Land Use In The Garvies Point – Landing District Circa 1835-1840

This paper is intended to serve as a demonstration of the feasibility of using the 1837 Coastal Survey data for Glen Cove for an analysis of land use patterns in the community circa 1835-1840. Percentage calculations are approximate, and are subject to refinement if access to the 1837 survey data can be obtained.

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Introduction:

In the 1830's, the United States Coast Survey conducted a detailed topographic survey of Glen Cove and environs as part of an effort to create a master survey of the coastal United States. In addition to attempting to precisely define the coast-line, the survey also mapped inland terrain features such water-courses, wetlands (both tidal and freshwater), cleared and uncleared land, gardens and orchards, and man-made structures. The original 1837 data for Glen Cove was apparently never published, but the hand drawn maps still survive in Washington DC.

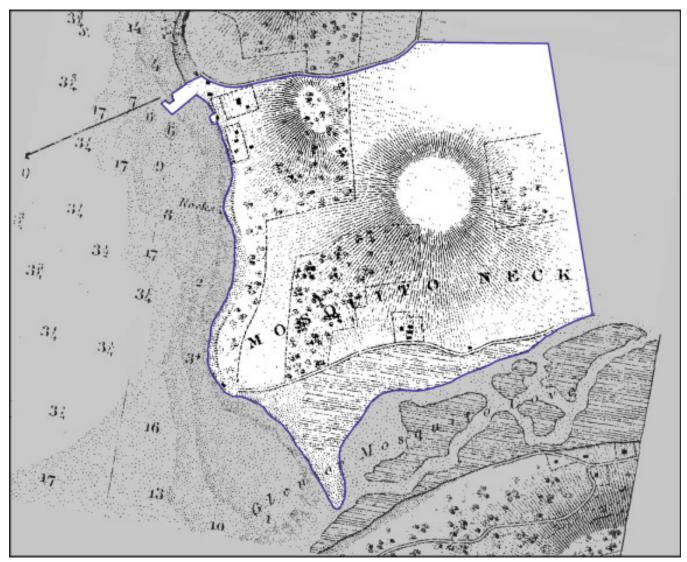
In 1859, a detailed bathymetric chart of Hempstead Harbor was published by the same agency. While the bathymetric data was new, the information on the topography of the lands surrounding Hempstead Harbor was not. Side-by-side comparison of the 1837 and 1859 surveys by the author about 1980, showed that the 1859 survey simply re-used the data generated by the 1837 topographical survey, without any effort to update the data. This makes it feasible to use the 1859 survey as a surrogate for the earlier work to generate some preliminary land use data – with certain caveats relative to man-made structures located at or near mean water. Updated information on structures located in this zone would have been critical to the mission of creating an accurate nautical chart and undoubtedly would have been revised.

Two areas of special interest shown on the 1859 bathymetric chart are the Garvies Point-Landing districts in Glen Cove. The Garvies Point area was originally known as "Sheep

Pen Point" in the colonial era, and by 1840 was the farm of Dr. Thomas Garvie, a Scottish immigrant who had moved to Glen Cove in the early 19th Century to practice medicine. Much of the 90 acre parcel is today preserved as the Garvies Point Museum and Nature Preserve, administered by the Nassau County Department of Parks and Recreation. The second area, located north of and contiguous to the Garvie farm, was The Landing, which evolved around the steamboat landing constructed to serve the Glen Cove to New York City steamboat operation established in 1829. Although still in its infancy at the time of the 1837 coastal survey this area of Glen Cove would, by the 1850's, be a vibrant district of mixed uses that included resort hotels, boarding houses, stores, taverns, oyster saloons, and residences (ranging from homes for laborers to the estates of wealthy New York City residences). The Garvies Point area maintained most of its agrarian nature throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries; The Landing did not.

Definition of Study Area:

The study area comprises the area south of the road to the steamboat landing (modern day Landing Road) south to Glen Cove Creek, and from the eastern shore of Hempstead Harbor to the western limit of the map detail (which corresponds roughly to a north-south line drawn between the intersection of Raymond Street and Landing Road, south to the intersection of Shore



The Garvies Point - Landing Study Area

Road and Hammond Road). For the purposes of this paper, the islands shown in Glen Cove Creek have been excluded from the study area.

Regrettably, the 1859 bathymetric chart does not provide complete coverage of either The Landing or of Garvies Point as conventionally defined. It stops short of the eastern boundary of both districts. However, it does provided coverage of approximately 80% of the areas of interest, which the author deems adequate for the purposes of this demonstration study.

