

which still advises on many aspects of the national park system. Benjamin Thompson, citing his experience with the Yosemite board, insisted that he and Wirth actually felt the Cape Cod advisory commission would “be a good device” that would give “people locally a voice and knowledge of developing problems.”²⁹ But this was the first time national park legislation would include specific requirements for a citizens’ advisory group, another precedent set by the Cape Cod National Seashore. The advisory commission, which was generally considered an important success over the coming years, would become a template for other such committees for national parks and an increasingly common tool used by other federal agencies.³⁰

One of the reasons Wirth, Thompson, and other

park service officials may have been willing to accept so many precedents—and make significant compromises—at Cape Cod was that the legislation set the most important precedent of all for the park service: it authorized funds for the acquisition of land to establish a new national park.³¹ At first \$15 million, then raised to \$16 million, the amount was obviously low to anyone familiar with the region’s real estate market. But as Wirth wrote in his memoirs, he considered this to be one of the most significant steps taken in the history of national parks since 1872, when Congress established Yellowstone National Park. Nevertheless, the provision attracted remarkably little discussion or even notice. Congress’s unprecedented move seems to have been not so much a change in policy as a shift in climate



Fig. 4.6. Point Reyes National Seashore, California. Photo by Carol Highsmith. CHA.



Fig. 4.7. Padre Island National Seashore, Texas. Photo by Carol Highsmith. CHA.

in Washington. Park service budget appropriations were increasing by tens of millions of dollars for Mission 66, and at the time other seashore bills were being considered which would have funded land acquisitions for not one but multiple new parks. In this context, congressional deliberations of the Cape Cod legislation, with its relatively low price tag, hardly addressed what was, for Wirth, its single most important component.

The park service minimized the estimated cost of land acquisition intentionally, not because of any

delusions regarding real estate prices on the Outer Cape, but strategically. While it might be a standard legislative practice (as Holborn put it, if they made a “good showing” they always “could come back” for additional funding), there was a specific reason the park service did not try to fund the entire project at once.³² Wirth had ambitions for establishing national seashores in the immediate future at Point Reyes (California) and Padre Island (Texas), where planning had also been well advanced. (Figs. 4.6, 4.7) In the Senate, an amended version of Neuberg-

Ponds). All six towns owned land within the boundaries—including their town beaches—and the legislation stated that these lands could be acquired only through donation, which would require a two-thirds majority vote in town meeting. Both the state legislature and the town governments would need to act in order to complete transfers of ownership of these areas to the park service. This was an opportunity, at the state and local level, to exert some influence over the federal seashore administration.

Charles Foster, as chair of the advisory commission as well as Massachusetts commissioner of natural resources, was determined to see the transfer of state lands made quickly through the necessary legislative action. But Joshua Nickerson, acting for

the Barnstable County commissioners, instigated a delay in hope of gaining concessions from the park service. At this point state senator Edward Stone, the longtime advocate of land conservation on Cape Cod, stepped in and used his considerable influence to move the legislation forward. Compromises were made: the state retained jurisdiction over the Great Ponds in Wellfleet (though not ponds elsewhere) and ceded its jurisdiction over tidal lands (up to one-quarter mile offshore) only in Provincetown and Truro.²⁴ Provincetown also secured a fifteen-year delay in the transfer of forty acres of the Province Lands, where some town officials still hoped to build a marina. The Emergency Preservation Committee continued its vigilance and eventually prevented the



Fig. 5.11. The Great Beach. NPSHC.



Fig. 5.12. Nauset Light Beach. Photo by author.

development. In fall 1962, the Massachusetts legislature agreed to transfer the Province Lands and Pilgrim Spring State Park, comprising about 7,000 acres, to the park service.²⁵ The decommissioned Camp Wellfleet military reservation was being prepared for transfer through “decontamination,” which was completed by the U.S. Army in August 1962.²⁶

The donation of town lands was complicated by other considerations. Town beaches were a particular concern. In Provincetown, Truro, and Wellfleet, the transfer of state and military land would create opportunities for federally administered beaches. Other beaches, such as Coast Guard Beach in Eastham and

Nauset Beach in Orleans and Chatham, were town owned and would be desirable to bring under federal jurisdiction for the operation of the national seashore. (Figs. 5.11, 5.12) But the towns had little incentive for donating their beaches. While federal jurisdiction would relieve them of the expense of maintaining the areas, it also would mean giving up local control over access and parking permits. In the case of Eastham, the planned park headquarters and visitor center at Salt Pond did give the park service leverage. Gibbs promised to begin construction on the facilities as soon as possible—once Coast Guard and Nauset Light in Eastham were donated. At its



