



Sasquanaug News

MERCHANT PROFILE: SPIC & SPAN MARKET

By Jennie Murphy

The Spic & Span Market is a jewel in the crown of The Southport Merchants Association, a group that takes pride in doing business the old fashioned way by prioritizing high-touch customer service alongside quality product. Bucking the contemporary norm of automated customer contact, Lori and Greg Peck and their long-time employees (20 years is the average tenure on the Peck's current team) routinely greet customers by name and are now welcoming a third generation of customers into the store. "There are a lot of 'remember when...' conversations happening these days" says Greg.

Established in 1928, The Spic & Span Market celebrated its ninetieth anniversary in 2018. Lori and Greg have been owners since 1983, the longest tenure of previous owner-operators; Greg has been working at The Spic & Span since 1976. With their purchase of Zamar's Market in 2002, The Pecks doubled the retail space size, transforming the business into today's unique grocery retail experience. Over the years, all of the Peck's children have worked at Spic & Span and Greg and Lori are delighted that their son Alex has joined them as a partner after eight years in the US Army – which included a tour in Afghanistan. Turn the page for excerpts from a recent interview with Greg Peck.



Alex, Lori and Greg Peck

AROUND SOUTHPORT PARK

By Peg North

The Southport Park, 171 Old Post Road, has been called an urban oasis, a little piece of heaven within a concrete jungle; for humans and birds alike. It acts as an important stop for migratory and local birds amid a concrete environment of Post Road, Southport Center and Metro North.

Migratory birds, a wonderful asset, must refuel for their journey south. They move through the area in the spring, from now through June. The Southport Park has an amazing wealth of native, wildlife loving trees and shrubs.

Some of the finest red oak specimens in town are thriving here. When flowering in May, these oaks attract over 400 insect species which in turn are a magnet for countless insectivorous birds, such as more than a dozen species of warblers, as well as scarlet tanagers and great crested flycatchers, which will focus on the flowers, feeding on the tiny insects.

Plenty of our resident birds, such as mourning doves, blue jays, chickadees, tufted titmice and others, can be found here year-round in this "vest pocket" nature park.

Spring is here and a walk in the park is a great way to celebrate nature!

ABOUT SOUTHPORT PARK

The park's history begins with a railroad project -- the New York, New Haven and Hartford railroad bought the property in the 1890s, and in 1912 clear-cut the area to use the wood to pay for an expansion project. Southporter Milton Lacey purchased the cleared land from the railroad and in 1915, he and other residents formed the Southport Park Association and began restoration work. In 1950, the deed for the park was transferred to the Sasquanaug Association, with the condition that the property be maintained for public use and protection of plants and wildlife. Later an entrance was constructed to enhance the park's visibility.

Directions & Parking:

Just past Equinox Fitness Club on the left going toward Southport Center, you will see stone pillars marking the park's entrance. A small lot is available in front of the entrance and parking is also available roadside.

AROUND TOWN: UPCOMING EVENTS

April

- 6: Document Shredding, 9-11:30 am; Fairfield Police Station
- 6: Free Young Person's Concert, 2 pm; Pequot Library
- 7: Southport Historic Walking Tour, 2 pm; Pequot Library
- 13: Hats, Hats, Hats! Day, 10-4 ; Southport Women's Exchange
- 13: Easter Eggstravaganza, 5-8 pm; South Pine Creek Soccer Complex and Field (for children and adults)
- 13: Donnelly Dash Community Challenge, 2 pm; Tomlinson Middle School
- 20: Earth Day Clean-Up, 9 am; Southport Park (rain or shine)
- 20: Easter Egg Roll, 10 am; Pequot Library
- 26: Young Artists Café, 5-6:30 pm; Pequot Library

May

- 4: Derby Day, 4-9 pm; Pequot Library
- 10-12: Dogwood Festival, Greenfield Hill Congregational Church (10-5 Friday and Saturday; 11-5 Sunday)
- 27: St. Paul's Memorial Day Pancake Breakfast, 6 am-noon; St. Paul's Church, Fairfield
- 27: Fairfield Memorial Day Town Parade, 10 am
- 27: Memorial Day Family Picnic, 12-3; Fairfield Museum lawn
- 29: Fairfield Art Show opens, 6 to 8:30 pm; Pequot Library

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(CONTINUED)

Do you and Lori have any favorite memories from your years in business?

