

# *the* *Newton Conservators* NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 1986



An historic Newton home  
is subject to modern  
pressures. See pg. 5.



The Marcv Estate - circa 1875

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 1986-87

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Member:

The Conservators' autumn outdoor activities this year consisted of walks in Cold Spring and Kennard Parks, canoeing at Norumbega, a full-day hike along the Charles River Pathway and a walk along the aqueduct system in Newton. The Charles River Pathway hike, led by William Giezentanner, a professional naturalist associated with the Audubon Society and the designer of the Pathway, was favored with fine autumn weather and provided an excellent opportunity to appreciate the Charles from the river banks, to complement the earlier swimming event.

There are several open-space items of interest on the calendar. We call your attention to the Newton park owned by you, the Conservators. Ordway Park, a gift of the Ordway family, is located in Newton Centre and presents an extensive selection of plants, shrubs and trees on its varied terrain. It is described in the Conservators' pamphlet on the parks of Newton, and is a fine example of a small park co-located with residences near a busy commercial area.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, there is a review of the latest forum on land use, co-sponsored with the League of Women Voters, which was held in November. The forum featured aldermanic members of the Zoning Amendments Committee and representatives of the Economic Development Commission. Nahanton Park is on the way to fulfilling its promise as a major recreational area of the city, with the formation of a committee to formalize the mechanisms for the installation of recreational facilities and to plan for the continuing maintenance of the park.

We bring to your attention the proposed development plan for the Marcy estate in Newton Upper Falls. A presentation to the Board of Directors of the Conservators was made recently by Messrs Howard Levine and Frank DeMilla, who outlined the scope of the project which is scheduled for presentation to the Land Use Committee of the Board of Aldermen on December 17th.

Although the Newton Conservators is a strong organization, it is apparent that there are many Newton residents, and others, who are interested in open-space and environmentalist issues but who do not participate in Conservator membership because they are unaware of the presence and purpose of the Conservators. In seeking a method to promote Conservator membership, we suggest that our present members consider making a one-time gift of a membership to a friend or



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (Cont.)

neighbor to introduce them to our goals and activities. A one-year membership (\$5.00) is a very modest gift and could bring extended awareness of local activities to an acquaintance with conservation interests. As part of this Newsletter you will find a short form which can serve as a donated membership application. The recipient will be informed of your thoughtful gift, and renewal in subsequent years would be the choice of the new member. Think of friends and neighbors who would enjoy becoming a part of the conservationist movement in Newton. A small gift of a Conservator membership would provide information about Newton open-space activities and enhanced enjoyment of the naturally beautiful areas in the city.

In closing, we would like to express our thanks for the efforts of Sally Barnett, David Jackson, Zygmunt Plater, and Jean Thompson, who have completed terms of service on the Board of Directors. All have made notable contributions in support of Conservator programs. We welcome three new members to the board: Lawrence Kaplan, William Leitch and George Stephen, and we look forward to their collaboration as we begin a new season and a new year.

Nicholas F. Yannoni, President

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## ANNUAL MEETING AND ENVIRONMENTALISTS-OF-YEAR AWARD

Our annual meeting this year served as the occasion to honor the founders of the Newton Conservators, now in its 25th year as an environmental and open-space activist group in the City of Newton. The Environmentalists-of-the-Year awards were presented to Sharon Francis, Ann Barker, Sarah Barnett, AnnDinsmore, Deborah Howard, and Joan Lerner, who together constituted the nucleus of the present organization. Our dinner speaker at the meeting was Mr. Thomas W. Baron, a civil engineer with major professional interests in water supply systems. Then with the MDC and now a member of the staff of the Mass. Water Resources Authority Mr. Baron presented an exciting historical insight into the development of the water supply system for Metropolitan Boston. His slide-illustrated review covered the origins of Boston's water supply as well as its present status with the Quabbin reservoir as the principle water source for the MWRA region. His presentation gave an inside view of the massive public works programs, which, over the years, have provided for the installation of reservoirs with their watersheds, extensive

## ANNUAL MEETING (Cont.)

aqueduct systems and final water distribution networks for the entire metropolitan area.

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## A REFRESHING SWIM IN THE CHARLES!

In June, favored by excellent weather, we co-sponsored with the Charles River Watershed Association a well-attended swim at what was then called Novitiate Park and what is now named Nahanton Park.

For those who participated, there are memories of excellent water quality and enthusiasm for the future prospects of the Park as a fine recreational, multi-purpose open space. For those who could not make it this year, plan ahead for 1987. The efforts of the CRWA and the watershed communities have produced splendid results for the full length of the Charles River.

