



BARRINGTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

• ESTABLISHED 1979 •

Allin's Cove Conservation Area ~ 2026 History Walk Notes

LOCATION

- The Allin's Cove Conservation Area lies on the eastern shore of the Providence River and is situated approximately 1.5 miles above the head of Narragansett Bay, 4 miles NW of the entrance to the Warren River and 4.5 miles south of Providence Harbor.
- It's bordered by salt marshes and located along the Providence River just to the east of Bulluck's Cove.
- Located in the northwest corner of Barrington, Allin's Cove includes salt marsh, sandy beach and coastal upland. It includes 10 acres encompassing 2 parcels owned by the state, 6 by the Town, and 7 by the Land Trust.
- It's part of a small estuarial embayment of the Narragansett Bay Estuary, about 30 acres in size in total.
- The tidal cove facilitates the drainage of Annawamscutt Creek into Narragansett Bay. The Annawamscutt flows from East Providence south into the head of the cove.
- The sole use of the Allin's Cove Conservation Area is passive recreation.
- The primary reason for protecting this land and cove is to preserve it as wildlife habitat and nursery and sanctuary for estuarine flora and fauna.

INDIGENOUS LANDS

- Allin's Cove is part of the ancestral homelands of the Pokanoket people. Their southern territory included all the East Bay and parts of neighboring Massachusetts, an area now being proposed as a National Heritage Area.
- The Land Trust's Baseline Documentation Report, compiled in 2017, notes that:
 - Prior to a restoration project in 2001, members of local tribes visited the site and determined there were not any sacred remains that might be disturbed.
 - They noted that the NW bank of the cove showed color and texture striations indicating ancient Native American shucking and cooking of oysters.
 - They said an archeological site likely existed at one time on the shores and abutting lands of the cove. I don't have a source for this, but it's said that artifacts found there years ago included a Brewerton Notched projectile point dating to 5,000 years ago, a Crescent knife dating from approximately 3,000 years ago, and clay marbles.

COLONIZATION

- The Bay Spring section of Barrington abutting Allin's Cove, once called Wannamoiset, was purchased by Thomas Willett and John Brown in 1645.
- 1774 Barrington Census: Town population included 601 people (90% white, 4% Indigenous, 7% black). Fifty-seven people were identified as slaves.
- In 1779, Barrington's 4,124 acres included 400 acres of tilled land, 50 acres of orchard, 2300 in pasture, 600 in meadow, and 700 in woodlands. There were 92 households and a total of 143 buildings.
- Matthew Allin (1742-1800) was an early resident who owned 500 acres of land. He had two sons: Thomas and Matthew. Thomas, the older son, received 300 acres when his father died. The Allins were a family of wealthy farmers.
- Barrington was mostly farmland. People were outnumbered by sheep and cows.
- Captain Thomas Allin (1742-1800) held several civil offices: treasurer, assessor, moderator, general assemblyman. He led the town's militia in the Revolutionary War and became a general after RI became a state. Other roles included: Committee of Correspondence (1774-), Captain of Town Militia Company (1775), Committee to apportion ordinance, Contracts with state for repairing guns, Lt. Col, East Bay Regiment (1783), Brigadier General, East Bay Regiment (1794-1800).
- Allin's Cove is likely named for Gen. Thomas Allin.
- Thomas Allin lived with his wife Amy, 12 children and 5 slaves in a house built in 1769 that still stands on Lincoln Ave. His grave still stands in the Allin graveyard in Bay Springs.
- In this graveyard, a large empty area is believed to hold the graves of his slaves. One stone stands for the slave, Simeone Freeman. You can learn more about slavery in Barrington from the RI Slave Medallion Project and the Barrington Preservation Society.
- Dr. Nathaniel Taylor, former member of the Barrington Preservation Society, lived in General Allin's house at 20 Lincoln Ave. He completed the process to place it on the National Register of Historic Places for its slave-holding significance. It's one of 3 Barrington houses on the Register, including Belton Court and a house at Nockum Hill.
- The Allin house is one of a handful of houses in town that remain from before the Revolutionary War.

