

BRANT POINT ASSOCIATION



A Word from BPA President Bob Dobies

Welcome to our second quarter 2023 Brant Point Association newsletter. The BPA is committed to providing residents with relevant, useful information on local topics of interest as well as issues pertinent to the entire Nantucket community. Member feedback helps inform what we will write about, so please let us know if there are topics high on your list of priorities.

In this issue we address native plantings and landscaping, public right of ways in Brant Point and an update on the Children's Beach pump. We are also introducing two new sections to our newsletter that will focus on people or businesses in our community and the history of Brant Point. Our first business spotlight is with Abby and Stacey, the owners of GypSea, the wonderful restaurant at Children's Beach and The Surf, the concession shack at Surfside Beach. We also share a brief history of the Gilbreth property, The Shoe, on Hulbert Avenue associated with the book *Cheaper By the Dozen*. We hope you find these articles fun and informative and that they add to your knowledge of our neighborhood.

Please be sure to mark your calendar for Saturday, August 5 at 8AM for the Brant Point Association annual meeting at the Nantucket Hotel. We encourage all BPA members to join us. Nantucket Town Manager Libby Gibson will be our featured speaker and will update us on town government activities. We will also ask for your approval to appoint board members for the next year.

Soon we will announce the date of our annual BPA summer social gathering, which will be held towards the end of July. This event will give you a chance to meet with neighbors and an opportunity to speak with BPA board members.

Finally, if you are not yet a member of the BPA, we urge you to join. Membership is a modest \$100/year. Increased membership will enable the Association to have a larger voice in the community. Your input will allow us to represent you more effectively. Please see our website for joining (www.nantucketbpa.com).

Thank you,

Bob Dobies, BPA President

Public Right of Ways to the Beach Along Hulbert Avenue

Allen B. Reinhard, Vice Chair, Nantucket Roads & Right of Way Committee



There are five public ways leading to the beach along Hulbert Avenue: Willard Street, Henry Street, Dix Street, James Street and Charles Street. Willard, Henry and Dix are footpaths with access to the beach while James St and Charles St are wider public ways that provide pedestrian access as well as emergency vehicle response points. These ways to the beach were laid out when Brant Point was subdivided into lots over several years from the late 1800's through the early 1900's to provide public beach access for all individuals. As properties developed and subdivided along Hulbert Avenue over the years, abutters closed off some of these ways to the public. As the island's summer population grew, the Nantucket Select Board and Planning Office developed a plan to reestablish the public's right to use these access points.

After a period of legal review and debate over beach use and ownership, Hulbert Avenue property owners and town officials agreed to what has become known as

the "One Big Beach Program." It confirmed the right of public access through the public ways at all five access points along Hulbert Ave. Each right-of-way included an eight to ten-foot-wide footpath with the remaining 10 to 12 feet on each side of the way leased to abutters on either side on which they could construct fences or plantings for privacy. The lease allows public access over the footpath and the full width of the road on the beach down to the waterline. The town has a monitoring program for the public beach sections and maintains the footpaths. Because of the success of the One Big Beach Program, it was offered in other parts of the island where public ways had been established through approved early subdivision plans.

Without these public ways along Hulbert Avenue, Brant Point Lighthouse and Charles Street provided the sole access to harbor beaches. The additional public ways guarantee neighbors and visitors easy access for generations to come. 🏖️

Easton Street Marsh, A Nantucket Conservation Foundation Property

Dr. Jen Karberg, NCF Director of Research and Partnerships, Senior Wetland and Coastal Ecologist



Rolling dunes once surrounded an extensive salt-marsh connected to Nantucket Harbor on the peninsula that is now Brant Point. As town grew and the Brant Point lighthouse was established, people began moving into the area. The fill used to raise Easton Street cut most of the salt marsh off from the harbor. The isolated part to the north of Easton St. became a freshwater marsh filled by groundwater and rainwater.

Today the Easton Street Marsh, the primary low spot on Brant Point, provides a rich habitat for migratory birds and waterfowl as well as other wildlife like peepers and deer. A few years ago, when the pump station at Children's Beach stopped working correctly, tidal salt water flowed into the marsh at every high tide, causing the marsh plants to convert to salt marsh plants. Fixing the pump station allowed Easton Street Marsh to revert to freshwater, and freshwater wetland plants including cattails and the invasive *Phragmites* dominate once again. Last year, the Nantucket Conservation Foundation, working with our volunteer Tessa Husted (of Brant Point), examined the water quality of the marsh. Salinity of the water over the summer showed that, right now, no saltwater intrusion is entering into the marsh. Over the summer the marsh removed phosphorus and nitrogen from the groundwater as well as serving as a large storage sink for carbon. As the weather became warmer and drier through the summer, the marsh struggled to hold on to nutrients and store carbon.

