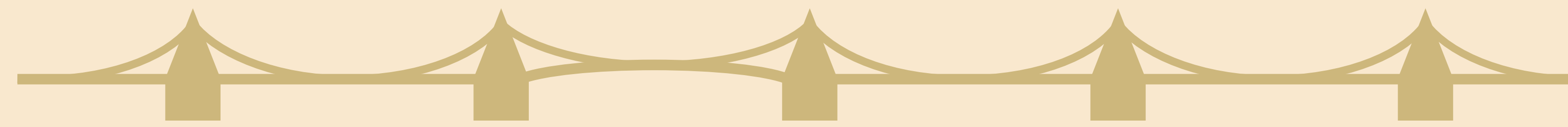




## Ferries, Bridges and Railroad Bridges



Think about how people have crossed the Merrimack River over the centuries. Indians used the river for travel and crossed it by canoe. When the first settlers landed in Salisbury in 1639, they came by boat. By 1644 the first ferry crossed the river. Wooden bridges replaced the ferries and then gave way in turn to iron, steel and concrete bridges. Wagons, stagecoaches and livestock being driven to market were followed by steam railroads and electric trolleys. Then automobiles led to the closing of the trolleys and the railroad.

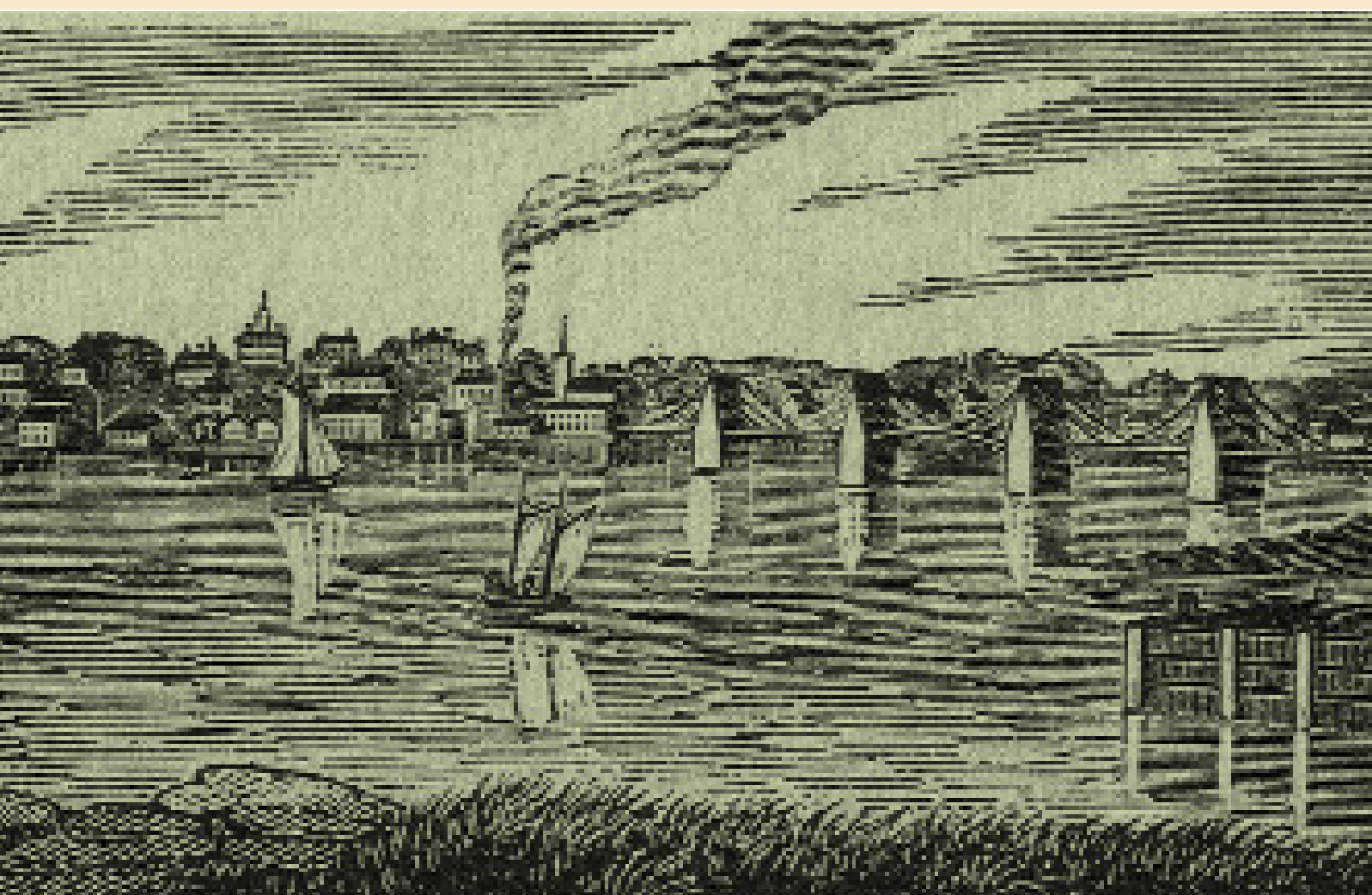
These different ways to cross the Merrimack reflect continuing changes in our society. Here you stand today looking at a defunct railroad bridge and a highway bridge with poor pedestrian access. These are products of the automobile age. But our society is changing again, with a new focus on healthful exercise and alternative transportation. Planning began in the 1990's to build a trail for pedestrians and bicyclists on abandoned railroad lines south to Danvers and north to New Hampshire. Will the old railroad bridge become part of the trail?

