

A
HISTORY
OF
PENN WOOD
ON
LAKE WALLENPAUPACK

FROM ITS ORIGIN
UNTIL SEPTEMBER 1992

Prepared by:
George Coutts
Raymond Maudsley
Richard Voorhees

In 1774 the first Connecticut settlers arrived along the Wallenpaupack Creek and occupied land that was claimed by both Connecticut and Pennsylvania. Those settlers were in defiance of the "Proprietaries of Pennsylvania," since the Wallenpaupack Manor, comprising 12,500 acres, had been surveyed October 14, 1751 for the use of the "Proprietaries of Pennsylvania" by the Penn family. During this time the area was known as Westmoreland County, Connecticut and Northampton County, Pennsylvania, and a bitter dispute known as the Pennamite War raged for thirty years "of more or less active strife." After years of compromise and intervention by the Quakers of Pennsylvania and Federal authorities, title was confirmed in 1806 for Pennsylvania.

The property known today as Penn Wood passed through a long line of owners until on July 29, 1949, title on 129 acres, which had been part of the Wallenpaupack Manor, passed to George and Anna Coutts. At that time one barely driveable woods road existed from PA 507 to the cove, which itself was choked with driftwood for about one-half of its area, because flotsam from the initial flooding and formation of Lake Wallenpaupack had drifted into all the coves on the south side of the lake. The Coutts family worked all one winter cutting and burning to clear the cove.

Two housekeeping cottages were built on what are now lots #1 and #2 for summer rental. Water was piped overground and gravity-fed from a spring near PA 507. Following several years of renting the cottages it was decided to convert the original goal of rental units into a real estate development. A survey was performed, and a plot plan showing 137 lots was duly recorded. Several names were considered for the development, and it became a choice of either Fern Wood or Penn Wood. The final decision was Penn Wood, and the name was quickly recorded in both Harrisburg and Milford (see Exhibits A and B). The original plot plan was eventually

revised and became known as Section I as Sections II and III were surveyed.

Initial water, road and lake facilities were constructed and maintained by the Coutts family. Their concept of retaining the entire lake frontage in the development for the use of all the lot owners instead of selling it piecemeal as they sold lakefront lots was unique at the time of the original survey. In those days much lakefront property was available elsewhere, and for that reason Penn Wood developed very slowly in its early years. However, those who became the first Penn Wood residents liked what they saw. They also had faith in the integrity of the Coutts family, for there was no legal document binding the family to fulfill their promise of granting unlimited use of the lakefront, since all deeds indicated only a right-of-way at the cove, point and glen.

Many discussions were held with the original residents, in particular with Russel Hurst, concerning the formation of an association and its gradual assumption of responsibilities for the amenities. Support for and acceptance of the association idea was recognized among the growing number of lot owners. The first recorded meeting of Penn Wood property owners was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Willis Pierce on September 1, 1968. The meeting was convened to discuss the conducting of an "investigation leading to the development of an association," which would assume ownership of the boat and swim docks and the responsibility of maintaining them and the waterfront area. A Negotiating Committee comprised of Russel Hurst, Willis Pierce and the Reverend Richard Wolf was elected to pursue the matter with George Coutts, representing the Penn Wood Development.

Eighteen of the then-current list of twenty-six lot owners attended that first meeting.

On August 2, 1969, Russel Hurst, Chairman of the Negotiating Committee, reported at a meeting attended by ten property owners that a tentative agreement had been reached with the Developer, and he also presented a set of tentative By Laws for the proposed association.

On August 31, 1969, with 22 of the 27 property owners present, a motion to form the Penn Wood Home Owners' Association, Inc. (later changed to Penn Wood Association, Inc.) was made, seconded and passed, as did a motion to adopt the proposed By Laws. The following were elected to serve as the first officers of the Association (see Exhibit C for a complete listing of all Officers of the Penn Wood Association):

President - Russel Hurst

Secretary/Treasurer - Reverend Richard Wolf

Road Supervisor - Willis Pierce

Beach & Dock Supvr - Alan Borkenhagen

At a meeting on June 5, 1970 it was reported that the proposed agreement between the Developer and the Association concerning transfer of ownership of the docks had reached an impasse. Consequently, the primary function of the Association in those early years was to have its officers act as a liaison between the property owners and the Developer as complaints and disagreements materialized.

