

Post-Morrow Foundation NEWSLETTER

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History of Post-Morrow

The Post-Morrow Foundation, Inc. is located in the Hamlet of Brookhaven, Suffolk County, New York. Its principal office is at 16 Bay Road.

Conceived by Thomas and Elisabeth Post Morrow and established in 1969, the Foundation has dedicated itself to the preservation of the rural countryside character of the Hamlet and the surrounding areas. Through the acquisition of properties, either by gift or purchase, the Foundation seeks to establish a nature preserve and sanctuary for the benefit and enjoyment of the immediate community. The preservation of Beaver Dam Creek, where the Foundation owns over 60 acres, is a priority.

The Post and Morrow families have had a long tradition of philanthropy to the community. James H. Post purchased the land along Carman's River, now known as Squassux Landing, which was later donated by his daughters to the Brookhaven Village Association for use as a marina. The land upon which the Brookhaven Library is situated was another gift. Elisabeth Post Morrow continued the tradition of her father, by donating various gifts to community groups, mostly anonymously. It was the hope of the Morrrows that this legacy be continued through the establishment of the Post-Morrow Foundation, Inc.

The Post-Morrow Foundation

Giving the land a chance to breathe

There is a quiet revolution going on in the Hamlet of Brookhaven, a land conservation movement built on the premise that less is better, and it is a good idea to give the land a chance to breathe.

For many years on Long Island, developers, educators, and some politicians proclaimed that undeveloped land is not economically productive; however, the Foundation believes that, to the contrary, land conservation is essential to the fiscal health of a community.

There are several studies to support the Foundation's land conservation philosophy. A 1990 study of land use in Red Hook, Fishkill, and Amenia, New York, determined that developed, residential land required \$1.11 to \$1.23 in services for every dollar contributed in tax revenue. These services, including schools, library, highway maintenance, garbage pickup, fire and ambulance, are reflected in the tax bill.

Applying this concept to Brookhaven Town, which has higher costs in every category and a relatively low industrial tax base, one arrives at an even less favorable ratio of almost \$1.50 in services to every \$1.00 raised in taxes.

A 1991 study by the Dutchess County Planning Department revealed, "Giving land conservation a high priority encourages more cost-effective development, and saves public funds by preventing development of hazardous areas. Conserving land allows nature to continue its valuable work, and open space increases the value of nearby property."

One of the priorities of the Post-Morrow Foundation is to preserve a natural corridor, Beaver Dam Creek, that runs through the heart of the Hamlet. Flowing from its headwaters north of Montauk Highway in a southerly direction, the creek meanders past the Memorial Park, a popular site for wedding photographers and family picnics. The stream continues in a leisurely course through woods and backyards, flows under Beaver Dam Road to a marina, then eases through wetlands to Great South Bay. The home of ducks, hawks, geese, ospreys, frogs, turtles and small fish, the creek has long been a source of inspiration and meditation for artists, photographers and nature lovers in general.

The Foundation has fought for the preservation of Beaver Dam Creek on a number of fronts. It has purchased, or acquired by gift, parcels of land along the creek, as well as a substantial piece of land on the eastern bank. In addition, Post-Morrow has entered into a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to remove the dredge spoils dumped there and restore the area to its former state, a spartina grass habitat.

According to Bruce Wallace, Foundation president, "When we decided to start the restoration, the area was a wasteland covered

with the fill from the dredging of the creek. Katherine Jahn of the Fish and Wildlife Service was instrumental in forging an agreement so we could enter into a cooperative restoration program, a 50-50 cost-sharing proposition. We also got a lot of support and advice from John Halsey of the Peconic Land Trust."

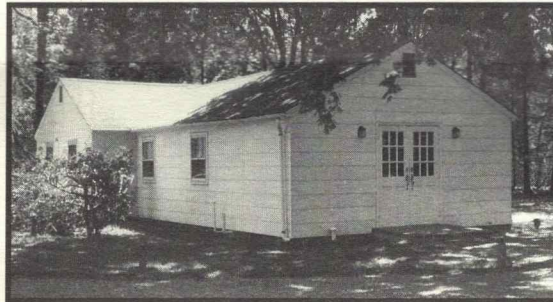
Wallace added, "Our intent is to be responsive to the needs of the community."

