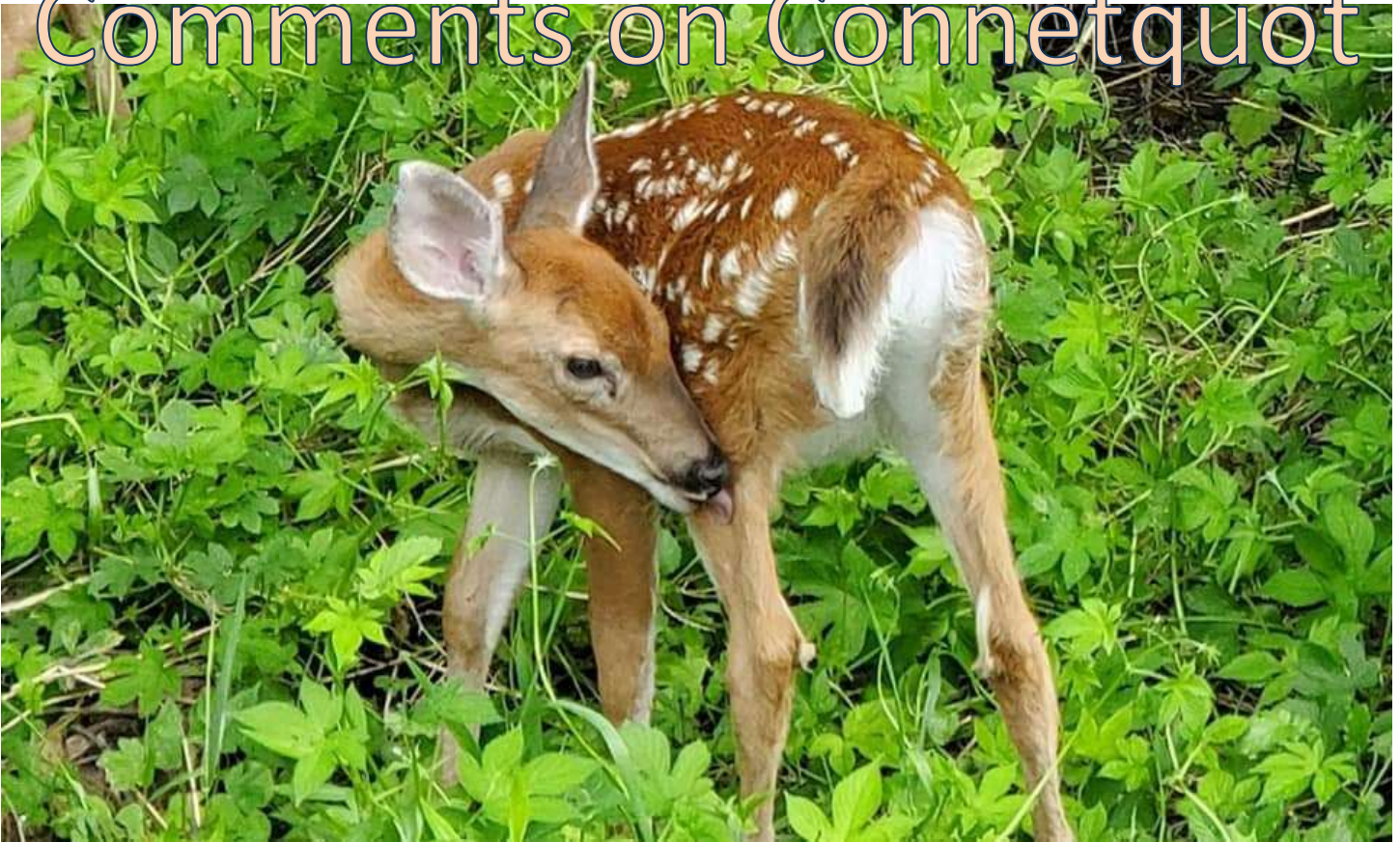


Comments on Connetquot



Published by the Friends of Connetquot State Park Preserve

VOLUME 25 NUMBER 3 Fall 2021

A Farewell ...

