

Knights Hill Association History

Community Overview - 2017

Executive Overview:

The origin of the Knights Hill Subdivision is found in the formal definition dated 1/22/1969, the Declaration of Property Restrictions and Easements, otherwise known as the Covenants. That document is on file with the Cumberland County Registrar of Deeds and is found in book 3074, page 537.

The Knights Hill Corporation, with office in Fryeburg, Oxford County, Maine developed the declaration and the subdivision itself is within Bridgton, Cumberland County, Maine. Initial subdivision plans were drawn by Earl Hotchkiss, registered Land Surveyor.

Knights Hill is a community of over two hundred fifty homes, with at least two new homes undergoing construction as of this writing. It is situated approximately 6 miles West of the town of Bridgton and is located on both sides of Knights Hill Road [formerly Lovell Road] on the northwest shore of Moose Pond in the town of Bridgton. This is a “greenfields” community in the sense that the homes exist on former farmland.

All homes are single family, year-round properties on half acre wooded lots. These are stand-alone homes, and the community covenants have minimum standards for construction. The Knights Hill Building Community manages pre-construction oversight and approval. There is some landscaping, but for the most part owners maintain the standing woodlot characteristic of the western Maine forested environment. In the early days, there was no such thing as a paved driveway, however many newer homes have recently paved the driveways with asphalt.

The community has a significant number of amenities, which, taken together, are probably unique within several hundred miles radius. From the community owned docks and kayak racks on the west side of upper Moose Pond, one has complete access to the entire 11-mile length of the lake. There is a beach club facility providing a formal office for the resident community manager, a small library and two large event rooms for general use, management meetings, wedding gatherings and occasional community meetings such as the Hospital Guild or the DAR.

At the western end of the community there are three facilities – a large swimming pool with its own clubhouse, tennis courts and a basketball court. There is also a convenient direct access point for snowmobiles, which leads to the whole of the 14,000-mile long Maine snowmobile trail system. It is

entirely possible to skimobile from your Knights Hill home all the way to New Brunswick, Canada.

Shawnee Peak at Pleasant Mountain [formerly Pleasant Mountain Ski Area] is a visually exciting overlook on Moose Pond, an active winter ski area and less than three miles from the very center of the Knights Hill residential community. The view from the US 302 causeway is likely the most photographed vista in Western Maine and a part of the scenic waterfront community property of Knights Hill.

The Original Community:

The original developers were Mr. Harry Hopewell and Mr. Morgan Elmer, a resident of Bridgton and Wolfeboro, NH. Later, the Morgans - Elmer and son Bruce - continued the business after Mr. Hopewell had sold his interest. Morgan maintained his business office in a home on Knights Hill Road for nearly ten years, subsequently relocating to an office on Route 302 in 1985. The formal name was Elmer Associates, functioning as both real estate broker and contractor. His son, Bruce was second in command. Elmer Associates engaged in other property development beyond the scope of Knights Hill, including properties on High Tail Ridge. Morgan passed away at age 75 in 1994.

Mr. Clarence Estes was the crew foreman and Ms. Georgia Carlson provided home design drawings, corporate and commercial administration and client interface for customers. In turn, Morgan contracted the crafts and trade workers as necessary according to the building schedules and as affected by weather. Those trades included concrete, masonry, painters, electrical, plumbing, rough and finish carpentry, roofers, general labor and a variety of materials suppliers.

There were several standard home plans that existed for the Chalet style home, many of which remain as originally built, and others that have been expanded by later additions. Within the standard plan, there was considerable owner flexibility with respect to interior room layout, window selection and placement, and exterior deck structures. Home exteriors were, for the most part, T-11 siding material and stained in forest compatible color schemes. The philosophy was to attempt a visually non-intrusive environmentally compatible home. A 1,200-1,400 square foot home would have been considered a large home.

At this time [1970-1980] electricity was the least costly source of energy. Central Maine Power was and is the current electric provider and all, or nearly all of the original homes were all electric. CMP increased rates over the years, ultimately eliminating any discount for all-electric homes. Vehicular traffic

from propane and fuel oil suppliers, common in 2016, was virtually non-existent.

