

*Researched and written by Tom Price  
Nature Preserve Committee Chairperson  
March 2019*



# **Chronological History of the Wilma Quinlan Nature Preserve**

**New Britain Borough, Pennsylvania**



*Sidebotham Tract circa 1960 and 1970*

## Late 1960s

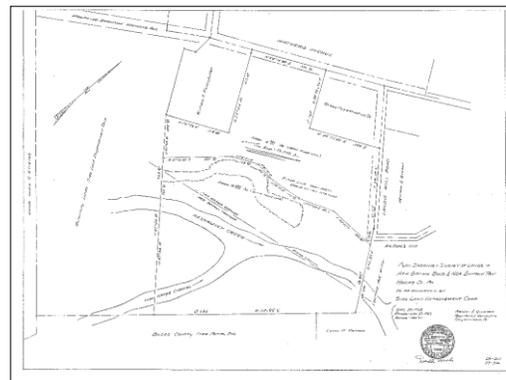
### Efforts to Purchase Sidebotham Tract

- The effort to purchase the 23.75-acre Sidebotham Tract, part of the former Spagna farm, was primarily led by Councilwoman Wilma Quinlan and resident Larry Miller. The Sidebotham Tract was owned by the Side Land Improvement Corporation, formed by Frank and Jane Sidebotham when they bought the property from Janet Spagna in 1965.
- The stated purpose for wanting to purchase the property was to preserve open space (“for our children and grandchildren,” according to Mrs. Quinlan) and protect the Neshaminy floodplain. The intention was to create a natural preserve available for passive recreation.

## 1969

### Property Survey

- The Sidebotham Tract was surveyed by Weisel & Gilmore.



**1970**

### **Zoning Issues**

- The Sidebotham Tract had recently been rezoned from Industrial to R-1, Residential. There were indications that Mr. Sidebotham was considering a suit against the Borough over this zoning change, and also that he was interested in building apartment units on the site.

### **Negotiations and Purchase Option**

- Mr. Sidebotham's initial asking price for the Sidebotham Tract was \$68,000. The Borough countered with an offer of \$60,400, the eventual purchase price. (March)
- Borough Council passed a resolution to enter into a six-month option-to-purchase agreement with Mr. Sidebotham at \$200 a month, with these payments to be credited towards the purchase price if the sale was completed. (March)

### **Mayor's Opposition**

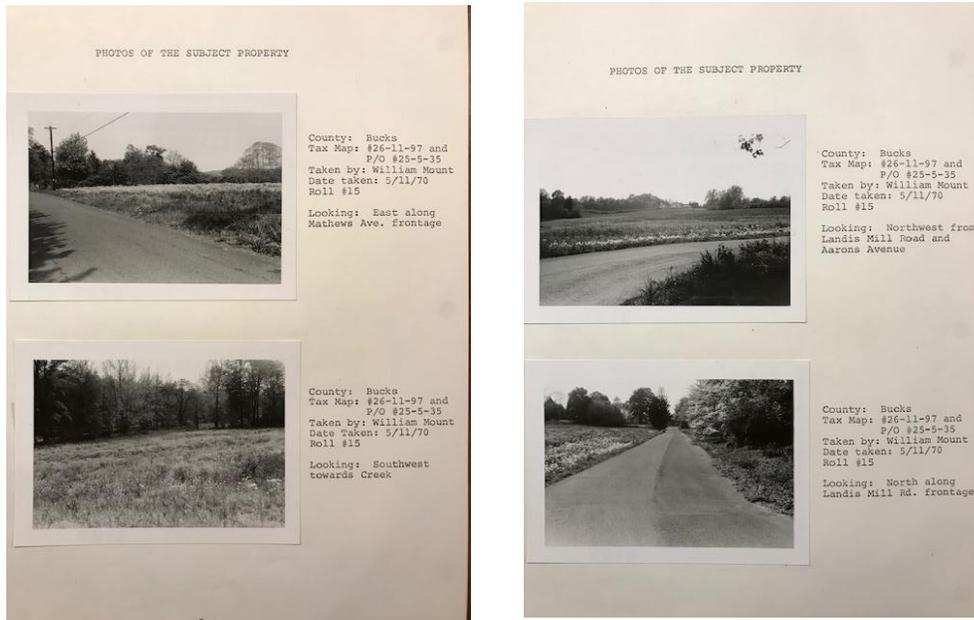
- The option to buy agreement wasn't implemented because of Mayor John A. Mueller's veto. Mayor Mueller strongly opposed the proposed purchase, citing the high purchase price, the already existing park in the Borough, future maintenance costs, and the loss of tax revenue. (April)
- Wilma Quinlan and other Council members considered taking action to override the Mayor's veto but decided instead to move forward with the project without an option.

