

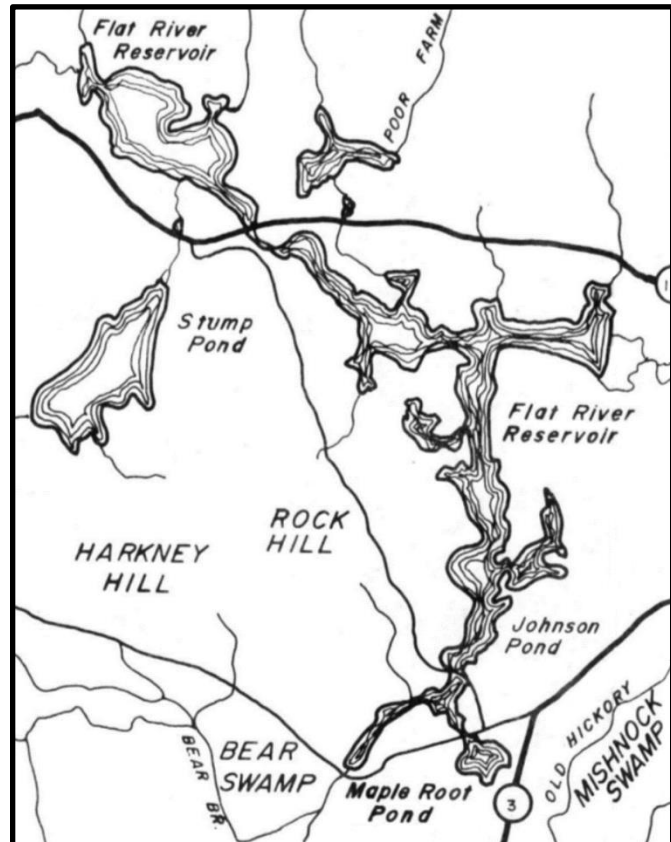
THE OLD WOOD FAMILY FARM SITE

The Woods Point Peninsula at the Flat River Reservoir

Coventry, Rhode Island

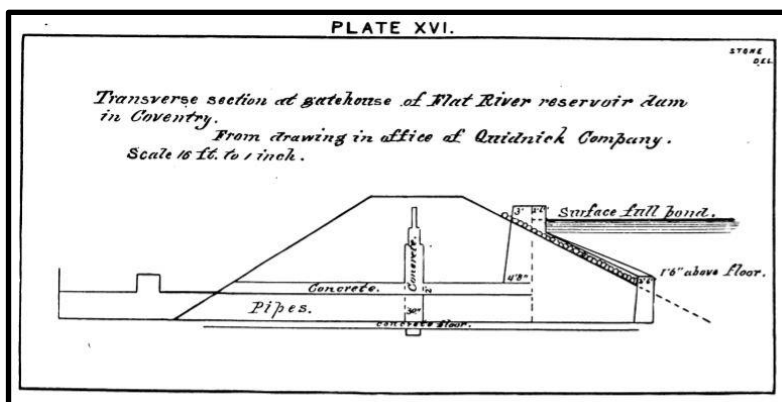
The Flat River Reservoir is an artificial lake that was constructed in 1878 by The Quidnick Reservoir Company by clearing the land and erecting a dam across the Flat River in Coventry RI. The Quidnick Reservoir Company was incorporated in May of 1846 by its members A. & W. Sprague, Stephen Harris, Benjamin Cozzens, Coventry Manufacturing Company, Joseph James, and John J. Kelton for the purpose of erecting, establishing, maintaining and keeping in order dams and reservoirs on the waters of the Pawtuxet river and its branches. Quidnick, which is a Native American word meaning "at the end of the hill". This company was formed to insure there was a constant and steady flow of water to power the mills and manufacturing shops downstream where their companies were located.

The Flat River Reservoir is part of The Pawtuxet River Watershed, located in the central-western Rhode Island, is the largest watershed in the state. The Pawtuxet River flows generally from west to east with its headwaters are in the hills of western Rhode Island. Its mouth is in the historic Pawtuxet Village between the cities of Cranston and Warwick.



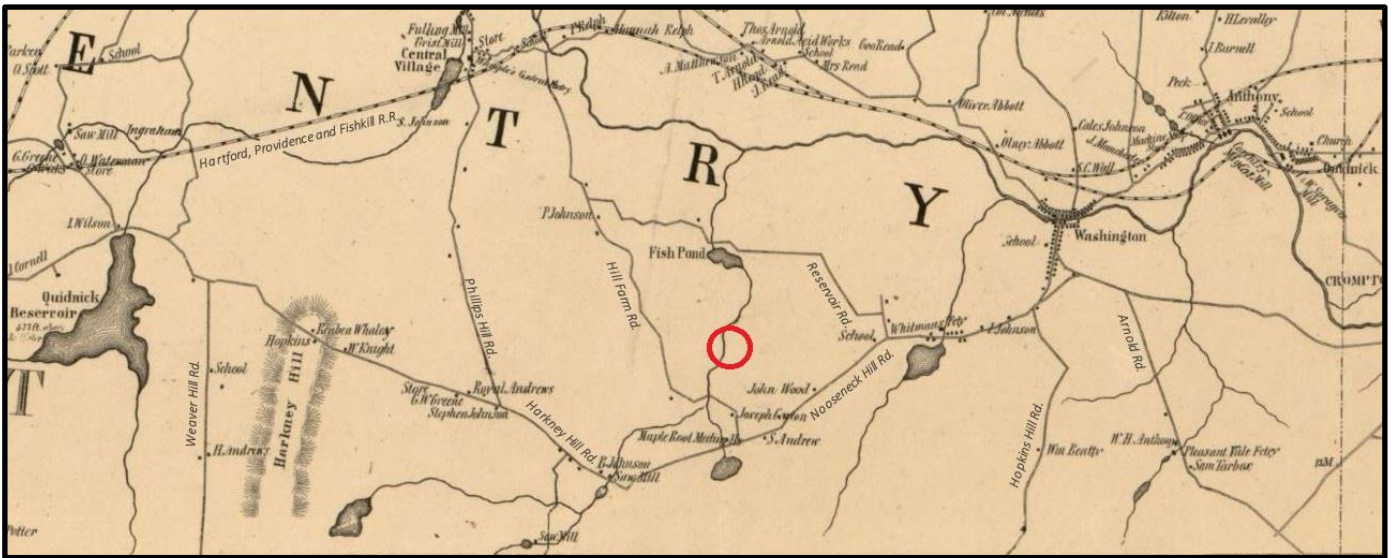
Above: Section of a Physical Features map of Coventry RI made in 1978 showing the Flat River Reservoir

The Quidnick Reservoir Association controlled the Flat River Reservoir System, which includes the Flat River Reservoir, Quidnick Reservoir, Stump Pond Reservoir as well as the flows into the South Branch of the Pawtuxet River. The Flat River Reservoir or Johnsons Pond as it is more commonly known today was named after the Johnson family that owned a large section of the land at the southern end of the reservoir. At normal water levels the reservoir covers a surface area of 659 acres, 17 miles of shoreline, a maximum depth of 36 feet, and has an average depth of 19 feet.

