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Currents, Special Edition (Apr.23, 1984)

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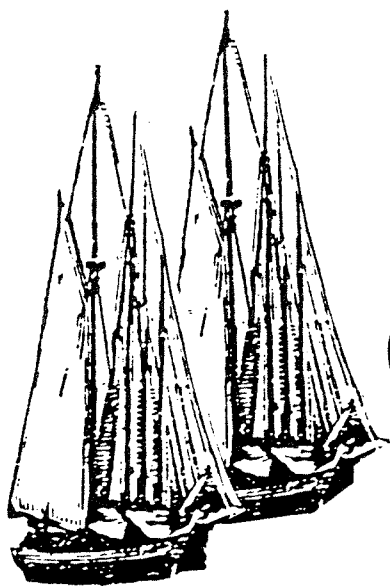


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University of Southern Maine CURRENTS

Special Edition

April 23, 1984

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A Unit of the University of Maine

USM RECIPIENT OF EXTRAORDINARY GIFT

The Gift

Sweeping saltwater vistas, rocky pastures and rolling fields, broken intermittently by stands of conifers and hardwoods, as well as campsites which brush the edge of a bayside bluff are now part of the University of Southern Maine.

Wolfe's Neck Farm, Freeport, Maine, has been given to USM and to the people of Maine by Mrs. Eleanor Houston Smith. The farm, just 30 minutes from the Portland campus, is contiguous to beautiful Wolf Neck Woods State Park. These, along with nearby Mast Landing Sanctuary, create a legacy of private lands made public through the generosity of Mrs. Smith and her late husband Lawrence M.C. Smith.

The gift of nearly 600 acres informally valued in excess of \$2 million was accepted by action of the University of Maine Board of Trustees today, bringing to fruition plans envisioned by Mr. Smith before his death in 1975.

The quiet conservationist dreamed of opening the farm to educational, cultural and recreational use by the public. (The campground has been public for decades.) And his widow sees in the University of Southern Maine the means to do just that, while at the same time giving the University a new dimension. The gift also recognizes USM's emergence as the leading educational institution in the region, according to Russell Cox, Freeport management consultant and chief advisor on the project for the past three years.

Wolfe's Neck Farm includes a working "alternative" beef farm (see story p. 4), woodlands, oceanfront areas and Recompense Shores Campground. In accepting the gift, President Robert L. Woodbury remarked on the myriad

educational possibilities of the land, its buildings and the seacoast itself.

The land and the farm will be maintained as they are today, but the property will be used as a center for instruction and research around the issues of ecology, land use planning, conservation, marine life, coastline preservation and other areas as they are reflected in the special characteristics of this diverse parcel of coastal Maine land.

"Many of the ideals the Smiths have believed in are increasingly important to larger and larger sectors of our society," says Woodbury. "This link to the University promises a particularly effective way to bring those issues into an educational framework." To pursue this end, discussions with the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture at Orono have already begun. Research faculty at our sister, land grant institution are especially interested in the alternative farming methods.

The availability of a working farm on the outskirts of an urban area has traditionally provided rich educational experiences. The farm joins our Southworth Planetarium as an immediate and valuable resource for Maine school students. For our own marketing majors, it will provide a "laboratory" in which to explore the marketing of organically grown beef.

Future uses of the land include summer institutes on subjects such as Maine history, literature and art as well as a setting for our residential summer programs. Woodbury also envisions a retreat center of national and perhaps international importance headquartered in the majestic stone, columned Main House used for nearly 40 years as a summer residence by Mr. and Mrs. Smith. (Mr. Smith hosted a meeting of UNESCO dignitaries there in the fifties.)

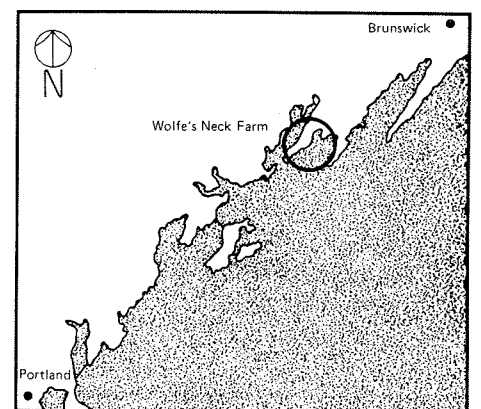
The value of such a center is its isolation, away from mainstream pressures,



(Nance Trueworthy photo)

giving policy-makers, business executives and education leaders the opportunity to explore issues in a relaxed and uncommon environment. "We must, in these days, provide opportunities for senior level people from private and public sectors as well as our own faculty and staff to think deeply and reflect in uncommon ways about the state of our society and the state of our situation as human beings," says Woodbury.