The future of Easton Street Marsh is uncertain. As sea level rises within the harbor, we expect inland groundwater to rise, too. That's why the circle of grass just down the road is starting to hold wetland grasses. Eventually, denser salt water will rise up into the groundwater and potentially infiltrate the marsh. Storms and higher high tides regularly flood the marsh with salt water. Warmer and drier summers with little rain further stress the marsh. Recurring salt water and longer dry spells stress freshwater wetland plants, lead to poorer water quality and release carbon into the atmosphere. NCF has been tracking water levels in the marsh and last year worked with consultants at Horsley-Witten to consider our restoration and management options. At this time, the marsh reduces flooding by holding on to excess rainwater and tidal flooding, but it is almost at capacity. By 2060 we expect the marsh and Easton Street to be regularly flooded by high tides. The best adaptation strategies will likely allow the reconversion to salt marsh as sea levels rise and potentially find a way to reconnect the marsh to the harbor. That would allow it to drain and, in that way, improve water quality. At the same time, raising Easton Street itself might help provide resilience to access within the neighborhood. Considering adaptation of the Brant Point neighborhood as a whole will be important in creating successful resilience in the future. In the meantime, the existing marsh will continue to act as a home for migratory ducks, egrets and deer while filtering rainwater and improving local groundwater water quality. 🇺🇸



Photo taken at Brant Point looking towards Children's Beach, 1880. Extensive salt marshes can be seen along the shore with a path that eventually was filled to make Easton St and isolate Easton St Marsh. Image courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.



A brief history of Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, The Shoe and “Cheaper by the Dozen”

In 1838 two small lighthouses, with one light 20 feet higher than the other, were built between Jetties Beach and the foot of the Cliff not far from Cobblestone Hill. When commissioned it was named the Nantucket Cliff Lighthouse Station, but locals referred to it as the “bug lights.” The pair of lights provided a marker for ships entering Nantucket Harbor. The taller of the two bug lights located in the rear had a red beam, the shorter light closer to the shore a white beam. When a ship approaching the harbor channel had the two lights lined up, or in daytime the two lighthouses themselves lined up, the pilot knew they were on the correct course to enter the harbor safely.

In addition to the two bug lights, the property included the light keeper’s residence, a brick fuel shed and a tool shed. The bug light installation was eventually decommissioned in 1908. The light keeper’s residence was sold and relocated closer to town. However, the remaining structures have an interesting history.

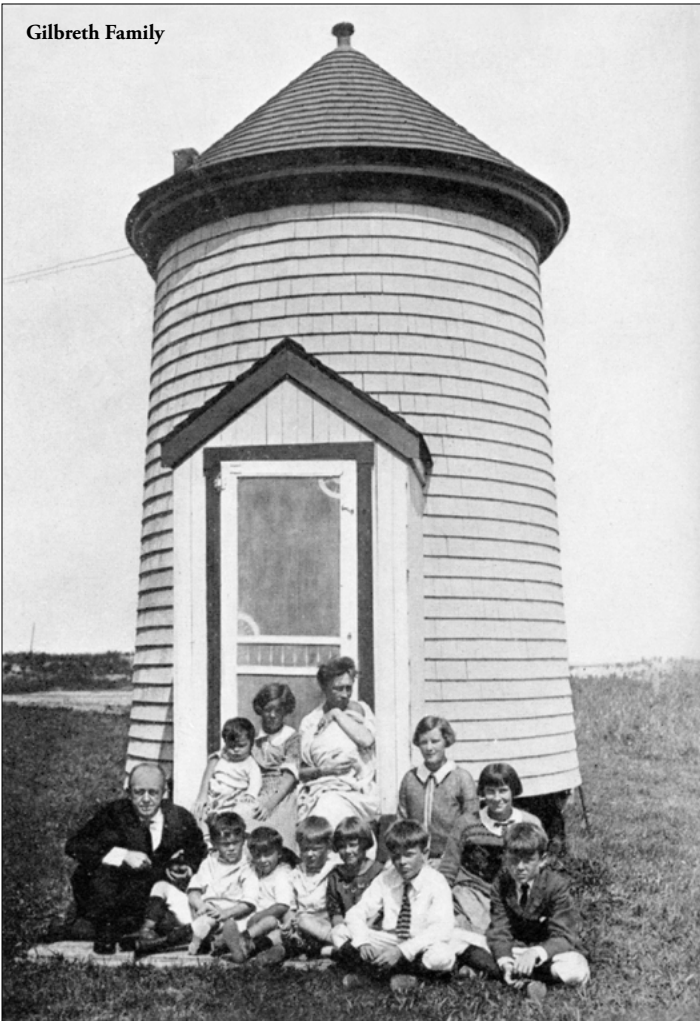
Frank and Lillian Gilbreth purchased the bug lights and tool shed in 1918, looking for a suitable family beachfront cottage. Both Frank and Lillian were world renowned efficiency engineers, among the first in the scientific management field and the very first to perform time and motion studies. The original tool shed, all 12

feet by 18 feet, became the Gilbreth family cottage for Frank, Lillian and ten children. Two additional children would be born on Nantucket soon after, making it a cool dozen. At the time Frank had the taller bug light moved closer to the cottage, by rolling the tower on logs pulled by a blindfolded horse driving a capstan. With both bug lights now flanking the cottage, one was converted to an office/den, and the other served as a bedroom for three of the children.

