



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE NEW BEDFORD WHALING MUSEUM

HARBINGER

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY www.wpthistory.org

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Summer 2025

Don't forget to renew your membership!

Renewing your membership in the Westport Historical Society is a lot like growing turnips. A little bit of seed yields tons of reward. And, moreover, just like a Westport staple agricultural product – the Macomber turnip – we are hardy and uniquely local! Your choice to renew your membership enables the historical society to continue its efforts to preserve Westport's heritage in all its forms – objects, documents, photographs, buildings, knowledge – for the future. Our activities follow parallel paths this year:

A project to highlight the stories of Westport's Farming Families in the 20th century has unearthed fascinating collections of photographs and artifacts. Our project explores the experience of local lives on the land, pinpointing the inflection points of change that led to a gradual disappearance of generational farms (and we will attempt to peel back the somewhat mysterious origins of the Macomber turnip). The story will be told through ordinary and humble objects such as a milk bottle, well-used agricultural implements, potato bags, farmers overalls, and other artifacts yet to be discovered!

Behind the scenes, at the Bell School, a new Westport History Center is taking shape. Our office has returned to the Bell School and the collections are safely settled into dedicated, spacious, and orderly storage areas. The new history center is not yet ready for prime time, but planning for an exhibition, research, and meeting space is well underway.

Meanwhile, in the coming months, we offer an array of events for you (see enclosed calendar).

You can donate securely in memory of/in honor of an individual and set up recurring monthly donations using a credit card via our website. We look forward to seeing you at the Handy House, on the Handy House Heritage Trail, and at our events this summer! You have our heartfelt thanks for supporting the endeavors of the Westport Historical Society.

Thank you!



Don't forget to save your Lees Market receipts and bring them to the Westport Historical Society. Lees Market generously donates 1% of the total receipt value. You can drop them off at the Bell School or bring them to a historical society program.



Discover more farming stories!
www.wpthistory.org/lives-on-the-land-westports-farming-families/



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The mission of the Westport Historical Society is to engage the public in the exploration of the town's rich history and culture, to inspire a spirit of discovery through educational programs and encourage active participation in the preservation and interpretation of our past.

The Society collects and shares this history. Its goal is to foster the imaginative process of connecting to the past, making it relevant to our present and vital to the future of our community.

Don't forget to save your Lees Market receipts and bring or mail them to the Westport Historical Society. Lees Market generously donates 1% of the total receipt value. You can drop them off at the Bell School or bring them to a historical society program.

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A NEW EXHIBITION CHRONICLING WESTPORT'S FARMING FAMILIES DURING THE 20TH CENTURY

The stories of Westport's farming families chronicle at a micro-level the broader 20th-century agricultural shift in this region — the demise of small-scale family farms and the beginning of industrial, global-scale “bigger is better” agriculture.

The 20th century was an era of change for Westport's farming community, a century that began with 400 farms and ended with fewer than 30 farms. This is not just a story of potatoes, cows, turnips and chickens, but also a topic that connects people of diverse origins — Portuguese, French Canadian, Polish, Scots, and early English settlers — as well as highlighting an extraordinary example of a farm owned and operated by a Native American family throughout the 19th and early 20th century.

At the beginning of the 20th century, this community of farmers and fishermen was chiefly focused on feeding their family. Eventually farmers were forced to break through the limits of local production: they specialized, commercialized, and oriented a growing portion of their production toward the market. This commercialization of farming turned farms into businesses and farmers into business owners, who grew increasingly concerned with making a profit.

Local farmers interviewed in 1976 expressed increasing worries about the financial viability of their occupation. “Our overhead is just too much,” stated Bob Smith in 1976, a view echoed by farmers such as Alton Boan, Daniel Meader, Charlie Costa, Roger Acheson, and George Medeiros. The decline of Westport's small farms was attributed to a combination of political factors, evolving consumer preferences, dietary trends (specifically the Atkins Diet), the popularity of bottled water, concerns about cholesterol, the Watergate-era milk money scandal, specialization in agriculture, rising costs of fuel, equipment, and labor, the interstate highways, Route 88, national economic shifts, recession, competition from large Midwest farms, and taxes.

By 1986, dairy farm buy-outs led to the sale of many local farms. “Geographically we had the largest concentration of dairymen go out in the country. We lost some of our best men” (James Shaw, dairy livestock specialist).

As many of the generational farms disappeared, new forms of farming arrived such as the Westport Rivers Vineyard and Winery. A few generational farms have survived, among them



Noquochoke Orchards, Ferry farm, Milky Way, and Tripps. Sampson Potato Farm attributes its survival to the solar array occupying a portion of the property. In recent decades, new farming families have established themselves: Andrew Orr on Adamsville Road, Ben and Hannah Wolbach, Skinny Dip Farm, and Bill Braun and Dee Levanti, Ivory Silo Farm. Farm life has generated a unique community identity and culture, such as the formation of the Westport Grange. It has inspired authors such as JT Smith and many artists such as Mary Hicks Brown. Over the years, many events have grown out of Westport's agricultural traditions, for example, the tractor pulling contests of the Westport Fair.

