



*Jaci Barton of Cotuit served as the Executive Director of the Barnstable Land Trust, Inc. (nee Barnstable Conservation Foundation, Inc.) from 1985 to 2015. She oversaw the development of the group from the receipt of its first gift of marshland to a powerhouse non-profit that could successfully pull off a \$3.3 million, 22-acre purchase. She gracefully merged the Mary Barton (no relation!) Land Trust of Cotuit into the Barnstable Land Trust in 2011, bringing the flagship property at Eagle Pond into BLT's domain. She received an award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for "leadership and dedication to the New England environment." (pictured with Mark Robinson, Executive Director of The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, 14 July 2021. Photo credit: Amanda Sullivan, BLT)*

### **Jaci Barton receives Barnstable Land Trust Founder's Award,**

### **14 July 2021 Annual Meeting, Remarks by Mark H. Robinson**

I don't usually write down a speech, I usually wing it, but it is a measure of my highest regard for Jaci Barton that I wrote this down, put some thought into it!

It is appropriate that we are here at Lowell Park in Cotuit because this neighborhood bracketed Jaci's 30 years at the helm of the Barnstable Land Trust. Across the street, at the corner of Putnam Ave and Lowell Ave, is the red house, look for it on your way out of town. A hundred years ago, it was the summer home of Abbott Lawrence Lowell, the Harvard President. His sister gave the land that became the Cotuit high school and later this ballpark.

In the 1980s the red house was owned by Sepp and Peg Dietzgen, who hosted the first fundraiser for the new Barnstable Conservation Foundation (now, the BLT). Jaci attended that meeting and was energized to hear Jim Lentowski describe his work with the Nantucket Conservation Foundation, which now has protected one-third of that island. When Jim died

this month, after leading the Nantucket group for 40 years, his colleague said that “No ten people could have accomplished what he did.” The same can be said for Jaci’s 30 years in Barnstable.

Fast forward to 2015, as Jaci was putting the finishing touches on her last great project, the preservation of the 19 acres surrounding this field, the Lowell Park Woodlands. Slated to become nine luxury house lots, the manicured backyards would have butted up against the bleachers and outfield fence. Jaci rallied the Town government, the Cotuit Fire District and 1600 individuals and families to raise \$1.6 million to preserve the forest. This gem of a ballpark, the prettiest on the Cape, would be just another place, not the field of dreams we know it to be.



*Jaci negotiated the deal to preserve 19 acres of pine woods surrounding Lowell Park to ward off a 9-lot luxury subdivision in Cotuit and raised the \$1.6 million needed for the purchase in 2015. Widely acknowledged as the best ballpark in the famed Cape Cod Baseball League, Lowell Park has been home to the 17-time champion Cotuit Kettleers since 1947.*

*(Photo by Paul Rifkin)*

Land conservation is proving a negative. If the 9 houses were built here, we could admire their architecture, their landscaping, their decorative spotlighting of the yard trees. But when land conservation succeeds, nothing happens. The woods just stays as woods. Jaci’s greatest

success was making sure that nothing happened. What a lot of action goes into making sure that nothing happens!

How did she do it? Running a land trust is often a high-wire act. You need skills in real estate, law, environmental planning, mapping, negotiation, collaboration, biology, and politics. You also need how to meet a payroll, file tax forms, do your own HR work, draft a budget, staff committees, fundraise, and recruit and train up board members. But the best land trusts engage in generous amounts of risk-taking, sticking their neck out for the land, hoping that others will join you when you make a leap of faith and say, “Yes, we will find a way to raise \$1.6 million.” Jaci’s ultimate skill was making good on all the risks she took. Sometimes it took longer than others, but she never failed when she stuck her neck out. The fact that her boards went along with her so often is a tribute to the confidence they had that she would figure it out—somehow.



**Jacalyn A. Barton, 2008**

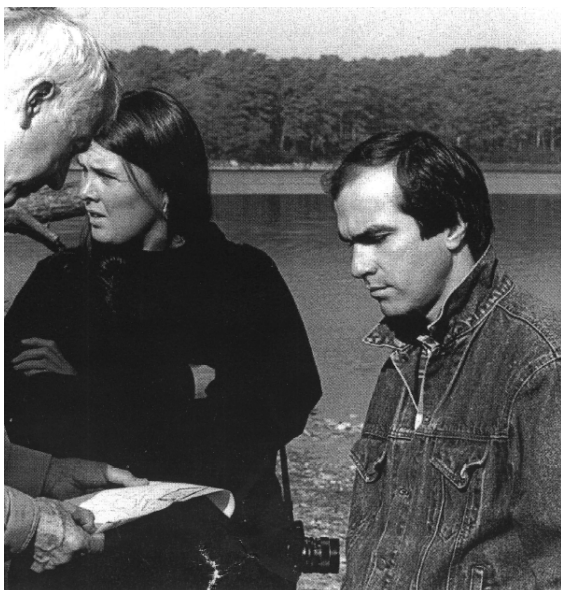
Jaci has received numerous awards, among them: the New England Advisory Council of the Trust for Public Land’s New England Conservation Award for “outstanding vision, passion and dedication to the conservation of a unique landscape;” the Cotuit Community MVP Award presented by KeySpan, in partnership with the Cape Cod Baseball League, in recognition of her commitment to community; the distinguished Region 1- EPA Environmental Merit Award; and was celebrated as a Green Hero-Protector of Open Space by Cape Cod Magazine.