- 1644** Carr's Ferry begins operating between what is now Jefferson St. in Newburyport and Ferry Lots Lane in Salisbury.
- 1655** America's first floating bridge is built by George Carr. Carr's ferry continues to run to Carr's Island with the floating bridge providing the connection to Salisbury.
- 1669** Amesbury Ferry, later called Hook's Ferry, operates from the end of Newburyport's Ferry Road in what is now Maudslay State Park to the upriver side of the mouth of the Powow River.
- 1688** March's Ferry begins operating from the center of Newburyport to Ring's Island.
- 1789** Bartlett's Cove Ferry begins operating from what is now the Newburyport Water Department to Salisbury Point, now Point Shore in Amesbury.
- 1792** The Essex-Merrimack Bridge is built between Newburyport and Salisbury (now Amesbury) across Deer Island. It is the first bridge across navigable waters on the Merrimack River.
- 1810** The Chain Bridge replaces the Newburyport side of the Essex-Merrimack Bridge.
- 1827** A wooden highway bridge is built from Newburyport to Ring's Island in Salisbury with a swing draw span.
- 1840** The Eastern Railroad reconstructs the highway bridge with an upper deck for trains.
- 1865** A wooden railroad-only bridge from Newburyport to Rings Island is built upriver of the highway bridge.
- 1875** The Salisbury side of the highway bridge is rebuilt with iron following an ice jam that destroyed three piers and 200 ft. of the wooden bridge.
- 1888** A new double track iron railroad bridge is built and remains in place today.
- 1902** A new iron girder highway bridge, the "Green Bridge", is built with a swing draw.
- 1922** The railroad bridge is reinforced with additional girders to accommodate heavier trains.
- 1976** The current "Gillis Bridge" is built. It is much higher and uses a lift draw rather than a swing draw.



MARCHS FERRY BETWEEN NEWBURYPORT AND RINGS ISLAND

The Essex National Heritage Commission is the primary grant sponsor of this sign. Additional funding was provided by Coastal Trails Coalition and the Salisbury Cultural Council, which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.



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Photo from Historic Postcard

### Road Bridge 1827

The first bridge from downtown Newburyport was a privately-owned toll bridge. It was a chain suspension bridge with five stone towers and a swing draw. The bridge was used by pedestrians, livestock, wagons and carriages.

### Trains on Bridge 1840

In 1840 Eastern Railroad contracted to rebuild the wooden road bridge to rebuild the wooden road bridge with an upper deck for trains and an enclosed lower deck. Imagine pedestrians and livestock crossing the bridge with a train rumbling overhead.