### **Endorsements**

- The New Britain Borough Planning Commission endorsed the effort to preserve the Sidebotham Tract and commended Borough Council's plan "to leave the land as undeveloped open space." (June)
- The Bucks County Planning Commission endorsed the effort to purchase the Sidebotham Tract "to protect the Neshaminy Creek and for open space purposes." (June)
- The Borough's Recreation Committee, chaired by Council member, Robert Snavely, urged Council to purchase the Sidebotham tract, describing this land as "the only available land in the Boro (sic) that can be used for passive recreation." (July)

## Land Appraisals

- The Sidebotham Tract was appraised by William Mount at \$46,900 if zoned residential and \$73,700 if zoned industrial (May).



- A second appraisal was later made by John T. Welsh which valued the land at \$62,500. (December)

## Grant Applications

- Following the monthly New Britain Borough Council meeting, an Intelligencer article, "New Britain Borough Seeks Grants to Buy Land for Open Space," reported that "several citizens spoke pro and con" about the proposed land purchase. (July)
- Following discussion at the same meeting, Council passed a resolution approving the application for a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and another grant from the PA Dept. of Community Affairs. Council made it clear that it had no intention of purchasing the land if the grants failed to come through. (July)



1971

## Grants and Contributions

- The Borough was awarded a grant from HUD for \$30,075. (November 1970)
- The Grundy Foundation agreed to contribute \$3,000. (February)
- The Borough was awarded a grant from the PA Dept. of Community Affairs for \$25,089. (May)
- The Haas Community Fund agreed to contribute \$5,000. (May)
- John Knoell contributed \$500
- Clemens Market contributed \$500.

## Agreement of Sale

- Borough Council passed a resolution authorizing an agreement of sale for the Sidebotham Tract contingent on the anticipated federal and state grants covering 80 per cent of the agreed purchase price of \$60,400. Mayor Mueller signed this resolution. (April)



Members of the New Britain Borough Council review a new borough ordinance that will enable them to borrow more \$2,000 from the Industrial Valley Bank of Duryea to purchase open space land for recreational use in the borough. The ordinance was passed by unanimous vote.

### New Britain To Buy 23 Acres

By CARLA McCLAIN  
The Borough Council will borrow \$2,000 from the Industrial Valley Bank of Duryea to purchase 23 acres of open land in the borough, according to a resolution passed by unanimous vote last night. The money is to be used to purchase the land before the borough council meets on Monday. The money will be borrowed at the "borrowed" interest rate of 3 and 3/4 per cent, according to council members. The money is to be used to purchase the land before the borough council meets on Monday. The money will be borrowed at the "borrowed" interest rate of 3 and 3/4 per cent, according to council members. The money is to be used to purchase the land before the borough council meets on Monday. The money will be borrowed at the "borrowed" interest rate of 3 and 3/4 per cent, according to council members.

## Loan Approved

- Borough Council passed an ordinance permitting the borrowing of \$55,400 from the Industrial Valley Bank & Trust Company. This loan was a short-term (five year), low-interest (3 ¾ %) loan to be used to purchase the Sidebotham Tract before awarded grant monies were received. Mayor Mueller signed this ordinance. (June)

## 1971 - 1972

### Property Purchase

- Settlement for the purchase of the Sidebotham Tract was held on August 16, 1971 which is the date on the recorded deed to the property. The deed was held in escrow for four months until all the promised grant money was received.
- An Intelligencer article “Many Chip in to Buy NB Park,” (2/11/72) reported on the formal transmitting of the deed to the Borough once the grant monies were received. It states that the Borough “closed the deal” on February 3, 1972. A ceremony was held on the Sidebotham Tract to mark the completion of the property’s acquisition.
- The purchase price for the Sidebotham Tract was \$60,400. Appraisal, legal, and settlement costs raised the final cost to \$62,570.52. After grants and contributions, the total cost to the Borough was \$4,229.02.



