



## Newsletter – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2024

### A Message from the President

Wednesday, February 21, 2024 was an historic moment for the Friends. It was the day on which, after three years of negotiations with the East Lyme Land Trust and a resounding vote of approval in the town referendum in October, the town filed deeds, transferring ownership of hundreds of acres of open space, including the critical acreage in the preserve. The entire Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve, all 465 acres, is now owned by the town and protected forever by conservation easements held by the Friends. You can imagine that all of us on the board celebrated!

With all the focus on that situation, you may have wondered what was happening with the other acreage in the Hills threatened by development. In a few words – not much. According to Roger Reynolds, our attorney at Save the Sound, the Landmark application appears to be delayed for the foreseeable future. In 2019 the town's Water and Sewer Commission approved new regulations regarding sewer applications. Due to the town's constrained sewer capacity, future applications would need to provide A-2 surveys, proof of ownership, and statistics to justify the capacity requested.

The new regulations would not apply to the allocation of 118,000 gallons per day set aside for Landmark in 2016. However, if Landmark were to file a new, revised application for the property in the Hills, the new regulations would then apply. Landmark challenged these regulations and requested a summary judgment, which is "a judgment entered by the court for one party against another without a full trial." Landmark's motion was denied and the trial is set for late May.

Attorney Reynolds explains that this is "good news on a number of fronts. First, since the trial is scheduled for the end of May, and these things can take a long time, it does not appear there will be any movement in the case anytime soon. Second, the decision on the summary judgement was highly favorable to the East Lyme Sewer Commission, so the if the same judge hears the appeal, there is a good chance of success."

Rest assured that although things may seem quiet now, we are still very much concerned about what Landmark may try to do. We continue to retain the services of Attorney Reynolds, for which we pay annually. In addition to this retainer, there are always the expenses that come along with ensuring that trails are safe, needed repairs are made and conservation projects undertaken. Please keep this in mind when you renew your membership this year using the envelope enclosed with this letter. Thanks in advance for your generous support.

*Kris Lambert*

"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter."  
~ Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

# Oswegatchie Hills Quarry – Stone Silent Now, but with a Storied Past

By Greg Decker, Stewardship Chair

Quarries are locations where minerals, rocks, and sand are easily extractable and technically are 'open-pit mines.' Throughout human history, quarries have been used to extract stone to be used as building materials and monuments. The great pyramids of Egypt were built from limestone and granite that was hand cut from quarries.

In New England, colonist could not depend upon supplies from overseas and needed to provide building material, including stone, for themselves. As the country grew, the demand for sturdy and durable quality material for homes, building, street pavers and monuments was the impetus for stone cutting immigrants to start quarrying rock on an industrial scale. This paved the way for Connecticut's granite industry, which included famous quarries in nearby towns, including Niantic.

Tectonic plate movement has left CT with some of the finest granites. But cutting and removing granite was a slow and time-consuming process where all holes had to be drilled by hand. Technological advances like the steam engine and later the pneumatic rock drill (1880s) made extraction more efficient and easier.

## What did the Great September Gale of 1815 have to do with the OH Granite Quarry?

On September 23, 1815, the first major hurricane to impact New England in 180 years made landfall near Old Saybrook at 9AM. Historians believe the hurricane was somewhere between a Category 3 or 4 with winds of 111 mph - 156 mph. The fierce winds and storm surge nearly decimated the little Smith Cove cottage of Simon Smith and his aristocratic wife Mary. She was so frightened by the experience, Mary threatened Simon with leaving and returning to her Massachusetts home of Ludlow, unless she had a more secure house to live in. Simon assured her he would build her one, and he did!

Finished in 1819, Simon built a sturdy house out of granite that he cut and extracted from the nearby eastern hillside of the Oswegatchie Hills, thus starting one of the first quarrying operations in CT. The two-story Stonehouse with its 18-inch-thick blocks still sits in what is now the Three Belles Marina on Smith Cove and should withstand any hurricane.



Stonehouse built in 1819 on Smith Cove

In 1831, the Oswegatchie rock was also used to build the old Stone Church on Society Road. It wasn't until 1850 that the business, managed by Simon's son Eli, began to boom with steady work. At that time several houses were built near the quarry, along with a stone dock where schooners could tie up and load the granite. Quarry Dock Road near Smith Cove is named after the structure. Much of the stone shipped out was used for street pavers, curbing and manholes.

Sometime in the late 1860s, ownership of the quarry was transferred to John Beattie and his partner, Adam Dawson. Beattie and Dawson operated several quarries in New England. In 2016, a researcher gathering information about the Cape Hatteras lighthouse discovered 22 "reference slips" from the National Archives, dated December 1868 through June 1869, related to the *Beattie & Dawson Co. of Niantic Connecticut*. These documents referenced the shipment and receipt of "rough stone" for the Cape Hatteras lighthouse. Though there is some debate on where the granite that makes up the base of the lighthouse came from, he believes the stone came from the Oswegatchie Quarry because these documents reference Niantic, and not their other quarries. You can see copies of the Reference Slips from the National Archives at OSWhills.org.

