

under  
the Light

# Planning for Our Future



By Bill Holding, Trust President

THE 'SCONSET TRUST turns 40 next year. I'd like to think that the founders would be pleased with all the progress that's been made over this time, building on their vision for protecting and preserving our village. Plus more work continues today – we're wrapping up a busy year that included a major property acquisition, the purchase of a house for workforce housing, the expansion of our trail network, record attendance and support at our various events, and the hiring of Julie Ruddick Meade as our new Executive Director. There is a lot of activity and momentum at the Trust!

That said, milestones like this are also a good reminder of the need to periodically reflect on the mission of an organization and ensure that its strategy is aligned with the current environment and needs of its stakeholders. Land Conservation and Historic Preservation have been the core pillars of the Trust since its founding, and they remain the focus today. However, the reality is that the dynamics in 'Sconset are evolving. Interest in our village continues to grow, new developments are adding many new homes, several of our retail businesses were up in the air and at risk this summer, and the traffic from all this growth is creating new levels of pressure in our village.

To some extent, these changes put the Trust at a crossroads,

and the question becomes what is the best use of our assets and energy to pursue our core mission in this shifting environment? For example, with the "green belt" of land conservation around the village largely in place, should we be shifting gears and pursuing the acquisition of vacant interior land lots to reduce future building density and traffic? Was the uncertainty in several businesses a wakeup call that we can't take them for granted, and should be investing to protect and preserve our commercial core? Given the steady increase in prices and demand for property, should the Trust be fundraising in advance to have a war chest ready so it can move aggressively when opportunities arise?

Over the coming months, our board and a number of longstanding supporters are going to participate in a strategic planning review to think about questions such as these. I don't imagine our mission or core tenets changing significantly – it's more about setting priorities and having a plan for where the rubber meets the road in how best to pursue this mission as 'Sconset continues to evolve. I look forward to sharing updates about this as part of our 40th Anniversary celebration next year. In the meantime, if you have any thoughts you'd like to share for this review, we would welcome hearing them – please email us at: [strategicplan@sconsettrust.org](mailto:strategicplan@sconsettrust.org)



## RENEW YOUR TRUST MEMBERSHIP!

Please use the enclosed envelope to make your annual gift to the Trust TODAY! Or visit [SconsetTrust.org](http://SconsetTrust.org).





Photos: Kris Kinsley Hancock



# Annual Meeting 2023

The 29th Annual Meeting of the 'Sconset Trust was held on July 7th with a standing-room only crowd in attendance. The Lourie Family Preservation Award was presented to the team responsible for the publication of the Trust's most recent book, *Building with 'Sconset in Mind*: the Judy Foundation, overall underwriting support; Michael May, author; Cynthia Fraser Gallagher, editor; Eileen Powers, graphic designer and photographer; and Art and Diane Kelly, who underwrote the cost of two separate printing runs, enabling the Trust to provide this wonderful publication to the public for free.

The 'Sconset Trust Award, which is presented for dedication to the mission of the 'Sconset Trust and has only been given eight times over the last 39 years, was awarded to Betsy Grubbs in recognition of her incredible service to and support of the Trust over the past 20 years.

The newly elected Board members for 2023 are Matthew Fremont-Smith, Drew Guff and Nell Morgan.

## Retiring Board Members

**Doug Brown** served on the Finance and Development Committees where his strategic thinking was key to several initiatives. He is also the designer of the Trust's ever popular belts.

**John Carter's** keen eye for preservation, began with the restoration of Bedlam, his family's home. John always thinks out of the box, which kept the Board on its toes.

**Jamie Holt** chaired the Preservation Committee and has graciously agreed to continue as an ex-officio member. His dogged determination made inroads into establishing more easements and preserving our commercial district through the pursuit of Rights of First Refusal with the owners of the commercial core buildings to ensure 'Sconset retains its beautifully unique character for generations to come.

