

THE FOWWOS NEWS

Newsletter of *FRIENDS OF WEST WINDSOR OPEN SPACE*

Vol. 5, No. 2 • SPRING-SUMMER 2004

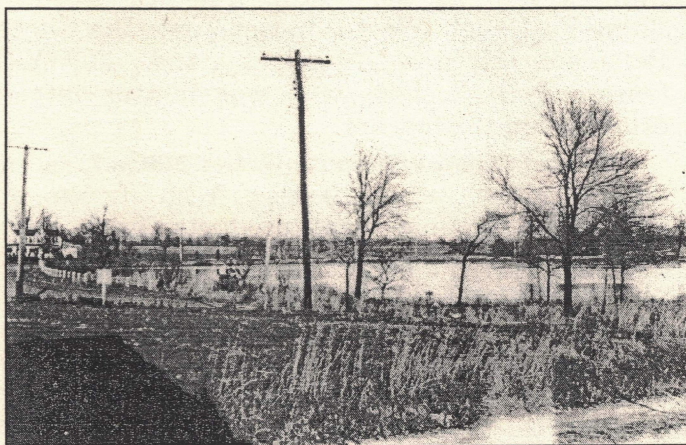
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GROVERS MILL DAM REHABILITATION BEGINS

After many delays and decades of planning, restoration work on the dam at Grovers Mill Pond has finally begun. A tree service contractor arrived on the scene on the morning of July 22 to begin removal of the trees that have grown up over the years on the dam's embankments. It is estimated that the restoration work will take about two to three months to complete.

The Grovers Mill Dam is an earthen embankment approximately 400 feet long that lies under and on both sides of Clarksville Road as it approaches the intersection with Cranbury Road. It was built in its present form in 1931. At that time, Mercer County took ownership of the Clarksville Road right-of-way along the top of the dam and built the present bridge next to the mill. The dam itself and the 37-acre property on which Grovers Mill Pond is located were privately owned by a local farmer. Dating from Colonial times, the

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View of Grovers Mill Pond in 1931. The newly rebuilt dam and the Grover house are at the left.

THE TROLLEY LINE BIKE PATH

West Windsor will soon have a new dedicated bike path that will give residents improved access to one of the first preserved open spaces in town. Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh and township officials have successfully negotiated an agreement with PSE&G to allow the township to construct a bike path along the easement under the PSE&G power lines that bisect our town. The agreement will enable the township to spend the \$300,000 in grants it has received for the construction.

The PSE&G power lines follow the exact route of the Camden & South Amboy trolley line that once ran through West Windsor. The bike path will begin where the power line easement intersects with Rabbit Hill Road, and will proceed along the easement towards Big Bear Brook. A major portion of the grant money—\$200,000—is for a bridge that will span the brook. Once across the brook, the path will proceed through Community Park and ultimately terminate in Mercer County Park, the township's first and, at over 2,000 acres, largest area of preserved open space.

The bike path is a tremendous step forward for bicycle and pedestrian mobility in West Windsor, and will provide an important non-automotive link between the two largest parks in town. The Mayor and his administration are to be commended for their dedication and persistence in obtaining the funding and, just as importantly, in negotiating the agreement with PSE&G. Members of FOWWOS' Recreational Trails and Bikeways Committee, chaired by trustee Ken Carlson, and the Mayor's Bicycle and Pedestrian

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Friends Of West Windsor Open Space

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E-mail: ek61@juno.com or FOWWOS@yahoo.com
Web site: www.fowwos.org
Meetings: First Tuesday at
Town Hall, 7:30 p.m.

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Grovers Mill Dam, Cont.

dam was far less substantial before 1931, and the road along its crest was unpaved and only 15 feet wide. The present right-of-way is 60 feet wide.

In 1979, the Federal government, through the Army Corps of Engineers, issued an order to the owner of the dam to undertake certain repairs and to initiate a regular program of inspection and maintenance. The order came as a result of the passage of the National Dam Safety Act in 1977, which mandated the inspection of all dams in the United States and the start of a program to ensure their safety. As has been shown by recent dam failures in other parts of New Jersey, there is much work to be done—more than a quarter century later—before that safety is ensured. In New Jersey alone there are nearly 1,500 earthen dams under state control.

Over the years since 1931 the Grovers Mill dam has had little maintenance. This is not so much a matter of neglect, but is mainly a result of lack of direction from state authorities. Until recently there has been little if any enforcement of safety regulations for this type of dam. For example, long-standing regulations clearly state that trees must not be allowed to grow on an earthen dam. Yet some of the trees now being removed began growing up soon after the 1931 reconstruction. A quick check of the tree rings on some of those already removed reveals them to be 40 to 50 years old. Some of the larger ones yet to be removed are certainly older.

