

GREENWAYS

Newsletter of
Delaware & Raritan Greenway, Inc.
Volume 3, Number 1
Winter 1995

In Perpetuity

The Hamilton/Trenton Marsh: A Collective Memory

PART I

The Hamilton/Trenton Marsh is a regional treasure—rich in natural and historical resources. To many, it is a personal treasure as well. The stories of childhood adventure, exploration and play, have created in those who lived in the area as children, a great fondness of the marsh. These fond and colorful memories kindle a sense of joy and a sense of place among others, when shared. Often the storyteller's face lights up with the child-like wonder and pleasure they knew in the experience itself. Their stories are an important part of the Hamilton/Trenton Marsh story, a story we hope to preserve in perpetuity.

The earliest memories come from life-long Hamilton resident, Bob Simpkins, who was born in the tenant house of the Bow Hill Mansion in the early years of this century. While he can't remember the earliest experiences personally, he does remember the stories he's heard told about them.

"My father farmed the land of what was known as the Lalor Farm. The fields were planted with crops of corn, wheat, and potatoes. Cows were pastured on the low lying lands that are now marshlands. In the earlier part of the century, these areas flooded only at high tide or in heavy rains. To be sure the cows could get to the barn at milking time, Mother used to hitch a horse to the jigger wagon, and place her baby in the basket at her feet. Timing was everything. If the tide was high, the water would run over the boards at her feet and she would have to lift the basket so her infant son wouldn't get wet."

When he was a bit older, Bob traveled with his mother to shop in Trenton. He remembers the bridge crossing the Delaware & Raritan Canal was often raised for a boat to pass and those traveling along the road had to wait. It was interesting to watch the boats. Freighters didn't get much attention, but passenger boats, with their more interesting fashions, were always more carefully observed.

Bob remembers attending a State grange picnic when he was eight or nine years old, at the White City Amusement Park, so named because all of the buildings were painted bright white. Located just off Broad Street, the park included the White City Mansion, a dining hall, a dance hall, several rides, including a merry-go-round, walking trails, and picnic areas. While most of the activities were on top of the bluffs, a favorite ride—the chute-the-chute—went down over the bluffs and onto the lake.

By the 1940's and 50's, the area had changed substantially. Houses sprang up on top of the bluffs, where potatoes and wheat once grew. The marsh became a playground for the neighborhood children who lived in the houses that lined streets with names such as Schiller, Annabelle, Bow Hill, New Cedar Lane, and Sewell.

Few traces remain, indicating the numerous small neighborhood grocery stores, taverns, and other shops which were so integral to the community. Many of the buildings are gone, others are used as houses. Only in the mind's eye, through memories shared, is the picture of yesterday vividly recreated.

The stories we share here are the combined memories of Hamilton resident, Clyde Quin, Hamilton Township Mayor Jack Rafferty and Richard Switlik, Sr.

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Position Available

D&R Greenway is seeking a mature, motivated individual to assist with the coordination and implementation of our public outreach and environmental education program at the Hamilton/Trenton Marsh. The position is part-time (15-25 hours per week) and available immediately. To apply, send a resume to: Hamilton/Trenton Marsh Project, D&R Greenway, 570 Mercer Road, Princeton, NJ 08540 For additional information, contact Patti Quinby at (609) 924-4646.

Trail Opened at Hamilton/Trenton Marsh

Joe Schmeltz, Mercer County Park Naturalist, and a group of volunteers recently cleared and blazed a trail through Watson Woods in the John A. Roebling Park at the Hamilton/Trenton Marsh. Marked with yellow blazes, the loop trail is a little more than one quarter mile long and is accessible from the road leading to the picnic area. Volunteers who worked with Joe include Samantha Bodner, Rhonda L. Ferre, Peg Hanna, Nina Keros, and Craig Pizzuti.

The trail is open to the public and offers an easy walk.

Slide Program Available

D&R Greenway is offering a slide presentation about the Hamilton/Trenton Marsh and its tremendous natural, historical, and recreational resources. Give us a call to schedule a program for your group; (609) 924-4646.

Have you updated your records? Our new address is:

Delaware & Raritan Greenway, Inc.
570 Mercer Road
Princeton, NJ 08540
Tel (609) 924-4646
Fax (609) 924-5577

Common Ground

The night sky in central New Jersey was transformed during the 1980's. Darkness gave way to high-pressure sodium haze. As the sky above glowed more orange, the land below became less green.