**Will Overlock** has tirelessly organized the July 4th Fun Games, where his status as umpire is almost as big as the hat he wears. Will also served on the Finance Committee, was a co-founder of the Young Members Cocktail Party, which is preparing the next generation to continue the Trust's mission, and he and his wife Colleen hosted a New York City soiree.

**Marcella Zimmerman's** and her husband Rhoads' deep commitment to 'Sconset and the Trust could not be more evident. In 2007, she and Rhoads underwrote *Keeping the Light*, which documented the Lighthouse move. Marcella came up with the Night Under the Light theme for our 2010 Gala, which she and Rhoads chaired, and which has become not only the Trust's signature fundraiser but also a beloved community event. In 2011, they chaired the Coffin Land (now known as Ruddick Commons) Campaign, which was the largest in the Trust's history resulting in over \$8 million in donations and 45 Keepers of the Land. Marcella joined the Board in 2017 and served on the Land, Preservation and Development Committees. She founded the Beacon Society, a giving society honoring those who have made provisions for the Trust in their estate planning. She and Rhoads again chaired the Gala in 2017, and last but not least, she furnished the Trust Office on a shoestring budget.

**Clement Durkes** first joined the Board in 2016. She was elected Chair and President in July 2019 and stepped in as Interim Executive Director these past few months. We can't thank Clement enough for answering the call this summer and for all of her tireless efforts on behalf of the Trust and our wonderful little village.



Left to right: Will Overlock, Jamie Holt, Marcella Zimmerman, Clement Durkes and John Carter





# New Board Members



## Matt Fremont-Smith

is returning to the Board for a third term and has agreed to lead our ever important Preservation Committee. Matt and his wife Samantha live in Providence when not in Nantucket. Samantha spent childhood summers in 'Sconset in the Atlantic House on Main Street, and the Fremont-Smiths took over in 2009 and later donated an easement to the Trust to preserve the exterior, prevent subdivision and limit future uses, thus ensuring the building's contribution to the look and feel of Main Street would endure. The family loves having three generations in one place over the summer, and in particular the unique experience of their children playing with 'Sconset friends' children, just as they did. The Fremont-Smith children Maddie, Lila and Matthew ("Teo") spend the off-season counting the days to get back to 'Sconset!



## Nell Wilson

Nell Wilson has been coming to Nantucket for the last 13 years, and she and her husband George spent much of their courtship in 'Sconset. They bought the property at 39 Main Street to build their family home, Laginappe, instructing their architect to design a house that looked as if it had been a part of the 'Sconset community forever. They were successful and were awarded recognition for new construction that looked historically correct and fit into the existing historical community. Nell is passionate about historic preservation and worked for many years in Atlanta to establish her neighborhood as a historic landmark and on the Beautification Board to restore the many small parks in her neighborhood which was designed by Frederick Law Olmstead in 1905.



## Drew Guff

Drew Guff and his wife Jessica have been coming to Nantucket for 30 years, and love and appreciate the beauty and uniqueness of 'Sconset. In 2016, they bought and restored one of the small cottages in the Underhill section of 'Sconset that was built in 1893, for which they received the Lourie Family Preservation Award in 2022. A few years ago, Drew worked with the Town on the transfer of 30 acres of beachfront on Low Beach that was owned by the US Government back into the hands of the Town. One of his primary goals as a new Board member is to get the new beacon for Sankaty Lighthouse installed to restore its commanding sweep of light over the water and the Nantucket landscape.



2023 Lourie Family Preservation Award recipients



Clement Durkes and 'Sconset Trust Award recipient Betsy Grubbs



"Commemorative" Sankaty Move Life cover presented to Betsy Grubbs by Rob Benchley

Photos: Kris Kinsley Hancock





# A NIGHT UNDER THE LIGHT

'SCONSET TRUST ANNUAL GALA

Hosted by Clement and Rick Durkes & the 'Sconset Trust Board of Directors

★ Sunday, July 16, 2023 ★

**Sankaty Head Golf Club**

Our 2023 Gala, Night Under the Light, was again a huge success, selling out quickly and netting over \$240,000. Thank you to our fabulous Gala Chairs, Clement and Rick Durkes, and to all of our sponsors, donors, silent auction item donors, and our numerous hardworking and dedicated volunteers, as well as the Sankaty Head Golf Club Staff. We couldn't have done it without you!