At the outset there were diversions from the standard Chalet style according to the owner preference, and as approved by the building committee, including semi ranch styles. Some owners had custom designed homes, and in one instance, brick was used for the exterior. Most homes featured either a built-in or freestanding fireplace as a source of ambiance and auxiliary heat in the event of power outages. Most homes were seasonal, that being summer/weekend and ski season and did not include garage facilities. Just as a numerical reference point, in the early 1970's there were roughly 104 completed homes and only 12 year around resident families. This serves to underscore the seasonal nature of Knights Hill.

In the beginning, there were two methods of trash disposal, commercial and owner's preference to utilize the town dump. Litter, refuse and garbage were taken to what was then the "Bridgton Dump" - an open pit system that utilized composting as an element of waste degradation. One bagged or boxed the waste and loaded it into the truck or bed of pickup and threw these things over the edge and into the pit. This system clearly predated the more modern Transfer Station and sorting process now used by Bridgton though home owners still "bag and tag" and transport waste to the transfer station.

The Bridgton volunteer's fire department provides fire Protection. In 1972 a localized fire station was built on route 302 just East of the causeway. Known as the West Bridgton Fire Station, it contains two engines and provides faster response time than the 6-mile transit from Bridgton.

The community maintains it's own well and water supply distribution system. Testing for potability and regulatory compliance has always been a part of the management disciplines for Knights Hill. Nearly 50 years of use has provided interesting challenges to the continuum of Knights Hill Managers. Piping and connections have deteriorated, and there is always someone who neglected to ensure their residence against freeze-up and the resultant leaks and uncontrolled flow.

Record keeping and drawing retention had been less than perfect, and leak discovery in the distribution system was always a matter of digging for discovery. It should be noted, with a grin, that record keeping and documentation has gone from imperfection to superb under the most recent management team and the system is undergoing a multi-year extensive maintenance and upgrade program.

Association roads were constructed according to Bridgton specifications. Early on Morgan Elmer asked the existing owners to attend a town meeting, where the vote was taken to have the town begin taking on the road

maintenance. The town of Bridgton has then been responsible for road maintenance and snow removal for all the streets within the community. With respect to driveways, each property owner is responsible for snow removal on their own property.

Bridgton is and has been responsible for providing policing and law enforcement activities. Chiefs Robert Pendexter, Arden Wood and Robert C. Bell served between 1967 and onward into the 1970's, the initial phase of robust development in Knights Hill. Officers James Littlefield and David Boyd constituted the balance of the Bridgton Police Department, much smaller then than it is now. Others who served during the early stages of Knights Hill were Jim Berry, Ernie Loring, Eric Marston, Lee Noble, Leon Shackley, Mike Trumble, Mike Pierce, Bernie King, Douglas Taft, Dick Carpenter, Dick Stretton and Bob Stanford.

In the early 1970's there were approximately 104 finished homes and no more than a dozen year round families in residence. There was no formal street-addressing scheme, and one located a person or family simply by the family name and street name. As in so-and-so on Fox Crossing Road, or on Lovell Road. Similarly, one rented a Post Office Box for mail, instead of having delivery at the door or to a group of mailboxes on a corner.

UPS was in the early stages of development, not attaining national delivery capability till 1975. One looks at their ability to track down a delivery to a person in Knights Hill with only the street name and family name as tools, remembering that GPS was not even a non-military concept, and is left to consider the skill of the system drivers in getting parcels to destination.

As of this writing, there are some 250 homes and in the vicinity of 50 year round families in residence. Mail arrives either at the box on the street adjacent to the home, or to an individual cluster of mailboxes at strategic corner locations.

"Down East Magazine" carried advertising to attract new homeowners. The "Bridgton News" was a constant source for advertising, and there were certainly other resources. Without hard copy of original sales materials, it is impossible to know specifically what existed, but certainly there was some marketing campaign and advertising material in the Boston metropolitan area.

