

Veits Woods (also known as Dow-Veits Woods)

In 1971, the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation donated \$115,000 to the University for use in the acquisition of roughly 12.5 acres of land owned by Mrs. John Veit and a tract of approximately 10 acres owned by Mr. Fred Jans. The size of this wooded parcel is now 45.79 acres and it is located 1.5 miles west of campus, in the City of Mt. Pleasant, Isabella County, Michigan, directly behind the President's Residence at 1214 Forest Lane. The woodland is a beech-hemlock climax forest, with plentiful woodland shrubs, plants, and wildlife. *Per Facilities Management data, the estimated value of this woodland is now approximately \$504,000 as of June 30, 1998*

Restrictions

Correspondence in our file indicates that it was the "wish of the Foundation that this woodland, a valuable asset to our community, would be preserved by the University for many years to come."

The November 24, 1971 deed to the University for the 12.3 acres Veit parcel (we paid \$43,000), contains no land use restrictions. In a number of letters to Mrs. Veit, however, the University did make various promises to her concerning both the name and use of the land. They are as follows:

In a September 24, 1970 letter from N. C. Bovee, then Vice President for Business and Finance, promised:

The University will assume the responsibility for maintaining the area as a natural woodlot as long as it is possible to do so, and will name it for John Veit. When it is no longer possible to maintain it in this manner, the University would have the right to convert it to other uses and drop the name.

Our file also contains two undated letters from Jerry Tubbs, as Vice President for Business and Finance. I cannot determine whether either of these letters were ever actually sent, however, one is signed and one is not. The signed letter to Mrs. Veit makes this assurance:

The property described above and purchased by the University will be named "John Veit Memorial Woods" and that property will carry this name forever.

The unsigned letter from Jerry to Mrs. Veit contains the following provision:

The property would be known as "John Veit Memorial Woods" for a period of twenty years, or your lifetime, whichever is longer. Following that period of time, the University will have the right to change the name of the woods.

It is difficult to discern exactly what promises were made, or relied upon by Mrs. Veit, when she conveyed the land to the University, but the purpose of the gift was clearly for preservation of the natural area.