Photo: Kris Kinsley Hancock



THANK YOU TO ALL GALA SPONSORS, AUCTION DONORS  
AND SANKATY HEAD GOLF CLUB STAFF

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Photos: Kris Kinsley Hancock

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Kathy and David Cheek  
Henry Michaelis, Maria Mitchell Artist in Residence





## YOUNG MEMBERS

# Cocktail Party

Our third annual Young Members Cocktail Party was held at the Casino on August 4th, and was another resounding success with over 130 attendees. We want to give a huge shout out to our wonderful hosts Bunny Bispham, Ashley Ghiskey, Chris Crampton, Robin Ried, and Will Overlock. Save the date for next year's party on Friday August 2, same time and place, and please encourage children and grandchildren to attend—the more, the merrier, as we continuously work to grow our membership ranks and raise awareness regarding the Trust's important mission!

## Sponsors

David and Delia Biddison  
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Madelyn and Jon Terbell  
Katie and Conor Tochilin  
Laura West

Summer 2023



## PATRONS' PARTY

Sunday, August 13, 2023

Kate Heller O'Reilly graciously opened her beautiful home for the Trust's annual Patrons Party, which recognizes and thanks our members contributing at the Patron level (\$1,000 and above). Around 200 Patrons attended, enjoying an evening that, in the words of our hostess, was "perfectly 'Sconset."



Jog in the Fog lived up to its name, taking place on a very foggy morning. With around 160 participants, the event was well represented. Special thanks to the folks at the Casino for lending us tables, to all the volunteers and to the many families who participate year after year. It's always heartwarming to see parents jogging alongside their kiddos in support of the 'Sconset Trust and is so wonderful to see familiar faces coming together for events like this in our Village. It was a fun morning :) And we beat the rain!!!!

## Land Update

The Land Committee focuses on the preservation of open space through the purchase and the acquisition of conservation easements, ensuring continued public access to 'Sconset beaches and developing walking and biking trails on Trust owned properties. The purchase of the 3.2 acre parcel at 2 Gully Road earlier this year furthered our dual goals of preserving open space and enhancing public beach access by adding over 100 yards of beach frontage to the directly abutting 'Sconset public beach. The Trust has also been working closely with the Land Bank to develop additional public stair access to the beach from Ocean Avenue. The stairs have been permitted and are scheduled for construction this winter. The Land Committee is very interested in acquiring additional property for conservation. Please contact the Trust if you are interested in discussing the possible preservation of your property.

By David Brown

## Lighthouse Update

By all accounts we had another busy summer season at Sankaty Lighthouse. Visitors arrived by all manner: car, bicycle, tour bus, as well as on foot. Some come just to look, while others run down to offer her a hug. They all enjoy her majesty. Occasionally one can find solitude there, but more often on a typical summer day we find the grounds teeming with people of all ages, from Nantucket and beyond our shores.

We also climbed to the top to take in the views with some 350 visitors on our two regular public Open Days, and our two pop-up Open Days for Trust members and patrons. Additionally, we opened for a three-day film shoot, and for the Sankaty Head Golf Club caddies. This fall and winter, Nantucket students will have the chance to climb as well. We say a well-deserved thank you to the donors and volunteers who help make it happen.

The lighthouse is emblematic of a community that treasures its distinctive character and fights hard to preserve it (think of our epic 2007 move!). Much more than an emblem, the lighthouse provides an opportunity for visitors to learn about 'Sconset's unique history and the Trust's efforts to preserve it. People who visit the lighthouse hear or read a very compelling story. Hopefully they leave with an increased understanding not only of the lighthouse but also of the importance of preservation. ❤️ Your Lighthouse.