Preservation of green space in the environs of the Delaware & Raritan Canal Park was the vision of C. McKim Norton. In 1987, a far-sighted, determined group, led by Bob Johnston, launched the D&R Greenway. To those who started the Greenway and stayed, and to those who strengthened it and moved on, the organization owes its success—nearly 800 acres preserved.

D&R Greenway's future depends on the board, staff, volunteers and an ever-growing membership. It depends on people's increasing awareness of the need for open spaces. It depends on landowners' willingness to preserve their property. One preservationist landowner summed it up, "Once it's gone, it's gone."



Delaware & Raritan Greenway's mission is to ensure that our green places never vanish.
—Kate Litvack, chairperson.

New Trustees and Officers Named

The board of trustees of Delaware & Raritan Greenway, Inc. appointed four new members—Joyce M. Copleman, Charles M. Hartman, Hella McVay, and John H. Rassweiler—at its recent annual meeting. Kate Litvack of Princeton, former vice chair, was newly elected as chair. Other board members elected to leadership positions include Samuel M. Hamill, Jr. of Lawrence, Edmund Stiles of Hopewell, and William Swain Jr. of Princeton as vice chairmen. Alan Hershey of Pennington was elected treasurer and executive director, Peggy McNutt, was named secretary.

A Lawrenceville resident, Joyce Copleman, is project coordinator of The Network for Family Life Education at Rutgers University. She is also president and treasurer of the Lawrence Township Conservation Foundation, Inc., a private nonprofit land conservancy in Lawrence. Ms. Copleman has had a long-standing interest in land preservation and is

chairperson of the Lawrence Township Planning Board. She was instrumental in the successful effort of the Lawrence Township Conservation Foundation to purchase and preserve the 63-acre Shipetaukin Woods. Ms. Copleman received a B.A. in political science from Boston University.

Charles Hartman is a managing general partner of the CW Group, Inc., a New York City based venture capital organization dedicated to the professional management of several funds for the health care and biological fields.

He is chairman of the Finance Committee and the Development Committee of the Hastings Center's Board of Directors. Mr. Hartman is also the central New Jersey representative for Earthwatch. He also serves on the boards of a number of biotechnology and health care services companies. He received a B.S. in chemistry from the University of Notre Dame and a

M.B.A. from the University of Chicago.

Hella McVay, is founder and president of the Whole Earth Center of Princeton. She previously worked at Seimen's Corporate Research and Support, Inc., Research and Technology Laboratories. Prior to that she headed the mathematics department at Stuart Country Day School.

She is a graduate of Free University in Berlin, Germany.

Long-time Princeton resident, John Rassweiler, Ph.D. serves as chairman of Health Enhancement Systems, Inc., a company he founded in 1982. The company designs, markets and implements fitness, wellness, preventative medicine, occupational health and safety programs for employees.

Mr. Rassweiler has served as Treasurer of the Board of Trustees of Marquand Park Foundation Arboretum in Princeton and was a Governor's appointment to New Jersey Governors Council on Open Spaces. A graduate of Amherst, Mr. Rassweiler also received a Ph.D. from the University of Illinois and did postdoctoral research at the Federal Institute Switzerland E.T.H.

Kate Litvack is Executive Vice President of J&M Advertising, Inc., a Princeton agency. A Princeton resident since 1966, she served two terms as a member of the Princeton Township Committee and was mayor of Princeton Township for two years.

She was the first woman to serve as executive director of the New Jersey State Democratic Committee and as a director of First Fidelity Bank, Princeton.

Ms. Litvack has served as chairman of the Princeton Joint Recreation Board, as a member of the Princeton Regional Planning Board, as a trustee of the Princeton Community Area Foundation and is currently a vice-president of the Princeton-Petroranello Foundation.

Former Chairman Honored

Robert C. Johnston, a founding member of D&R Greenway who chaired the board since the organization's incorporation in 1989, was honored at a champagne reception following the annual

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meeting. Jim Amon, Executive Director of the Delaware & Raritan Canal Commission and Advisor to the D&R Greenway board, spoke on behalf of the board. He congratulated Mr. Johnston on steering D&R Greenway from its infancy through several dramatic changes in the organization's structure.

Under Mr. Johnston's leadership D&R Greenway preserved nearly 800 acres and generated, through private contributions and public and private partnerships, nearly \$20

million for land acquisitions.

