

The Jacobson Family Farm Story, 1916-2025 and Other Things

By Laurie Jacobson Stevens, 5th child of Bob Jacobson and property trustee

The farm was purchased by Benjamin Franklin (yes, really) Jacobson in 1916-17. My father, Robert "Bob" Jacobson, was born in the front bedroom in 1918. There, my grandfather (Ben), grandmother (Lillian), my dad and my aunt (Ruth) lived and farmed.

The farm was purchased to create a dairy farm. The house was also used as an inn during the summer for those escaping from the heat of Boston.

Ben kept the dairy products going until approximately 1978 the year he died. My Dad choose a family burial site at Meadowview Cemetery with a view to the farm for Ben and ultimately his mother, Lillian, and himself. After Ben's death, Bob continued to live at the farm until his death May 13, 2013, at just short of 95 years old. He joined the family at Meadowview.

From 2013-2018, we received no contact from anyone regarding purchase or 'what might you do' except a couple of people stopping to say, "could you carve off a bit for me". We also talked with farmers in the area about the option of being maintained as farmland. Due to the value of land in the area, there was no possibility of anyone being able to consider this.

In 2018, we discover the Russell Foundation. This was established in 2003 by Barbara and Gordon Russell as it was focused on assisting landowners and farms in securing protection of farm soils and forests. Unfortunately, the Russell Foundation was closing due to the end of its planned term, but it did offer good guidance.

We then began to work with Carter Scott on a plan for a farming community with a combination of farmland, homes, and forests. This Original plan was denied by neighbors as they did not wish to have homes that were 'different' from their own located along frontage of Christian Hill Rd. We were trying to avoid taking up frontage on Christian Hill. Many homes, throughout Amherst, are in developments. Starting with our good friends on Brimstone Hill and Bloody Brook.

And that brings us up to where we are today.

And some of the things have been said about us as a family or about the property.

-We are not greedy. My Dad once was offered 4 million for the property and turned it down.

-The ski hill has been gone since the late 60's? Pining for that seems a bit excessive, and people need to move on.

- Moving to your 5-acre lot next to large tracts of land (the farm) does not guarantee that someone else will not build something next door. If you want a large open space, then buy it in the 1st place. Don't tell someone else what they can and cannot do on their own property. You do have rights, but so do we.

-Questions concerning the 'surprise' paddocks up on field side were brought forth as if never heard of before. Also, the question of access. The roads up there are multiple and actually extend (or did) to Milford. The fields have been on the plans since the beginning and were originally referred to as the silvopasture.

-The question of the current house condition has been brought up. We, the Trust and Carter Scott are not willing to put in \$20-\$50,000 for a paint job when neither knows the outcome of ownership. All necessary repairs, roof, plumbing, etc., have been maintained and noted in the presentation on November 11th.

-There appears to be a real disconnect between the 'great schools' of the town and the constant worries about new families with children moving into the town. If that's why you moved here, why does it make it ok for you to keep others out? The Jacobson's have had no children in the school system since 1935? But we, like you, pay taxes to maintain the town and the school system.

I hope that you will open your mind to the idea that we do have a right to use our property in a reasonable manner. You don't get to decide what your neighbor prices their property at or how they should meet your needs. We don't feel we have the right to tell you that when the day comes and your family is left to make such hard decisions, that no, they need to meet our needs before theirs.

Laura Stevens