

History

Historians are at odds on the origin of the word “Monomoy”: it is either a term used by the Wampanoag people, a loose confederation of several Native American tribes, that means “look out place,” or derived from the Algonquian word “munumuhkemoo,” meaning “there is a rushing of great water,” or a mix of Native American names meaning “deep black” or “black soil,” referring to the wet spongy soil in the region around The Creeks.¹

¹ *The Native American Names of Cape Cod*, *Cape Cod Times*, 31 January 2022; *Indian Place Names on Nantucket Island*, Elizabeth A. Little, *Nantucket Historical Association*, 1983.



Whatever the origin, the first indigenous peoples, the Wampanoag, were careful and caring stewards of their natural environment for thousands of years, long before the arrival of European settlers, according to the Nantucket Historical Association. They fished, hunted, gathered and planted on the lands of Monomoy, and across Nantucket, instilled with cultural values that celebrated seasonal cycles and the power of creation.

OWNERS OF SHIMMO, FISH LOTS, WEST AND SOUTH MONOMOY.	Shimmo.	Fish Lots.	West Monomoy.	South Monomoy.
Stephen Coffin and son Stephen	1	1	26	
Sarah Gardner	1	1	25	
Edward Coffin and Bethia Gardner	4	4	24	
James Coffin	19	19	22	
Jethro Coffin and Stephen Coffin, Jr.	18	18	21	
Nathaniel Starbuck and Colemans	5	5	3	
Peter and Samuel Coffin	14	14	4	
James, Ebenezer Gardner and brethren	9	9	5	
Nathaniel Barnard	13	13	9	
Jethro Starbuck and George Gardner	15	15	10	
John Swain and Samuel Gardner	1	1	11	
Nathaniel Starbuck	26	26	12	
Ebenezer and Peter Coffin and William Worth	22	22	13	
Ebenezer Folger and brethren	6	6	14	
William Vaughn	12	12	15	
Joseph and Benjamin Swain and Robert Long	20	20	16	
James Coffin, Jr.	25	25	17	
The Bunkers 1. Proprietary 1	10	10	18	
Thomas Macy	11	11	19	
Ebenezer Gardner and Jenima Coffin	8	8	20	
James Coffin, Jr., Edmund Allen and Macies	21	21	21	
Nathaniel Coffin and William Worth	24	24	22	
William Worth, Richard Gardner and Stephen Coffin	16	16	23	
George Gardner	23	23	24	
Stephen Hussey	17	17	25	
Richard Pinkham and Nathaniel Barnard	7	7	26	
Richard Gardner	3	3	27	

A list of early Monomoy landowners, circa 1726

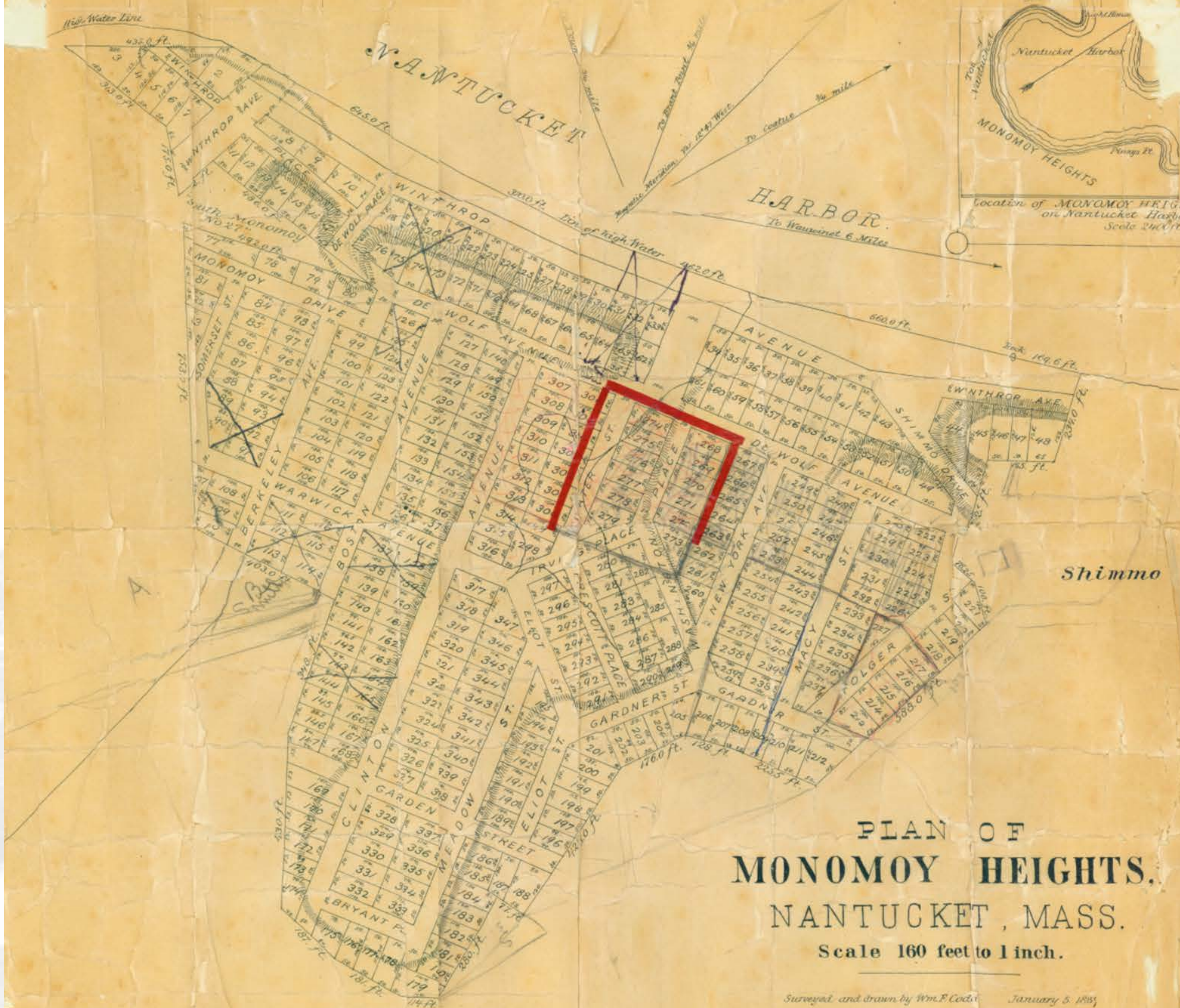
In 1641, William, Earl of Sterling, deeded Nantucket to Thomas Mayhew, beginning the European settlement of the island, with a first community, Sherburne, located on the north shore at Capaum Pond.

