

# MONTAUK SOLD BY AUCTION

## A BROOKLYN CAPITALIST THE PURCHASER.

A GREAT PRICE FOR A GREAT WASTE OF SAND—HOW THE LAND WAS BOUGHT FROM THE INDIANS.

EAST HAMPTON, Long Island, Oct. 22.—

Montauk, the great Indian reservation and peninsula at the south-eastern extremity of Long Island, was sold by public auction in this place to-day. The town has been filled with excited people all day, and no event in many years has caused such a sensation. For over 200 years the immense tract of land comprised in Montauk has been used by the people of East Hampton and Southampton as pasturage for their cattle, thousands of which have grazed there every year. Montauk has never been accurately surveyed with a view of ascertaining its area. Its outlines, however, have been very exactly laid down upon the United States Coast Survey Map. It consists of a single compact body of land forming a large peninsula at the extreme south-eastern end of Long Island. It is from nine to ten miles in length, and in width varies from about a mile and a half to three miles. Including land under water, there are about 11,500 acres in the tract. The only road upon it is a cart-track from end to end, and this is passable only for carts that can stand a severe racking. There are no piers, wharves, or docks, and no harbor that can properly be so called. There is an anchorage at Turtle Bay, near the light-house, and another at Shagwonoe Point, which can only be used by small vessels at certain states of wind and sea. Fort Pond Bay affords excellent anchorage for the largest vessels, but is open to the gales from north-east to north-west, and no vessel could lie there with safety. It is doubtful whether a pier could be maintained there, because of the severe storms and the floating ice. A breakwater, half a mile in length would make of the bay an excellent harbor. A large number of ponds, large and small, are scattered over the tract. The largest, Great Pond, covers over 1,200 acres. Fort Pond covers over 150 acres, and Fresh Pond covers 50 acres. They are well stocked with fresh-water fish. Oyster Pond, covering 20 acres, is connected with the Sound, and the brackish water affords an excellent home for oysters, with which the pond is filled. The entire peninsula was originally the property of the Montauk tribe of Indians, whence the name. By a deed bearing the date of Feb. 11, 1661, the Indian owners conveyed to the inhabitants of East Hampton "all the piece or neck of land belonging to Muntaucut land westward to a fresh pond in a beach on this side westward to the place where the Indian fort stood. On the other side eastward to the new fort that is yet standing, the name of the pond being Quantowouk on the north, and Konhoganik on the south." This plot is now known as the Hither Woods, or Hither End, of Montauk. It is about four and a half miles long by about a mile and three-quarters in breadth, covering about 4,300 acres of land and 150 acres of water. Seven hundred acres of sand beach and salt meadow and 400 acres of rock and barren ridge are practically worthless. From 1,500 to 1,800 acres are covered with a scattering growth of wood, mainly oak, with some pine. The rest is cleared land, susceptible of tillage. Land of the same quality, within a mile of this place, is worth from \$25 to \$50 an acre. About the 1st of December, 1670, the Indian tribe deeded to John Mulford, Thomas James, and Jeremiah Concklin, a second parcel of the Montauk tract, then called Wuchebehsuek, and now known as the Nine-score-acre Purchase. Within three months the three persons just named assigned their deed and interest in the tract to the town of Easthampton. It comprises, in all, about 3,000 acres, of which 650 are under water. Of the rest, about 200 acres are beach and barren meadow, and 150 acres are rock and barren land. The remaining 2,000 acres are nearly all cleared, but here and there are swamps and marshes, and in the northern part is a scattering growth of trees. The third purchase of Montauk lands by the whites was made in July, 1687. By a deed bearing that date, the Indians conveyed to Lient. John Wheeler and others, as Trustees of the Town of Easthampton, and to Benjamin Osborn, employed by the Trustees, the tract now known as the North Neck, the Indian Field, and the Point Field. This conveyance was confirmed by the Indians, in a deed dated March 3, 1703. The tract contains about 4,200 acres, about 900 of which are covered by water. In all Montauk there are about 8,650 acres of land, excluding water and beach, and about 6,000 acres are cleared and susceptible of tillage. Each of the deeds mentioned above was duly confirmed by the Colonial Governor of the Province of New-York. Among the seals are those of Govs. Richard Nicolls, Francis Lovelace, and Thomas Dongan.