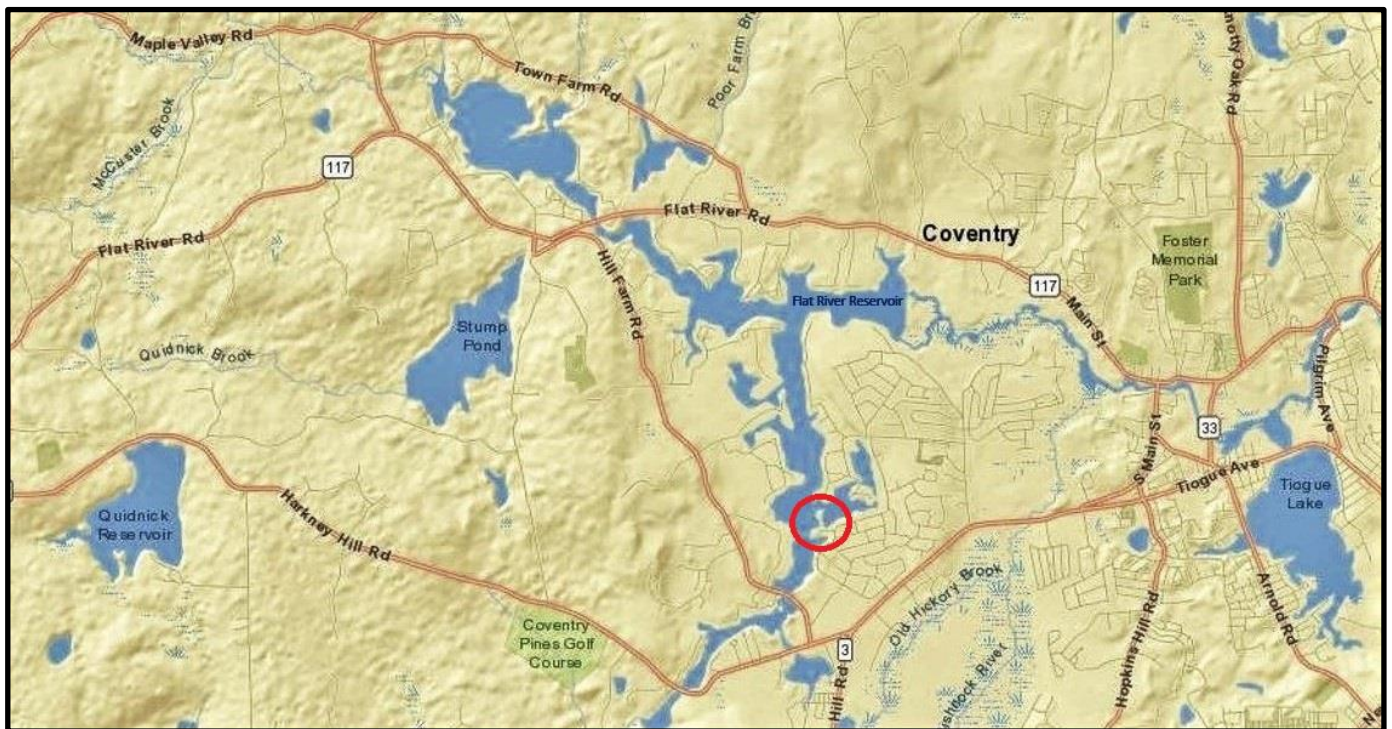


At right: Engineering drawing of the Flat River Reservoir dam gatehouse in Coventry RI. Drawing was made for the Quidnick Reservoir Company. This Drawing was part of the 1885 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Dams and Reservoirs for the state of Rhode Island.

Map of the Flat River and The Flat River Reservoir



Above: Section of 1851 Map of Providence County, Rhode Island, with some adjacent towns. This map shows The Quidnick Reservoir Company's Flat River Reservoir System with only the Quidnick Reservoir being constructed at the time this map was made. Names of local roads were added to this map. Red circle indicates area of study.

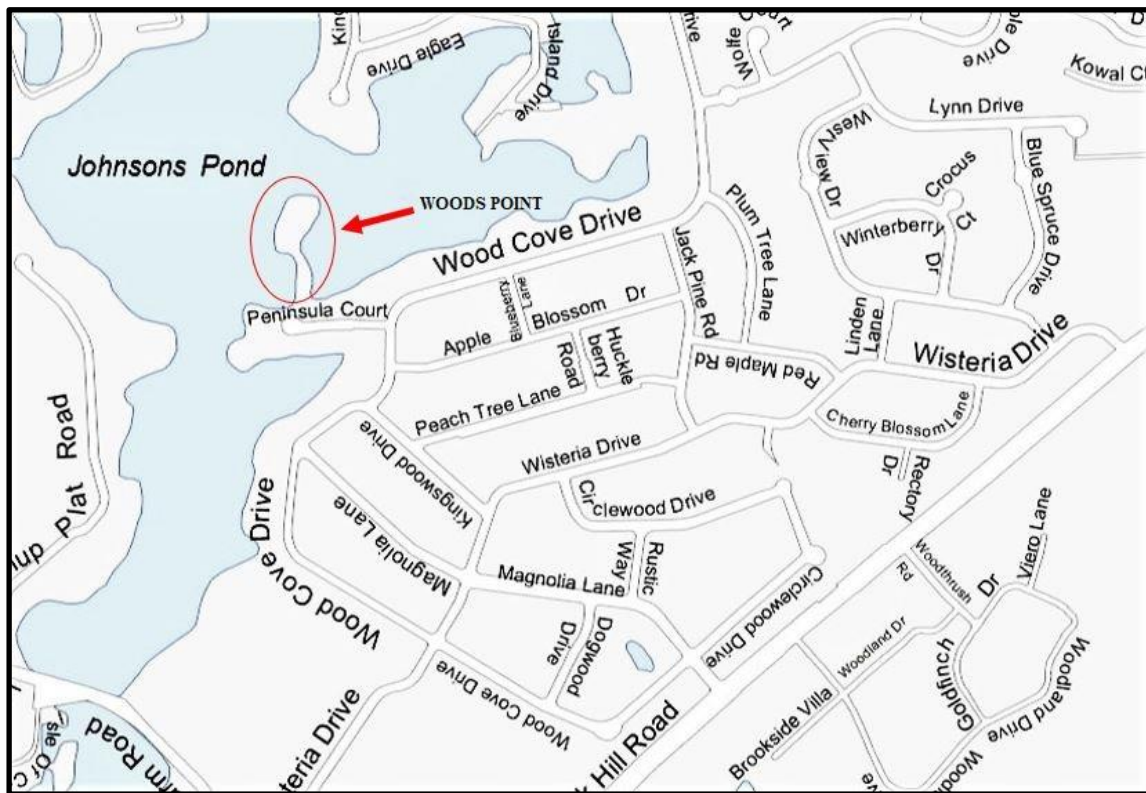


Above: Present day map showing Flat River Reservoir System as it looks today. Red circle indicates area of study at the Woods Point Peninsula,