Mr. Johnston is a partner in the law firm of Smith, Stratton, Wise, Heher, and Brennan.

Mr. Johnston also is a board member of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space. He served as chairman of the board of the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association from 1985-1988 and on the Hopewell Township Planning Board from 1975-1982.

Mr. Johnston received an A.B. from Princeton University and an L.L.B. from Harvard Law School. ■

1994 Highlights

For Delaware & Raritan Greenway, 1994 was a fast and creative year—filled with new opportunities, new friends and many transitions.

We began the acquisition process for our five projects that received \$2.5 million in matching grants from the State Green Acres program and closed on one donation by the end of the year. With the help of Eastern Mountain Sports and other volunteers a trail, parking area, and trail guide were completed at the McBurney Woods Preserve. Monitoring efforts continue on the easements we hold, including the 90-acre Transco easement, which recently received recognition as an exceptionally well maintained wildlife habitat.

The Institute Lands Preservation Committee formed with the three lead organizations being D&R Greenway, Friends of Princeton Open Space and the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association. The Committee worked throughout the year with the Institute of Advanced Study to move forward on the purchase of development rights for the 589 acres of Institute farmland and woodland.

Nearly 600 people attended the programs D&R Greenway sponsored at the Hamilton/Trenton Marsh. These events brought new visitors to the marsh as well as reacquainted people who grew up in the area with the wonders of the marsh. Thousands of others were introduced to the marsh when *Prime Time* of

WPVI TV, Channel 6 in Philadelphia, aired a segment on the marsh in October. More than 650 calls were made to the Marsh Hotline, which was established to facilitate event registration and gather and share information about reported wildlife and nature sightings at the marsh. With the help of volunteers we began a water monitoring program and coordinated a small cleanup. Cooperative relationships with area businesses and government agencies developed, producing interesting joint projects. One such project involves PSE&G employees constructing and installing wood duck boxes at the marsh while the county assisted in locating the installation sites. The William Penn Foundation continued funding the project with a generous two year grant of \$65,000 per year.

In the fall, D&R Greenway sponsored a very successful "Best of the West" Tour of the Delaware & Raritan Canal. Our guide, Jim Amon fostered both intrigue and delight with his colorful commentary.

The year was one of transition for staff. In February, Patti Quinby joined the staff as Hamilton/Trenton Marsh Project Director and in July assumed additional responsibilities as Director of Development and Special Projects. In May, Peggy McNutt took the helm as Executive Director. Later in the year, Coby Miller joined the staff as Administrative Assistant and Jennifer Feerick an AmeriCorp member joined us to work on the Hamilton/Trenton Marsh project.

People have always been the root of our success. Our volunteers and contributing members continue to increase in number and play a tremendously important role in the success of our organization. With their time and financial support we realized many of our goals for the year and went beyond our expectations in other areas.

To these folks we send a grateful thank you. We could not, nor would we want to, do it without you. We look forward to working together and another year of continued success! ■

1995 Membership Campaign Announced

The new year is here—bringing new opportunities and new challenges. We are making exciting progress on several land acquisition projects and are moving full steam ahead on the Institute Lands Preservation project. The outreach program at the marsh is expanding to reach more public school students through educational programs and service projects. We also received a National Park Service challenge grant to provide interpretive and directional signage at the marsh.

Exciting possibilities are beginning to take form. We need your help to make them a reality.

Membership contributions provide greatly needed support for our day-to-day operations and programs. Land preservation, public outreach and educational programming require time and resources.

Now, more than ever, your membership dollars are needed to support our programs. Please use the coupon on page 7 to renew your membership today.

Membership includes a subscription to *Greenways*, D&R Greenway's quarterly newsletter, advance notice to all events, and discounts on nature walks, workshops, and other events.

For those who renewed in November or December of 1994, your membership will carry through December, 1995. The newsletter is also available to non-members for a subscription fee of \$15.

