

Hay Beach Community

FIRST RESIDENTS – OLDEST HOMES



1966



“Windwood” on Dinah Rock Road belonged to Lester & Emma Ohrtman, (above) two of the original members of the Hay Beach civic organization in 1962. This later became the Hay Beach Property Owners Association. The Ohrtmans were also one of the five original families who purchased property in 1953. The home is now owned by their son Bob and his wife Pat Ohrtman (below).



From an interview with Bob and Pat Ohrtman on May 6-7, 2014

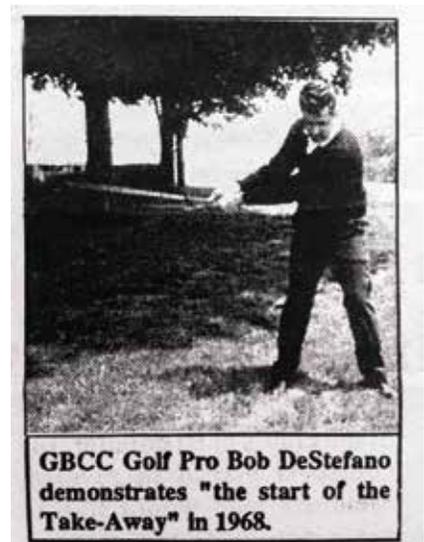
Lester Ohrtman was one of five friends who traveled together mostly on vacations – taking pictures with 35mm cameras. They all purchased property on Dinah Rock Road in 1953. In addition to the Ohrtmans, the Conlins, Bartels, Mosleys and one other person purchased the land from the Primes for about \$1500 an acre. Robert Conlin sold one of the three acres he purchased to Lydia, a woman he worked with at Doubleday Publishing in Garden City and her husband William Wisner. Robert Conlin was the only person to build his home immediately. Renting property on the corner of Winthrop and Rt. 114, he supervised the construction, which was completed around 1954. The electric company charged him \$100 for each of the 26 poles needed to bring electricity to his home. As people built homes on their property, the utility reimbursed him, pole by pole, for his expenses. Bartels was an artist who never built a home on his property and eventually sold it.

Lester and Emma started visiting Shelter Island long before they purchased property or built a house here. Bob remembers his father playing golf at Goat Hill in the 1940s and visiting the island even during the gas rationing of the war years. Bob and his sister used to walk from their Hay Beach house to the to the Gardiner’s Bay Country Club through the woods. Lester and Emma spent weekends and vacations here for years before they became full time residents. Once on the island, they became involved with Stuart Herman and others in the revitalization of Union Chapel in the Heights, which was in need of repairs. Bob remembers his mother sending letters inviting clergy to come and preach at the Chapel. Lester also served on the Shelter Island Town Planning Board. They called the home “Windwood” – Lester would say “I have the wind and the wood.”

Originally we thought only 5 parcels were sold prior to the Kessler, Weil purchase, but we now know there may have been as many as 19-20. The home on Carousel Lane that belonged to Pearl & Rudolph "Honey" Aberli was completed in 1955. The Aberlis were also original members of the Hay Beach Property Association. It is presently the home of Gert Hounsell.



Bob and Anne DeStefano are staples of the Hay Beach community. They purchased the property for their home from Sylvester Prime in 1964 for \$3700. Friends thought it was a lot of money at the time. When the Kessler group took over the subdivision in 1965, their property was valued at \$12,000. They built their house in 1970. Bob was the pro at the Gardiner's Bay Country Club from 1962 to 2011. He was a member of the Shelter Island School Board from 1975-1990 and served as School Board President from 1984-90. Anne worked for Bob, managing the golf shop, the whole time he was the Golf Pro and did real estate as a second job.



Sylvester Prime and Cornelius Point



10/4/63



Andrienne Cohen who owns Sylvester Prime's former home (1963 above) with her husband, Jerry, shared pictures she had from Sylvester Prime. The Cohens have respectfully renovated the home along with the cottage and structures that were moved from Gardiner's Farm.



During the period when the Hay Beach Point Corporation was negotiating to sell the development rights for Hay Beach, Sylvester Prime moved structures from Gardiner's Farm where he was living to Cornelius Point. The house he built on Cornelius Point was modeled after the main house on Gardiner's Farm. Today Cornelius Point is subdivided into five lots.



LINDA HOLMES, a highly acclaimed author and news correspondent, was not only a past president of the Hay Beach Property Owners Association (two separate terms), but its unofficial historian. Her home on Dinah Rock Road was built in Cutchogue in 1775 and transported to Shelter Island on a barge by the Davis Brothers in 1969. She purchased her Dinah Rock Road property in 1968 from the Kessler group for \$7,000.



HENRY AND LILLIAN KESSLER

17 Country Club Drive. The Kesslers first had property on Gardiners Bay Drive but decided to move closer to the golf course. Henry Kessler was a CPA and attorney that also loved to invest in real estate. In 1969, the Kesslers, Henry and Lillian, of all the partners, were the only ones to move into Hay Beach.

Since they were the only partners around, they took the brunt of many disputes about zoning and what could be done with the property. Many Islanders were not happy with the thought of more building and population growth, and they made that clear.



Henry himself was born on the lower East Side of Manhattan and, as a child, lived in very poor conditions. He was 5 years old before he saw his first park or tree. To Henry and Lillian, Shelter Island was truly heaven. Those who knew him often heard him say, "You can travel all over the world and never find a more beautiful place". Lillian still spends summers in the house. (B. DeStefano)