The Barbara Barnes Hale Nature Preserve is a 17-acre parcel on the west side of Accabonac Harbor, accessible from Hog Creek Road near its intersection with Hamton and Suffolk Springs-Fireplace Road. The Town of East Hampton, Suffolk County, and the Town of Hampton and Suffolk County acquired the property in 2001, after extensive lobbying by the APC and others, including The Nature Conservancy and what is now the Town of Hampton East End. The parcel was subsequently designated a town Nature Preserve, named at the request of the APC after Barbara Barnes Hale, a prominent local naturalist and educator who died in 2003.

The Barbara Barnes Hale Nature Preserve

The Barbara Barnes Hale Nature Preserve is a 17-acre parcel on the west side of Accabonac Harbor, accessible from Hog Creek Road near its intersection with Hamton and Suffolk Springs-Fireplace Road. The Town of East Hampton, Suffolk County, and the Town of Hampton and Suffolk County acquired the property in 2001, after extensive lobbying by the APC and others, including The Nature Conservancy and what is now the Town of Hampton East End. The parcel was subsequently designated a town Nature Preserve, named at the request of the APC after Barbara Barnes Hale, a prominent local naturalist and educator who died in 2003.

Like much of the environs of Accabonac Harbor, the Barbara Barnes Hale Preserve was traditionally maintained as a meadow. In the 19th Century, the area was grazing and annual mowing with a scythe. At the time it was acquired by the county and town, however, many years had passed since cattle or horses grazed the land and, despite some restoration and maintenance as a meadow, it was on its way to becoming a forest, threatening not only a unique and historic vista of Accabonac (a Scenic Area of Statewide Significance) but also a habitat that has become increasingly rare. Once home to meadowlarks, killdeer, upland sandpipers, grasshopper sparrows, visiting glossy ibis, hunting kestrels, quail, pheasant and numerous other grassland and wetland animal and plant species, the meadow gradually has been overwhelmed by shrubs and trees, many of which are non-native. APC persuaded the Town Board that restoration and maintenance as a meadow is the best use of the land or the parcel had been cleared; it was on its way to becoming a forest, threatening not only a unique and historic vista of Accabonac (a Scenic Area of Statewide Significance) but also a habitat that has become increasingly rare. Once home to meadowlarks, killdeer, upland sandpipers, grasshopper sparrows, visiting glossy ibis, hunting kestrels, quail, pheasant and numerous other grassland and wetland animal and plant species, the meadow gradually has been overwhelmed by shrubs and trees, many of which are non-native.

Chromology of Barbara Barnes Hale Nature Preserve

1956: Sheridan Lord purchased 21 acres from Tom Collins (rented to Syd Miller for dairy-cattle grazing). In 1956, what is now the Barbara Barnes Hale Nature Preserve was rented to a dairy farmer and gradually cleared land for agriculture. However, while doing research for our recent film, Great Island, we discovered quite the contrary. In the nation as a whole, as well as L.I., from 1838, the earlier the maps we found, the more grassy they looked. The grassy plains were crystal-clear and the bottom dotted with scallops and thick in places with eelgrass. In 1956, what is now the Barbara Barnes Hale Nature Preserve was rented to a dairy farmer and gradually cleared land for agriculture. However, while doing research for our recent film, Great Island, we discovered quite the contrary. In the nation as a whole, as well as L.I., from 1838, the earlier the maps we found, the more grassy they looked. The grassy plains were crystal-clear and the bottom dotted with scallops and thick in places with eelgrass.

2000-01: After Community Preservation Fund set up and in partnership with County, Town immediately buys Weitzman property. APC and others, including The Nature Conservancy and what is now the Town of Hampton East End. The parcel was subsequently designated a town Nature Preserve, named at the request of the APC after Barbara Barnes Hale, a prominent local naturalist and educator who died in 2003.

1985: APC forms to fight such development and other threats to health of Accabonac. Begins pressure on state, county & town to acquire the property.