There are many surprising aspects to Westport's farming story:

- A farm breeding thoroughbred horses destined for the Olympics.
- A plan to repopulate Westport's abandoned farms in the 1930s with destitute farmers from other parts of the country.
- Westport's role in breeding the Rhode Island Red (or is it the Macomber fowl?)
- The origin story and local lore of the Macomber turnip (for example, is there truth in the belief that Macomber turnips will not grow in Little Compton?)
- The women who made their mark on the farm such as Stella Lake, Westport's feminine farmer, the horsebreeder Milcent Tuckerman, and farm owner Alice Sampson.
- The unique southeastern Massachusetts hay cap

Westport's agricultural past is preserved in the landscape and the many barns, silos, outbuildings, stone walls and fields. The Westport Historical Society is honored to play a role in the preservation of this town's farming legacy, as a caretaker of stories, photos, and artifacts. It's very much a locally sourced collection – from humble farming implements hauled out of sheds to unique objects such as a bronze potato trophy, a collection of mid-20th century photographs discovered in a barn, handmade cards chronicling the Acheson farm in photos and personal observations, and milk bottles found in local backyards. The pride felt by Westport farmers is symbolized by a blue corduroy jacket worn by Mike Kelley, president of the Westport Future Farmers of America 1963-1964. It is decorated with pins chronicling his vocational training as a farmer. Other collection highlights include Betsey Macdonald's beloved Harvest Festival posters and a fascinating memoir written by Alexander Tripp, an authentic grass-roots account of farming life in the 1930s - 60s.

Memories and firsthand knowledge of the 20th- century farming experience are slowly fading. Although this project has gathered a significant collection of materials, there is more to be discovered. We are most grateful to the many individuals who shared their story with us. *We welcome additional contributions!*



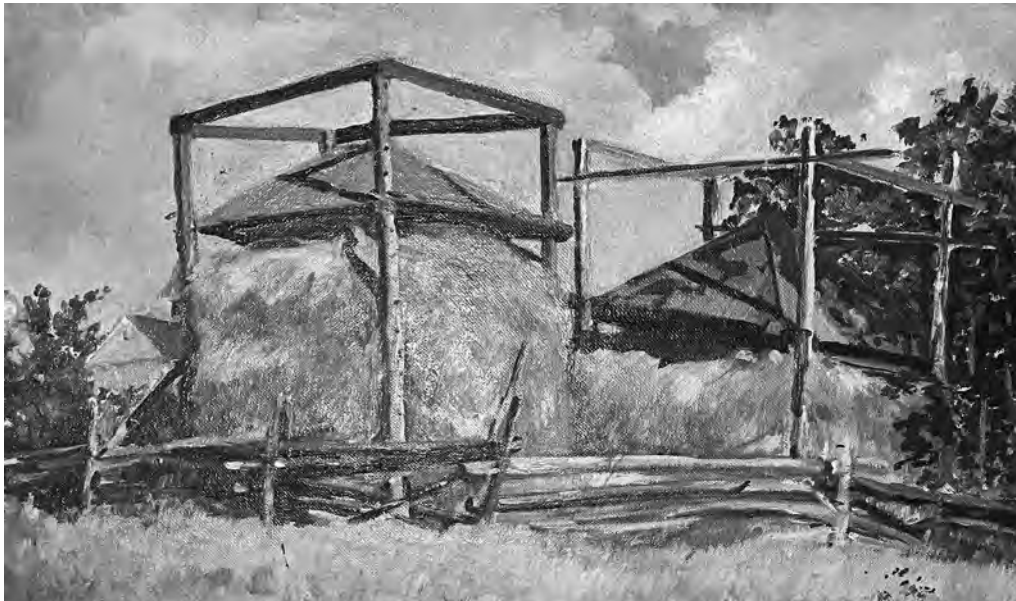
Farming Families History Day



Seraphine Perry with sister Aldina Perry, David Perry at Sodom Road Farm



Janet Meader Turner



Hay Rack by Mary Hicks Brown

With special thanks to:

Project team: Jenny O'Neill, Sarah Levalley, Barbara Smith, and Paul Schmid

Exhibition team: Jenny O'Neill, Blair Walker, and Ray Shaw

Special thanks to Merri Cyr and Ken Simon

We thank the many donors of photos and objects: Meredith Cornell, Merri Cyr, Jane Dufault, Burney Gifford, Mike Kelley, Sam Manley, Steve Medeiros, Heather Reed, John Smith, The Sampson family, Janet Turner, and many more!

P.S. On a personal note: Although I understood that farming was an important aspect of Westport's heritage, this project is much bigger than I ever imagined and there is so much more that could be covered. The story of farming in the 20th century is worthy of a book, offering a rich array of images, objects, family histories, places and personalities. Perhaps there is an author or creative individual with an interest in further documenting this history!

Jenny O'Neill, Executive Director

On our website:

- Timeline of Westport farming in the 20th century
- Personal recollections of farms including Alexander Tripp, Jane Tuckerman on Little Sunswick, Sharon Raposa on the Raposa farm, Carvalho family farm.
- Video interviews with Mike Kelley, Tony Oliveira, Steve Medeiros, and many others.
- Special photo collections: Acheson Farm, Zembo Farm, Small's Dairy, Meader, Boan, Smith, Sampson, Noquochoke, and Westport Rivers Vineyard.
- Artifacts and stories



Daniel Meader

Farming Families Photo Collections



The Tripp ALRU farm collection donated by Carin Tripp Wehrmeister
Named after Alvin and Russell Tripp, this 100-acre farm was located at 443 Horseneck Road. Established by Alexander Tripp in 1907 and in later years owned by Willis, Alvin and Russell Tripp. The farm was sold in 1999. Ziemba (Zembo) Family Farm collection donated by Jane Dufault



Ziemba (Zembo) Family Farm collection donated by June Dufault
Victoria and Joseph Ziemba emigrated from Poland in 1900. In 1911, they purchased their home at 634 Gifford Road in Westport from Malvina Davis. Descendants of the family have resided at the property for over 111 years. An extensive collection of photographs was found in the barn. The photos depict all aspects of a small family farm and the often hard physical work undertaken by both men and women on the farm.