Fig. 6.14. Lobby, Salt Pond Visitor Center, 2001. Photo by Jack E. Boucher. HABS.

simple square plan rather than a hexagon.²⁸ The new park service director, George Hartzog, was also impressed with the “architectural theme” of the early Cape Cod designs for shelters and bathhouses, considering them the “most appropriately designed that I have seen in the [national park] areas.”²⁹

The idea of a theme for the buildings of a given park was not new, although the acquisition of so many new parks after 1961 created an unprecedented opportunity for the park service to explore the concept.³⁰ Again, Cape Cod would demonstrate initiatives that would be implemented elsewhere in the coming years. Continuing the nascent Cape Cod theme at a larger scale, in summer 1963, Biederman quickly produced drawings for a visitor center at Salt Pond centered on a large hexagonal lobby at the building entrance. (Fig. 6.14) Window walls took full advantage of the immediate view of Salt Pond, Salt Bay, and the surrounding landscape—a particularly scenic area and one that allowed for the interpretation of the varied landscape of the Outer Cape. Two hexagonal outdoor terraces extended the lobby toward the view. On the oppo-

site side (away from the view), a ranger contact desk, a small office, and restrooms were all immediately accessible. Flanking the lobby, in long wings, large spaces for audiovisual presentations and for museum exhibitions completed the composition. (Fig. 6.15) In elevation, the large roof over the central lobby followed the hexagonal geometry and recalled the outlines of the two interpretive shelters already under way. Construction was primarily concrete and masonry, with the roof covered in cedar shingles. The lateral wings, housing uses that necessitated limiting natural light, extended as low, earth-tone masses to each side.³¹

As Biederman realized it, the Salt Pond Visitor Center epitomized some of the best qualities of this building type. It presented a low silhouette, familiar materials and color palette, and no ornamentation. The biggest impact on entering was the view of the landscape—including Salt Pond and the ocean in the distance—beyond the lobby’s window walls. Although the building provided for a large and complex program of visitor services, it functioned as an almost-transparent viewing pavilion, making



Fig. 6.15. Interior of museum, 2001. Photo by Jack E. Boucher. HABS.



Fig. 6.16. View across atrium to auditorium, 2001. Photo by Jack E. Boucher. HABS.



Leaving Head of the Meadow Beach, North Truro. Photo by Carol Betsch.

SEVEN

Recreation and Stewardship

By the time the national seashore was dedicated, land acquisition and development plans had established a successful model—the Cape Cod model—of how plans for national seashores and lakeshores and many other types of new parks could be implemented successfully with Congress's approval and appropriations. The operation of the park now challenged park service officials to balance “preservation” and “use” to the satisfaction of the many diverse constituencies that had as many different ideas of what successful management would entail. From the earliest days of park administration, the stewardship of the unique landscape character and natural resources of the Outer Cape would need to be accomplished while visitation grew from 2.5 million visits in 1966 to more than 4 million less than ten years later. The great question was—and remains—can such levels of recreational use occur without the “impairment” of the “character” the park service was charged with preserving? A new kind of park had been created, and the officials running it would continue to face unprecedented situations as they navigated a sea of

social and environmental concerns and pressures. In a delicate and constantly changing landscape, land development would transform the Outer Cape outside park boundaries over the next decades. Moreover, as the Mission 66 era ended, institutional changes at the park service resulted in new laws and policies that altered the agency's priorities and operations.

The essential debate of preservation versus recreation continued to frame the concerns of Outer Cape residents, their elected officials, and the CCNSAC. George Hartzog exacerbated apprehensions on the Outer Cape in 1964 when he attempted to divide the units of the national park system into three categories—recreational areas, historical areas, and natural areas—each with their own explicit “management principles.” Undertaken shortly after assuming his position, the initiative was supported by Stewart Udall and was intended to reinforce the park service's mission of “resource management” in response to environmentalists and scientists who had criticized the agency for its failure to incorporate scientific research adequately into park stewardship. By separating the

by Superintendent Arnberger and Regional Director Garrison.¹⁴ The master plan published in 1970 set precedents not only in the statement of “management objectives” but also in its methods and recommendations.¹⁵ The plan was drafted at a turning point in the early history of the park, as the first phase of land acquisition ended (with the next phase awaiting funding), and much of the physical development of the park completed.