The Woods Point Peninsula Background

The Woods Point peninsula is shaped like a top heavy hour glass, heading out from the mainland it narrows in the middle then expands to an elliptical-football shape that extends 465 feet out into the reservoir. The surface of the island-peninsula is devoid of any large rocks protruding above the surface, thickly tree covered with eastern white pine, southern yellow pine, red oak and has been cleared of underbrush except around its edges. The total land mass of the peninsula is just under one and a half acres

The topography of the of the land prior to the reservoirs construction in 1878 appears to have been a shallow sloping rise in the landscape known as a knoll. The knoll lacks any natural large rocks or stones, this characteristic leads to being a glacial out-wash area, with a glacial till of sand & gravel making up its soil.



When the Reservoir was originally built in 1878, the Wood's Point peninsula we see today was not a peninsula at all, it was an island. Rachel Pierce, a descendant of Deacon John Wood informed me that her grandfather James M. Wood and his son Daniel G. Wood filled in the space between the mainland and the island in the mid 1930's so that an automobile could be driven onto the Island from the mainland. During excavations in spring of 2020 a small stone foundation was discovered along with horseshoes, a quantity of square head nails, and ironwork that all pre-date the 1930's. This would suggest that the Wood family was using this island-peninsula long before the construction work done on the peninsula by James Wood in the 1930's.

It is possible that James Wood's father, Daniel Wood (1837-1922), may have constructed the original land-bridge to this island using it as a stepping off point for the harvesting of ice from the Flat River Reservoir. The land-bridge that he would have constructed may have been just wide enough to accommodate a horse drawn wagon to cross from the mainland to the island. Daniel Wood could have cut the ice out of the reservoir from the three sides of this now peninsula and bring the blocks of ice back to his ice houses that were located close to Nooseneck Hill Road for ease of distribution.

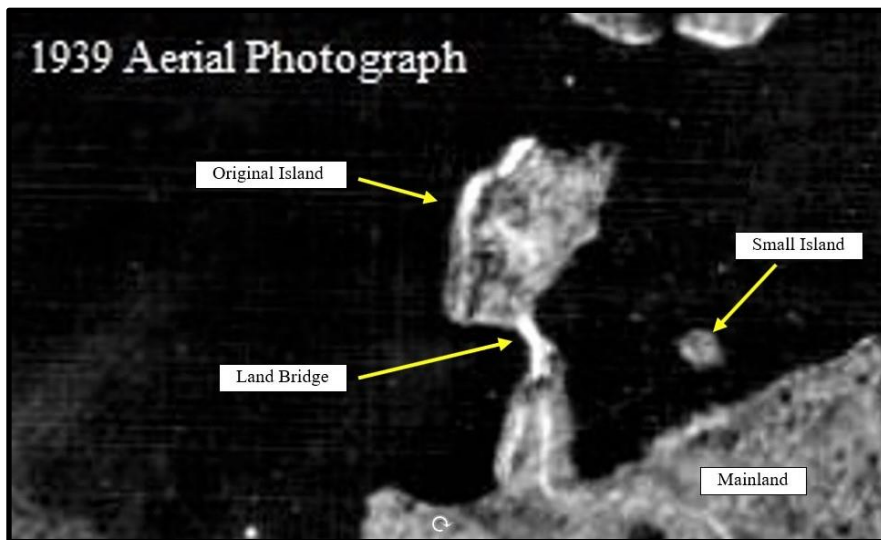
The Woods Point Peninsula Continued

It is also possible that the Daniel Wood family may have used this now peninsula as a recreational area in the warmer months of the year. As time went on the Wood family would build a cottage, cookhouse, outhouse, and several stone fireplaces on the peninsula they called “the camp”.

In the early 1960’s the old Wood farm and it’s properties were sold to make way for single family homes. All the structures that were standing on the point were torn down and removed so that only the foundations were left to give a hint as to what once stood there.

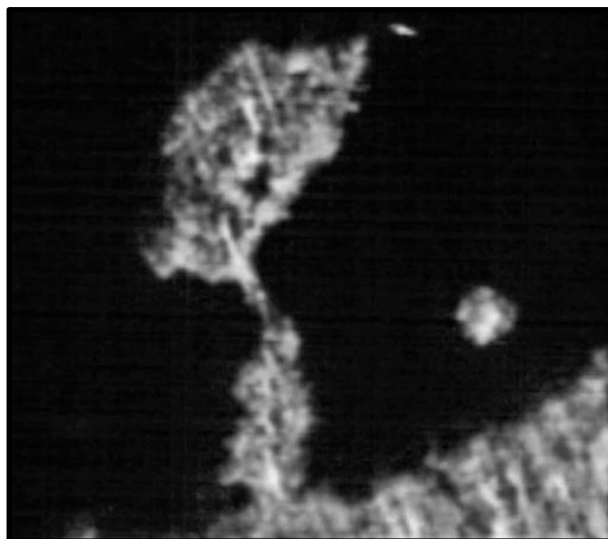
The Wood Estates Residents Association. W.E.R.A. now owns this peninsula. The association was formed in 1966 for its members to have access to the reservoir via the peninsula property for recreational purposes.