Longtime Friends of Connetquot President Ginny Fields has retired. We offer her our thanks and congratulations for all she has accomplished during her tenure and wish her health and happiness. Here is her own recounting of her years at the helm.

I served as a founding member of what started as a small nonprofit board of directors for Friends of Connetquot and was an active volunteer for more than two decades before deciding it is time to step down. After founding the Friends, we were able to help stop Connetquot River State Park Preserve (CRSPP) from becoming a Bed and Breakfast and start raising money to update, repair and restore various parts of the Preserve. During those years, when serving first as a Suffolk County Legislator and then as a New York State Assemblywoman, I was able to secure many small grants and a few large ones, such as \$50,000 toward the rebuilding/restoration of the Grist Mill and \$250,000 toward the Hatchery after the NYS DEC shut it down upon discovering the trout disease IPN. The Mill is almost completely restored and the Hatchery is open to trout fishing once again.

I've been unbelievably fortunate to have had the opportunity to be so creative and to make so many projects happen during my tenure. It has been an honor serving you and leading the Friends in achieving many accomplishments. I am proud that I was able to make significant contributions to the growth and visibility of CRSPP. Some of those achievements have been starting a Facebook page so that more people could see our beautiful Preserve, generating ways to bring people who had never been to CRSPP to the Park, and raising money to support the many projects that needed to be completed.

The first fundraising event we held was a gala, "celebrating the past, present and future of Connetquot River State Park Preserve." It was an outdoor gala with carriage rides, free food from many local restaurants, fly fishing exhibitions, tours inside of the Main Building and the Hatchery, culminating with a very profitable auction. We organized that for approximately 15 years, then decided to change to an indoor gala at a local restaurant with many raffle prizes. In the interim, I developed a profitable "Ladies Tea" where we served scones, petit fours, and tea sandwiches, and offered fabulous raffle prizes to ladies wearing wonderful hats. In December, 2018 we staged a beautiful "Christmas at Connetquot" event with 50 uniquely decorated trees which we raffled off.

With the money raised in these fundraising events, along with donations, several much-needed grants from the Gardiner Foundation (with noteworthy assistance from Cathy Curran and Judge Peter Cohalan), semi-annual appeals to members, grants from various politicians, the able assistance of Park staff and some of our Board Members, (in particular Jerry and Rita Trapani

(Continued on page 3)

HOOF BEATS

by Carole Scialdone



Sharing the Connetquot trails with your favorite steed is truly enchanting. The Park abounds with life at this time of year; it's like being in a fairy tale. The leafy canopy provides the needed shade from the hot summer sun for equestrians and their mounts. The bucks and does are frolicking with their adorable spotted fawns and, if you have a keen eye, you may catch a snapping turtle laying her eggs or a brightly colored eastern box turtle leisurely strolling across the path. There are turkeys trotting along with their fluffy little poults, geese and their goslings grazing the fields, swans and their cygnets swimming in the Main Pond, Red Tail Hawks swooping through the trees and we've even had sightings of Bald Eagles fishing in the river! As equestrians, we are privileged to share this Preserve with its wide variety of natural inhabitants. Every day is a new adventure during a Connetquot summer.



The Park staff has been busy making improvements, including adding sand to the banks of Collins Crossing and removing dead and unsafe trees from the trails' edges. They replaced the Oceanside Street gate in Islip Terrace after it was severely damaged by a car earlier this year. And of course they are performing ongoing trail maintenance, including utilizing the trail groomer attachment donated by the Friends of Connetquot.

As sorry as we are to see the Summer come to an end, we are definitely looking forward to the less humid days of autumn. Fall is typically perfect riding weather. More refreshing temperatures and a crisp breeze calls for longer sleeves and cooler horses. Soon enough we'll be enjoying the Park in full color.



IN OUR MAILBOX

Dear Friends of Connetquot,

Thank you for selecting me as this year's recipient of the FOC scholarship. I appreciate your recognition of my school and community involvement, as well as my love for Connetquot State Park. I will be using the scholarship to help fund my education at Florida Tech's College of Aeronautics.