Tuckerman Farm / Little Sunswick Farm collection donated by Sam Manley and Jane Tuckerman
Bayard Tuckerman established a horse breeding farm in 1938. By the 1950s, the farm had 85 thoroughbred horses destined for East Coast racetracks. Bayard's wife, Milicent, bred a horse ridden by a local Westporter, Kerry Millikin, at the Atlanta Olympics, winning a bronze medal. She was recognized as New England Thoroughbred breeder of the Year for three years with "Rise Jim", who held the record as the highest winning horse in New England for many years.



Charlene and
Nancy Tuckerman
and dog Tammy



The Sampson Potato Farm collection

donated by the Sampson family

The Sampson Farm was established by the Wordell family in the 1840s. In the 1970s, a decade when many farms were struggling, the Sampson Farm continued to operate successfully thanks to “Yankee ingenuity and puritan work ethics.” “Once a relative told me I should sell the farm. “Why?” I asked him. “What else is there?” (Del Sampson in 1976)



Smith Family / Long Acres Farm Collection

donated by John Smith

John Smith, who arrived in Westport from Scotland, purchased this property of 110 acres located near Cadmans Neck in 1882. For the next 40 years he raised cattle, planted corn, potatoes, and turnips. His three sons – William, John, and Stuart – continued the farming tradition.



Maple Lane Farm/The Meader Family

donated by Janet Turner

Daniel Meader interviewed in 1976: “When I first started, we got about four or five cents a quart for milk. Though we get more now, we’re not making any more because grain and all that is costing so much more. At that time, oats weren’t more than thirty-two cents a bushel. Now they are \$4.50 a bushel.”



The Boan Farm,

collection donated by Nancy Rodrigues

This farm located at 382 Hix Bridge Road was established by Joseph Boan who immigrated from Scotland in 1887. Succeeding generations -- Sam, Alton, John -- continued to operate the 100-acre farm, growing potatoes and Macomber turnips. By 1975 the farm was operating at a loss. Alton Boan noted farm life was disappearing due to sky-rocketing costs of materials and equipment. "Taxes are very high and repairs to machinery very expensive."



Jim and Dorothy Acheson

Acheson Farm

collection donated by Heather Reed

Roger Acheson interviewed in 1976: "We never had any trouble selling all our milk because we had high quality milk (Guernsey cattle). We sold it as Grade A milk—got a cent a quart premium on it because it was high quality butter fat and low bacteria, but then they began to do away with Grade A milk."





Wainer Farm Collection donated by George Wortham

This property, originally part of the 70,000-acre tract “acquired” from the Wampanoags in 1652, was finally brought back into the possession of a Wampanoag Michael Wainer and Mary Cuffe Wainer. The core of this property has remained in the possession of the Wainer Family and their descendants since 1800 – a span of nearly 225 years. Currently, a new group of descendants is in the process of restoring the 46 remaining acres of the property and transforming it into a historical and educational site emphasizing its Native American Heritage.