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## WELCOME TO NEW BOARD MEMBERS

New energies and expertise have been added to our board, as Lawrence Kaplan, William Leitch and George Stephen join us.

Lawrence Kaplan is a long-term resident of Newton and resides near Newton Centre. He is a professor of botany at the University of Massachusetts and his professional expertise will be most useful in several of the naturalist projects associated with Newton parks.

William Leitch has lived in Newtonville in the Bulloughs Pond area for several years and is a long-term Conservator member. He is an officer in Computer World Publications, a major producer of computer-oriented literature, and has a strong interest in environmental issues and nature study.

George Stephen, who resides near Bill Leitch, is a native of Aberdeen, Scotland and has lived in Newton for almost thirty years. George is a professional architect and is the North Atlantic Regional Architect for the National Park Service. He enjoys the outdoors very much and has a professional interest in the tasteful recycling of buildings. He is the author of a book "Remodeling Old Houses". We are pleased to have these new directors on the board and look forward to their contribution.



NAME: Willard Marcy

BIRTHPLACE: Hartland, Vt.

OCCUPATION: Wharfinger

ADDRESS: Chestnut Street  
Newton Upper Falls  
Mass.

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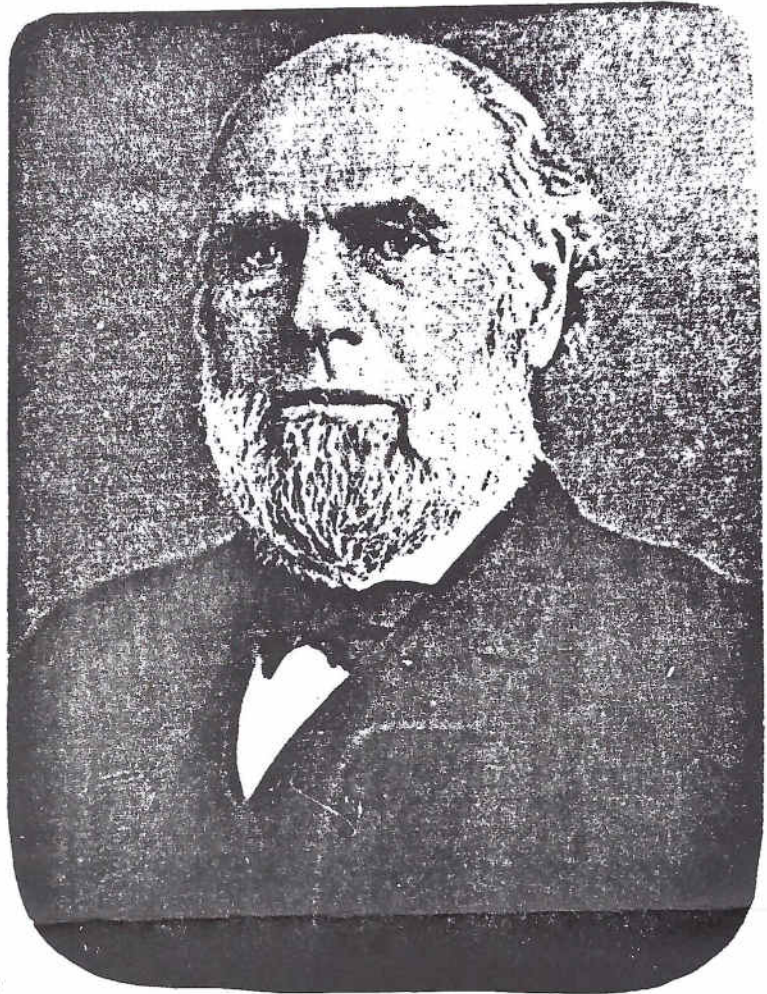
The statistics in a bibliography can hardly describe the full experience, and role played, by a prominent citizen of Newton in the 19th century.

As a youth he came to Boston and soon became wharfinger for the Boston Wharf Company. As chief in command of the active business of the Company's yards, he was remembered as

having a piercing but kindly eye that seemed to possess a rare faculty of taking in many details at a glance. Mr. Marcy was tolerant of many things, but loafing was not one of them, and the appearance of his alert figure clad in bobtail coat and shod in high boots was the signal for brisk activity among the laborers on the Wharf.