Respectfully,
Daniel Woods

Our pleasure, Daniel! Best wishes for a successful college career and beyond.

Photo front cover: *Carole Scialdone*

Top: Nicole Scialdone and Cash enjoying the sunset at Bunce's Bridge. *Carole Scialdone*

Left: Box turtle. *Laurie Chionchio* Right: The refurbished Collins Crossing. *Carole Scialdone*

A Farewell ... (Continued from page 1)

and Richard Remmer) we were able to achieve many improvements: four historically replicated rocking chairs in the Billiard Room, linoleum in the kitchen, a repair of the stained glass transom window at the entrance to the main building (thanks to a grant from the Gardiner Foundation), and the recent rebuilding and restoration of the Grist Mill (mostly accomplished by John Remmer).

We replicated the Epithalet Snedecor portrait in a framed canvas print in the foyer of the main building, created a canvas portrait of Gil Bergen for the Men's Dining Room, secured a large, beautiful boulder donated by the Rudolfer family and had a bronze plaque placed on it dedicated to Gil. We also awarded scholarships to local high school students, among many other endeavors. The passion of the staff and many volunteers who have worked and supported the Preserve were why we were able to do so much in the past two decades.

And so, although it's sad to have to do so, I've made the decision that I'm bowing out before I burn out. I am much older now, my husband has finally retired, and we wish to travel and spend time with our family. I shall miss everyone, and I'm enormously proud of everything we've achieved together.

I wish my many Friends, colleagues, and the new President the very best. I will continue to celebrate the accomplishments of this fine organization as it begins its next adventure.
Ginny Fields



Photo courtesy of Ginny Fields.

...And a Welcome

Hello!

Did I get your attention? I hope so! I'm so excited to be your new President!

Given the uncertainties presented by the Delta Variant, the Board has decided not to hold a Gala this year. Pray we get past this and can hold a 2022 Gala. That being said, the Friends Board is planning an Open House for our members and family in late October. Keep an eye on your email or mail for that invitation.



I have so many plans and ideas that I hope you will help me with and embrace. One of my initiatives is to establish a Volunteer Corps. As you know, community service is important for youth development. FOC will set up monthly activities for members, your children and grandchildren to come do a little light work at the Preserve on a monthly basis (weather permitting).

We are so proud of the work the Friends have done to reopen the Grist Mill. But the Mill can't be open for tours without docents. Please consider becoming a mill docent. Your commitment could be a little as 2 hours a month during the season! (Easy-peasy!)

Another initiative I have is to offer members more group activities in the Preserve. Have you hiked the Greenbelt Trail? Ever wanted to try fly fishing? Would you like to ride a horse? Let's all explore this wonderful Preserve together!

Do you have ideas? Want to get involved? Leave a message or a voice message and I will get back to you ASAP. Let's make I Love My Park Day 365 Days a Year! No reason for us to wait until that one day in May!

Sincerely,

Janetmarie Soley

janetmariesoley@gmail.com

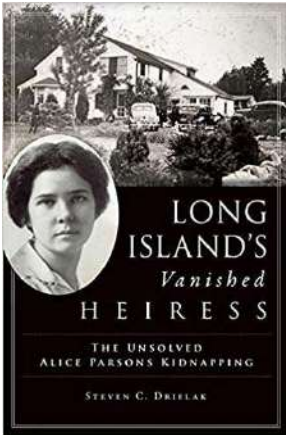
Fun Fact

The Town of Islip Seal, designed by A.G. Thompson in 1883, contains three vines representing the towns bordering Islip: clockwise from the top, Smithtown, Brookhaven and Huntington. (Note that at the time the Town of Babylon was still part of Huntington.) The cluster of grapes represents the patents and necks of land that make up Islip Town. 1683 is the date of the Nicoll Patent creating Islip Grange, now the Town of Islip. The motto is from the Nicoll family crest and translates more or less as, "Have confidence but be careful in whom you confide." And then there's the eye, above the date. Vine cuttings with rootlets were also known as "slips," so taken together we have "Eye-slip"! This may be the only town seal that elicits a groan from those in the know. (Thanks to Town of Islip Historian George Munkenbeck for the information.)