### Railroad Bridge 1865

The Eastern Railroad built a new wooden railroad bridge upstream of the road bridge. The road bridge was rebuilt on the same piers. It became public and toll collection ceased in 1868.

### Road Bridge Rebuilt 1875

In April 1875 a great ice jam on the Merrimack carried away three stone piers and 200 ft. of the road bridge on the Salisbury side. That summer half of the bridge was rebuilt with iron.

### Iron Bridges 1888, 1903

The railroad bridge was rebuilt as a double track iron bridge in 1888 and remains today. The road bridge was rebuilt in 1902-3 as an iron girder bridge called the Green Bridge, with a swing draw.





ESSEX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

# Great Marsh Wildlife



## The Salt Marsh Community

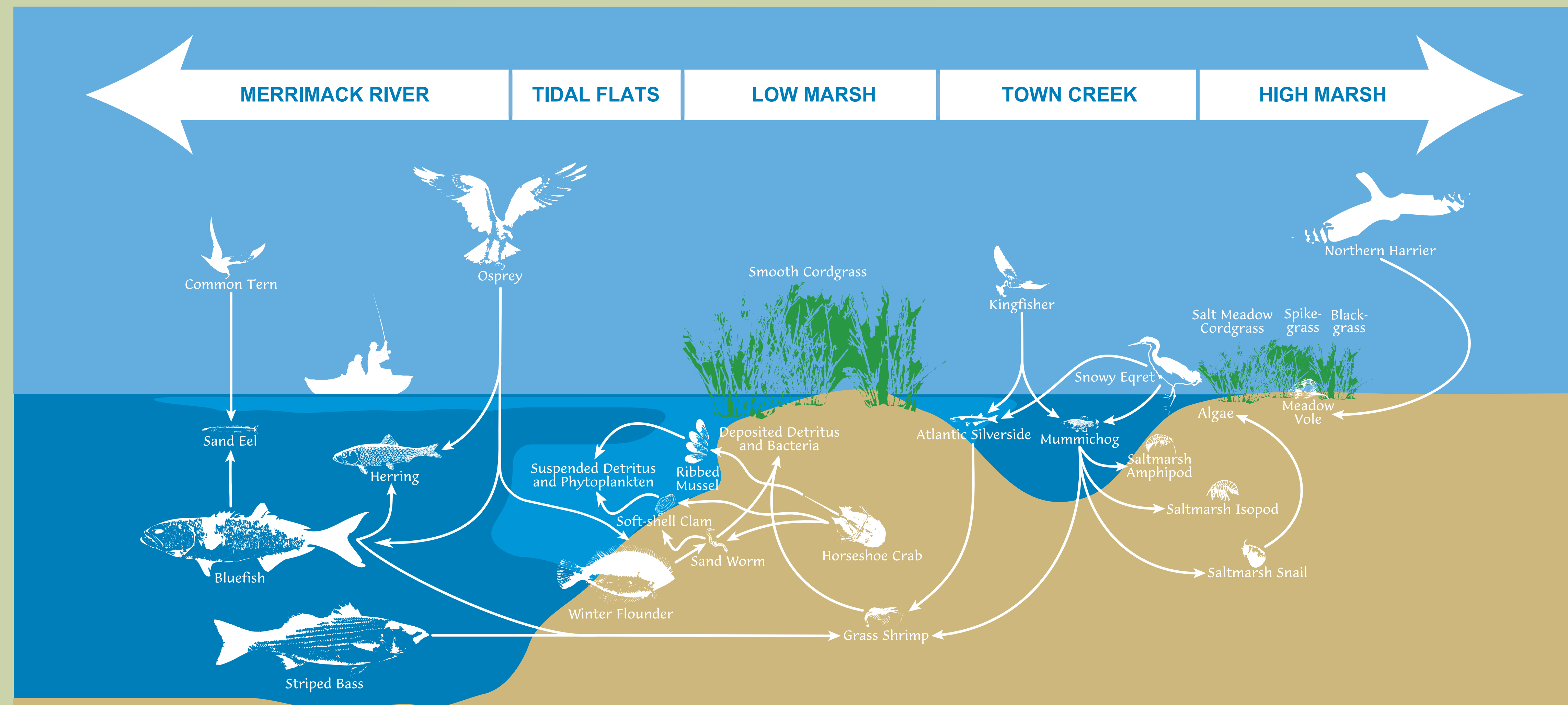
The salt marsh at Town Creek is part of Great Marsh, which stretches from Cape Ann in the south to the New Hampshire seacoast in the north. This is one of the largest salt marsh systems in the country.

