

The Needham Sportsman's Club Part V

As we enter 1959 and the next decade, it appears all the Club's energy is being directed to the trout pond and surrounding property. Few members were surprised when Sam Loomis presented plans for a new club house. The Club's popularity and publicity had driven membership to an all time high in excess of 225. Of these 103 were trout pond members rapidly approaching the by-laws imposed limit of 110.

The Building Project

A "Use & Occupancy Certification" was applied for and received from the Town of Needham on Oct. 8, 1959 calling for a "Shelter, log cabin type with an open porch". There are no plans available from the archives however newsletters indicate it would be of one room construction with a fireplace on the north side. It is not known why and there is no information but it must be noted there were no provision for water or a lavatory. It can only be assumed the cost to run water and sewer lines several hundred feet along Club property lines, without going across abutter's property, would have been prohibitive.

The estimated cost of construction was \$2,800 and this was for the basic materials, labor being provided by several members, who were experienced builders. (As a comparison, a 3 bedroom, home with garage, located two streets from the Club was selling for \$19,000.)

In June 1959 there is reference to a well being drilled adjacent to the proposed club house site. This was stated as an attempt to find "clean cold water". It is not known if the well was ever used for human consumption (at least not by today's standards) however at some point water was pumped into the pond in hopes of lowering the pond's temperature.

Cement footings (pilings) were finally pored in November; construction continued through the winter and was completed in April 1960.

Provisions for electrical power took almost a year of negotiations with abutters. It appears, in return for allowing the lines to cross their property; the abutters wanted the Club to provide drainage of a swampy area adjoining the two properties. Authorization was not received until Oct. 1960.

The Funding Drives

Historically finances of clubs such as the NSC always appeared in a precarious state however it must be put in the prospectus of the times. Club dues were \$2.00, trout pond participation an additional \$15.00 (recently raised from \$10.00), the annual banquet roast beef dinner \$3.50 per person. The \$2,800 construction cost was a sizable amount when compared to a home being built locally.

To assist the building fund, “six skillful members started building a wooden fishing boat in the fall of 1958”, this was raffled off at the May annual family night. A total of \$1500 was realized in raffle tickets and dedicated to the new building.

The Trout Pond Committee asked each pond member to make a “voluntary assessment” of \$5.00; this was in addition to their annual dues and went directly toward the building fund.

As they had in a previous financial situation (i.e. dredging), Club members were asked to make no-interest loans in any amount possible. These would be paid back with-in a specified time, with funds from a special account set aside utilizing pond dues.

At the annual meeting in Feb. 1959 the Pond Committee announced that Lee Wulff had agreed to return with his highly entertaining show. His previous appearance in 1957 was a sell out and a financial success.

The Club Settles Into 1960s

As it had for many years the Club continued to hold it’s meetings at The Village Club on Morton Street. A short business meeting was followed by entertainment consisting of a speaker of sporting interest or a film fishing/hunting related.

Refreshments comprised of coffee, cider, and doughnuts were available at a minimal fee. A raffle table provided members the opportunity to win sporting related items. The Club maintained relationship with a couple of local sporting goods stores that gave a sizeable discount with an agreement items would not be resold.

The list of speakers was impressive ranging from leading sports figures, firearms and fishing tackle representatives to state fish and wildlife biologist.

A man with many of these contacts was Ed Novak, sales representative for Bigelow & Dowse Co., a leading distributor of sports equipment. Ed became a member of the Club and was a loyal supporter for over 50 years. In 2008 Ed was recognized with a plaque for his many years of service.

An interesting item appears in the monthly newsletters during the 1950 & 60s reminding Club members, meetings are for men only, women are not allowed (Obviously there are no female members). The May meeting was set aside each year for families; wives, mothers and children. Entertainment was family related and all tickets for the prize table were free to women and children. There was also a family cookout at the Club pond each June. A search of the original 1928 constitution and by-laws showed no prohibition to women membership.

The boat raffle was such a success that the Board approved the purchase of another boat and trailer to be combined with the aforementioned Lee Wulff appearance at the Needham Paramount Theater. This turned out to be a major fund raiser again.

The ever successful annual field trial in its 15th year, once again proves the Club's status as organizer of the leading trial on the East Coast. The food tent nets more than \$50 for the Club.

With new Club house complete (April 1960), the Board voted unanimously to dedicate the building in honor of deceased member John Lucier. John served the Club for many years "was a truly wonderful sportsman and one of this Club's biggest boosters". Mrs. Lucier was present for the dedication, his son unable to attend, sent a letter asking it be conveyed to each member. In part he wrote "a lifetime of pleasant experiences.... remembrance of my father is clarified in the friendship, loyalty, love, and respect.... may these values be continually strengthened within the membership of your Club".

The Club is once again cited for its years of support to the Mass. Fisheries & Wildlife and the Junior Conservation Camp. A press release noting this citation appeared in the Needham newspapers.... "Being one of the organizers of this program gives much pride to the Club and the members".

In the fall 1960 membership stood at 225 and is the first time requirements for membership are published in the newsletter. Dues were \$5 plus \$2 initiation fee however "the applicant must have a sponsor and provide one good reference".

As mentioned in Part II, Matty Mathis owner of Mathis Construction Co. designed and built the dam at Sharpe's Pond, he now took on the job of rebuilding the Club dam. Age and several storms had taken its toll and the dam was in need of some major work before winter so a decision is made; while the pond is drained it would be an ideal time to treat the remaining water with rotenone eliminating as many trash fish as possible. No attempt was made to seine the pond and salvage the trout. However members were asked to help collect dead fish but no mention of method of disposal.

Interestingly, when the pond was last dredged a consultant recommended applying rotenone every 3 years.

A New Rule or May be Not so New

In March 1961 a special bulletin was issued to all trout pond members concerning keeping and taking fish from the Club premises. Pond members were allowed to keep 3 fish per day and fishing was allowed year round. However by MF&W regulation, possession of trout out of season, the season being April 20 to October 1, was illegal. It must be remembered this was before state regulations were changed allowing year round fishing on public waters.

Although the Club maintained a log of all fish caught and kept, there was no provision for tagging if removed from Club property. In addition a fine was never imposed for failing to follow Club rules. Now a \$1 fine would be assessed for not wearing a trout pond identification badge and an additional \$1 for not logging in your catch. Once leaving the Club property and stopped by a game warden with a trout (out of season) with

out a tag would result in a stiff fine. Even worse the Club could lose its “private water status”.

There was no explanation given, either the Club did not know of the regulation or they had just disregarded the requirement. However it was about this time in MF&W history that many changes were taking place i.e. changes in stocking philosophy, new reduced limits, several streams dedicated to fly fishing only and a new initiative to stop illegal stocking of evasive species.

In Part VI a few quiet years appear but long lasting problems may be on the horizon.

Ray Capobianco antiqanglr@verizon.net
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