At the Association's meeting of September 5, 1971 a new slate of officers was elected and a \$10.00 annual assessment of the members was adopted.

President Donald Mercereau read a proposed agreement prepared by the Developer at the September 3, 1972 meeting of the Association. Said agreement would provide for the Association to assume responsibility for the beach and swim dock maintenance and collect fees from Association members for same. The agreement would also arrange to lease certain waterfront property

and a two-acre recreational parcel to the Association for one dollar per year. A motion to accept the agreement was passed.

Recognizing the need to maintain some continuity among the elected officers of the Association, proposed By Laws changes that would provide for the election of officers on a staggered basis were discussed at the Association's meeting of May 27, 1973, and those By Laws changes were adopted at a special meeting convened on July 8, 1973.

At the September 2, 1973 meeting, President Donald Mercereau began his third year of office as did Beach and Dock Supervisor Richard Voorhees, so that the initial staggering of terms of office could be accomplished. Arnold Waldman succeeded Leigh McArthur as Secretary/Treasurer, and John Long succeeded Raymond Maudsley as Road Supervisor. The annual assessment was increased to \$20.00.

The minutes of the May 25, 1975 meeting report that there were now 63 lots sold in Penn Wood, and 38 of them were developed. The identification of property owners and their guests was perceived to be a problem, and ID stickers for autos and recreational vehicles were ordered and distributed.

At the May 30, 1976 meeting of the Association it was reported that the suggestion of moving the beach area to the point was investigated and was rejected by the Fish and Game Commission. The idea of constructing a pavilion near the beach was discussed.

On May 29, 1977 the gypsy moth infestation was discussed, and it was decided to have Penn Wood sprayed.

The minutes of the May 28, 1978 meeting disclose that the Developer was interested in transferring the responsibility of road maintenance to the Association.

It was reported at the September 2, 1979 meeting that the Developer has approved, and will contribute toward, the construction of a cinder shed on Penn Wood Drive. The shed was constructed early in 1980.

On August 31, 1980 it was noted that Penn Wood had been wired for cable television earlier that year. It was also reported that the Developer was agreeable to the installation of guard rails on Penn Wood Drive near the entrance to Penn Wood on a shared cost basis. It was later determined that the project would be too costly.

At the September 6, 1981 meeting of the Association, the Community Development Committee (CDC) reported that the construction of a pavilion was "not cost effective" and "tennis courts too costly for now." The By Laws were changed on this date to create the new office of Vice President and to separate the duties of Secretary and Treasurer into two offices.

The CDC reported at the May 30, 1982 meeting that a permanent (macadam) boat launching ramp near the point had been discussed with the Developer, and they are agreeable to it. At the September 5, 1982 meeting it was noted that PP&L would not approve a macadam boat launching ramp and that a concrete one would cost about \$2,500; it was voted to abandon the idea.

At the May 30, 1983 meeting it was reported that the Developer has offered to deed over to the Association those lots that have been leased to it since 1973. This to be in return for assuming road maintenance and committing to take over the water system upon notice by the Developer. At the following meeting, the Association voted to accept that offer subject to certain minimum road conditions at the time of the transfer and subject to development restrictions on the South side of Route 507.

On May 27, 1984 the Association adopted a policy governing road openings for utility hookup and maintenance.

At the September 2, 1984 meeting it was reported that the Association now owns all of the "Greenspace" and that it will be necessary to establish a Plans Review and Approval Committee, thus performing the task previously done by the Developer.

On May 26, 1985 it was announced that the Developer has decided to sell their interest in the boat docks and the water system later that year. After a lengthy discussion at the meeting of September 1, 1985, the Association voted to buy the boat docks (\$10,000 over five years) and the water system (\$40,000 over ten years) from the Developer.

Early in 1986 the Association's membership was surveyed to get feedback concerning the development of recreational facilities on the Association's newly-acquired Greenspace. At the May 25, 1986 meeting it was disclosed that returns showed an almost 2:1 response against further development.