After many years of "reclamation" by filling and degradation by dumping and pollution, salt marshes are now recognized as highly productive ecosystems. Salt marshes not only provide essential support for marine fisheries, but also protect coastal areas from flooding and erosion and improve water quality.

Salt marshes develop in sheltered coastal areas that allow sediment to settle and accumulate without being eroded by storm or ocean waves. One of the first plants to colonize a shallow tidal flat is smooth cordgrass (*spartina alterniflora*) that grows tall and has a strong rooting system that can tolerate the ebb and flow of the tides. This grass traps additional sediment and plant material and gradually builds into high marsh, which is flooded only occasionally by higher tides. The high marsh supports a wider variety of plants, including salt meadow cordgrass (*spartina patens*), supporting nesting birds and mammals like meadow voles.

The primary product of the salt marsh is detritus produced by decomposition of dead plants. The marsh also hosts microscopic organisms such as bacteria, plankton and algae that form the base of the food web. Many invertebrates such as snails, crabs, shrimp and amphipods eat detritus. Clams and worms consume detritus, bacteria, plankton and algae by filtering seawater. Predators such as crabs, fish and shorebirds feed in turn on these smaller animals. The shallow waters provide habitat for prey species such as mummichogs and silversides and serve as a nursery for food fish like flounder. These small fish attract fish-eating birds such as terns, kingfishers and cormorants and game fish such as striped bass and bluefish. At the top of the food web osprey, northern harriers, eagles and other raptors patrol the skies to prey on larger fish and small mammals and birds.

As you look over Town Creek, you will see tidal flats (exposed at low tide), a narrow band of low marsh and large expanses of high marsh, dotted with uninhabited upland islands supporting woodlands. This diverse habitat supports a wide variety of species. On the lower part of this sign you will find pictures and descriptions of the birds that are most commonly found in and near Town Creek.



The Essex National Heritage Commission is the primary grant sponsor of this sign. Additional funding was provided by Coastal Trails Coalition and the Salisbury Cultural Council, which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

Bird photos courtesy of Jim Hully, with exception of the Northern Harrier, which is courtesy of Jim Fenton.

### NORTHERN HARRIER

Length 18" Wingspan 43" Weight 15oz  
Slender and buoyant flyer with a distinct white spot at base of long tail. Usually seen coursing low over fields and marshes with upswept wings. Hunts small birds and mammals. Commonly known as Marsh Hawk.



### COMMON TERN

Length 12" Wingspan 30" Weight 4.2oz  
Flies Buoyantly and plunge-dives head-first in open water for small fish. Gray body with a white belly and forked tail. Very streamlined.



### BELTED KINGFISHER

Length 13" Wingspan 20" Weight 5oz  
Uses posts, trees or wires for lookout perches and catches fish by plunge-diving head-first in sheltered waters. Often seen hovering. Blue head and body with white collar.



### RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

Length 8.75" Wingspan 13" Weight 1.8oz  
Widespread species arrives early in spring and nests in wet, brushy or marshy areas. Males perch on branches or tall reeds and sing (kon-ka-ree) in breeding season. Black body with a red-orange patch on shoulders of males.



### TREE SWALLOW

Length 5.75" Wingspan 14.5" Weight 0.7oz  
Stocky and broad-winged with a gray body and white belly. Catches insects in flight. Nests singly in cavities in trees or birdhouses. Large flocks gather in fall for migration.



### EASTERN KINGBIRD

Length 8.5" Wingspan 15" Weight 1.4oz  
Perches on posts, trees or wires to watch for flying insects which they capture with a fluttering flight. Black head, gray body with a white-tipped black tail.



