

Nantucket's strong ties to the Newbury's

Uniquely, Nantucket is closely linked with Newbury's and Newburyport. Thomas Macy, a 17th-century settler, lived in Newbury before becoming a founder of Amesbury and one of the first European settlers on Nantucket Island.

Tristram Coffin and Peter Coffin, who had earlier been part of the Newbury settlement, were also part of that connection. Tristram Coffin, born in 1609 in Devon, England, sailed to America in 1642, first settling in Newbury, Massachusetts, before moving to Nantucket Wikipedia. This shows a direct personal and familial link: Newbury was the initial home of Coffin family members who later became central to Nantucket's development. Macy's family and other early colonists purchased the island from Native Americans and secured its claim through colonial authorities, linking the Newbury area to Nantucket's founding.

Newburyport was 'Stuck'

After the extraordinary efforts of Newburyporter's with amazing vision, and HUD financing through the Newburyport Redevelopment Association; the future began to stall. Much controversy was generated by *Parcel 8*; and the continuing demolition of many historic buildings left a 'hollowing out' and large open expanses, especially near the Waterfront, caused a split in vision. More often not, developers with one idea ran up against conflicting ideas from the citizens. Finally, a planned hotel downtown by Roger Foster and his developers caused an uproar and abandonment of much construction toward the water and much hard feeling amongst the Friends of the Open Waterfront (COW), City officials, and the Waterfront Trust.

Then came the Lagasse's. In the 1990s, Chuck and Ann Lagasse moved to Newburyport from Haverhill and bought several buildings, setting out for renewal and charting a new course toward preservation and restoration of downtown and the waterfront.

"We moved here, and we liked old buildings," Ann Lagasse says. "We saw some opportunities. This town has the best collection of Federalist-style buildings in the nation, and we wanted to preserve that."

Before long, the Lagasse's were the city's biggest commercial landowners, with about 25 percent of the downtown area in their hands. Their work inspired other renovation efforts, and property values in the city went up. Newburyport witnessed a commercial rebirth under the Lagasse's, who invested in condominiums, renovated Michael's Harborside restaurant, converted another old restaurant into the Black Cow, and

renovated the Atkinson Building downtown into office space and residences, among many other projects.

Bringing in Walter Beinecke, Jr

The Lagasse's enlisted the guidance of Walter Beinecke Jr., heir to the S&H Green Stamp fortune, who had revitalized much of Nantucket by buying waterfront buildings and renovating them with appealing 18th-century architecture. Impressed with the renovations he'd made with Nantucket, the Lagasse's met with him in the early 1990s and asked for his advice in preserving and revitalizing Newburyport's downtown and waterfront. Beinecke agreed to help and went a step further: he moved to Newburyport.

"It was great," Lagasse says of having Beinecke as a mentor. "He was a visionary, concerned about the big picture, but also concerned with the details."

Beinecke persuades Stephen Karp

Beinecke left Newburyport a few years later to be closer to his family in Texas and passed away in 2004. Around that time, the Lagasse's met with Beinecke's Nantucket protégé, Stephen Karp, and began discussions about investing in Newburyport. The Lagasse's were millions of dollars in debt and couldn't materialize their goals for Newburyport on their own.

"We knew we needed a strong partner to develop the waterfront property," Lagasse says. "We had mortgages on the properties, and the sale price included that debt. We wanted to find an entity that had the expertise and experience to develop the waterfront."

Karp is chairman and CEO of New England Development, a company he started in the early 1970s, specializing in commercial real estate that developed more retail space in its first 30 years than any other developer in the Northeast. The company's portfolio included the CambridgeSide Galleria in Boston and the massive Pinehills residential community in Plymouth, and NED had purchased and renovated properties on Nantucket, where Karp kept his work in line with Beinecke's vision of preservation on the island.

"Frankly, we talked to many companies at that time, including companies that were interested in particular parcels," Lagasse says. "We liked NED's proposal because they had an interest in the entire portfolio, and we believed we could continue to work with them."

