

# The NRT Report

Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield Newsletter

## Special Notice:

### Great Woods Celebration.

**JUNE 2, 2001 10:30 A.M.**  
**Oak Street Entrance**

**Refreshments.**  
**Guided Walks**

**A celebration of the  
completion of the Great  
Woods Conservation Area.**

**EVERYONE IS INVITED**

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A color copy of this newsletter is available on our web site.

## The Birth of the NRT of Mansfield

by Jane R. Sheehan

**L**ittle did I dream on that sunny fall day of 1968, when I rode "Little Britches" over the Rumford River's make-shift bridge, just how far that trail would lead.

Someone had told me that the Great Woods was a good place to ride horseback. Well, it was true! Never had I encountered such good footing with a variety of terrain, over wide, inviting, abandoned logging roads. I rode on for quite a while, exploring, crossed some swampy places and a railroad track. Then I realized that I was lost. Finally I emerged near the School Street bridge, dismounted, and led the tired pony down Willow Street, home to our South Main Street farm, ecstatic over my discovery.

I shared my adventure with neighbor Roger Vickery who was gassing up my car at Vickery's Garage. Roger, who was always helpful, offered to get me a map of the woods from Harry Chase.

Harry was a former Boy Scout leader who knew the Great Woods of Mansfield and Norton like the back of his hand. I never got lost out there again!

With each ride I came to know the woods better. I never met a soul. It seemed to me that this was a special place.

My enthusiasm for the trail system of the Great Woods spilled over to my neighbors Rob and Doris Webb, who had given me permission to ride on their property on Fruit Street. (Now owned by Lou and Mary Andrews.)

They started to hike there with their two children, Billy and Marybeth. Together we became more convinced that these woods were an unheralded asset to Mansfield and Norton, and

that a plan to preserve them was needed.

Who in the town should we approach? Who made plans for the future? In our naiveté, we decided that we would go to the Planning Board. After all Planning Boards were for planning weren't they?

Our reception was less than enthusiastic. We left feeling that we had been patronized and perhaps even ridiculed. Later we were angered to hear that we had been referred to as "the bird-ladies of South Main Street."

However, upon analyzing why the meeting had gone badly for us, we learned some important lessons. First of all, do your homework! Have lots of facts and figures

to present. Get public support. Try to enlist the Town Fathers, but if you cannot, get lots of other people interested. Find out what avenues to pursue to make preservation possible.

We read a lot. We wrote letters to the state to find out if a state park was a possibility. About a dozen other conservation-minded people joined us as we explored options.

Adding urgency to our cause was the announcement that an extension to Route 25 was planned that would destroy and divide much of the Great Woods' 3000 acres.

We decided to follow the lead of a group in Easton which had incorporated the previous year as a non-profit land trust. (The Easton Natural Resources Trust).

Thus, in 1971, The Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield was incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

We broadened our interests to include conservation education and the protection of the other natural resources of the Town of Mansfield.

The incorporators were: Beatrice C. Alperin, Nancy Bielán, Harry Chase, Nancy P. Jones, *(Continued on page 3)*

*"the bird  
ladies of  
South Main  
Street"*



## A message from the President

The Great Woods conservation acquisition project is now virtually complete except for three isolated parcels. Approximately 1200 acres in Mansfield and Norton have been protected for passive recreation, wetland and wildlife protection.

The Conservation Commissions of both towns working with the NRT of Mansfield, the Land Preservation Society of Norton, The Trust for Public Land, and with grants from the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, made this accomplishment possible. Gifts of land from Arthur Freeman of Norton, Eric DeLong of Acorn Manufacturing, the Eagan and Turinese families, and Fleet-Boston Bank were also important contributors to the success of this endeavor. This cooperative effort between the private and public sectors is a great achievement.

The NRT will now focus on the protection of the Canoe River Aquifer. Working with the Canoe River Aquifer Advisory Committee (CRAAC), the Conservation Commissions, and the Land Trusts of the five member communities, we plan to establish a 16-mile green belt along the river from Lake Sabbatia in Sharon to Lake Winnecunnet. This very ambitious undertaking, which will protect the towns' water supplies and create a green belt, is a great investment in our future.



## Harry's Notebook by Harry B. Chase, Jr.\*

### Taylor's Hill and the Old Harris Farm

My second grade teacher, Miss Edith Guild, taught us that Mansfield has three hills: Jewell on the West Side, Stearns's in East Mansfield, and Taylor's in the Great Woods.

Out-of-towners seeing Taylor's for the first time laugh: "You call this a hill?" We sure do, and it's been the sledding and skiing place for generations of Mansfield's flatland kids.