Thanks for your continued support. It is key to our preservation efforts and vital to our ongoing success. ■

The InSTITUTE Lands Preserving the Culture of Two Working Farms

BY DAVID LAMOTTE

As you drive south on Quaker Road, with the Quaker Meeting House at Stony Brook just behind you and the canal crossing at Port Mercer on up the road ahead, you cannot help but be refreshed by the broad expanse of farm fields off to your left and the two graceful homesteads nestled among them, the Eno and Updike Farms. Together, these two pre-Revolutionary era farms make up roughly half of the 589 acres of the Institute Lands, and they epitomize the graceful balance of natural history and human history that makes these lands at once a renowned bird sanctuary, a treasured source of recreation and renewal, and a landscape full of historical significance. Indeed, if you allow yourself to slow down and take it in—farmland to one side, thickets and woods along the Stony Brook to the other—the landscape through which you pass might just conjure up some 18th century traveler, coming toward you in his creaking wagon, bringing his grain to mill.

The Eno and Updike Farms were settled before the Revolution, and the Eno Farm still has today a pre-Revolutionary building and a Native American architectural site. Both farmsteads are composed of well-maintained buildings in the historic style, set well back from the road among their fields and surrounded by stately shade trees. But something more than historic structures and old trees are preserved in this land that has been farmed continuously for more than 200 years. For generations, our traditions, values, and sense of identity were rooted in the work of the family farm. Today, when we drive along Quaker Road and see the old farm buildings alive and trim as ever, when we look out over the freshly plowed earth, the tall corn, the fallow field sprinkled

with wild flowers, we witness a living heritage of stewardship, devoted labor, and love of place.

The history of these farmlands is intimately bound to key events in the history of Princeton. They lie near the original Quaker settlement of Stony Brook, founded in the 1690's. And Washington's troops marched across them in the pre-dawn hours of January 3, 1777, just before the Battle of Princeton, which proved to be a pivotal engagement of the Revolutionary War.

Preserving productive farmland protects one of our most important resources: food. As population growth puts increasing demands on the nation's system of food production and distribution, renewed attention has been given to the benefits of local cultivation of fresh, high-quality produce. Eliminating long-distance transport reduces costly energy consumption, pollution, and spoilage. While New Jersey leads the nation in vegetable production per square mile, the state's productive farmland is giving way to development at a distressing rate, especially along the Route 1 corridor. The Institute Lands provide an extraordinary opportunity to preserve, within a mile of Route 1 in the center of the state, two historic farms that are highly productive, well-managed, economically viable, and nourishing to both body and spirit.

When we think

of preserving ecosystems and wildlife habitat, we tend to think of forests, wetlands, and uncultivated land. But in fact the interaction between human cultivation and wildness is an ancient and essential element of many ecosystems, embodied in the classical idea of the "Middle Landscape." The extensive farm fields of the Institute Lands play an important role in ground water discharge and provide ideal habitat for many bird species that prefer open land and forest edge to deep woods. Such species include the following members of the New Jersey Audubon Society's "Blue List": Northern Harrier, Red-Shouldered Hawk, Bobwhite, Upland Sandpiper, Purple Martin, Barn Owl, Eastern Bluebird, Eastern Meadow Lark, and several species of sparrows. From the open fields of the Eno and Updike Farms, to the wetlands along the Stony Brook, to the deep and varied woodlands of the "Institute Woods," the Institute Lands embody the diversity, abundance, vitality and beauty that can result from a caring and conservative human presence.

Sensitive Fern
(*Onoclea sensibilis*)



Hamilton/Trenton Marsh

The 1,250-acre Hamilton/Trenton Marsh is chock-full of abundant natural, historical, cultural, educational, and recreational resources. Join us to enjoy and learn more about these valuable wetlands.

All events are open to the public and pre-registration is required. A nominal fee is charged to cover costs associated with the events. Unless otherwise noted the cost for members is \$2/person, \$4/family; for non-members, \$4/person, \$8/family. For more information or to register, call the Hamilton/Trenton Marsh Hotline at (609) 452-0525.

Artifacts and Archeology of Abbott Farm, Museum Tour

Saturday, March 4, 1995
10 a.m. - 12 noon

The Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark, whose boundaries nearly coincide with those of the marsh, was named for Charles Abbott, MD, whose discovery in 1872, of man made tools in the Trenton glacial gravel on his farm, prompted years of study about their origins. Dr. Lorraine Williams, State Archeologist and Bill Bolger, Land Coordinator for the National Park Service share more about the site and the ancient treasures found there. The program will be held at the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton and includes a tour of the exhibit of artifacts at the museum.

