, were Portuguese communities. Manuel Perry opened his market on Main Street in Teaticket in 1915. Frank Costa's ice

cream parlor opened in 1925, the same year another market was launched that would later be operated by Alphonse DeMello. Joaquim Sambade opened a shoe store and cobbler shop in 1927. That was the year the town bought land for a new elementary school – now the School Administration Building – to serve the growing population. It would be the third Teaticket school. Many children didn't know a word of English when they started kindergarten there. In the words of John Hough, the late publisher of *The Falmouth Enterprise*, "Portuguese was the language of the home."

The first owner of record of part of the land that would become the driving range was Howard Swift. Mr. Swift, who was born in Centerville in 1857, was a large-scale cranberry bog owner in East Falmouth. (Remnants of cranberry vines can be found today at Teaticket Park.) It was Howard Swift who developed the cranberry bogs along the Coonamessett River. He was active in town affairs, serving as a park commissioner and participating in town meeting. He was also a director of the Gentlemen's Driving Club that established the Trotting Park race track in 1896. Nearly a century later, those 24 acres were purchased by the town for playing fields, with the help of The 300 Committee.

A bicycle race at the Gentlemen's Driving Park, 1896.  
From *Falmouth by the Sea*.





In 1917 Mr. Swift sold the Teaticket parcel to Joseph Cardoza Jr., who was born on Martha's Vineyard and settled in Teaticket when he married in 1916. Mr. Cardoza bought a second parcel in 1923 from Antone Barboza. Many Portuguese farmers had jobs as laborers and cleared and farmed their land in the evenings and on weekends until their farms were large enough to support their families. Following that practice, Mr. Cardoza served on a road crew and worked at Sam Cahoon's ice house in Quissett in addition to farming. In later years, he invited farmers to bring their cattle to graze in his field. In 1949, he and his wife, Cora, moved to California to be with their two sons. A year after her husband's death, Cora Cardoza sold the land to Joseph Vieira, founder of the driving range.

Joe Vieira was a first generation American. His father, Manuel Vieira, was born in San Miguel in the Azores in 1886 and came to this country in 1907, arriving in Teaticket five years later. His mother, Theresa Vieira, also from San Miguel, immigrated in 1907. Their grandson Bill Vieira doesn't know if they arrived together or just by coincidence in the same year. Manuel had a farm on Brick Kiln Road.

Growth in the post World War II years brought new opportunities to those who grew up on small farms. Joe became a successful contractor. His company, Vieira Contractor and Builder, built mostly homes, including many on Walker Street and Mill Road, and some businesses, such as the Cape Cod Drive-In in 1954. Bill said his father suffered from ulcers and hypertension, so he began to seek other opportunities. It was on a trip to Florida that he saw a driving range and decided to open one in Teaticket.

With his wife, Angelina, Joe began buying several parcels on Teaticket's Main Street. Joe's Driving Range, a first for Falmouth, opened in 1951. Throughout the fifties, the Vieiras would buy up additional parcels. In 1953, they discovered that a

variance was needed because the front of the property was zoned for business, while the back was zoned for agriculture. "Under existing conditions," stated a story in *The Falmouth Enterprise*, "hitting the balls would be all right in the business-zoned strip, but descent of the balls on the agricultural-zoned hinterland would be illegal."

More than 100 residents signed a petition in support of the golf range. John Augusta Sr., founder of Falmouth Lumber, spoke in support of the variance. "This is one of the things the town is hollering for. It is good, clean entertainment," Mr. Augusta told the zoning board. The variance was granted.



The last Driving Range sign, 2011.  
Courtesy Stimson Associates.

## About the Author

Margaret Hough Russell, formerly the editor and co-publisher of *The Falmouth Enterprise*, left the newspaper business in 2006 to join The 300 Committee, Falmouth's land trust. She began researching the Portuguese immigrants from the Azores who settled East Falmouth as part of her work for the Emerald House Thrift Shop on Davisville Road.