On May 24, 1987 it was voted to require builders to post a \$1,000 bond to cover damage to roads and other community property during construction. New DER regulations on the operation and maintenance of water systems was discussed, and Charles Otis was elected as the Association's first Water System Supervisor.

On May 29, 1988 a committee was formed to investigate the feasibility of building a tennis court on the Association's two-acre recreational property. At the following meeting the committee submitted its report which called for funding and maintenance of the court by only those who chose to participate (similar to the boat docks). The plan was narrowly voted down by the Association's members.

Also at the September 5, 1988 meeting, in an attempt to regulate the escalating number of requests for boat slips, it was voted that owners of undeveloped lots would not be entitled to have boat slips. Additionally, outgoing President Raymond Bigus suggested the formation of a Board of Governors comprised of three Past-Presidents and two members-at-large. The By Laws Committee promised to study the idea.

At the May, 1990 meeting, Water System Supervisor William Crisp stated that chlorination of our system may be required, and John Patrick was elected to the new office of Financial Secretary.

A Special Meeting was convened on July 4, 1990 to discuss regulations concerning the ownership and operation of recreational vehicles (RV's) in Penn Wood. A minimum age of 14 years was established for operators of RV's, and proof of \$100,000/\$300,000 of liability insurance was imposed as a requirement on owners of such vehicles.

At the May, 1991 meeting the Association adopted a requirement that persons building new homes or making major additions to existing homes shall pay a nonrefundable usage fee of \$500, and contractors must put \$1,000 in escrow to cover damage to Penn Wood's roads.

Also at the May, 1991 meeting, volunteers were sought to serve on a committee "to investigate plans for the future repair/replacement of our water system." At the meeting of September 1, 1991 this newly-formed committee made its initial report to the Association's membership.

It was reported at the May, 1992 meeting that the system continues to suffer from occasional breaks and from either insufficient or excessive water pressure. It was decided that a consultant will be retained to investigate the system and

make recommendations, with those recommendations and cost estimates presented to the membership at the following meeting.

At that meeting of September 5, 1992 the Association's membership voted to spend up to \$45,000 to upgrade the water system. The membership also celebrated the Association's twenty-third anniversary by electing Helene Parker as its first female President.

As of this meeting date there were 84 homes in Penn Wood with an additional thirteen Association members who own undeveloped lots.

ELECTED OFFICERS
OF THE
PENN WOOD ASSOCIATION

YEAR	PRESIDENT	VICE-PRES	SECRETARY	TREASURER	BEACH&DOCK	ROAD	WATER	FINAN. SECTY
69	R.Hurst		R.Wolf		A.Borkenhagen	W.Pierce		
70	"		"		"	"		
71	D.Mercereau		L.McArthur		R.Voorhees	R.Maudsley		
72	"		"		"	"		
73	"		A.Waldman		"	J.Long		
74	J.Emenhizer		"		W.Klimek	"		
75	"		A.Waldman		"	D.Mercereau		
76	R.Voorhees		"		E.Rose	"		
77	"		J.Huff		"	B.Latchaw		
78	T.Eckert		"		B.Taylor	"		
79	"	A.Waldman	M.Latchaw		"	D.Mack	R.Borson	J.Patrick
80	B.Taylor		"		J.Klein	"		
81	"		T.Rogel	V.Long	"	D.Mack		
82	A.Waldman		"	C.Otis	R.Bigus	R.Borson		
83	"		M.Haytmanek	C.Otis	"	R.Borson		
84	R.Koontz		"	"	B.Huff	"		
85	"		J.Kissel	M.Lauria	"	S.Parker		
86	R.Bigus		"	"	B.Huff	"		
87	"		J.Kissel	M.Lauria	"	S.Parker	C.Otis	
88	L.Auerweck		"	B.Giangiulio	D.Mack	"	W.Crisp	
89	"	M.Lauria	S.Loughery	B.Giangiulio	D.Morris	T.Ireland	"	J.Patrick
90	M.Lauria	H.Parker	"	"	D.Morris	"	W.Crisp	"
91	"	"	S.Loughery	B.Giangiulio	"	T.Ireland	"	J.Patrick
92	H.Parker	W.Crisp	"	"	D.Morris	"	A.Versandi	"