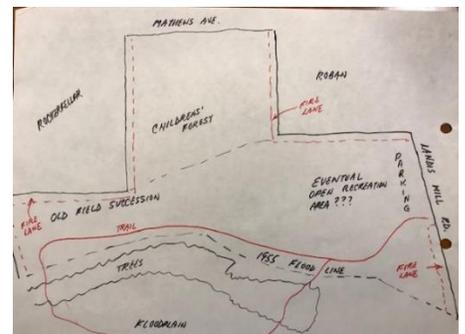
## 1972

### Open Space Committee

- An Open Space Committee was established for the management of the Sidebotham Tract. The original members of this committee were Dr. John Mertz (Chairman), Mrs. Wilma Quinlan, Mr. Carl Senica, Mr. Norman Fischer, Mrs. Janet Haines, Mr. Lawrence Miller, and Mr. Robert Snavelly.

### Early Planning

- After visiting the new preserve with Wilma Quinlan, Dr. John C. Mertz, associate professor of biology at Delaware Valley College and Chairman of the Open Space Committee, wrote a six-page memorandum to Borough Council outlining some suggested proposals for the future development and use of the Sidebotham Tract. A key suggestion was to allow a large area to reforest through natural succession. (February)



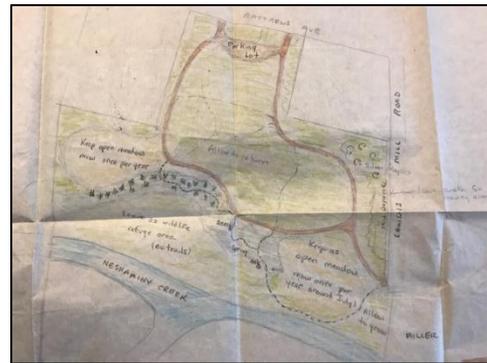
1973

## Soil Conservation Plan

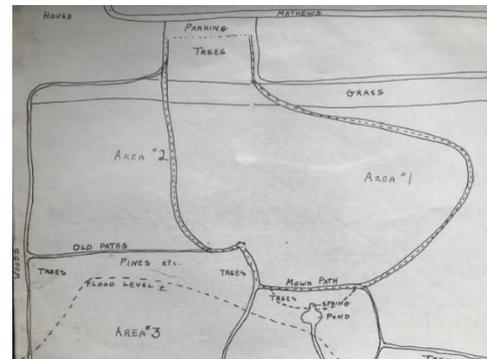
- Dr. Mertz, as “Chairman of the Borough’s Open Space Committee,” entered into a cooperative effort with the Bucks County Conservation District for the “conservation and development” of the Sidebotham Tract’s natural resources (December 1972). As a result, the BCCD developed a Soil and Water Conservation Plan for the Sidebotham Tract. (April)

## Early Maps of “Nature Preserve”

- Dr. Miriam Groner drew by hand a “Preliminary Plan for N.B. Nature Preserve,” which is the first known reference to a “Nature Preserve.” This plan is undated.



- Dr. Groner also drew the first known trail map of the Preserve. (October)



## Gift of Pines

- The Conservation Society of Delaware Valley College gifted ten pine trees to the Nature Preserve. The Borough thanked the members for the trees and for their assistance to Dr. Mertz “in preparing parts of the Open Space Park for the public’s use.” (December)

## Plant Inventory

- Dr. Groner sent Dr. Mertz, who she referred to as the “Chairman of the Nature Preserve Committee,” a “list of plants which are found in the Nature Preserve.” She also stated in an accompanying letter that, “species suggested for future planting include only native plants that should become established fairly easily.” (December)

1974

## Dedication Ceremonies

- Dedication ceremonies for the “New Britain Borough Nature Preserve” occurred at 11:00 a.m. on September 21 at the Preserve. A sign was erected at the Preserve’s main entrance on Mathews Ave. Donald A. Chamberlain, President of Borough Council was the master of ceremonies; George R. Carmichael, President of the Bucks County Audubon Society was the featured speaker.
- An Intelligence article announcing the scheduled dedication points out that an objective of the committee responsible for managing the Preserve is “to provide an opportunity for nature lovers to see how nature itself reforests what was once farmland.” (September 18)



1980

## Rededication



- On January 7, 1980, Borough Council passed a resolution recognizing Wilma Quinlan’s efforts “in securing the New Britain Nature Preserve,” and changing the name of the Preserve to the “Wilma Quinlan Nature Preserve.”
- This Intelligence article (March 20, 1981), showing Mrs. Quinlan in front of a new Preserve sign, described the former councilwoman as “the driving force behind the creation of a nature preserve.” She is quoted as saying, “we wanted to do something for preservation, thinking that if we didn’t, there would be nothing left for our grandchildren.” She goes on express satisfaction that “we did the sensible thing.”

