

WHAT'S IN THE NAME?

THE CONTROVERSY CONTINUES – PART 4

By Bob Weingarten, a Greens Farms Resident and Westport Historic Society House Historian and Plaque Coordinator

In the last 284 years our community has gone by a plethora of names: Parish of Greensfarms, Green Farms, Greenfarms, Greens Farms and Green's Farms. The only consistency lies in the use of the word "Farms." In order to truly understand the issue, we first must discuss the history of our area and where and when the different names were used.

The historical information is necessary in order to let my fellow Green, Greens or Green's Farms residents understand the controversy of the name given - that local, state and federal governments can't seem to agree, even among themselves. After reading this article if you would like to ask questions or voice opinions please contact me at rwmmailbox@aol.com. Your questions and comments will be addressed in the next issue of *Greens Farms Living* but I would appreciate your name and address so that I can include it in the article.

Let's first review the history of our area. As I've previously stated in articles in *Greens Farms Living*, in 1684 three Fairfield farmers settled in the area called Machamux, with two additional farmers arriving several years later. These five farmers - Thomas Newton, Henry Gray and John Green followed by Francis Andrews and Daniel Frost - were jointly called the Bankside Farmers and settled along the banks of Long Island Sound at Beachside Avenue.

In 1708 the Bankside Farmers, along with other families in Machamux, petitioned the Connecticut General Court to legally create a self-reliant parish with both religious and civil authority. This was done in 1711 and was called the "West Parish of Fairfield." According to Woody Klein, in his book, *The Story of a New England Town's Rise to Prominence*, he stated that, "John Green, a remarkably energetic man, was the largest landholder among the Bankside Farmers. By 1699, his neighbors already referred to his holdings as Green's Farms. But the name was not officially changed to Greens Farms until 1732, because Fairfield did not want any individual landholder to become too independent." But the reason for the plural form of "Farms" is either that John Green had multiple farms or it was adopted from the multiple farms of the Bankside Farmers. However, the plural form of Farms was adopted and it remained consistently used.

But why was the name Green's Farms used after it was changed in 1732? It is curious that most deeds from that time period to the early 1840s included the wording that the property was "situ-

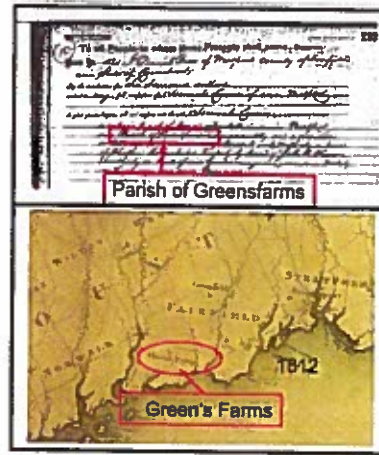


Figure 1

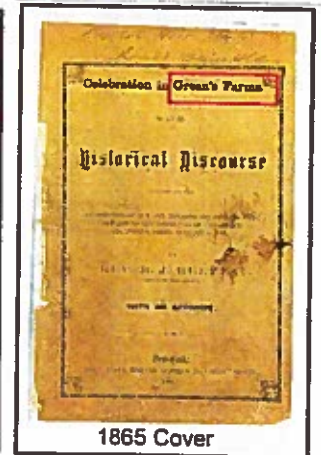


Figure 2

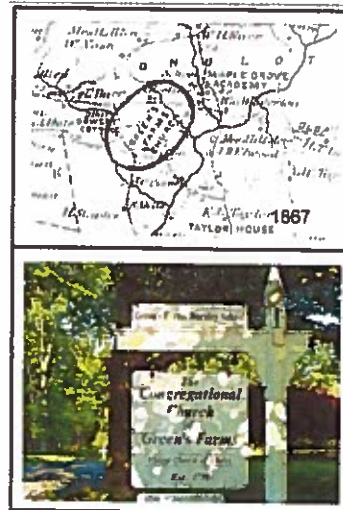


Figure 3

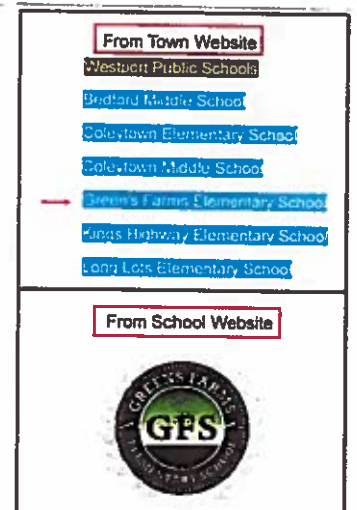


Figure 4

ated ... in the Parish of Greensfarms," see top of figure 1. This area description was used, rather than Green's Farms, which was "proof" that the local government believed the spelling of the area was Greensfarms. When the Parish of Greensfarms was incorporated into Westport in 1842 the phrase Parish of Greensfarms was dropped in favor of calling the area Green's Farms. Although the area was legally, by deeds, called the Parish of Greensfarms the name Green's Farms can also be found on a map and other literature, to be discussed. In the 1812 Connecticut map, see bottom of figure 1, the name of the area was identified as Green's Farms. Yet a few years later in the Clark 1858 map the area was identified as Green Farms. The controversy continues!

