

## HISTORY OF THE WEBER KELLY PRESERVE

The history of the Weber Kelly Preserve is shaped by its maritime location on Georgetown Island at the mouth of the Kennebec River, and by its access to the transportation and resources that the river provides.

**Early settlement.** Abenaki tribes had seasonal camps near the rich fishing and clamming grounds at the Kennebec River's mouth and shell mounds and signs of native habitation are found on both sides of the river. Europeans recognized the importance of the Kennebec River entrance early. The mouth of the river was explored by Samuel de Champlain in 1605, Hanham and Pring in 1606, the French Jesuit priest Father Pierre Biard in 1611, and Captain John Smith in 1616. In 1607 - 1608 the Gilbert and Popham expedition attempted a short-lived settlement, Fort St. George, on the west side of the river at Atkins Bay.

By the 1620s a seasonal European fishing station existed on Stage Island to the east of the river's entrance. John Parker, an English mariner and fisherman, came to Stage Island to fish and trade around that time. He was deeded Georgetown Island (then called Roscohegan) by the Abenaki sagamore Robert Hood in 1650 and settled at the south end of Georgetown on a small island in a marsh, as did his son Thomas. Some sources identify John Ed's Island in the Sagadahoc Marsh as the location of an early Parker homestead.

John and Thomas Parker are listed among Kennebec settlers who swore oaths of allegiance to King Charles II in 1665. Following the destruction of settlements in the first Indian War in 1676, Thomas petitioned with others to rebuild and was appointed an overseer of the new settlement on Arrowsic Island, called Newtown, by Governor Andros in 1679.

The Parker homesteads on Georgetown Island were burned during the hostilities of King Philip's War (1675-1676), King William's War (1689-1698), and Queen Anne's War (1703-1713). The Parkers and other settlers fled to Damariscove, to Stage Island, and finally to the Massachusetts Bay area. The Island was abandoned.

**Resettlement and continuity.** Peace came to the region, and in 1718 the children and grandchildren of Thomas Parker petitioned to regain the family property on Georgetown (then called "Parker's Island"). In a 1732 Deed of Division, the southwest quadrant of the island was divided among Thomas Parker's heirs. Thomas Parker's daughter Margaret Parker Dixey, a widow of Marblehead, Massachusetts, was assigned "Lot 3": the upland and marsh where the Weber Kelly Preserve is today. Although other Parker heirs settled on Georgetown in the years that followed, Margaret Dixey apparently did not; her lot is shown as "vacant", with no known owner, on the 1759 Jonas Jones map for the Kennebeck Proprietors.

In 1790, Margaret Dixey's Georgetown land was sold by her heirs (Susannah Brainerd, Margaret Carneau, Susannah Hall, Elizabeth Wheelwright and John Wheelwright, all of Boston, Massachusetts) to Samuel Manson, "yeoman," of Georgetown, for sixty six pounds, fourteen shillings in hand and " forty eight thousand and one half merchantable boards payable in three years." The deed of sale was entered four years later in 1794, after Samuel Manson had, presumably, produced the lumber: evidence of the thriving timber industry on Georgetown at the time. The 1790 deed describes the land which Samuel Manson acquired as "the lot of land he now improves on Parker's Island," suggesting that Samuel Manson was not only living on the Island in 1790 but was already living on the land.

Samuel Manson arrived in Georgetown, from Kittery where his family had lived for several generations, at some time after 1769 when he was listed on the Kittery tax list but before 1772 when his marriage to Isabella Rogers Parsons of the Rogers family of Georgetown was recorded

in Georgetown records. Unlike the Parkers, Samuel Manson appears to have been a man of the land rather than of the sea. He farmed the property he bought from Margaret Dixey’s heirs, and it is recorded in later deeds as “Manson Hill Farm.” He also engaged in land transactions. In 1797, Silas Lee of Pownalboro, John Rogers of Georgetown and Jordan Parker of Georgetown quitclaimed to Samuel Manson his land and farm on Parker’s Island, perhaps as he completed repaying them money he had borrowed to purchase the property in 1790 (Lincoln County, Book. 40). In 1803 he sold a meadow at the foot of “Brake heart Hill, so-called” in Georgetown to David Oliver 5<sup>th</sup> for \$60 (GHS document). And, in 1807, with the previously mentioned Silas Lee, John Rogers and Jordan Parker, he sold to George Rogers the island “commonly known and called by the name of great stage or Salter’s Island” (Lincoln County, Book 65).

Manson Hill Farm remained in the Manson family until passing to the Oliver family in 1867, when Baxter Scott, who had married Samuel Manson’s daughter, Mary Parker Manson, moved with her to Peak’s Island, selling Manson Hill Farm to Washington Oliver.

During the Manson-Oliver years (1790-1943), Manson Hill Farm was home to the families of Captain Robert Parker Manson Sr., a mariner who piloted ships between the mouth of the Kennebec River and Bath, who successfully took the brig *Mary Jane* from Bath to the sea through the Embargo while under fire in January, 1809, and who - in 1831 - sold to the inhabitants of School District #5 the land on which the Old Stone Schoolhouse on the Bay Point Road was built; Captain Robert Manson Jr., who commanded Bath ships world-wide during a 56 year career; Washington Oliver, a sailor who was the Pond Island light keeper at the mouth of the Kennebec from 1872-1877; Orville Oliver who, in 1878, ran the first regularly scheduled steamer on the Bath-Popham run; and John Edward Oliver, a farmer, for whom John Ed’s Island in the Preserve is named.

