



*Preserving our past...*

*protecting our future.*

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**PASCOMMUCK CONSERVATION TRUST**

**NEWSLETTER**

**WINTER 1994**  
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**STELLA'S BIRTHDAY PARTY**  
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Thanks to the support of so many members of the Trust, along with Stella Wiernasz's many friends and relatives who made this event a great success. The Trust used this evening as an opportunity to 'roast' one of our oldest members, (in years, as well as in years of active service to the Trust). State Representative Nancy Flavin, who is also an active Trust member, honored Stella with a citation citing the years of service that Stella has volunteered to the community.

The Board of Directors had their opportunity to express a great deal of humor over Stella's modes of transportation; the ever changing phone number; and love of tag-sales. Putting humor aside, the Board of Directors honored Stella's dedication to the Trust by naming the trail at the Lake Street Park, the "Stella D. Wiernasz Shoreline Trail".

Sunday evening, October 24th, was filled with Trust members, Stella's friends, and family, good food, great music, in the beautifully decorated Pulaski Hall, followed by warm, humorous, friendly and emotional speeches. Door prizes were awarded to several lucky guests.

In addition to a very pleasant evening, well over six hundred dollars and many new memberships of some new friends were all added to the growth of the Trust.

Overheard was a comment by Stella, that she would love to see such a fund raiser repeated on her 80th birthday, but only if all present would join her again.

As usual, the Easthampton Fall Festival predictably brought rain, thus ending the devil drought of summer, with all of its watering hassles; and as usual, we participated by holding a tag/bake/plant sale at Lake Street, which resulted in a section of the lawn resembling the Grand Canyon. This, of course, called for major turf surgery and fervent prayers to all the Saints in Heaven!

This fall we again planted spring flowering bulbs at the Pascommuck Conservation Area at East Street, and the Lake Street property. Bob and Agnes Banas made a new bed at East Street, donating 70 bulbs and 12 Sweet William plants. Soon after, our autumn chores began in earnest. Leaves were raked, mulched/ mowed and spread around plantings; both plots were fertilized and limed; annuals were removed and perennials cut back; summer flowering bulbs were dug up, and stored inside for the winter.

New shrubs were also added, thanks to donations. First, the Montessori School in Amherst offered two six foot highbush cranberry viburnums in full berry --- it took four of us to dig them out and transport them to Lake Street, where we planted the specimens along the open shoreline facing the benches. They look great there! Second, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Press of Mayer Street donated three dwarf Alberta Spruce --- we planted one in a new bed on East Street, and the other two now grace the planting near the parking lot at Lake Street.

Our last project of the year involved honoring Stella Wiernasz at her 75th birthday party fund raiser for her years of service to the Trust, and to the community. We will dedicate the wooded trail running along the Rubber Thread Pond at Lake Street to her. Bob Pinkos has agreed to construct a wooden sign, which will read: "Stella D. Wiernasz Shoreline Trail". The two upright posts are already installed at the entrance. Naturally, we picked the windiest, coldest day of the season to work on this. We had to chop through two inches of frost and scores of roots! I bet Bob rushed straight home and warmed up to a bottle of his own famous home brew after that experience!

My thanks to the small cadre of able bodied volunteers who have helped to make our properties attractive and useful to the public this year. When spring finally comes, walk the trails, enjoy the plantings and join the growing number of regulars who are taking advantage of these unique natural parcels.

A VISION OF GREEN  
by Don Polonis

During 1993, the Trust was interested in acquiring four parcels to help complete the Manhan River Greenbelt Project. Two of the parcels lie on the main branch of the river, while the remaining two are on the north branch.

An approximately nine acre track of floodplain land, set back 300 feet behind 7-77 Pleasant Street, is most desired. It is adjacent to land the Trust already holds, and is a strategic parcel in our quest to complete the greenbelt.