The first section of the plan described the approved objectives, including a statement assuring that any future park structures would be “so designed as to conform to the Seashore’s architectural theme.” The next section, “Regional Characteristics and Analysis,” indicated how much had changed in how national park plans would be prepared in the future. A “Land Use Map,” for example, showed existing land uses for the entire Outer Cape Region, both outside and within seashore boundaries. A precursor of what would become commonplace with the advent of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), the hand-drawn map used different graphic hatching to show zones of industrial, commercial, residential, recreational (public beaches), and other land uses. The accompanying analysis emphasized the degree to which cooperation with town, county, and state governments would be an absolute requisite to achieving resource conservation. The planners noted several “land use trends” that would continue in the coming decades. Increasing numbers of summer visitors would create an expanding market for motels, restaurants, and all other services. In addition to visitors, the Outer Cape was gaining popularity as a retirement destination, meaning that many new or rehabilitated houses were intended for year-round occupancy. The growing population was therefore aging, with a marked increase in residents over age fifty. Another important factor influencing development outside park boundaries was Massachusetts legislation passed in the early 1960s which

protected identified wetlands and set up town conservation commissions. “The Cape as a whole and the Seashore face challenges to both,” they wrote, “challenges which can be fully met only through close cooperation.”¹⁶

The planners’ mapping methodology would become increasingly employed in national park planning. A series of graphically coded maps spatialized data on natural history, natural and fragile areas, history, and historic architecture. This analysis yielded a “general development plan” that incorporated greater protection of the identified and mapped “park resources.” The development plan was supported by “land classification” and “zoning” maps that reinforced protections for ecologically sensitive and historic areas. Mission 66 planning had prioritized the lack of adequate infrastructure and facilities, and so the “prospectus” of that era described the rapid construction of, for example, buildings, campgrounds, housing, and maintenance yards. The new plan for Cape Cod was based on the “concept that the resources of Cape Cod National Seashore can be preserved in their present state to the extent that uncontrollable natural forces allow,” while allowing for “certain types of outdoor recreation for its visitors.” This somewhat tentative endorsement of recreation was further clarified. Planning could provide “fuller utilization of the capacity for use of a given resource,” but it could not “increase the *innate* capacity for use.”¹⁷

The idea of “use capacity” was given considerable explanation, which was appropriate considering its novelty. “Any natural resource—a marsh, an acre of woodland, a beach—has an optimum use capacity,” they wrote, “an ability to be used by a given number of people for a given purpose or purposes without being destroyed.” The same was true for the “assemblage of resources” that was the Cape Cod National Seashore.¹⁸ Ecological standards had not yet been developed, however, that could establish what

such limits would be. As an alternative, the planners suggested that the “*design load* of the facilities” be used to determine a desirable level of visitation. This number represented “the number of people the facility can serve before it would be overloaded or damaged.” The capacity of the physical facilities in the park (as of 1969), they went on to determine, was 33,000 every five hours, a number representing filled parking lots and (private) campgrounds, and with trails experiencing heavy traffic. With a “daily turnover” of two times, the total daily capacity was estimated at 67,000. They predicted that number would be surpassed by 1975, necessitating the consideration of contingencies.

Emphasizing that there was “no *internal circulation system*,” the planners noted that the capacity of Route 6—even with anticipated improvements—

would soon effectively determine the level of use of both the national seashore areas and the town centers of the Outer Cape. The lack of alternatives to the private car for access was noted. But any amelioration or solution to what was already becoming an overcrowded and at times dangerous roadway would require regional solutions and, again, cooperation with the appropriate state and county planning authorities. By this time, the park service collected parking fees at the five beaches it now operated. Beach parking fees were and would remain the only fees collected in the park. Eleven miles of bicycle trails had already been opened, and plans were under way for a system that would extend throughout the seashore.¹⁹ (Fig. 7.3)

The 1969 draft plan was also notable for including a section on “resource management and visitor



Fig. 7.3. Camp Fire Girls resting during dedication of first bicycle trail, 1967. NPSHC.