To reach it, park at the corner of Fisher and Judy's Lanes and head west on a footpath across Rumford River, past the bronze sign at Cobbler's Corner where in 1640 Myles Standish and his survey party paused to resole their shoes. Keep bearing left and in a third of a mile you'll be at Taylor's Hill.

At the north foot of the hill is Taylor's Spring, which "ain't what it used to be" since the construction of Route 140 to the west somehow choked off its flow.

On the ridge 150 yards south of the hill you'll find a foundation most people think is a house site. It was a cabin built with money willed to the Boy Scouts of Mansfield. I drew the plans in 1948 for an A-frame structure, 22 1/2 by 28 feet, warmed by a Heatilator fireplace. Bad idea! It got vandalized so repeatedly that after a few years we tore it down.

Taylor's Hill and Spring were named in the 1800s for Wallace Taylor, who owned both.

In 1737 this was a farm belonging to Joseph Harris. Joseph's rebellious wife Rebecca in 1750 deserted him for Boston with some of his belongings. He wanted her back, under certain conditions, and advertised in the newspapers:

"If she will return to my family and behave as a virtuous wife ought to do, she will be kindly received."  
*(Taylor's Hill, Continued on last page)*

## Kid's Stuff

### Which one of these critters are reptiles and which are amphibians?

All of these animals can be found in The Great Woods, along the Canoe River, and some in your back yard. *Watch out for tricks.*



Place your answers here  
**R** for reptile

**A** for amphibian

- 1. Garter Snake \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Dusky Salamander \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Painted Turtle \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. American Toad \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Bullfrog \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Brook Trout \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Milk Snake \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. Eastern Newt \_\_\_\_\_

Some pictures from *The National Audubon Society Field Guide to New England* by Alden and Cassie, a great guide to flora and fauna in the area.

*(Answers on page 4.)*

## A Safe visit to the woods

By Colin Cauldwell

Generally speaking, walking and hiking in the Great Woods Conservation Area is a very safe activity.

But, as with any pursuit, there are a few precautions the prudent visitor should take. Hunting is allowed in the Great Woods year round. Hunters may be encountered in the woods at any time, especially during deer season, in the late fall. Precise information on hunting seasons may be obtained from the Town Clerk's office at the Town Hall.

To minimize potential problems hikers should wear hunter orange and dog walkers should consider clothing their pets in a similar fashion.

Poison Ivy is one the most common plants in the Great Woods especially around the Coddling Farm property. Hikers should be able to identify it and avoid it. Consequences for not doing so can range from annoying to life threatening. Any good plant identification guide will have a picture and description of poison ivy.

Washing hands and other exposed skin with

dish detergent upon return from the woods will help with accidental poison ivy exposure.

Another serious problem, can come from the bite of the deer tick. This tiny insect can spread Lyme Disease, which can be debilitating. Precautions to prevent this include wearing long pants and long sleeves and tucking pants into the tops of boots or socks. Also, insect repellent with a high concentration of Deet sprayed around the cuff and boot area is an effective deterrent.

As a precaution, you should examine yourself carefully when you return from the woods for these very small ticks.

In the late summer and early fall, mosquitoes can carry the Eastern Equine Encephalitis virus which can be deadly. Use the same precautions that are used to prevent Deer Tick problems.

By following these simple precautions, you can have a safe and pleasant visit to the Great Woods Conservation Area.

*Editor's note: There have been no reported cases of Lyme Disease and EEE, nor have there been any hunting accidents, in recent times, in the Great Woods.*



*Poison Ivy. Note the three leaf clusters and shiny, reddish, new leaf growth.*

## Conservation History

Dateline: September 1976.

After years of negotiations the Great Woods Study Committee and Richard Hallet agreed on the sale of the important "Taylor's Hill" parcel. The 40 plus acre parcel is in the northern section of the woods and contains the historic Cobbler's Corner.

Read *Harry's Notebook* to learn about access to Taylor's Hill.



Brad Johnson, Committee Attorney; Rob Webb and Jerry Harpin committee members; Richard Hallett, former owner; Charles Meszoely, committee chairman; Lou Andrews and Marydee Flynn committee members.

*"Historic  
Cobbler's  
Corner  
saved"*

*(THE BIRTH OF THE NRT, Continued from page 1)*

Robert J. Jones, Richard A. Morse, Jane Sheehan, Richard J. Sheehan, Roger Vickery, Doris Webb, and Robert Webb.

The first Board of Directors were: Robert Webb, President; Doris Webb, Vice-President; Jane Sheehan, Secretary; Robert J. Jones, Treasurer; Janice Meszoely, Membership; Directors: Beatrice Alperin; Herbert George; Virginia George; Patricia Marcussen, and Betty Roche.