School Children

From fall of 1972 onward there seem to have been few changes other than an increase in the number of students and range of ages. The common pickup location for school buses remains the intersection of Knights Hill Road and East Pondicherry. Children now wait in the company of parents in warm

vehicles as opposed to standing outside in whatever the prevailing weather. The original student population in 1972 consisted of Sandra and Ronald Hayward; Billy and Anna White; the Bishops and perhaps two others.

Cultural changes have impacted the students. It was generally understood in the late 1960's and early 1970's that if one lived in Maine in the Winter, it snowed in Maine in the Winter – sometimes a lot. Buses transported children to schools; students went to class to learn and teachers and businesspersons left homes early to ensure timely arrivals at destinations. Bridgton Public Works and Maine Public Works snow removal equipment and systems ensured clear roads. Beyond the year 2000 - perhaps earlier – the mere utterance of the word “snow” by a forecaster now causes systemic shutdowns as if one had just learned the outbreak of Bubonic Plague.

Wildlife:

One of the very earliest residents, Beatrice White, conveys that her family experienced an exciting presence of much natural wildlife. On one occasion an Eagle dragged a fish to their beach to share with his spouse. Eagles are still seen in the upper branches of trees on Moose Pond. A small Black Bear frequented the community in the Fall of 2016 [Fox Crossing Road and Elk Lane] as well as a Bobcat on Fox Crossing Road in 2016.

Consistent with the name “Moose Pond”, Beatrice White observed the genuine species on the community beach.

There is excellent pan fish and Bass fishing directly from the community boat docks. Togue and lake trout are taken during ice fishing season.

There have been Ermine, Porcupine, Raccoons, Red Fox, squirrels, and in the early days there were Deer, Snowshoe Hare, many ducks, Loons, an occasional Canada Goose, and an abundance of Kingfisher, Grosbeaks, Indigo Bunting, and others.

It should be noted that, with respect to the Aleutian Canada Goose, this was the time when they were indeed an endangered species and very rare, protected by the “Endangered Species Act” passed in 1973. In 2016, they are so abundant as to be even a hazard on golf courses.

There is a roving flock of Wild Turkey in the community, seen frequently by this author since 2012. The head count varies from one to two dozen in any one location.

There are other Bear in very close proximity. Bird Feeding is discouraged, as seed dispenser residue is an attractor for the Bear, and this presents a

potential conflict between the Bear resident in its natural environment and domestic animals and children.

Adjacent to the club house is a sandy beach populated with Pine and other trees, a floating island and a resident Heron named Harry. Moose Pond water quality is such that it sustains a host habitat for Loons, and is a birthing location for new Loons. The resident population appears to be stable with newborn each year. It is an easy kayak jaunt from the Knights Hill beach area to visit, and maintain a respectful distance from the birthing location.

Governance, Covenants and Regulations:

Knights Hill Association functions as a community within the community of Bridgton. One of the first, if not the very first homeowners was the White family – Bill and Beatrice White. Bill held a significant executive role as the Director of Development for 20 years at the Bridgton Academy. Bill also became the second Manager of the Knights Hill Association and was the key individual and driving force behind bringing administrative organization and business processes into existence on behalf of the Knights Hill Association.

Many of those procedures are still in place nearly 50 years later, with modifications as necessary to keep them contemporary. In 2007, then Knights Hill Board President Pam Ambrose updated all operational procedures, including producing a detailed manual.

There are two principle components to the Governance of the Knights Hill Community. The first are the people, consisting of the Manager, and the Board of Governors. The Knights Hill Manager role has historically been the single most important person in this group, while simultaneously functioning as a team member with the Board of Directors.

The position itself requires the utmost in interpersonal skills, diplomacy, patience, tenacity, knowledge of crafts skills and maintaining good relationships with the diverse homeowners, the Board, and Bridgton at large. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to, community oversight, fiscal management, scheduling, discipline in the boat use facilities, functionality and regulatory testing of the entire water supply system, reports, care of all common properties such as the pool and the beaches, dock placement and removal in the fall, slip assignment and many others not listed.

The complexity of the Manager's position has increased significantly since the early days, attributable to an increased population, regulations and reporting requirements, water quality testing and components of the infrastructure that require attention or upgrades as a consequence of use and time.

