

News Article

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SPEAKING OUT



Photographs by EDWARD C. HANSON

Languishing in disuse or flourishing in neglect?

By HADASSAH F. DAVIS

ON AUGUST 15 an article appeared in the *Providence Journal* headlined "Haffenreffer Estate Languishes in Disuse." It should have been titled "Haffenreffer Estate Flourishes in Neglect." As anyone can see by going down there, the goldenrod and Queen Anne's lace are blossoming; the thistles (and poison ivy) grow in profusion; there are bayberries, blackberries, birds and butterflies all over the place.

In these ecologically hard pressed days, 400 acres of virtually unim-

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proved land lying along the shore serve as a rare resource on which the citizens of the state, and particularly of Bristol, can draw interest every day while the principal remains for generations to come.



Although the land isn't publicly owned, it serves as a public benefit. Anyone can drive to the museum, park his car, and walk along the shore or along the rough road which runs to the cove. He will find if he walks along the shore, lots of stones, lots of shells, some marsh grass, and a view which stretches across a mile of water and along the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay from Fall River almost to Little Compton. If he walks along the road his eyes may be refreshed by cedar trees and sumac bushes, and his ears solaced by the twittering of song birds. With any luck he will see a monarch butterfly as he crosses the meadow.

Above all the visitor to the Haf-

fenreffer tract can find space and solitude. These trace elements of spiritual health grow scarcer with every improvement we make in the landscape. They have become, in the last thirty years, rarer than rubies, and more to be treasured than fine gold.

There is no better use Brown University can make of the Haffenreffer estate, no better contribution it can make to the community, than to leave the land intact, unimproved, and only casually used. Artists tell us "Less is more;" the principle applies here. Brown has enough classrooms and libraries; Bristol has plenty of real estate developments; all of us need a quiet place where existence itself can be felt as a blessing.

□

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