Friends of Connetquot Lecture Series at Connetquot River State Park Preserve

Long Island's Vanished Heiress: The Unsolved Alice Parsons Kidnapping Presented by Steven C. Drielak Sunday, October 10, 2021, 1:00 PM



Alice McDonell Parsons was the heir to a vast fortune among Long Island's wealthy elite when she was kidnapped from Long Meadow Farm in Stony Brook in 1937. The crime shocked the nation and was front-page news for several months. J. Edgar Hoover personally assigned his best FBI agents to the case, and within a short time, Parsons's husband and their live-in housekeeper, Anna Kupryanova, had become prime suspects. Botched ransom attempts, clashes between authorities and romantic intrigue kept the investigation mired in drama. The crime remained unsolved and has captivated Long Island audiences ever since. Former Suffolk County detective Steven C. Drielak reveals previously classified FBI documents and pieces together the mystery of the kidnapping.

Mr. Drielak is an internationally recognized expert in the area of environmental forensic attribution. He received his Master's degree from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City and has over 30 years of law enforcement experience. He was responsible for the establishment of the Suffolk County Environmental Crime Unit in New York and commanded it for 16 years. Beginning in 2003, he served as a Director within the EPA's Office of Criminal Enforcement, Forensics and Training in both the Homeland Security and Criminal Enforcement national programs.

An avid outdoorsman who enjoys backpacking and fly fishing, he is the author of the 1998 Connetquot River Protection Plan and has been awarded a lifetime membership to Idle Hour Fly Fishers. His most recent publications include the historical fiction novels *Murder Season in the Hamptons* and the sequel; *Murder Season in the Hamptons: Glowing Sands*. Books will be available for sale and signing at the conclusion of the Lecture.

The Birth of a Unique Town – Islip Town, New York Presented by Cdr. George J. Munkenbeck, USCGR (Ret.) Saturday, November 13, 2021, 2:00 PM

The early history of Islip Town, originally known as Islip Grange, is at best a convoluted story that is not easy to unravel. Much of that has to do with the turbulent times that created Islip and the efforts of its founding families to survive during a time when each message from Great Britain brought news of political change and created turmoil in the colony of New York. Accusations of piracy, imprisonments of the founders, execution of a governor, capture at sea and political intrigue all make this a fascinating story of a family and a glimpse of the birth of the flame that will lead to a new country. Join the Islip Town Historian for a glimpse into those days that gave birth to a unique place that if one takes a moment, the stamp of those founding days can still be seen in boundaries, open space and how the Town developed in later years.

Native Long Islander George Munkenbeck resides in West Sayville. He earned a B.S. in Engineering from the U. S. Coast Guard Academy and an M.A. in Emergency and Disaster Management from American Public University. He has been married to his wife Mary for 53 years and has three daughters and four grandchildren.

A Certified Lay Servant in the United Methodist Church, he is a fourth-generation member of New York's volunteer fire service and an active member of the West Sayville Fire Department where he is an ex-Captain of the truck company and serves as Department Chaplain and Lieutenant of the Fire Police. A living historian with the 14th Brooklyn, Company H, for 32 years, he portrays a Civil War and Spanish-American War Chaplain.

He serves as Town Historian of the Town of Islip, New York, and has a passion for the history of the United States, particularly Long Island and especially Islip Town, the volunteer fire service, technology, railroads, and Civil War medical topics. He is an avid model builder and has built models of lost and threatened Town of Islip buildings as well as railroad models. He is a member of the Firemen's Association of the State of New York, United States Naval Institute, Sons of Union Veterans, Society of the Grand Army of the Republic, Richard J. Clark Post, and the Society of Civil War Surgeons.



Lectures are free for members of Friends of Connetquot. Non-members pay \$5/person.
Please consider becoming a member and enjoy our programming all year long. Seasonal parking rates apply.
To register or to become a member, please visit www.friendsofconnetquot.org.