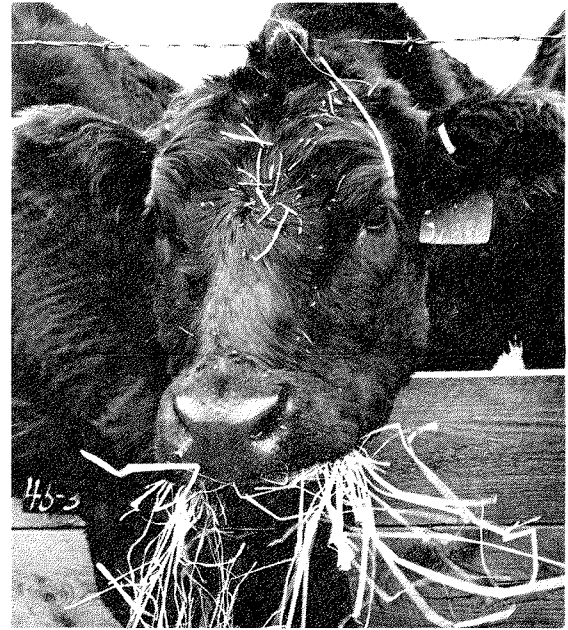
With Wolfe's Neck Farm, the University will continue the spirit of Mr. and Mrs. L.M.C. Smith in husbanding natural resources and nurturing human potential. Their gift ushers in a new period of growth for the University, both broadening and deepening its mission to the people of the region who will benefit from the land, the lessons learned from it and the lessons learned on it, forever.



Wolfe's Neck Farm is located 30 minutes from the Portland campus on a peninsula at the mouth of the Harraseeket River. The property, given to USM by Mrs. L.M.C. Smith, is comprised of nearly 600 acres contiguous to Wolf Neck Woods State Park.