Methodology:

Because of certain problems with the computerized mapping software (specifically a complete lack thereof) the author used squares counting to determine the percent distribution of basic land uses: open land, uncleared land, beach, wetlands, and manmade structures. Further, certain problems with the computerized mapping software (specifically a complete lack thereof) necessitated the use somewhat primitive methods to graphically represent the study area and land uses.

No attempt was made to calculate the total acreage in the study area. Percentages have been rounded up to the nearest percent.

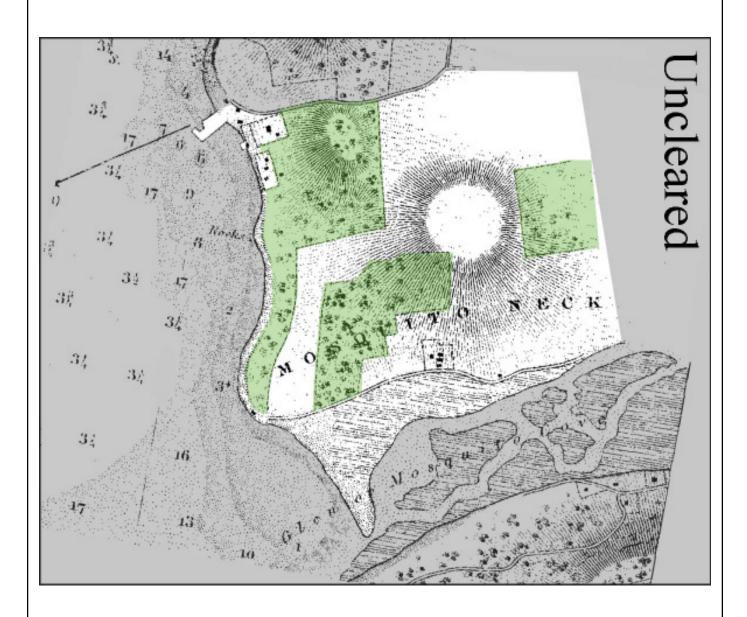
Open Land

Open land consists of arable land (whether or not actively under cultivation), meadow, and pasture lands. It is likely that the bulk of the open area in the study area served as pasture land for grazing cattle and sheep. **Open land composes approximately 42 per cent of the study area.**



Uncleared Land

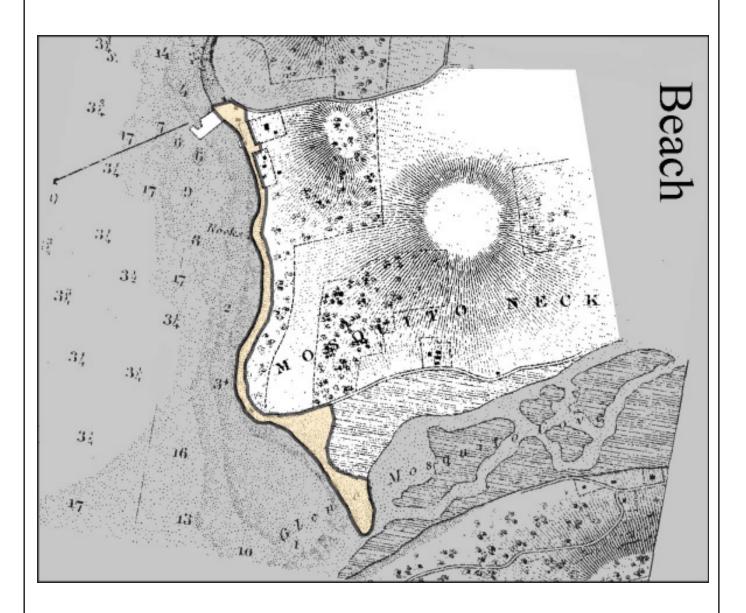
Uncleared land includes woodland, brush, and scrub, and incorporates not only old growth areas that were never cleared but also previously cleared lands that are reverting to a wild state. Uncleared land, however, does not necessarily equate to land that is serving no agricultural function, as woodland was commonly used to fatten free-roaming hogs during the colonial era, and the author feels that the continuance of that use in the early 19th Century cannot be discounted. **Uncleared lands comprise 32% of the study area.**



Beach

Beach refers to lands located above mean water level adjacent to the marine environment, dominated by sand, gravel and stone that has been deposited or exposed by the action of tide or waves.

