

The History of Wick Family Preserve

Allayne and Douglas Wick owned 10 contiguous parcels of property totaling 50 acres along Epping Rd. and Beverly Lane and Chagrin River Road. In December of 2005, the Gates Mills Land Conservancy, in partnership with the then, Chagrin River Land Conservancy, acquired more than twenty acres of key ecological and scenic value in Gates Mills from the Douglas Wick Family.

A generous family gift in honor of Allayne and Douglas Wick not only made this purchase possible but also solidified a partnership among the family, Gates Mills Land Conservancy and CRLC, (now Western Reserve Land Conservancy). The Wick Family conserved two parcels by donating approximately 17 acres along Chagrin River Road and Berkshire Road in combination with the sale of 5 acres along Epping Road and Beverly Lane.

This spectacular property of wetlands, a meadow, upland and bottomland forest, also contains three separate stands of White Pine planted by three generations of the family – A. C. Ernst in the 1920s or '30s, Douglas Wick in the late '50s, and Adele Ernst Wick in the early '80s. This beautiful pine forest can be seen as you drive along Chagrin River Road south of the Village.

At the time, according to GMLC Board President, Tom Liederbach, “The Wick parcels are among the most important properties to be protected by GMLC in its sixteen-year history. We hope that this will become a catalyst for other conservation efforts in the Village’s ‘historic corridor’ which includes properties along River Road, Epping, and Old Mill Road.”

This land encompasses 2,861 linear feet of tributary streams, 5 acres of wetlands and the protection of 6 rare species of birds and insects, including:

- Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), an Ohio endangered species;
- Dark-eyed junco (*Junco hyemalis*), an Ohio threatened species;
- Magnolia warbler (*Dendroica magnolia*), an Ohio species of special interest;
- Pine siskin (*Carduelis pinus*), an Ohio species of special interest;
- Twin-spotted spiketail dragonfly (*Cordulegaster maculata*), rare to Cuyahoga Cty;
- Indian skipper butterfly (*Gompus fraternus*), rare to northeast Ohio.

The Wick family has further enhanced the ecological value of the land acquired by GMLC by placing a conservation easement that will limit future development on more than twenty-five acres of contiguous land remaining in the family. The value to Gates Mills and GMLC is more than the protection of natural habitat.

In 2005, Adele Wick commented on the family’s motivation to preserve their property in the heart of this historic district. “This land has been in family hands for almost 100 years. But our hands have been those of custodians and guardians, not owners who are free to manipulate and alter it to the full extent allowed by law. So, we are grateful to GMLC and CRLC for taking on this stewardship. In their institutional hands, it should last well beyond our lifetimes and well beyond the next 100 years.” Adele went on to say, “Gates Mills has been good to our family, and we wanted to give something back to the community. It is important to us that Gates Mills retain the village character that has long made it such a special place to live.”

Gates Mills Land Conservancy will forever be grateful to the Douglas Wick family for their vision and generosity in helping us to secure a future in Gates Mills that includes beautiful open spaces and natural habitat for the wildlife that inhabits our back yards and enriches our lives.