The first written records of Monomoy appeared in 1678, when the area was staked out by the Proprietors. To sort out haphazard land use, the parcels were recalled in 1726 and re-issued by the Proprietors as West and South Monomoy, the latter being what is known as the Monomoy of today. Largely meadow and pastureland, it comprised 27 parcels owned by many of the familiar early islander families: Coffin, Starbuck, Folger, Gardner, Swain and Macy, among others.²

The arrival of the whaling industry created a population boom, yet most development was limited to town, with shrinking lot sizes as more people subdivided their lots to create the historic, dense, rectangular lots as we find today in the town core. Fortunately, major wetland areas like those in Monomoy remained relatively untouched for centuries, with Nantucketers embracing the conservation of natural spaces. This mindset of stewardship minimized the spread of human interruption and interference

Monomoy's shift to a summer residential community did not begin until more than 160 years later, in 1889, with a new speculative development called Monomoy Heights, following in the wake of similar residential developments in Brant Point, 'Sconset, Cliff and Wauwinet.

Monomoy remained sparsely populated with only a few houses until the late 1920s, when efforts to drain swamplands and eradicate mosquitoes ushered in a new era of growth.³ Today, a few homes built in the 1930s still stand in some manner, designated local historic structures.



3 A Nantucket Enclave: Monomoy Heights, 1852-2005, C. S. Lovelace, 1985. Mill Hill Press.

² Nantucket Lands and Land Owners", Worth, Henry Barnard, Nantucket Historical Association, Vol. 2, Bulletin No.1, 1901.

Monomoy remains a unique community in the Nantucket Island landscape, situated along the inner harbor with sweeping views across precious salt marshes, to town and harbor, while offering majestic views of sunsets and sunrises. Accessible by one main paved road, and without an outlet for through traffic, Monomoy is an oasis of quiet and solitude while offering proximity to town and mid-island shopping and services.

Monomoy also hosts two popular family-oriented, calm-water public beaches, Monomoy Beach and Cathcart Beach. The waters immediately adjacent to the properties along the upper reaches of Monomoy Road provide a large anchorage used by boaters, and the beach access points are used by canoe and kayak enthusiasts to access the wildlife rich Monomoy Creeks, surfcasters, scallopers, birders and those who simply enjoy a relaxing walk on the beach.

Monomoy residents and those who visit the area value the feeling of peace and serenity they find in the neighborhood, with its quiet residential character, open green spaces, the proximity to calm inner harbor beaches and the downtown area, as well as magnificent vistas across the Harbor to Town and Coatue.

Sustainable stewardship of this priceless and irreplaceable environment in Monomoy has never been more pressing or important than it is today. This Monomoy Area Plan seeks to preserve these very qualities through the vision, recommendations and implementation plan presented here.



A view from Monomoy to Town, circa 1950s