The Woods Point Land-Bridge Construction

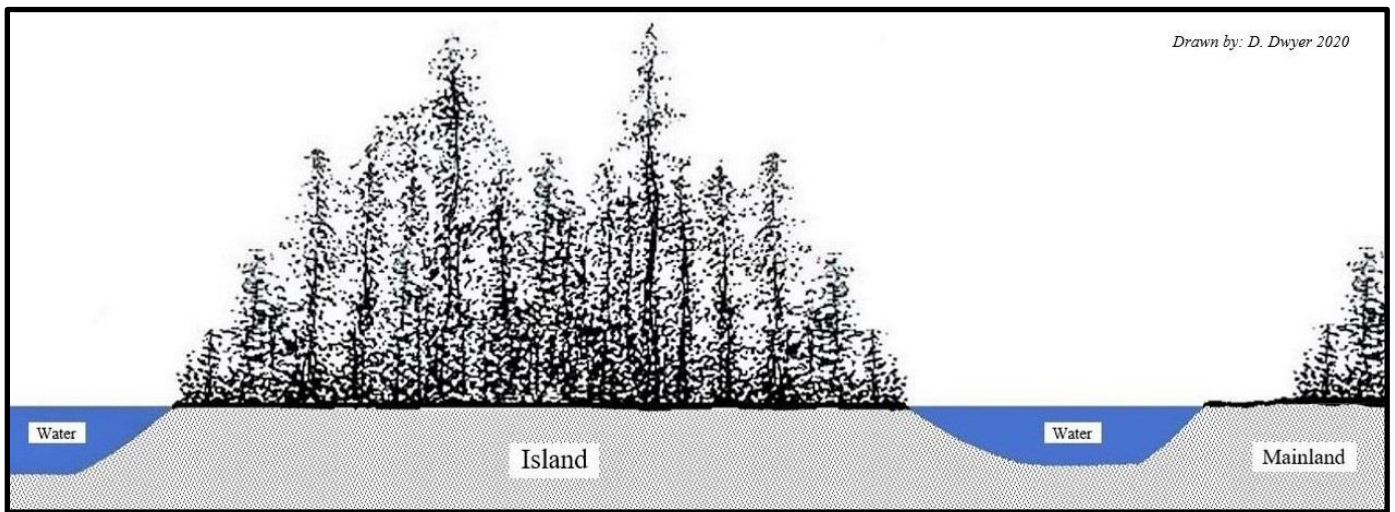


At left: 1939 aerial photograph of the Woods Point peninsula, it appears to show the newly widened land-bridge in the narrow white area between the mainland and the island. Land bridge shows up white in this photograph due to the light color of the sand and no vegetation on the land-bridge.

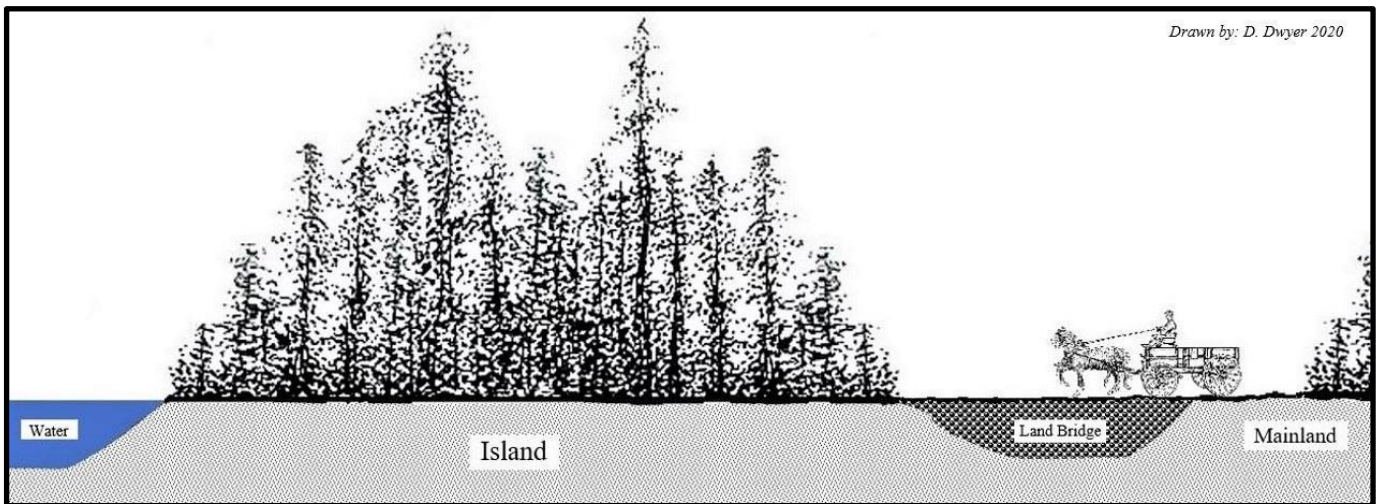
At right: 1951 aerial photograph of the Woods Point peninsula appears to show that vegetation had taken hold on the land-bridge.



The Woods Point Peninsula Background Continued



Above: Drawing depicting an island before construction of a land-bridge.



Above: Drawing depicting the space between mainland and island has been filled-in with material to make a land-bridge.

At right: Photograph taken in February 2020 of the land-bridge made by the Wood family members. This photograph is looking towards the mainland.



The Woods Point Peninsula Background Continued



Above: 1939 aerial photograph of the Wood Farm with present day street locations imposed. The large irregular white shaded areas in the middle of the photograph is what the Wood family called “The Desert”. This area was a sand covered area devoid of trees and only had sparse vegetation. It is unknown if this was a natural occurrence or from over tree harvesting from the Woods lumber business. It can be speculated that this may have been the source for the land-bridge fill material.

*At right: A photograph taken of 4 yr. old of Erma Wood in 1927. This photograph was taken in an area on the Wood Farm called, “the desert”.
Photograph courtesy of Rachel Pierce.*



The Woods Point Peninsula Background Continued



Above: Photograph taken in 1939 of James Wood standing next to a 1938 Caterpillar Auto Patrol Diesel Grader. This photograph was taken in front of his house on Nooseneck Hill Road, directly across the street from the Deacon John Wood farmhouse. This is the same location of the present-day Cumberland Farms Plaza. This photograph indicates heavy equipment may have been used in the construction of the land-bridge. At the time the land-bridge was constructed, James Wood was a Maintenance Forman for the State of Rhode Island Highway Department Garage, later renamed to The Rhode Island Department of Transportation.

Photograph courtesy of Rachel Pierce.

