

Whatever happened to Textile Field?

LONG AGO, before the digital age emerged, Nashua's youth played outdoors with little to no resources during the Great Depression. They engaged in games like jacks, marbles, Dominoes and checkers, swam in nearby watering holes and played sports at Textile Field.

The cotton textile business established in 1823, known as Nashua Manufacturing Company and its successor, Textron Inc., helped to define our city and its economic landscape. By 1836, the company had constructed three cotton mills that produced 9.3 million yards of cloth yearly on 710 looms and many jobs.

And the same could be said about Manchester and the impact the Amoskeag Mills had on the Queen City's heritage and early transformation during the Industrial Revolution.

But like most textile mills in New England, Nashua Manufacturing Company struggled during the Depression.

Nashua Manufacturing Company owned a sizable portion of the land along the Nashua River that it used for powering its machines. But that was not all.

In a column my late newspaper editor father wrote for the Nashua Telegraph, I found interesting information about our city's recreational spots, namely Textile Field.

It reminds me of the classic Kevin Costner movie "Field of Dreams," but instead of building a baseball diamond in the Iowa cornfields, Nashua built one in the middle of the woods.

"At one time, it (Textile Field) had a regulation diamond, and on Sunday afternoons and also evenings, drew large throngs at baseball games involving industrial teams. And there were some good ones.

"This was an era before Holman Stadium, and the major diamonds included North Common, South Common and Textile Field," my dad wrote. "Baseball prospered those days but not at today's heights with so many leagues involving youth. But a high brand of semi-professional baseball was offered, not to mention the old New England pro league and the later Class B baseball presented by the Nashua Dodgers, 1946-1949."

He went on to write that Textile Field was later narrowed through the construction of Ledge Street Elementary School (1956), and the once-wooded area saw the development of many new residences take place over the years.

So, did Nashua's Field of Dreams disappear?

I asked for help from Nashua Public Library's Marita Klements, supervisor of information services. I also contacted the Nashua Historical Society and finally called Eddie Lecius, former WSMN radio legend and recently retired community policing coordinator for the Nashua Police Department.

They were all helpful, but Eddie seemed to have the right answer and confirmed it with two other well-known Nashuans, Al Savage (age 92) and Greg Andruskevich (a former Union Leader editor).

All three Nashua sports experts believe that a portion of Textile Field is now home to Ledge Street Elementary. If you walked halfway into the school, you would possibly be standing where home plate was.

Not far from Textile Field lay the old mill canal, where young and old swimmers had a blast with the swift current provided by the water power used by the textile mills. You could negotiate a half-mile or so downstream with no major effort.

"At least a half-dozen swimming holes were spread along the canal, most of them with ethnic names such as French hole, Polack (Poles) hole, Greek hole, Lemon Hole, and so on," my father wrote in his column.

Fields Grove was the other popular swimming spot at Salmon Brook that Nashuans enjoyed for several decades before it was closed to swimming in the late 1960s. I grew up merely yards away from the grove, which we would access via the corner of Revere Street and Lawndale Avenue and walk down the steep, unpaved hill with our little beach towels in tow.

Nashua has gone through fascinating transformations and will continue to do so. As philosopher Henry David Thoreau once said: "It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see."

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The Heart of Nashua

Joan T. Stylianos

COVID-19

2 residents die at NH Veterans Home

By John Koziol
Union Leader Correspondent

TILTON — Two residents of the New Hampshire Veterans Home have died of COVID-19, and 19 other residents and 17 staff members have become infected.

"We were so blessed to make it from March to Nov. 10," when the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed, Commandant Margaret LaBrecque said Wednesday.

"We continue with thankful hearts, but unfortunately last Tuesday we had a small cluster of high temperatures and immediately did the COVID tests and isolated and quarantined them."

On Friday, the New Hampshire National Guard tested all patients and staff at the home and detected infections in both groups, she said.

