

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Southampton History Museum Files Federal Lawsuit to Defend Ownership of Conscience Point

Southampton, NY — September 17, 2025 — The Southampton History Museum has filed a federal lawsuit in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York seeking to restore and protect its rightful ownership of Conscience Point, one of Southampton's most significant landmarks.

The Museum's legal action comes in response to an unprecedented, coordinated campaign by Town and County officials, in concert with private parties, to strip the Museum of its property rights at Conscience Point, so the property can be commercially developed. According to the Museum, these actions include the manipulation of official records, interference in court proceedings, and the diversion of public resources to benefit private interests, all without notice, due process, or just compensation.

“For over a century, the Museum has safeguarded Conscience Point as a symbol of our community’s heritage and as a site for public education and preservation,” said Averitt Buttry, President of the Museum’s Board of Trustees. “We have no choice but to defend the Museum’s legal rights, uphold the public’s trust, and affirm the integrity of our mission.”

“Considerable amounts of time and resources have been devoted to preserving Conscience Point for more than 115 years,” said Executive Director Sarah Kautz. “It is devastating to see the power of our Town and County suddenly turned against the Museum, undoing decades of our past work together to protect the historic, cultural, and natural resources at Conscience Point from commercial development.”

The complaint alleges that:

- The Museum has held clear title to Conscience Point since 1910 and has been recognized as the owner by the Town and County for over 115 years.
- In 2025, Town officials and their private partners engaged in a deliberate scheme to cloud the Museum’s title by administratively altering Suffolk County tax maps, publicizing false claims of municipal ownership, and obstructing eviction of unauthorized commercial occupants.
- The defendants bypassed judicial processes, denied the Museum notice and a fair hearing, and acted contrary to the Museum’s deed, longstanding public records, and prior municipal acknowledgments.

- These actions have gravely harmed the Museum's operations, fundraising, and reputation, and threaten to set a dangerous precedent for all charitable and cultural institutions.

The lawsuit seeks a declaration that the Museum is the sole rightful owner of Conscience Point, the removal of false and adverse claims from public records, injunctive relief to halt further interference, and monetary damages for the harm sustained.

"We believe these coordinated actions are not only unlawful, but a disservice to the entire Southampton community and its history," said Sheila Tendy, the Museum's attorney. "We are confident that the courts will vindicate our rights and help restore faith in the rule of law for all nonprofit stewards of public heritage."

The Southampton History Museum remains committed to transparency, community engagement, and the preservation of local history for future generations.

For media inquiries, please contact:

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History of Conscience Point

Conscience Point plays a significant and unique role in commemorating one of the most consequential events in our shared past: the landing of the first colonial English settlers in New York State in 1640 and the unimaginable changes that followed their arrival. The property is a Town-designated historic site and eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. While this proceeding is a time-consuming and expensive endeavor, the Museum has been forced to take this step to preserve Conscience Point and to defend against government overreach.

About the Southampton History Museum

The Southampton History Museum is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization chartered by the New York State Board of Regents and incorporated under the New York State Education Department. Established in 1898 and incorporated in 1910, the Museum preserves and educates about local history and culture through historic sites, archives, collections, and engaging public programs.