### MARSH WREN

Length 5" Wingspan 6" Weight 0.39lb  
Small, secretive and hard to see in tall reeds and marsh grasses. Sings with a gurgling song night and day in breeding season. Reddish-brown back with upturned tail.



### GREAT BLUE HERON

Length 46" Wingspan 72" Weight 5.3lb  
Tall, gray, solitary, mostly stationary wader. Hunts for fish and small animals. Long neck, wide wing span with slow, steady wingbeats.



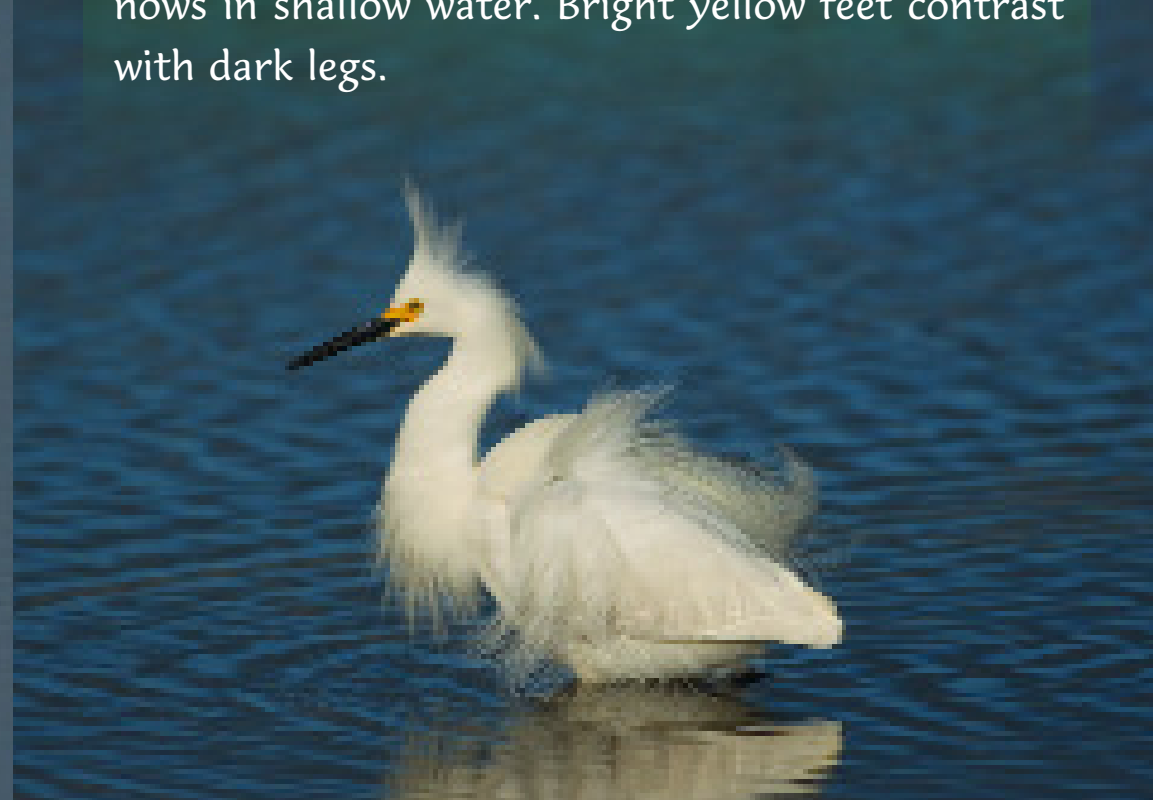
### GREAT EGRET

Length 39" Wingspan 51" Weight 1.9lb  
Tall, slender white waders with black legs and feet. Larger than Snowy Egret. Feed mainly on fish captured in open water.



### SNOWY EGRET

Length 24" Wingspan 41" Weight 13oz  
Slender white waders, smaller than Great Egret and larger than Cattle Egret. Often gather in small flocks and feed mainly on fish, often chasing minnows in shallow water. Bright yellow feet contrast with dark legs.