1987

## Wilma Quinlan, 1903-1987

- Wilma Quinlan passed away at the age of 83 and was buried in Beulah Cemetery.

## **1992**

### **Concerns About Preserve's Long-term Status**

- In a letter to Borough Manager, John Wolfe, Larry Miller expresses concerns about the long-term status of the Nature Preserve. (September)
- In his reply to Larry, John Wolfe assured Larry that existing documents certify that, “the nature Preserve is there forever” and, “there will be no change of use.” He states that, “it is well established by all these different papers that the preserve must stay intact as a Nature Preserve” and that, “both of the grants from the state and federal governments stipulate there may not be any change of use of this property.” (October)
- Larry forwarded John Wolfe’s letter to committee members and said that he expressed his concerns because he, “wanted to guard against the possibility of some future Council conveniently forgetting the permanence of the property as a nature preserve, and somehow re-zoning it and selling it.”

## **1993**

### **Committee Responsibilities**

- In a letter to new committee chair, Bill Macklim, Larry Miller says the responsibilities of the committee “principally involve decisions in respect to the mowing of the trails, the semi-annual mowing of the two meadows, and the cutting back of the multiflora from the sides of the trails.” He also says that, “those of us who live nearby do some of the work that needs to be done, such as cutting away limbs that may have fallen across the trail.” (April)

## **1996 -1997**

### **Sewer Line Replacement**

- The Chalfont-New Britain Township Joint Sewer Authority began replacing the existing sewer line running through the Preserve along the Neshaminy Creek. The Borough granted the Sewer Authority a temporary 30-foot right-of-way on both sides of the existing permanent 20-foot right-of-way. The Sewer Authority stated that the removal of trees would be kept to a minimum, and that any affected areas would be leveled out, seeded, and restored as closely as possible.
- The installation of the new sewer line was completed. The Nature Preserve Committee decided to establish a trail along the 20-foot right-of-way, connecting it at both ends with the existing trails in the Preserve. (April 1997)

1997

## Groner Conservation Easement

- Dr. Groner donated a conservation easement on her three-acre property to the Borough. (September)
- Dr. Groner's intention in granting this conservation easement was to permanently "preserve her property in its natural state" and to have it eventually become part of the Nature Preserve. (September)



Miriam Groner does some planting in the woods on her New Britain property. Staff photo by James L. Wilson

**Gift will add to nature preserve**

Retired botanist Miriam Groner to donate three acres so nature's beauty will remain untouched by development.

By James E. Wickstrom  
Staff Writer

NEW BRITAIN — With a cane in one hand and pruning shears in another, Miriam Groner strolled along a path through her wooded property off Academy Avenue, flanked by the trees she planted and long after bearing the nearby houses in 1975. Her eighty-something-year-old eyes twinkled the undergrowth. Groner stopped and, with a steady hand, she cut a branch and stuck it into the ground. She was planting a tree.

"I had to get those trees," she says, and she smiles.

Groner is a woman who knows her land and she is proud of it. She has been here since she was a child and she has seen it grow up around her. She has seen it change and she has seen it stay the same. She has seen it become a part of her life and she has seen it become a part of the community.

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2001

## Sewer Authority Tree Plantings

- The April committee meeting minutes stated that "32-36 trees, out of 70+ provided by Sewer Authority, surviving in the area affected by the construction. Plus a number of saplings starting to grow." *Note: There is no record of what tree species were planted or exactly where they were planted.*

2002

## Management Concerns

- In a letter to members of the Nature Preserve Committee, Larry Miller stated that he had originally favored the "common wisdom at the time, to let nature do whatever it would do in respect to trees and plants", but that he had now become "increasingly and painfully aware of the extent to which grape vines and multiflora have taken over the Preserve." He lamented the fact that many trees were being pulled down by the grapevines and added "there is a barren and forlorn look about the place." (March)
- Larry noted that "the Borough has little in the way of money to invest in the Preserve" and suggested trying to raise funds or obtain grants to address the "deterioration of the Preserve." (June)

**2003**

### **Professional Help Sought**

- Larry Miller contacted Natural Lands Trust for the first time, seeking some “professional management” of the Preserve. (February)
- In his reply, Dave Steckel, Director of Natural Resources for NLT, said that NLT was not in a position to take on the management of new properties, but offered to walk through the Preserve with members of the Nature Preserve Committee later that month. (March)