(photo credit: Mark Robinson, 2008)

Jaci exasperated a lot of us with her organic approach to projects, doing it her way, sometimes not the by the book way. She would make a phone call and stay on the line forever, making sure that whomever she was speaking to understood and accepted her vision, her plan, her result. That long phone call might be the most important thing she did all day or all week.

Cultivating a relationship with a landowner or financial backer or local official. In our time now of texts and emails, a lot of that personal touch is being lost (take note, younger generation.)

The pantheon of places that Jaci rescued from development is impressive. Remember, she began work in the mid-1980s, at the peak of the 20<sup>th</sup> century development boom. In 1986, the Town of Barnstable issued more than 1000 building permits—that would be three new concrete foundations poured every day for a year. The pressure on land was enormous and the BLT was just a fledgling organization. Like the old fisherman’s saying “Oh, Lord, thy sea is so great and my ship is so small.” How could we compete with well-heeled developers? Like the off-Cape syndicates that wanted to build 300 condos on the shore of Hathaways Pond, or 90 houses off Old Jail Lane, or 30 houses against the marsh at Crocker Neck?



*In 1989 Jaci led an effort to have the Town purchase the forest along the northeast shore of Hathaways Pond to prevent a 300-unit condo development from being built there. Hathaways is one of the few ponds in Barnstable now owned completely by the Town.*

*(with L. Burns Magruder and Mark Robinson, November 1989. Photo credit: Barnstable Patriot.)*



Jaci realized that the best way to succeed was in support of the town government: to ally the flexibility, creativity and grass-roots energy of a nonprofit like BLT with the access to capital in a big town like Barnstable. Often, you have to grin and bear it when working with town officials, but Jaci kept the lines of communication open, first with the Conservation Commission and Selectmen, then the Town Managers and Councilors. Along with Ric Presbrey at the Housing Assistance Corp. and Wendy Northcross at the Chamber of Commerce, Jaci had the utmost respect of these town hall bigwigs because they knew if she and these other civic leaders promised something, they could deliver.



Photo credit: Elizabeth Lewis

Left to right: (2021)  
Lindsey B. Counsell, 30-year open space dealmaker for the Town of Barnstable, whose work continues (Mr. Inside to Jaci's Ms. Outside); of Centerville  
Jaci Barton; of Cotuit  
Mark Robinson, The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, Inc. (1986 – present); of Cotuit  
Robert O'Leary ; Cape & Islands State Senator from 2001 to 2011, campaigned to secure approval of Cape Cod Land Bank Act, which preserved 4500 acres, and Community Preservation Act to help towns buy open space; of Cummaquid

So, while we think of the 1000+ acres and the flagship landscapes preserved by BLT under Jaci's watch, like Fuller Farm in Marstons Mills, Eagle Pond and Meadow Point in Cotuit, Bayview

Farm in West Barnstable, Coombs Bog in Centerville, and Bansfield Meadow in Osterville, don't forget the behind the scenes work Jaci did to nudge the Town to preserve our other wild places.



*Jaci loved to get children out in nature, whether opening new public walking trails like these at Coombs Bogs in Centerville, or taking the 5<sup>th</sup> graders out herself each year to examine the tidepools at Crocker Neck in Cotuit. (Photo credits: left by Jaci Barton, right by Mark Robinson, 2011.)*

I mentioned that land conservation work is often proving the negative. Likewise, think about where Barnstable might be if Jaci and Vern had not put down roots here in 1978. Sure, there may have been a Barnstable Land Trust, whose staff directors came for a while, then either burned out against the pressures or moved on, pursuing their careers rather than curating a passion to save open space. Jaci is the one who stayed and fought. And rallied thousands of others to the cause.

In his early song called Growing Up, Bruce Springsteen wrote, "When they said sit down, I stood up." Our Jaci stood up, and stood out.





*The “Godmothers of Open Space” in Barnstable: Anne G. Gould and Jaci Barton, 2008. Anne founded the Mary Barton Land Conservation Trust in 1980 to preserve the 110-acre Eagle Pond property and several others in Cotuit. She was Jaci’s friend and mentor and a BLT president early on. Jaci spoke for Anne when Anne received the Chaplin Award from The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts in August 2008. (photo credit: Mark Robinson)*



*In March 2007, Jaci and Anne Gould celebrated the preservation of 23 acres on Cordwood Road for \$3.3 million, a joint fundraising effort between the Mary Barton Land Trust and BLT.*





Jaci Barton's oldest friends and well-wishers gathered to honor her after the BLT event.

