

Brewster trail honors Eddy sisters

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Mark Robinson talks about the irrigation of the cranberry bogs at the footbridge on the Eddy Sisters Trail.



BREWSTER—They gave their name to the Eddy Elementary School and now to the Brewster Conservation Trust’s first nature trail. The trust dedicated the Eddy Sisters Trail, on the site of their old farmhouse and Brewster’s current community gardens on Lower Road last Thursday evening. Eddy cousins Cathy, Steve and Roy Jones and Larry Houghton cut the ribbon on the quarter-mile long trail just after 5 p.m. [July 12, 2012]. “This property was given by the Eddy family for use in public service,” Peter Johnson, president of the trust said.

That was in 1983, when Ruth and Mary-Louise Eddy donated 18 acres of what had been the Thorndike cranberry bog, to the Trust. Ruth (born in 1921) and Mary-Louise (born in 1915) spent their summers at the grandfather’s (Augustus Thorndike) farm “Pinecroft” on Lower Road. In 1955 they built their own cottage there along the Bay and soon moved back to the adjacent farmhouse at 593 Lower Road. The sisters gave the town a conservation restriction on all 32 acres, running from Lower Road to the Bay, in 1974.

Ship Captain Solomon Freeman (1800-1887) was the original owner of the land and Thorndike bought the land from his family after his death. Thorndike had been the state’s banking commissioner and ran for state Treasurer in 1912 but he also became a “gentleman farmer” after marrying Cora Nickerson of Brewster. It was Thorndike who upgraded the cranberry operation, pumping water from Cobb’s Pond into the bogs. His farm manager, Fred Young, invented and patented a mechanical cranberry pruner in 1908.

It was the council on aging that came up with the idea for the community garden in 1984 – and squash, beans, tomatoes and cucumbers were all growing splendidly in the evening sun last week. Next-door neighbor Lenore Dedon donated an additional 2.5-acres of wetlands a few years ago.

Mark Robinson of The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts suggested to the Brewster Conservation Trust that the forested land might also make a fine nature trail. The cranberry bogs are now over grown and filled with luxuriant cinnamon and royal ferns, numerous sedges and large tupelo trees sheltering blueberries, sweet pepperbush and swamp azalea. The upland portion showcases old stonewalls, towering white and black oaks and tiny shinleaf hidden in the shadows.

“The volunteers cleared the poison ivy and we have nice interpretive stations. [Botanist] Mario DiGregorio walked the trail and gave us a list of interesting things to talk about,” Johnson said. “Jim Gallagher gave us wetlands help and Chris Miller supported us, we have a nice collaborative relationship with the town.” They also got help with the trail work from AmeriCorps.

Robinson led the first official walk on the trail and explained that the site was a planting field for the Saquatucket Indians. “So this land has been in farming and agriculture for hundreds of years,” Robinson said. A sizeable chunk of land near the gardens is being kept open as meadow for butterflies and wildflowers, mowed once a year in November. In the fall the field is filled with rough-leafed and Canada goldenrods and Joe Pye weed. In mid-July the field is mostly green, enlivened by flashy purple knapweeds and yarrow. The trail is a pleasant wander over a footbridge through cool fern-flecked woods into a quiet corner of Brewster history.