

## The Woodlot

I am a piece of woodland. I have always been woods because the creator made the land beneath me too rocky and rolling for any other use. My location is at a place called Stone Arabia, North of the Mohawk River in the State of New York.

My story began long before man walked through me. For generations seedlings took root in the forest floor beneath my older residents. Those old residents were maple, oak, elm, birch, cherry, hickory and others whose leaves fell as winter approached. The pines and hemlocks retained their beautiful green throughout the whole year. Sometimes storms or old age brought my older residents down. They lay on my forest floor and helped nurture the seedlings. Then, with the help of the sun and rain, the small seedling began their growth and in time they too become huge trees. Thus overseen by no one but the creator, the process took place over and over through the centuries.

I had other residents besides trees. Different forest plants dotted my landscape. The trillium, both red and white, the mayflowers and the bloodroot made my surface a panorama of color as the soft, warm, breezes of early spring blew over my landscape. Sheltered by trees and plants, I had other inhabitants also. The grouse drummed to attract their mates, the jay's shrill voice shattered the solitude of my existence. The call of an owl high up in one of my old resident's limbs beckoned to another of his kind in a far part of me. The vibrant, hammering, sound of the woodpecker chipping away on the trunk of one of my old residents as they searched for grubs or a nesting place was a sound familiar to me. Four footed inhabitants made paths through me. The squirrels scampered through the leaves and up my trees. Deer drank from the brook that ran through me. The same brook where raccoons found their meals of crayfish and minnows. The hoof prints of deer were impressed into the soft soil of the brook's edge where they stopped to drink.

At present, I am a very small piece of woodland of only twelve acres. My association with man accounts for my present small size. Once, I was part of an undivided vast area all covered with huge trees. Now, I am but one of fifty small segments that people say they own. My first encounter with man was when native people, who had their homes by the living spring south of me, roamed and hunted all through me. They used me as a place to hunt their food, and gather wood and nuts. They took the bark from a few of my old inhabitants to make their longhouses. They picked the plants from my forest floor for medicine. They never said they owned me. Only the Creator owned me.

One day, some 263 years ago, I found some strangers with pale skins unlike those I had known for so long, making their way slowly through me. Then their words sounded different than those I had heard. The language may have been German, Dutch, or English. However, being only a piece of woodland, what did I know about language. I thought they said they were doing something called surveying. One man pulled a long steel chain through me. Another had a strange device with a needle which swung back and forth until it pointed steadily in one direction. Soon after, I found that I now had a name. I was part of Lot number 77 of the second division of the Stone Arabia Patent, originally granted to John Christian Garlock and others on October 19, 1723. Now I began to hear that people owned me. They said that Johannes Grems and Simon Eckert owned the 100 acres that was my whole being. From

this time I was to be separated several times and had many owners. I was to be used and sometimes misused by my owners.

I have served generation after generation. The huge pine stumps still within me, though now only a shadow of themselves, are a reminder that men with axes and saws once cut my oldest inhabitants to produce lumber. From me, timber was taken to provide weather boarding, shingles and timbers with which to build the great timber barns that protected the first harvests. I furnished the materials to give shelter and keep young families warm and dry. These same people took from me the wood from which they made implements, vehicles, barrels, bowls and all sorts of utensils. How proud I was to be so necessary to everyday life.

The storms of nature brought some of my old residents to the earth. Fortunately, my old enemy fire did not damage me. I survived my enemies and I witnessed me onslought of man against man. A little over 200 years ago I saw the smoke as the surrounding settlement was destroyed by raiders. Again, it was my destiny to furnish that which was necessary to build new.

As the new republic war formed, my existence became questioned. When winter snows came, men with teams of horses came to me each year to cut wood to keep me home fires and produce some lumber needed for necessary repairs to the buildings. In 1827, two men built a dam on my stream to power a new saw mill. On the high bank to the south, a small house was built for the miller. The mill dam and house sites are still visible within me. Now, they are silent reminders of a day and age long gone.

I remained in the Gramps family for 169 years. Then I changed hands several times. In the 1950s I was passed from logger to logger another three times. When they bought me, they and their helpers, brought big machinery into me. Noisy saws bit rapidly into my old inhabitants and even the younger ones. The logs were skidded to the roadway, making deep scars in my soil. When all was finished I was crushed, scarred and little remained of my former self. I thought the men had taken their share of me and many years of the future share also. I was not worth much money now, so I was sold for a small amount. I lay with little attention paid to me except by nature's creatures.

In 1979 I changed hands again. I am now invaded but a small amount to produce some fire wood. My land has begun to heal and my residents allowed to survive and grow. It is my hope that I will not be misused as I have sometimes been in the past. Carefully used, I will be a benefit to mankind for years to come.

Willis Barshied, January 1997

December 2009

Being just a woodlot, I'm not sure what a lawyer is. I once overheard someone mention that word. It seems my owner since 1979 was getting older and wanted to know what would happen to me in the future. I knew something was different when an Amish man named Emanuel and his sons, David and Norman, brought a team of mules into me to take out firewood. I now know that my owner put the deed in his name along with the Amish man's on March 4, 2008. Now I know when my owner passes

away Emanuel will own me. I'm sure he will use me wisely and I will provide firewood for his family in the days ahead. What more could an old Stone Arabia woodlot ask?

Willis Barshied, December -2009