

Hemlock Properties Traced to Original Land Grants of 1793

EDITORS NOTE — The following article was researched and written by Richard W. Emery, a resident of Hemlock Farms, for the 1976 Bi-Centennial Celebration. This and other articles on Hemlock Farms activities are preserved in the Hemlock Farms Bi-Centennial Volume in the HF library. The Herald expresses thanks to Dick Emery for permission to publish this interesting story of how it all began.

The recorded history of Hemlock Farms begins in the years immediately following the American Revolution.

In the mid-1780's, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania commenced issuing land grants in this region — most of them in the Blooming Grove - Lords Valley areas just to the north. Hemlock Farms, more heavily wooded, with its hills, its marshy bogs, and its rocks, was less attractive to potential farmers. Nonetheless, a series of grants in 1793 and 1794 brought almost all the present Hemlock Farms into private hands. The great mass of ungranted lands survived as the nucleus of the present state-owned forest and hunting preserves that now surround the community. The grants of 1793 and 1794 were issued to 12 men, each of whom received about 400 acres of land:

Twelve Men

1) Reuben Place — around the present Washington Drive and the presidential streets at the southern end of the community.

2) Peleg Place — the original nine-hole golf course with the present club building sites, and the Fairway Drive and Waterview Drive districts.

3) Joseph Lehman — most of the area now under the water of Hemlock Lake, along with that part of the golf course to the east of the lake and around the long curve of Canoe Brook Drive.

4) Blackwell Ball — the land around the lower end of Forest Drive and the southern tip of McConnell Lake.

5) David Sailer — from the sharp turn on Forest Drive at Woodland Court to Route 739, along with most of McConnell Lake.

6) Frederick Hart — the land around Mountainview and Bluestone Drives and the eastern end of Longridge Drive.

7) James McBride — on both sides of Hemlock Farms Road from Longridge to just south of the present fire house.

8) John Knouse — the land around the ski run and the Steer Barn.

9) Isaac Hoover — the Remuda Drive and Surrey Lane areas to the northern end of Elm Lake.

10) Frederick Meyer — most of the present Elm Lake and the northern loop of Maple Ridge Drive.

11) Peter Bruner — the land around the southern loop of Maple Ridge Drive.

12) Samuel Snyder — most of this grant reverted to the state and is now under the waters of Peck's Pond, but a small corner around Hemlock Farms Road from the current Com-

munity offices to the development entrance was included in Hemlock Farms.

A wedge of state-owned land remained in Hemlock Farms — from Burning Tree Drive westward across Hemlock Farms Road and around Canter Brook Drive — most of it low and marshy ground. The western two-thirds of this was granted to Theodore Bowhanan in 1850, and the remainder (from Burning Tree Drive across Hemlock Farms Road) to Oscar Mott in 1858, on the eve of the Civil War.

Unsuitable Farm Land

The first half of the 19th century was marked by intensive settlement of the northeastern United States (New England, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania). Forests were cleared, and many thousands of small farms were established. This proved to be a short-lived phenomenon. With the opening of western lands (far richer, far less hilly, and far less stony) after the Civil War, such intensive exploitation of the poor and rocky soil of much of the old northeastern region became uneconomical. Those who had tried to farm these stony plots were generally driven off by competition of cheaper foods from the west; the individuals moved on west, or moved into the booming industrial towns of the northeast. The process of eliminating marginal lands from agricultural production wiped out whatever agriculture may have been attempted in Hemlock Farms. To the extent that the land had ever been cleared, it now reverted to forest.

By the early 20th century, the only local economic activity was logging; every few decades the area was stripped again of its forest growth and left to start over. The original pine and hemlock forests of the areas were stripped off, and replaced by the maples and oaks that still dominate its woods (though, barring further man-made interference, the pine and hemlock growth will eventually become dominant once more). The last great sweep of loggers across Hemlock Farms was about the time of World War I, and with rare exceptions, all of our present trees have grown up since that time; **Good Hunting and Fishing.**

Most of the land around Hemlock Farms not owned by the state, wound up in the preserves of the private hunting and fishing clubs, such as the Blooming Grove, Blue Heron, and Porter's Lake clubs. In Hemlock Farms itself, the original 14 plots had by 1927, passed into the hands of three parties. About two-thirds of it belonged to Harry Atkinson of Hawley, who had acquired it by purchases made in 1908, 1920, 1921, and 1922; his land included the entire present golf course area, and pretty much all the land south of Hemlock Farms Road to Rt. 739 except the Steer Barn region. The western portion of the Sailer grant and the John Knouse

grant were now owned by the McConnell family (whose name is preserved in McConnell Lake). The Peter Bruner land was held by the Spruke brothers of Scranton.

Brewster Builds "Camp Hemlock"

The beginning of the modern Hemlock Farms was made in 1927, when William Brewster acquired the entire Atkinson holding. William Brewster was then a young man, not quite 30, the son of George Brewster, a highly successful contractor in Bergen County, New Jersey (the firm of Brewster and Sons is today still one of the major construction companies of northern New Jersey). Between 1927, and 1963, the greater part of Hemlock Farms was owned by William Brewster, and much that is familiar to its present residents took shape in those years.

In 1932 he built the dam that created Hemlock Lake out of a small pond. He built the original clubhouse (rebuilt with minor alterations after a fire in 1970) and the other stone buildings around and near it. In 1944 he bought a large part of the McConnell holdings, and shortly thereafter he built the dam that made McConnell Lake out of the original McConnell Pond.