Greg: "Having grown up in town, Lori and I love running a business in Southport Village with its unique character and alchemy. We like calling our customers by name and value the friendships that we have with our customers and fellow merchants. The merchants always try to help each other out. As an example, when Lori and I got married we were 21 and 23 years old – just kids. A bunch of the merchants got together and gave us a set of crystal as a wedding gift. Folks like Mary Ruger, Maggie Daly and Mills Ten Eyck and Bob Emerich were a part of that group. That gift is something we use and treasure to this day.

"Another great memory is having been honored to lead the Blessing of The Fleet Parade as Grand Marshall two years ago. That was a really wonderful experience."

What are your latest challenges?

"Recent changes in community demographics have presented challenges. There don't seem to be as many families and we've started to morph into a weekend community. More and more of our long-time customers are spending winters in warmer climates so we've had to become more creative to survive the winters.

"In addition, retaining good employees over many years at Spic & Span is a more expensive business model, however, it is also a HUGE part of our success. Our customer base doesn't want us to change but

I am not sure that people realize how fragile Southport village is...We need to continue to bring in new faces to our store in order to thrive. Making a commitment to running a business in the village requires a thoughtful approach. You have to tread a fine line. For example, Connecticut Lotto is always after us to put a machine in our store. That would be a good revenue stream but it doesn't fit our business model. Sometimes economic sacrifices are necessary to strike the right balance. People may not be aware of how much thought goes into that."

How many turkeys do you sell at Thanksgiving?

"We sell about 500 Turkeys. That's five to six tons of turkey. We could sell more but we don't have the space. The Spic & Span Market has been carrying Jaindl Turkeys for 50 years! Lori and I have become friends with David Jaindl. David is a third generation representative of the Jaindl family turkey business in Allentown, PA."

What's new at Spic & Span Market this year?

"We are opening on Sundays! When our kids were young we committed to keeping Sundays open as a family day. Our children are adults now and opening on Sunday is a response to customer requests."

The Southport community is grateful to have the Spic and Span Market as a vital retail anchor and for the high standards of excellence that the Peck Family have applied to their business practices over the past 36 years.

HELP KEEP SOUTHPORT GREEN: EARTH DAY CLEANUP APRIL 20TH

Earth Day is observed annually and celebrated in more than 193 countries around the globe. It's a day to demonstrate and promote environmental awareness and calls for the protection of our planet. It's a time for us to clean up our corner of the world.

Bring the family, friends, and neighbors and celebrate with us to keep Southport green! We'll gather at Southport Park at 9 am where you'll pick up your trash bag and decide where you'd like to clean up – the train station, around town, or your neighborhood. Bags may be dropped at three locations for pickup: Northbound train station, Southport Park, or Perry Green. Signs for where to drop will be posted. Children of all ages are welcome!



Southport Harbor

HISTORY FROM THE CAPTAIN'S LOG BOOK: THE SOUTHPORT ONION BOUNTY

By Richard Webb

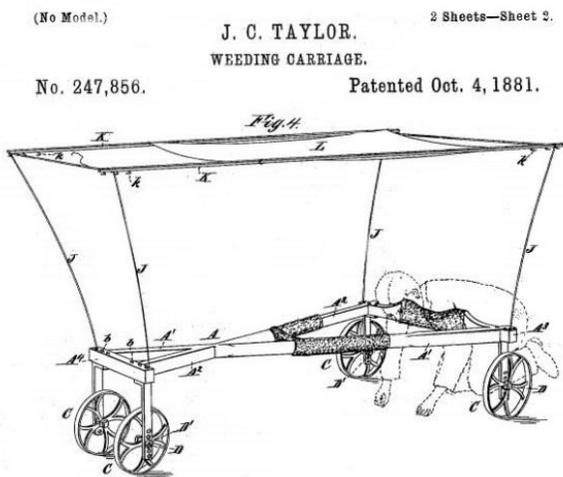
From December 1861 to March 1862 the Schooner *Hawley* made two round trips a month out of Southport, destination usually New York City. The most profitable cargo were onions. The *Hawley* returned with manufactured goods as well as manure from city streets used to fertilize local farms.