From this location, you can see the waterfall at the Town Water Department Shop. Neighborhood children have constructed makeshift wooden aerial walk-ways over feeder drainage basins. Walking on the paths worn down by generations of fishermen, you are reminded of the eternal beauty of nature that is less than 500 feet from the Route 10 rotary and the urban Pulaski Park.

Although the prime owner of the property was supportive of our quest, we were unable to acquire it last year. We will try again.

The remaining properties are still in discussion. A 2.6 acre parcel owned by Warren Underwood will secure the south shore at the mouth of the Manhan River, where it empties into the Connecticut River at the Oxbow.

On the North Branch of the Manhan, we walked a 10 acre parcel behind 104 through 120 Loudville Road. Although this land may be in environmental jeopardy, the parcel supports a wide variety of plants and animals, and is partly farmed. The Board is seriously considering accepting it, providing an agreement can be worked out in 1994.

Adjacent is a 9 acre parcel which lies behind 90 through 98 Loudville Road. This land also lies in the Manhan flood plain and has a meandering western boundary. We are patiently waiting to hear from the business which owns it.

Although progress sometimes seems to be slow, the Board of the Trust remains optimistic. Each of us can help speed up this process by writing to the owners of these properties, letting them know that their donation of land is a gift for all to share. Please contact a director to obtain the name and address of the property owners. Land owners are encouraged to donate land or give an easement. Please call a director for more information.

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COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL USES OF THE NASHAWANNUCK POND.

By Ed Dwyer

The Nashawannuck Pond is an important scenic resource for the Town of Easthampton. The reflection of Mt. Tom on the pond water --- "the bottle" --- has become a symbol of the town. Throughout the years, the pond has provided many recreational and sporting opportunities for the townspeople including boating, ice skating, swimming, and fishing.

The pond owes its creation, however, not to nature, but to the need for water power by industry. In 1847, Samuel Williston moved the button business from Haydenville and centralized operations in Easthampton. The Williston-Knight Button Company built a four story mill building on Union Street, (now the location of the House of Landry), an office across the street, (now the location of Easthampton Travel), and several boarding houses for the mill girls.

A dam was built to impound the flow of Broad Brook, and to power the new mill. A small farming community was starting to become a 19th century manufacturing community. Soon, Williston's second industrial venture was incorporated. The Nashawannuck Manufacturing Company made elastics from their mills on Cottage Street.

The Nashawannuck Pond was named after this mill. The mill, in turn, was named after the 18th. Century district of Easthampton, that was between Bassett Brook (Saw Mill Brook) and the Manhan River. This section of Easthampton had many farms, and took its name from the Nipmuk word, that translates "the meadow between", (the waterways).

The pond served the industrial needs of both of these ventures, as well as the Easthampton Rubber Thread Company, the George Colton Company, The Glendale Manufacturing Company, and their successor, the United Elastic Corporation.

As the mills hired more people to come to Easthampton to work, the Nashawannuck Pond was used as a source of outdoor recreational activities. Two boathouses, a swimming beach, and a footbridge to Nonotuck Park were available.

The Nonotuck Boat Club was located on the cemetery side of the pond. The building from which it operated was called the Brookside Boat House. The club formed in 1903, and was dissolved in 1948.

The Water Lane Boat House was operated by William Wagner. The footbridge that crossed to Nonotuck Park was near his boathouse. A nearby ice house was owned by local oil man Howard Graham, who ran it until 1923. The business was then purchased by Mr. Wagner, who operated it in conjunction with the boat house until they closed in 1935. At this site, the public beach was later located. It was in use until the mid-1960s.

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THE PASCOMMUCK CONSERVATION TRUST, INC.

P. O. BOX 806

EASTHAMPTON, MA 01027

PROPERTY PRIMER  
by Kenneth Larsen

In the preceding articles, we discussed potential tax advantages, legal liabilities and offered an outline of what constitutes a common appraisal report of real property. The outline was the first of four guidelines involving the donation of conservation easements as charitable gifts.

The second of these four guidelines will be discussed here: General Principles of Easement Valuation.

