

Land donation adds to a legacy in Woodstock

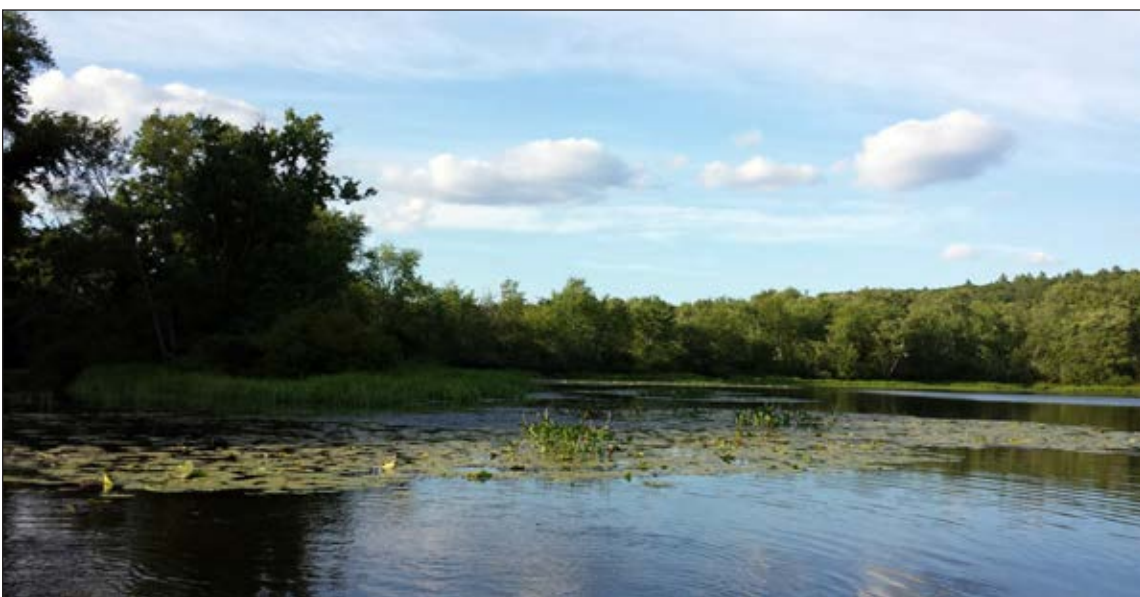


Courtesy photos

The donated property on the northern end of Roseland Lake has been named "Zeelandia" in memory of Doug "Z" Zimmerman.



One of Doug Zimmerman's bluebird nest boxes along Muddy Brook as it feeds into the northern end of Roseland Lake.



The land donations from Bet Zimmerman Smith and Patrick Smith will help protect the shoreline of Roseland Lake from development.

WOODSTOCK — A donation of three parcels of land on Roseland Lake will preserve the land for future generations while honoring the memory of a loved one.

In September 2015, Bet Zimmerman Smith and her husband Patrick Smith donated the three parcels to the Wyndham Land Trust. Their goals were to protect the lake and honor the memory of Bet's late husband, Doug Zimmerman.

Roseland Lake is an important piece of Woodstock's history. Henry Bowen, a wealthy New York industrialist, was a native of Woodstock. In 1846 he built Roseland Cottage (the Pink House) on Woodstock Hill as a summer retreat from the heat of the city and a place to entertain friends and politicians. Later, he purchased about 60 acres on the west side of what was then called The Great Pond and created a manicured, Victorian-style park that became a regional attraction. Bowen named the pleasure grounds Roseland Park. He bequeathed the property to the people of Woodstock upon his death in 1896, enabling residents and visitors to continue to enjoy the recreational opportunities afforded by both the Park and Roseland Lake.

"The wetlands we donated on the northern end of the lake about the park that Bowen had the foresight to protect over 120 years ago," said Bet Zimmerman. "The land fronts both the lake and Muddy Brook, and is teeming with wildlife and plant diversity. Boating up Muddy Brook brings you to this quiet patch of wilderness. Houses could have potentially been built on the two smaller lots we donated at the southeastern end of the lake. Unlike most lakes in Woodstock, there are still very few houses on Roseland Lake's waterfront. Patrick and I wanted to help preserve that character. It's also important to protect the water quality because the lake is part of Putnam's water supply, and provides a home for a wide variety of wildlife, from bald eagles to bass to otters.

"Protecting land forever in honor of someone you love is such a great concept. We've

always admired others who left such a legacy. We were glad to be able to follow in their footsteps. Perhaps our donation will serve as an inspiration to others. There is so much valuable and scenic open space in northeastern Connecticut, but only a small fraction of it is permanently protected or set aside for agricultural use."

A love of nature has been a central theme of the Zimmerman's lives. Between the two of them, Doug and Bet spent 40 years working on environmental issues at the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). Outside working hours, their attention focused on their home town of Woodstock. Bet serves on the Conservation Commission, was a former weekly column writer for the Villager Newspapers, and creates web sites for a number of non-profit groups in and around the region. She is also on the board of the North American Bluebird Society, and she and Doug installed over 100 nesting boxes around Woodstock. Bet's life was turned upside down in 2010 when Doug died suddenly after suffering a malignant arrhythmia while jogging in a park in Hartford.

Doug used to play softball with Wyndham Land Trust board member Jeff Stefanik, and volunteered with board member Dawn Adiletta on the Woodstock Historical Society.

"Working with Wyndham Land Trust members was a pleasure," said Bet. "They are knowledgeable and committed people. The board asked a lot of questions, but at the same time were responsive and sensitive to our wishes. We have similar goals and look forward to continuing to work with them to protect another significant property in Woodstock."

The Wyndham Land Trust now owns 2137 acres in Northeast Connecticut and protects an additional 700 acres through conservation easements. More information about the land trust can be found from their web site at www.wyndhamlandtrust.org. You can contact them at info@wyndhamlandtrust.org or by calling (860) 963-2090.

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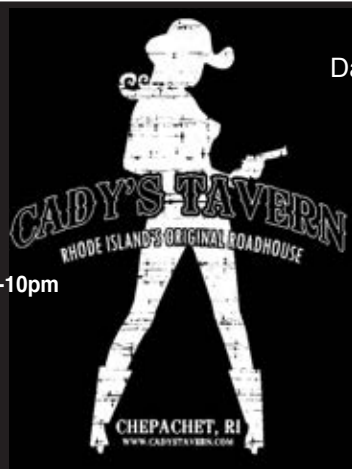
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