By Robert Franklin

## PRESERVATION UPDATE

Preservation is an integral part of the Mission of the 'Sconset Trust, and 'Sconset is blessed with an extraordinary collection of antique homes and buildings, as well as a vibrant Commercial Center.

- **Many buildings in the Village** have survived intact due to our remote location, as well as a preservation aesthetic that has developed and attracted summer residents over the last hundred years. However, due to a shift in current tastes favoring more living space, modern conveniences, subdivisions of land, and rising valuations, great pressure is now being exerted on our 17th and 18th century cottages and our 19th century Victorian and shingle style summer homes, and surrounding spaces. The Island's existing zoning and compliance structures are supportive but can be circumvented. During some renovations, historic fabric has been lost forever.
- **'Sconset's commercial center** is critical to the Village's vitality and cohesiveness, which is unique on Nantucket. Having a mix of commercial activities, such as a market, liquor store, post office, and multiple venues for food creates a hub of convenience and social interaction, and a center of gravity for the community. These are under constant threat of change of management and ownership.

The Preservation Committee is tasked with executing on the Preservation element of the Trust's mission to protect 'Sconset. Through education, outreach, and sponsorship of specific initiatives, we aim to expand the Trust's effectiveness in maintaining the unique character of our community. In the past, the Committee has led initiatives to:

- **Compile House Histories** of architecturally important homes,
- Develop literature to explain the concept and benefits of (and debunk myths about) easements
- **Conduct periodic tours** of historic neighborhoods (e.g. partnership with Nantucket Preservation Trust (NPT) events and tours of Codfish Park),
- **Evolve the zoning** in the Village to protect commercial zones from residential encroachment
- **Promote workforce housing**

Going forward we will continue to build on the momentum of these past initiatives, including:

- **Developing new House Histories.** To date we have sponsored 20 of these to educate homeowners on important facets of their homes to protect; separately NPT has done 11. The house profiles done by the Trust are available to read in the Trust office and on our website. We are also working on adding the NPT's histories to our website. Please have a look, they are fascinating!
- **Providing education materials** about easements, and pursuing easements, on historic properties. Our pamphlet *Saving 'Sconset* and our recent book *Building with 'Sconset in Mind*, are available at the Trust office and linked on our website.
- **Helping to develop the Trust's new Village Keepers initiative**, to ensure we are proactive in protecting the 'Sconset commercial center in the future.

By Matthew Fremont-Smith





## Village Keepers

Purchased by the 'Sconset Trust in February 2023, the historic Aldrich House at 6 Elbow Lane provided critical housing for staff of the Market and Claudette's during the summer season.

Reliable housing for workers

of 'Sconset's beloved shops and restaurants keeps the village commercial core viable and helps preserve its unique

spirit and character. The purchase of Aldrich House helps fulfill the Trust's mission of preservation and was made possible through the generosity and foresight of many villagers.



*One of our Elbow Lane tenants*

By Robin Ried

## Closing Thanks

These past few months have been gratifying and busy. I found an even deeper admiration of Betsy Grubbs after occupying her chair; attempting to keep all the events, donations and initiatives of the Trust moving forward; smoothing the transition from Betsy's tenure to Julie's reign. Thank you for the honor of serving the 'Sconset Trust. It has been my pleasure.

— Clement Durkes

## Three Weeks in and Loving It

If you have run into me around the Village at any point over the past three weeks, you will notice that I am sporting a huge smile. I am so honored to have been selected as the Trust's next Executive Director.

It truly is my dream job in my absolute favorite place in the world, and while I couldn't have bigger shoes to fill than those of the incredible Betsy Grubbs, I am ready for the challenge. As you have read in all of our Committees' reports, this is truly an exciting time for the Trust. I look forward to working with our Board on a strategic plan to guide us as we execute on all the various aspects of our mission of land conservation and historic preservation. 2024 looks to be a great year for the Trust and I look forward to celebrating our 40th anniversary with all of you.



*Betsy Grubbs and Julie Ruddick Meade*

—Julie Ruddick Meade

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