

The Knob, a hideaway with views of Buzzards Bay



RON DRISCOLL FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

A walk along one of the trails to The Knob ends with a view onto Buzzards Bay.

By Ron Driscoll

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FALMOUTH — During the War of 1812, residents of the village of Quissett went to great lengths to obscure the presence of their lovely protected cove from British warships sailing past on Buzzards Bay. According to the Woods Hole Historical Society, foliage was used to

camouflage ships, and treetops were lashed to masts to disguise the existence of the harbor and its shipbuilding and saltworks operations.

It's 200 years on, and every day hundreds of summer interlopers take Woods Hole Road past this lovely slice of Falmouth that sits halfway between downtown and the Steamship Authority terminus at Woods Hole, where visitors ferry across the sound to Martha's Vineyard. The vast majority of them drive right past the turn for Quissett Harbor, unaware of the tiny village and the 12-acre nature preserve that was established there nearly 40 years ago.

A gift to the town — or more specifically to the Salt Pond Area Bird Sanctuaries — by Cornelia L. Carey in the early 1970s, The Knob is still something of a hidden gem along Falmouth's nearly 70 miles of coastline. The Knob was once part of the 16-acre property purchased by Carey's family in 1877, on which sat the Quissett Harbor House, a popular resort for nearly a century that closed in 1975, two years after Carey's death. Some of the former resort buildings still occupy a prominent spot near the start of The Knob walking trail, though they are now owned by the Quissett Harbor House Land Trust.

Quissett Harbor is filled with boats in the summer, including many Herreshoff 12½ sailboats, a popular choice among members of the Quissett Yacht Club. The Quissett Harbor boatyard is the first building you come to as you reach the harbor's edge, and a couple of dozen parking spaces — in two groupings — sit across the road from the harbor. At the road's

end, the former hotel sits, with the entrance path to The Knob close by, next to Little Sandy, the first of the three beaches along The Knob.

The trail, which measures just under one mile from its start to The Knob overlook, is meant for meandering and admiring the views, not strenuous hiking. Children will enjoy the chipmunks darting along the shaded path, and nearly 100 bird species have been logged in the area.

Steps on the north side of the spit of land lead to Crescent Beach, which easily accommodated some 50 or so visitors on a recent July day.

The payoff for your walk, on either the main trail or the “harbor cliff” trail, is the magnificent views of Buzzards Bay atop The Knob, 15 or so steps above the path with space for easily two dozen people to absorb the setting, which can include the Elizabeth Islands to the south, all the way to New Bedford and into Rhode Island.

A perfect way to cap a Cape Cod vacation is to watch the sunset from The Knob. In the 1930s, folks could drive their cars out to the end — today the view requires a bit more effort.

THE KNOB *Open from dawn to dusk for bird-watching, strolling, beachcombing, and swimming. No lifeguard on duty. Follow Woods Hole Road south from Falmouth center for about 2 miles. At the traffic light, turn right onto Quissett Harbor Road and follow until it ends by the docks. Limited parking available along the road. Visitors are asked to help protect The Knob by staying on trails and leaving the protective stones in place. 508-548-8484, <http://www.300committee.org/knob.htm>*

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The entrance to the trail for The Knob in Falmouth's Quissett Village.