There have been several community managers over the course of time. Those with the longest tenure and greatest beneficial impact are Mr. Frank Yindra who was the first Manager. Frank served for a short time, moving to various roles at the Pleasant Mountain Ski Area. Frank passed away in April of 1980 following an extended illness. Mr. Bill White replaced Frank Yindra in August of 1972, followed later by Mr. Dave MacFarland, and currently Mr. Fred Fortier. In between, there has been an occasional short duration manager.

The Board of Governors is a seven person elected group with scheduled meetings 6 to 7 times each year. Elections are held annually by vote from the property owners, restricted to one vote per property to re-elect incumbents or fill vacancies. The term of office is two years. The current structure and incumbents are as noted. President Keith Pelletier; Vice President Dave Ginzler; Secretary Peter Silva; Treasurer Phil Blaney; and Directors Lee LePage, Ray LePage and Paul Means. Dan Weygandt has agreed to chair the Building Committee for 2016-2017

The second components of Governance are the legal elements, consisting of the Covenants, the By-Laws, the Watercraft Policy, the Building Control Committee and the Building Application. The Knights Hill Covenants exist to maintain and ensure the residential quality of the community. The By-Laws define the governance of Knights Hill Association.

Knights Hill maintains it's own Mission Statement – as follows:

“To actively maintain and enhance KHA facilities, be environmentally responsible and promote social and respectful values for today and future generations that recognize the importance of all Members in a mutual effort to improve the quality of our Association so the experience really is – “The Way Life Should Be”

Knights Hill Economic Benefits to Bridgton

The community has provided a robust revenue source for Bridgton. A detailed analysis would provide a more thorough insight. Respecting the privacy of the homeowners, the following will be stated in only broad, conservative, generalizations. From a tax revenue standpoint, using 200 homes and an average of \$2,200.00 annual tax bill per home, Knights Hill generates a very conservative \$440,000 annual capital inflow to Bridgton. For perspective, contrast that benefit towards a town budget that was a little over \$12,000,000 in 2012.

Most homeowners are nautically inclined, with a boat and motor on the docks in the summer months, or moored offshore if boat length exceeds the limitations of the dock facilities. There has been a cash infusion to the dealers

as a result of the initial purchase and subsequent upgrades, followed by steady income from recurrent operating, maintenance, registration, additional taxes, insurance premiums and winter storage costs.

At some point in the 1980's Central Maine Power rate changes eliminated the cost effectiveness of electricity for all-electric homes. The effect was to ensure skyrocketing electric bills for homeowners and wholesale conversion to alternative fuel sources such as Kerosene or Propane. In turn, those conversions yielded revenue to heating contractors and a recurrent revenue string to fuel oil and propane dealers.

While largely seasonal from a residential standpoint, most Bridgton merchants benefit from a strong summer season and cash flow generated from second homeowners, friends and family.

These homes require continuous maintenance to keep them in condition. With an extensive percentage of the homeowners being absent much of the time, this work is generally subcontracted to the roster of trades and crafts in the Bridgton area, generating still another benefit to the local employers.

The Little Mountain Store on Highway 302 derives additional income, highly variable and seasonal in nature, from the Knights Hill Community.

Infrastructure:

Knights Hill has a hybrid infrastructure, with some components provided by Bridgton, and others within and by the community itself. The Knights Hill Water Supply system is owned, maintained and operated by the Knights Hill Association. In the earliest days, there was but one well for water supply - a source of concern to the community and no backup electrical power.

There are now a series of four wells, a central pump house with it's own propane powered electrical generator for back up, and the system of mains distributing water to each homeowners lot. A three phase systemic upgrade was initiated in 2015, with Phase 1 being completed in the fall. The longer-term strategies schedule Phase 2 to begin during the 2016 summer season and Phase 3 will be scheduled later. Two service lines were replaced in 2016 and one eliminated. A new Pressure Reducing Valve was installed at the intersection of East Pondicherry Road and Norman Lane in late 2016

Low-level chemical treatments are utilized to ensure potability and eliminate any potential biological problems. Rigorous testing is performed to ensure regulatory compliance. A full copy of the 2015 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report is included at the end of this history with the educational objective being to indicate just how extensive the testing and compliance reporting have become over the

Operating funds for the system come from the annual homeowner assessment.