**2004**

### **Continuing Concerns**

- Larry Miller walked through the Preserve with David Hughes, a partner of Larry Weiner, Landscape Design Associates, on a pro bono basis “to gain an understanding of the present condition of the Preserve.” Larry reported to the Preserve Committee that “the Preserve is in very bad shape, and without intervention, it will get worse.” He concluded that the work needing to be done called for a management plan drawn up by professionals and urged committee members to “determine restoration guidelines and to push the Preserve towards a state of health.” (April)
- Larry wrote to David Hughes, asking for the approximate cost of having Larry Weiner Associates draw up a management plan. (April) He also wrote to Jeff Schumacker, a friend who was a landscaper, and asked him for an estimate as to what it would cost to remove the invasive plants from the Preserve. (April)
- Larry Weiner, Landscape Design Associates, submitted a written proposal for a management plan for the Preserve (July) *Note: This proposal was never implemented.*

**2005**

### **NLT Proposal**

- David Steckel, Senior Stewardship Planner at Natural Lands Trust, submitted a written proposal to the Borough for the preparation of a Land Stewardship Plan for the Groner property and the Nature Preserve. (December)

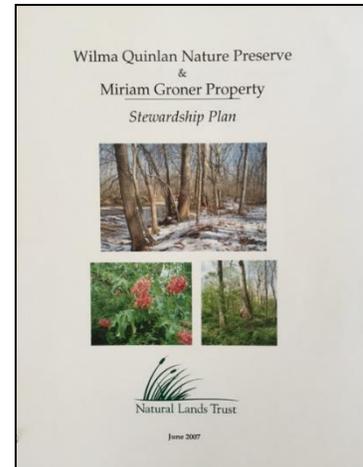




2007

## Stewardship Plan

- Natural Lands Trust submitted its finished “Wilma Quinlan Nature Preserve & Groner Property Stewardship Plan” which assessed the Preserve’s existing environmental and ecological conditions and its current management issues. (June)
- This plan divided the Preserve into distinct “Management Units” and established clear stewardship priorities for the Preserve.



## Property Survey

- Gilmore & Associates completed a survey of the Nature Preserve and the Groner property.
- The Preserve Committee decided to send notification letters to neighboring property owners responsible for encroachments on the Groner property or the Nature Preserve. (August)

2007 - 2009

## Spring Valley Restoration Efforts

- Spring Valley Nursery was hired at a cost of \$8,087 to clear invasive plants from a pilot area of the Preserve bordering Landis Mill Rd. (from the creek up to the Binkley property. (October 2007)
- Spring Valley Nursery was hired at a cost of \$5,939 to plant native shrubs in the pilot area. (October 2008) *Note: 10 years later, there is no sign of these shrubs except for Spicebush.*
- Spring Valley Nursery was hired at a cost of \$3,950 to plant four Colorado Blue Spruce and ten female American Holly along the Mathews Ave. border of Miriam’s Meadow. (February 2009) *Note: Only 5 Hollies can be accounted for ten years later.*
- Spring Valley donated three 12’ Spruce trees that were planted along the rear border of Miriam’s Meadow. (November 2009)

## 2008 - 2010

### Miriam's Meadow Proposals

- The Environmental Designer's Club of Delaware Valley College created a "Meadow Enhancement Plan for Miriam's Meadow." (March 2008) *Note: This design was never implemented.*
- A proposal was submitted by Larry Weiner Landscape Design Associates to design a native wildflower meadow on the Groner property for a design/consultation fee of \$1,800 and to plant that meadow at a cost of \$7,000. (February 2010).

## 2010

### Orphans Court Final Decree

- The Borough petitioned the Orphans Court to clarify whether Groner Endowment funds could be used for the entire Nature Preserve. The Court found that the Borough could "expend funds from its sequestered Groner account to *maintain and develop* the Wilma Quinlan Nature Preserve in a fashion consistent with the provisions of the Groner will."
- The Court also ruled that the Borough could expend Groner funds to "investigate the feasibility of acquiring additional lands contiguous to" the WQNP but that, "in the event that New Britain Borough shall determine that acquiring new lands is feasible, the Borough must petition the Court for authorization to proceed to acquire additional lands." (April)

## 2011-2012

### Installation of Miriam's Meadow

- Miriam's Meadow was seeded by Larry Weiner, Landscape Design Associates. (June 2011)
- Larry Weiner hired to access the meadow and spot spray weeds twice with herbicide. (July 2012)
- A Meadow Committee was created to oversee Miriam's Meadow. (Spring, 2012)
- The Meadow Committee hired Larry Weaner for weed control in Miriam's Meadow, but decided to discontinue that work after one application of herbicide -- with the intention of using the remaining funds for poison-ivy removal and shrubs for the meadow borders. (August 2012)
- *Note: The Meadow Committee dissolved in 2014.*