Over time, Frank affectionately named the three structures The Shoe in recognition of those who reminded him of the old woman who lived in a shoe and had too many children! As family folklore has it, Frank would often joke while driving his family around their Montclair, NJ residence when asked, “Hey mister, how come you got so many kids?” Frank would respond, “Well, they come cheaper by the dozen, you know.”

Always pursuing efficiency theories, Frank was constantly studying motion and applying unorthodox teaching methods to his children. In fact, Frank painted wall-writing on nearly the entire interior of The Shoe with Morse code along with the planets and stars. The children learned code quickly, as they became well-versed in astronomy. These stories and many more are chronicled by two of the children, Frank Jr. and Ernestine, in

Gilbreth Family



the 1948 autobiographical book *Cheaper by the Dozen*, with a chapter dedicated to Nantucket. In 1950 the film *Cheaper by the Dozen*, starring Clifton Webb and Myrna Loy, included familiar Nantucket scenes of *The Shoe*, *Jetties Beach* and *the Cliff*.

After Frank died in 1924, Lillian carried on with the family business. Her family remained a permanent fixture on Nantucket, visiting each summer and eventually buying their own summer homes. Over those years *The Shoe* went through at least two transformations. In 1952 a stylish prefabricated cottage, the first of its kind on the island, replaced the cottage. In 2022 the bug lights were renovated, re-shingled and freshly painted, and a classic Nantucket shingle-style home with views of *Jetties Beach* and *Nantucket Sound* replaced the cottage itself. The last remnant of the lighthouse station, the brick fuel shed, still stands in the vacant wetlands to the east of its famous companions. With a keen eye, the red roofed bug lights can still be seen from ferries entering and departing Nantucket Harbor. 🏠

Storm Water Pump Update

A conversation with David Gray,
Town of Nantucket Sewer Director

How does the town deal with storm drainage on Brant Point? Director of the Sewer Department David Gray superintends the pump at Children's Beach as well as the analysis of the water flow near the Cliff and Brant Point areas. When necessary, he brings in a large temporary pump to deal with major storm water, a strategy that has worked reasonably well for the last several years. Knowing that this approach is a short term solution at best, he recently used town funds to complete a closed circuit TV survey of all the pipes in the area, looking at their locations and condition. Most were clean and in good shape; a few are damaged and will be fixed, especially near the storm drains. Using the data generated by the "video tractor" that went through the pipes, the Department is analyzing the best way to deal with the water flow to prevent future flooding on Brant Point. The Children's Beach pump may eventually need to be moved to a different location, depending on

where the water overflow needs to be directed. Currently, it goes primarily into the Nantucket Yacht Club boat basin near the boat lift.

The best news is that since the pipes seem to be generally in good shape, replacing those that need attention will not require major infrastructure work. We asked David about the impact of construction in the Brant Point area on the water flow when it rains particularly hard or there is a major storm. New construction, major renovations and raising houses affect the water flow, sometimes diverting more water into the roads. The town currently does not limit approved construction, and we look forward to learning more from the climate resiliency study group. Their decisions and recommendations may have an impact on construction requirements in the future. David works closely with Sustainability Programs Manager Vince Murphy, the Land Bank and the Nantucket Conservation Foundation, sharing the analysis of the data produced by the pipes survey this past winter. They will be completing their analysis over the next several months and will come up with a plan to control the storm water on Brant Point, including a possible relocation of the pump. 🏠

Native Landscapes of Nantucket

Nantucket is home to a rare balance of ecological elements in the wild. The island also benefits from cultivated gardens with distinctive looks that incorporate natural landscape elements. The use of native plants and landscape techniques is especially important on Brant Point as non-native plants, trees or landscaping techniques can change the natural appearance of the area, disrupt the delicate balance of the ecosystem and block sight lines for neighbors and visitors.

