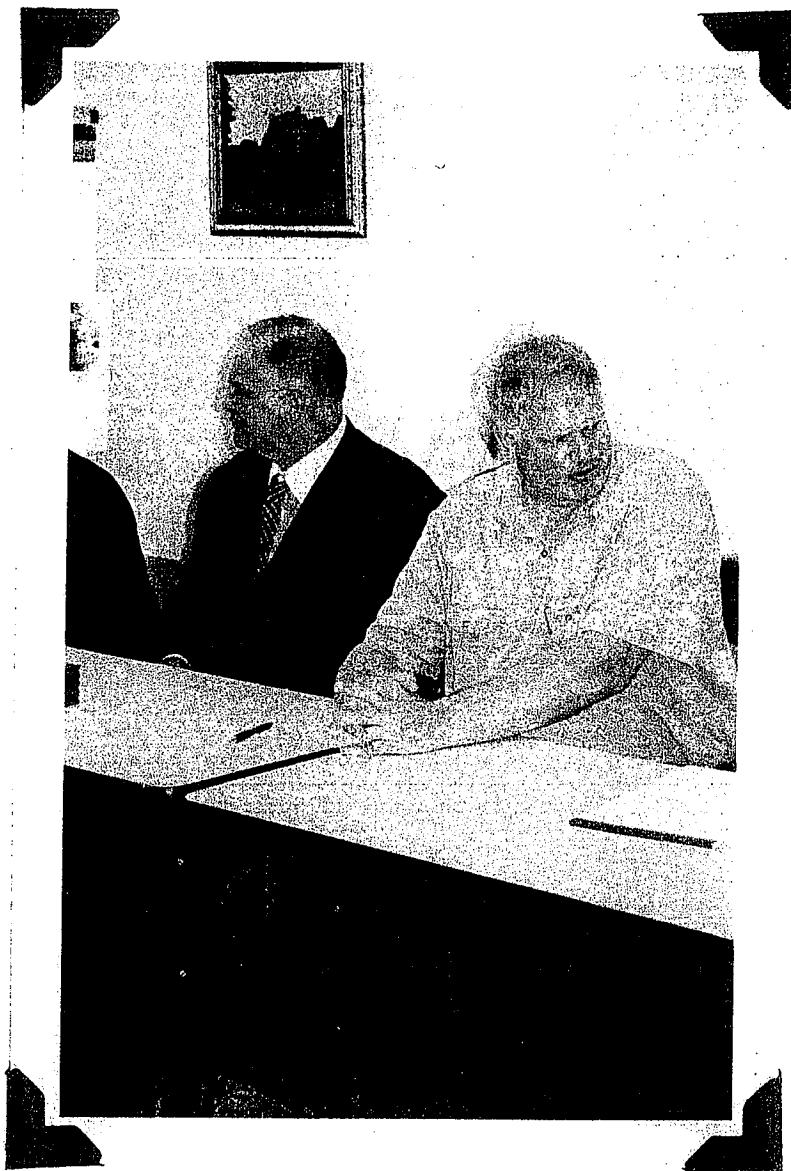


PART 8. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Site History

Helander, Joel E., *A Short History of the Goss Property, a/k/a East River Preserve, Guilford, Connecticut, 1641-1927*, 2010)

A Short History of the Goss Property
a/k/a East River Preserve
Guilford, Connecticut
1641–1927



George Goss & Dirck Goss at the closing table,
Guilford Town Hall, August 26, 2009

A Short History of the Goss Property
a/k/a East River Preserve
Guilford, Connecticut
1641–1927

The 624 acre Goss property borders the east bank of East River for over one mile, where the river winds through the salt meadows like a silver thread.

Kuttawo is the Indian name for the tidal river that marks the original eastern boundary of Guilford. The name appears in Reverend Henry Whitfield's deed (1639) from the Menunkatuck Squaw Sachem "Shaumpishuh". A little later, Reverend Whitfield and his company of English settlers or planters acquired all the lands east of East River in a second transaction (1641) with the Mohegan Sachem "Uncas".

Native American groups, including the Indian predecessors to the Mohegan and Menunkatuck, relied heavily on East River for thousands of years. The waterway provided convenient transportation and supported hunting and fishing activities, in addition to agriculture. American shad could once be caught in abundance, as well as white perch and the less edible hickory shad and alewives.