With the advice and consent of the Village Association, the Foundation has purchased a number of other properties, such as the Reddall land on Bay Road, two lots on Old Stump Road, and a site that adjoins Squassux Landing.

Wallace said the Foundation's land acquisition program started when the Morrow estate was settled. "We plan to work quietly, as was the style of Mrs. Morrow herself. She was a delightful, gracious lady, and it was my honor and pleasure to know her," he said.

In 1994, the Foundation purchased the George Tooker property, which has a small cottage that looks directly out onto Beaver Dam Creek. The Foundation plans to convert the building to a nature center for the use of students and other organizations.

In addition, the Foundation has completed a 4,000-foot trail network along the creek, and these trails are open to the community.



The Post-Morrow Foundation Annex and Exhibition Center.

The Foundation has also provided a grant to an organization known as Students for Environmental Quality at the nearby high school to purchase equipment to measure the quality of water in the creek on a regular basis. SEQ students are also conducting a nature inventory at the town preserve at the end of Bay Road. Plans are underway to train these students to be teaching naturalists, so they can share their enthusiasm and expertise with elementary students.

Just last year, the Foundation purchased several parcels of land at the headwaters of Beaver Dam Creek. Bruce Wallace said, "It was a complicated purchase. Evidently, much of the property consisted of the subdivision called 'Orient Park,' lots of 25x100 feet that accompanied the sale of an encyclopedia many years ago, part of a program called 'Bringing Green to Long Island.' Some families had two or three lots, but most had only one, that they passed on to their children, or were taken over by the county in tax defaults."

Plans have been made for the property to become a nature preserve, part of the overall conservation of the Beaver Dam Creek.

As the next century approaches, the Foundation hopes to provide Brookhaven residents with a pristine stream and enough land on either side to recreate the natural beauty of the last millennium. •

Foundation co-sponsors estuary conference

In April, 1997, the Post-Morrow Foundation co-sponsored the first South Shore Estuary Conference, held at Bellport High School in Brookhaven. The colloquy was chaired by junior Brigid O'Connor, president of Students for Environmental Quality (SEQ), who said that several months' planning and fundraising for the conference had worked out, and the exchange of ideas during lunch was most fruitful. Students from ten area schools were in attendance. In addition, there were representatives from Brookhaven National Laboratory, the Great South Bay Audubon Society, the Environmental Defense Fund, the Citizens Advisory Committee of the South Shore Estuary Council, the Bellport PTSA, and the Open Space Council.

Speaking before over a hundred students and environmentalists, Art Cooley, founder of SEQ, bottle bill proponent, and one of the founders of the Environmental Defense Fund, called for the adoption of a "Ten Percent No-Take Plan," where ten percent of the bays, creeks and rivers making up the South Shore estuary would be set aside for marine life to flourish, untouched by man.