14 July 2021, Cotuit

Cotuit Water Commissioner Scott Horsley, Rob O'Leary and West Barnstable's Pat Loughran share a laugh



Paul Grover, top real estate broker on Cape Cod (of Cotuit), lobbied for the Land Bank Act when that was unpopular with his industry peers in the 1980s and '90s.

with Jaci Barton and Mark Robinson

*Photo credit: Elizabeth Lewis*



## Draft script for BLT's Jaci Barton appreciation video, 2016

**M. H. Robinson**

Narrator:

Barnstable is a big town

*Satellite image of whole town*

Of seven villages

*Rapid collage of village signs*

Spread out over 60 square miles

*Another aerial or drone*

With 100 miles of saltwater shoreline

*Oblique view of Sandy Neck (drone or plane)*

Enjoyed by 120,000 residents and thousands more visitors on a summer day.

*Busy Hyannis street scene*

Is it possible for one person to make an impact on something so big and complex?

We think so. And Jaci Barton is that person.

Jaci served as Executive Director of the Barnstable Land Trust from 1985 to 2015.

In that role, she has led the charge to preserve thousands of acres throughout the community.

Green space that has kept Barnstable the beautiful place to live and visit.

*Beauty shots of town*

Land that has protected our clean drinking water

*Child drinking from tap*

Our ponds and shores

*Pond and shore shots*

And kept wild space for plants and animals

*Bell Farm, Cotuit meadow*

*Lindsey Counsell or Mimi McConnell: "Subdivision sprawl threatened to consume Barnstable in the 1980s and 90s. Jaci identified crucial parcels to save from the bulldozer and set out to preserve them."*

People responded to her leadership. Voters backed multi-million dollar land purchases at town meeting and the ballot box. She raised millions more in private donations to buy critical open space.

*Anne Gould: "Jaci and her husband bought a house in Cotuit in 1978. They knew they had found a spiritual home in our village with its woods and sailing harbor..."*

*Jaci and Vern sailing in Yana and walking at Eagle Pond*

*Anne Gould: "...but Jaci knew she had to fight to save it. That led her to the Barnstable Land Trust."*

Barbara Birdsey gave the first gift of land to BLT, a small parcel of marsh at Smith's Dock in the Great Marshes.

*Barbara Birdsey, landowner: "I had faith that Jaci and BLT would keep the land forever wild as animal habitat. She has never let me down."*

*Jaci: "At BLT we could involve the entire community in my passion for open space. It reached all seven villages and enabled us to work with civic groups and town government."*

*Tom Mullen: "Jaci's desire and people skills helped her to develop keen political instincts. She could bring people together and inspire them to work for progress in environmental protection."*

Indeed, Jaci steered the campaign to buy 492 acres for \$18 million at one Town Meeting in 1986, still a conservation record. Places we know and love like:

*Shots of*

Race Lane Farm in West Barnstable

Crocker Neck in Cotuit

*Something* in Hyannis

*Susan Nickerson: "Beyond Barnstable, Jaci mobilized support for the regional campaign to adopt the Land Bank bill in 1998. Over the next ten years, the Land Bank funded the purchase of another 1,100 acres of open space in Barnstable."*

*Tom Lynch: "Jaci also served as president of our Town Council. She rallied the Town to adopt two-acre zoning to protect our wellfields in the west part of Barnstable.)"*

*Mark Robinson: "Jaci has a deft touch with landowners interested in preserving their private property. It's not always easy. She gets to know them personally. They trust her. And so they trust her with their land's future."*

*Jaci speaking (mute) with landowners at a kitchen table, maps spread out.*

More than \_\_\_ families have protected their land with Barnstable Land Trust. Families like the Lowells of Cotuit.

*Pete Lowell: "When it came time to divide the family land after our mother died, we came first to Jaci and BLT to see if something could be worked out. We could not be happier that we sold our 19 acres around Lowell Park to BLT."*

*Some of MaryJo's footage of a Kettleers game*



*Jaci talking about Lowell Park project as symbolic of community coming together: "More than 1600 donations to the fund drive. It really was a community project as much as an open space project."*

*Cotuit Fourth of July parade with BLT surrey (MaryJo or Paul Rifkin has some)*

*More from Jaci here; what motivates her? "I could not have done this alone, etc..."*

*Kat Garofoli, Administrator, DCT: "As someone newer to the land conservation field, Jaci has been a model for me. Her passion and dedication is so apparent to everyone she meets. One person can make a difference. Jaci's impact has been profound on so much land and so many people."*

*Jaci showing Walter Garofoli the Crocker Neck tidepool (go out in early May when the shadbush is in blossom in the background)*

We always need to keep one eye on the future while remembering the past. Jaci Barton and her life's work has preserved Barnstable's rich natural heritage and keeps us hopeful for its next generations.

*A series of one liners from notables saying "Thank you, Jaci."*

*Jaci and Vern walking the country lane at Crocker Neck or Cordwood Road.*

*BLT logo and website*

*Roll credits*