Karp had reportedly declined to invest in Newburyport the first time he was approached, but later changed his mind and was drawn to the city. "Walter introduced me to Newburyport, and we discussed the similarities and differences with Nantucket," Karp says. "I had great appreciation for the character of Newburyport, the preservation of

older buildings, the unique shops and restaurants, the location on the Merrimack, and the close proximity to Plum Island.”

Karp began buying several of the Lagasse's' properties in 2005, starting with 31 properties and adding on from there. He had a vision for the town, one that was estimated at more than \$100 million that included long-term development of the waterfront. Ann Lagasse stayed on with NED and now helps manage its Newburyport properties.

“The Lagasses created value in their preservation of building character, land purchases, and appreciation of the location on the water,” Karp says. “Ann continues her work in finding new tenants who serve a year-round population.”

Walter Beineke, Jr's background

When Walter was five years old, he contracted Mastoiditis, a severe ear infection, which at that time in history was largely untreatable. The Doctor's told his parents, Walter, Sr and Katherine Beineke that he needed to encounter fresh air and away from an urban existence. To assist, they rented a cottage at 10 Sankaty Road, in Siasconset village on Nantucket. Later in 1934, they persuaded the owners to sell to them and the home became a regular vacation spot for the family for many years. It was then with many fond children's memories, that Walter Jr fell in love with the Island and the residents.

Though his many businesses and even charitable work took him away from the island, he would briefly visit and he began to see a future for Nantucket that was not to his liking. Due to a shortness of lodging on the island, he began to see private residences being converted over to short-term domiciles and outright hotels. He also saw homes now hosting business in the commercial areas of downtown.

Beinecke started to buy up property on Nantucket shortly after World War II, using the money he inherited from the S&H Green Stamp Co. He bought properties mostly along the waterfront and in the downtown district, many of which were old and needed repair.

His hope was the local Nantucket Historical Association would begin to model his efforts, but they did not have the financial standing and often stood by helplessly as commercial interests began to buy up the downtown.

To begin a financing arm that concentrated on preserving historic structures, he created the non-profit, the Nantucket Historic Trust.

In 1957, he created Sherburne Associates, a real estate development company, to manage his many holdings. His interests expanded and with others in the community, created in 1963, the Nantucket Conservation Foundation. His involvement in historic preservation prompted him to create the Preservation Institute: Nantucket in 1972 to

train architects and craftsmen in preservation techniques.

Walter Beineke's 'Vision'

Noticing an island not ready for a future that was rushing in as more and more people began to vacation on the island, Beineke figured that he could simply stand back and 'watch it' or he could 'influence it'.

"In the case of historic preservation, which was kind of the direction my interest in Nantucket took, it meant that you had to find some pattern where you make people support the goals of historic preservation, not just because they were being a nice guy and throwing a little something into your tin cup, but because it was going to be to their advantage. They were going to get something for themselves out of it."

When creating the Nantucket Historical Trust, he established the bylaws to be of such a general nature that it be flexible against unforeseen challenges in the future. But regardless of its writing, he made sure the goal was clear: a vision that relied on sound business and economic principles, good planning and execution, the preservation and reuse of historically important buildings, open-space preservation, respecting tradition, and having a concern for the needs of the island's year-round residents.

When he established the Shelburne Associates, his vision was complementary in that commerce and preservation should be partners:

In business, his approach was to concentrate on strengthening what he considered were the island's most engaging and marketable elements: its connection to the sea, its town center, its irreplaceable sense of place, its remarkable architectural consistency, its people, and how each of these factors complemented one another.

Nantucket resistance to the 'vision'

In the 1960s, 40 years before the "Gut Karp, Not Nantucket" bumper stickers popped up on the island, the buttons people wore on Nantucket said "Ban the B." Newspaper articles declared, "No Man is an Island." Others declared Beinecke the "King of Nantucket."