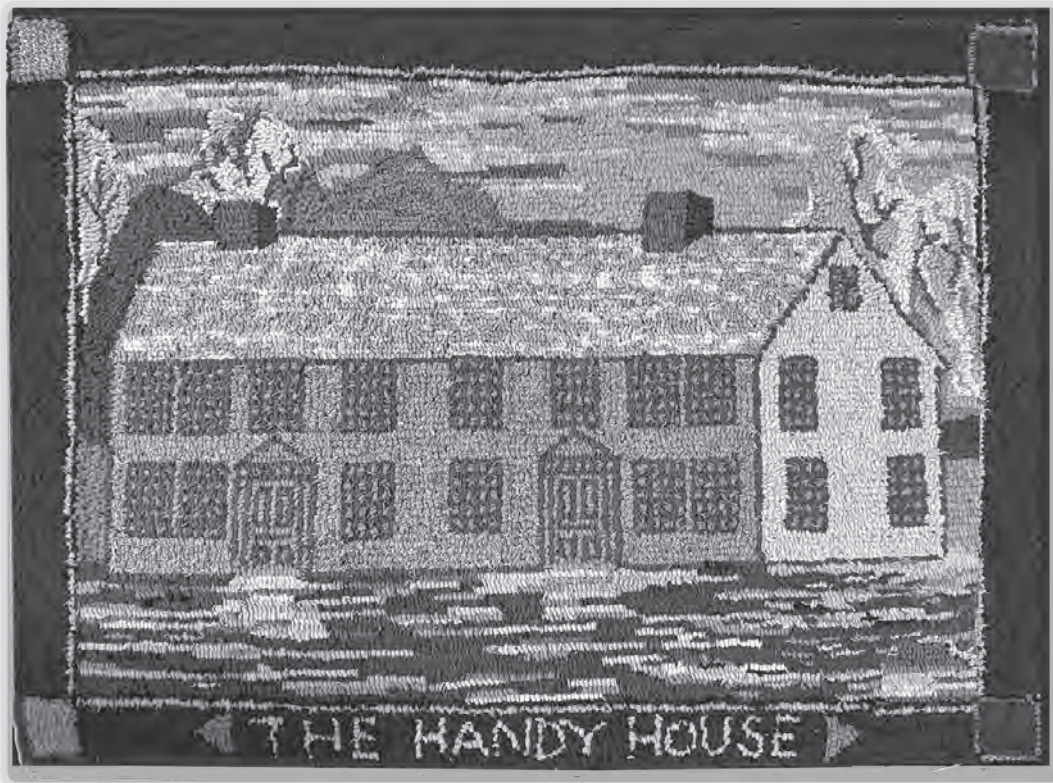


**Westport Rivers Vineyard and Winery/
Buzzards Bay Brewery Collection**

donated by Bob and Carol Russell

In 1980, the Smith family was offered a large sum of money to develop their farm into a 65-unit housing lot. Fortunately, the Smiths decided to sell to another farmer, Bob Russell, who with his wife Carol, established Westport Rivers Vineyard and Winery.





YOUR CHANCE TO OWN A UNIQUE PIECE OF HISTORY!

"Art that is simultaneously decorative and functional"

Throughout the summer, visitors to the Handy House will have a chance to bid on a vibrantly colorful hooked rug, depicting the Handy House. Made by Westporter Steve Tripp, all proceeds from the auction will be donated to the Westport Historical Society. The silent auction will end at 2 PM, Saturday September 20 during the Handy House Artisan Fair.

The simple and meditative technique of rug hooking requires a few tools -- scissors, hook and lap frame, some burlap and Scottish linen -- and many hours of time, which in Steve's words slip by in a "flow state." One rug can take a month or more to complete.

Steve Tripp's Head of Westport studio is filled with multi-colored strips of linen and many examples of imaginative Westport scenes, visual memories from his childhood, such as clamming and quahogging on the Westport river or local scenes such as the Head Garage as it appeared in the 1960s complete with gas pumps and resident dog!



The rug can be viewed at the Handy House, 202 Hix Bridge Road during open hours, Wed/Sat 10 AM – 1 PM.

WESTPORT'S FARMING FAMILIES:

Preserving artifacts, photographs and stories

We thank the many individuals who have loaned/donated objects and photos relating to Westport's farming families. Although it is not possible to display all the images in the exhibition, each photograph has been catalogued in the historical society's collection and will be preserved for future research. Many of the images can be viewed at wpthistory.org/lives-on-the-land-westports-farming-families. If you would like to donate images (originals or allow us to copy photos), please contact us!

Some highlights:

Milk Can

Milk cans were used to transport small quantities of fresh milk from the cow to the consumer. They are a symbol of small-scale local dairy producers. During the 1950s, bulk tank trucks replaced 40-quart cans. Many farmers could not afford to make the transition from cans to bulk tanks, nor did they produce enough milk to fill a bulk tank.

The First Tractor

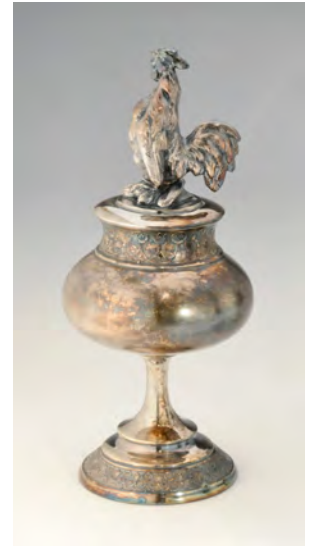
In 1921 Julius T. Smith (Turtle Rock Farm) bought one of the first tractors to be used on a Westport farm. The Fordson tractor was invented for a man "with a strong back and a weak head. We always took a monkey grip on the handle when we cranked the tractor, otherwise if it backfired, it would break your wrist or arm. The fellow who drove the tractor got \$1.50 a day." (Julius Smith, Poor Bill's Almanac 1975)

The Macomber Fowl

Have you ever heard of the Macomber Fowl or Tripp's Yaller Hens? Should Westport lay claim to the Rhode Island Red? Imagine receiving eggs by mail? Did you know Westport once had a problem with hen thieves?

"Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without"

This bag was made by Elvira Smith from left over pieces of twine. Growing up on a farm in the 1920s/30s, she recalled: "We were very frugal. I remember that instead of throwing our old sweaters away, we would unravel the yarn, then wash and clean it to take out the wrinkles. I still have two vests that I knitted from old sweaters. My mother had the expression "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without". We lived by that slogan."



The Glass Milk Bottle

Do you remember the milkman? Some of Westport's dairy farms are represented by glass milk bottles. Many of these bottles were found buried in backyards! The invention of the milk bottle in the 1870s revolutionized delivery and consumption of highly perishable milk. Before refrigeration became commonplace, milk was delivered daily. The glass bottles made it easier for milkmen to make their deliveries, and for the dairy farms to keep track sales.

Do you remember Gulf Hill Dairy in South Dartmouth? Many Westport dairy farms relied on Gulf Hill Dairy to process their milk. And many locals enjoyed ice cream made on site at Gulf Hill Dairy.