In response to the order from the Army Corps of Engineers, the owner claimed that he could not afford the large expense involved and, in 1981, unilaterally drained the pond, thereby removing any hazard associated with the dam. At that point West Windsor took steps that eventually resulted in the refilling of the pond a year later and, in 1987, the transfer of ownership to the township. Serious planning then began for rehabilitation of both the dam and the pond. It

has taken 17 years for that planning to bear fruit.

The accompanying photo of the dam area was taken from a point south of the dam looking north shortly after its 1931 reconstruction. Shown in the distance on the left is the old Grover house on Cranbury Road. Also shown is the new guardrail made of concrete stanchions connected by pipe railings. The house and the guardrail are still there. The trees and shrubs in the foreground are well south of the end of the dam. ☺

COMMUNITY FARMERS' MARKET OPENS

On June 19th, FOWWOS took part in the formal opening of the new West Windsor Community Farmers' Market. The opening was celebrated as West Windsor Farm Heritage Day. The market, which is held every Saturday morning, June through October, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., is located in the Vaughn Drive train station parking lot off Alexander Road.

The Heritage Day celebration allowed residents to get in touch with the farming communities of West Windsor's past. Speakers included New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Charles Kuperus, Congressman Rush Holt, Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh, West Windsor Township Council President Kristen Appelget, and FOWWOS trustee Beth Feehan, who was instrumental in establishing the market.

Nine farms participate in the market, selling, among many other items, fresh fruits and vegetables, organic meat products, fresh bread, pastries and coffee, fresh cut flowers, bedding plants, specialty Asian vegetables, and food from En Route of the Princeton Junction train station.

West Windsor was founded as a farm community in 1797, and many of its roads and landmarks bear the names of founding farm families. It appears that the West Windsor Community Farmers' Market is becoming a Saturday institution for West Windsor and the surrounding area. ☺

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

FOWWOS RECEIVES PRESERVATION AWARD

Recently, FOWWOS received an award from the Delaware and Raritan (D&R) Greenway for its contributions to the preservation of two important land parcels in West Windsor, the 80-acre Tindall family farm and the 22-acre Yeger property. Trustee Ken Carlson accepted the award on behalf of FOWWOS. The D&R Greenway and FOWWOS both contributed funds for the preservation of these parcels. The D&R Greenway is one of the largest land preservation trusts in New Jersey and has worked jointly with FOWWOS and West Windsor in the past to preserve other parcels.

The Tindall farm is located across Old Trenton Road from Mercer County Community College. Its preservation under the Mercer County Farmland Preservation program assures that it will continue to be farmed, and thus help preserve West Windsor's farming heritage. An agreement was also reached that gives public access to areas of the farm that are not under cultivation. Under current zoning, 22 single-family homes could have been constructed on the farm. D&R Greenway estimated that the 22 new families would have generated over 80,000 additional automobile trips per year, adding to the congestion in West Windsor. In addition, over 2.8 million gallons of water that would have been consumed by those homes have been saved.

The Yeger property is located on Millstone Road where it crosses the Millstone river, our border with Plainsboro Township. This property is a critical link in the series of properties along the river known as the Millstone River Greenway. Its location is not far from the Grovers Mill site where the Martians landed during the famed radio broadcast on Halloween in 1938.

But the award is really yours—our FOWWOS members, the roots of our organization. Thank you for your continued support in helping to preserve West Windsor's open spaces. ☺