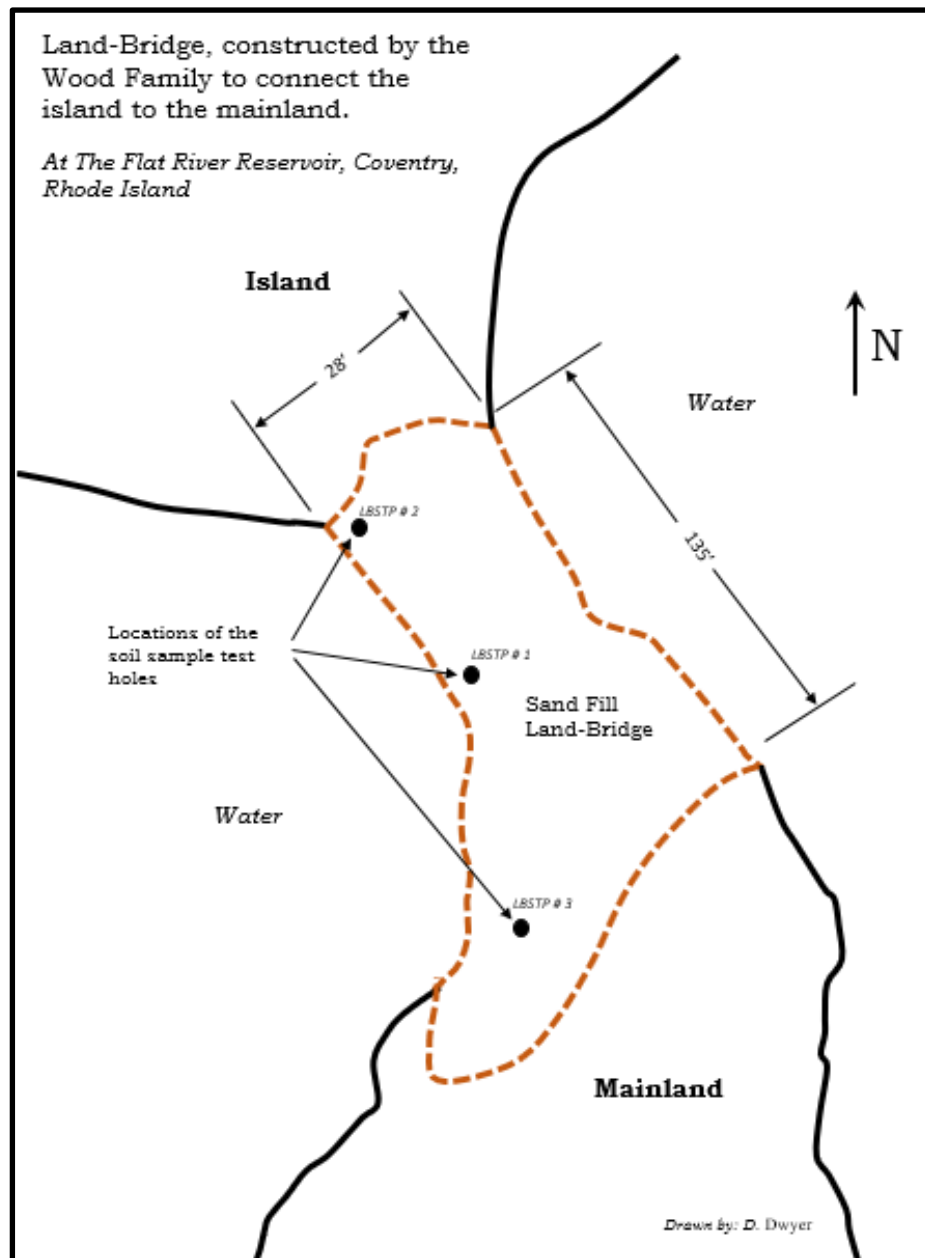


At right: A photograph of James Wood with puppy named "Jerry" taken in the late 1930's.

Background could be part of the Flat River Reservoir.

Photograph courtesy of Rachel Pierce.

The Woods Point Peninsula Background Continued



Above: Is a diagram of the land-bridge and its original shape taken from the 1939 aerial photograph. Shaped like a “Boot”, this represents the fill that was dumped in the space between the island and mainland. The fill was then leveled off to create a road to the island that an automobile could be driven across.

The results of the test holes indicated that the land-bridge is made out of medium to coarse grade sand, no large stones were found in any of the three test-holes.

The width of the land-bridge appears to have narrowed over time due to the erosion effects of the water on the type of material used in its construction. Sand was probably chosen as a fill material due to the abundant quantity of sand that was present on the Wood property.

Soil Sample Data from the Island

Soil samples were taken by shovel test pits from several locations on the island and the man-made land-bridge to determine their composition.



***At left:** Island Shovel Test Pit hole #1. This hole was dug at the southern end of the island to a depth of approximately 24 inches. The surface layer is very dark brown-black organic debris, partly decomposed 4 inches thick (O horizon). The topsoil and very dark grayish brown silt loam 5 inches thick mixed with mineral particles and organic materials (A horizon). The subsoil is yellowish brown stony sandy loam 15 inches thick (B horizon).*



***At left:** Island Shovel Test Pit hole # 2. This hole was dug the northern end of the island to a depth of approximately 24 inches. The surface layer is very dark brown-black organic debris, partly decomposed 4 inches thick (O horizon). The topsoil and very dark grayish brown silt loam 5 inches thick mixed with mineral particles and organic materials (A horizon). The subsoil is yellowish brown stony sandy loam 15 inches thick (B horizon). This soil sample is consistent with ISTP # 1 above.*



Soil Data from the Land-Bridge



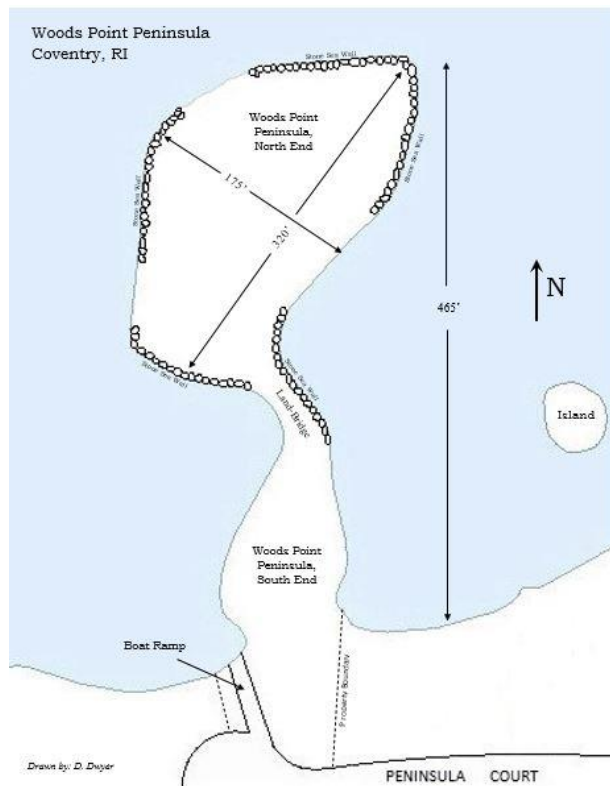
At left: Land-Bridge Shovel Test Pit #1. This hole was dug to a depth of 36 inches. The surface layer is sandy light brown-black organic debris partly decomposed 4 inches thick (O horizon). The topsoil is a gray-white sand with organic materials 6 inches thick (A horizon). The subsoil is gray-white medium to coarse sand down to a depth of 36 inches, at this depth water was encountered (B horizon).