Friends of Connetquot Lecture Series at Connetquot River State Park Preserve

**Coaching Along the Great South Bay
Presented by Jerry and Rita Trapani
Saturday, December 11, 2021, 1:00 PM**



Coaching Along the Great South Bay is a look back at traveling with a coach and four-in-hand from New York City to the estates along the Great South Bay by members of the “Coaching Club,” many of whom were also members of the Southside Sportsmen’s Club. A glimpse back at the route they took, their Gold Coast Estates and the logistics of such a journey. Mr. Trapani will talk about the houses, clubs and residents who traveled to the Great South Bay. From the birthplace of American polo on the legendary fields of The Meadow Brook, come hear about our Island’s equestrian history.

Jerry and Rita Trapani own Shadbelly Farm in North Great River. They are members of the Carriage Association of America, the American Driving Society, the Four-in-Hand Club, are founding members of the 37-year-old Paumanok Driving Club of Long Island and very involved with the carriage and coaching aspects of the Long Island Museum at Stony Brook. Jerry is a popular speaker at carriage-related events around the country and in Canada. Rita is an accomplished artist and photographer. For more information on the Trapanis, please visit their website www.shadbellyfarm.com.

Lectures are free for members of Friends of Connetquot. Non-members pay \$5/person.

Please consider becoming a member and enjoy our programming all year long. Seasonal parking rates apply.

To register or to become a member, please visit www.friendsofconnetquot.org.

What’s Happening in the Park

Superintendent Susanne Wuehler reports that August was a quiet month in the park due to excessive heat. We were very lucky that Hurricane Ida just blew down some branches and caused minor flooding. It also gave the river a well-needed flush.

Park staff fabricated and installed historical interpretive signs on Snedecor’s Tavern, the pump house and the ice house, plus a new orientation sign on the Annex lawn and posts and signs for the On Cell QR-code self-guided information system.

Troutfest was held at Connetquot on Saturday, August 14. Members of the national, Art Flick and Long Island Trout Unlimited chapters, Friends of Connetquot, and Save the Great South Bay Creek Defenders participated.

The Grist Mill is again open to the public on the weekends from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM. As of September 5, Historical House Tours have also resumed. (The last tour of the day should arrive by 2:00 PM.) Pam Hunter and John Remmer will provide training for anyone interested in becoming a docent. Contact Pam at 631-581-1005.

Sue says, “Nothing else exciting: fence repairs, trail maintenance and hatchery cleaning and maintenance.” Prosaic, perhaps, but we find it exciting that there is so much necessary work ongoing. We applaud Connetquot’s management and staff for making the park more user-friendly while preserving its history and environment.



The new orientation sign greets visitors outside the Annex.

Photo: Sue Wuehler

Nature Note



*First
Fleeting
Fall
Color:
Tupelo*



Early to mid-September is the time to notice tupelo trees (*Nyssa sylvatica*) in Connetquot Park. Also known in other places as black gum, sour gum and pepperidge, it ranges from eastern Texas to New England. It likes its feet wet (the genus *Nyssa* refers to a Greek water nymph), so look for it along our streams and ponds in Connetquot and elsewhere on Long Island. Some tupelos in Blydenburgh County Park are reputed to be 600 years old!

As it nears its northern limits here, it displays its autumn colors early, usually around Labor Day. The single-lobed leaves turn a bright red that practically glows when backlit, then soon turn a deeper, duller shade. It's hard to catch them at their best. Tupelo is also easily identified even when bare, as its branches radiate from the trunk almost horizontally, as shown in the picture on the right. The leaves come to a point, called a "drip tip," an adaptation to moist conditions allowing them to shed rain and dewdrops quickly to avoid rotting.

Given this year's crazy weather, we can't know if the tupelos will have peaked by the time you read this issue. Visit the park and try to catch them. If you miss them, you'll still be treated in October with the red maples and scarlet oaks, with huckleberry and blueberry in the understory, ablaze in autumn splendor.

Photos: T. Casey

Happy Fourth of July!

Left: FOC Board Member Keith Snedecor supplied an American flag, which Park staff was happy to hang on the Nicoll's Mill for the holiday.