### GREATER YELLOWLEGS

Length 14" Wingspan 28" Weight 6oz  
Slender, elegant wader. Forages actively in shallow water. Bobs head and body when alarmed. Long, thin bill and gray body with yellow legs. White tail is visible in flight.



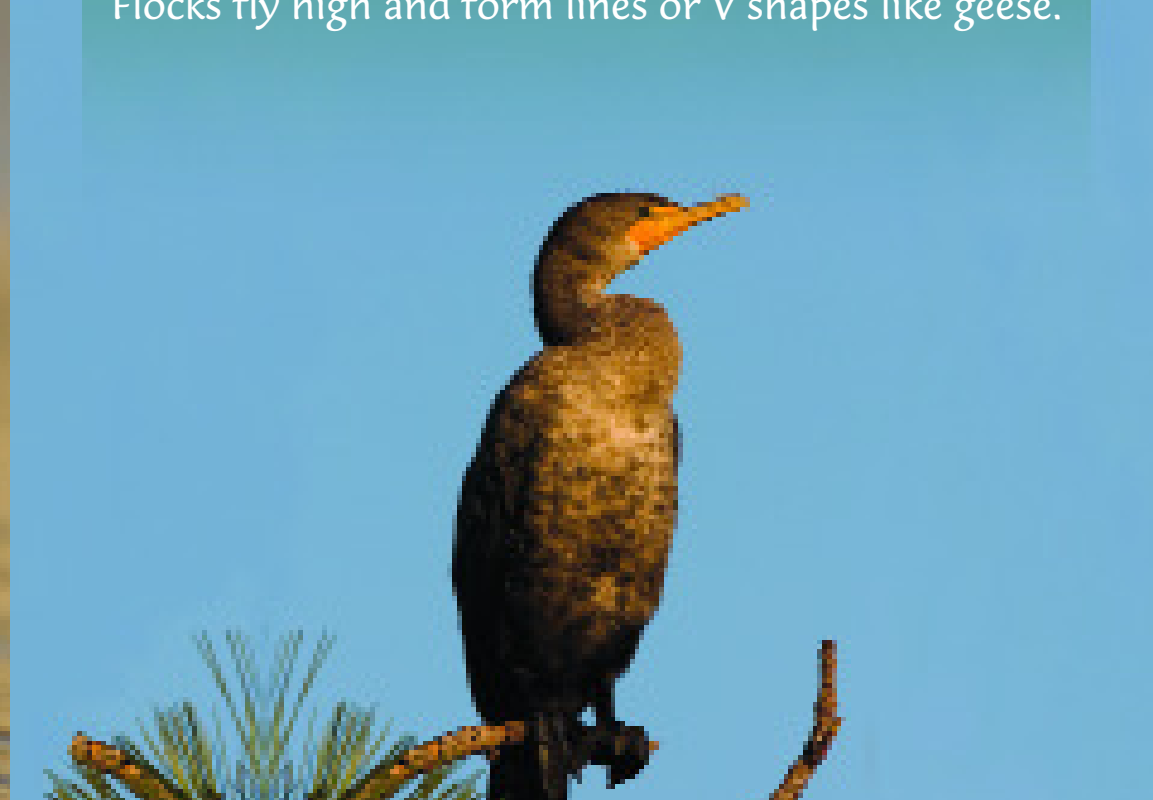
### WILLET

Length 15" Wingspan 26" Weight 8oz  
Large, stocky gray-brown wader showing a white wing stripe in flight. Clear, loud chanting calls in flight and to claim territory.



### DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT

Length 33" Wingspan 52" Weight 3.7lb  
Found on open water either fresh or salt, often in flocks. Swims and dives for small fish. Dark-bodied with yellow-orange bill. Struggles to get airborne. Flocks fly high and form lines or V shapes like geese.



### AMERICAN BLACK DUCK

Length 23" Wingspan 35" Weight 2.6lb  
Dark brown, heavy-bodied dabbling duck. Especially fond of saltmarshes. Takes off water almost vertically.