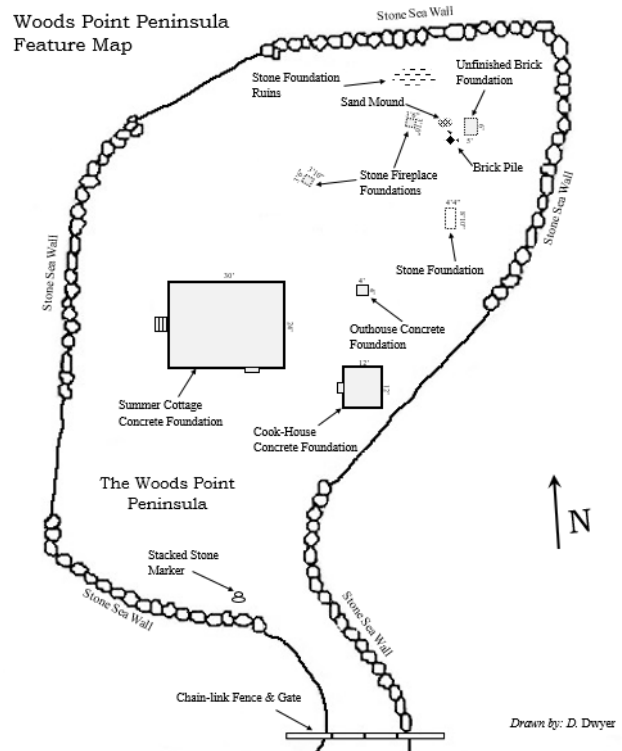
At right: Land-Bridge Shovel Test Pit #2. This hole was dug to a depth of 20 inches. The surface layer is very dark brown-black organic debris, partly decomposed 4 inches thick (O horizon). The topsoil and very dark grayish brown silt loam 5 inches thick mixed with mineral particles and organic materials (A horizon). The subsoil is gray-white medium to coarse sand down to a depth of 18 inches (B horizon). Below this level is dark brown loam with organic debris, partly decomposed (C horizon). The C horizon appears to be the original level of the island prior to the sand being dumped in the late 1930's to widen the land-bridge by the Wood family.



The Woods Point Peninsula Background Continued



Above: The dimensions of the present-day Woods Point Peninsula.



Above: Features on the Woods Point Peninsula.



Above: Photograph of the west side of the Woods Point Peninsula. This photograph was taken when the water level is lowered during the winter season, revealing the sandy gravel bottom soil that now makes up this part of the Flat River Reservoir. The stone rubble around the peninsula shoreline is there to help stop erosion by wave action of the water.



Above: Photograph of the northernmost point of the peninsula. This photograph shows the gradual slope of the land that leads up to the shoreline and how high the island-peninsula land now sits above the water when the reservoir is filled to its normal level.

The Woods Point Peninsula Background Continued

Photographs of the Wood family summer cottage on Woods Point

(Photographs provided by Wood descendant, Rachel Pierce). *All Photographs are the daughters of James and Maud Wood, taken around 1940.*



At Left: Photograph of three of the Wood sisters from left to right: Erma, Cora, and Lilly in front of the summer cottage. Note the tarpaper for siding on the cottage outer walls. Pieces of this tarpaper were recovered during excavations around the foundation of this structure.



Above: Photograph of what was called the "Cookhouse". This structure was located behind the larger cottage. Lilly Wood is pictured in the window with their dog Jerry underneath.



Above: Photograph of the Wood sisters in front of the cottage. From left to right: Lilly, Evie, Cora, and Erma Wood.



Above: Photograph of Cora Wood in a row boat with the west side of Woods Point in the background.

The Woods Point Peninsula Background Continued

Then and Now

Photographs of Woods Point back then, and how it looks today.



Then....



