

# Advice regarding South Street water wells

## COMMENTARY

GARY A. MACHABY

### From our files

*(The following article first appeared in the Sun on June 3, 2005.—ed.)*

After the Second World War, during the 1950s, both Holbrook and Randolph experienced a home building boom.

The water departments in both towns could see an expanded demand on the water treatment/pumping station located on the Great Pond in Randolph, which was the only source of water for both towns.

It was decided to look for some possible sources in Holbrook.

Test borings were made at various locations in Holbrook and resulted in finding a water source off South Street on land owned

by the Wright family, who operated a dairy farm on this land.

In 1956, Holbrook voted to take a portion of this land, by eminent domain, which sealed off access to the large remainder of the land owned by the Wright family, rendering the remaining land useless if they desired to sell this property that could not be accessed by South Street.

A project was approved by the Holbrook and Randolph water departments, which were partners in this venture.

Three wells were completed. Well Number One and Well Number Two were designed as supplemental wells to the larger Number Three well.

These wells were built at great expense to the taxpayers of Randolph and Holbrook on a 50-50 cost basis.

It was estimated that Well Number Three would supply enough water to meet the needs of Holbrook and thus take a great burden off the treatment/pump-

ing station in Randolph.

The project was a dismal failure. Well Number Two was first tried to supply water to the system. Within a short time, the well had to be shut down because a chemical (phenol) showed up in the water. It was not toxic in its amounts, but the taste and odor were not fit for potable water.

Next the main and larger Well Number Three was put on line. It was not long before phenol showed up in the water at this well, and the well was shut down.

Over the next few years, attempts were made to see if the problem had dissipated or even if the source of the phenol could be determined.

For nearly 50 years, these wells (which I am sure are outdated, if not also dysfunctional) have sat dormant. Well Number One was then put on line, and the water was tested regularly and met the standards for potable water use. Well One was yet in operation

until the Baird and McGuire ground contamination was discovered, at which time Number One Well was also taken off line. Now the whole failed well system was inoperative.

In the early 1960s or late 1950s, another water supply was installed before the inlet to Lake Holbrook; the Donna Road Well Field, a series of shallow spring fed wells.

These also were discontinued about the time of the Baird and McGuire dispute and for other mechanical reasons. The cost to put this well field back in service would be cost prohibitive, if even possible.

It was voted at the May 23, 2005 Town Meeting to participate with the towns of Randolph and Braintree to devise a new town water district and erect a new water treatment/pumping station on the Great Pond in Randolph/Braintree.

With the expense and purpose of this venture, it is very doubtful

that the failed water wells on South Street in Holbrook would ever be used again.

A petition was presented at the May 23, 2005 Town Meeting to return the land where the wells are located to the Wright family estate at a price, which, to me, should equal what the Wrights received when the land was taken because of the 50 years of not being able to sell the land locked property.

Randolph could not possibly be interested in keeping a parcel of land, which was taken originally for the purpose of water wells, and the taxpayers could also benefit from the revenue this land could generate.

Notwithstanding some special interest agenda from any Holbrook residents, this land should be resold to the Wright family estate.

*Gary A. Machaby is a former Holbrook selectman and water commissioner.*