

## The Needham Sportsman's Club III

### Preamble to Part III

Before proceeding with Part III we must digress a little. Sometime after Part II was released, a box of old club archives was discovered that contained information important to the origin and early activities of the club. This included minutes of the initial club meetings, a list of charter members, elected officers and board of directors, preliminary by-laws and certification of incorporation. We owe a vote of thanks to Don Michael, a long time member and secretary for many years during the 90s. He had secured the archives for safe keeping after most of the old club records/data, for some unknown reason, had been lost.

Through out the archives, names of certain members continually appear as officers, committeemen or just members who were very active in the club for many years. An attempt will be made to identify some of these individuals.

One point of interest not made very clear in Part I or Part II and need's clarification; the NSC's primary objectives, as stated in the corporation charter were, "the perpetuation, propagation and protection of our game and fish .....and development of the New England shooting dog.....education of its membership and the public.....to the benefits derived from the aforementioned". At the end of the first year membership stood at 82 paid up members.

The primary interest of the club was trapshooting, target shooting, hunting and dog training. Trap and skeet fields were set up at a farm on Brookside Road and a rifle range off Great Plain Ave. with other locations identified, mostly on private property however permission was granted to use town land at several sites.

The club was heavily involved with Mass. Fish & Wildlife Department's conservation programs, such as raising hares and game birds and to a lesser degree rearing trout.

The MF&W supplied pheasant and quail eggs (as many as 250-300 per year) that committee members incubated at home. The surviving chicks would be pen raise until stocked on huntable land located in the Needham-Dover area.

They also supplied fingerling trout (as many as 4000) that were reared in screened off sections of local water until they were 6" or more at which time they were stocked in local brooks i.e. Rosemary, Fuller, Clay, Strawberry Hill, to name a few. On occasion the state supplied full grown (9-12") trout for stocking in public waters.

Until around 1940 club members were limited to fishing the local stocked brooks and ponds, about that time the Walker-Gordon ponds became available for lease. Trout rearing was phased out so full attention could be devoted to the new ponds however the club continued to assist the MF&W in stocking public waters.

Annual club dues stayed at \$2.00; however a separate fee of \$5.00 was charged members fishing the club ponds. The ponds were private water so the club had to procure trout from private hatcheries.

Of interest, one of the charter members by the name of Archie Friswell, becomes club treasure sometime around 1940 and remained treasure for the next 30+ years. He played a crucial role through the years not only in fund raising but coming up with innovated ways to keep the club solvent during difficult times. It appears he maintained a tight reign on spending and was a force in collecting dues.

By the mid 40s the NSC was recognized as the premier field trial club in the New England. Ted Whittemore, Dr. W.H. Beard, Frank Bridges, Bob Proctor Sr. and others club members are credited with establishing field trials as a sporting event through out New England. The annual spring trial drew more than 60 entries from all over the East coast. Club members under the leadership of Archie Friswell, manned the ever profitable food tent during the 2 day event and also organized an annual banquet for all attendees the week end of the trial.

In addition to it field trial recognition, the club was recipient of several awards from the MF&W for its wildlife conservation initiatives. The most important and still being conducted to this day, Massachusetts Junior Conservation Camp.

### Part III

We now enter the 1950s, an interesting and probably the most important period in the NSC history. It also happens to be a time of change in our country. Advancements in technology, a post war population explosion and accompanying housing boom in the suburbs had a negative effect on the sports of hunting and fishing. Loss of access and dwindling habitat, plus the ever increasing diversion to other leisure time activities, takes its toll on both hunting and fishing but especially hunting.

The Mass. Fish and Wildlife reduced its partnership role with sporting clubs no longer supplying fingerling trout or quail and pheasant chicks for local stocking programs. The state elected instead, to add several new fish hatcheries and consolidate their game rearing farms. It was also the era of advancement in wildlife management practices with a move to provide better access to public water for fishing and game management areas for hunting. Indiscriminate stocking of both fish and wildlife by individuals was having an adverse effect on native species.

With the increase of housing and industrial development the club's trap and skeet fields, as well as the rifle ranges were forced to close. The club joined the Norfolk County League of Sportsman allowing members access to established shooting ranges. By 1953 the loss of accessible hunting land, forced the gradual phase out of the pheasant rearing and stocking program. With the field trial program at its zenith, a permanent home was

found at the newly established MF&W field headquarters in Westborough. All game birds necessary to support the trials were donated by the state.