The late Estelle Farrell Goss identified a series of stones in the bottom of East River near her home, reputed to be "Indian Stepping Stones" for fording the river at low tide. At the north end of the Goss property, where brackish water turns to fresh water (i.e. marshland meets the woodland), the 1641 Indian deed refers to a tree for crossing the river.

Despite all its beauty, the rough topography of the Goss property, which is broken up by myriad fingers of small streams or inland wetlands, held little economic value for the early settlers. The expanse of woodland between East River and Clapboard Hill/Podunk Roads has been largely unused for over three centuries. The principal value and utility of the woodland has been for woodlots i.e. timber harvest. The relative absence of old stone wall enclosures demonstrates the lack of other uses, such as for pasture.

There is an important exception, however, to this characterization of land on the Goss property. The rolling plain that encompasses about 15–20 acres along the river must be considered as some of the best agricultural land in Guilford. The plain is sharply demarcated by the line of woodland running parallel to the river, where rocky elevations up to 100+ feet above sea level slope down to the plain. It is prime farmland with well-drained, rock free soil.

Patterns of settlement in early Guilford always seemed to follow the fertile valleys of East River and West River. No sooner had the town been settled when survey parties went out to survey the character of the land. They discovered level plains on the west side of East River, where settlers were induced to make permanent settlements as early as 1700. Nut Plains farms were established northwest of the Goss property; Duck Holes/Tanner's Marsh farms were established south of the Goss property; and Clapboard Hill farms were established southeast of the Goss property—all around this same time. The Goss property is most closely associated with the Nut Plains neighborhood because the earliest owners of the lands east of the river lived in the lower Nut Plains just west of the river.

The Colonel George Foote House (built 1810) at 829 Goose Lane stands on the homestead for the principal early owners of the Goss property. It is at least the third dwelling house on the same lot—

strategically located on one link of the old Boston Post Road, which is Foote's Bridge Road. The route of the original Post Road leading out of Guilford Center, eastbound, passed up State Street to Half Mile Road and then down Footes's Bridge Road to cross the river. Around the time (1703) that the East Guilford farmers successfully petitioned to form their own church society or parish, the Post Road was altered to cross the river where it crosses today — two miles to the south of Foote's Bridge.

Joseph Chittenden (1672–1727) joined the ranks of the farmers in lower Nut Plains as early as 1692, establishing a home site adjacent to Foote's Bridge. Chittenden's fertile plow ground extended easterly across the river. Prized salt hay could be harvested from the meadows and surplus farm products could be sent downriver to Guilford markets.

Andrew Ward IV from Guilford Center purchased the 40-acre Chittenden Farm in 1761, whose family line of Ward/Foote/Beecher descendants included a Revolutionary War general, a prominent abolitionist, and an American literary icon. Andrew Ward V inherited the farm associated with Foote's Bridge in 1779. His active service throughout the Revolutionary War is impressive, rising through the ranks to become brigadier general. General Ward participated in the Battles of White Plains, Trenton, and Princeton, and for his role in the Battle of Long Island, he was commended by Commander In Chief General George Washington.

During the havoc of the Revolutionary War, when Tories engineered various raids and pillaging in Guilford, members of the Ward family allegedly buried their valuables in the gravelly bank of "Sandy Hill," which later became the site of their private Foote Cemetery. Little Harriet Foote, a granddaughter of General Ward, and two of her playmates, buried their dolls for safekeeping in the side of the same hill.

The General's daughter, Roxana Ward Foote, and her ten orphaned children lived in the Ward household adjacent to Foote's Bridge. According to Foote family tradition, the little cemetery reservation on the Goss property was established by General Ward after the tragic deaths (1794) of his two teenaged grandsons. The coffin bearing the body of one of the boys' young friends was hand-carried by a relay of bearers in the old-time custom to the public burial yard. During this sad task on a hot day, the brothers collapsed and died within a week of each other. The General vowed that no more young lives should be sacrificed in such a way for any of his family. Whereupon, he included a provision in his will to establish the little burial plot overlooking East River.

General Ward's granddaughter, Roxana Foote, (namesake for her mother) married Lyman Beecher from Yale College's class of 1797. The Reverend Doctor Beecher became a nationally known theologian and the father of Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887), one of the most charismatic and controversial abolitionist reformers of the 19th century. Even more renowned was his sister Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896), whose anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), influenced the course of U.S. history. When Harriet Beecher Stowe was orphaned at five years of age, her Aunt Harriet Foote brought her to the Nut Plains Farm, which the younger Harriet later described in a letter: my "dear old grandmother [Roxana Ward Foote] received me with a heart full of love and sorrow...hours spent at Nut Plains were the golden hours of my life."