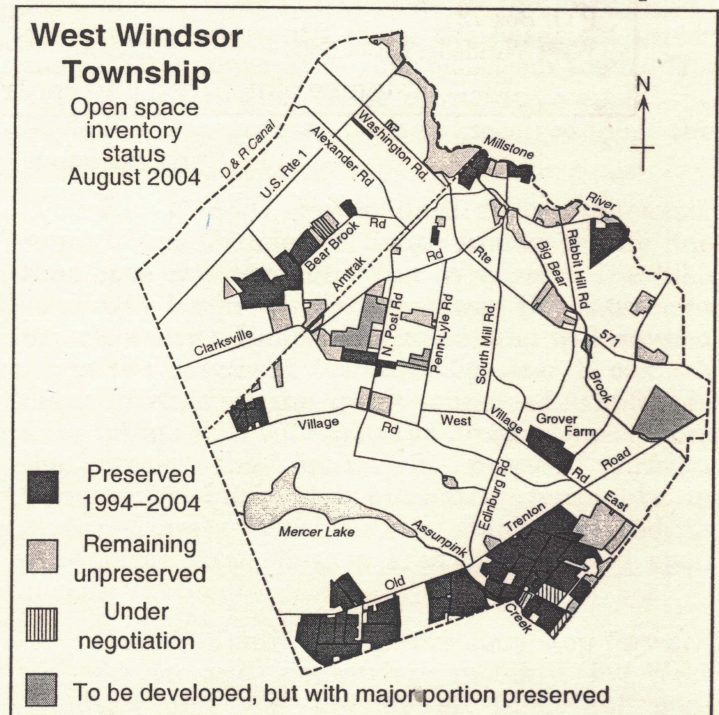
TOWNSHIP-WIDE MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

In April, the FOWWOS trustees conducted a township-wide drive for new members. Information on joining FOWWOS was sent to all households and businesses in West Windsor, nearly seven thousand in all. The results were encouraging. To date, 127 new members have joined and 77 former members have renewed for 2004. As of July 1, the total membership of FOWWOS stood at 482 individuals and families. The cost of the drive was underwritten by trustee John Sabino, to whom FOWWOS extends its sincere thanks. ☺

LATEST OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION FIGURES

The latest figures show that over 60 percent of the acreage in West Windsor's list of potential open space sites has now been preserved. Of the total of 99 properties on the list, 40, comprising nearly 1600 acres, have either been purchased or otherwise preserved through the acquisition of development rights.

Some of the listed properties that remain unpreserved, and which would have been extremely costly to acquire, have been the focus of recent efforts by the township to minimize the effects of their ultimate development. One of these is the Baker farm on Old Trenton Road. This 157-acre property will be developed with a total of 156 units of age-restricted housing. However, because of environmental constraints on the property and an agreement with the developer, over 100 acres of the site will be preserved as open space. Another large property with significant environmental constraints—such as wetlands or the inclusion of greenbelt areas—is the 96-acre Azmy property on North Post Road. Less than 20 percent of its area can be developed.



In addition to environmental constraints on such properties, development is also controlled by the now mandatory township cluster ordinance. This requires that building lots on properties with greenbelt areas must be smaller than otherwise allowed by the zoning and that they be clustered in one area, rather than being spread out over a large portion of the property.

Two other property groups share these restrictions on the extent of development possible.

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Latest Open Space Preservation . . . , cont.

One group of five adjacent properties totaling 23.1 acres on Bear Brook Road is constrained to the extent that over 50 percent of the the area will be preserved. Similarly, over half the area in a 27.5-acre group of three adjacent properties on Penn-Lyle Road will also be preserved.

Negotiations are now in progress for the purchase of two additional candidates for preservation, both on Windsor Road, with a combined area of 43 acres. These properties are contiguous with a substantial area of preserved farmland in that part of the township.

The ultimate preservation of all these areas will mean that over half the 27-square mile area of West Windsor Township will be preserved as open space. This includes areas owned not only by the township, but also by the county and other government and nonprofit entities, as well. ☺

Trolley Line Bike Path, cont.

Task Force should also be credited for their lobbying effort on behalf of the path. For more information about the path please use the following link: <http://www.nj.com/news/times/mercator/index.ssf?/base/news-12/1090485427198022.xml> ☺

UNDERSTORIES

Clean Streets Program: Forms to fill out to obtain state reimbursement for time spent picking up trash in the community can be obtained at the FOWWOS web site: www.fowwos.org

Pavers for Ron Rogers Arboretum: Application forms for the purchase of engraved pavers to be installed at the arboretum can be obtained from Harley Pickens (799-0060).

FOWWOS Caps and T-shirts: These can be purchased for \$10 each from Harley Pickens. Proceeds support the Ron Rogers Arboretum.

To join FOWWOS

Send name and address to:
FOWWOS
P.O. Box 73
West Windsor, NJ 08550

Enclose dues check made out to FOWWOS for one of the following memberships:

| | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Regular (family) | \$25.00 per year |
| Silver | \$50.00 " " |
| Gold | \$75.00 " " |

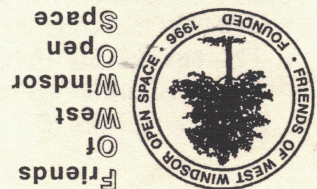
Membership dues and contributions are fully tax deductible.

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