In December 1855 Willard Marcy married Elizabeth Pettee (1831-1914), daughter of Pettee Machine Shop founder, Otis Pettee; he probably moved to Upper Falls about that time. Mr. Marcy was deeply involved in local affairs, and held several Newton positions ranging from town constable, selectman, and assessor, to Overseer of the Poor and chief of the local fire department. In 1869 he was chairman of the building committee responsible for designing (after the original architect's plans had been "disapproved,") the new mansard Upper Falls School House.

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*Willard Marcy*  
1822 - 1890



DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR THE MARCY ESTATE

At the meeting of the Board of Directors held on Thursday, November 20, Howard Levine, attorney, and Frank DeMilla, architect, presented initial revised plans and described the presently proposed project on the 4-5 acre site. Instead of 56 units, the present proposal is for 39 units. Six of these units would be in existing structures (the house and the barn). The remaining 33 units would be in clustered townhouses; 16 units in the building near Chestnut Street on the east side of the property, 12 units in a building near the railroad tracks toward the back of the property, and 5 units near the driveway. Many of the tall old evergreen trees (hemlock?) by Chestnut Street, would be kept. Garage space (2 per dwelling unit) would be partly below grade under the dwelling units. Four on-site units will be given to the city for low income housing. The developer would grant a conservation restriction on the remaining open space on the parcel, thus giving future protection for all remaining trees and shrubs on the property. New buildings would be just a few feet lower in height (2 or 3) than the present structures on the property.

This proposal by developers Morris Tarkinow and Harold Ellison will be heard by the Land Use Committee of the Board of Aldermen on December 17. (The remaining part of the Marcy farm remains the property of WHDH, which has its tower and a small building on the site.)

The Conservator board reviewed these plans and will vote on a statement of position at its December 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. The consensus of the initial discussion was that the proposed development is too intense for the site. The Newton Conservators are deeply concerned about pressures to develop all land to its maximum potential, including zone changes to allow for more intensive use. Such zone changes have the effect of raising the speculative value of land, thus putting increasing development pressure on all remaining open land in Newton.

Because this site has long been zoned to permit 17 two-family homes, the sense of the discussion was that no more than the 34 units permitted by current zoning should be allowed. Cluster zoning is preferable to traditional two-family homes because it preserves the existing buildings and a modicum of open space. In exchange for the

# MARCY ESTATE (Cont.)

special permit this requires, it is hoped that the City will obtain 4 units for low and moderate income housing.

Make your views known - come to the December 17 meeting! Your presence will be helpful.

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## LAND USE FORUM

Fears that business construction, particularly new office buildings, have harmed the quality of the life in the Garden City have inspired many residents to push for the moratorium, a one-year commercial construction ban designed to hold off development until the Board of Aldermen enacts new zoning.

After a land use forum held by the League of Women Voters and the Newton Conservators, Alderman Rodney Barker commented that indeed the Board may have to consider the extension of the city's building moratorium to stop a rush of construction applications between the original end of the building ban and the enactment of new zoning ordinances. Around 60 residents gathered to hear Barker, Alderman Verne Vance and Economic Development Commission (EDC) members Linda Whitlock and Brian Yates discuss the work of the aldermanic Zoning Amendment Committee (ZAC) and city's village study.

Just before the aldermen adopted the building moratorium on March 17, 1986, many developers protected their building rights by filing perimeter plans with the city. The plans guarantee the zoning on a specific parcel will not change for three years. The last public hearings on the ZAC's recommended zoning changes are not scheduled until March, but even if they occur on schedule, the Board of Aldermen still must vote to implement the changes. Alderman Verne Vance stated that new zoning takes effect the date of the public hearing, provided it is later enacted by the board.

The first public hearing on the revised residential zoning ordinance prepared by the Zoning Review Committee and reviewed by the Zoning Amendments Committee will be held at City Hall on Tuesday, December 16. The ZAC is still completing its work on the Commercial, Open Space and Public Use Zones, and the regulations for Educational and Non-Profit Institutions.

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The proposed Open Space District is new. It was endorsed unanimously by the Zoning Review Committee at its first meeting. The Newton Conservators have encouraged the concept, not least at the Open Space Forum in March 1986. The main application of this zone, if it is adopted, will be for the golf courses, which currently are in "Res. A" and "Res. B." districts.

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#### NEWS FROM THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

GODDARD-CHRISTINA LOT 34 - It is expected that the Board of Aldermen on December 15 will authorize an appropriation of \$30,000 for the purchase of the 3.21 acre parcel of wetland surrounding a small piece (1.14 acre) already owned by the city. This acquisition will consolidate the city's holding.