Fig. 9.20. Highland Light, Truro, in current location. Photo by author.

move and rejoined the lighthouse, again through federal transportation funding, the next year.³⁹ (Fig. 9.21)

Also in Eastham, the “Three Sisters,” a group of lighthouses that directed mostly local maritime traffic, became a preservation concern. The Sisters had a complicated history. The original set of three brick lighthouses built in 1839 had been set close together to form an identifiable triple light signal. In 1892, they were replaced by three tapering wood frame towers back from the eroding bluff. The original structures eventually fell into the sea. By 1911, erosion threatened the Three Sisters again. At that point two were decommissioned and the third, which became known as the “Beacon,” was moved

farther back from the cliff and converted to a single, triple-flash signal. In 1918, Helen M. Cummings purchased the two decommissioned towers at a nominal price with the condition that they be removed, which they were. Two years later Cummings moved them again, and they were incorporated together into her summer home, known as the “Twins.” In 1923, the Beacon was, in turn, decommissioned (its function was replaced by the Nauset Light that year), and that structure was also moved and converted into a summer residence. In the 1960s, the park service purchased both the Beacon and the Twins, the latter with a ten-year right of occupancy. Although separated and altered over time, the Three Sisters survived, and were considered possibly the only ex-



Fig. 9.21. Nauset Light and the “French Cable Hut.” Photo by author.

ample of a set of triple lighthouses left in the United States. In 1975, with all the Sisters under park service ownership and the right of occupancy expired, the question of what to do with them became central. By 1983, the park service had removed the residential additions to all three towers, stripping them back to the original structures. Then in 1988 the Sisters made their last journey, to a parcel of land off Cable Road in Eastham (near Nauset Light Beach), to be reunited in their original configuration not far from where they first stood in 1892. By the next year restorations were complete, and the Three Sisters were opened for guided tours.⁴⁰ (Fig. 9.22)

Lighthouses were only part of the built legacy of life-saving and navigational aids at the national

seashore. In 1785, a group of concerned citizens founded the Massachusetts Humane Society for the purpose of aiding shipwrecked sailors by building refuge huts on remote sections of beach. They later established a series of boathouses on the shore from which sea rescues could be launched. (Fig. 9.23) By 1871, the Massachusetts system had more than seventy stations, manned by life-saving crews prepared to go out to sea in the worst conditions to save shipwrecked sailors and passengers. That year, Congress acted to create a federal system of life-saving stations on the East Coast, establishing the U.S. Life-Saving Service, which eventually took over the responsibilities of the Massachusetts Humane Society. The new federal agency compiled a remarkable record of aid-

farm by the lighthouse and the excellent vistas. Thoreau was an early customer, and his positive account of his stay probably increased business in the coming decades.

It was James's son, Isaac Morton Small, who developed the family farm into a small but successful resort, particularly once the railroad was extended to Provincetown in 1873. By 1893, his son Willard

took over the growing complex, and in 1898, he laid out a golf course and soon added an indoor bowling alley and other recreational amenities. In 1906, the Smalls added a new forty-room hotel, the Highland House, and over the following decades additional guest cottages were built, lining Highland Road leading to the Highland Light. (Figs. 10.4, 10.5) The resort stayed in the Small family until 1947; changes



Fig. 10.3. Small family farm, North Truro. NPSHC.



Fig. 10.4. Highland House, Truro, c. 1935. NPS.



Fig. 10.5 Highland Light, 2012. Wikimedia Commons.

in ownership and some subdivision of the property followed. Some of the guest cottages were sold or demolished, and by the 1950s, the new owners adapted much of the business to serve day-tripping tourists. The park service acquired the property in 1964 with a provision that allowed the business to continue until 1969.⁸

The park's 1970 "development concept plan" for the area called for the preservation of the Highland House, the continuing operation of the public golf course (under a special use permit), and the repurposing of one of the cottages. The planners also anticipated the transfer of jurisdiction (but not yet the relocation) of the Coast Guard's Highland Light facility. But otherwise plans called for demolishing most of the remaining buildings, or selling them on the condition they be removed. The Highland House and the golf course were recognized as potentially eligible individually for the National Register. The intention to restore a natural scene around those features, however, outweighed any sense of the overall significance of the history of the Small family's early resort development, and so the removal or demoli-

tion of buildings continued through the first decades of park service management.

Beginning in the 1990s, a series of reports by the OCLP documented the history of the development of the Truro Highlands and described it through historic base maps and comparisons to existing conditions. The impending move of the lighthouse provided additional reason for considering the potential significance of the landscape. As a result, a National Register nomination was prepared for an eighty-five-acre historic district that included the existing listed properties (the Highland House, the Highland Light, and the golf course) and added the remaining structures of the family compound and existing landscape features and characteristics that told the story of early resort development. This research opened the opportunity for new interpretive themes: the site was a rare survival of railroad-era tourist development on the Outer Cape, for example. The new historic district also acknowledged the importance of the people involved in shaping the Outer Cape landscape and the public's experience of it. This was a more holistic way of considering what consti-