Charles D. Hubbard. Guilford's historian and newly-discovered great American Impressionist painter, often came to the locality of Foote's Bridge to sketch and draw. In his book, *Old Guilford*, (1939) he describes the scene:

It meets the salt tide near a little round knoll.
Once I overheard the stream talking to the knoll,

But what stream could refrain from talking? And the great white oaks stand on the little round knoll and about the pasture lot and talk back to the stream and they speak to the white pine and they speak to the tall locusts and they speak to the pale dim stones in the little graveyard on the little round knoll. The stream talks and the oaks talk and the stones talk of the quiet valley—and of Beechers and of Footes and of all those who once journeyed this way to meet the great tide from other shores.

A fork in the end of Foote's Bridge Road diverges to the north, which is the ancient Bear House Hill Road. It served as a public road or "highway" during the years that the original Post Road crossed East River at Foote's Bridge. A deed in 1710 refers to this roadway as "the old path to Hartford." East of Bear House Hill Road, about one quarter mile from its beginning fork, there is a knoll of erratic boulders that contain a pronounced cave or little rock shelter. The so-called Bear Cave was identified by the late Clarence Evarts of Nut Plains District, who led an expedition there in 1968. The late George Edmund Carter stated that he visited the Bear Cave in his boyhood (1880s) every Easter morning to cook eggs for breakfast.

The land records mention "Barehouse Swamp" as early as 1736. This swamp is a narrow strip of wetland lying east of Bear House Hill, where there is an abandoned cranberry bog. The late Edgar Wilcox, who worked on the Foote Farm before 1900, emphasized the fact that he would be "afraid to bring a pair of oxen" into the bog because of its deep, black muck. A low earthen dam on the south side of Bear House Hill Road can still be seen, which has a passageway for draining the swamp. According to Mr. Wilcox, Andrew W. Foote, Sr. (1833–1880) dammed the swamp to create the cranberry bog.

In a rocky ravine in the lowermost or southerly acres of the Goss property, there is an industrial mill site of great historical curiosity. Here are the ruins of the Parmelee Saw Mill, which burned to the ground in 1901. An old fashioned up and down saw mill was first established on this stream as early as 1850 by Eber S. Hotchkiss, who built ships at what is now no. 10 Boston Post Road along the same river. When Henry E. Parmelee (1830–1896) returned from the Civil War, he entered a saw mill partnership with Hotchkiss. Later, when Hotchkiss bowed out of the business, Parmelee's two sons, Edgar and Herbert Parmelee, continued the partnership. A broken mill dam, mill pond, pillars of foundation stone, and sunken timbers bear testimony to that long ago enterprise. On a five minute walk upstream from the high mill dam, another magnificent stone dam may be found, which appears to represent the earliest (1850) of two mill sites.

Nobody chose to establish housing on the Goss property east of East River until Andrew Jackson Dudley (1835–1911) conceived the idea. Dudley grew up in his parent's home at 321 East River Road in the old Clapboard Hill neighborhood. As a farmer, he needed a fertile farm tract and new housing to coincide with his marriage, which occurred in 1857. He built a modest farmhouse overlooking East River in a section known as "Duck Holes" and, the following year, acquired 62 acres encompassing the site from his father. This structure is traditionally known as the "caretaker's house" on the Goss family's farm on Duck Hole Road. The 1860 Federal census reflects Andrew J. Dudley living there with his 22 year old wife, Catherine, two children under two years of age, and a 13-year-old non-family member who may have worked as a farm hand.

Dudley moved to New Haven by 1870. In 1888, Harry W. Bishop of San Francisco, California purchased the Duck Holes Farm. Bishop was a brother of Henry, Walter, and Frank Bishop, who were great showmen using the stage name of "Morosco." It was

their custom to take in homeless boys and train them as athletes. One of their proteges was Charles Morosco, who was the first performer to turn three somersaults over the back of an elephant. This feat attracted the attention of Barnum and Bailey and with that circus Charles Morosco toured England. Stationed at the Duck Holes Farm, the Morsoco brothers used the old barn as winter training quarters. Walter Morosco (Bishop) planned to build a great stone house at Duck Holes, as well as a stone bridge over the river for a new direct route to Guilford, but death cut him short, just as he was preparing the stonework for these undertakings.