Grain bag apron

Westport women recycled colorful patterned grain bags creating clothing such as this apron. One bag might be enough for a child's shirt or three bags enough for a woman's dress.

Bronze potato award

In 1940, the Smith family of Long Acres farm was awarded this bronze potato in recognition of a record-breaking production of 613 bushels of potatoes on a single acre.

Inventing the Macomber Turnip

In 2026 the Macomber turnip will be 150 years old. This commemorative handkerchief from the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition depicts the source of seeds that created Westport's Macomber turnip.





Russell S. Manchester



Walter and Norma Elwell

COLLECTIONS NEWS

Donation of WW2 silk escape map spotlights the service of a Westport US army air force gunner

Russell S. Manchester grew up at Westport Point and graduated from Westport High School in 1938. By the age of 23, he had flown 50 missions with the 15th Army Air Force over Nazi-held territory. He carried with him four maps, known as silk escape maps, precious possessions that have recently been donated to the Westport Historical Society by Norma (Russell Manchester's niece) and Walter Elwell.

The four maps depict Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, and "General government Poland" (term used for German zone of occupation). Even today, the maps offer stunning details and vibrant colors, showing locations of roads, railways, lighthouses, churches, and former and present frontiers. The maps are printed on both sides of the silk-like fabric known as rayon acetate which was lightweight, waterproof, tear resistant, and easily concealed in boots or coat linings. Silk escape maps were instrumental in helping Allied servicemen evade capture and return to safety.

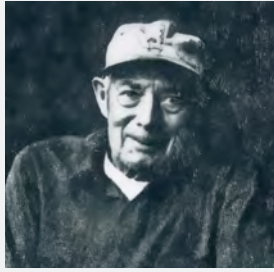
The maps had a secondary use to identify nationality. An American flag is sewn in the corner of each map. The following instructions appear alongside the flag:

1. Learn by heart the Russian phrase "Ya Amerikanets" (means "I am American" and is pronounced as spelt)
2. Carry this folder and contents in left breast pocket.
3. If you have time before contact with the Russian troops, take out the folder and attach it (flag side outwards) to front of pocket.
4. When spotted by Russian troops put up your hands holding the flag in one of them and call out this phrase "Ya Amerikanets."

Entering the army in July 1940, Russell Manchester trained at various posts and was later sent to Hawaii where he witnessed the attack on Pearl Harbor. In 1943 he began his combat flying as an engineer and gunner on a B-17 Flying Fortress.

Russell Manchester recalled that his 47th mission, the raid on Innsbruck, Austria on December 19, was the toughest one: "the bomb run was complete and as the bomb bay doors were closed, fighters attacked from all points of the compass... shells penetrated the gas tank, draining all but about 40 gallons." "The dead engine vibrated so badly that the pilot couldn't read the instruments. Orders were given to bail out, but the prop settled down. When we landed, the prop flew off and rolled to a stop on the landing mat."

Russell Manchester married Bertha J. Beaulieu. He died in 1994 and is buried in Beech Grove Cemetery.



Alexander Frank Tripp

(1920 – 2004), A Farmer's Autobiography

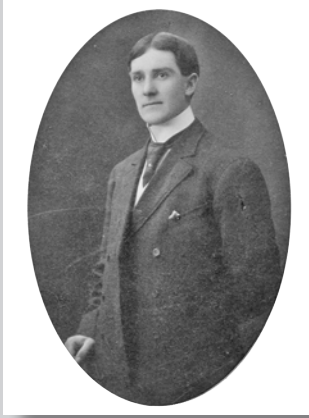
"I was born in 1920. My father went to get Dr. Hicks in South Dartmouth on Slades Corner Road. The snow was so deep (4 feet) that he drove his horse and sleigh over stone walls and through fields and woods. It was so cold that winter that Buzzards Bay was frozen over to Martha's Vineyard."

Born in Westport, the son of Arthur and Agnes Tripp, Alexander was a 1938 graduate of Westport High School and a 1939 graduate of Stockbridge School of Agriculture, School of Animal Husbandry at UMass Amherst. He was a partner in Bojuma Farm before purchasing White Rock Farm in Little Compton in 1960. His autobiography covers his childhood in Westport MA, life on the farm on Horseneck Road and Main Road (Fair Home Farm), stories of rum running, chicken farms, dairy farming, and turnips. It provides an authentic, unfiltered record of Westport's agricultural community during the 20th century. Read his memoir at npthistory.org/alexander-frank-tripp-memoir-of-a-westport-farmer/

"In 1930 my father was building a two-story hen house. He hired Harry Shurtleff as carpenter. Harry was always on to somebody. When he set up the forms for the cement, he was always finding fault with the wall Squire Lord had built. It was always "hey guy, hey guy, who did this". The weather was hot and my brother Donald was about three years old then. He would go down to see how things were going. He went down one hot, windy day with a big straw hat on and pants that hung from his shoulder. The wind blew his hat and he grabbed that but when he grabbed it his britches would fall, so Harry Shurtleff was always after him about pulling his pants up and so forth. Donald told my father, my father told him to call him Harry Shirt-tails, so he went right down right away and called him Harry Shirt-tails. Harry never did call him anything again.

