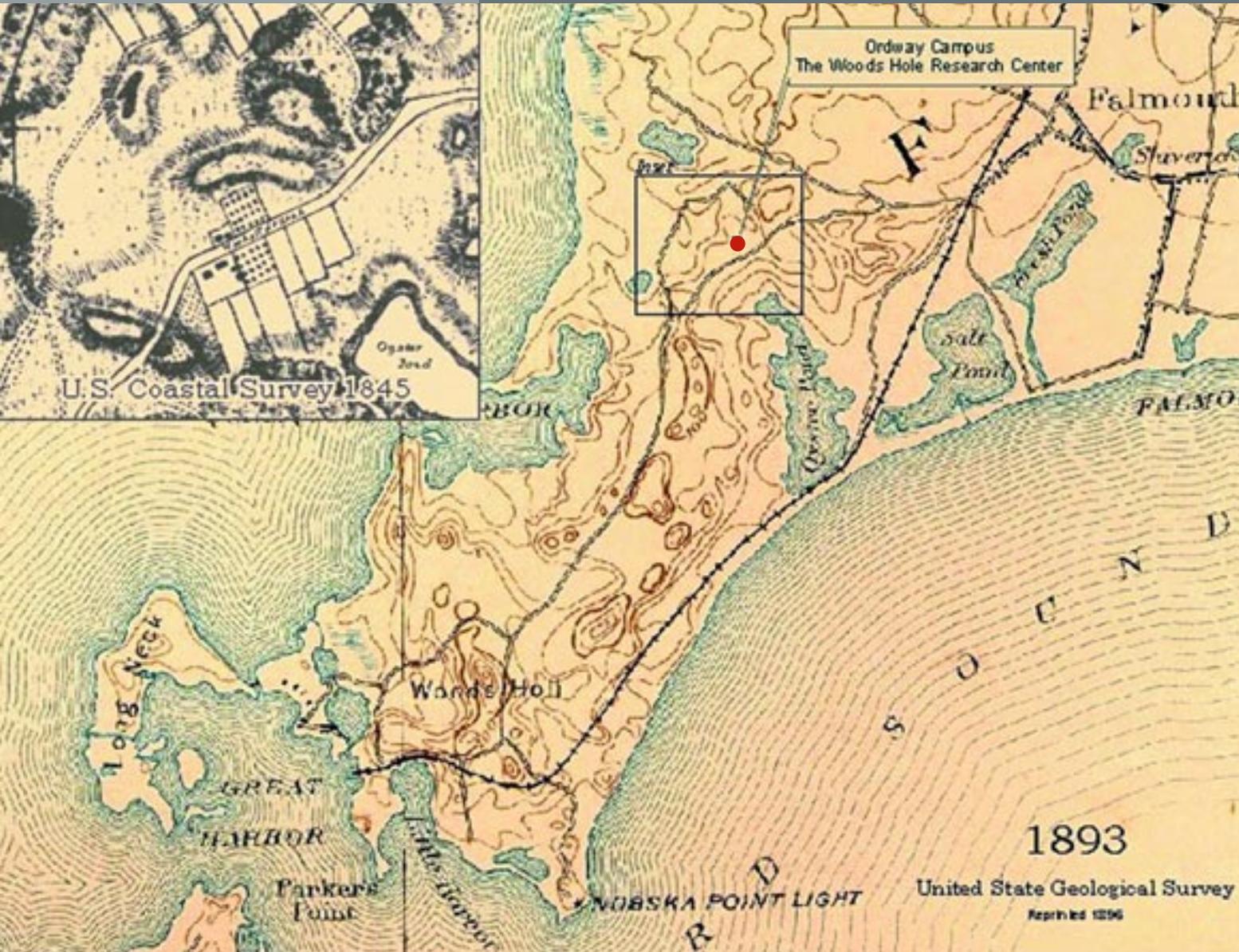


# The Ordway Campus: From Victorian Mansion to "Green" Building



*A half-century ago, Hilltop House, a venerable inn two miles from the village of Woods Hole, charged guests \$6 a day for two, 75 cents more for breakfast. Today, the inn has undergone a transformation to a “green” building and is the headquarters of the Woods Hole Research Center.*



Quissett, or Quamquissett, its original Native American name, is an area that stretches northeast to southwest between Falmouth and Woods Hole, between two distinct bodies of water, Buzzards Bay to the west and Vineyard Sound to the southeast. A large portion of land in Quissett was granted to the Weeks family in 1677. They farmed the land for nearly two centuries, raising cattle, sheep and pigs.

