

## The Needham Sportsman's Club Part IV

Part III closed near the end of the Club's first year at the new pond (1954). At the final meeting in June the president, John White, announced "we can all take pride in this past year. In that span we've obtained our own trout pond, ran a successful field trial, a fine annual banquet and fund raiser..... rifle and pistol shooting now available to all members..... the Club is financially sound..... membership now exceeds 200".

As new property owners, The Needham Sportsman's Club now has a "home" or an identity and with this came new interest. Monthly meetings were becoming popular events attracting increased membership.

The 1950s brought about many changes; the game bird rearing had stopped but the Club still assisted the Mass. Fish & Wildlife with game and fish stocking programs, a junior rifle and pistol program was initiated, field trial entrees increased from 80 to over 90, new member brought added revenue and the annual banquet and raffle table became the major fund raisers.

### The Trout Pond.

As John White said, a lot was accomplished that first year, but by today's standards the pond was still a shallow (6-8 feet) man made impoundment, built in the late 1800s for harvesting ice. The upper end where the brook entered was basically a swamp. The access road along the dam was narrow with over hanging trees, there was very limited parking and a normal back cast was next to impossible except at 2 or 3 locations.

As reported some clearing of trees and brush allowed for an exciting opening day at the Club's new home. The Trout Pond Committee had been meeting all spring and plans were in the works for major improvements. They brought forward a proposal to drain the pond at the end of June and "scooping out the mud and silt in the lower 2/3 of the pond" also to replace the outflow pipe, all to be completed before winter. To defray cost, dredging of the upper end would wait till the following year because draining the pond was not required to accomplish this. The committee also recommended pond dues be increased by \$5.00 to \$15.00 to offset cost of these improvements.

The trout pond was drained late in June unfortunately work was continually delayed because of weather. The new outflow pipe didn't arrive till November however all work was completed before winter. Measured depth along the dam/road was now 12 feet. Dredged silt and loam was piled near the roadway, it was to be sold as a source of income for the Club. (There were few buyers, what soil remained was subsequently used for fill and landscaping around the property).

The year 1955 brought about some interesting changes in Club philosophy. The pond committee, in order to raise the \$700 estimated dredging cost for the upper 1/3 of the

pond, recommended soliciting no-interest loans from Club members. Loans would be paid back with-in 4 years by setting aside \$5.00 of the pond dues in a separate account. In this way work could take place immediately rather than wait 4 years to accumulate the necessary funds. The Club treasury at that time was not as it is today. The trout pond had a self sustaining budget and all associated cost was separate from the general treasury. With Board approval the funds were collected and all work completed by September 1955. Actual cost was \$659 well with-in the original estimate.

More interestingly, of the 1000 trout stocked that spring, it was estimated 600 remained; even with low water levels and summer heat, the trout showed a high rate of survival. These estimates were fairly accurate because members were allowed to keep 4 fish per day and were required to record their catch in the pond log book. The answer was clear, trout were holding over which prompted the Club to institute a temporary policy of, barbless hook, catch and release fishing only.

In October it was decided to stock 400 trout of reduce size (7-9"), in this way the Club would avoid the higher cost of spring stocking, saving an estimated 30% for the same number of fish (9-12"). It was hoped, with fish holding over and a catch and release policy in place, the spring program could be started with fewer stocked fish.

During this same period work continued on the grounds around the pond, newsletters make reference to a bulldozer being used. Trees and brush removal continued along the road way with provisions for additional parking near the shack. However before this could be done a 60 foot underground drain had to be installed from the NW corner of the Club property to the pond. Apparently a spring created a natural reservoir resulting in water problems for Club abutters. This area of concern is just behind the present tool shed and parking area.

### Other Club Interest

During the spring of 1956 the Needham Park Commission approached the Club for assistance in running a fishing derby at the reservoir off Great Plain Ave. (behind the present Public Works building). This was well received by the membership and a cooperative effort has continued for more than 50 years to this day.

Over the years the Club maintained a very close relationship with Mass. Fish and Wildlife Department not only stocking fish and game for public sport but in areas of conservation. It assisted the department in establishing the Junior Conservation Camp and sent one and occasionally two boys age 15-18 to a 2 week summer camp, free of charge. With loss of the Park's Farm in Sherborn the Field Trial Committee was looking for a new home; the department offered their headquarters site in Westborough. They also supplied all the live game birds for the trials; resulting in considerable savings to the Club...

