

## Exhibit Explores Trout Pond

Posted on 31 July 2008



Â

They started with watercolors by Annie Cooper Boyd showing a rustic red mill, a barn and a bucolic view of Noyac Road that wouldn't see a BMW or Jitney for many decades. It is a narrow, swerving dirt serpentine that ambles west toward North Sea and Southampton. Three other watercolors depict fields, a pond, a farm and a scene that looks more like Vermont than a hamlet only four short miles from bustling Sag Harbor.

The quartet of paintings look at the same locale from different angles. And in the same way Dorothy Zaykowski and Jean Held approached their research, friends from the Sag Harbor Historical Society would try to guess what they were looking at.

The paintings, which will be part of an exhibit opening at the society's Annie Cooper Boyd House on Main Street in Sag Harbor this Saturday, are all of Trout Pond painted in the early part of the last century, when Noyac was truly that rural hamlet that its residents now can only imagine. In beautifully rendered story boards chock with surprising old photographs and some of Annie's paintings, the exhibit tells the story of how one very specific feature of the local landscape allowed the hamlet to evolve.

"Just look at these paintings, and you're filled with questions," said Ms. Held, who along with Ms. Zaykowski curated the exhibit. "It's like the Internet, where one thing leads to another. Pretty soon you're on to unrelated subjects."

That curiosity led the ladies onto an exploration of the area around what we know today as Trout Pond, and while they admit there are still more than a few holes and unanswered questions, the story begins with the area's Native Americans attracted to the spring-fed creek that early English settlers referred to as Noyac River, and the harnessing of those waters by a series of mill owners beginning in the late 1600s, creating the pond itself. The

story includes resort owners, a hermit philosopher and even the father of modern baseball. And concludes with a great preservation effort in the early 1980s to save from developers what is arguably the hamlet's centerpiece.

The ladies culled items from the earliest Southampton Town records and stories from the local press to piece together the early history of the property. Apparently two small tribes of Indians, the Noyacs and the Wickatucks, inhabited the area. They were not, according to reports, connected with either the Shinnecock or the Montaukets, but instead, thought Held, related to Indians from Shelter Island, although the history here is a bit fuzzy.



It appears from town records that several settlers had been granted a right to put a mill at the site, the first being a Rogers, but that none actually did until about 1690 when records indicate John Parker was the first to capture the waters of the Noyac River to power a mill.

A succession of millers followed, with names that have long been associated with local history: Rogers, Budd, Jessup and Eldridge. There were grist mills for grinding grain into flour, and fulling mills, which pounded stiff and oily woven wool into something usable.

The mill eventually wound up in the hands of Henry Chadwick, a sports writer from New York, who is widely credited with developing and promoting the modern game of baseball. Chadwick and his family visited Noyac several years as summer residents, guesting with the Eldridge family. It was there that their daughter fell in love with Thomas Eldridge and later married. The Chadwicks bought the mill property in the 1870s, and Henry Chadwick soon put his son-in-law, Thomas, in charge of the operation. Descendants of the family live in the area today, and "Chaddy" Worden, in his 90's, still returns for a couple months each year. He walked the grounds with Ms. Zaykowski and Ms. Held last year, and a series of photos taken on that walk reveal the crumbling bits of foundations that remain as ghosts from the home that sat on the east side of the pond.

The pond, though, had a life beyond that of powering a mill, and at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the place became know as a resort for fishermen and families looking for recreation and a place to picnic. Opened as Thompson’s Trout Pond Oak Grove, the property was popular with “sports” looking to hook a trout and, as Ms. Held says with a wink, “the right kind of people.”

Mr. Thompson, who occupied the house in the southwest corner of the property, which also served lunches and dinners to the carriage trade, was the one responsible for the network of tiny creeks that remain in the woods behind the pond today, and hiking paths meander where 30 pools for breeding trout once existed.

There is little, except for bits of foundation, that remains from either of the big houses, both which were destroyed in fires. And indeed much of the Noyac woods was destroyed by a huge fire that swept north from Scuttle Hole Road in 1944. This, too, is part of the exhibition.

There are plenty of the aforementioned side tracks on exhibit, one of the most interesting being the story of Bobby Graham, the hermit philosopher of Noyac. In the interest of full disclosure, Mr. Graham was a correspondent for The Sag Harbor Express, and frequently wrote of life among the ponds, woods and fields of Noyac. Graham had lived in a house on Noyac Road until the 1944 conflagration took it away. He packed whatever belongings he had left and took off for the remaining woods southeast of the pond where he built himself a shack and lived his remaining years.

The exhibition concludes with reports of the effort to preserve the property, and its use today as a town park.

The exhibit remains on view Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 4 p.m., through September 14.Â

Â

Popularity: 4% [?]

Be Sociable, Share!

+ MORE

[Tweet](#)

[Share](#)

St

**This post was written by:**



**Bryan Boyhan** - who has written 246 posts on [The Sag Harbor Express](#).

[Contact the author](#)