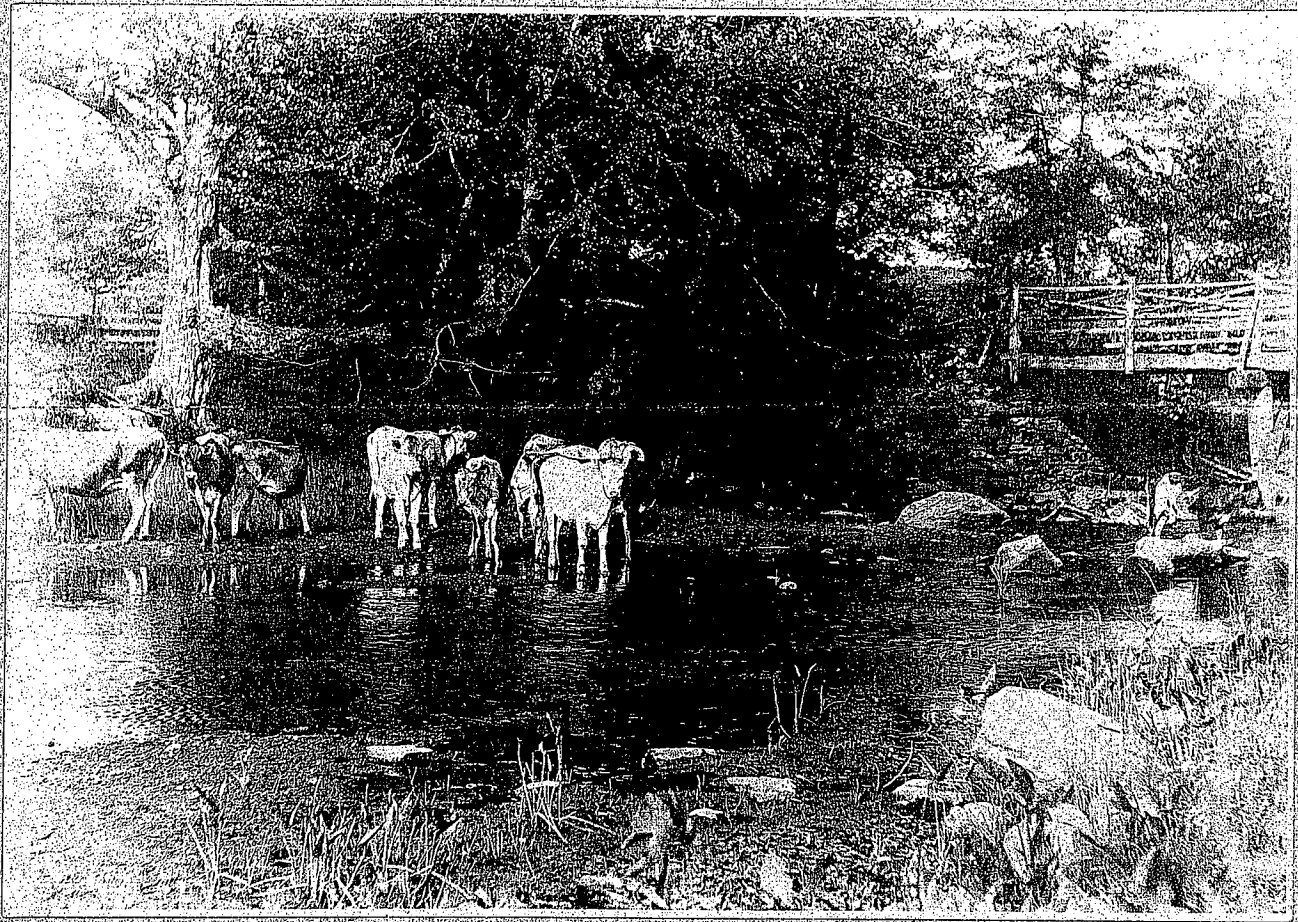
Henry B. Beckwith of Guilford, who was a family friend of the Bishops/Morsocos, owned the Duck Holes Farm, 1904–1920. Franklin Farrell, Jr. of New Haven conveyed the 62-acre Duck Holes Farm to his daughter and son-in-law, Mr. & Mrs. George A. Goss, Sr. in 1927, which began the Goss Family era of careful land stewardship.

