

KINGSTON REPORTER

Follow Kingston's rivers through Hathaway Preserve

Casey Meserve

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Part 3 of a continuing series about Kingston's conservation land

From its sources, the Jones River quickly becomes a river of some girth; wide and deep enough for saw mills while still in its first miles. As it travels east and south through Kingston and near Roger Correira's cranberry bogs, it divides, twice, and the three channels continue downstream for perhaps a quarter mile or more before merging again. Hathaway Preserve is where the Jones River trifurcates.

Town Meeting purchased the 77-acre Hathaway Preserve from Isaac Hathaway in 1996 using surplus funds and a state Self-Help Grant. In the decade before adopting the Community Preservation Act, Kingston purchased more conservation land than it has since the adoption in 2003. There is another property called Hathaway near Second Brook. That Hathaway Preserve is only seven acres.

Hathaway creates a three-mile long corridor between Grove Street and Wapping Road, bordering bogs on one side and power lines on the other. A neighbor provides access to Hathaway, Roger Correira gave the town an easement to cross his property, rumbling along the dirt road next to his bogs, which he and his wife were busy harvesting on a sunny fall day. Of course, when people cross at the wrong spot, it can cause trouble. An ATV driver tried to enter the preserve by knocking over a locked gate by the power lines. Two trails cross the property. The Bay Circuit Trail crosses from Three Rivers Basin into Hathaway, while another path leads to the Foxworth Lane; the trail becomes boggy at it nears the neighborhood.

When it comes to wet, Hathaway has plenty of it: Spring Brook, the Jones River and a vernal pool near the parking area. In the mid-18th century Steven Bradford (the grandson of Governor William Bradford) was granted property and river rights to the land. Back then it was called Steven Bradford's Privilege. The Bradford family operated a sawmill on the Jones River, on the most northerly branch. The last working sawmill was vacated around 1900, but the sluice, lined with cut granite blocks is still visible by the new bridge.

The Bradfords made redware pottery in a building once located just to the right of the entrance. Correira tore down the old house and outbuildings when he built his bogs. Conservation Agent Maureen Thomas said he tried to give the house away and someone from Plimoth Plantation came to look at it. A kiln foundation was also nearby.

The iron-rich clay came from the vernal pool. The gray clay turns red when it's fired. Hikers can still find shards of red pottery on the access road and by the bridge over Spring Brook. The Open Space Committee found a multitude of the shards when they dug holes and put in the footings for the boardwalk that was built over the brook in the late 1990s.

Isaac Hathaway's sister Mary used to ride her bicycle the property during the 1930s to dig clay from the vernal pool. She would form big balls of it, wrap them up and then ride all the way to Plymouth Pottery in the center of Plymouth to sell. Digging clay from the vernal pool is not allowed any longer, since it's a protected area.

There are animals in the preserve and in the Jones River. Endangered eastern box turtles can be found, and dozens of bird species, from chickadees to kingfishers, mockingbirds, great blue and little blue herons, woodpeckers and many others. Mammals include white-tailed deer, bats, red fox (including a particularly handsome one Thomas sees sometimes on her visits), skunks, raccoons, cottontail rabbits, and even bobcats have been found along the Jones River. Spring peepers can be heard from the wet areas in the spring, red-backed and spotted salamanders

lay their eggs in the vernal pool, which this year did not dry until July this year and was wet again by September.

Boy Scouts camp in Hathaway regularly, Thomas said, and one of the leaders build a gate for the main entrance. Thomas hopes to move the gate back, closer to Wapping Road, to keep vandals out of the preserve at night. Vandalism is a problem. The kiosk, which houses maps and information about the preserve, was recently covered with jumbles of letters drawn in thick black marker or paint. Black ashes from fires are visible in the parking lot.

Thomas hopes to get approval to eventually extend the Bay Circuit Trail through Three Rivers Basin to connect it with Hathaway, but it would require the kindness of neighbors to provide easements and another bridge over the Jones River.