



Part of the 100-acre Gross easement in Potter Place.

The Gross Family Easement: A Family Gift Of Place

By Nancy Teach

From the ASLPT newsletter, *Chatter*

It's the place you see in the evening hours during the winter holiday season traveling westbound on Route 11 through Andover's village. The lighted silhouettes of a barn mark the property of the Gross family. During the daylight hours the passerby can see the barn has a giant wreath.

This property, all 100.5 acres, has been the gathering place since 1968 for the Gross family. I recently sat in the family farm house with the five siblings – Donna Vilsmeier, and Donald, Russell, Richard, and Raymond Gross. (Raymond was on a cell phone conference call from Colorado.) We talked about this place and why a conservation easement is important to the Gross family.

Chatter: Can you tell me how this property came to be part of your family?

Don: Our grandfather started a trucking business in New Jersey and trucked for A&P food stores. The family company started to get a bit sour, and Dad wanted to take his wife and five children away from the business and the city. We camped a lot as a family; we loved the outdoors. Mom and Dad wanted the open spaces we didn't have in New Jersey.

Chatter: This was a brave thing to do.

Don: It was pretty scary I would say. Mom and Dad arrived here in August with five kids, a tractor trailer full of things, and no jobs.

Russell: We moved into the cabins, part of the motel, until the farmhouse was ready for us. They gave up a lot to get to what they thought was a good future, which brings us to the land.

Don: It kind of brings us to the end of the story. Why it was so important to them and why it is important to us to make sure that that stays open land for everyone to enjoy.

Chatter: Will you allow public access?

Don: Yes, we always have. My parents allowed anyone to come here

to recreate. It was always about this piece of property and what it meant to them. So it is up to us to preserve it, not knowing what any of our future generations might decide to do. This way it's guaranteed that what they wanted stays here for grandkids, great grandkids, all of our friends, and folks in town who always came here to recreate can continue to do so.

Chatter: So that's how you see the residents of Andover and others benefiting from your conservation easement.

Ray: Dad and Mom would always have the Boy Scouts camp out in the back. They let the town dig up the top soil in the center of the field to use for the initial ball park in Andover; again trying to help the public. It was land, land for everybody to use. That's what kind of led us to this point. We saw what our parents did and that the land was important and to allow access. I remember when we had the motel; people would come to the door and if we were full Mom and Dad would let them camp out in the back. Just kind of open use.

Chatter: Can we talk about some of your own experiences as children on this land, in these woods?

Donna: I was only here two years, and then left to go into the military for awhile out in Colorado, got married, and we moved to Nashua. I came up here and brought my kids; we'd sleigh ride in the back and find frogs in the little brook along our property. And now I bring my grand kids.

Don: My parents were extremely generous people even when we had little money. They never stopped giving. Mom was a public health nurse for the State of New Hampshire. She always wanted to work where the need was the greatest. Our dad was a quiet person. One of the things he used to do at Christmas time was go to the store, fill-up the family station wagon with toys, and drive right to Boys Town. Dad always donated what he could to kids.

See Gift on page 26

Franklin's Annual Sportsman Show Arrives March 6 And 7

Lakes Region Chamber of Commerce press release

The Lakes Region Chamber of Commerce is proud to present the 13th Annual Sportsmen's Show on Saturday, March 6th, from 9 AM to 5 PM, and Sunday, March 7, from 9 AM to 3 PM at the Franklin Middle School, 200 Sanborn Street in Franklin. Admission price for the show is \$8 per person, with children under 12 free with a paying adult.

There will be more than 40 vendors, with refreshments available, great

raffle prizes, lessons on fly tying, and seminars by Bill Saiff Outdoors, Lane Benoit, Island Fishing Charter, and On Point Kennels.

As our community's only event dedicated solely to those who love the outdoors, this is a great opportunity for companies of all sizes to gain valuable exposure to over a thousand people from the communities of the Lakes Region and beyond.

For more information, call Kathy at the Chamber office at 934-6909.

Friends of the Northern Rail Trail

FNRT press release

In 2006, the Friends of the Northern Rail Trail in Merrimack County (FNRT) received a \$258,000 (since increased to \$345,000) grant of federal funds under the Transportation Enhancement Program administered by New Hampshire Department of Transportation (DOT) to build 8.3 miles of trail from Potter Place in Andover north to the Danbury Town Garage on the Northern Rail Line.

Recent Developments

The project is being constructed in two segments – installing bridge railings on six bridges in Danbury, and then covering the existing stone ballast with four inches of stone dust.

VHB, our engineers, have completed their design work on the six bridge railings in Danbury, and these plans, as well as the plans for laying down stone dust on the 8.3 miles, have been submitted to DOT, which has in turn sent them to various bureaus for comment. After we have revised the plans to reflect the comments, if any, we will submit final plans.

DOT's Bureau of Rail and Transit

(the "owner" within the state bureaucracy of the Northern Rail Line) has recently informed us that no permit would be required from that Bureau. This removes what could have been a major hurdle, and we appreciate this determination.

We have raised approximately 90% of the \$70,000 matching funds that we will be required to provide.

We believe we are on track to commence construction in the summer of 2010. We will be meeting next week with Tom Jameson, the DOT official in charge of the project, to confirm that we are on track to meet this schedule.

For more information, contact FNRT's project manager, Alex Bernhard, at 735-5071 or AABernhard@comcast.net.

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