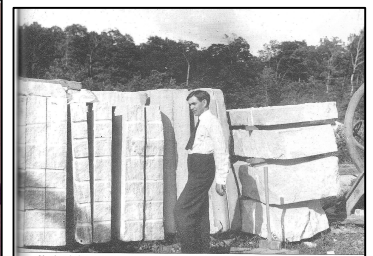
Activities at the quarry from around 1877 to 1903 remain unclear, but during this period it may have been inactive. Quoting from an article in 'STONE,' vol XXVII, #1, Nov. 1903:

*"It is reported that John Tank will reopen the large granite quarries at Oswegatchie, CT this spring. There is a fine stone dock in good condition where two or three large vessels can load at the same time on the Niantic River near the quarries. An extensive business was carried on at the quarries 35 years ago by Beattie, Dawson & Company and later by Dawson & Tank. The houses were all torn down and the quarry abandoned several years ago it was said on account of the difficulty in getting through the two drawbridges at the mouth of the river."*

Photos below from 'Images of America, East Lyme'  
by Kathryn Burton, printed 2003



Photo from 1916 of Schooner in the Niantic River to pick up granite



Undated photo of Claude Clarke in the Oswegatchie Hills Quarry

It is unknown whether the quarry became operational again. Olive Tubbs Chendali, the former town historian, notes in her book, *East Lyme, Our Town and How It Grew*, published in 1989, that she knows of one house near the quarry that was towed across the frozen Niantic River one winter to Waterford.

There have been rumors that the Oswegatchie Hills (OH) granite was used for parts of Grand Central Station, built between 1903 and 1913. After extensive research we are not able to document that, and believe it is only folklore. According to 'NYCgovParks.org' the stone used for Grand Central Station came from nearby Stony Creek quarry, in Branford.

Today, the stone quiet quarry is a place of interest while hiking in the OH Nature Preserve. Cut stone and drill holes are all that is left of the once thriving operation.

# Annual Meeting - May 4, 2024

Please join us on Saturday, 5/4/24 at the East Lyme Library for the annual meeting. We will gather at 10AM in the East Lyme Room to swear in new officers, hear updates on the nature preserve and enjoy a special speaker. This is your opportunity to learn first-hand about what is happening in the preserve and to ask questions. Hope you can come!

**CT Trails Day**  
**Saturday**  
**June 1, 2024**

There are three hiking opportunities to enjoy on CT Trails Day 6/1/24

Have questions on any of the birding apps, iNaturalist, or other outdoor apps to help enhance your hiking experience? This is a great time to ask your hike leaders.

**Birding Walk, 7:30AM** (Easy 2-mile hike)  
Birding by ear! Enjoy an early morning educational and informative bird walk with birding experts Bruce and Andrew Dasinger.

**Long Hike, 9AM** (Moderate 3-mile hike)  
This beautiful perimeter hike will feature the blue and red loop trails, including a short hike up to Mount Tabor.

**Red Trail Hike, 10AM** (Moderate 1.5-mile hike)  
Explore several interesting points of interest. Visit a pitch pine ecosystem, a quartz pit, and a small crawl through rocky overhang for kids.

Registration opens May 8th at the following link:  
[ctwoodlands.org/events/ct-trails-day](http://ctwoodlands.org/events/ct-trails-day)

**Run for the Hills**  
**Save the Date**  
**September 14, 2024**



**Join the Fun!**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Run for the Hills 5K will be held on 9/14/24 at 11AM

Run by Clark Pond and through beautiful scenery around the perimeter of the preserve. All proceeds go directly to maintaining this special place of quiet beauty! Registration opens April 15<sup>th</sup>!



Check out  
[OSWHills.org](http://OSWHills.org)  
or Run SignUp  
For Details

## Recent Activities



Stewardship efforts to manage flooding due to recent heavy rains.

With heavy rains the last few months there has been significant flooding between the Clark Pond bridge and the Blue trail. To keep the excess stormwater in the original spillway, amazing volunteers braved the frigid water to modify the beaver dam and redirect the flow. Special thanks to Greg Decker, Bruce Kolowsky, John Starrett, Franz Edson and Dave Hughes for all their hard work.  
Photo Credits - Kris Lambert

## FOHNP thanks the following members for their generous support in 2023

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Yankee Remodeler  
Albert and Linda Yost  
Christine Young  
Susan Zimmerman  
Amy Zinsser  
Karl and Jeanne Zirolli

Editor's Note: Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. However, if you find any error or omission, please let us know.