

## **LITTLE KNOWN FACTS ABOUT PATUXENT**

### **Dynamite Shed**

by Matthew C. Perry

During the early development years (1936-56) of Patuxent Research Refuge there were not the large bulldozers and other heavy equipment that are now considered routine for land-clearing operations. Refuge personnel were required to use primitive means of disposing of large tree stumps, while they were preparing old woodlots for new grazing areas for geese and other wildlife. One product commonly used was the relatively cheap dynamite. Dynamite was also used to make drainage ditches for some of the lakes and ponds created at Patuxent.

Sticks of dynamite could be detonated at a distance making them relatively safe for workers. However, storage of this explosive material had to be done at a good distance from the staff working area. A shed was constructed in the woods about 1000 feet from the nearest occupied building for the sole purpose of storing dynamite.



Charles Lammers dynamiting the drainage ditch for Cash Lake, 1939.

Over the years when dynamite ceased being used the dynamite shed fell into disrepair. The wooden roof and door collapsed and all that remained was the square 15x15 feet square box made of concrete blocks. In 1987, when the government conducted an extensive written and photographic survey of all buildings at Patuxent this shed was not included, although other much smaller sheds were included. Apparently, the meticulous government survey people never found the shed hidden in the woods, where the “skeleton” from the past still exists.

One of the workers in charge of the dynamite at Patuxent in the formative years was Charles Lammers, of the facility maintenance staff. Many years after he died his daughters were cleaning his old garage and came across a small stash of dynamite sticks. They were not sure what they were, but were suspicious and took them to a local fire station. The staff there was rightly concerned and came to the Lammers residence to make a complete inspection of the property for possible other dynamite sticks. Then the sticks were properly disposed with no injury and no formal record of the incident.



Dynamite Shed in the woods during winter 1989.

Contact Matthew C. Perry at: [mperry1209@verizon.net](mailto:mperry1209@verizon.net)