In the mid-nineteenth century some of the property along the Quissett ridge became the farm of Samuel Palmer Davis. In 1873 his heir, John W. Davis, sold twelve acres of farmland, fields and

orchards to Joseph Fay of Boston and a summer resident of Falmouth. Two years later Fay sold the property for \$750 to Nathaniel D. Turner of Newton, who bought it for his daughter, Miss Helen Turner. The Turner mansion was built as a summer house in 1877, a golden age for summer mansions along the Atlantic coast.

The Turner mansion, which featured a roof design with large diagonal corner gables, was sold in 1908 to Charles R. Whittemore, a partner in the Whittemore Shoe Polish Company of Cambridge. Whittemore, who bought the house for his sons, enlarged it with porches and amended the Queen Anne style roof to reflect the Colonial Revival symmetrical hipped style then in vogue.

During the first part of the twentieth century, the Whittemore family owned all three Victorian mansions along the ridge, as well as considerable land to the north and west toward Quissett Harbor and Racing Beach on Buzzards Bay. The Whittemores built homes for their sailing captains Perry and Besse, who skippered the family’s catboat and Buzzards Bay 40 *Young Miss*. A stable on the property held a large number of horses, and the surrounding land toward Ransom Road became a game park with deer, pheasants and peacocks. The family eventually amassed a great deal more land toward Buzzards Bay, along the shoreline east of Sippewissett Road. The area off Sippewissett Road known as Racing Beach,

where legend tells of galloping horses, was in this period a part of the Whittemore property.

Frank Dunlap of Springfield bought the Turner/Whittemore house in 1920, and it changed hands again in the 1930s, when it was purchased by Edgar McCallum, and again in 1948, when Laura Reardon transformed the mansion into a seventeen-room inn known as “Hilltop House.” Hilltop was purchased for \$65,000 in 1978 by Edith Ban, the owner of a popular Hungarian restaurant in Boston, the Café Budapest. Mrs. Ban who was a native of Hungary and a Nazi prison camp survivor, ran Hilltop as a year-round guest house until her death in 1988. At that time her sister, Livia Hedda Rev-Kury, took over the property and maintained Hilltop for her own use. Mrs. Rev-Kury kept the famed Café Budapest going until 2000.

In its heyday, Hilltop’s brochure described high ceilings and eleven bedrooms, spacious hallways and living rooms, “and an unobstructed exposure to winds from all directions which makes Hilltop airy and cool.” It boasted nearby tennis, golf, swimming, sailing, both salt and fresh water fishing, and noted that the steamship service from Woods Hole to Martha’s Vineyard and



*The newly renovated Victorian mansion*

*Background: Landscape Master Plan*

Nantucket was “equipped with radar for safe sailing through foggy weather.” The innkeepers recommended the region’s cooling southwest breezes of summer and a winter climate mild enough for golf.

### *Transformation to Green*

From 1985 until 2003, the Woods Hole Research Center’s staff was scattered among various buildings in Woods Hole, and for some time the Center had sought to consolidate to one location. Then in 1998 the stately house on the ridge, conveniently located between Falmouth and Woods Hole, became available and was deemed a perfect site for the new headquarters. That fall the Center purchased the 7,500-square-foot house with eight acres of land for \$750,000 through a gift of trustee Gilman Ordway of Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Following its purchase, the renowned architectural firm of William McDonough + Partners of Charlottesville, Virginia, was engaged to redesign the building as a model for the future. Concerned with environmental sustainability, the Center’s and the architects’ central theme called for the use of renewable energy sources such as photovoltaic cells, ground-source heat pumps, as well as a waste water denitrification system.

The Woods Hole Research Center relocated to its new headquarters at the Ordway Campus in

March 2003, after completion of the sixteen-month renovation and construction project. The basic style and façade of the original Colonial Revival mansion were retained according to standards set by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, while the interior was redesigned with a large contemporary addition in the back of the building to complete the 19,000-square-foot space.

From the upper floors are vistas of Buzzards Bay to the northwest and Vineyard Sound to the southeast. Large windows in back of the building face a canopy of tall trees, with paths leading to the Peterson Farm and Beebe Woods, a 380-acre town conservation area. Landscaping in front of the building consists of a reception lawn,

stone walls, a sloping wildflower field, and the original bank of rhododendrons.

In keeping with the Center's mission of global environmental sustainability, Ordway is a "green" building that will eventually be capable of producing all of its own energy without the use of fossil fuels. The Center will monitor the energy systems to ensure their optimal function.

*Allison B. White June 2003*



*Solar panels on the roof of the Victorian wing*



*The new curved wing of the Ordway Campus*

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