Thirty years later, I look back in awe at the volume of letters, the public hearings, the Town Meetings and the media coverage of the various threats to the Great Woods and to the environmental integrity of the town. I shake my head in wonder at what one little incident in my life led to. And I feel so proud and privileged to have been able to take part in some of the NRT's accomplishments.



## Annual Meeting Report

The NRT held its 30th annual meeting at the Mansfield Public Library. Attendees enjoyed a presentation by Randy Julius. Randy spoke on the importance of preserving open space to protect our public water supply and provide wildlife habitat and recreation land for future generations. He presented a slide show of his artwork, and open space areas in southeast Massachusetts. President Leonard Flynn reviewed our accomplishments for the past year and our objectives for the near future.

### Achievements included:

- ? Facilitated the purchase of 35 acres in The Great Woods by the Conservation Commission.
- ? Instituted a newsletter.
- ? Established a web site. ([www.geocities.com/nrtma](http://www.geocities.com/nrtma))

Received the following gifts:

- ? 150 acres in The Great Woods to NRT and the Norton Land Preservation Society from Fleet/Boston Financial.
- ? 23.7 acres off Mill Street from the Flint Family Realty Trust .
- ? 8 acres in The Great Woods from Acorn Manufacturing.
- ? 3.2 acres in The Great Woods from the Eagan and Turinese Families.
- ? 3.96 acres in The Great Woods from Allen Brown.
- ? 3.5 acre Conservation Restriction in The Great Woods to the NRT from Fleet/Boston Financial. and

**Promoted the withdrawal of the Great Waves amusement park development.**

### Upcoming Projects and Events:

With the completion of the Great Woods Conservation Area acquisitions, the NRT will focus on the protection of Canoe River Aquifer.

- ? Earth Day Celebration, April 28th, 1- 4 P.M. , South Common.  
*Come to the Fair sponsored by the Mansfield Girl Scouts.*
- ? Great Woods Completion Celebration, June 2nd , 10:30 A.M.  
Oak Street Entrance, with Great Woods walks, refreshments, and more.  
*Celebrate with us the completion of this 30 year endeavor to save the Great Woods.*
- ? Downtown Sidewalk Event , July 11th, 6 – 9 P.M.  
*We will have a table at this annual event.*
- ? Great Woods Walk (Scheduled this Fall)  
*Families and individuals are invited to walk with us and see the Great Woods in the fall.*
- ? Community Preservation Act (CPA)  
*The NRT will be providing educational material and presentations to interested groups in support of the CPA.*

## Welcome

A special welcome to our two new directors, Chris Flass and Cindy Ostrowski. Chris and Cindy were instrumental in our fight to stop the Great Waves water park. Chris is now a member of the Mansfield Conservation Commission.

### Special Awards!

Certificates of Appreciation were presented to **Harry Chase** and **Jane Sheehan**, Incorporating Members, for 30 years of continuous service to the NRT and Mansfield Conservation; and to **Janice Meszoely** and **Betty Roche** for their 30 years of service as board members. Janice also served as president. A special certificate was awarded to **Victoria Connor** for her many years as NRT treasurer. Congratulations to all!

## Officers and Board of Directors for 2001

President: Leonard Flynn  
 Vice-President: Lou Andrews  
 Secretary: Peggy Flannery  
 Treasurer: Lou Andrews



### Board of Directors:

Ginny Bellamy	Marydee Flynn
Colin Cauldwell	Meredith Holford
Vicky Connor	Janice Meszoely
Chris Flass	Charles Meszoely
Cindy Ostrowski	Betty Roche
	Jane Sheehan



## Conservation Gifts

### IF YOU OWN A UNIQUE PIECE OF THE LANDSCAPE, A CONSERVATION GIFT CAN PRESERVE ITS NATURAL FEATURES AND ENRICH OUR HERITAGE OF PROTECTED OPEN SPACE