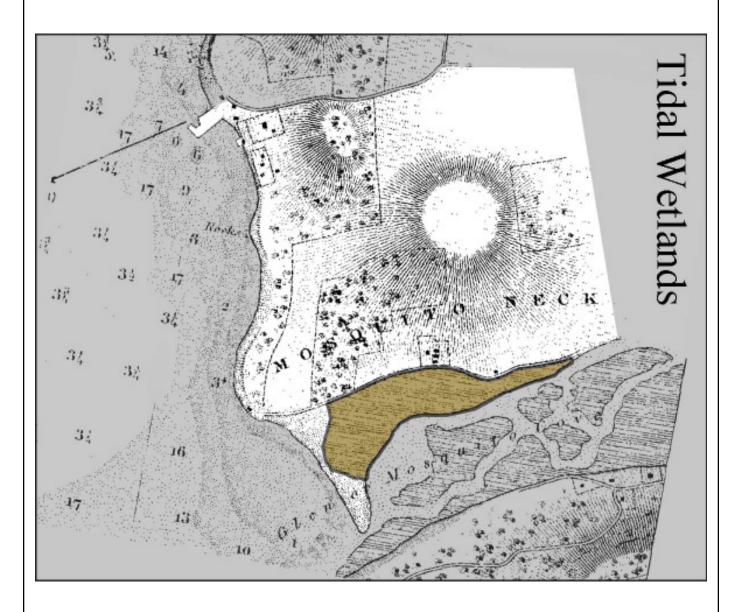
In the study area, beaches tend to be composed of sediments derived from glacial till, and show poor sorting, with grain sizes ranges from sand to gravel, commonly admixed with cobbles and large glacial erratics. In part of the subject area (due north of Garvies Point Road) the beach surface is often shingled with siltstone slabs and cobbles stained deep red by high percentage of iron oxide. **Beach represents approximately 5% of the study area.**



Tidal Wetlands

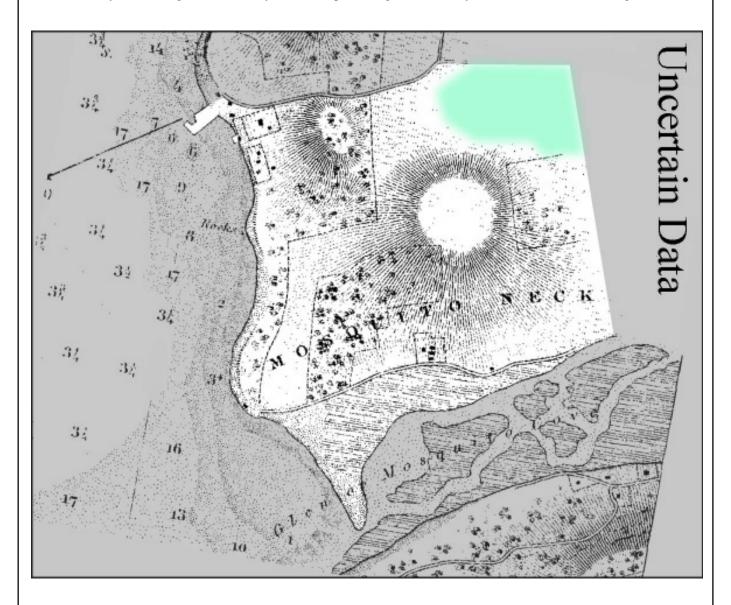
Tidal wetlands includes terrain dominated by high tidal marsh, low tidal marsh, and mud flats. In Glen Cove and surrounding communities, this class of topographic regime was exploited as a source of "salt hay" (Spartina patens or "saltmeadow cordgrass") and "thatch" (Phragmites sp.). Both plants were economically valuable from earliest colonial times through the 19th Century, as evidenced by a law suit brought by James Garvie against James C Miller and George W Merritt for cutting creek thatch (which Garvie regarded as his own property) in the subject area. (Oyster Bay Town Records, Volume 7)

Tidal wetlands comprise 8% of the study area. Only vestigial remains of the salt marsh remain today.

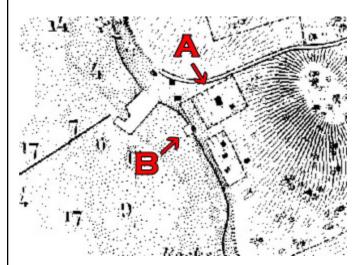


Uncertain

One area located in the north-east corner of the study area is not clearly defined as to land use, appearing on the bathymetric survey as an area where the chart artistically "fades out" towards its margin. **This represents approximately 9% of the study area.** It is likely that the original 1837 survey sheets will provided greater certainty as to how this land was being used.