Central Maine Power provides electrical distribution within the community from a small sub-station situated on Knights Hill Road and traditional overhead lines and transformers reducing voltage to 110 VAC at each homeowner location.

Streetlights have been installed according to a strategic plan, which provides illumination and avoids light pollution. They are staged so that at any location while one is walking, a street light is visible, but they are not packed one upon another at fixed distances as is typical in municipal environments.

Each home has a private septic system and leach field, subject to inspection and certification by the town of Bridgton.

Following 9/11/2001, in the interests of overall community safety and assisting emergency responders, a naming convention for the streets was established. A street with the name ending in "Lane" is not a through street – merely a two directional lane, while those ending with Road or Drive – such as North Bay Road or Moose Pond Drive, are two directional through streets.

Morgan Elmer Lane within Knights Hill itself is named after the original developer/builder of the early community.

Each owner maintains an on-property tank for propane or for kerosene/fuel oil providing for home heat. There is no subsurface gas distribution system as is typically found in larger metropolitan areas and home hot water is electric.

Mentioned earlier, the beach club, beach itself and boat docks and racks, swimming pool and adjacent athletic facilities are all owned, maintained, operated and tested by the Knights Hill Association. Funding comes from the annual fee charged to each homeowner. These original physical facilities were constructed at the very outset of the community, have always been present as part of the community appeal, and have been continuously maintained and upgraded as required.

In December of 2016 the exterior deck for the Bullwinkle Beach Club was replaced. The project involved upper and lower decks, new support structure and railings, and complete modification to the stairs to provide easier access between upper and lower decks, with less gradient and a landing at the halfway point, as well as better stair access from the lower deck to the beach itself. Fred Fortier notes that this was a project ten years in the making from a planning and artistic standpoint. The exterior esthetics of the Club has been improved by a huge amount, and the ability to use the upper deck for scenic view and lounge purposes have been greatly enhanced. Fred Fortier notes

that this new construction is the final implementation of a vision ten years in the making – the end result is a true testimony to that vision.

For a period of time in the early 1970's, Knights Hill also had its own lifeguards both at the beach and the pool. They also checked the pool chemicals, broke up the beaver dam, and guarded the activities for the adults and the children. Lifeguard activities have been long gone by 2016.

The boat docks themselves are a source of continuous maintenance. This is not a trivial chore, as they accommodate approximately 75 watercraft in slips. They need to be installed after ice-out in spring and removed in late fall prior to freeze-up. This is a labor-intensive activity. In addition, these floating dock sections sometimes have a mind and will of their own, causing the crew an involuntary dunking. New slips were added for larger boats as well as an extension of the gas dock in 2016.

Floating dock sections are numbered so that they may be installed in sequence, and the process involves lifting sections by forklift, launching them into the small lagoon, then being towed by boat into the proper location for inter-connection by section. In the winter, the process is reversed and these sections are stored in the parking area.

Demographics:

Knights Hill homeowners are a diverse group, from all corners of life. There is a State Representative, young families with children, retirees, retired military, vacationers, teachers, businesspersons and extended families who either own or rent homes. There have been instances where owners have sold their homes, only to return and purchase a home again after periods of residency elsewhere.

Those who are year round residents tend to take on other roles in the community, such as volunteer work for the Hospital; Community Board embers; the Arts community, historical preservation of Bridgton, and in the local churches and other volunteer opportunities within Bridgton. There are strong supporters, as well as helpers, at the traditional Saturday night Bean Supper fund raising activities.

Dave MacFarland maintained a long-term role on the Bridgton Budget Committee in addition to his 16-year tenure as the Knights Hill Association Manager. Dave retired from his Knights Hill role in 1998.

Phyllis Ginzler is the current State Representative, serving her first term in the Maine House of Representative. She is also the Bridgton Hospital Guild President.