In 1959 he bought the land of the Spruke brothers (who had established a not too successful hunting club — The Spruke's Camp Hunt Club — whose only surviving trace is the remains of a small hunting lodge still to be seen just off of Gold Rush Drive). He laid out the original golf course. Except for some minor exchanges of land with the state (one of which brought the original Reuben Place grant into Hemlock Farms), the borders of the community were not set, and, except for the addition of Elm Lake by the developer in 1972-1974, the main features of Hemlock Farms' topography remain as William Brewster created them.

In 1929 William Brewster incorporated the property under the name of Camp Hemlock, thus approaching the eventual name of the community.

Western Heritage Takes Over

In 1963, William Brewster sold the entire property to Western Heritage Properties Ltd. (later to be known as Home Smith International), a subsidiary of Great Northern Capital Ltd. (a Toronto-based firm later to be known as Abbey Glen Ltd.) The approximately 4,500 acres of land brought him the sum of \$700,000 — about \$155 per acre. (By previous standards this was a high price; as late as 1924, for instance, the Spruke brothers had bought 128 acres of their accumulation from one Asa Martin for \$51 — about 40 cents an acre.) By 1964 the new developer had laid out his plans, was putting through roads, and had begun an extremely active sales campaign, centering on Stages 1 and 2 (along Forest Drive by Rt. 739 and along the east shore of McConnell Lake) and stages 41, 42, and 81 (along Hillside, Waterview and Fairway); and it is in these areas that the first new homes were built in Hemlock Farms. Within 10 years of the sale by William Brewster, the 1,000th home was completed in 1973, and the history of Hemlock Farms had become, for its residents, a matter of current events.

June 6, 1993
 Pat July 14, 1993
 John
 JACOB G
 41505



War. Feb. 11. 1794.
Nov. 19. 1794.
Pat. May 14. 1795 to
Philip P. Price.
"Mill Seat."
p-25-232.

399 os. & allow.
War. Feb. 11. 1794.
Sur. Nov. 11. 1794.
Pat. May 14. 1795 to
Philip P. Price.
"Somerville."
p-25-232.

War. July 30. 1844.
Sur. Feb. 3. 1844.

SLEYE.
400 os. 33
ps. & all.
War. Jan. 29. 1793.
Sur. Apr. 5. 1853 to
Ugden & Cushman.
H-50-388.

ISAAC HOOVER.
401 os. 69 ps. & all.
War. Jan. 29. 1793.
Sur. Apr. 9. 1846.
Pat. June 23. 1890
to
Camp Hemlock
H-79-128.

FREDRICK HART
391 os. 94 ps. & all.
War. Jan. 29. 1793.
Sur. Apr. 21. 1847.
Pat. June 23. 1890 to
Camp Hemlock
H-79-128.

BLACKALL W BAL
415 os. 15 ps. & all.
War. Mar. 6. 1793.
Sur. June 21. 1793.
Pat. July 14. 1794 to
John Nicholson.
"Williamsbourg."
p-21-438.

CHRISTIAN STOWER.
157 ps. & all.
War. Jan. 29. 1793.
Sur. Apr. 6. 1845.
Pat. June 23. 1890 to
Camp Hemlock
H-79-128.

FREDRICK MYER.
15 os. 15 ps. & all.
War. Jan. 29. 1793.
Sur. Apr. 26. 1845.
Pat. Apr. 7. 1853 to
Ugden & Cushman.
H-50-390.

JAMES MCBRIDE
400 os. & allow.
War. Jan. 29. 1793.
Sur. Apr. 9. 1846.
Pat. June 23. 1890 to
Camp Hemlock. Itc.
H-79-129.

JOS. LEGHMAN.
415 os. 15 ps. & all.
War. Mar. 6. 1793.
Sur. June 21. 1793.
Pat. July 14. 1794 to
John Nicholson.
"Washington."
p-22-209.

HICKS
400 os. & allow.
War. Jan. 29. 1793.
Sur. Apr. 14. 1829 to
Ugden & Cushman.
H-50-387.

PETER BRUNER.
415 os. 15 ps. & allow.
War. Jan. 29. 1793.
Sur. Nov. 26. 1845.
Pat. Apr. 6. 1853 to
Ugden & Cushman.
H-50-387.

THEO. BOWMAN.
200 os. 20 ps. & all.
War. Jan. 21. 1850.
Sur. Apr. 8. 1850.
Transferred
to Forestry
Comm.

OSCAR
H. MOTT.
250 os. 69 ps.
& allow.
War. Aug. 16.
1853.
Sur. Oct. 16.
1858.
Purchased
by Forestry.

DELIC PLACE.
415 os. 15 ps. & all.
War. Mar. 6. 1793.
Sur. June 24. 1793.
Pat. July 14. 1794 to
John Nicholson.
"Gulford."
p-21-429.

JACOB COX.
415 os. 15 ps. & all.
War. Mar. 6. 1793.
Sur. June 22. 1793 to
John Nicholson.
"Eden."
p-22-206.

JOHN ENTOR.
310 os. & allow.
War. June 3. 1794.
Sur. Nov. 26. 1845.
Pat. July 19. 1871 to
Richard Hoston.
War. to accept
of same date

SIMON LORD.
300 os. & allow.
War. Jan. 29. 1793.
Sur. Apr. 9. 1846.
Pat. June 23. 1890 to
Camp Hemlock
H-79-128.

RICHARD HOSTON