Now

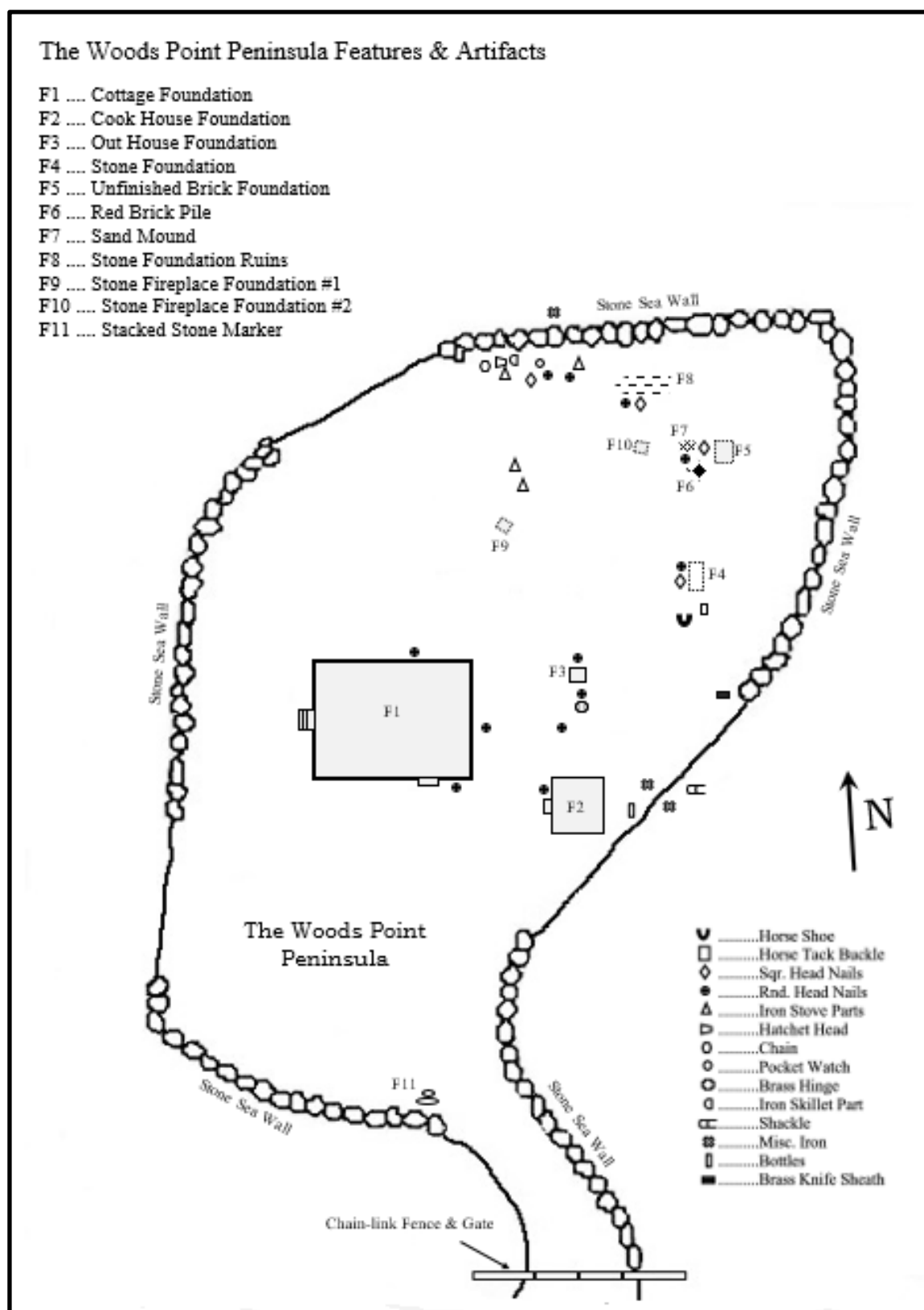


Then....



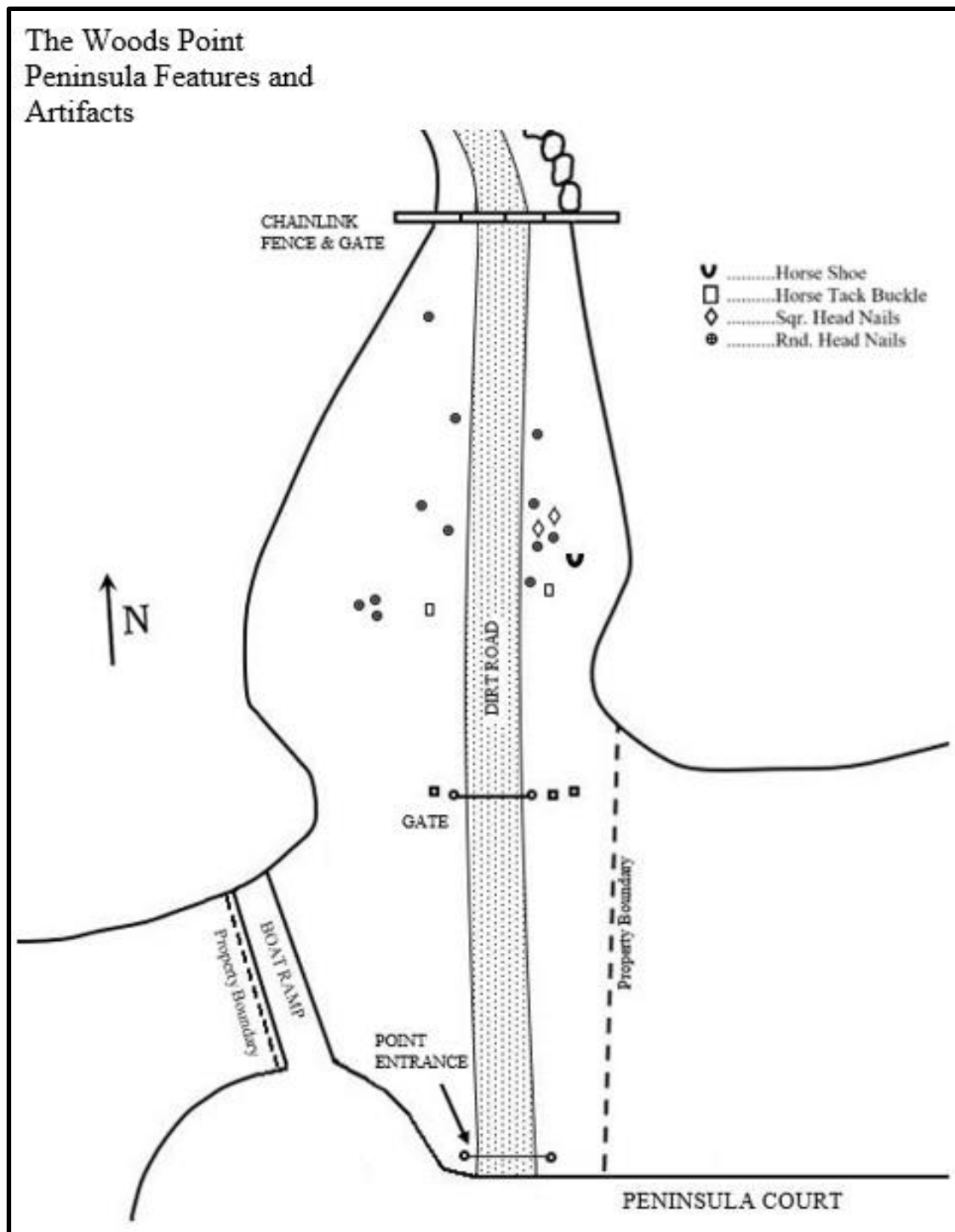
Now

The Woods Point Features and Artifacts



North End of The Peninsula

The Woods Point Features and Artifacts Continued



South End of The Peninsula

What Was Found - Artifacts



Above: A) 19th century chain with handmade wrought iron hook, B) Square-head nail, C) Horse tack buckle, D) Very worn & eroded late 19th century horseshoe with corrective work, E) Late 19th century horseshoe.



Above: F) 20th century wedge nail, G) 19th century wedge nail, H) Brass top to a knife sheath, I) Cast iron stove part, J) Late 19th century broken axe head, K) Cast iron skillet handle.

The Woods Point Features and Artifacts Continued



Above: L) Early 20th century medicine bottle, M) Early 20th century food jar, N) Mid to late 19th century hand-crafted top to bottle, O) Early 20th century medicine bottle, P) Mid to late 19th century hand-crafted top to whiskey bottle.



Above: Q) Late 19th century cast iron & wrought iron parts, possibly to a small wooden wheel, R) Late 19th century cast iron part, possibly to a slightly larger wooden wheel as shown above in (Q), S) Late 19th to early 20th century large logging-rigging clevis shackle.