# Landing Place of the First Settlers



ESSEX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

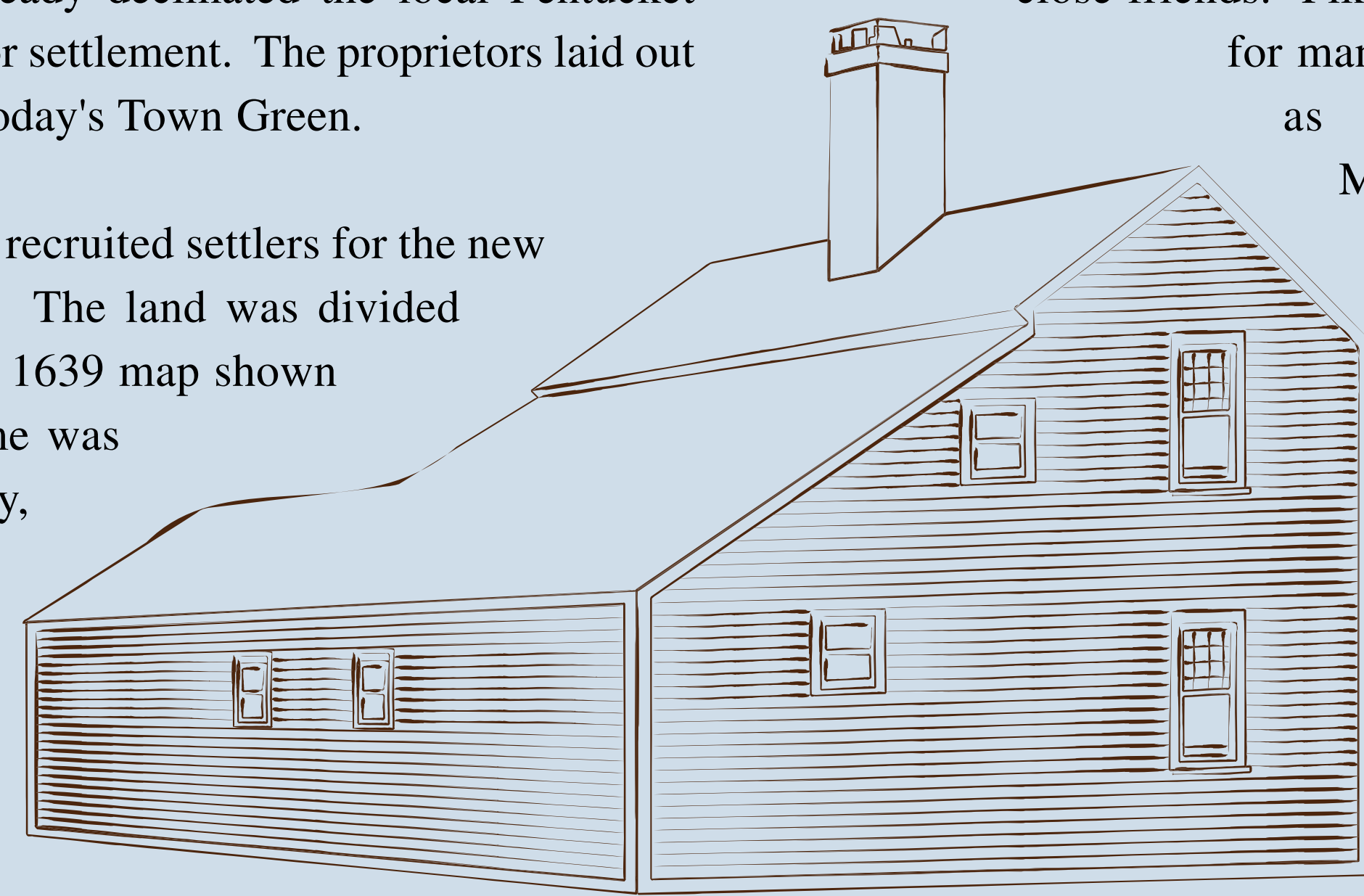
## First Settlement in Salisbury, 1639



In September of 1638, Simon Bradstreet, John Sanders, Christopher Batt and nine other proprietors received permission from the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony "to begin a plantation at Merrimac" north of the Merrimack River. Bradstreet and Batt had explored the area in August 1638, rowing across the Merrimack River from Newbury and up Town Creek, where you are standing today. Nearby they found a broad open space on high ground previously cleared by Indians. European diseases spread by fishermen had already decimated the local Pentucket Indian tribe and left the land open for settlement. The proprietors laid out the town around this open space - today's Town Green.