Photo: Sue Wuehler



Welcome, David

David Reisfield, President of the L.I. Greenbelt Trail Conference, has returned to the FOC Board. David runs in the park almost daily and is focused in part on maintenance of the 32-mile L.I. Trail, a section of which passes through Connetquot. On one outing in August, he cut back vegetation blocking the trail, picked up rubbish, removed branches and trimmed back the growth in the northern portion of the preserve. Later he sawed two trees blocking the trail on the south side of Vets Highway.

David and others will soon improve the trail blazes that define the route, particularly at a turn west of Bunce's Bridge, near the hatchery, and adjacent to the parking lot at the main gate. Welcome back, David!

Give Us Your Best Shot

Share your photos of the Preserve with us! Send us up to four photos in .jpeg or .png digital format, and for each issue we'll pick a winner. Photos must be current (within a year of submission) and shot within the park. Please give the approximate location of the scene. Send your files to Jerry Trapani at shadbelly4@aol.com.

Last issue's winner was Rick Matteson, who receives a subscription to the newsletter for his great shot of an osprey.

Entries will be judged by the board of the Friends of Connetquot, Inc., and their decision is final. Each image submitted must be the original and unpublished work of the participant, who must also be its copyright owner. The participant shall retain copyright to the image entered for the competition. By submitting an image for the competition, the participant will be regarded as having granted the organizer the right to use the image in print, broadcast and/or electronic media without any fee payment, for the purposes of promoting the competition or promoting the Friends of Connetquot, Inc. Where any image is so used by the organizer, the participant will be credited accordingly.



Board Spotlight: Bobby Ploetz

FOC's Treasurer Bobby Ploetz has had a long and varied career. After high school he entered the U.S. Navy in 1959. He was assigned to a guided missile destroyer as a radar man and took part in the blockade of Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Honorably discharged in 1963, he became a store detective for Macy's department stores.

In April 1965 Bobby joined the NYPD. While in the academy he won a trophy for the highest score in pistol shooting. As an officer he worked the Tactical Patrol Force and later the Street Anticrime unit, managing in the meantime to achieve the Dean's List and a B.S. at New York Institute of Technology.

In 1985 he left NYPD and started a swimming pool company, which his son still operates. At that time he became very interested in SCUBA diving and photography and became a certified diver, then a PADI professional instructor who taught diving lessons for seven years. He qualified in underwater photography, underwater naturalist, advanced open water diver, rescue diver, equipment specialist, underwater navigator, deep water diver, and night diver.

Also around 1985, Bobby began running, including the New York Marathon twice. After 15 years a knee injury made him shift to bicycling. He still rides about 115 miles a week.

Bobby tells us, "Most of my life I have been interested in parks. I have been to most of the Federal parks and several state parks in the United States. I have amassed a collection of over 73,000 images, most of them on my computer, some on my walls, some in books, and many others I continue to work on. For the rest of my life, I plan on traveling throughout this country and the world. My favorite park is Yellowstone, which I have been to 5 times. Out of the country? Africa! I don't want to be someone who says, 'Should have when I had the chance.' The chance is now!"



Board of Trustees

Executive Board

Janet Soley, President
Jerry Trapani, Vice President
Robert Ploetz, Treasurer
Tom Casey, Recording Secretary
Rita Trapani, Corresponding Secretary

Board at Large

Jo-Ann Carhart Tammy Jaggi
Steve Mendelson David Reisfield
Carole Scialdone Keith Snedecor Carol Swedborg

Advisory Board

Edward Kelleher Joe Mikulas Richard Remmer
Richard Steinberger, MD Bob Giffen, Historian

Newsletter Editor Tom Casey **Webmaster** Eric Larson

Membership Chair Rita Trapani

Program Chair Jo-Ann Carhart, Janet Soley

Mission Statement

The Friends of Connetquot is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation, conservation and history of the 3,473-acre Connetquot River State Park Preserve. We work to help management protect a pristine environment and historic buildings and artifacts. We also support educational programs, fishing facilities and hiking and equestrian trails.

