

Veasey seems to have evolved into a spot that fills in a lot of little cracks and crevasses for the Town of Groveland. It is protected open space, it provides indoor and outdoor recreation possibilities, and it is available for private rental to help pay the bills. The rentals can be family parties, educational or civic activities, business meetings, or cultural events. We also work closely with a number of local organizations, helping to make the programs offered by those organizations available to Groveland residents as well as residents of other Massachusetts communities.



Young artists at our annual fundraiser

Our partners include the North Shore Amateur Astronomy Club, Northern Essex Community College, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, the Pentucket Regional School District, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion, the Groveland Activities Committee, the Groveland Library, One Tail at a Time (a dog rescue organization), home schoolers, wood carvers, public health programs, artist collaboratives, kids' camps, and the Bradford Grange. The Groveland Conservation Commission, the Groveland Recreation Commission, and the Groveland Open Space and Trails Committee are based here. Over the years we have also been able to help "incubate" a number of small businesses. We like to think that Veasey is a place where things can happen that might not ever happen - if we didn't have this place.



Young astronomers in the Great Hall

We have been open to the public since 1996 and are financially stable, making improvements to the property when we can but maintaining it in the way it is supposed to be used. We have evolved our programs to fit the condition and operating constraints of the facility. We are always interested in forming new working partnerships and creating new programs that are consistent with our conservation and civic responsibilities.

So, what is this place? It's an old place, it's a new place, it's a place for the natural world, and it's a place for people.

It's a great place.



## Veasey Memorial Park

201 Washington Street • Groveland, MA 01834 • (978) 521-9345  
<http://www.veaseypark.org> • [events@veaseypark.org](mailto:events@veaseypark.org)

## What is this place?

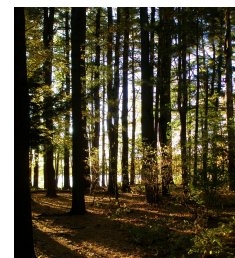
Veasey Memorial Park is a 47.5 acre property owned and managed by the Groveland Conservation Commission for open space purposes and passive recreational use. That's a dry mouthful, which doesn't really communicate much about the history or the spirit of this place.

Veasey is a nice piece of land with a modestly unique group of natural features. Most of it is a hill – a glacial drumlin of sand and well worn river rock – deposited here during the last ice age. The hill slopes down through the woods to the north and west into Johnson's Pond, an 80 acre body of fresh water with an undeveloped shoreline.



A place to sit, at the entrance to Veasey

The forest is a mix of conifer, softwoods, and hardwoods; the creek that flows from the pond drops about 75 feet on its way to the Merrimack River, and then to the Atlantic Ocean. The hill itself is peppered with many small freshwater springs. On the east and south the hill is bared to open meadows and lawns. This combination of features means we support micro-habitats for a wide range of wild birds, plants, insects, and small mammals.



Veasey has walking trails in the woods and fields

There is some evidence that early human inhabitants of North America used this area as a seasonal fishing spot, many thousands of years ago. The European settlers later cleared the land for farming and grazing, and built mills downstream, along the creek. The modern part of the Veasey story revolves around these mills, operated for many years by the Hale family of Haverhill, and later by the Veaseys.

Around 1873, a 19-year-old Arthur D. Veasey

began working for Benjamin Hale as his carriage driver. Mr. Veasey was bright and ambitious, and eventually worked his way up through the company and bought out his boss. Although he worked very hard, he also fiercely enjoyed the out of doors and spent many rustic holidays with his family and friends in Maine. Mr. Veasey also built this bungalow-style cottage near the top of Reservoir Hill here in Groveland, at the edge of a field used by an enterprise that was at one time known as the Wabenauki Dairy. The small shingled cottage at the entrance to Veasey Park is all the remains of the dairy.

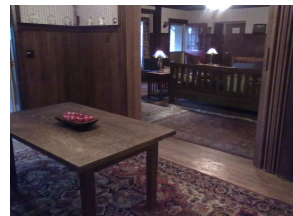


Early picture of "the Bungalow"

The Veaseys' bungalow was constructed by workers during slower times at the mills, and was built in the Arts and Crafts style. The Arts and Crafts movement was something of a reaction to the famous excesses of the Victorian period, and incorporated a number of tenets that guided architectural design

as well as the manner of construction. Homes were smaller, sited to fit well with the land, used local materials – as well as labor, and they included built-in furniture and other practical features.

The Main Building at Veasey today incorporates the original bungalow, and when you look at the historical rooms that remain you can see these "Craftsman" principles echoed in the paneling, stone work, and decorative elements of the original house. The bungalow was well-used by the Veaseys, and a perusal of the photographs in the display near the west entrance will show you the serious affection that the family had for this place, and for the out-of-doors in general.



"Arts and Crafts" interior of some of the older rooms

Meanwhile, the mills were very successful, having been a major supplier of blankets to the Union Army during the civil war, and Henry Ford even came here to purchase the fabric to cover the seats of his early cars. But as time went on, the mill machinery was less suited to producing the fabrics demanded by evolving tastes and industrial requirements, and the mills eventually closed. By then, other improvements to the property, including a tennis court, Lucile's Cottage, the carriage paths and the gardens had been added. The Veaseys sold the property not long after Arthur D. Veasey passed away.

The property then changed hands privately for a number of years, and in the late 1950's became the possession of the Little Missionary Sisters of Charity, an order of Italian nuns unconnected with the local Catholic archdiocese. Their original plan was to establish a novitiate here, but during

the turbulent early 1960's it was difficult to convince young women in Italy that this was a quiet and serene location. The sisters searched for a new mission, and found it when the large State mental hospital closed in Danvers, Massachusetts. A group of adult women with special needs had no place to go, and the sisters welcomed them here.



While the nuns were here, a number of changes were made to the property's structures. Some of the larger rooms in the bungalow were converted to dormitories, a swimming pool was built, the nuns maintained a large vegetable garden, and the "east wing" of the Main Building was added. The addition of this wing meant that the older Veasey home was enveloped by a more institutional structure, which included a new dining room, a small and a large chapel, and a function hall with a large kitchen. The sisters hosted many events for families and children, and operated Camp Fatima here for many summers. The sisters also added the

Good Shepherd's Cottage, as a residence for visiting priests. Famously, the steep hillside along Washington Street grew into a favorite sledding spot during the winter, with the quiet consent of the owners of "Nuns' Hill".

About 35 years went by, and the population of women here was aging and needed to move into different caretaking situations. The sisters decided to sell the property to raise funds for their future missions, and the Town of Groveland was an eager buyer. The process took over two years, and - because it required collaboration with the State that was unprecedented in Groveland – drew some controversy. But on October 30, 1996 the sale was consummated at a cost of \$954,000, only \$160,000 of which was paid directly by the Town. The remainder of the money was raised through grants and conservation liens, and a very generous donation from the Veasey family. The Veaseys requested that the property be named "Veasey Memorial Park", and the town was happy to comply, in recognition of not only their financial contribution but also the historical relationship between the Veaseys, the mills, and the town of Groveland.



Winter sports on the hill

So, now what is this place?