The preserved open space around Pleasant Bay is a mosaic of owners, techniques and stories.

Sipson Island is the last remaining fully private landform in the Bay.

In fact, it is the last private saltwater island on Cape Cod.
Open Space funds come from public and private sources, including families and individuals.
Before towns and local land trusts took in land for conservation, private citizens took matters into their own hands.
In the 1920s, Edward McClennen helped to restore the business that would become the 130-acre Eastward Ho! Country Club.

On one condition:

That the view from his family’s place on the Bay (now, PBCB) would not have houses ringing the Chatham shore.

To this day, there are no houses on the Bay shore there.
In 1961, President Kennedy signed the Cape Cod National seashore Act, preserving 27,000 acres within its boundary in six towns, including all of Nauset Beach.

When Congress failed to appropriate enough money for the purchase of federal lands within the boundary, Paul Mellon stepped in with the final millions.
“Of all my philanthropic endeavors during my lifetime, I think I can safely say that the saving of these beautiful natural areas has given me the profoundest pleasure and the most heart-warming satisfaction.”

-- Paul Mellon  Reflections in a Silver Spoon, 1992
In 1973, Margaret “Granny” Cochran donated 59 acres of upland off Quanset Road to the Orleans Conservation Trust.

It is one of the largest private gifts of upland on Cape Cod.
Granny Cochran had lived at Quanset since 1907 and died in 1982 at age 102!

She recalled having to sail from Quanset up The River to go to the store when she was young and sent to town on errands.

Her son Moncrieff and other family members persuaded her not to sell the family land for development.
In 1975, the Payson family (Payson, Parra, Thomsen) donated a 300-acre Conservation Restriction to the National Park Service. It is still the largest private CR on Cape Cod. Public access is allowed on trails maintained by the family.
William L. Payson (left) negotiated the family's 300-acre conservation restriction (CR) around Pochet, Sampsons and Hog Islands in Pleasant Bay with the National Park Service in 1975. It is the largest CR donated on private property on Cape Cod. The family continues to welcome the public to the islands. (b/w photos from E. Parra.)

"The Old House" was built in South Orleans in the early-1700s and floated up to Pochet Island in the mid-1700s. Gilbert R. Payson bought the island in 1885. At right are some of the Payson Family enjoying a perch in 1888. Below is "The Old House" in 2013.
In 1972, Victor Horst donated 37 acres of salt marsh at Sipson Meadow to the Town of Orleans for conservation.
In 1973 Victor Horst donated 70 acres of salt marsh on Strong Island to the Town of Chatham Conservation Commission.
In 1974 Victor Horst sold 55 acres of upland at Strong Island to the Chatham Conservation Foundation, Inc., which opened it to the public with trails and informal beach use.
PAW WAH POINT
In 1982, the Environmental Minister of Oman, Shabib Taimur Al-Said, a member of the royal family, purchased 11.5 acres on PawWah Pond.

He subdivided the land into 8 waterfront lots in 1986.

He doubled his investment in American real estate when he sold the unbuilt subdivision to the Town in 1987 for $1.6 million. At the time, Cape Cod real estate was appreciating at 3% per month.

OCT President Charlie Thomsen called him “The Man from Oman.”
Funding for the Paw Wah Point land purchase came from the Town, the State and the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.
Little Sipson Island
1.6 acre upland, 3 acres marsh
After Hurricane Bob destroyed his cottage on Little Sipson Island in 1991, Arthur Finlay got permits to rebuild it. But Charlie Thomsen persuaded him to sell it to the Orleans Conservation Trust for $150,000 instead.
“He often referred to Pleasant Bay and Rock Harbor as being two of his favorite places, and the closest a person could come to heaven on earth.”

Arthur R. Finlay, Jr. (1923-2012)
Orleans native
Master craftsman and homebuilder
WWII vet
Muddy Creek is the largest estuary in the Pleasant Bay watershed. In 2017, it was re-opened to tidal flow for the first time in 100 years.

42 acres
In 2004-05, the Harwich Conservation Trust led a $6 million campaign to preserve the largest undeveloped parcel in the Bay watershed.
Blue-claw crab fishing at culvert under Route 28 at mouth of Muddy Creek, 1950s
Eelmans Point
10 acres, shore
In 2005, the Pleasant Bay Narrows Trust sold a conservation restriction for $2 million (half-price) on 10 acres at Eelman’s Point at The Narrows to the Orleans Conservation Trust. Public access via small craft is allowed on the shore.
“In 2020, citizens came together from the four Pleasant Bay towns of Orleans, Chatham, Harwich and Brewster to raise $5.4 million to preserve 24 acres of Sipson Island. Most is owned for conservation by the Sipson Island Trust and open to the public. All is protected by conservation restrictions. No further development of the island is allowed.

The last private island on Cape Cod has been preserved.”