

The NRT Report

Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield Newsletter

Upcoming Events

A Walk in the Great Woods.

Join us on October 3rd at 1:00 P.M. for a guided tour of the Great Woods. Meet at the Oak Street entrance.

Mansfield's Conservation Legacy

by Lou Andrews

This is a story about conservation history in Mansfield. Its success resulted from the partnership of the Mansfield Conservation Commission, The Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield, and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. Also providing help were the Trust for Public Lands, neighboring land trusts and conservation commissions, state legislators, and many individuals. It's also the story about the dedication of two individuals, Marydee and Lenny Flynn, and their dedication to the environment. I first met the Flynn's at an NRT meeting in 1971 or '72.

The NRT was founded out of concern over development in and around the Great Woods. Lenny and Marydee were founding members, and became board members shortly thereafter.

The NRT championed the formation of the Great Woods Study Committee at the 1972 Annual Town Meeting. The committee was directed to work with the Conservation Commission to establish a plan for the best use of the land in the Great Woods. This was the

first time I had the opportunity to work with Marydee.

Marydee championed the establishment of our Great Woods acquisition plan, and negotiated with the landowners to sell or gift their land to the Town and NRT.

Marydee led the negotiations for the Town's first major acquisition. ...it was the largest acquisition to date.

The Committee recommended that most of the Great Woods be kept in a natural state and be acquired for conservation, and that the land along South Main Street be allowed to

be developed. We estimated it would take FOUR years to acquiring all the conservation land. In cases when Town funding was not available the NRT would step in to purchase the land, then sell it back to the Town at the next Town Meeting. Self Help funding from Environmental Affairs was critical to leverage our local funds.

In 1975 Marydee led the negotiations for the Town's first major acquisition: the Moreau piece. It was largest acquisition to date - over 100 acres of land.

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Acquisition Accomplishments by Leonard F. Flynn, Acquisitions Director

Mansfield has acquired sixty-four more acres of conservation land during 2003 -- 47 acres on the Canoe River and 17 acres in the Great Woods. Considering the current economy this was a significant accomplishment for the NRT and the Conservation Commission.

The 47-acre parcel was acquired with existing conservation commission funds and a Self Help Grant from the Department of Conservation Services of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. The grant paid sixty percent of the \$251,500 price, resulting in a cost to Mansfield of \$100,600 or \$2,140 per acre -- a great bargain! The land is situated at the end of Canoe River Drive and Deep Run Road off Ware Street. The Canoe River flows through the parcel and has 3,400 feet frontage

on the River. The parcel, sixty percent upland area and forty percent wetland, is adjacent to town conservation land to the north and south. The upland is hilly and heavily forested with mature trees. This land is an important link in the proposed Canoe River Greenbelt and provides recharge area for the town wells, protects wildlife habitat, and offers opportunity for passive recreation.

A pleasant surprise was a gift from Norman K Freeman of New Jersey to the NRT of 17 acres in the Great Woods. The land, in the northern part of the Great Woods just south of the Beagle Club, contains a rare Atlantic White Cedar swamp that has cedar trees over one hundred years old. These swamps were

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Dedication and persistence

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In 1976 Marydee was also instrumental in the purchase of the 78 acres Taylor's Hill parcel in the northern section of the woods. Shortly after, the committee negotiated the acquisition of the adjacent parcel containing historic Cobbler's Corner

Lenny and Marydee worked tirelessly to get many parcels gifted to the NRT, and worked with the Conservation Commission and Environmental Affairs to purchase the rest.

During the late 80's and early 90's funding sources for conservation were scarce and environmental efforts slowed down. Then came Lego World. It spurred us all into action again. Lenny picked up the ball and rallied the troops. Lego went elsewhere.

But our conservation efforts were renewed. Lenny's dogged persistence for 20 years led to the transfer of 45 acres of state land to the Conservation Commission in 1994

In 1996, the Town acquired the Scott-Goyea farm on Oak Street. This piece was not in the original plan for the Great Woods but Lenny managed, with the help of The Trust for Public Lands and funding from the Town and Commonwealth, to arrange the purchase of the nicest parcel in the Great Woods.

When developers planned to build an industrial park in the Great Woods, just over the town line in Norton, Lenny along

with members of Norton Land Preservation Society, leaped into action. Their efforts culminated in naming the Great Brook as a perennial stream. This eventually helped lead to the TCP golf course instead of an industrial park, and the gifting of over 147 acres of conservation land in Norton and Mansfield by Fleet Boston. Some of these parcels gave the NRT standing for our next fight.

In 1999, with Lenny as its president, the NRT led the fight to stop the Great Waves water park development adjacent to our conservation area. It took nearly three years and over \$30,000 in legal expenses, not including legal costs by land owner Karl Clemmey, but the park was stopped. The fight ended with the proponents dropping their plans in January of 2001

With the fight behind us we finally declared the Great Woods project completed. All but three land locked parcel were purchased or gifted to the Town and the NRT.

We celebrated our achievements at the Scott-Goyea farm in the Fall of 2001. Now, here's how persistence pays off.

Marydee first contacted Norman Freeman of New Jersey in the early 1970's to ask if he were interested in selling or donating his land in the Great Woods. Through the 80' and 90's he was periodically contacted and cajoled by Lenny.

Last year, Mr. Freeman contacted me and offered to donate his 17 acres to the NRT. We passed papers in December. This now leaves only two small parcels that have not been acquired, and both are surrounded by conservation land.

Our four-year plan took 30 years - but we completed it. It's thanks to the persistence and dedication of the Flynn's.

In 2002 NRT members finally marked all the Great Woods trails. With the Great Woods completed we can focus our full attention to the Canoe River. Back in the early 70's the NRT understood the importance of the Canoe River as a

“ Flynn drives a hard bargain, the land is worth much more.”

valuable resource to the town.