parishioners. Remarkably, Salisbury's original Puritan Parish still exists and owns the local Methodist church, the Post Office, Pettengill House and other property. Salisbury residents can become voting members of the Parish, just as the local Puritans did centuries ago.

Salisbury's first minister, the Reverend William Worcester, served for 23 years. He and Robert Pike, pictured below, were neighbors and close friends. Pike was a leader of the new town, serving for many years as Prudential Man (Selectman), as Town Meeting Moderator and as Magistrate (local Judge). After the General Court disenfranchised Pike and removed him from office for criticizing a law that forbade preaching without permission, Worcester and many others petitioned for Pike's reinstatement. The petitioners were investigated and threatened, but eventually the General Court relented. This was the first successful citizen petition in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.



John Sanders House

The Sanders House pictured here was built by John Sanders in 1639 and is the only house remaining of those built by the first settlers. It is a typical saltbox of the early New England Colonial period. In 1641 John Sanders' sister Sarah (then age 19) married Robert Pike. They eventually had eight children and thousands of their descendants now live all over the United States. The Sanders House was purchased and restored recently by a descendant of John Sanders and is the site of Sanders family reunions. The house is located at the corner of School Street and Mudnock Road.

Bradstreet and the other proprietors recruited settlers for the new plantation, first named Colchester. The land was divided among the settlers according to the 1639 map shown on this sign. The settlement's name was changed the next year to Salisbury, after Christopher Batt's hometown in England. Batt also left his name on Batt's Hill, the highest hill in Salisbury, now the site of a Town water tank off Locust Street. If you look closely at the map you will see the names of original settlers whose descendants still live in Salisbury, such as Dow, Eaton, Pike and Sargent. Descendants of some of the early settlers like the Bartlett and Stevens families still farm land that was granted to their forebears almost 400 years ago. You can visit the Colonial Burying Ground at the corner of Beach Road and Ferry Road where the earliest settlers are buried. Note the "wolf slabs" that were laid on their graves to keep the wolves away after a burial.

The Massachusetts Bay Colony functioned as a Puritan theocracy in which only male church members were allowed to vote. No new town could be established without an approved Puritan minister for the



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### Major Robert Pike



Major Robert Pike (1616-1706) was one of Salisbury's first settlers and its leading citizen. A successful farmer, he served as Salisbury's Deputy to the colony's General Court and as a Governor's Councilor, making the arduous two day horseback trip to Boston until he was in his 80's. He showed great courage throughout his life. For more than 50 years he commanded militia units defending northern frontier towns against Indian raids. A man of strong convictions, he was punished severely for criticizing Puritan laws restricting religious freedom. He later interceded to protect Quaker women from court-ordered public whippings and was among the first to challenge the witchcraft trials of the 1690's. You can read Loyal Dissenter, the Life and Times of Robert Pike by Roland Warren for a study of Robert Pike's role in the major issues that faced the colony.

Simon Bradstreet (1603-1697) arrived in Boston in 1630. He was a major figure in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, serving as its first Secretary. He became Governor in 1679, but by 1684 in turmoil over the English King's assertion of more control over the colony, he was removed and voted "an enemy of his country" by the colony's General Court. He helped establish several new towns, including Salisbury, although he never lived here. His wife, Anne Bradstreet, was America's first poetess and her poetry is still taught in our schools. She is best known for her love poems for Simon, writing most of them while he was away from home on public business. Her poem, "My dear and Loving Husband" begins:

If ever two were one, then surely we.  
If ever man were lov'd by wife, then thee; . . .

### Gov. Simon Bradstreet