A day later, LaBrecque said, "one of our very elderly residents" died from COVID-

19. A second resident died Monday.

"We mourn their loss and it's very difficult for our staff because we do love them like family," she said, adding that the deaths were even more tragic because the Veterans Home is closed to visitors "and we know it's been very trying" to the residents and their families not to be with each other.

Founded in 1890, the Veterans Home can accommodate 250 residents, though it now

has only 136, ages 62 to 102.

The Veterans Home began in 2020 with 180 residents, but the number has dwindled because of natural "life processes," LaBrecque said, and now COVID-19.

From March through May, the Veterans Home did not admit new residents but resumed in June. After last week's positive COVID-19 tests, the Veterans Home has reinstated its pause on admissions.

Side-by-side comparison



DAVID LANE/UNION LEADER PHOTOS

Firefighters put out a controlled fire on a trailer to demonstrate the benefits of sprinklers at the New Hampshire Fire & EMS Academy in Concord on Wednesday. The New Hampshire State Fire Marshal's Office and the National Fire Sprinkler Association hosted the event to remind people who will be putting up Christmas trees to be fire smart because a small fire that spreads to a tree can become out of control very quickly.

Side-by-side Christmas tree controlled burn rooms show the benefits of sprinklers following a demonstration at the New Hampshire Fire & EMS Academy in Concord on Wednesday.



HUDSON

Environmental impacts of Logistics Center debated

■ Developers point to planned improvements on wetlands, river.

By Ryan Lessard
Union Leader Correspondent

Residents opposed to a major warehouse and distribution center proposed for Hudson say the developer's plans to lessen environmental disruption from the project don't address their concerns.

At Monday night's Conservation Commission meeting, representatives of Hillwood Investment Properties presented environmentally targeted changes to their original plans for the Hudson Logistics Center, which includes a 2.6-million-square-foot warehouse and distribution center for Amazon and a future tenant.

"From our perspective, we're really here to highlight the progress and the improvements that have been made to the plans, which all help to

further avoid, minimize and mitigate the impacts that are proposed here," said Justin Pasay, an attorney from Donahue Tucker and Ciandella, representing Hillwood.

Since a site walk of the Green Meadow golf course in June, the plan has been revised to reduce wetlands impacts by almost 20% (13,000 square feet) and reduce buffer impacts by 16% (36,000 square feet), according to Hillwood. Wetland crossings have been redesigned with larger structures, and grading has been significantly reduced at the Merrimack River shoreline zone.

Pasay said the changes were informed by 125 public comments and more than 50 questions raised by members of the Conservation Commission.

During the meeting, Hillwood formally proposed making 120 acres of the property conservation land, via an easement offered to the town, as well as restoring several sections of degraded areas. Since

the land is currently used as a golf course, developers argued it has minimal value for wildlife habitat.

Attorney Amy Manzelli of BCM Environmental and Land Law, who represents over 50 Hudson residents opposed to the project, submitted a letter to the conservation commission, which included initial reviews by a team from GeoInsight Inc. and by wetland scientist Mark Jacobs.

She argues the proposal has several impacts on the Merrimack River, Limit Brook, wetlands and buffers, and that the change from a golf course to a distribution center would represent a "dramatic shift" in the use of land.

"Ultimately, what I heard Hillwood describing as the most recent changes did not address the serious problems with respect to wetland and wetland buffer impacts," Manzelli said Tuesday.

GeoInsight estimates 32% to 58% of the storm water flowing to wetlands would no longer

flow to those wetlands if the project is built as proposed. Manzelli said this could result in less aquatic habitat, and the potential for pollutants to accumulate.

Jacobs concluded Hillwood's proposal has not sufficiently avoided wetlands or minimized unavoidable impacts, as required by law.

In an emailed statement, Hillwood Senior Vice President Gary Frederick said Hillwood has submitted voluminous studies and reports demonstrating that developers will protect the site's natural environment as well.

"For example, our state-of-the-art storm water management system will improve the collection and treatment of all runoff which will in turn better protect wetlands in the Merrimack River. We will restore and protect a 250-foot-wide natural buffer along the Merrimack River and tens of acres around the Limit Brook and associated wetlands," Frederick said.