Many native plants are beautiful and hearty. Most don't need fertilizing or watering the way non-natives do which helps homeowners follow "good practices" while heeding the island's fertilizer by-law. In addition, they are winter-hardy, drought-tolerant, and generally have increased pest and disease resistance. The rich biodiversity on Nantucket offers continual blooming times in all four seasons. Native plants also support native animal and insect species, while also purifying the water and providing shade and protection. Certain birds and insects rely on native plants to survive on Nantucket. Non-native plants do not provide the good nutrition needed for Nantucket fauna. If we don't have balance in nutrients for wildlife, we could lose diversity of species. Native plants also provide places for our fauna and insects to hide and raise young. Even though more than half of Nantucket is conserved, developed areas of the island block much of the wildlife and insects from moving freely. For that reason, property owners should remember to blend in native species that encourage the movement of fauna throughout the island. Nantucket has seen a decline in insects in the last decade, but the good news is that what we do in our yards will help reverse that downward trend. If you take native plants out during renovation, please put some back when you do your design. In doing so you will continue the tradition of establishing blended gardens, a technique which supports ecological balance and the unique framing of vistas that characterize Brant Point.

Erosion control is another important benefit native plants provide in coastal environments because their deeper roots stabilize soils. If you are lucky enough to



have a Conservation Commission designated wetland on your property, you will have another opportunity to design a landscape that offers symbiosis between these two areas. Wetlands are a key tool in Brant Point to help manage stormwater because they function as a natural sump for stormwater that collects in the absence of an adequate drainage system on Brant Point.

The Nantucket Conservation Foundation feels that, as an island, we need to boost the amount of native vegetation on private property and more actively manage invasives. We can also help their efforts by checking annually for invasive species and removing them. We encourage residents to bring the beauty of Nantucket's native species into the design and function of your gardens and wild areas. Look to add more "Nativars" which are new varieties of natives that will both look good and be good for the environment. 🌿

For more information on native plants and invasive species:

Consult with your garden service about the best ideas for native plants to include in your landscape design.

[Native vs. Non Native Plants Invasive Plants The Nantucket Landscape](#)

[Video Presentation of Native Plantings](#)
with Kelly Omand, Ecologist & Botanist NCF



Brant Point Community Spotlight: GypSea Café at Children's Beach

As a new addition to the BPA Newsletter we are spotlighting local businesses.

For this article we sat down with Abby Shaw and Stacey McEachern, the owners of GypSea Café at Children's Beach and The Surf at Surfside Beach to hear more about the business, amazing food and their ties to the community.

Q. What inspired you to open GypSea Café at Children's Beach?

Three years ago Abby and I were fortunate enough to have been awarded the concession for The Surf located at the Surfside Beach. Since then, we've come to know and love our community, serving local families as well as visitors. I have fond memories from over the past eighteen years of the Children's Beach and playground, where I would lay down a blanket on the grassy field and enjoy breakfast or lunch with my four children. It truly is a special place. In 2022 we were awarded the concession for Children's Beach and opened GypSea.



Q. Can you tell us about your breakfast and lunch menu and what sets it apart from other restaurants in the area?

We have many tasty, new, healthy food options at GypSea, and in addition to them we offer The Surf's top favorites, the Açai Bowl, The Surf Burger and our famous Chicken Sandwich. We provide the highest quality ingredients including grass-fed meats, antibiotic-free chicken, organic produce, gluten-free, vegetarian and vegan options. We cater to all ages, offering options for both adults and children.

Q. What makes your restaurant a valuable addition to the island and specifically to the Brant Point community?

One of our main goals for GypSea Café was to re-establish a full morning breakfast menu, offering our community an additional breakfast restaurant option. Breakfast options are quite limited in the downtown area. Families can come and enjoy the park, the beach and the beautiful views while eating a yummy meal at GypSea.

Q. What kind of atmosphere and a mbiance can diners expect when visiting your restaurant?

We have added a new outdoor patio area allowing for additional seating with umbrellas. Customers are able to enjoy their breakfast or lunch while taking in the amazing views of the Brant Point Harbor. Abby has planted greenery and flowers to beautify the property. It's a lovely outdoor experience.

Q. What are your longer-term goals and plans for the restaurant?

We have several plans in the offing. This season we are going to start offering a menu for small private parties or events, such as children's birthday parties or small family gatherings in the early evenings. We also think it would be fun to offer tea parties or themed parties for children. A longer-term goal is to improve the exterior of the building and create an overhang or awning which would allow us to provide service on bad weather days. Please email hello@nantucketh2o.com if you'd like to book.

We are fortunate to have GypSea Café readily available to all of us who live in Brant point and appreciate their commitment to serving high quality food in a beautiful, comfortable, casual environment. GypSea provides all residents and visitors with a fantastic place to eat right in the neighborhood. Speaking from firsthand experience, I can attest to the exceptional quality of the food, and I absolutely love the breakfast! We at the BPA encourage everyone to go eat at GypSea, say hi to Abby and Stacy and their staff, and support our local small business. It's just a short walk or bike ride away for amazing eats!