Known as the "Onion Capital" Southport shipped millions of the prized Southport Globe Onions all over the world, including hundreds of tons to the Union Army and Navy that used pickled onion juice for wounds and the vitamin C content to combat scurvy. Over one hundred local farms were involved in the industry.

Analysis of several log books during this period indicate an average payout totaling \$1,100 (\$28,000 today) per trip to over thirty farmers for their goods- including to notable families such as Penfield, Jennings, Sherwood, Bulkley, Perry, and Sturges.

Profits from sales averaged \$2,200 (\$56,000). This netted before expenses profit of \$28,000 per trip. Eight trips with a profit of a quarter of a million dollars- not bad for four months work.

Thanks to the extraordinary staff of the Pequot Library for access to their archives.



An onion-harvesting carriage

AROUND TOWN (CONT.)

June

- 2: Southport Historical Walking Tour, 2 pm; Pequot Library
- 7: Miss Susan's Potluck & Campout, 6:30; Pequot Library
- 8: Southport Garden Stroll, 10-3; begins at Pequot Library
- 8: Up, Up & Away Gala Preview Summer Concert Series kick-off, 7-10 pm; Fairfield Museum
- 15: Blessing of the Fleet, 10 am; parade begins at corner of Pequot and Center Street
- 22: Trinity Church Tag Sale, Trinity Parking Lot

July

- 3: Fairfield Fireworks, 9:15 pm with entertainment at Jennings and Penfield beaches 6-9 pm
- 4: Fourth of July Bike Parade and Games, 10-noon; Five Corners Southport to Pequot Library
- 27: PAL Sand Sculpting Contest, 12-3 pm; Penfield Beach (rain date: 28th)
- 26-30: Summer Book Sale, 9-6 pm through Monday, 9-2 Tuesday; Pequot Library

SEPTEMBER

SAVE THE DATE: Southport's 380th Birthday Celebration Weekend, sponsored by Sasquanaug Association

- 14: Dive-In Movie at Southport Beach
- 15: Birthday Bash

STAY TUNED FOR DETAILS

JOIN SASQUANAUG NOW!

As a charitable organization, we rely on membership to drive our efforts to protect and preserve the quality of life in Southport. That includes involvement in zoning, conservation, historic district and other town issues. Whether it means hiring an attorney to defend the community's position on development or sponsoring an event around town, our dues go directly back to the community.

We are also looking for your input and involvement. Please visit our website to join and let us know how you'd like to get involved.

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FROM JACK IJAMS, SASQUANAUG PRESIDENT

I have served on the board of this fine organization since next door neighbor Stephen Stout coaxed me to join several years back. When it came time to take on the leadership, I had a very good role model in George Russell to follow. I still consider myself a new comer to Southport and Fairfield having grown up from 'away' (south shore of LI) but Sally and I have been residents for 33 years. Together with a dedicated group of directors, we are here to do everything in our power to sustain and support what makes living in Southport special. That means speaking up for our neighbors at the town commissions or community meetings on traffic, illegal parking and safety. That also means collaborating with the Sea Lodge organization and the Southport Conservancy to find a way to sustain the Sea Lodge for the continued enjoyment of our sea coast today and tomorrow and supporting the Friends of Southport Park in their management of this gem right in the heart of our village. Thank you to all members for your financial support. We will continue to do all we can to preserve what's great about living here and improving the quality of our time here to every extent possible. Please let us know how we can continue to help.

With our members' ongoing financial support, over the last 18 months we've been able to:

* Provide financial and organizational support to oppose the **Lower Bronson Road high density development**, an entirely inappropriate and unsafe proposal adjacent to the busy exit 19 on-ramp to I-95. This case is under appeal in court.



* **Expansion of 65 Station Street:** Provided financial support to and coordination with the Station Street Neighbors in their successful opposition to an inappropriate commercial expansion in a residential neighborhood already reeling from commercial and commuter traffic.

* Provide organizational support for our tenant, **the Sea Lodge organization**, in the needed renovation and preservation of

this historic community gem at Southport Beach.

* Convene an **important community meeting** with Fairfield's First Selectman, police department leadership, and RTM members about recent crimes, and traffic and safety concerns in our neighborhoods.

* Organize the **Southport 380th Birthday Bash** weekend to take place September 14-15: Save the Date! Details to come.

