



The Northfield News



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Larry Drown Acting Without Counsel Sues Northfield, Two Others, Requests Damages of Nearly \$3,000,000

By JOHN CRUICKSHANK
The Northfield News

Larry Drown together with two other people that are allegedly land owners of the old Dupere saw mill site off Wall Street and a fourth that claims injuries from a fall, have sued the town of Northfield.

Their suit, filed without counsel, has also been brought against MJM Properties, LLC [MJM], the owner of the former railroad property that abuts the plaintiff's property and Northfield Wood Products, Inc., the tenant of a portion of the property owned by MJM.

Last year, Mr. Drown filed a protest with the Environmental Court over the application by MJM to re-develop the engine house built in 1855. That building is the last remaining original railroad building in Northfield which was part of the railroad repair and maintenance operation from the 19th century.

The engine house is being completely restored by MJM and will be used as offices and a warehouse for RH Associates.

Before they could start construction, Mr. Drown filed a protest to the project. He claimed in his appeal that he had 32 areas of concern but each was ultimately rejected.

mately rejected.

Mr. Drown was also the spearhead behind an Act 250 action which ultimately helped to doom the redevelopment of the old Cross Brothers [later Centrangolo] stone shed sight on North Main Street.

Mr. Drown claims in his lawsuit that he owned three separate properties which together, comprise the Politti, Pellagi and Delia properties.

Both the Polittis and Pellagis had stone sheds in Northfield during the early 20th century. The Pellagi shed burned in the 1930's.

The property which is the subject of the lawsuit is what is commonly known as the "saw mill site" which was owned by J.L. Dupere and Max Berno and was a saw mill from 1933 until it burned in 1984.

Larry Drown purchased the property in 2005 and was described as a 1.4 acre site without any buildings. Shortly after he purchased the property, he filed an application to build a 60 x 100 foot commercial building which was approved and the building was constructed.

Then, in 2007, he filed a second application to build a 14 x 70 foot mobile home and filed a sketch show-



Photo by Rob Wills, The Northfield News

Larry Drown has complained that the new flower boxes installed by Martha Mahan of MJM Properties restricts his ability to bring trucks down the road to his property and in a lawsuit against the town and MJM states that they were maliciously placed there making him entitled to damages until removed.

ing that the land had been subdivided into two lots. The application was denied.

Furthermore, the Natural Resources Board found that the lot had never been legally subdivided and there was never an application filed either with the Agency of Natural Resources or the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Furthermore, the News could find no application with local authorities for the subdivision of this land.

The only other transaction that could be found was a deed executed in 2008 which settled a boundary dispute with Mr. Drown and increased the size of the land to 1.79 acres, all as one parcel.

In an action last January before the Natural Resources Board, the board found that there was no evidence that the land had been two separate lots or that it was ever subdivided into two lots.

The board found that in order for Mr. Drown to develop the property, he had to comply with Act 250 requirements before he could construct any building. So far as the News could determine, he has never made any such filing.

Mr. Drown claims in his lawsuit that

the land constitutes three individual parcels and that he has deeded two of them to plaintiffs Jake Dorman and Kenneth Strong who have joined in the lawsuit.

Just prior to the filing of this lawsuit against the town by Mr. Drown, Mr. Dorman and Mr. Strong, the alleged new landowners were added to an action which was earlier brought by the town against Mr. Drown alone for zoning violations. Because the other men, Jake Dorman and Kenneth Strong now are named in deeds which claim they are landowners, the town had to add them to the zoning lawsuit according to papers filed by the Town of Northfield in zoning lawsuit.

This new lawsuit by Mr. Drown and the others also claims that Jason Law, a fourth plaintiff, was injured on property owned by MJM and leased to Northfield Wood Products.

The suit claims that he was injured on November 25, 2008 within "25 feet of [a] telephone pole . . . on property leased to Northfield Wood Products."

The suit relates that Mr. Law was airlifted to Dartmouth Hitchcock hospital. The lawsuit claims that MJM deliberately and maliciously put up barri-

cades which created a swamp and this caused Mr. Law's injuries when he allegedly had to travel through the swamp to get to his property. He is claiming \$2.5 million in damages.

Martha Mahan, one of the principals of MJM said that they have installed planter boxes as part of the landscaping on the old railroad property.

She said that Mr. Drown complained that the planter boxes kept him from being able to navigate trailer trucks onto his property.