1991: Town zoning changes reduce lot yield. While awaiting permits for ever-fewer houses, ending at 1991: Town zoning changes reduce lot yield. While awaiting permits for ever-fewer houses, ending at... but is insufficient for meadow restoration. After meeting with DEC and Suffolk County, all now is located.

2005: At APC's request, with help from Councilperson Debra Foster, Town names it Barbara Barnes Hale Nature Preserve in memory of prominent local naturalist and educator. 2005: At APC’s request, with help from Councilperson Debra Foster, Town names it Barbara Barnes Hale Nature Preserve in memory of prominent local naturalist and educator... and what is now the Town of Hampton East End. The parcel was subsequently designated a town Nature Preserve, named at the request of the APC after Barbara Barnes Hale, a prominent local naturalist and educator who died in 2003.

1996: APC persuaded the Town Board that restoration and maintenance as a meadow is the best use of the land or the parcel had been cleared; it was on its way to becoming a forest, threatening not only a unique and historic vista of Accabonac (a Scenic Area of Statewide Significance) but also a habitat that has become increasingly rare. Once home to meadowlarks, killdeer, upland sandpipers, grasshopper sparrows, visiting glossy ibis, hunting kestrels, quail, pheasant and numerous other grassland and wetland animal and plant species, the meadow gradually has been overwhelmed by shrubs and trees, many of which are non-native. APC persuaded the Town Board that restoration and maintenance as a meadow is the best use of the land or the parcel had been cleared; it was on its way to becoming a forest, threatening not only a unique and historic vista of Accabonac (a Scenic Area of Statewide Significance) but also a habitat that has become increasingly rare. Once home to meadowlarks, killdeer, upland sandpipers, grasshopper sparrows, visiting glossy ibis, hunting kestrels, quail, pheasant and numerous other grassland and wetland animal and plant species, the meadow gradually has been overwhelmed by shrubs and trees, many of which are non-native.

Why So Concerned about a Meadow?

A great many people have always been concerned about the preservation of Long Island and of Springs, our local piece of it, we, woodlands we have found forests when he arrived, and gradually cleared land for agriculture.

2007: DEC not convinced: sees deer, hears birds; requests more detailed plans, but only for trails.

2005: EH Town passes Comprehensive Plan that includes “meadow restoration” for Barbara Barnes Hale Nature Preserve in memory of prominent local naturalist and educator.

But is insufficient for meadow restoration. After meeting with DEC and Suffolk County, all now is located.

March 2001: Clearing finally gets underway, but Natural Resources Director Larry Penny allows a local landscaper to remove trees not included in permit. After meeting with DEC and Suffolk County, all now is located.

October 2014: Accabonac Protection Committee adopts the Preserve through the Town’s Nature Preservation Program. October 2014: Accabonac Protection Committee adopts the Preserve through the Town’s Nature Preservation Program.

April 2009: Proposal is revised for clearing in selected areas. Application is submitted.

April 22, 2010: DEC permit is granted.

April 2009: Proposal is revised for clearing in selected areas. Application is submitted.

October 2007: DEC not convinced: sees deer, hears birds; requests more detailed plans, but only for trails.

Spring 2011: Clearing finally gets underway, but Natural Resources Director Larry Penny allows a local landscaper to remove trees not included in permit. After meeting with DEC and Suffolk County, all now is located.

May 2009: Proposal is revised for clearing in selected areas. Application is submitted. 2005: At APC’s request, with help from Councilperson Debra Foster, Town names it Barbara Barnes Hale Nature Preserve in memory of prominent local naturalist and educator.

1985: APC forms to fight such development and other threats to health of Accabonac. Begins pressure on state, county & town to acquire the property.

1991: Town zoning changes reduce lot yield. While awaiting permits for ever-fewer houses, ending at 1991: Town zoning changes reduce lot yield. While awaiting permits for ever-fewer houses, ending at... but is insufficient for meadow restoration. After meeting with DEC and Suffolk County, all now is located.

2000-01: After Community Preservation Fund set up and in partnership with County, Town immediately buys Weitzman property.