When the Needham High School asked for help in running a hunter safety course for 15-18 year old boys, the Club in turn asked the M. F. & Wildlife for advice. The State

provided a game warden as instructor, the National Rifle Association donated text books and course outline, the Club coordinated the program providing members to assist the instructor. This program continued for several years (could one imagine that happening today).

Another interesting note, whenever changes were being proposed to Mass. Fish & Wildlife regulations, the Club was asked to review and respond with their member's input. It was during these years that fishing and hunting, in general (as previous mentioned) was beginning to come under political pressure. Access to streams and ponds was being challenged by landowners and the proximity of hunting i.e. the discharge of firearms, was an even greater concern.

The Club had stopped raising pheasant several years previous and now, no longer assisted in the state distribution program. State owned property through out the commonwealth was being developed into game management areas. These rural locations around the state provided easy access, stocked 2 or 3 times a week and were ideal for pheasant hunters.

By mutual agreement the Club stopped participating in the trout stocking program. The state was consolidating its trout rearing hatcheries at Sandwich on the Cape and the newly developed Belchertown facility was nearing completion.

In the fall of 1957 the Park Commission requested permission to use the Club pond for recreational skating. To bely any fears by the membership, a lease was drawn up and approved; assuring the Club's pond/trout was adequately protected. The "lease will be automatically renewed from year to year....outdoor skating season....December through March....removing snow from the surface....windrowed along the middle of the pond....will not, in any way....interfere with the dam....or any other act tending to lower the water level....injure or destroy the fish in said pond" the price, \$1.00/year. Although not stated in the lease, the town has faithfully plowed the pond roadway/parking area and the Club has allowed public use of the parking lot. This lease has held for over 50 years and is still in effect.

### New Ventures for the Club

In the October 1957 newsletter appears the first reference to a "staged affair" fund raiser held at the Needham Paramount Theater. This was a double feature movie evening, the first being a Disney film for children and the second a film for the older set. It was felt the annual November turkey raffle was limited and not bringing in adequate funds. A theater night could draw 350-400 at \$.90 per person showed more potential. Although this turned out not to be true, the Club felt some minor changes would increase receipts and the members were relieved of peddling raffle tickets and delivering turkeys.

Over the years the Club occasionally brought in a fly fishing celebrities to speak at the monthly meeting. Because of limited seating at the Village Club the Needham Theater

would once again be rented. With a little free advertising through the local sporting clubs and charging nominal fee, it became a profitable event. Many of us remember seeing Lee Wulff for the first time during the late 50s.

With the expanding Club membership, in 1958 the Trout Pond Committee elects to limit pond membership to 110. The committee also proposed changes and some new fishing regulations that here-to-for had not appeared in the newsletter:

“Fly fishing only. One fly to a line. No spinners or other hardware allowed ahead of the fly. No sinkers.”

“It is strongly suggested that only barbless hooks be used but this is left up to you as sportsmen and not made a definite rule”

“You may keep four fish in a day, no more than 20 in a month, no more than 40 in a full season. When you have a guest his fish apply to your limit. No more than one fish 15 inches or larger may be kept in a season.”

“Again we make a suggestion.....do not take your limit of fish on opening day. If everybody who fishes takes a full limit, the stocking is rapidly dissipated and a lot of money is spent for one day’s fun.”

“...most important is a (new) rule which limits to 15 the number of fish which may be handled in one day. It is hoped through this to spread good fishing further.”

“One last rule, wear your button and register in the log when you fish.”

Although the name Sam Loomis appeared on various committees and is mentioned in the monthly newsletter as a hard worker with keen interest in the Club, the membership recognizes this by electing him as their president in 1958. This is important because over the next 30 years he, like several other long time members, he will leave a memorable legacy. No one had worked harder clearing trees and brush or coordinating the bulldozer work around the new pond or help in the dredging effort.

Another man deserving of equal mention during this period is 30 year, charter member, Allan McIntosh. As mentioned in Part I and II, it is not only the McIntosh family background with the Club property but also Allan’s years of service on various committees. In the November 1958 newsletter a casual note appears, the Club has accepted a gift of lumber from the Needham Park Commission, the remnants of a “dismantled shack from Rosemary Beach” estimated to be worth \$100 (a significant amount in 1958 dollars). Allan has this “gift” transported to the Club property. Nothing else is mentioned however it is obvious Sam and Allan have something in mind.

Next time a home for the new tenants.

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