



Cuvilly Arts & Earth Center

Cuvilly Arts & Earth Center Stats and Facts:

- Founded by Sister Patricia Rolinger, S.N.D., on the principle that all of life is sacred and that the diversity of life is essential for the well being and sustenance of the planet.
- Established in 1983.
- Located on approximately 15 acres of woodlands, fields, gardens and animal pastures in Ipswich, Mass.
- Operates a pre-School/kindergarten program and serves as an environmental education facility for the larger community.
- Maintains a working farm on the principle that the earth serves as our primary teacher and classroom.
- Contributes to the global community by raising and donating Nubian goats for Heifer International and by serving as the alternative energy prototype for the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur African missions
- Takes its name from the rural village in France where Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur foundress Marie Rose Julie Billiard was born in 1751.

Cuvilly Arts & Earth Center is:

- A nationally accredited and state certified **Pre-School and Kindergarten** renowned for a curriculum that extends beyond the educational basics, teaching students how to live harmoniously with nature, one another and the world community.
- A variety of **Environmental Education Programs**. Biking, gardening, canning locally produced fruits and vegetables, learning how to conserve energy – all are incorporated into Cuvilly’s current offerings. Past programs have included wool spinning workshops, soap making, egg decorating, weaving and knitting classes. Every summer, Cuvilly offers a special program, *Simply Keep It Local (SKIL)*, designed to teach 4th through 7th graders how to thrive in their natural surroundings.
- A **Farm** that’s home to an array of animals, including a herd of Nubian goats being raised for donation to the Heifer Project, an international non-profit organization dedicated to ending world hunger and poverty. The farm also includes organic vegetable gardens cultivated by members of the larger community.
- An **Alternative Energy Site** consisting of photovoltaic panels and a wind turbine that generates most of the Center’s electricity. The photovoltaic system also serves as the experimental prototype for hospitals and schools operated by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur at their missions throughout Africa.

The Cuvilly Story

Cuvilly Arts & Earth Center draws its name from the rural village in France where the foundress of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Marie Rose Julie Billiard, was born. A ministry of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Cuvilly Arts & Earth Center was founded in 1983 by Sr. Patricia Rolinger as an educational facility dedicated to modeling ecological sustainability.

The facility, located on the grounds of a former dairy farm in Ipswich, Mass., includes a renovated dairy barn that houses the pre-school, a studio, and offices; a photovoltaic array and wind turbine to supply the Center's electricity; a 19th-century timber frame barn that houses a variety of farm animals; approximately 15 acres of land that includes woodland, pond and pastures as well as an authentically constructed 17th-century Nushwetu lodge and indigenous encampment. The Center recently acquired a 17th-century timber frame house in addition to a solar-paneled "House of the Future," which were constructed as part of the 375th anniversary of Ipswich. Both houses will serve as a teaching display about using available natural resources wisely.

Cuvilly strives to keep Saint Julie's spirit and work alive and relevant to the present moment. Although today's challenges are different from those in 18th century rural France, our goal is the same – "to teach them what they need to know for life."

Knowledge of ecological and environmental issues is critical to the survival of our planet. Children, especially, need to experience themselves as part of the natural cycle. Cuvilly is dedicated to re-awakening the collective conscience to the interdependence of life. Since 1983, more than 1,000 students and their families have participated in the mission of the Center. Cuvilly's resources and programs, such as its community organic gardening program, art studio and its involvement in Heifer International, create an atmosphere for learning that respects all of creation in an ecological balance.

The living expression of Cuvilly's mission is found in its animals. In addition to the goatherd raised to benefit Heifer International, the school is home to pigs, donkeys, horses, sheep, chickens, ducks, geese, a llama, dogs and cats. The lessons taught by the animals are at the heart of Cuvilly's guiding principle that all of life is sacred, and that the diversity of life is essential for the well-being and sustenance of the planet. To give children the experience of diversity is critical to nurturing our basic instinct to live in harmony with the created world. Without diversity, the quality of all life diminishes, be it agricultural or societal. Our unique "Full Circle Curriculum" teaches that everything needs food and everything becomes food in the cycle of life-death transformation.

Recent History of The Cuvilly Arts & Earth Center Land

- 1906** Charles P. Searle commissions the building of a renaissance revival Italian-style villa on what may have been known as “Monstone Farm.” The house served as his summer home. According to the 1919 town records, the Searles “removed” themselves from Ipswich in that year. In the book, *Images of America*, author William Varnell writes that the Searles referred to the villa as “Ingisby” and that following the death of their son, it was purchased by historian Bayard Tuckerman.
- 1920** The published “Valuation and Assessment of Taxes for the Town of Ipswich for the Year 1920” lists Isaac R. Thomas and his wife Gertrude of Boston as the new owner of the parcel. The Thomas family is listed as owning property on Jeffrey’s Neck at least as far back as 1897. Included in the 1920 assessment are several residences, several barns, an ice house, a piggery, various outbuildings and sheds, upland, marshland and 4.75 acres of Mosley land on Spring St. An interesting note is that the Thomas and Mosely families – neighbors in Ipswich – also shared the 300 block of Commonwealth Avenue in Boston for a time.
- 1929** During the Depression Isaac R. Thomas is forced to lessen his tax burden and orders many of the farm buildings destroyed. One deed covering the years 1929-1947 lists the Perley family as owning part of this land. There were Perleys residing in Ipswich at the time. Carrie S. Perley was an unmarried vocal music instructor for a church in Newburyport. David Sydney Perley and family were cattle dealers listed as residents of Linebrook Road. A 1919 advertisement for the Perley’s business boasts “Milk Cows a Specialty.” It’s reasonable to consider that the Perley family acquired part of the Thomas property, especially if the latter family was suffering because of the Depression.
- 1947** F. Murray Forbes, Jr., conservator for Gertrude F. Thomas, sells the property for \$39,000 to Raymond Massey of New York City. By most accounts, the noted actor and his wife never actually lived on the farm or at the villa.
- 1948** Barclay Warburton III, the stepson of William Vanderbilt II, purchases the property from Raymond Massey of New York City. Warburton christens it “Seracen Farm” and greatly increases farming activities. It was in this period that “the cow barn,” the building that houses most of Cuvilly’s programs, was built. Warburton was not only a gentleman-farmer, but was also elected as a state representative.
- 1959** The Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur purchases the property to build their Ipswich Novitiate. The building is completed and dedicated on July 4, 1961.

1961 Notre Dame Training School, Inc., sells “all interest on S.E. East Street, near Agawam Avenue” to the town of Ipswich as part of a “lot lines adjustment.”

1983 Cuvilly Arts & Earth Center founded at the base of The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur property, 10 Jeffrey’s Neck Rd. (once known as East Street), Ipswich, Mass.