Having thus, by operations extending over several years, obtained control of Montauk, the purchasers occupied and enjoyed the land not as public property belonging to Easthampton, nor as corporate property, but as if it belonged to them individually, as tenants in common. The land was held in shares, in other words, and the number of shares held by each owner was determined by the sum paid by each when the purchases were made. Some owned more in one portion than in another, and some owned shares in one portion who owned nothing in another. In 1748 an arrangement was made by which the interests of all the owners were extended over every part of Montauk. This was done by equalizing the interests and placing the value of each share at £40. The shares were divided into eighths, each worth £5, and few owners now hold more than one of these eighths. The parcel of land upon which the United States light-house now stands, embracing about 10 acres at the extreme eastern point, was conveyed to the Government in the year 1792, and was, of course, not included in the sale of to-day.

In concluding these various sales to the whites, the Indians were wise enough to look after their own interests in one important respect. By both written and verbal agreements they reserved the right to fence in for each family 30 acres of land, either at the point called North Creek or at the Indian Field, but not both places at once. They could exchange one tract for the other as often as they chose, but were prohibited from occupying both places at once. The cattle of the proprietors were to have free run of every portion not fenced in by the Indians from October until April. The Indians were not allowed to keep over 250 swine and 50 horse and neat cattle, and were restrained from keeping cattle or swine for other persons, leasing their land to be planted, or selling hay or grass. There is still due to the Indians \$250 of the original purchase money, the interest of which is annually paid to them, and for which there is a lien upon the property. It was also agreed that all "mustees or mulattoes" having native Montauk squaws for their mothers should be forever debarred from any right to improve land at Montauk, and any squaw who married a strange Indian or foreigner should also forfeit all right to hold and improve the land. The Indians have kept fenced and cultivated as their general field the land east of Great Pond for about 170 years. Is is a tract of about 1,200 acres of the best land in Montauk. There are now only two families left of the once powerful tribe, and only 20 or 30 acres are cultivated by them.

In 1851, by an order of the Supreme Court, in a suit brought to determine the question, the Trustees of the Town of Easthampton became the owners of Montauk, in fee, and in March, 1852, they "granted, surrendered, quit-claimed, and released" all Montauk to James P. Mulford and others. Since then there has always been more or less dissatisfaction with the management of the property. The sale which took place here to-day was brought about by Mr. Robert M. Grinnell, one of the numerous owners of Montauk. In 1877 Mr. Grinnell applied, through counsel, to Judge J. O. Dykman, in the Supreme Court, for an order of partition. Judge Dykman appointed Everett A. Carpenter, of Sag Harbor, as Referee, to take testimony and determine whether the property should be sold, and if so, whether in separate parcels or as a whole. He reported in January last that the land was so situated that an actual partition could not be made without great prejudice to the owners, and it ought, therefore, to be sold in bulk. The report was confirmed, and the sale ordered for 1 o'clock to-day. By noon the town was filled with interested persons, and when Mr. Carpenter, who acted as auctioneer, mounted a chair in front of ex-Supervisor Jehial K. Parsons's office, a large crowd had gathered. Forty thousand dollars was the opening bid, and in a moment it jumped to \$75,000. The third bid was for \$100,000. Then followed a long series of bids each increased by \$1,000. Finally, Mr. Arthur W. Benson, of Brooklyn, bid \$151,000. This was higher than any one else was willing to go, and, after trying in vain to get another offer, the hammer fell, and Mr. Benson was declared the owner of Montauk. By the terms of the sale, the purchaser was obliged to pay 10 per cent. of the purchase money to the Referee immediately, and also to settle the auctioneer's fee. The balance of the \$151,000 is due on the 1st of December next, at Mr. Carpenter's office, in Sag Harbor, and, when it is paid, the deed of Montauk will be delivered. The new owner of Montauk is a wealthy resident of Brooklyn, and is the President of the Brooklyn Gas-light Company. He is, of course, bound to respect all the rights of the little remnant of the Montauk tribe, now on the property.