Man-Made Structures

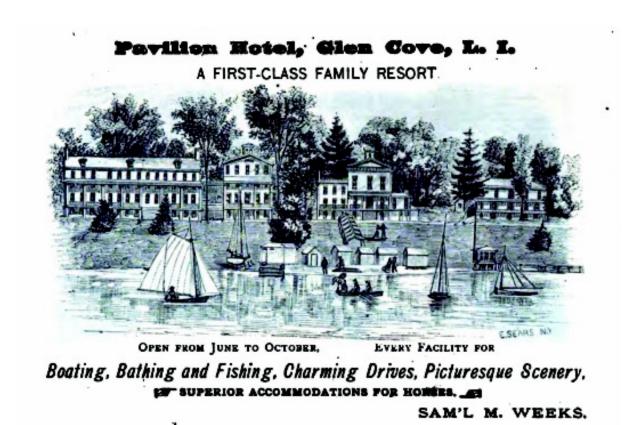


In general, the topographic survey shows an area depauperate in man-made structures. However, several buildings are evident adjacent to the steamboat landing as well as on the Garvie farm. These include:

In the north-west portion of the study area, at the steamboat landing, are a scattering of structures of interest. One structure (tagged A in the figure at left) located immediately south and east of the steamboat landing is a largish building with a smaller building (outbuilding?) on the same parcel; the property surrounding the two structures is fenced and there is a garden plot shown at the western end of the parcel. The author considers that this cluster of structures, based on their position, represent the early Pavilion Hotel, one of the earliest (and even-

tually grandest) of the Landing hotels. It was founded in 1835 by members of the Weeks family and was originally an adaptive reuse of a farmhouse.

Also associated with this structure is a short, equant wharf or pier projecting into Hempstead Harbor (tagged B in the figure). Associated with this wharf is a structure located roughly where it meets the shoreline. It is not certain that this structure appears on the 1837 topographic survey, and it may be a post-1837 structure which was incorporated into the 1859 bathymetric

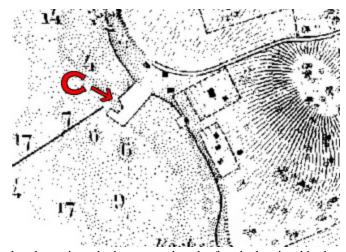


The Pavilion Hotel from an 1850's era advertisement.

chart as new information. (While general landward topographic features were of no interest to the 1859 survey, changes to the coastline at mean water and in the near shore environment would have been of considerable importance). The original 1837 topographic maps should be examined to determine whether or not the wharf or dock existed in that era. .

A large pier or wharf appears at the western terminus of the road known today as Landing Road (tagged as C in the figure at right). This is the steamboat landing which served the Glen Cove to New York City steamboats, as well as other vessels (both commercial and private).

However, just like the smaller wharf or pier discussed above, it is not certain that this structure appears on the 1837 topographic survey, and it may be a post-1837 structure which was incorporated into the 1859 bathymetric chart as new infor-



mation. The original 1837 topographic maps should be examined to determine whether or not the wharf or dock existed in that era, and to clarify its dimensions and configuration.

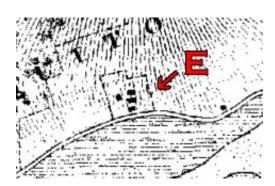
The wharf shown on the 1859 bathymetric survey projects about 250 to 300 feet into Hempstead Harbor. Upland from the dock are three structures; their function is uncertain.



A group of three structures in a fenced-in parcel south of both the landing and the probable site of the Pavilion Hotel is also shown (tagged as D in the figure at left). The north end of the fenced in area is marked as an area cultivated as a garden. A small bleb outside the fence to the east may either be an additional structure or simply a defect in the scan.

The final group of four structures, located on the north side of Garvies Point Road, represents the farm of Dr. Thomas Garvie.

In all, man made structures (including the fenced-in gardens, etc., associated with them) comprise less than 3% of the study area



Summary:

The dominant land use in the study area circa 1840 was open land, probably used as grazing land for cattle and sheep, followed by uncleared lands.

SUMMARY	
Open land	43
Uncleared land	32
Tidal wetlands	8
Beach	5
Uncertain	9
Man-made	<3

Provided that an accurately scaled, digitized copy of the 1837 coastal survey for Glen Cove could be obtained or created, it would be feasible to perform an analysis of land use throughout Glen Cove.