Watson House Tour and Nature Walk

Saturday, April 8, 1995
10 a.m. - 12 noon

In 1708, Isaac Watson built his house on the bluffs overlooking the marsh on an 800-acre parcel of land. Today it is the oldest standing house in Mercer County. The grounds are maintained by the Mercer County Park Commission and the home is furnished by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Join us for a tour of the house with its period furnishings, followed by a tour of the grounds.

Family Nature Walk

Saturday, April 29, 1995
10 a.m. - 12 noon

Bring the entire family to explore nature's beauty at the marsh. Learn to identify and understand more about some of the hundreds of plants, animals,

and birds found at the marsh. Dr. Mary Leck, Professor of Biology at Rider University and Dr. Charlie Leck, Professor of Ornithology at Rutgers University will lead us as we explore the area around Spring Lake and the upland woods.

Sounds of the Marsh

Thursday, May 4, 1995
7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

Join us as we explore the mysteries and sounds of an early evening in spring. The marsh is home to many species of birds, animals, reptiles and amphibians. Mary Doscher of Washington Crossing Audubon and Lynn Kurzava of Rutgers University will lead the walk and help us to call and identify owls as well as frogs, spring peepers and other nocturnal animals that inhabit the marsh. Join us for this exciting and fun-filled evening.

Nature Walk

Saturday, May 6, 1995
8 a.m. - 10 a.m.

Delaware & Raritan Greenway, Delaware River Greenway and Bucks County Audubon are co-sponsoring this nature walk. Spring is one of the best times to see migrating birds, spring flowers, and other wildlife at the marsh. Join us as we explore the area around Spring Lake and Watson Woods.

Migrating Bird Walk

Saturday, May 13, 1995
8 a.m. - 10 a.m.

Do you wish you could identify the bird that sings your favorite spring song? Here's your chance to learn. Tom Poole of Washington Crossing Audubon and D&R Greenway's Board of Directors will help us to identify birds and their songs during their migration through the marsh. Over 230 species of birds have been recorded at the marsh. Join us as we explore the marsh for warblers, thrushes, vireos, and other songbirds along with herons and a variety of waterfowl.

Field Sketching

Saturday, June 3, 1995
9 a.m. - 12 noon

Discover more about the world around you by observing and drawing. The Hamilton/Trenton Marsh offers a diverse setting of creeks, lakes and woodlands as well as historic buildings and wildlife. Bring a sketchbook, pens,



Pickerel weed
(*Pontederia cordata*)

and pencils and enjoy sketching at the marsh. Beginners and experienced artists are welcome. Local artist, Kathy Shumway-Tunney will help us to capture what we see on paper.

Nature Walk

Saturday, June 10, 1995
10 a.m. - 12 noon

Join us as we explore the marsh and learn to identify the birds, animals, plants, reptiles, and amphibians who live there. Our leader, Bob Mercer, is director of the Silver Lake Nature Center in Bristol and is coordinating the breeding bird count at the marsh. Bob will lead us as we explore this diverse habitat of marshlands and woods.

Canoeing the Crosswicks

Sunday, June 25, 1995
1 p.m. - 5 p.m.

This tour of the Crosswicks offers a magnificent view of the marsh as well as a leisurely ride with the tide. We'll launch in Bordentown and ride with the tide as it fills the marsh. After exploring the marsh at high tide we will paddle back to Bordentown with the outgoing tide. Registration is limited for this popular event, so please register early. Cost is \$20/member; \$25/non-member to rent a canoe or \$5 registration fee if you bring your own canoe. Maximum per canoe is two adults and two children under 16. Children under 16 are free provided they are accompanied by two adults. We will match singles with partners when possible.

These events are made possible through funding from The William Penn Foundation, Mobil Research and Development, and Public Service Electric and Gas Company.

In Perpetuity

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Others have provided similar glimpses into this shared life. Always, the storyteller's eyes sparkle as the thoughts travel down memory lane.

Jack Rafferty lived at the corner of Annabelle and Bow Hill. Just south of Jack's house, Bow Hill became Schiller Avenue. Clyde Quin lived at the corner of Schiller and New Cedar Lane. With their bedrooms facing the same direction, they traded treasures via a string crossing their backyards and the street like a telephone wire. Together, via flashlight signals they beamed across the dark of night, in a language all their own, they made plans for their days at the marsh.

As the corner groceries were transformed, in a child's eye, into 'candy' stores, so too, notable natural landmarks took on their own magic and names and became designated meeting points.

