



*We hope this small story brings you closer to the Godena Farm. So close you will open the gates and take a walk. It is there for your enjoyment.*

The patriarch of the Jamestown “Godena” family was Manuel Godinho, born on April 12, 1878 on Terceira, an island in the Azores archipelago. He and his wife arrived on American shores at the turn of the century and eventually settled in Jamestown. Following WWI, Manuel purchased the property on the west side of North Road where Astrid Mendes resides, just north of the small house now owned by the Conanicut Island Land Trust. He was recognized as an excellent gardener and particularly famous for his asparagus. During the late summer and fall when crops arrived, he would push a large wheelbarrow laden with produce down North Road in the early morning to catch the first ferry to Newport where he sold his vegetables. Of course, at the end of the day he had to push the same wheelbarrow, now empty, almost 4 miles home.

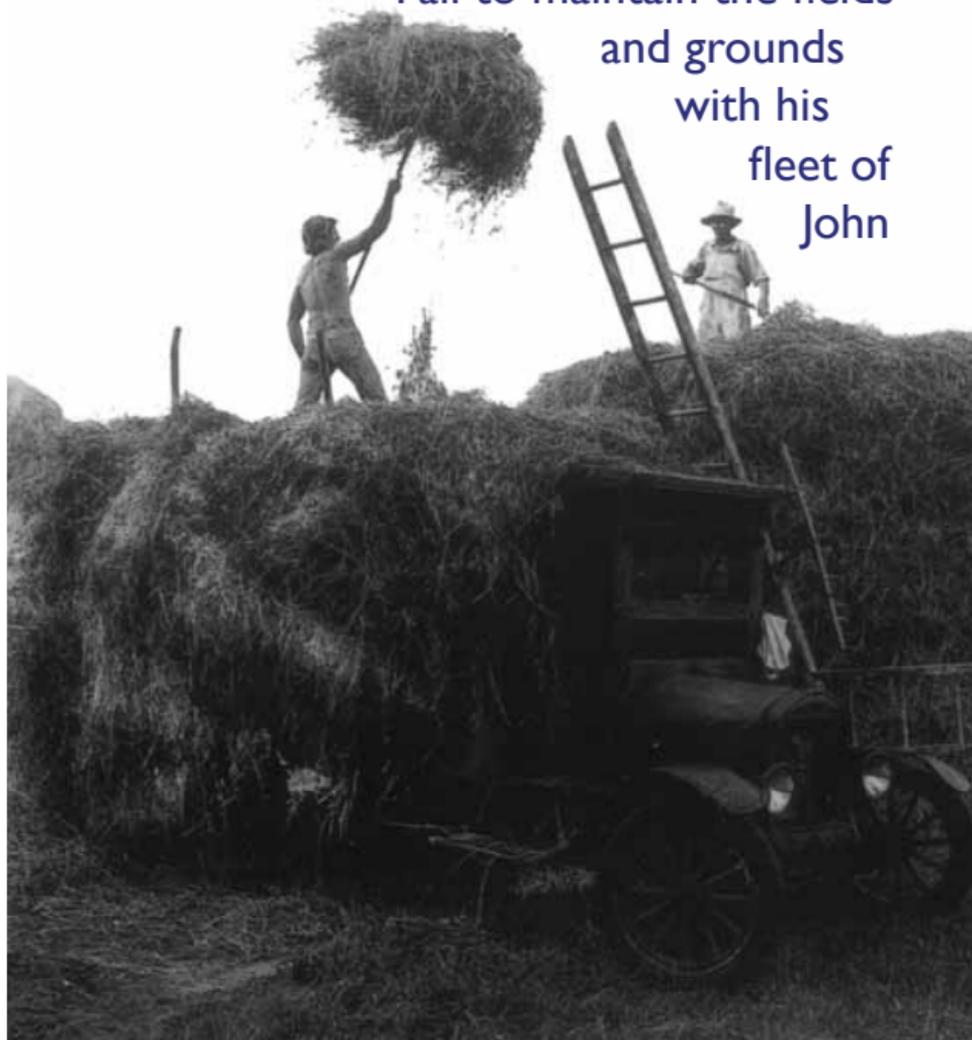
His son, Manuel, was born on April 5, 1909 in the house now occupied by Phil and Hanne Calcina, immediately south of Godena farm on North Road. Young Manuel wore the name Godinho until the second grade when it was “Americanized” to Godena. Young Manuel purchased the house at 891 North Main Road, now owned by the Land Trust, in the mid-1930’s and the farm “proper” on the east side of North Road from the Carr family in 1956. Young Manuel was a well-respected carpenter and supported his family with that trade. Otherwise, all his time was spent