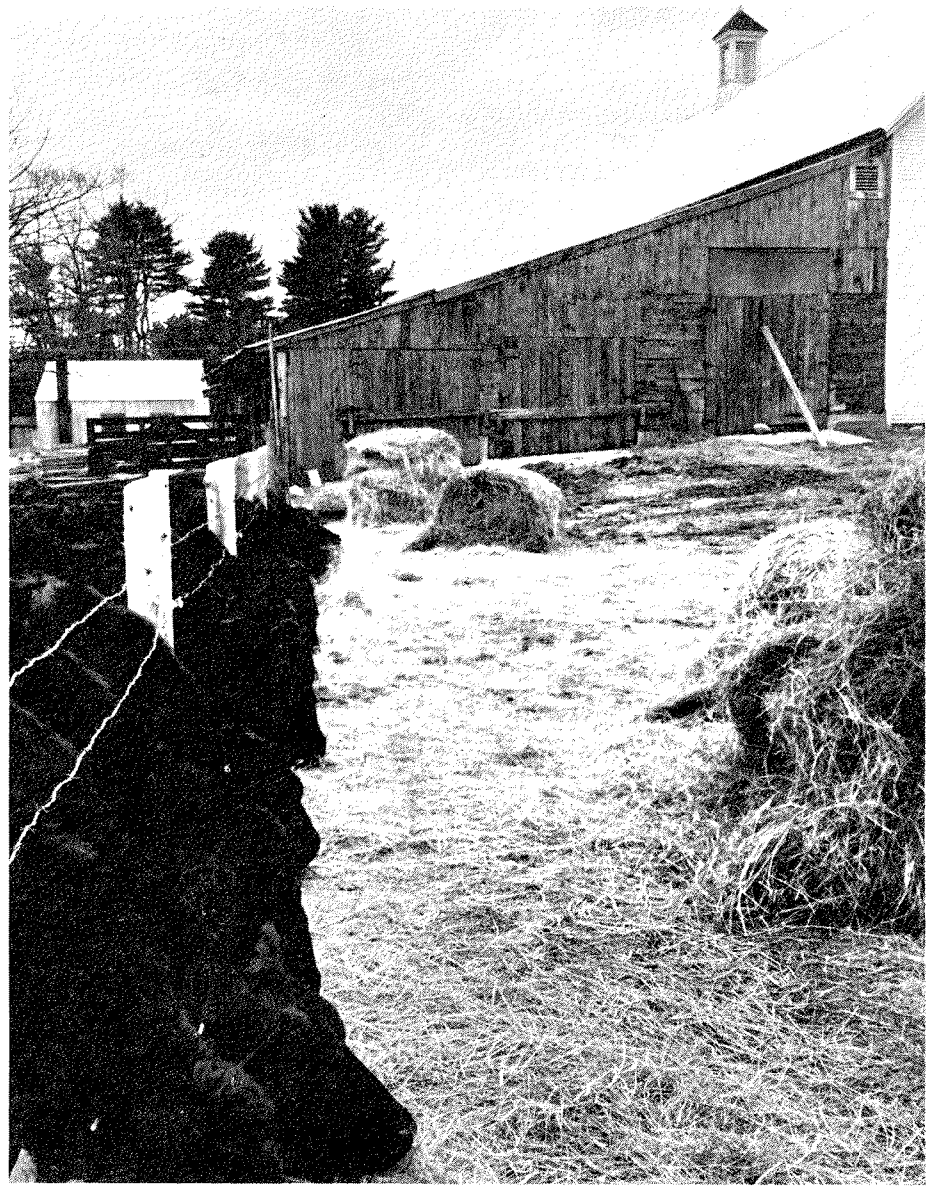
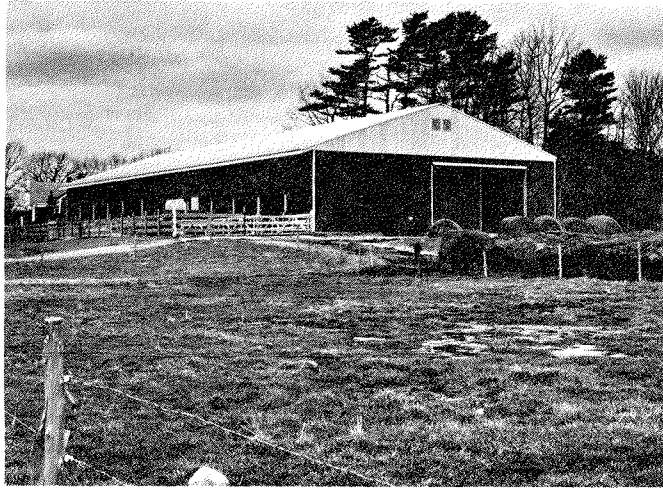


The Main House, summer home of Mr. and Mrs. L.M.C. Smith since 1946, will become a retreat center at a future date.





The 18th century Salt Box House was moved to its present site from Yarmouth around 1796. According to local lore, its sea captain owner waited for the right combination of wind and tides to sail it across the bay. Favorable conditions occurred on the Sabbath. This so angered his God-fearing neighbors that they ostracized him. When he arrived in Freeport, he spied a knoll. "Put the damn thing right here," he reputedly said. And so it sets today.



View from the Main House.



Farm House headquarters of the organic beef raising and marketing operation. Beef is sold flash-frozen throughout New England. Plans call for a national advertising campaign to increase sales.

The Donors

Two years ago, the Maine Times reported that "Eleanor Smith and her late husband L.M.C. 'Sam' Smith of Philadelphia and Freeport have set a standard for involvement and generosity."

In fact, Mr. and Mrs. Smith are often credited as Maine's most influential conservationists and entrepreneurs. Yet L.M.C. Smith is not a household name in this state. The reason is simple. Mrs. Smith and her late husband shunned publicity, choosing to exercise their generosity out of the public eye.

Indeed, Maine Times reporter Phyllis Austin, in a feature story published in the summer of 1975 shortly after Mr. Smith's death, noted that "...Smith was so quiet about his goings-on that to mention his name would elicit a response of 'who's he?'"

Nevertheless, Mr. and Mrs. Smith's legacy is one of wise conservation practices and creative entrepreneurial projects. Those conservation practices and entrepreneurial projects have greatly influenced state policy on protection of coastal lands and, moreover, large tracts of land have been opened to the public along a coast which is primarily privately owned.