In the early 30's, rum running was a big business. One of the Gifford's was the Town Treasurer. He had a store at Westport Point across from Fish's Store and one night the store got on fire and burned. It burned \$20,000 he was holding of the town's money and years later I heard the truth, that he sent a boat out to a larger boat to get a load of booze, on the way back in the boat sank, so he didn't get the booze, so he burned the store. That's the way the \$20,000 got burned up. He had used the \$20,000 to buy the booze. John Oliver at Central Village was the telephone operator. During the night he operated from home. He could intercept all messages by the government agencies and let the rum runners know where they were and so forth. The main business place for rum running was on the Drift Road down in back of the Fireside. Then when Roosevelt got to be president and legalized the booze business, that was the end of that. There were a lot of fellas still making moonshine, that got to be a big business. There was a still at Charlie Menard's. Anyway, the cops raided that one night so my father took Art and I and we went up to Granville's and walked down back across Granville's field over the walls into Menard's to check out the still. Everything was smashed up, there was a lot of land cleared up and with all of the stumps and roots piled up so as to be fences around the different lots. That land today belongs to Goldstein on the Gifford Road. Rt. 88 goes right down through where that still was."

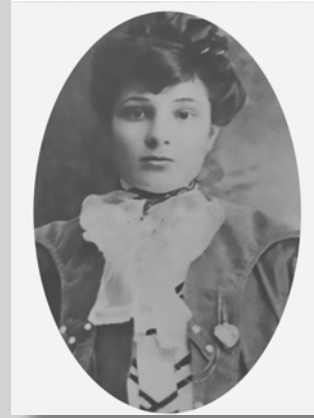
Read his memoir at: npthistory.org/alexander-frank-tripp-memoir-of-a-westport-farmer/



Henry Paquette



Bayard Tuckerman



Angelina Raposa

STORIES

The Mystery of the Hillandale Milk Bottle

by Jane Dufault

The discovery of a milk bottle for Hillandale Farm leads to a fascinating research effort to learn more about this Westport farm, its owner Henry Paquette, and some disturbing events!

Read more at: www.npthistory.org/2025/06/the-mystery-of-the-hillandale-milk-bottle/

Little Sunswick Farm/Tuckerman Farm

"The Farm" we called our home. "Little Sunswick Farm", 180 acres on the Westport River, 4 adjoining residences, all acquired at different times beginning in 1938 when my father, Bayard Tuckerman, moved from north of Boston to be near his friend Bunny Almy. Horseneck Road was frequented by horses and hounds as the two men actively participated in weekly outings of the "Quansett Hunt". They remained close friends until my father died in 1973." Jane Tuckerman (daughter of Bayard and Milicent Tuckerman) recalls that the farm attracted some fascinating and famous individuals such as the actress Bette Davis and Jackie Kennedy's dermatologist Dr. Veit (known as Vitamin).

Read more at: www.npthistory.org/little-sunswick-by-jane-tuckerman/

The Raposa Family Farm

by Sharon Raposa

Westport became home to many Azorean farmers, among them Manuel Raposa and his wife Angelina who settled on Main Road. Farm life was hard for women like Angelina. Up at 4 AM every morning, she made bread in preparation for breakfast set for nine children plus farmhands. Then she canned vegetables, tended the herb garden, filled the root cellar for winter and fed small animals, mostly goats and chickens. Cleaning house, washing clothes by hand came next before preparing yet even more meals for lunch and dinner. She frequently wrote to her family in the Azores, but sadly never returned to visit and never saw them again.

TRANSCRIBING THE HENRY SMITH JOURNAL

JOURNAL PROVIDES INSIGHTS INTO LIFE OF A
LOCAL FARMER AND WHALE SHIP OWNER IN THE 1850S

By Peggy Aulisio

Over the winter, about 40 volunteers helped transcribe the journal of Westport farmer and whale ship owner Henry Smith who lived from 1815 to 1873. The journal covered the period from January 1853 to May 1861.

The mid-1800s was a notable period in American history leading up to the Civil War. Smith mostly talks about his daily business activities but occasionally he mentions an historic event like voting for president in 1856 and 1860.

Each entry starts with the weather, an obvious preoccupation for a farmer and whale ship owner. The journal reads like a business ledger with notations down to the penny. Smith also details how many bushels of farm produce like apples, potatoes and turnips he picked or sold.

Smith was one of more than 18 ship owners who lived in Westport. He lived with his wife, Ruth, and children on a farm owned by his father-in-law, Henry Wilcox. Today, the farm is known as Keith Farm at 775 Horseneck Road.

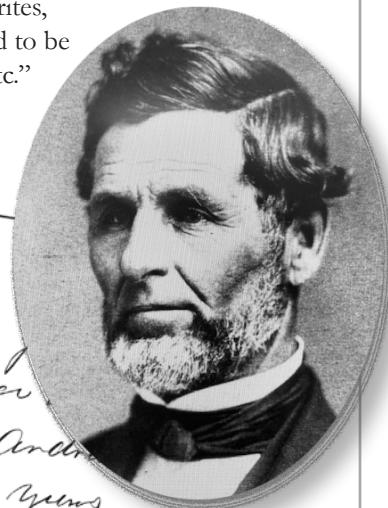
Throughout his journal, he talks about hiring crew members from ship masters to mates to green hands. He frequently mentions the barks he owned or outfitted and ships owned by his father-in-law. In one entry, he reports that the Bark Solon brought home 3,574 & 1/2 barrels of sperm oil.

