



The restoration of this site was generously supported by the people of Yarmouth through our Community Preservation Fund 2019

Indian Memorial History

Early Mid-Cape Native Settlements



The Mid-Cape Native Peoples consider the land you are standing on to be particularly sacred because it was the burial place of tribal members. Archaeological discoveries in Yarmouth, specifically the partial Agate Basin projectile point represented lower right, indicate that Native People were on this land as early as 10,000 years ago. In the Wōpanāak language, the Yarmouth area was called "Mattacheese" which translated means "old lands by the border of water."

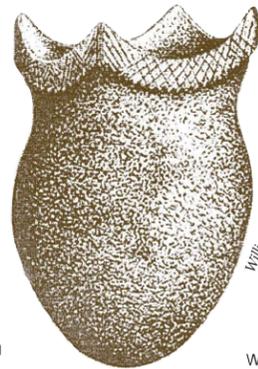
Early in our history there were significant Native settlements in what is now Barnstable County in Mashpee, Monomoyick and Potanumaquut (Eastham). During the early to mid-17th century, English apostles led by the Rev. John Eliot began to Christianize the Plymouth Colony Natives. In the late seventeenth century, English style native meetinghouses were erected at these settlements to accommodate the religious needs of the Christianized natives. Yarmouth was a half-way point between the Mashpee and Potanumaquut settlements and an English style Native meetinghouse was built on the northeast corner of Swan Pond. There were smaller settlements of declining tribes in the Mid-Cape area, namely; the Mattakeese, the Nobscusset, the Pawkunnawkut, and the Sauquatucket.

The Pawkunnawkuts, who were one of the South Sea Tribes, occupied the vicinity of Yarmouth on both sides of the lower Bass River. There were freshwater ponds, woodlands, and planting fields in this area that afforded ample subsistence.

In 1713, during Yarmouth's third division of common lands, a planned 160-acre Native reservation was laid out by the Proprietors and mutually agreed upon by the natives. The reservation was located on the south side of town, in the settlement of the Pawkunnawkuts between Long Pond and the west bank of Bass River.



Discovery of the Barnstable Clay Pot

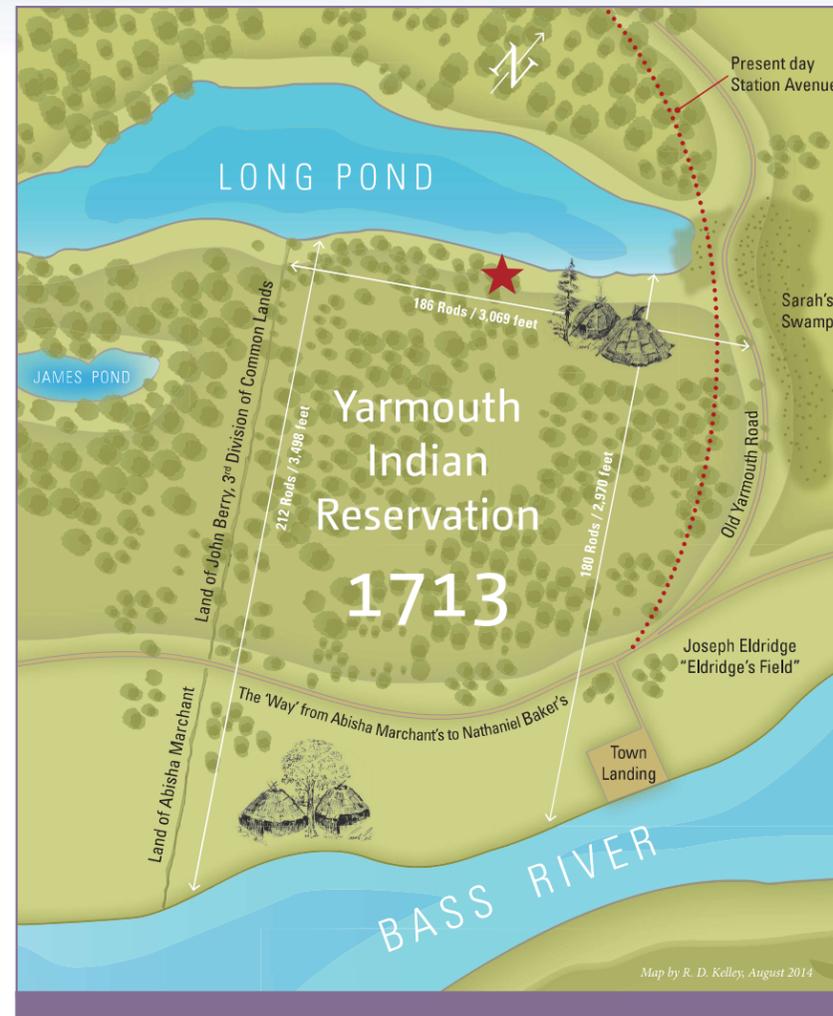


William S. Fowler

In the late 1800s, this Wampanoag clay pot, 450–350 BP, was discovered during the construction of a cranberry bog in Barnstable not far from Sandy Neck where the Native Peoples had a large camp. The Native women were the potters for the tribe.