Perhaps Mr. and Mrs. Smith's best-known conservation activity concerns their involvement in the creation of Popham Beach State Park in Phippsburg, just south of Bath, and Wolf Neck Woods State Park in Freeport.

In the mid-1950s state officials expressed some interest in acquiring Popham Beach. To raise the needed



Mr. and Mrs. L.M.C. Smith at Popham Beach dedication, 1969.

(Tom Jones photo)

funds for purchase, Maine voters would have had to approve a bond issue. Aware of the fact that a bond issue would send real estate prices skyward and prompt development of the area, Mr. and Mrs. Smith quietly bought more than 350 acres of the beach property. They told government officials that they would hold the title to the land until such time that state funds were available for its purchase. In 1968 they sold the land to the state at less than the appraised value. This act preserved for public use an area

that columnist John Cole called "...one of the world's rarest and most lovely beaches."

Other areas of the Maine coast and countless state citizens and visitors have benefited from Mr. and Mrs. Smith's involvement in other land preservation projects.

In 1969, the year following the state's acquisition of Popham Beach, Mr. and Mrs. Smith gave the Maine State Bureau of Parks and Recreation 200-plus acres of forested coastal land near their Freeport home for Wolf

Neck Woods State Park. Records show that more than 40,000 people walk the park's nature trails each year.

There have been many other projects during Mr. and Mrs. Smith's nearly 30-year commitment to imaginative use of land in Maine for the public good. In 1956 they donated the Mast Landing Bird Sanctuary in Freeport to Maine Audubon so that the society could hold public environmental education programs. Their concern about lack of public access to the Maine coast prompted them to establish the public Recompense Shore Campsites on their land in Freeport overlooking the mouth of Little River in Casco Bay. The campground is part of the gift to USM. Mr. Smith and his wife also donated the historic Percy and Small Shipyard to the Marine Maritime Museum in Bath.

And Mr. and Mrs. Smith, among the first people in Maine to talk about organic farming, established Wolfe's Neck Farm in 1959. (see farm story below)

Mr. and Mrs. Smith's standard of involvement and generosity in Maine is an outgrowth of a longstanding family tradition — a tradition of benefiting society. Shortly before his death, Mr. Smith told the Maine Times "You can eat so much, sleep so much and have so many cars. At some point you have to decide how...to benefit society. My wife and I didn't have much trouble deciding how to (do) it in Maine...the land spoke to us and told us what to do. All (we) could say was 'yes, sir!'"

The Farm

It is quintessentially a Maine farm scene: cattle graze on a scraggy, pine-dotted hillside, their bellows echoing off the waters of Casco Bay which gently laps at the edges of the farm. This is Wolfe's Neck Farm, Freeport, Maine.

Since 1959, Wolfe's Neck Farm has successfully raised and marketed beef from herds ranging in size from 250-300 head of Black Angus cattle. It has operated under the principles of organic farming, known today as "alternative farming." This method of growing food "largely excludes the use of synthetically compounded fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators and livestock feed additives."

The farm was established by Mrs. Eleanor Houston Smith and her husband the late Mr. Lawrence M.C. Smith, conservationists and land philanthropists, who believed in the preservation and protection of open spaces. They have operated the farm as proof of this belief. And today, Mrs. Smith has given Wolfe's Neck Farm to the University of Southern Maine. In a recent interview in the Maine Organic Farmer and Gardener, Mrs. Smith remarked, "This place has just got to stay this way forever."

To ensure that it does go on "in perpetuity," Mrs. Smith passed the land first to the American Farmland Trust which then conveyed it immediately to USM. The purpose of the so-called "pass through" is to protect the integrity of the farm in the event that USM can no longer operate it. In that case, ownership reverts to the AFT. Farm operations will continue under Charlie De Grandpre, manager there for the past 16 years.

With characteristic foresight, Mrs. Smith has seen to it that the farm will not burden the financial resources of the University. To protect against financial losses during any bad seasons, and to underwrite the cost of operating the farm, The Wolfe's Neck Farm Foundation, Inc. will be formed with assets expected to grow to nearly \$500,000 in the next two years. This tax exempt, non-profit foundation will actively seek additional funds from other sources.

The Wolfe's Neck Farm Foundation, Inc. will oversee the prudent management of the farm and ensure that it continues as a nationally recognized model of alternative farming.



(Nance Trueworthy photo)