The Woods Point Features and Artifacts Continued



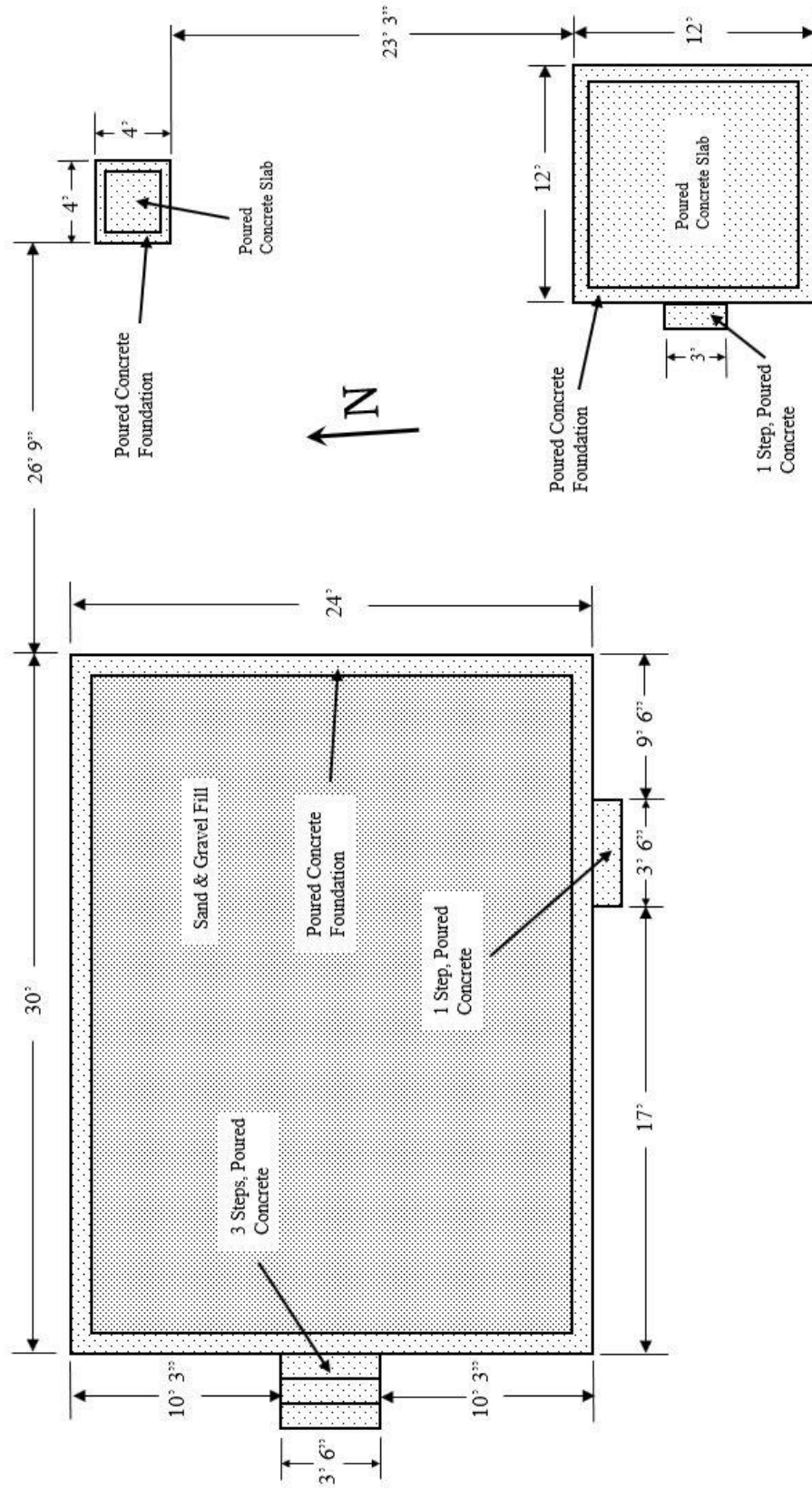
Above: Early 20th century silver-plated over brass open-face pocket watch; no brand name could be found on this watch. When the back cover of the watch was removed, patent dates of 1907, 1908, and 1910 were clearly visible on the inside plate. This pocket watch was recovered at the northern end of the peninsula.



Above: Photograph of the Wood cottage foundation taken in 2020.

Old Concrete Foundations on the Woods Point Peninsula Plan View

This area on the Point Island-Peninsula was the location of the Wood family summer cottage that was constructed in the mid to late 1930's. The 30' x 24' was the foundation for a lake-side summer cottage and has pea gravel fill now occupying its center. Of the two smaller foundations the 12' x 12' foundation was the Cook-House and has a poured concrete slab in its center. The 4' x 4' solid slab of concrete was the foundation for the Outhouse.



The Woods Point Features and Artifacts Continued



Above: Photograph of the Outhouse foundation taken in 2020.



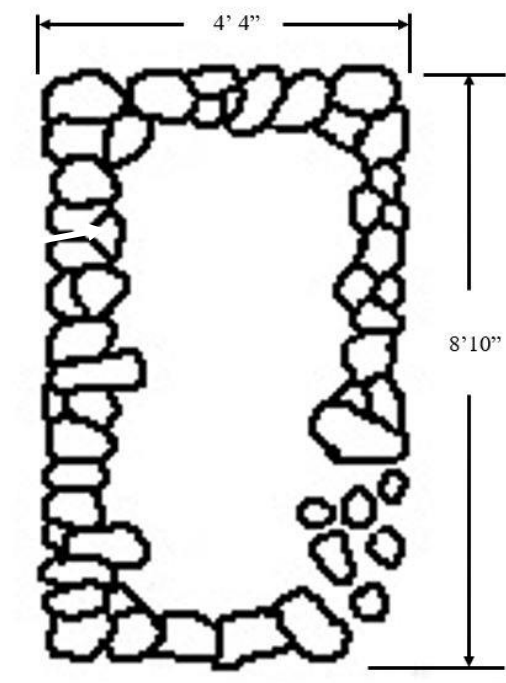
Above: Photograph of the Cook House foundation taken in 2020.

Pre-1930's Stone Foundation on the Woods Point Peninsula

A stone foundation discovered on the Woods Point Peninsula appears to be older than the concrete foundations that James M. Wood constructed in the 1930's. It is possible this earlier foundation was constructed by his father, Daniel Wood. This feature, along with recovered artifacts that pre-date the 1930's construction.

At right: Drawing of the small stone concrete capped foundation, which is located 62 feet northwest from the summer cottage foundation. The construction of this foundation is in stark contrast with the 1930's poured concrete foundations construction. This type of construction is similar to the Wood Carriage House foundation that is located next to the original Deacon John Wood Farmhouse. This suggests that this small structure may have been constructed many years before James Wood built the cottage and other structures on the peninsula.

The function of the structure that sat on top of this foundation is unknown. By the artifacts recovered from this foundation we know it had a wood framed structure with glass window(s).



At left: Photograph of the partially excavated stone, concrete capped foundation,