The process of valuation should be logical, concise and complete in detail to support its conclusion in the current market. While the appraisal estimates the property value, the valuation of an easement aims toward establishing a real market price. As there is no traditional market for easements, valuation generally proceeds indirectly with "before and after" methods.

"Before" valuation attempts to determine the property's highest and best use in its current state, and before easements are attached. The appraiser views the suitability of the property, zoning laws and reasonable likelihood of a change in use. Opportunities and limitations in the property are measured and three recognized approaches (Income, Cost & Comparable Sales) to value are applied to the "before" value. All factors are included and inherent differences between unimproved rural properties and urban and suburban properties are recognized.

"After" valuations also determines the property's highest and best use but now views the property value in light of the easement that is attached. Examples of "after" valuation may include such things as agricultural or historical district zones, statewide regulations, federal limitations, et al. The three recognized approaches to value are then applied as before.

A critical and concrete example of the difference in "before" and "after" valuation is in a change in the highest and best use of a property. Where highest and best use calls for immediate demolition of subdivision, an easement prohibiting such changes will have a substantial effect on value.

Agricultural, recreational, residential or commercial areas that experience a change in highest and best use, show a greater impairment in market value compared to those experiencing an upward change in highest and best use such as those logically in line for development. The latter are valuable because they limit or eliminate the development potential for the land.

Easement values are also impacted by adjacent properties that are owned by the donors of the easements. There are federal tax implications (IRS & 267(c)(4), Tres. Reg. & 1.170A-13(h)(3)(i)) that delineates who constitute the "family members" to minimize the excess values to reasonable economic benefits not exceeding values normal to those obtainable from the general public.

For tax purposes, the value of the easement must be reduced by any benefit received by the donor.

Finally, balancing benefits of a conservation easement between public and private properties often require legal interpretation. Appraisers and property owners analyzing gifts of easements, particularly over less than the donor's entire property, should seek legal counsel.

## NASHAWANNUCK POND UPDATE

by John Watling  
Clerk, Nashawannuck Pond Steering Committee

September brought the first major construction undertaking of the Nashawannuck Pond restoration project. Dietz Construction, of Easthampton, won the bid for the installation of a gabion wier on White Brook in Nonotuck Park. The dam-like structure holds back the sediment that enters the pond in this watershed area.

The Pascommuck Conservation Trust sponsored a Frank Stanley Beveridge Foundation grant application on behalf of the community. A ten thousand dollar grant had been awarded from the Foundation for the White Brook work.

Eight thousand eight hundred dollars paid for the wier project with the balance of the grant moneys being applied to the costs associated with the sediment retention basin designed for White Brook. Currently, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management will be awarding small grants for the enhancement of lakes and ponds in the Commonwealth. This is the first year for such a grant program under DEM and is viewed as a pilot program to help organizations such as ours that are striving to meet the challenges of lake and pond management. We have applied for a ten thousand dollar matching grant which would assist with costs of the Broad Brook basin project. Announcements of the awards will be made in February.

We are optimistic all will be in place for a 1994 completion date for this project.

Our committee is a member of Mass. COLAP (Congress Of Lakes And Ponds), a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the aesthetic, recreational, and commercial values of lakes and ponds through maintenance and improvements. Our Assistant Town Clerk, Barbara Rich, allowed a photograph she had taken of the pond to be submitted to COLAP as an entry for the 1994 Calendar. COLAP produced this calender to highlight various lakes and ponds in Massachusetts with similar problems as we have with our pond. Barbara's beautiful early autumn shot was chosen as a winner and can be found as the September photo in the calendar. It is available for viewing or purchase in the Town Clerk's office.

The Pulaski Club will be the site of our next fund raising event to be held Saturday night, February 26th. A smorgasbord will be served at 7 p.m. with music by D.J. Mike Perrier following for your listening and dancing enjoyment. Tickets will be available in advance at many downtown businesses. We ask you consider supporting the pond project by joining us.

