



Updates from the Trail: November 2022

“No Cranberries for President”

“No Cranberries for President” read an AP News article on the day after Thanksgiving in 1959 as the First Lady Mamie Eisenhower served applesauce instead of cranberry sauce for Thanksgiving dinner. Just a few weeks prior, residue from aminothiazole—an herbicide found to cause cancer in lab rats—was detected on a small batch of cranberries from Oregon. The Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, Arthur Flemming, alerted the public of the contamination just 2 weeks before Thanksgiving.

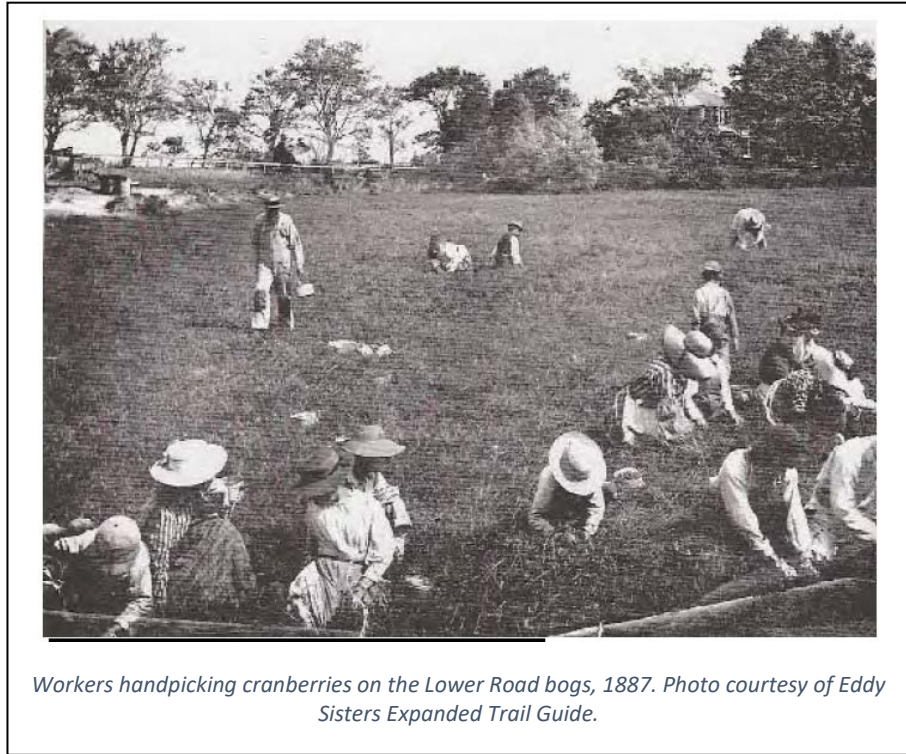
With the alert, an industry that had been expanding since Captain Henry Hall first cultivated cranberries in Dennis in 1816, nearly collapsed. It took years for bogs across the country to start selling cranberries again and many had to abandon their bogs

due to high costs, including the Pincroft Farms bogs on Lower Road (now the Eddy Sisters property). The bogs that were abandoned were slowly reclaimed by the weeds that farmers fought so hard to keep out, and slowly transitioned into forested areas through a process called forest succession. Today, the Eddy Sisters property is a Red Maple and Tupelo swamp, with the evidence of its past in the straight channels, poured concrete flume, and borrow pit.

Although the industry recovered after 1959 due to product and technological innovations (like cranberry juice and flooding bogs for harvesting), today many Massachusetts growers are being forced to close their operations due to factors such as falling cranberry prices and high production costs. The decline of the cranberry industry does have a silver lining: ecological restoration.

Most cranberry bogs are the former sites of historic freshwater wetlands. With help from state and federal agencies and various conservation groups, landowners are working to undo some of the damage these farming practices have done and restore ecological drivers to these areas. [The Tidmarsh Wildlife Sanctuary](#) represents the largest of these projects completed in the Northeast. Here, over three miles of stream channel was excavated, nine dams were removed, and thousands of tons of sand was excavated to restore 481 acres of cranberry bog to wetland. For the first time in a century, the Beaver Dam Brook was connected to the ocean, allowing herring, brook trout, and American eel to return.

This project highlights the environmental benefits of these projects. The legacy of cranberry production is not being lost but being intertwined with a new legacy of environmental stewardship. This legacy is a legacy that will pay dividends for generations to come.



Workers handpicking cranberries on the Lower Road bogs, 1887. Photo courtesy of Eddy Sisters Expanded Trail Guide.