- ? A CONSERVATION GIFT IS *a donation of land, or a conservation restriction on a piece of land, to a qualified land trust or governmental agency.*
- ? WHY MAKE A CONSERVATION GIFT?  
*Because you wish to preserve the natural features and environmental significance of your property and ensure that your successors will respect your wishes.*
- ? ARE THERE TAX ADVANTAGES?  
*A conservation gift may generate income, estate, or property tax savings for you and your heirs. Together, these incentives can be substantial.*
- ? ARE THERE OTHER ADVANTAGES?  
*A well-planned conservation gift may avoid future conflict over a family-owned estate.*
- ? WHO MAY ACCEPT A CONSERVATION GIFT?  
*Non-profit land trusts and conservation organizations, municipal conservation commissions, and conservation agencies are qualified recipients. Many owners choose to work with private organizations whose goals they share and support.*
- ? WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A GIFT OF LAND AND A CONSERVATION RESTRICTION?  
*A gift of land transfers ownership and management responsibility to the conservation organization. A conservation restriction (CR) permanently limits development and protects conservation values of the property, but leaves ownership and management responsibilities in private hands.*
- ? HOW DOES A CR WORK?  
*A CR is a legal agreement permanently protecting scenic and natural features and ensuring that protected areas will not be developed or subdivided. The donor grants the CR to a qualified organization, which in turn agrees to monitor the restricted property and enforce the CR in perpetuity. The donor/grantor continues to own and use the property, always subject to the CR's terms. CRs have been authorized by Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 184, since 1969.*
- ? HOW DOES A CR AFFECT THE OWNER'S USE OF THE LAND?  
*Except for rights expressly granted in the CR document, the owners continue to use and control the land as they wish. Each CR is tailored to the property's special features and the donor's objectives. In most cases, the CR prohibits development and subdivision, road building, and other uses that would damage the land. It usually permits woodland management, farming, fishing, boating, hiking, horseback riding, and similar activities.  
*Depending on property characteristics and the owner's objectives, the CR donor may reserve the right to build specified additional structures within defined areas ("building envelopes") of the CR parcel, or may exclude some land entirely from the CR.**
- ? HOW DO LAND TRUSTS DECIDE ON A PROPOSED CONSERVATION GIFT?  
*First, staff and volunteers learn as much as possible about the property and the owner's objectives. Then, they measure the property against established conservation priorities and criteria.*



## Membership Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in the getting involved with:

- ? Acquiring land for conservation
- ? Maintaining trails
- ? Fund raising
- ? Newsletter publishing
- ? Nature walks
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Check if renewal

Individual and family dues are \$25.00 per year

**Welcome to the NRT!**

Mail completed form and check to:

**NRT  
 255 Fruit Street  
 Mansfield, MA 02048**

**Reminder,  
 please pay your  
 2001 dues.**

- ? WHAT IF A PROPERTY IS TOO VALUABLE FOR ITS OWNERS TO GIVE AWAY?  
*Often a carefully planned CR can solve this problem by keeping the cost of the gift at manageable levels. Even when an owner decides that land must be sold for development, a CR on a portion of the property can prevent sprawl and reduce the impact on conservation values. Staff of a land trust in your area will be glad to discuss options with the landowners and design a CR, if appropriate.*

(Information provided by the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition)



Non-Profit Org.  
POSTAGE PAID  
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MANSFIELD, MA

## Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield

102 Jewell Street  
Mansfield, MA 02048

Phone: 508-339-4691  
Web: [www.geocities.com/nrtma](http://www.geocities.com/nrtma)  
Email: [nrtma@yahoo.com](mailto:nrtma@yahoo.com)

"To acquire and preserve natural resources  
for the use and enjoyment of present and  
future generations"

**WE'RE ON THE WEB:  
WWW.GEOCITIES.COM/  
NRTMA**

*(Taylor's Hill, Continued from page 2)*

Rebecca did return. In 1763, when Joseph died "seized and possessed," she inherited part of the house (of which I've found nary a trace), the well and "use of a water hole."

Taylor's Hill now is part of a 106-acre conservation tract owned by the Town of Mansfield. It's separated by the highways from the larger Great Woods conservation holdings. The State promised a connecting footbridge sometime in the future.

Despite some traffic noise, the piney Taylor's Hill area is as pretty a piece of woods as you'll find in Mansfield and well worth a Sunday stroll. 

*\*Harry has camped, hunted, surveyed, mapped and observed plant and animal life in The Great Woods for over 50 years.*

**Our  
30th  
Year!**

## Membership

The NRT welcomes new members!

Our dues are \$25.00 per year.

Dues can be sent to :  
NRT  
255 Fruit Street  
Mansfield, MA 02048.

Please include your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and your specific conservation interests.; or visit our web site for an application.

E-mail us for a free brochure or call Lou Andrews at 508-339-4155.

Your comments are welcome.

Please e-mail them to [nrtma@yahoo.com](mailto:nrtma@yahoo.com).

The NRT newsletter is published three times a year. All opinions and comments are those of the authors.

Lou Andrews—editor

The Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to acquiring and preserving natural resources for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations; and other conservation related activities.

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## Contributions

The NRT welcomes donations to our land acquisition fund. These funds are dedicated to acquire and protect conservation land in Mansfield.

Please send your tax –deductible contribution to:  
NRT, 255 Fruit Street, Mansfield, MA 02048.

Kid's quiz answers : 1-R, 2-A, 3-R, 4-A, 5-A, 6 IS A FISH, 7-R, 8-A