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Joel E. Helander,
Municipal Historian,
Town of Guilford, CT
March 14, 2010

References: _____

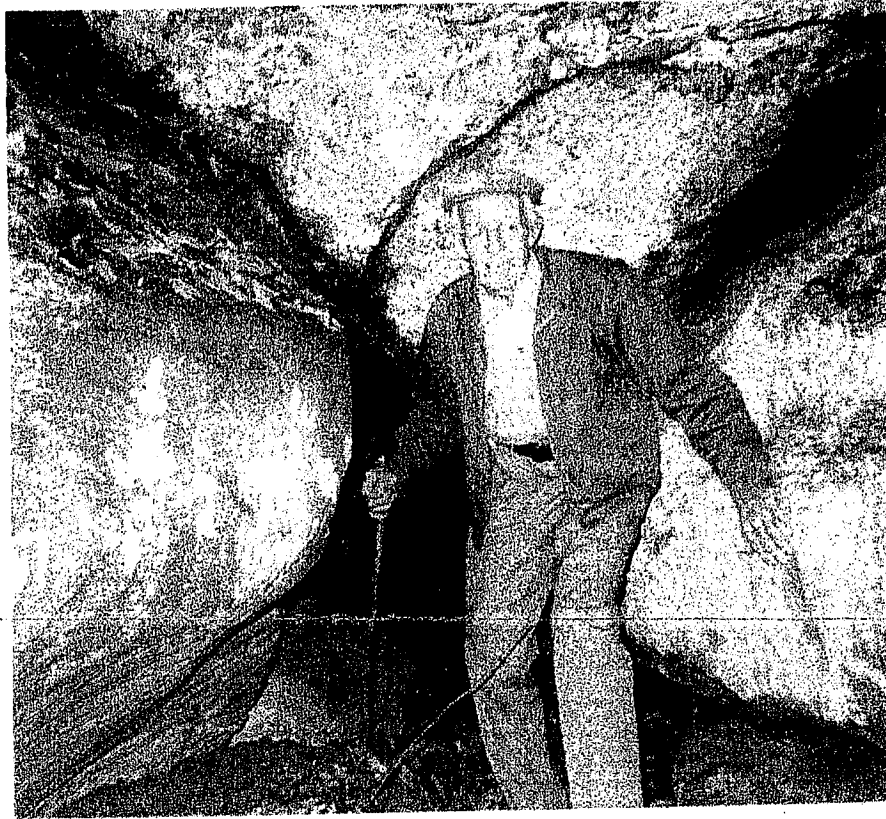
Guilford Long Ago, Vol II, by J.E. Helander, 1969.
A Treasury of Guilford Places, by J.E. Helander, 2008.



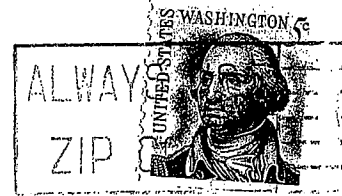
Foote's Bridge in Lower Nut Plains is a gateway to the Goss property. A bridge has spanned the river here from the beginning of the town's settlement and served as one leg of the old Boston Post Road until about 1700. This idyllic setting with dairy cows was photographed circa 1910 by Oliver B. Husted.



Andrew Jackson Dudley (1835–1911) was the first person to establish housing on the Goss property.



At 79 years of age in 1968, Clarence Evarts led the way to the Bear Cave at Bear House Hill on the Goss property.



Mr. Joel Helander
Clayboard Hill
Guilford
Connecticut

MRS. GEORGE A. GOSS
MIDDLEBURY, CONN.
06762

Dear Mr. Helander:-

I truly enjoy your Clayboard Hill newspaper. You must have "arrived"! In 1926 when we first went to Duck Hales, Mr. Goss went to see an old lady who was reputed to be willing to part with some of her antiques. He said who he was, & "Clayboard Hill" & she replied "Can't be. There's not no Gosses on Clayboard Hill!" I know we have arrived, 50 years later, & Clayboard Hill is very dear to us. I have mislaid your copy with list of historical, previous

articles. We would like a complete set. Also, I want to subscribe for the Rev. Mr. W. H. C. Moore, Avery Heights, New Britain Ave., Hartford. He is a wonderful man, & this would mean a lot to him.

Sometime, when I saw at the farm, you might be interested in the essay books, & in the pamphlets which Mr. Moore (1st Cong. Church) & Mr. Biggs (Christ Church) wrote.

Please let me know what I owe you.

Sincerely

Estelle Tarral Goss.

Mrs. George A. (Estelle) Goss was the family matriarch and original co-owner of the Goss property. J. Helander received this letter (among others) from Mrs. Goss at the age of 16 years old in 1967.