Sometime around 1949 the club stopped holding their meetings at the Needham Golf Club and moved to the Village Club on Morton Street. A monthly meeting consisted of covering the business at hand with brief committee reports, a speaker of note, with or without film/slides, a raffle table and refreshments. The one or two times they were able to get Lee Wulff or Charles Riz required moving the meeting to the Needham movie theater sans the business portion.

An annual meeting and banquet each February drew as many as 200 members and guest. The raffle table under the direction of Bob Proctor Sr. was the major fund raiser bringing in \$350-400 for the club treasury. The club continued to meet at the Village Club there for the next 20 years.

To be continued.....

Ray Capobianco [antiqanglr@verizon.net](mailto:antiqanglr@verizon.net)  
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Part III continued.....

As we ended Part II of the club history, Route #128 (I-95) was well under construction, 1953 would be the last year for fishing at Sharp's Pond. Sometime during that year a search team turned up a private body of water known as McIntosh Pond. (Some old town maps called it Ice House Pond or Trout Pond).

From the 1800s till just after the turn of the century it was a major source of ice for town residents as was Blacksmith Pond located down stream, between Great Plain Ave. and Nehoiden Street. These, plus Rosemary Pond were all part of the Rosemary Brook watershed that flowed from above Mark Tree Road through Needham to Wellesley below Central Ave. (Over the years Blacksmith Pond was filled in for a housing development with a cement encasement for the brook to pass through to Rosemary Pond. This is all documented in town history with photos of the ice houses).

Unfortunately there is little documentation of how the club acquired the present pond and surrounding property. No club members have been located that participated or are familiar with how the transaction took place. We do know, up till 1953 the pond and approximately 2+ acres surrounding the pond was in the hands of four members of the McIntosh family. (Strangely none were members however a close relative (Alan McIntosh) was one of the club's founding fathers).

Most importantly, a deed was found in the club archives and a little research at the Norfolk County Registry of Deeds revealed some interesting information. In 1952 the town took, by easement (eminent domain), a sewer right of way from Mark Tree Road,

down the middle of McIntosh Pond (the club pond) to the location of the present sewer substation. Three months later they took, by eminent domain, the land for the pumping station, from a party by the name of Hanscom (club member, Larry Socoby's father-in-law).

In October 1953 John P. Kenny, a town building contractor and also an abutter to the McIntosh property, acquired four parcels of land from members of the McIntosh family. In January 1954 Mr. Kenny in turn transferred the pond and surrounding land (combined 4 parcels) to the Needham Sportsman's Club. The mystery, why was the land handled in that manner? Mr. Kenny was not a member of the club, why did he do this? No fee is mentioned, what did he pay for the property and more interestingly, why did he sell it to the club for just \$1,000? Nothing is mentioned in the club archives other than "We owe John P. Kenny.....a sincere thank you for his gentlemanly attitude....He showed real sportsmanship....to clear up final details."

It is interesting to read the club newsletters during the months after acquisition. The area around the pond was heavily wooded except for the roadway and a small cleared area where the old ice house stood 60-70 years before. Work crews put in many hours each weekend preparing the grounds for opening day. The north shore (roadway) was the only area offering a backcast and that was limited. Brush and trees made the west side near impossible to fish, there was no available parking. The back end of the pond was a swamp and the east side was heavily forested. It sounded like a disaster but as the newsletter stated "For the first time in its 26 years history the Club has some property of its own".

Opening day, March 20, 1954 at the new pond, was a major success. Enough brush had been cleared to allow limited parking, areas on the north and west sides had been cut away to give a reasonable backcast and a screen was installed across the outlet to prevent trout escapement. The old shack from Sharp's pond was dismantled and relocated to the site of the present club house. The April newsletter reported that 83 paid-up (\$10/) trout pond members had enjoyed catching 619 fish of which 229 were kept.

In October 1954 the club leased the property either side of Rosemary Brook, from where it enters the pond up to Mark Tree Road. This was a strategic move because it gave the club control over water flowing into the pond. More importantly, the club was able to permanently acquire the property (price unknown) two years later from the owner (William Kahler) a member of the club.

Through the efforts of Red Stockbridge, Conservation Chairman, access to 250 acres of farm land in Southborough was made available for the club's private use. The procurement of 100 pheasant at \$1.25/ was authorized for the 1954 fall stocking. Use of the property lasted two more years at which time it was sold and subdivided for housing. This effectively ends the club's activities with hunting except for one short note in a 1957 newsletter where members assisted the state MF&W in its fall stocking program.

Next time, the club takes on problems associate with the pond.

Ray Capobianco antiqanglr@verizon  
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