

The General Field

In 2006, the Groton Conservation Trust acquired 143 acres of agricultural land as their portion of a successful joint venture with the Town of Groton to protect from development the 265-acre Surrenden Farm property along Farmers Row. Research conducted on the history of the area reveals that the early inhabitants of Groton referred to land in that general vicinity—near Farmers Row and south of the current site of Groton School—as “the General Field.” In keeping with the historical use of the land for agriculture and acknowledging those early references, the Trust has decided to name its portion of the Surrenden Farm land The General Field.

Two local sources of Groton history led the Trust to select the name. In her book titled *A Plantation Called Petapawag*, Virginia May includes a rough map of the area that indicates The General Field. Dr. Samuel Green reports in his book, *The Early Records of Groton, Massachusetts 1662-1707*, that in 1670, soon after Groton was established, the Selectmen of Groton voted to lay out a road leading to Lancaster, which was an earlier, more established settlement in the area. He describes that road (which ran alongside the now-protected area) as being laid out next to the “general field lots.” He also notes that, “The ‘general field,’ frequently mentioned in [certain land grants], refers to land owned in severalty by a number of persons, who turned it into one field, for reasons of mutual advantage.”

Today, under the terms of the conservation restriction on The General Field, the Trust is to manage the property primarily for agricultural use. The soils maps prepared by the USDA indicate that most of the land is a glacial till consisting of sandy loam that is well suited for that purpose. During the past year, the Trust has worked to find farmers whose practices would be suitable for the property and who would find it useful for their needs. The portion of The General Field adjacent to Farmers Row is now leased to a local farmer to be used primarily for hay production, and the land adjacent to Shirley Road is leased to another for the primary purpose of raising cattle.

Owned by the Groton Conservation Trust and subject to a permanent conservation restriction held by the Town of Groton, The General Field is once again dedicated to a use that is designed to serve the common good “for reasons of mutual advantage.”

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