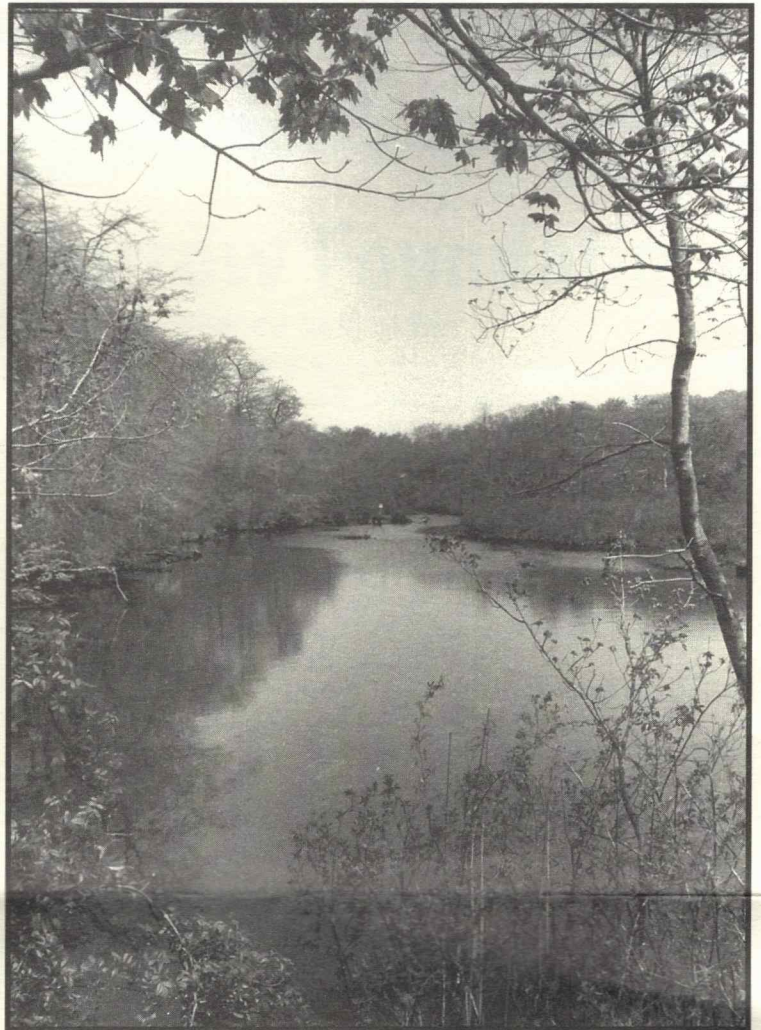
Cooley said, "These reserves would still be a place for recreation and study, a place for students to boat, swim, snorkel, but they would take nothing there, giving the plankton and other forms of marine life a chance to grow and spread to other areas. The problem today is that single species management is not successful; we end up overfishing areas because we don't understand a species. The no-take reserves would be an insurance policy against overfishing everywhere."

Cooley's proposal was one of many advanced by a variety of speakers at the conference, ranging from Florence Sharkey of the Baymen's Society to Dava Stravinsky, who spoke about the Kreamer Street School Bay Education program and the Bellport Village Composting program.

Ms. Sharkey, speaking passionately about the bayman's way of life, said that the baymen's association, which at one time boasted a membership of 8,000 in Brookhaven Town alone, had been reduced to 247, with the youngest members in their late thirties. "We're a dying industry," she said, "due to the water quality of the estuary. When the clams don't spawn, there's a problem."

The SEQ proposed a plan characterized as "Mayday," which had a double meaning based on the traditional mariners' signal of distress, and a special day set aside on a Saturday in May of 1998. The proposal calls for each organization at the conference to develop within the next ten months "a plan for a one-day activity devoted to improving the environmental quality of the bay," including a community information and awareness program, a physical cleanup of the shore or an estuary, and development of legislation that would help improve the quality of the bays.

The participants were treated to a special bonus at the end of the day: a walking tour of the Bay Road Nature Preserve, led by Sean Pilger, and a boat tour of Bellport Bay and a look into the life of a bayman, led by Flo Sharkey, with boats provided by the members of the Baymen's Society.



Beaver Dam Creek, looking north.

Marvin Loewen, advisor to the SEQ, deemed the conference a success, saying, "Any time you can get the message out, it's a success. It is notable that most of the participants were from the immediate area." •