Sandra Weygandt was the former President of the Bridgton Hospital Guild.

Ginny Moran, wife of retired Colonel Richard Moran, spent considerable effort assisting the Bridgton Hospital Guild as a volunteer, having been recognized for extraordinary commitment in 2010. Ginny acquired a significant international background by way of spousal military travel, which allowed her to contribute to numerous other community activities.

Helen Jurack, retired teacher, was a 50-year member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and a member of the Molly Ockett Chapter, as well as contributing to the Bridgton Hospital Guild as a volunteer.

Within the community, there are a number of events. First of these is the Memorial Day Clean-up, where the membership of the Knights Hill Association work on preparing the public areas – notably the beach and docks – for seasonal use. There is an annual summer cookout at the beach, and a July Kids Fishing Derby. Other activities, such as wedding receptions and parties are arranged according to community need or the initiative of the managerial group. More recently, there is a summer venue on Friday evenings, “Music at the Beach” featuring instrumentalists, vocalists and groups providing light entertainment from the deck at the Bullwinkle beach club.

In mid-summer to early fall of 2016 the Knights Hill Community adopted a series of informal no-charge concerts on the deck at the Bullwinkle Beach Club on Friday evenings just prior to sunset. The concerts featured local musical artisans and vocalists using mostly stringed instruments, and songs that ranged the gamut from early folk music to ballads to contemporary popular and patriotic. While the entertainers utilized the lower deck at the Bullwinkle, the audience was seated informally at picnic tables and plastic chairs in the sand while simultaneously enjoying the evening music while sundown approached and the view of Moose Pond sky was a continuously changing dynamic.

On occasion, youngsters dancing in the sand accompanying the music only added to the ambience of the evening.

The Knights Hill Association embraces current digital technologies, maintaining it’s own website. Internet addressing is via either <http://knightshill.net> or <http://www.knightshill.net>, and Mr. Dick Minogue manages website maintenance. There is also a Facebook page available for the community. A significant upgrade to the website was achieved in 2017, involving the structure, format, visibility, and password protection for owners. The embedded imaging has been greatly enhanced and the home page now utilizes “sliders” to present a slide show of our views at the home page location.

Easy access buttons hyperlink to the KHA Bylaws, Covenants and the KHA Policy Handbook, meeting schedules and minutes.

Weather data has now been hyper-linked to two sources, one being Weather Underground and the other being Weather.com, replacing the former resource at “allmoosedhome” mentioned in earlier history.

Footnotes

Mr. Clarence Estes and Ms. Georgia Carlson relocated to Palmer, Alaska sometime prior to 1980 – feeling Maine was becoming overdeveloped. In addition to her role with Morgan Elmer, Georgia operated a silversmith shop, the “Silver Fox” producing sterling silver jewelry. A copy of her 1973 product catalogue is on file with the Bridgton Historical Society and the “Silver Fox” continued operating in Alaska.

Pleasant Mountain Ski Area later became renamed as the Shawnee Peak at Pleasant Mountain in 1988 following the sale to Shawnee Mountain Corp. for \$1.4 million.

This overview is intended to be an ongoing historical reference for our community and there will be periodic updates.

Author

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Knights Hill Association resident/homeowner 1972-1977 and 2012 - current

Resources and Contributors:

Declaration of Property Restrictions and Easements, Knights Hill Subdivision
Cumberland County Registry of Deeds

Knights Hill Annual Reports and meeting minutes

The Bridgton News

The Bridgton Public Library

Ms. Beatrice White, one of the very “early colonists”

Mr. Ned Allen, Bridgton Historical Society

Ms. Cynthia Gorman, Oberg Agency, Bridgton

Ms. L. L. Chadbourne, Bridgton Town Clerk

Ms. Phyllis Ginzler, State Representative

Ms. Carole Jurack, editor and proofreader

Mr. Fred Fortier, Manager

Mr. Dave MacFarland, retired long term Manager

2014 & 2015 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report

Knights Hill Association Directors meeting minutes

Distribution List:

Knights Hill Association general files

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