On behalf of the Nashawannuck Pond Steering Committee, I want to thank the Pascommuck Conservation Trust and its members for their continued work and support of the Nashawannuck Pond restoration as well as for this opportunity to update the pond project, and put in this plug for our upcoming dance.

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## ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting will be held on February 28, 1994. There will be a separate mailing to members explaining details of the meeting. If you are not now a member, and would like to attend, please call Ed Dwyer, at 527-2211, to receive an invitation.

INCREASING TRUST HOLDINGS  
by Stuart Beckley

With the nearly acquired addition of the Gawle farm (60 acres), the Pascommuck Conservation Trust will approximately double our land holdings. This will advance one of the Trust's objectives --- the conservation of open space in Easthampton. Recent development proposals may give the opportunity to further increase conserved open space.

The Trust has been offered approximately ten acres off Loudville Road. This property borders the North Branch of the Manhan River. This would help the Trust with the development of a Manhan River Greenbelt, another long-term goal. Because this land was once used as Easthampton's landfill (dump), the Trust is trying to gather as much information about the site as possible.

The Planning Board has received two plans for Open Space Residential Developments which will require conservation of open space. In preliminary discussions, the developers have indicated a willingness to turn ownership of the land to the Trust or to the Conservation Commission.

One parcel (5.5 acres) is located on Hendrick Street and borders Broad Brook. This parcel abuts town-owned lands. The conservation of this property would decrease development near the brook which would help decrease sediment reaching the Nashawannuck Pond.

The second parcel (4.8 acres) is in an entirely different setting, it is off of Florence Road. This parcel is an open field which also backs up to a small stream and is surrounded by more intense uses.

A third parcel (2.6 acres) has been offered to the Trust by Mr. Warren Underwood. This landlocked parcel off of East Street has nearly 1,500 feet of frontage on the Oxbow. This property can be reached from the E. Florence Smith Nature Trail, with a quick walk down the railroad tracks. The Trust will accept the property sometime in 1994.

Since these parcels do not border the Manhan River and do not add to the Greenbelt, should the Trust be interested in holding the properties? With Easthampton's relatively small land area, there appears to be a significant benefit to conserving any land. If enough individual parcels are collected, they could be linked together. For example, the parcel on Hendrick Street connects with agricultural land on Holyoke Street which in turn connects with Nonotuck Park. As the holdings increase, the Trust could write a guide to the properties which inventory their key resources such as flora, fauna, history, and landscapes. This will promote another goal of the Trust --- environmental education.

While progress may at times seem slow in achieving the Trust's goals, it is important to note that progress is being made. Equally important is noting that it is being done with your membership help, whether that be physical, intellectual, or financial. Good work!


A NOTE OF THANKS  
from Stella Wiernasz

To the Board of Directors, members of the Trust, Representative Nancy Flavin, family and friends: for your generous contribution to the Trust, for your presence on October 24th in support of my 75th birthday, and for your gifts, cards, and best wishes, my sincere thanks to you all.

Nancy, for your tireless efforts to convince the Legislature that I was worthy of their beautiful citation, I am deeply grateful.

I would like to ask all of you to join me on my 80th! (God willing).

Sincerely, and gratefully,

  
Stella Wiernasz

MEMBER'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Pascommuck Conservation Trust Inc.  
Post Office Box 806  
Easthampton MA 01027

Please check appropriate membership and level of support:

Limited income	_____	\$	6.00
Individual	_____	\$	10.00
Family	_____	\$	18.00
Contributer	_____	\$	25.00
Patron	_____	\$	60.00
Corporate	_____	\$	100.00
Sponsor	_____	\$	150.00
Life Member	_____	\$	1,000.00

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to be active in the Trust, helping with activities.

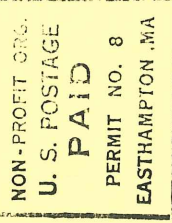
My new member is:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

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*Read Stella's  
Thank you  
message inside!*