

LITTLE KNOWN FACTS ABOUT PATUXENT
Picnic Ground and Barbeque Pit
by Matthew C. Perry

During the mid-1940s, after much of the early construction work on buildings and roads was completed, the Refuge staff built a picnic ground for employees. The area located near the present Service Buildings was complete with a grill and oven under a wooden shelter, an open large barbeque area, and a Spring Reservoir. The site selected for the picnic area was probably chosen because of the location of the spring, which provided excellent drinking water. The site was equipped with two outhouses, installed with porcelain toilets. An interesting addition to the area was a large circular camp fire site approximately 30 feet in diameter and made of concrete blocks. The site probably was used for many stories and tales, that if known would reveal much about Patuxent history.

A Fish and Wildlife Service picnic was held at the refuge at the picnic ground in the early summer of 1948. A softball game between the Refuge staff and the Central Office staff occurred before the barbeque, most likely on the Refuge grounds. The staff from the Refuge won the game by a slight margin over the Central Office, which made the event especially successful for Patuxent employees.



Constructing barbeque pit and spring reservoir for the headquarters picnic ground, mid-1940s.

It is unknown how many times the picnic ground was used for social events, but in the early 1970s, the area was in total disrepair and appeared that activities had been absent for at least a decade. In the late 1970s, Montpelier Housing Development was constructed on the western border of Patuxent and some homes were built within 100 feet of the picnic ground. The development also brought erosion and trash to the site. The site has not been disturbed over the decades and all remnants of the picnic area still exist. The spring reservoir is still there, but now used by frogs and not humans.

In the 1990s, when Dr. Jim Kushlan was director of Patuxent and attempt was made to have more social functions for the Patuxent staff. A gazebo was constructed between Gabrielson and Merriam Laboratories and several Patuxent picnics were held in this area. Unfortunately, the Patuxent Employees Recreation Association became inactive in the mid 2000s and social activities have been conducted only at irregular intervals in recent years.



Picnic ground grill and oven prior to construction of the shelter house, mid-1940s.

Contact Matthew C. Perry at: mperry1209@verizon.net