19TH-20TH CENTURIES

- At the end of the 19th and early 20th Centuries, Bay Spring was a summer colony with many small cottages and tent sites.
- In the early 1900s, Allin's Cove was bordered by about 25-30 acres of saltmarsh. Natural silting and shifting sands eventually covered portions of the marsh, and other sections were filled to accommodate development.
- The 1938 hurricane took out all the cottages along the cove at Byway Road, washed out the SW end of Byway Road, and destroyed cottages along the SE shore of the cove. Remnants of those buildings become evident as the bank erodes.
- The 1938 hurricane also destroyed cottages on the SE side of Allin's Cove along the shore of the upland. During the hurricane, whole houses from Warwick were blown across the Providence River and landed in Allin's Cove.

- In 1954, Hurricane Carol took out a house and the SW section of Byway Road, remnants of which are becoming evident as the bank erodes.

MANUFACTURING

- In the early 1900s to 1990s, RI Laceworks and other manufacturing facilities in Bay Spring Village pumped pollution from dye vats and other sources directly into Allin's Cove.
- Rhode Island Lace Works was founded in 1904 and expanded in 1920 and 1930 as one of the country's largest lace making facilities. It continued to operate until 1990.
- Discharge from dye vats and other sources was pumped through pipes directly into Allin's Cove where current residents remember swimming in the cove and "turning all the colors of the rainbow."
- The Laceworks building was demolished and replaced by Atria Bay Spring Village, an assisted living facility, in the early 2000s.
- Annawamscutt Mill was built in 1897 specializing in finishing and coloring cotton goods.
- In 1908, Frost Finishing, a dyer, bleacher and finisher of leather goods for the Ford Motor Company, sold the building to International Rubber, which continued the manufacture of leather goods for the auto company.
- The O'Bannon Corporation, which made chain and metal fittings, bought the building in 1914. It remained idle for years until it was converted into elderly living apartment units called Barrington Cove Apartments, in around 1993.
- The manufacturing companies made a practice of discharging waste directly into the Cove, which caused heavy metals to settle onto its tidal flats.
- In 1959, the Army Corps of Engineers disposed of dredge spoils from Bullocks Cove on 11 acres of Allin's Cove salt marsh and tidal flats. This caused a change in the marsh's elevation, eliminating the native Spartina marsh grass. Phragmite colonized much of the filled area. The fill also led to an increase in the velocity of tidewaters, resulting in erosion.

RESTORATION EFFORTS

- In 1996, Save the Bay worked with community volunteers to lead an assessment of Narragansett Bay's salt marshes. This is when they learned of the filling of the marsh.
- The Allin's Cove Neighborhood Coalition, led by Sandra Wyatt, was created to work in partnership with the Town, the Land Trust and Save the Bay to advocate for technical assistance and funds to restore Allin's Cove. With support from the CRMC (Coastal Resources Management Council), they requested reparation from the US Army Corps of Engineers. The plan cost about \$760K.
- In 2003, the US Army Corps of Engineers conducted the project to relocate the channel in the cove and restore the salt marsh.
- Much work remains, and many volunteer hours have been contributed over the years, but it's a good example of collaborative effort.
- Native trubs and trees can be found in the uplands and buffer area. Native plants found in the saltmarsh include 2 different types of spartina cord grass, as well as sea lavender and glasswort.

- The cove supports variety of aquatic species, including small fish, crabs and various types of shellfish.
- Raptors, song birds and aquatic birds such as ducks, heron, swans and osprey live here on seasonal or full-time basis.
- It also supports mammals: mice, squirrels, rabbits, coyotes, fox, deer inhabit upland and buffer areas.
- Seal occasionally haul out on shore in late winter.
- The Land Trust's management plan was developed with input of a wildlife biologist from NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- Invasive plants remain a challenge: phragmites, Japanese knotweed and multiflora rose crowd out native plants. We continue to work with Save the Bay and others to find solutions.
- Phragmite operate like a colony – very hard to remove – and may be the only thing holding the shoreline together right now in the event of a major storm. An earlier recommendation to mow it may have strengthened the colony, or at least didn't deter it.
- Strategic introduction of saltwater rivulets is one proposed solution being explored, as phragmite thrives at a specific height above sea water.
- We continue to seek ways to facilitate growth of native saltmarsh grasses and other native plants.
- Native plants provide food and habitats for birds, butterflies, bees, and mammals.
- You can help us monitor erosion by using the photo station at the entrance to capture and upload images of the cove in all seasons.