The Native Potter showed her creativity and inventiveness by not following the usual practice of repeating the same design motif on the four collar expanses between the castellations. Here, the potter has deliberately used a different design motif for each collar face.

Massachusetts Archaeological Society, April–July, 1962, Pages 45–47.



Map by R. D. Kelley, August 2014

Legend of the Nauhaught

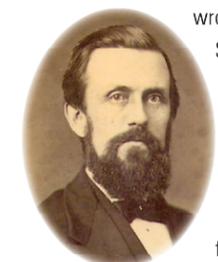
Our honest deacon was once attacked by a number of large black snakes. Being at a distance from any inhabitants, he was, to be sure, in a very precarious situation; for unfortunately, he had not even a knife about him for his defense. What to do he knew not. To outrun them he found utterly impossible and to keep them off without any weapon was equally so. He therefore came to the determination to stand firm on his feet. They began to wind themselves about him; in a little time, one



(Adaptation of a poem by John Greenleaf Whittier)

of them had made his way up to the Indian's neck, and was trying to put his black head into his mouth. Nauhaught opened it immediately for him. The black serpent thrust in his head and Nauhaught, putting his jaws together, bit it off in a moment! As soon as the blood, streaming from the beheaded, was discovered by the rest of the snakes, they left their intended prey with great precipitation, and Nauhaught was liberated from the jaws of impending death.

Historian Daniel Wing



Daniel Wing Jr. a birthright Yarmouth Friend (Quaker) and local historian wrote about the history of South Yarmouth. He was a collector of Indian artifacts and kept a historical diary. Wing arranged for this Cairn to be built on his property, a part of the former reservation.

An adaption from Wing's diary states: During the last small-pox epidemic at the reservation in the late 1770s, Friends John & Elizabeth Kiley and Silas & Rachael Baker lived near the southern border of the reservation and had previously contracted and survived small-pox. As they were immune to the disease, the Killeys and Bakers converted their homes into care centers for the Natives stricken with the disease. The last of the Indians were buried near Long Pond on former reservation ground around 1777 or 1778. A monument of boulders has since been erected on the site, bearing the following inscription:

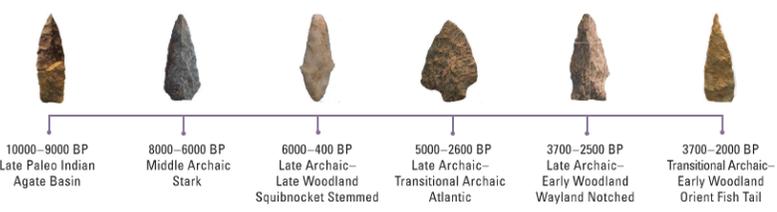
ON THIS SLOPE LIE BURIED THE LAST NATIVE INDIANS OF YARMOUTH

Mr. Wing wrote: "The boulder on my cemetery lot came from the south side of White's Path. Isaac Walker, Nehemiah Goodwin, Allen Crowell and myself loaded it on David Chubb's dray Nov. 17, 1881 and carried it to the cemetery, first weighing it, about 3,000 pounds net. This cemetery lot, commonly known as the Indian Burial ground, I originally presented to the South Yarmouth Cemetery Association on January 20, 1905."



Photo courtesy of HSOY

Then on January 6, 1918 Daniel Wing conveyed a parcel of land to the Town of Yarmouth to be called Wings Grove Park. The parcel, formerly part of the reservation, adjoins Long Pond and the Indian monument ground, containing two-and-one-half-acres. The land conveyed is to be devoted to the purposes of a public park forever.



Stone Age Projectile Points Tens of thousands of artifacts were recovered and cataloged during the Taylor-Bray Farm Archaeological Project from 2009 through 2017. The Farm is owned by the Town of Yarmouth and was placed on the National Register of Historical places in 1993. The artifacts, such as these projectile points, have begun to tell the story of the occupation of the Mid-Cape by Native Peoples on a seasonal basis going back millennia.

BP = Before Present. Scientific dating convention where present has been established as 1 Jan 1950.

There's more history to discover online.