"It was a natural playground," Jack explains. "At the end of Annabelle Avenue was 'the canyon', a steep drop that led to the marsh. To the left going down the trail from Annabelle was White City Lake now known as Spring Lake. Southwest of the lake were 'the cables', two heavy cables, stretched across tidal channels and Watson Creek, one strung above the other approximately six feet apart, the lower on which to walk, the second to grip tightly in fist. The

cables provided access to the network of catwalks that crossed the high marsh and tidal channels leading to the PSE&G high tension lines and a playground of marshland filled with mysteries, muskrats and secret fishing holes."

At the northwest corner of White City Lake, the trail led to the wooded upland, another environ equally as intriguing and ripe for exploration. Here squirrels and birds filled the tops of tall tulip poplars and other trees as the boys played under the protective canopy, and later armed with sling-shot or gun, sometimes hunted their quarry of birds or squirrels. Further along the "snake path" crossed the marsh to the catwalk.

Along the lake, a five-foot-wide path, lined with bushes whose branches formed a tangled arched ceiling, led to a favorite swimming hole known as Second Sandy. "Only the boys went swimming at Second Sandy. We didn't wear suits or anything. One time, a group of girls came along on horses and stole our clothes," Clyde remembers with a laugh.

The "B.A. Beach", a second swimming hole less frequently mentioned today, was probably equally as popular in those days—if not for swimming, than perhaps for spying.

"The spring" was also just off the path along Watson Creek. Someone had put a box in to keep the leaf litter and weeds out of the water that

gurgled from the ground. Here the boys would quench their thirst, and then with their canteens refreshed, continue their work of exploration and imaginary games.

Further along, by the flood gates, a second set of cables, stretched across Watson Creek, providing another access point to the marshlands that stretched nearly to the river. Just beyond that, the path followed an 's' turn and climbed a small hood-like knoll known as the cobra.

Sometimes the boys would see Giuseppe "Mockey Joe" McCary, a mustached old man of fifty or so, out in an old row boat on White City Lake. With a rake, he would gather seaweed into burlap bags and then haul the bags up the steps, and, as the story goes, sell the seaweed for medicine.

Fishing was a popular activity. Fishing needs were supplied by the fishing store—a rustic, one floor wooden shack—located at the corner of Sewell and Harrison. The boys would extend their ten-to-twelve-foot-long bamboo fishing poles, strung with a line that carried a hook and cork, over the water and fish for sunnies, blue gills, crappies, pike, pickerel and eels. All were plentiful.

Favorite fishing spots included White City Lake, "the Sunny Pond", located just west of the lake, and various, sometimes secret, fishing holes along the catwalks. Fishing lured the boys during their lunch break from Holy Angels Elementary School. Clyde explains, with a laugh, "We had an hour or less for lunch and used to grab our poles, run down to the Sunny Pond and make it back in time. We used to do it just to see if we could catch one fish." Even when the boys reached high school and girls entered the picture, pulling their attention away from the marsh, they stayed with their fishing.

Another element that made the marsh and the times so memorable was Carney Rose's Riding Academy. The stables were located in the area known as DeCou or Hethenville, just off of Independence Avenue on Hobson Avenue. For a dollar or two, you could ride a horse for two hours. The bridge path followed Independence Avenue toward White City. People didn't seem to mind the droppings the horses left on the road; they gathered it up as free fertilizer for their gardens.

Continued on next page

Behind where Independence Mall is today, the path left the road turning into the woods. It continued down the hill, around Indian Creek to Watson Creek. From there, the riders followed a path along the creek to the narrow path around White City Lake. Although galloping was forbidden, the path called and the spirit overruled, and Carney Rose had his hands full enforcing his rule. As Clyde so aptly put it, "We paid our dollar or two for the ride, and we just wanted to make that horse go!"

Wildlife was abundant and diverse and the call of the wild also drew the boys to the marsh. Armed with sling shots, and a practiced aim, they would shoot at birds and squirrels. "There were so many of them, you just took them for granted—we thought they would always be here," the now wiser men regretfully relate.

Clyde was fortunate to meet Nathan Wyckoff, a naturalist with the Trenton Naturalist Club. Nat, who was sixty-five or perhaps older, invited the young boy to go to the marsh with him, coaxing "I could use your eyes." Today, it is easy to sense from Clyde's voice and story, the excitement and love of nature Nat instilled in the boy.