**2011**

### **Miller Easements**

- The Orphans Court approved the Borough's request to use Groner endowment funds to help purchase easements along the Neshaminy Creek across the properties of Ken and Carol Miller.
- The purchase price of these easements was \$60,000. The Borough used \$15,000 in Groner funds to cover twenty-five percent of the purchase cost, with the remaining \$45,000 coming from county open space funds. An additional \$2,500 of the endowment was spent on appraisal and legal fees related to this acquisition. (August)

### **Special Council Meeting**

- A special Borough Council meeting was held to discuss the usage and possible expansion of the Nature Preserve. Council voted to approve spending Groner funds for two appraisals (one for an easement and one for possible purchase) of the adjacent Powers property and the expenditure of General Funds for two appraisals of the non-adjacent Hutton property. (August)
- At their monthly meeting Borough Council members failed to second a motion made by Councilman and Nature Preserve Committee Chairperson, Peter LaMontagne, to begin negotiations to purchase the Powers tract. (November)

### **PECO Grant**

- Primarily through the efforts of Peter and Tess LaMontagne, the Borough applied for and received a PECO Green Region matching grant of \$8,000 for improvements to the Nature Preserve.
- The \$16,000 was used for recreational and signage improvements: A new entrance sign, a new kiosk and information sign, new rules signs, six benches, interpretive signs, boundary signs, bat houses, and bird houses were installed.



2012

### Chant Donation

- At the monthly Borough Council meeting, Jim Chant announced that he was donating a three-acre parcel of land next to Chant Engineering to the Borough with the intention that it become part of the Nature Preserve. The Borough gratefully accepted this donation. (June)

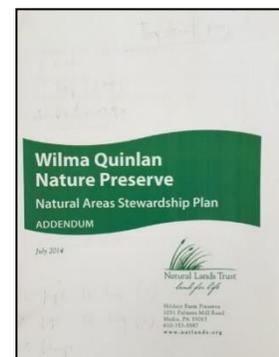
### Status Reports to Council

- Nature Preserve Committee Chair, Peter Lamontagne, formed a Nature Preserve subcommittee (“Strategic Plan Committee”) of Borough residents to formulate a vision statement and strategic plan for the Preserve that would “focus on the Nature Preserve Committee efforts on achieving agreed upon objectives that enhance the Nature Preserve experience for all Borough residents.” This subcommittee produced a document (“Analysis of the Current State”) which summarized its conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses of the Preserve as well as the current opportunities and threats. These conclusions were then presented to Borough Council by Donna von Lipsey, who asked Council to support the Nature Preserve Committee’s goals (May). Members of the Nature Preserve Committee later expressed concern that they should have been informed of the existence of this document before it was presented to Council. (August) *Note: A strategic plan for the Preserve wasn’t created at this time but was created three years later.*
- In response to a complaint at the June Council meeting from Borough Council President, Robert Belchic, that “money had been spent on Miriam’s Meadow with little result” and his request that the Nature Preserve Committee “come up with a new concept and doable goal” for the meadow, Dave Horne made a presentation to Borough Council on the current state of the meadow, the work that had been done in the meadow to date, and the future plans for it. (July)

2014

### Stewardship Plan Addendum

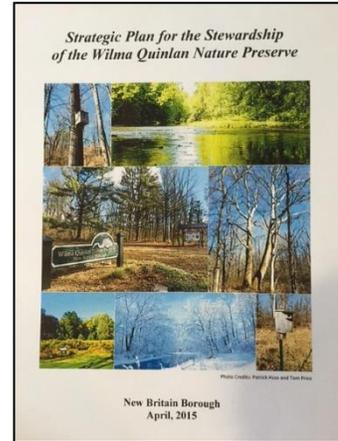
- Natural Lands Trust was commissioned to create an addendum to the 2007 Stewardship Plan, focusing on the managing of invasive plants in the Preserve. (April)
- Natural Lands Trust submitted its finished “Wilma Quinlan Natural Areas Stewardship Plan Addendum.” (July)



2015

## Strategic Plan

- A Strategic Plan for the Preserve was created by the Nature Preserve Committee. This plan summarized the progress made on the committee’s stewardship priorities, described the “significant challenges” facing the Preserve, and outlined the committee’s current management goals. (January – February)
- The committee’s stated rationale for the Strategic Plan was “the belief that we are the current stewards of the Preserve with an obligation to maintain and protect it for future generations.”