Foundation provides for public herb garden

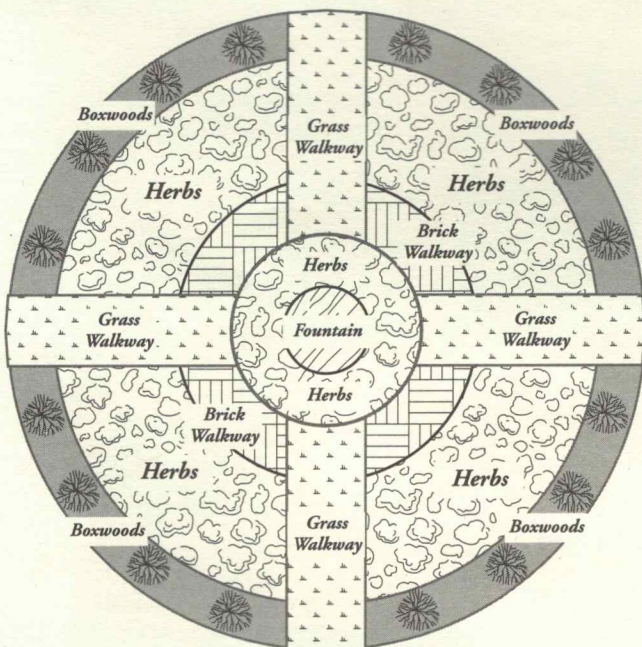
The Post-Morrow Foundation and the Long Island unit of the Herb Society of America have entered into an agreement to plan and create a public herb garden on the Foundation grounds on Bay Road.

The Herb Society will provide the expertise, design the garden, and provide the plantings; the Foundation will provide the funding to build the circular brick walkway and a circular fountain, as well as the space for the garden.

The Long Island unit of the Herb Society hopes to enhance the grounds of the foundation and enlighten residents about the beauty, versatility, and usefulness of herbs. The garden will have a formal plan, with paths wide enough so that two people can stroll side by side, and the Morrow fountain at its center.

Marauding deer and dryness, two local challenges, will be addressed through special plantings, such as thyme, lavender, lamb's ears and catmint.

The garden will have a plant list for the public, and members of the local unit will be available on certain days to give talks on the garden. •



Historic Brook Store purchased by P-M

When "Big Tom" Ellison operated the Brook Store in the Hamlet of Brookhaven before and during the Civil War, the 400-lb. merchant could well have been the originator of the self-server system, as he directed his customers to their merchandise from a specially-constructed chair.

At various times, the Brook Store, originally built in 1742, has been a parsonage, a hotel and saloon, a post office, a recording studio, a real estate office, and an antique shop.

To preserve this heritage and continue in its efforts to maintain the environmental integrity of Beaver Dam Creek, the Post-Morrow Foundation has purchased the current Brook Store and the property upon which it is located.

Originally known as the Parsonage, the Brook Store was erected in 1742 on the present site of the Brook House, the current home of the Brookhaven Memorial Hospital Hospice office, beside Beaver Dam Creek, as the residence of the minister of the Old South Haven Church. The last minister known to have occupied it was "Priest" David Rose, who was active in the Revolutionary War.

The parsonage was sold to Robert Ellison in 1805, and upon his death, his widow, "Aunt Betsy" Ellison, opened the original store in the house in 1815. Her son, "Big Tom," operated the store for a number of years, and during the Civil War, he had such a large supply of cotton goods that people came from many miles around for his merchandise. In 1867, Ellison sold the property to a nephew, Hallock Bishop, who added a boarding house, saloon, and barbershop to the building's functions. In 1872 Bishop had the 180-year-old parsonage torn down to make way for a new house and store on the same site.

The new building was typical of the freestanding and deep retail store found in rural hamlets across America in 1860-1895. Typically, the structure is two storied, clapboard sheathed, with a porch in front, and large, plate glass store windows on the ground floor. A similar example of this type of commercial building is the Ralph Brown building on Bell Street in Bellport, where the craftsman David Ebner now has his workshop and studio.

The store was located on a very old crossroads, including Montauk Highway before it was rerouted around Bellport and the Hamlet of Brookhaven. It was an extension of Old Town Road, which early settlers in Setauket used to reach the salt hay marshes of the South Shore.

The store provided a central place where members of the community could meet to hear the local news and exchange opinions of local interest. It functioned not only as a store and a post office, but as a place where



members of the community met on an almost daily basis, much as they do today, at the new post office and the delicatessen on the present Montauk Highway.

After Bishop, the store was next owned by Captain George Hawkins of Wading River, who sold the business to Charles Valentine, also of Wading River, about 1878. Valentine, who was made postmaster in 1877, had two sons, Jacob and Thomas. Jacob became postmaster in 1887, a job he held for the next 46 years.

