

Then & Now - 113 Goodnow Road

Mass Audubon's Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary – by Richard Bullock



*Wachusett Meadow 1887 – Goodnow Family standing along the wall
Can anyone tell us or do you know what crop they were growing in the foreground?*

The first permanent settlers of what has become known as Wachusett Meadow were Edward and Lois Goodnow who arrived in the 1770's. Edward married Lois Rice in 1770. He was 28, and she was 19. In 1775 when the Revolutionary War started, the couple had three children. Edward left his family in Northboro to serve his time fighting. He became one of the Minutemen at Lexington on April 19, 1775, serving in Captain Samuel Wood's Company. In 1776, Goodnow returned from the war and built the original house, parts of which exist today. It consisted of two rooms on two floors.

Princeton town records show that in 1778 a road was laid out from the Goodnow property to Princeton center. By 1786, Goodnow had built a larger home for his growing family. By 1796, the couple had ten more children with a total of eleven boys and two girls.

Edward was only 56 when he died. At the time of his death, he owned 126 acres in Princeton and 119 acres in Holden. The house at Wachusett Meadow, together with its two barns and other buildings, was appraised at \$2,520.

After Edward's death, his son Edward Jr. became responsible for running the farm. In 1823 a stagecoach began running between Barre and Boston, which went directly past the farm. The Goodnow family built a tavern in their dining room and extended the side entryway for easy access to it. They operated the inn for 21 years. With the advent of trains and steam-powered cars, the stagecoach became outmoded. In 1842, Lois Goodnow died at the age of 90, and the Goodnow Inn closed two years later.

For 75 years, Goodnow descendants lived on the farm. Prior to the Civil War the Goodnow house is said to have been part of the Underground Railroad.



Wachusett Meadow 1887 – Goodnow Family and hired hands

In 1917, Edward's grandson Moses sold the property to Charles T. Crocker of Fitchburg.

The Crockers spent idyllic summers at the farm, riding horses and raising cattle, sheep, and sheepdogs. They hired Connecticut Agriculture College graduate Paul Beardsley and

Shepherd Luke Pasco and his border collie "Jean" was the national champion in 1932.



The farm became famous in 1941 for its Milking Shorthorn cow named Wachess, who made breed history, both in the ring and at the pail. She was the leading junior two-year-old of the breed in milk production, with a record of 14,726.1 pounds of milk and 526.1 pounds of fat.

In 1973, Charles T.'s daughter-in-law Barbara Crocker wrote:

“I remember how it was, that first time in 1918, when we drove our buggy down the hill from Princeton to Goodnow Farm. Below the sheep pastures there was no pond at the foot of the hill, only a swampy stretch where the cattle loved to muck around and cool their feet. Of course, the big barn and silo weren’t there, but there were two magnificent old barns and a silo, much nearer the house than the present old barn is today.

Past these barns and on the house side of the road, we reined in our horse at the horse barn. It is gone now. It stood somewhat forward of the long ell of the house, attached to the ell beyond the open carriage stalls. It was a story high, with a roof that pitched toward the road. I remember how the inside of the barn looked as we led our horse into one of the stalls. The horse feed was in a big grain box opposite the stalls, under a window that faced out toward the house. And there was a piggery at the back of the barn, beyond a partition, with a floor of big stone slabs, the same slabs used years later, to widen the side porch floor.

Coming out of the barn, there were the great elm trees, all about the house, like great protecting arms. I can almost hear the wind, how it used to sing through those towering elms. It sounded like the sea, like ocean waves, a wonderful and comforting sound, all summer long.

One big elm stood at the right front corner of the horse barn, where a lane ran along the side of the barn through an opening in the stone wall, wide enough for the big hay wagons to drive to the upper mowing behind the house. Another huge elm grew through a hole cut in the end of the long porch roof along the ell. Elm trees grew at the west end of the house, and across the road along the stonewall, where a white garden gate led into an overgrown old flower garden. Under the elms, crossing the yard past the four granite hitching posts, we went into the house that first time, in 1918.”



Wachusett Meadow Cow Barn With Milking Shed in Front

The cow barn was built in 1924. It housed prize-winning cows. The structure of this barn was unusual for the time; it used truss-type construction rather than the usual post and beam. This allowed plenty of room to stack loose hay. The barn at UConn in CT is of the same design.

It had a track system with grappling hooks that allowed mechanized unloading of hay wagons and the piling of loose hay, as bales were not used at this time.

To move out manure, the Crocker's installed an overhead tram way in the milking parlor of the barn. It had a scoop, which collected manure and used a tram system to move through the barn and across the stockyard to the manure barn.

The manure barn (now called the Hey Day Inn) stored manure from the farm's animals. It was filled with manure on the sides with a drive-in space between for manure wagons to be easily loaded.

The Goodnow's had built the horse barn in approximately 1830. It was used to house the oxen and horses used to pull wagons and plow the fields.

That barn originally faced what is now the parking lot, and was moved by the Crocker's to its current position facing the road.

The Crocker's kept horses and tack on the first floor, giving the barn its name. Inside the barn are elevated hay-movers, transom hooks for loose hay storage, horse stalls and a shoeing platform for oxen and draft horses.



Wachusett Meadow 1930s - L to R Bigelow Crocker Sr, Rosemary Crocker, Peter Crocker and Bigelow Jr.

In November of 1956, Charles T. Crocker III donated almost 600 acres of land and two houses and barns to Mass Audubon.

Since that time, with the help of Mass Audubon members, neighbors, Princeton town residents, donors, volunteers and staff, Wachusett Meadow has grown to over 1100 acres with 12 miles of trails, and serves thousands of visitors, students, scouts and camp families each year.

The aesthetics of the sanctuary's landscape, hilltop vistas, upland fields and



Early 1930s - note tree through porch roof

meadows, large forest tracts, and beaver wetlands offer a superb resource for study and appreciation of New England human and natural history. Wildlife populations include over 100 species of nesting birds, over 70 species of butterflies, 48 mammals, and more than 500 types of plants, as well as numerous dragonflies, reptiles, amphibians, and fungi.

Today, Wachusett Meadow welcomes visitors and program participants year-round, with the goal of providing a connection to the natural world to those of all ages and abilities. It serves as a living laboratory for conservation science, a hub of environmental advocacy, and a living classroom for natural history education including public programs for preschoolers through adults, student groups of all ages including homeschoolers, summer day camp, and community groups like garden clubs, scouts, and senior centers. Programming occurs at Wachusett Meadow as well as offsite in classrooms and outdoor spaces throughout northern Worcester County. The 12-mile trail system includes many options of varied distances and terrain, and within the last few years has included ADA-compliant trail improvements and planned installations of sensory features and accommodations for sight and hearing-impaired users.



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