



The Greenway Struggle & Celine Gondolfo

TAKING A WALK THROUGH WHISTLE PATH WOODS WITH CELINE GONDOLFO adds another dimension to this important and for so long overlooked greenway. Celine cherishes this small patch of green land—6.9 acres—displaying spontaneous pride and humility as her conversation switches from the plant, tree or bird in front of her to the long

struggle of protecting and acquiring this land. The Whistle Path Woods is the Greenway Project of Locke Bohm Heights. The name Whistle Path Woods comes from the time when wagons of Provincetowners would go off to the dunes for cranberry picking outings. The train would pass this route and would have to sound its whistle for the safety of the numerous passing wagons.

On returning to Celine's tree-surrounded home, she lugged three large and cumbersome looseleaf notebooks to the table—records of three long extremely detailed, professionally charted histories of Provincetown conservation. Foss Woods, Locke/Bohm Heights and Shankpainter. As she deposited the volumes of so much research and struggle, Celine released a "Whew!" sigh and stated, "This is not about me. This is about so many people. All that's in these books has come through so much consolidation and elimination. So many people have given their time and expertise to these projects. Elizabeth Foss who gave me her family history, photos and mementos. They have a long history of conservation.

I asked Celine how long she had been involved in her passion for conserving. "It seems like forever, but I got involved in the early 90's. I always loved nature but what caught my attention was the National Park intention to widen Race Point Road. Peter Souza was out there every day protesting 'Not one more tree!'

"They were going to cut 500 trees to widen the road. I





got involved and printed the handouts to let the public know. By handouts and word of mouth we got everybody to go to the Visitors Center for that meeting of the Seashore with the public—an explanation and discussion of the project. That was how I first started.”

“[The advocacy] was different from my business and I could help. These

rich forested areas are needed to enable animals and birds to pass through our greenway areas. We must save these links. We can't save everything. When animals live near or on such hot dunes, they need cooling areas to survive or migrate. The Greenway Project is just this. All the projects culminate in saving the greeway to Truro.

“The 1995 report from the National Seashore states that Provincelands/Provincetown have only 13% of rich woodlands remaining. The bird habitat is the bottom line, the heart center. In 1998 the Nature Conservancy stated that Provincetown is one of the top two towns in Massachusetts listed as having the greatest density per square mile of state listed rare species. There are cedar swamps on the Locke property.

“We need a [Cape End] manor. I'm 100% in favor of the manor. We need to take care of our people. We were maligned at Town Meeting. [Opponents presented the matter] as birds versus people, but that was not the issue. We need to appreciate the land. We do not have to protect the habitat. We have a lot of dunes and we need to protect the forests, the birds and us.

“In 1714 it was illegal to cut a tree. The sand was filling the harbor. From 1714 to 1786, a series of laws were passed. The trees were getting cut and cows were trampling the sand which began to fill the town.” Imagine all these years later we still have problems. We came to town with \$600 and an old car. My husband T. and I started the business, Northern Lights Leather and The Hammock Shop. We worked hard. We wanted to [pull out of the

business while] it was good, while we were still strong. We wanted to enjoy it. There so many things we want to do. We rented the space to Dan Lazarus. He has beautiful ceramics. So a quality business continues there. We still have the hammock shop; it's enough. Ours was a lifestyle decision.

“But the land issues are most important. The Provincetown Conservation Trust is completely involved. Communication is good. Elizabeth Foss-Mayo came to me and said, 'I'm in charge of the Paul Foss land and I don't want the land developed. Can we save it? How do I go about it? I have 15 acres and I want it protected.' She knew I worked hard in this area.

“So the Trust for Public Land came in and helped. They reviewed the project and showed us how to raise money and how to get state funding. The fair market price was \$460,000. The gift of the land was \$35,000, so the purchase price was \$425,000. The state self-help grant was \$221,000. so the net cost to the town was \$164,000.” The struggle was long, but when I see the wildlife and the birds, when I see visitors and locals use the property, I feel good.

“Once everything passed and we got the Locke property, I heard the birds there singing and I said, 'You know, we saved your home.' And it's not just the birds. It's insects, plants and the whole bio-diversity. It feels good, keeps the balance.

“Personally, I feel we are on this planet, this virtual paradise so diverse and beautiful. We can't even understand it...the colors! We get so involved with our own worlds we don't see the paradie we live in...The plants and the species need to be protected. We are not separate. We think we are, but we are not.

“The trees are our garden...we are cutting down our garden. We can't preserve all the land, but I would love to help educate people to stop cutting the indigenous plants, to get landscaping advice. I would like a booklet on Cape habitat. Everybody can make a difference The planet may be too big for us. In Zimbabwe we can't make a difference but we can here. Each of us can make a difference.

“We can educate people not to destroy the food and shelter of the animals. We can reeducate to see that the 'scrumble-bumble' of the landscape is nothing less than

nest material and food. We can plant certain species and intermingle them. Land trusts could put together something for their areas. Those actions would make such a difference.

"I'm still in business and it's fun, but I'm dedicated to conservation. So many people are transient; they come and go and move every two years or so. It's always just one more piece of land that cuts into the greenways and the integrity of the land. The migrations are blown here.

"There are lots of berries in the greenways and the birds can double their weight on a stop. Insects move a lot, more difficult feeding. Gale Force is our next project. There's a Sand Hill Crane there now, blown off course in migration and very happy to have found Gale Force.

"The Town has started working on signage for the management of Shankpainter Pond. The Conservation Commission, the Conservation Trust and the Open Space Committee met at Shankpainter Pond to study the erosion of the road that was cut in there. A management plan exists to correct the erosion. There will be a regulated looping path so everybody can enjoy it.

"Signs will point out what is special: the largest quaking bog on a barrier beach. A small sand parking lot will be built as a convenience for public use and for education. We want a management plan implemented for an educational pathway and a handicap access as well. We will use Land Bank Funds, respecting conservation land.

"The Town wants to dissolve Land Bank Funds to serve affordable housing, historic uses and the Preservation Act for Open Space. There will be money. The next project will have so many wonderful people involved. Every single person can make a difference."

Thank you, Celine for all you do and have done for the town working meticulously and passionately. Rising above discouragement and negative criticism, you have gifted the town and the planet with what it deserves and could have lost.

FOSS WOODS

Part of 1836 "ALLOTTED LANDS"
From TRURO to PROVINCETOWN

Purchased by ELIPHALET J. FOSS
1898 & 1901

Purchased by PROVINCETOWN
January 30, 1996

IN MEMORY OF

Eliphalet Jay Foss	...	1840-1922
Louise Sanbourn Foss	...	1841-1891
Paul Maurice Foss	...	1884-1971
Bertha Dean Foss	...	1891-1976
Paul Birney Foss	...	1916-1993