The source of the resentment from islanders for the men is the same: Nantucketer's feared what would happen when one man controlled so much of where they lived.

Beinecke, who died in 2004 at age 86, now enjoys a legacy mostly of praise and adoration for his work on the island. He is remembered as someone who was a visible member of the community and who had an eye for historic preservation - even if the other was still focused on making a profit.

Robert Mooney, an author who wrote "Nantucket Only Yesterday: An Island View of the Twentieth Century," said there were many people who stood against Beinecke in days past.

In the 1960s, the people of Nantucket fought against Beinecke. Elizabeth "Libby" Oldham was the executive director of the island's Chamber of Commerce from 1982 to 1992 and has lived on the island for 30 years. Buttons were made that said, "Ban the B,". She said the local newspapers wrote about how no one man is an island. People feared what would happen since he owned what Oldham guessed was 60 percent of the land downtown.

The tide turned in the early 1980s, Ann Oliver, Beinecke's daughter said, shortly before Beinecke sold his property to First Winthrop Corp. for \$55 million in 1987,

"And then once he sold to (Winthrop) everybody decided the one they knew was better than the one they didn't know. Ironically, now I can't go to downtown Nantucket without some of the older merchants tugging on my ear and telling me they wish dad was still around."

When Walter was in his final illness, he would sit in a chair next to a small display case in which he would tell others contained his 'treasures'. One of the items was a one-inch diameter button. These were popular in the 1960's to protest something. This button displays the logo of the company associated with the Beinecke Family. It was surrounded by a red circle with a hash mark through it. They were sold in some of the gift shops to protest Sherburne Associates and its influence on the island's development.

Walter Beinecke's Victory over his detractors:

Ann Oliver said, "He reconstructed Nantucket in a very positive way under a great deal of criticism, But he stuck to his guns and he saw the way things were going, and he really did rebuild Nantucket. Basically he wanted to improve the lot of his friends that lived on the island year-round. To do that, he used historic preservation as a draw to entice those with a lot more than \$10 in their pocket to come to the island and spend it."

He is remembered as someone who was a visible member of the community and who had an eye for historic preservation - even if the other was still focused on making a profit. One of the things Beinecke was most praised for was helping to restore two old churches on the island, including replacing the steeple of one that had blown away years ago in a storm.

"(Beinecke) seemed to have a feeling for the history and the appearance of the place," Robert Mooney said. "I understand Beinecke wasn't perfect, but he looks pretty good right now."

His smashing success for the island was recognized by Ronald Reagan in 1988 as he personally was presented the National Historic Preservation Award by the President. Later, the National Trust for Historic Preservation gave him the Louise de Pont Crowninshield Award in 1994. His craftsmen's Institute stands today as a lasting legacy for historic preservation nationally and internally.

Walter Beineke's Efforts to Translate his Vision to Newburyport

When Beinecke was in his mid-70s, in the mid-1990s, he moved to Newburyport, drawn to the Port City by Chuck Lagasse, Oliver said. "Chuck was always talking it up," Ann Oliver, Beineke's daughter, said of Newburyport.

The Lagasse's had so impressed him with the potential for Newburyport, that he became their advisors on historic preservation; and followed up that commitment by moving to the city.

Beinecke "decided to come to Newburyport to be our mentor," Lagasse said, adding jokingly that he sometimes called himself the Lagasse's' "tormentor" since he was such a stickler for attention to detail.

Ann Oliver commented, "Mr. Lagasse contacted Dad. He wanted to restore the waterfront in Newburyport and came asking for advice," she said. "When anybody younger comes asking you for advice, you are flattered and wish to participate. I think he thought he could help, but I don't know how much, in the long run, he was able to help."

He began to suffer from myasthenia gravis, a muscle disease as the millennium began, and finally passed away at 86 at the Nantucket home of his daughter, Ann Oliver.

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