Manson Hill Farm was farmed for livestock and salt hay, with deeded access to a landing on the Kennebec River. In 1882, Washington Oliver and others petitioned the State of Maine to improve the Sagadahoc Marsh: ditching, draining, and damming the site of an earlier dam. Also in 1882, Washington Oliver granted a twenty year lease for mining rights on the property to Daniel Bacon and others (Standard Mineral Company).

In 1943 the property was sold by John Ed Oliver’s daughter Susie Pettingill to Lawrence and Alice Johnson of Chicago who held it only briefly. From 1945 to 1970, the property belonged to Elizabeth Deering Moffatt, of the Deering family of Bath ship builders, and herself a three-term Representative in the Maine State Legislature. During these years, the old farmhouse burned and was replaced. It was inherited by her children in 1970 and sold to Robert and Lucille Latta of San Diego in the mid 1970s. In 1979, the property was purchased by Anne Weber, who had an art studio and gallery in the farm house, north of the present Preserve. Ann Weber put 105 acres into conservation with the Lower Kennebec Regional Land Trust (now the Kennebec Estuary Land Trust) in 1999. Establishment of the Weber Kelly Preserve was supported by her sale of a work of the eminent American artist Ellsworth Kelly.

The Weber Kelly Preserve was officially opened to the public in ceremonies at the Preserve on June 7, 2008.

**RELEVANT DEEDS - WEBER KELLY PRESERVE**

1650	Robert Hood to John Parker	York Deeds: Book X, Folio 252
1671	Mary Parker to Thomas Parker	York Deeds: Book X, Folio 252
1732	Deed of Division - Parker heirs (Margaret Dixey, David and Thomas Oliver, and others)	York Deeds: Book XV, Folio 136

- 1790 John Wheelwright to Samuel Manson Lincoln Deeds: Book 32, p. 171  
(Susannah Brainerd, Margaret Carneau, Susannah Hall, Elizabeth Wheelwright and John Wheelwright - heirs of Margaret Dixey)
- 1807 Samuel Manson to Robert P. Manson Lincoln Deeds: Book 63, p 8
- 1838 Sarah Manson to Baxter Scott Lincoln Deeds, Book 171, p 291
- 1867 Baxter Scott to Washington Oliver Sagadahoc Deeds, Book 28, p. 339
- 1884 Estate of Washington Oliver to George Oliver  
Sagadahoc Deeds, Book 68, p. 369
- 1888 Orville Oliver to John E. Oliver Sagadahoc Deeds, Book 74, p. 247
- 1907 George Oliver to John E. Oliver Sagadahoc Deeds, Book 113, p. 87
- 1910 John E. Oliver to Elizabeth Oliver Sagadahoc Deeds, Book p. 60
- 1943 Susie I. Pettingill to S. Lawrence and Alice Johnson  
Sagadahoc Deeds, Book 231, p. 174
- 1945 S. Lawrence and Alice Johnson to Elizabeth Deering  
Sagadahoc Deeds, Book 238, p. 135
- 1974 Anne E. Davis to The Monday Company  
Sagadahoc Deeds, Book 395, p. 642
- 1979 Robert L. Latta and Lucille Latta to Anne C. Weber  
Sagadahoc Deeds, Book 715, p. 53
- 1999 Anne C. Weber to Lower Kennebec Regional Land Trust  
Sagadahoc Deeds, Book 1726, p. 327

#### POINTS OF INTEREST IN THE WEBER KELLY PRESERVE

**Small Point Quarry:** High quality feldspar was quarried in the southwest section of Georgetown Island from the 1870s to the 1930s, with a complex of quarries located along the Bay Point Road. The now-abandoned Small Point Quarry within the south boundary of the Preserve was active before 1911 and again after 1913. Quarried stone was removed by carts west on the wood road to a wharf at Todd Bay where the stone was transported out in flat-bottomed boats to ships waiting in the deeper waters of the Kennebec River.

**Logging and farming:** Several old logging roads cross through the Preserve, and there is evidence of past logging. Old stone walls are evidence of past pastures, and the remains of a stone dam and a watering pond for livestock can be seen along the Step Stone Trail.

**John Ed's Island:** Oliver family legend was that pirate gold was buried on John Ed's Island in the early 1800s. The island was dug over repeatedly and unsuccessfully in attempts to locate the buried treasure. An early house site and cemetery are located on the island. Evidence of a former track through the marsh to the island, and of a stone dike can be seen. The island is not accessible from the Preserve trail system.

**Memorial Plaque:** In 2008, a memorial plaque recognizing Anne Weber's gift to the Lower Kennebec Regional Land Trust (now the Kennebec Estuary Land Trust) was placed on a rocky cliff face in the north east section of the Preserve. It can be accessed by a trail spur off the North Loop. The location was chosen by Anne Weber herself and was a favorite destination of her horseback rambles through her property.