Smith's occupations often take him to New York. On one such trip in March 1855, he writes, "I'm sitting at a desk in the reading room at the U.S. Hotel writing this sketch and am glad to be seated having been upon my feet most of the day traveling about the city getting prices etc."

Westport May 1861

Monday 13th

*This day pleasant Employed at getting
ground ready at 2 o'clock P.M. attended
funeral of Edward Gloem son of Andrew
Gloem of Westport His age was about 21 years
the funeral was at Oak Hill Friends Meeting
the House was more than full Phoebe R. Gifford
Spoke or Preached the funeral sermon He was
buried in the burying ground on the Benjamin
Wilcox farm He shot himself either intentionally*



Henry Smith Journal

Also during that trip, he sells oil from a schooner, goes to a musical and buys “quite a few provisions including hams and dried beef, flour, meal, sugar.” He returns home on the Steamer *Bay State*, which arrives in New Bedford via Fall River. He often travels by horse or by boat.

While the first 100 pages or so of the more than 350-page journal are businesslike and brief, eventually Smith starts to provide more details about local life.

On November 4, 1856, he writes, “In company with H. Wilcox went to town election for presidential election and governor. I voted for Colonel John C. Fremont for president of United States and Dayton for vice president and voted for governor of Massachusetts, Mr. Josiah Quincy of Boston.”

Four years later, he records the local vote count for the Lincoln/Hamlin ticket as 275 votes for Lincoln of about 300 cast.

A Quaker, Smith attends Friends Meeting with his family. He says that at one monthly meeting they had some “good speaking,” but another time, he says the speaker talked too long. Smith devotes one sentence to a solar eclipse that occurred on May 26, 1854. It was the first solar eclipse to be photographed in North America after the invention of photography. In his typical style, he writes, “Had an Eclips of the Sun the center being invisible there being a ring about one inch wide which was not covered. Tucker Wilcox had 3 quarters of a calf 61lb 4oz \$4.98.”

Smith also recounts the severe winter storms and so-called Giant Freeze that occurred from December 1856 to January 1857. The storm was devastating, creating drifts up to 18 feet. Smith’s writing about these major events inspired transcribers to learn more details about what happened. One tragedy that inspired further research was the suicide by drowning of Nancy Wood Davis who left home with a small child around midnight on February 15, 1854, leaving a note saying, “Follow me to the river for that is a passport to a better world.”

Smith writes a lengthy description of the death of a young man named Edward Slocum, saying, “He shot himself either intentionally or accidentally in the front entry of his grandfather Humphrey Slocum’s house near the Horseneck house above Richard Almy’s.” Transcribers found a newspaper account of Slocum’s death.

The many references to apples led to research on the varieties common in New England in the mid 1800s.

Once a month, the transcribers got together to talk about their progress. In the meantime, they communicated on a Facebook page where they asked for help interpreting symbols, abbreviations, scribbles and Smith’s handwriting. Some of the transcribers were descendants of families with whom Smith had business or personal connections.

The journal is a great resource for anyone interested in whaling, farming and the lives of Quakers during the period just before the Civil War. Even details like the daily weather might be of interest to climate scientists.

Although he seems like a reserved New Englander or preoccupied businessman in the beginning, as the journal progresses, gradually an image forms of an observant, even caring,

human being. He may not say that he “cares” when Captain Seabury’s young son dies, but just the fact of his writing it down conveys a measure of feeling.

There are only a few references to slavery, although Smith does mention listening to a speaker at Friends Meeting who had been a slave for 37 years.

It’s not clear if another woman he mentions was or had been a slave, but on August 22, 1859, he writes, “All our family except Hannah Wilcox and Mary B. Smith and Hannah W. Smith attended the funeral of Zilphy Auker (colored woman) at Friends Meeting House. The house was full. She was buried in William Almy’s House Meadow.” In the margin he notes that Zilphy Auker’s age would have been 95 in October 1859.

Another reference to slavery is of a suspected slave ship, the Atlantic, which was seized in New Bedford. On July 27, 1859, he writes, “I went to New Bedford to get the Bark Solon provisions out of Ship Atlantic.” He says he was unable to get them, however, because the ship was being held in custody as a suspected slave ship by the marshal.

A news story found by the transcribers reports that “a thorough examination satisfied the officials that the ship was well fitted for a whaling voyage” and that “nothing was found on board to justify the suspicion that she was bound on any different mission.”

Smith also writes about a major dock fire in 1859. One Aug. 26, he writes, “I went to New Bedford and visited the burnt district.” Smith says the value of the oil and whale bone burned was about \$150,000 and that the other burned property was worth about \$200,000, a large sum for the time.

Historians mark the beginning of the Civil War as April 12, 1861, when Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina. Smith’s journal ends about six weeks later on May 22, 1861. Considering how slowly news traveled in that period, he may not have heard about the attack by the time his journal ended.

When he wrote the journal, Henry Smith was in his late 30s to mid 40s. He died in 1873 when he was about 58 years old.



Volunteer transcribers gathered at the Keith Farm to celebrate the completion of the project.