- To gain public support for the Strategic Plan, the Nature Preserve Committee asked Diane Rosencrance, GIS Program Manager at NLT, to make a presentation to Borough Council on the need for habitat restoration work in the Preserve. (March)
- Nature Preserve Committee members scheduled a “walk-through” at the Preserve with Dave Steckel, Senior Stewardship Planner at NLT, and Dr. Ann Rhoads, former senior botanist at the Morris Arboretum, to discuss elements of the new Strategic Plan. Tom Price also scheduled walk-throughs with individual members of Borough Council to educate them about the proposed plans for the Preserve. (March)
- Tom Price made a presentation to Brough Council on the Nature Preserve Committee’s Strategic Plan. Following the presentation, Council unanimously voted to approve the plan. (April)

## Strategic Plan Implementation

- The Nature Preserve Committee began implementing the long-term habitat restoration goals outlined in its Strategic Plan by having a large section of the Unit 1 Management Area cleared by Lentzscaping, Inc., by clearing invasive vines and shrubs from other parts of the Preserve and by planting native trees and shrubs throughout the Preserve.
- The first trees planted were 25 White Pines. These trees were planted in the cleared section of Unit 1 by Highland Hill Farms. (September 2015)



**2016**

### **Nature Preserve Committee Ordinance**

- Borough Council passed an ordinance which formalized the Nature Preserve Committee as a standing Borough committee and outlined its specific responsibilities. The ordinance specifically gave the Nature Preserve Committee responsibility for the Nature Preserve's maintenance, management, and long-term stewardship of the Preserve. (August)

### **Groner House Responsibility**

- At the request of the Nature Preserve Committee, the responsibility for the maintenance of the Groner House was turned over to the Borough's newly established Facilities Committee. (Nov.)



### **Meadow Assessment**

- A walk-through with Larry Weaner was held to get his assessment of Miriam's Meadow and his advice on the management of the other meadows in the Preserve. (December)

**2017**

### **Habitat Registrations**

- The Nature Preserve was registered as Pollinator Habitat with both the Xerxes Society and the Penn State Cooperative Extension. Signs were installed in Miriam's meadow. The Preserve had previously been registered in PA Audubon's Bird Habitat Network.

### **Strategic Plan Updates**

- Tom Price, Chairperson of the Nature Preserve Committee, made two public presentations to Borough Council on the achievements of the Nature Preserve Committee since 2015. These achievements included the removal of invasive plant species; the planting of native trees, shrubs, and herbaceous perennials; the addressing of erosion issues, the creation of a new pedestrian entrance on Landis Mill Rd.; as well as trail and signage improvements. (March and December)

## “Chants Woods”

- Borough Council voted to incorporate the property donated to the Borough by Jim and Phil Chant into the Nature Preserve and to name this new part of the Preserve, “Chant’s Woods.” Council also authorized the expenditure of funds to erect a stone monument on the property honoring Jim Chant. (June)

## DCNR Grant to Purchase Miller Properties

- After Borough Council approved the grant application in April, the Borough was awarded a \$210,000 matching DCNR grant to be used for the purchase of the properties owned by Ken and Carol Miller (and once owned by Larry Miller), consisting of 3.5 acres adjacent to the Preserve. (December)

**2018**

## Land Ethics Award

- The Nature Preserve Committee was the 2018 recipient of the Land Ethics Award, given out annually by Bowman’s Hill Wildflower Center. This award honors “the creative use of native plants in the landscape, sustainable and regenerative design, and ethical land management.”
- The Committee’s application for this award was based on all the habitat restoration work it had completed in the Preserve over the previous three years.
- The judges at Bowman’s Hill said the committee was being given this top honor because of (the project’s) “use of native plants, volunteer engagement, educational component, and well-documented public and ecological impacts.” The judges also said that, “starting with a considerably degraded site, (the committee) created a nature preserve that exemplifies what the Land Ethics Award seeks to celebrate.”
- Members of the Nature Preserve Committee accepted the award at the Land Ethics Symposium held at Delaware Valley University. (March)



**NEWS OF  
NEW BRITAIN BOROUGH**  
“A Friendly Place to Live”

Volume 27 - Number 2 Summer 2018

**Nature Preserve Committee Wins Land Ethics Award**

Tom Papp - Chair of Nature Preserve Committee

Bowman’s Hill Wildflower Preserve held its 18th Annual Land Ethics Symposium at Delaware Valley University on March 15th. This symposium is an event dedicated to the sharing of best practices and new ideas to conserve our native landscape. The highlight of this event is the presentation of the Land Ethics Award, which honors the creative use of native plants in the landscape and ethical land management practices. Individuals, non-profit organizations, government agencies, community groups, and business professionals may be nominated for this prestigious award. According to Kelly Jolin, Bowman Hill’s Educational Coordinator, “the Preserve currently has the highest number of submissions in 2018.”