Jacob Valentine sold the property on which the store was located, and moved the store around the bend to the south side of South Country Road, its present location, while the house was moved across to Fireplace Neck Road. Around this time, the creek, at that time called "Fireplace Creek," was changed to "Valentine's Brook," and is now called Beaver Dam Creek.

After the retirement of Valentine and Forrest Reeve, his assistant, the Brook Store lay idle, and the post office was moved to the home of Mrs. Thelma Waldron, the postmaster who succeeded Valentine.

In 1945, Thomas J. Lyons owned the store and became postmaster, a position he continued after Mr. and Mrs. Thad Moses bought the store in 1949. The post office was once again housed in the small, one-story wing on the west side of the building.

In 1961, the Moseses retired as storekeepers but continued to live above the premises, leasing the facility to

Brookhaven residents Bill and Gene Bonyun, folk musicians of national reputation, who used the store as a recording studio for their Heirloom Records.

Currently the store holds an antique shop, run by Linda Majowka, and a couple of apartments.

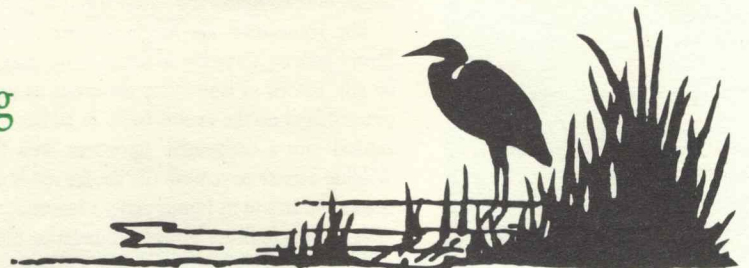
Many old timers feel that when the Brook Store ceased to be the post office in July, 1958, the community lost its center. However, in the early 1980s, a piece of land across the brook, immediately to the north of the store, was acquired by Brookhaven Town through the efforts of former Councilman Donald Zimmer, and was designated by the town as a park. The location is enjoyed by many residents, and has become a popular photo location for local weddings. The area is also enhanced through careful maintenance by the Brookhaven Fire Department of a triangle park in the middle of the crossroads, which serves the community as a war memorial. Through the efforts of these groups and agencies, the Hamlet of Brookhaven appears to have regained its heart.

According to Tom Williams, the Foundation will continue to rent the facility to the antiques store owner; however, in the future it may be used as a cultural center or art gallery. The Foundation is also making plans to restore the outside of the historic building.

(The editor is grateful to Ellen Williams, who provided most of the historical background for this article.) •

The stream runs loudly
Here where the bugs are swimming
Shining water runs.

— Owen Williams





Post-Morrow Foundation, Inc.
 16 Bay Road, P.O. Box 204
 Brookhaven Hamlet, New York 11719-0204

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The Post-Morrow Foundation Newsletter is printed on recycled paper.

Donations and grants

In addition to its land preservation program, the Post-Morrow Foundation has made a number of donations and grants. The Foundation's philanthropic activities have included St. James' Episcopal Church, the Brookhaven Free Library, the Methodist Church in Bellport, and the Brookhaven Memorial Hospital Hospice, now located in the Hamlet. In addition, the Foundation provided matching funds with the community and the fire department to assist in the restoration of the Memorial Park and Cannon at the intersection of Fireplace Neck and South Country Roads.

Two years ago, the Foundation started a Christmas Card Project, in which the talents of local artists are displayed on an annual basis. •

Thank you for your support

Your contribution is important to us in showing community support and allowing us to preserve the Hamlet. Please return the form below along with your gift to: The Post-Morrow Foundation, Inc. We will mail you an acknowledgement.

Historic memorabilia wanted

Do you or someone you know have old photographs, postcards, or other memorabilia of Brookhaven/Southaven? The Post-Morrow Foundation, in conjunction with the Brookhaven Free Library, the Fire Place Literary Club, and the Brookhaven Village Association, has dedicated a section of its headquarters at 16 Bay Road for historical material related to Brookhaven Hamlet and its environs. This collection will be available to the public in the future. If you have or know about any appropriate material, call 286-0686. •

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