NUMEROUS ENFORCEMENT ORDERS - The scarcity of land and the very high fees now imposed for dumping at the Rumford Avenue transfer-haul station is causing unprecedented enforcement problems for the Conservation Commission. This office is having to spend a major effort on enforcement orders involving illegal dumping, both on conservation lands and on privately owned wetland or floodplain. There is no place in Newton, at any price, where contractors may legally dispose of earth and construction or demolition residue. Gardeners may still dispose of brush at the Rumford Ave. station by paying a "tipping" fee. The Conservation Commission reports recent encroachments in the Winchester St. swamp off Charlmont St., off California St. on MDC land along the Charles River, and off LaGrange St., Boston into Newton's Saw Mill Brook Conservation Area.

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#### LEAF COMPOSTING PROGRAM

The proposal for a state-funded pilot program to demonstrate leaf composting at the Rumford Avenue landfill is in limbo because of strong neighborhood opposition that is based on dissatisfaction with past management of the landfill.

The Conservators support the concept of a well-run composting program; many Newtonians remember such a program at Cold Spring in



## LEAF COMPOSTING PROGRAM (Cont.)

the years before the playground was established there.

The aldermanic Public Facilities Committee approved the proposal, but it is being held in the Finance Committee pending agreement on a time table for the closing of the landfill at Rumford Ave. and appropriation of funds for the clay material needed to cap the site. The future success of this program is contingent on community support.

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## RETIREMENT OF JOHN L. SIMMONS

Jack Simmons has retired as Senior Planner in the Planning Department after more than 20 years, and the Conservators will miss him greatly. The Conservation Commissioners voted to make contributions to the Conservation Fund Acct. 8002-S028 for the planting of a flowering tree in Spring 1987 at the Norumbega Park Conservation Area, in honor of Mr. Simmons' distinguished service to Newton.

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## NAHANTON PARK REPORT

Friends of Nahanton Park, Inc., is being registered as a tax-exempt organization in the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth. Peter Kastner was elected Treasurer, and Carol Morrison, Clerk, of this new organization at its first meeting held Wednesday evening, October 26, 1986, at Newton City Hall.

At the November meeting Conservator board members discussed the amount of money Newton Conservators should donate to Friends of Nahanton Park, Inc., for the local share funds, and also for the needed Maintenance Fund for the park.

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William Leitch would like Newton Conservator members to check their name and address on this mailing, as a change of computers may have resulted in errors or omissions.

If you find an error on your address label, please notify William Leitch, at 244-0771.



## WILLARD MARCY (Cont.)

In 1885-86, he represented Newton in the House of Representatives. Willard Marcy was on the Board of Trustees of the Newton Savings Bank, as well as a stockholder. He was a partner in one of the local paper manufacturing companies, as well as president of the Massachusetts Benefit Insurance Association. His active private life and his participation in many facets of Newton's civic affairs can only dignify his home in Newton Upper Falls.

The officers and board members of the Newton Conservators welcome news of common interest and concern from our members across the neighborhoods of Newton. Let's hear from you in 1987!

## *Newton Conservators Board*

## DIRECTORS:

Rodney Barker	49 Woodcliff Rd., Newton Highlands 02161	244-6949
Roger Feinstein	96 Roundwood Rd., Newton Upper Falls 02164	969-0942
Bart Hague	110 Roundwood Rd., Newton Upper Falls 02164	969-3640
Jan Heespelink	45 Pleasant St., Newton Centre 02159	527-6909
Mary Herring	166 Winchester St., Newton Highlands 02161	244-5193
Fiora Houghteling	258 Mill St., Newtonville 02160	969-7764
Deborah Howard	34 Fairfax St., West Newton 02165	244-7269
Lawrence Kaplan	26 Parker St., Newton Centre 02159	527-3449
Peter Kastner	49 Woodbine St., Auburndale 02166	244-6094
William Leitch	69 Dexter Rd., Newtonville 02160	244-0771
Linda Mackey	PO Box 1354, 20 Berkeley St. Cambridge 02238	661-8608
George Mansfield	312 Lake Ave., Newton Highlands 02161	969-1479
Susan S. MacDonald	39 Mason Rd., Newton Centre 02159	332-6635
Rolce Payne	66 Fountain St., West Newton 02165	244-9026
George Stephen	191 Upland Rd., Newtonville 02160	527-5839
Nancy Schad	156 Melrose Ave., Auburndale 02166	965-3573
Virginia Taplin (Membership Chair)	15 Sewal Rd., West Newton 02165	527-1928
Lavina Tomb (Newsletter Editor)	34 Waterston St., Newton 02158	332-0818
Verne Vance	101 Old Orchard Rd., Chestnut Hill 02167	232-5494