When the Canoe River Aquifer Study Committee was formed, Lenny

volunteered to become a member. One of the committee's goals is to protect the aquifer by acquiring adjacent land. The committee sponsors the Canoe River Awareness day every year to increase awareness of this valuable resource.

In December last year the Town added to its protected land along the Canoe River by purchasing 41 acres from developer Doug King. Lenny negotiated the sale and coordinated the request for self help funds. King was heard to say after the paper were signed, " Flynn drives a hard bargain, the land is worth much more."

There were many events and milestones I left out of this story. The conservation fairs, guided Great Woods walks for elementary school kids, fund raising, and more. I am sure that all of you have your own stories to tell.

But throughout it all the Flynn's have been instrumental in every conservation effort for over 30 years. Their efforts will leave a legacy for future generations to enjoy. 

Land named for Flynn's

On January 29th, 2004 the Flynn's were honored by the Town of Mansfield, the NRT, and Mansfield Conservation Commission.

It was proclaimed that all conservation land along the Canoe River, from East Street in Mansfield to the Norton town line, be dedicated and henceforth and forever be known to all as the

Leonard F. and Marydee Flynn Greenbelt.

*Proclaimed the 29th day of January,
Two Thousand and Four by
the Mansfield Board of Selectmen,
Mansfield Conservation Commission, and the
Board of Directors of the
Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield.*

Membership Dues are due!

Dues are \$25.00 per year.
Send to:
NRT
255 Fruit Street
Mansfield, MA 02048.

Harry's Notebook by Harry B. Chase, Jr.

ONCE YOU COULD HIKE 20 MILES A DAY IN THE GREAT WOODS!

Make that 21 1/2! When I was a Scoutmaster 50 years ago that was how far a kid in my troop had to hoof it in the Great Woods to qualify for his Hiking Merit Badge.

The Handbook specified 20 miles. Why the extra mile and a half? Because some wise guy always asked, "How do you *know* you hiked 20 miles?" My Scouts could brag, "Because in *our* troop we go the extra distance to be sure!"

Before I became a Scoutmaster, Mansfield Scouts going for their hiking badge would tramp the highways to Attleboro and back, stopping en route for a hamburger. I decided that had to go. Boy Scouts should get off the blacktop and into the woods. The Great Woods!

Back then the Great Woods were greater. Route I-495 hadn't sliced them; forest bordered South Main Street and Mansfield Avenue. You could trudge from Willow Street in Mansfield to Route 123 in Norton. So I found it no trick to lay out a figure-eight route of the required length.

Of course when the boys went, so did I, to make sure they didn't get lost and (frankly) to share in the fun. The trek usually lasted 10 hours; we'd

take a five-minute break every half hour and eat lunch midway. The kids always insisted on running the last mile. Show-offs! In those days I could stay with them.

I never found a better way to get to know the Great Woods . . .

. . . The millions of oaks and swamp maples, all the same size. Trails that varied from wheel-worn cart paths to scarcely-visible waterlogged ruts; trails that circled aimlessly and went nowhere, or vanished underfoot. Acres of knee-deep, waist-deep brush through which we waded without seeing our feet. Greenbrier entanglements, like barbed wire. Rotted wood piles forgotten by the men who cut and stacked them. Hidden cranberry bogs. Gray-lichened farm walls, lost in the jungles. Venerable beeches carved with half-century-old dates and initials. And now and then a lofty, church-like pine grove.

I'm older now and the Great Woods are less great--no more 20-mile hikes. But Boy Scouts still use the woods, and nowadays when they walk it's on Mansfield and Norton conservation land.



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

Conservation History



PHOTO BY MEREDITH HOLFORD

State and local officials turned out for the ribbon-cutting ceremony at Judy Lane. From left are Peter Webber, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Management; James J. Kerasiotes, Secretary of Transportation and Construction; Sen. William Keating (D-Sharon), Rep. Barbara Hyland (R-Foxboro); Lt. Governor Paul Cellucci; Selectman Joseph Pasquale; Leonard Flynn, land acquisitions director for the Natural Resources Trust; Conservation Commission Chairman Greg Caldwell; Conservation Agent Dick Lewis; Bill Buckley of Bay Colony; Engineer and Selectman Ralph Penney.

May 1994—
Commonwealth transfers land to the Mansfield Conservation Commission after a 20 year effort by the NRT.



Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield

255 Fruit Street
Mansfield, MA 02048

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MANSFIELD, MA

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once common along the Atlantic coastal plain. The dramatic decline of the species and ecosystem is attributed to harvest without replanting and extensive development of coastal areas. Since the time of European colonization, loss of Atlantic Cedar Swamps exceeds ninety percent in the coastal plain. This ecosystem provides habitat for many species including the rare Hessels Hairstreak butterfly.

The NRT and the Conservation Commission acquired these parcels as a result of many years of contact and negotiations with the owners. Patience, persistence, and the support of the townspeople made the completion of the Great Woods conservation project a reality. If we want to preserve the character of Mansfield, protect our public water supply and our wildlife areas, we must act quickly to complete the Canoe River Greenbelt project.

Losing Ground, a publication of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, reports that every day 44 acres of woods, fields and farms are lost to development in Massachusetts. Mansfield has been one of the fastest growing towns in the state for the past twenty-five years. We must continue our efforts to protect the quality of life and the diminishing natural resources for future generations of citizens of Mansfield.



**WE'RE ON THE WEB:
NRTMA.HOME.
COMCAST.NET**

Membership

The NRT welcomes new members!

Our dues are \$25.00 per year.

Please send dues 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@comcast.net

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 to 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.