The second instance of the name usage of Green's Farms can be found in an 1865 Historical Discourse, see figure 2, which was "Delivered at the Celebration of the one hundred and 50th anniversary of the formation of the Church in Green's Farms, Held Oct. 26, 1865" by Rev. B. J. Relyea. The apostrophe was included in all references to Green's Farms in this 56-page historical discourse document available at the Archives of the Westport Historical Society (WHS) by appointment. The phrase Green's Farms Church was used as a label on the 1867 Atlas map of Westport that included "Green's Farms Church," see top of figure 3. Even the current day sign at the church uses this moniker, see

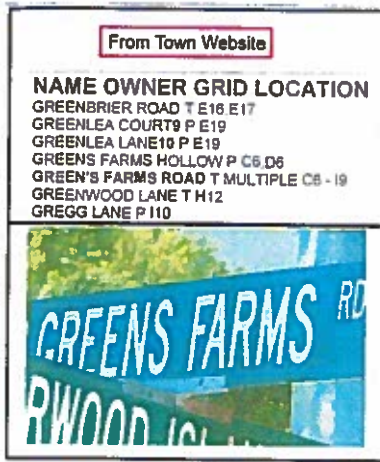


Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

bottom of figure 3 states that this is the Congregational Church of Green's Farms.

Reverent Relyea stated in his 1865 Historical Discourse that "The earliest instance in which the name Green's Farms appears in any writing which I have been able to discover, is in 1732, in a receipt given by Henry Caner, acting Episcopal clergyman in Fairfield, for his portion of the parish rates. In all legal notices of parish meetings, and in all the entries of the parish clerk, it is uniformly called the West Parish in Fairfield, until about the time of the American Revolution, after which it is written Green's Farms." (Recall that 1732 was the date that the West Parish of Fairfield name was changed to Green's Farms.)

Based on the fact that the Reverent Relyea Historical Discourse document, the 1867 map and the current day sign identify the church as an entity that has used the Green's Farms name consistently.

But it seems that map makers from 1812 to 1933 were also confused about the name. One would think that after the 1812 map identified our area as Green's Farms, the subsequent mapmakers would use the same name. But this didn't happen. Note that all these maps can be viewed at the Archives of the WHS by appointment.

- 1812 Connecticut map which names the area "Green's Farms"
- 1824 Connecticut map: no area name listed
- 1835 US Coastal Survey Map: no area name listed, structure images identified without names.
- 1858 Clark Map of Westport: "Green Farms" used for area name.
- 1867 Atlas Map of Westport: "Green's Farms Church" identified. No other area name found.
- 1879 Hopkins Map of Westport: "Greens Farms" area name listed, sub-map of 1879 listed "Green Farms STA."
- 1893 Hurd Map: "Green's Farms" area name listed. Also included in map was "Green's Farms Church," "Green's Farms School," "Greens Farms P.O." without apostrophe.
- 1911 Map of Westport: No area name listed but found "Greens Farms Road" listed on map.
- 1933 Map of Westport: "Greens Farms" area listed.

Currently the name of Green's Farms and Greens Farms are intermixed within local Westport websites. Here are a few examples, starting with the Greens Farms Elementary School. On the Westport official website for school we find that the list of Public Schools include an entry for "Green's Farms Elementary School," see top figure 4. Clicking on this name we are directed to the "Greens Farms Elementary School" website and find that the name of the school is illustrated on an emblem without the apostrophe, see bottom of figure 4.

Another example of Westport confusion deals with the Greens Farms Road signs and the identification in the "Name Owner Grid Location" document from the town website, see top of figure 5. On the document there are two conflicting entries of Greens Farms Hollow and Green's Farms Road. But the road itself is identified on all antique and current maps and on

the actual road signs as the Greens Farms RD or Road, see bottom of figure 5.

Confusion has also included the State DOT but they may know the difference now. In 2008 Dave Matlow posted a photo, see top of figure 6, on www.westportnow.com with the following comments: "Connecticut's Department of Transportation is red-faced over Greens Farms. Four new I-95 signs near Exit 18 in Westport proclaimed it the place to exit for the "Green Farms" Metro-North station." Matlow further stated that a DOT "...spokesman said the signs, part of a \$4.7 million sign upgrade project, will remain covered until fixed next month. "It was an honest mistake," he said." The current sign uses the name of Green's Farms, see bottom of figure 6.

The last example is from the Federal government dealing with the signs at the Greens Farms or Green Farms Post Office, which was labelled Greens Farms P.O. on the 1893 Hurds map of Westport. Currently there are two signs identifying the Post Office near the Green's Farms Railroad Station. Prior to entering the Post Office parking lot there is a sign with an arrow saying, "Greens Farms Post Office" but on the building itself is a sign with "USPS Greens Farms," see figure 7 for both signs. To add to the confusion, when purchasing stamps at the Green's Farms Post Office, the receipt says Greens Farms, also on figure 7. Confusing!

There are more examples of the controversy relating to the name of Green's Farms – the name which I believe is correct! But whether this is an issue with the town, state and/or federal government or just amusing, I will leave up to your call!



Do you have a story to tell? We want to hear them! Please send to Julaine.Davis@n2pub.com