clearing and improving the 23 acres on the east side of North Road which had fallen into disuse through the years. The land had been targeted by Commerce Oil Refinery Corporation as prime real estate for its oil refinery, but despite all the economic pressures, Manuel refused all discussion of a sale. Archie Clarke, who remembers Manuel well, said, "Manuel was fiercely protective of his land, and it was well known on the island that anyone thinking money would interest him was barking up the wrong tree."

In his 88th year, Manuel gave the Land Trust a conservation easement on all his property. According to his son, Louis, he died shortly after the gift, content with the knowledge that what he had sacrificed to protect would remain open land in perpetuity.

Manuel's son, Louis Godena, was born on December 5, 1949 and raised at 891 North Road. He was the youngest of the three children born to Manuel. Now residing in Cumberland, Lou drives to Jamestown almost daily during the Spring, Summer, and Fall to maintain the fields

and grounds with his fleet of John



*Manuel building a hay stack.*

Deere tractors: a 1939 Model A, a 1942 Model GM, two 1943 Model GMs, a 1948 and two 1949 Model Bs, and a 1951 Model B.

In late July the Land Trust asked Lou if he would take on yet another task. “We explained to Lou that we had received a grant from the federal government to plant native wildflowers and warm season grasses on 2 acres of land in the fields farthest from North Road. We were reluctant to ask any more of Lou because just the job of mowing the fields is enormous, and we knew that the 2 acres in question were filled with roots and rocks. There was no hesitation on his part. Lou insisted he could get it done. After that, there was no stopping him. He was there every day until the job was done,” said Quentin Anthony, President of the Land Trust.

According to Lou, the field in question was known as the north pasture of the original Carr homestead, and it had not been plowed or manured since before the Civil War. “My father always told me that Gunn Carr’s grandfather raised sheep and then milk cows about the time of the War with Spain. Thereafter “Cuba” Alves tended sheep for the elder Carr before he departed for Cuba in 1898. My father told me that he was the first to plow the property closest to North Road since at least the mid-late 19th century.”

In preparing the 2 acres needed by the Land Trust for native wildflowers, Lou used two Model GMs from WWII, a 1942 and '43. Lou said, “The GM was the largest general purpose tractor manufactured by Deere during the War. It could pull three bottoms in most soils, a two-row



corn picker, four-row cultivator, big combines, and a ten-foot disc, a lot of power for 1942! Now, of course, the humblest “utility” tractor can do all of that and more, but back in the day, the GM was the Rolls Royce of tractors. Incidentally, the GM was so large and took so much steel (Deere could build two of the smaller tractors – like the B – from the same materials), that production was suspended for two years during the war. Also, there were complaints that the GM was too large and unwieldy for women, who were doing much of the farming while their men were overseas. The plow used was a Deere #51 from that era, minus a coulter wheel and a rear guide wheel, which made plowing root and rock-infested ground a bit of a challenge.”

It took Lou three weeks of plowing and harrowing to prepare the soil. Rocks had to be removed, countless roots were pulled up, but on August 7 the 2 acres was ready for planting, and the wildflower mix, warm season grasses, and 50 lbs. of oats were hand broadcast over the field. “With the seed laid down, Lou hooked up a piece of chain link fence to the John Deere and gently dragged it through the fields creating contact between seed and soil. With that done, we insisted he go home and get some rest. As he was leaving, he told us he would be back the next day to continue the haying. We never doubted him,” said Anthony.



Photo: Nelson-Lee Marketing + Design.

*Louis finishing up the 2 acre field of wildflowers.*