She said that if that were true, it would keep trucks from being able to get into the old engine house as well. The allegation is silly, she said.

He's a "CAVE man," she said, a "Citizen Against Virtually Everything, who now is, like Don Quixote, assaulting planter boxes."

"Just as he attempted to stop our redevelopment of the engine house, he's now attempting to keep us from landscaping," she said.

In reality, "it's taxpayer dollars that will have to be used to defend this latest assault," she added since the town will have to pay the legal bills to defend the lawsuit brought by Mr. Drown and the others



Photo by Rob Wills, The Northfield News

Larry Drown claims in his lawsuit that this property is three lots and he sold two of them. The State says they are one lot and have never been subdivided. The town is suing Mr. Drown and the new owners for zoning violations.

Theater Curtains From Northfield's Past Are Restored, Will Be On Permanent Display

By JOHN CRUICKSHANK
The Northfield News

Northfield is lucky to have two rare theater curtains which belong to the Northfield Historical Society.

One has been hanging on the wall of the Community Room at the Brown Public Library for several years.

The other one had been in the basement of Kingston's Funeral Home for many years and given to historical society recently.

Both curtains have been completely cleaned and restored by the Vermont Painted Theater Curtain project.

The curtain which has been hanging in the community room for several years is a former Northfield Grange Hall curtain by Anderson Scenic Company of Buffalo, N.Y. It was painted between 1925 and 1930. An almost identical curtain hangs in East Braintree with ads from the Randolph area.

The other curtain was made by A.S. Ives in 1932. His studio was in Hillsboro, N.H.

Where it was hung is not currently known but Norwich University is one of the main sponsors of the curtain.

It may have hung in the dance hall in the Odd Fellows Block or on the high school stage but that is not certain.

The historical society would be interested in anyone who might be able to shed light on where the curtain did hang.

The central scene says that it shows Camel's Hump but the picture in the center is generic surrounded by ads from an large number of Northfield businesses.

The restoration has been made possible by a grant from the Curtain Project to the Northfield Historical Society and additional funds which were added to that grant by the historical society itself.

The Project began in 1996 with a survey to find and assess the condition of Vermont's collection of historic theater curtains.



Photo by Rob Wills, The Northfield News

Nancy Berini works to restore a 1933 Northfield theater curtain at the Historical Society. Also working with her is, Kay Schleuter, second from right, curator of the Northfield Historical Society. Present from the Vermont Theater Curtain Project are Peter Isles, Wylie Garcia and Michele Pagam

As of June 2009, 155 curtains have been cleaned, mended and judiciously in-painted.

About 120 of these have been installed for use on their home stages in town halls, grange halls, community theaters, and opera houses.

Vermont is the first state to pay attention to these reminders of a time when every small town was visited by traveling troupes of players, opera companies, vaudeville, and itinerant musicians.

Between 1880 and 1940, curtains like these were produced in other states, but it seems that the great majority

were discarded as they became worn and dirty and as tastes changed. However, in Vermont, many curtains were simply bundled up with baling twine or stashed in ceiling crawl spaces or shoved under the stage.

By bringing the curtains back into use, it is a rejuvenation of small town performance and meeting spaces and has resulted in an increase of local theater and the re-use of town hall for town meeting said spokespersons from the project.

A group from the theater curtain project brought their wisdom and tools to help with the restoration



Photo by Phyllis Murphy, The Northfield News

Early Cars Tour Vermont

Michael Murphy in the back seat and his brother, Brian, in front, visiting grandchildren of Phyllis Murphy of Northfield, have a chance to ride in a 1914 Ford Model T touring car owned by driver, Sam Tzountzouris from Port Perry, Ontario. The kids learn how the band shifting works on a Model T before taking a ride around the campus at the Vermont College of Fine Arts. A large group of car enthusiasts from the Horseless Carriage Club of America Pre-1916 Auto Club have been touring Vermont and came to the campus in Montpelier for a stop last week.

Correction

In our June 11 issue we showed the moth pictured at the right which Rose Audet saw hatch from a cocoon that she found in her flower garden. We reported that it was a Sequoia moth.

In fact, it was a Cecropia silkmoth about five inches wide at the wing span.

Also, last week in a photograph of the discussion group at the Sullivan Museum, we referred to 'Martha' Matheson rather than Marsha which is her name. We regret the error.