This year, the judges selected the Wilson-Quaker Nature Preserve Committee of New Britain Borough as the 2018 recipient of the Land Ethics Award. The 40 volunteer Borough committee is responsible for the management and stewardship of the Borough’s Wilson Nature Preserve located on Matthews Ave.

According to the press announcement released by Bowman’s Hill, the committee’s work on the Wilson-Quaker Nature Preserve “exemplifies what the Land Ethics Award seeks to celebrate.” By demonstrating “the creative use of native plants to create a sustainable habitat for wildlife and a place for the public to learn about and enjoy nature.” The press release goes on to say that, “the combination of the use of native plants, volunteer stewardship, the educational component as well as documented public and ecological impacts earned the project the top honor.”

The Nature Preserve Committee won this award based on the habitat restoration work it has carried out in the Nature Preserve over the past three years. In 2015, the Nature Preserve Committee wrote a Strategic Plan outlining the Committee’s knowledge goals and priorities for the Preserve, which can be found on the Borough’s website.

Highlights of the Committee’s work over this three-year span include the following:

- The Preserve’s three meadows have been routinely maintained and enhanced with the installation of additional native plant species to improve them as pollinator habitat.
- Native, bird-friendly, sustainable trees and shrubs have been added to the borders surrounding these meadows.
- Key degraded sections of the Preserve have been cleared of non-native trees and shrubs. A total of 241 trees and 113 shrubs have been planted in the Preserve over the past three years.
- Scores of nesting boxes within the Preserve have been fixed from chipping weevils and hundreds of nesting plots have been restored from the Preserve.
- New nesting boxes for species such as Bluebirds, Screech Owls, and Wood Ducks have been constructed and installed throughout the Preserve.
- The experience of visiting the Preserve has been improved through the addition of message boards, trail signs, and interpretive, additional benches, and the creation of another entrance to the Preserve on Lantz Mill Road.

When the planning and much of the physical labor that facilitated the above achievements has been carried out by the other members of the Nature Preserve Committee, additional other community and student volunteers on the six work days that it now holds each year. Community volunteers have included Borough residents and local schools. Student volunteers have come from the National Honor Society of C.R. West and G. B. South High Schools, and the Key Club of J. B. West. Without the help of these volunteer students, the Nature Preserve Committee couldn’t have reached this achievement and would not have won this award.

Nature Preserve Committee Members: Tom Papp, Chair of the Committee, Kelly Jolin, Education Coordinator, and members of the Committee, including Tom Papp, Kelly Jolin, and other members of the Committee.

## **Friends of New Britain Parks**

- Borough Council voted to create a nonprofit board, Friends of New Britain Parks Inc., a 509(a)(3) organization filed with the Federal Internal Revenue Service. This will allow members of the public to make monetary or in-kind donations to the Nature Preserve or to any of the other Borough parks.
- Peter LaMontagne and his family were the impetus of this nonprofit's creation, as they donated \$18,000 towards any needed repairs to the Miller house once the Miller properties are sold to the Borough and become part of the Nature Preserve (June)

**2019**

## **Orphans Court Ruling on Miller and Chant Properties**

- The Orphans Court authorized the expenditure of \$242,000 of Groner funds to purchase the properties of Ken and Carol Miller. The Court also authorized the incorporation of these two properties into the Nature Preserve and the future expenditure of Groner funds to maintain them as necessary. (January)
- The Court also approved the Borough's incorporation of Chant's Woods into the Nature Preserve and the future expenditure of Groner funds to maintain the Chant property as necessary.

## **Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence**



- The Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence are awarded each year by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. These awards highlight the best in environmental innovation and expertise throughout the Commonwealth. Each year the Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence provide statewide recognition to businesses and organizations involved in a cross-section of environmental initiatives
- The Nature Preserve Committee was awarded a 2019 Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence, based on the habitat restoration accomplished in the Preserve over the past four years. (March)

## **Miller Properties Purchase**

- The Borough's purchase of the Miller properties was finalized, adding 3.5 acres to the Nature Preserve.