SUMMER AT THE HANDY HOUSE

Alvin Tripp

Summer at the Handy House

202 Hix Bridge Road, Westport MA

Open June 25 – September 20, 2025

10 AM – 1 PM Wednesdays and Saturdays

Lives on the Land: An exhibition highlighting the stories of Westport's farming families. This exhibition focuses on the 20th century, an era that began with 400 farms and ended with fewer than 30 farms. This is not just a story of potatoes, cows, turnips and chickens, but also a topic that connects people of diverse origins — Portuguese, French Canadian, Polish, Scots, and early English settlers — as well as highlighting an extraordinary example of a farm owned and operated by a Native American family throughout the 19th and most of the 20th century.

Kids Make History!

10 AM - 1 PM Wednesdays in July/August

Drop in for some creative crafts and family fun! Make a corn husk doll, create a sunprint, make your own Macomber turnip, and take an adventure along the Heritage Trail. **FREE.**



Mike Kelley with his Future Farmers of America jacket



Nancy and Drew Rodrigues (Boan family)

Cyanotype Workshop

10 AM – 2 PM Wednesday July 30, 2025

(rain date Thursday July 31, 2025)

\$60 per student, visit our website to pre-register.

Tina Tryforos is a photographer and educator, specializing in the historic photographic process of cyanotypes, the Prussian blue image invented in 1842 by Sir John Herschel. This workshop includes:

A brief introduction to the history of this historic process, as well as a description of the chemical magic behind this simple process. Students will learn how to set up a cyanotype exposure, potential materials such as using natural materials to tone cyanotypes, how to safely develop a cyanotype in water, and how to intensify the image. Students will be provided with handouts with recipes and tips. All supplies will be provided. Maximum of 12 students.

\$60 per student, pre-register at www.wpthistory.org.

Milk Bottle Collector's Day

10 AM – 12 PM, Saturday August 2, 2025

Handy House, 202 Hix Bridge Road, Westport MA

Calling all milk bottle collectors! Local collectors (Westport/Dartmouth and surrounding towns) of vintage milk bottles are invited to gather at the Handy House to share information about their collection and to meet others who share



their interests. Bojuma, Small's, and Broadbent are just a few of the Westport dairies that are represented by milk bottles. View the collection of milk bottles gathered by the Westport Historical Society, on show as part of "Lives on the Land: Westport's Farming Families." Bring along dairy memorabilia and related agricultural items and mystery objects (whatsits) too! If you wish to display a collection, please bring your own table. Tent will be provided. *FREE.*

The Handy House Artisan Fair

10 AM – 3 PM Saturday September 20, 2025

(rain date Sunday September 21)

Meet Westport's craftsmen, peruse the Vintage Market, enjoy musical entertainment! Handy House Artisan Fair showcases local craftspeople who specialize in skills and traditional crafts commonly practiced in the 18th and 19th century. This year's fair also features a vintage market – an opportunity to pick up unusual antiques, metalware, jewelry and textiles. This program is supported by a grant from the Helen E. Ellis Charitable Trust administered by the Bank of America and the Westport Community Gift Fund.

Halloween at the Handy House

10 AM – 2 PM Saturday October 25, 2025

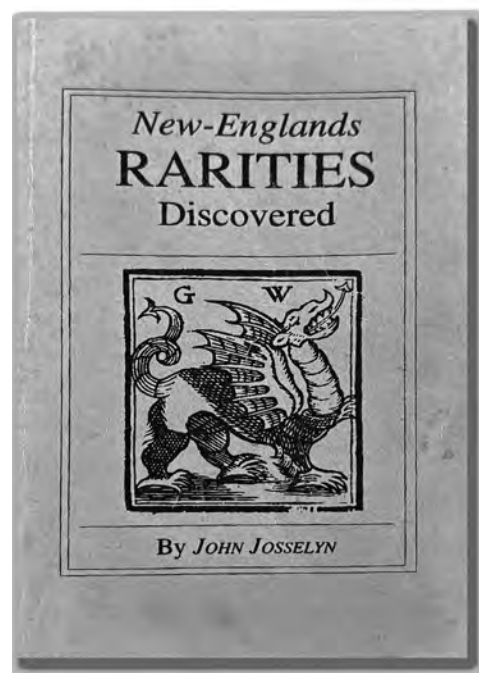
(rain date Sunday October 26)

Ghosts, goblins, witches, and skeletons have taken over Westport's historic Handy House! The air is filled with spooky spirits up to no good. This year's popular Halloween program offers children and their families a chance to make some magical tools to ward off those evil spirits. Kids will create their own protective spells and potions and meet the Handy House witches.

The Handy House Halloween Trail is open for the month of October.

Discover colonial-era plants at the Handy House

This summer, visitors to the Handy House can view an evolving garden and interpretive project headed by Merri Cyr and Tina Tryforos and inspired by the 17th century text by John Josselyn "New England's Rarities Discovered in Birds, Beasts, Fishes, Serpents, and Plants of that Country". Published in 1672, this was the first book to identify New England animal and plant life, medicinal recipes, and other natural lore. This multi-layered project will link visitors to information about historical and contemporary uses of colonial-era New England plants and to the Native American technique of planting the "Three Sisters," beans, corn, and squash. Check our website and Facebook page for regular garden meet-ups for volunteers to assist with this project.



WESTPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
25 DRIFT ROAD, PO BOX N188, WESTPORT, MA 02790

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Permit No. 323



Smith family farm

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Learn more about current volunteer
opportunities and sign up at:

wpthistory.org/join-support/volunteer/