"Did he know his birds!" Clyde exclaims. "He knew them by flight, by sight, by sound. He knew their habits." He continues the story: "I'd meet him each morning with my sling shot tucked in my back pocket. I soon got the idea I shouldn't be shooting these birds.

"I also discovered I had a knack for finding nests. At the marsh, they were abundant. Just walking down White City Lake Hill, I found the nests of catbirds, blue jays and cardinals.

"One morning I hit it right. We walked down the lake hill and back along the lake into the woods toward Russ Abram's place. About twenty-five yards into the woods, I spotted a ruby-throated hummingbird's nest. I just saw a little knot, and said, 'Boy that's a little bird.' Nat grabbed his glasses, focused on the tiny nest, and exclaimed, 'My God! That's a ruby-throated hummingbird!'

"First thing I know he had the Trenton Naturalist club down there with their tripods and cameras. They followed it through its nesting cycle. Then when it was done, they clipped the nest and took it somewhere to display it."

With his interest sparked, Clyde began learning more about birds. "Around this time you couldn't get a pair of binoculars to save your neck since the war was going on. But Nat gave me an old pair. Then I really started watching birds and anything else that was moving around."

Five or six years later on a trip to the lake with Nat, Clyde had another memorable sighting.

"We came down to the bottom of the lake hill and around the corner making the turn toward Russ's. There used to be an old tree stump there. Sitting on top of the stump were a mature and an immature bald eagle. They took flight and headed down along the lake's edge and across the marsh. 'Now there's a sight I bet you aren't going to see too often in your lifetime,' the old man said.

The marsh teemed with red-winged blackbirds. Each spring, thousands would come. The males came first, staking out their territory and then singing to attract a mate. You'd hear their chick-a-ree, chick-a-ree. To many it was, and still is, the first call of spring.

Marsh wrens, the Long-billed and the Short-billed, were also abundant. Their tiny nests, which they tied to cattails, were very hard to see.

"Spring peepers used to be all over the place; the marsh was loaded with them," Clyde relates, his eyes, as well as his words, sharing his enthusiasm. "Those were the days . . . You'd hear their musical chorus," he adds, pausing to purse his lips as if to whistle. "Two people whistling and you have just the sound. It sounds exactly like that." In the next breath he adds, "You hear them now, but not like it was."

The marsh also harbored snakes of all kinds—water snakes, garter snakes, black racers. "They were about six feet long and would whistle through the bushes." Jack shares the memory of bringing a snake home and putting it in the garage in a small aquarium. "When I told my mother, she insisted I get rid of it. So I went out to the garage, but the snake had disappeared. I never told her that."

To be continued . . .

This story was excerpted from an oral history of the marsh currently being compiled. Special thanks to Clyde Quin, Mayor Jack Rafferty, Bob Simpkins, and Richard Switlik, Sr. If you would like to participate, contact Patti Quinby at (609) 924-4646.

Help close the deal!

By becoming a member you can play an important role in preserving vital stream corridor lands throughout the region.

Yes! I want to help create greenways! Enclosed is my gift of:

- \$35 Basic Membership
- \$40 Family Membership
- \$50 Sustaining
- \$100 Supporting
- \$250 Contributing
- \$500 Donor
- \$1,000 Headwater Donor
- Other \$ _____

My gift is covered by an Employer Matching Gift Program. The matching gift form is enclosed.

*Contributors of \$50 and more will receive a set of wildflower note cards designed by Heather Lovett. (According to IRS rules, the value of this gift, \$6.00, must be subtracted when calculating the tax deductibility of your contribution.)

Also enclosed is a gift towards D&R Greenway's:

- Land Acquisition Fund \$ _____
- Management & Monitoring Fund \$ _____

I'd also like information about:

- volunteer opportunities
- preserving my stream corridor lands
- D&R Greenway footpaths
- Hamilton/Trenton Marsh

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (area code) _____

Please make check payable to D&R Greenway and mail to:

Delaware & Raritan Greenway, Inc.
570 Mercer Road
Princeton, NJ 08540

Tulip poplar
(*Liriodendron tulipifera*)



D&R Greenway, Inc. Board of Trustees

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Delaware & Raritan Greenway, Inc.

570 Mercer Road
Princeton, New Jersey 08540
(609) 924-4646

Patricia Orban Quinby
Editor

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