The records of the Friends of Connetquot can be viewed in our room at the Preserve. The New York State Office of Charities Registration holds copies of the annual charities reports required by law.

PLEASE NOTE: Automatic defibrillators are available in the administration office, the BOCES room, the main building and at the hatchery. Preserve staff is trained in their use.

BECOME A FRIEND OF CONNETQUOT

Fill out the membership form below and mail to: **Friends of Connetquot, Box 472, Oakdale, NY 11769.**

Already a member? Give the gift of membership to a friend.

Membership dues include our newsletter, Comments on Connetquot, free interesting programs, special events, and the satisfaction of supporting a beautiful Preserve that is a historical and ecological treasure.

Special Contributors receive all the privileges of membership plus a listing on the Donors Plaque. Patrons and Benefactors also receive lifetime membership.

Annual Membership Dues:

(Check the category that applies.) **Special Contributor:**

Senior Citizen (\$20) _____	Donor (\$500) _____
Individual (\$25) _____	Patron (\$1000)* _____
Family (\$30) _____	Guardian (\$2500)* _____
Supporting (\$50) _____	Benefactor (\$5000)* _____
Sponsor (\$100) _____	(*) Life Membership _____

New Membership Gift Membership Renewal

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ made payable to:

Friends of Connetquot, Inc.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

Date _____

(Gift membership only) Please send a gift card that reads:

For Emergencies in the Preserve: Call the New York Park Police at 631-669-2500.



Please renew your membership if it has expired. Together you and the Friends of Connetquot can have a powerful impact on revitalizing the Connetquot Preserve for future generations.

NON-PROFIT
ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
S. HACKENSACK,
NJ
PERMIT # 1171

Visit us at www.friendsofconnetquot.org

FOC Programs for
You:

An Unsolved
Kidnapping
October 10

The History of
Islip Town
November 13

Coaching Along
Great South Bay
December 11



FRIENDS OF CONNETQUOT
BOX 472
OAKDALE NY 11769



Historical Bits

Our thanks to FOC Board Member Keith Snedecor, whose research led to finding this article. Wildfires remain a threat in Suffolk County to this day.

Long Island Scourged by Flames: Forest Fires Ruin Many Houses

Suffolk County News April 23, 1926

South Side Club Suffers Heavily.

Because of the fact that it is located in a great tract of woodland, the South Side Sportsmen's Club, at Oakdale, has suffered serious damage in many forest fires, but none which would compare in seriousness with that which spread over its property on Wednesday.

Superintendent Owen telephoned the alarm to the fire departments of neighboring villages at about 10:30 o'clock in the morning, and but for the very prompt arrival of the West Sayville Department the fish hatchery and the home nearby of James Laird, who is in charge of it, would surely have been destroyed. The powerful pumping apparatus was used with excellent effect and the West Sayville men won new laurels and the gratitude of the club management.

The Sayville Department and those from East Islip, Islip and Bay Shore arrived in quick succession and that saved the poultry houses and the other buildings on the club property, with the exception of two shanties erected as shelters for the use of the game keepers, which were in a remote section of the woods and could not be protected. Several bridges were burned, but the greatest damage is due to the fact that over 2,000 acres of woodland, about half of the club's vast game preserves, were burned over, and that, of course carries with it the destruction of hundreds of quail, rabbits and other game. The deer, of which there are a considerable number in those woods, were able to take care of themselves, and many of them running frantically before the clouds of smoke and flame were seen by the firemen.

The fire lines and roads were utterly useless because of the terrific wind, which carried burning embers for long distances, and the flames even jumped the club's stream in its widest part above the fish hatchery. About 15 men of the club's employees, supplemented by eight or ten men sent through the kindness of Mr. Hobbs from the Anson W. Hard estate, worked with the firemen and when the fire was at its height there were probably between 200 and 300 men engaged in the effort to stop the conflagration.

In spite of all that they could do, however, the flames spread right down to the clearing and to the dog kennels, a short distance from the club-house, which itself was seriously threatened by the dying sparks and embers.



Right: Common Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*), with its tasty berries, is indeed common on Connetquot's forest floor. T. Casey