



No Clothing Required

THE MYSTERY OF WILTON'S NUDE BEACH

BY | CHRIS CAPELLE

THE 1983 EDITION of Lee Baxandall's *World Guide to Nude Beaches and Recreation* describes one of Connecticut's mere three listings as "A rather large pond with nice grass for sunning, clear water friendly fish, frogs and dogs, shallow places along the edge for nonswimmers" [sic]. The surprise is that this prose refers to a "clothing-optional" recreational area right here in Wilton, a

two-minute drive from the center of town.

Wilton's "nude beach," officially called The Gravel Pit, is sandwiched between the train tracks and Route 7, directly behind where Melissa and Doug and Rings End stand today. When viewing it using Google Earth, it resembles an extracted molar. It is well concealed on all sides by mature trees; a walk through the

woods is required to gain entry.

The site itself is referenced in Robert H. Russell's tome "Wilton, Connecticut", albeit only in a footnote on page 438: "Two other flooded gravel quarries are located south of Wolfpit Road. One behind the present Yankee Lumber, is now in the state-owned Super 7 right-of-way." He made no mention of nudity, nor is reference to it found

in other official annals of Wilton.

My sole encounter with the Gravel Pit dates back to my college days, specifically 1984. The spring semester had just ended; my friend Dave was finishing high school in New Canaan, but he was originally from Wilton and knew the ins and outs of town. Earlier that spring, a New Canaan High School student had discovered the Baxandall

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book, and soon enough, the high school rumor circuit was buzzing about a nude recreation area in neighboring Wilton.

As I was in college, and didn't consider myself as gullible as a bunch of mere high school students, I was not convinced that sanctioned nudity could peacefully coexist in a town where the sale of alcohol was banned. So one day in late May, when it was too cold, except perhaps for the heartiest of souls, for swimming in the Northeast, Dave and I headed to Wilton from New Canaan to see for ourselves if this nude

bathing spot existed at all.

To gain access to the Gravel Pit, we had to enter via the woods between the train tracks and the river bridge on the south side of Wolfpit Road. The multiple signs that warned us we were trespassing on state property were not enough to deter us from our mission. To reach the water, we had to trek down a winding, narrow trail through some thick brush. Disappointingly enough, despite the hype in the book, there wasn't any real "grass for sunning" near the water, nor any "friendly fish, frogs and

dogs", just untamed woods that obscured a nondescript body of water. And there was no evidence of any human activity, much less nudity, apart from the standard teenage party debris – scattered beer cans, cigarette butts and campfire ashes—left by those who came before us.

Reading Baxandall's book today as an adult, I form a more realistic view of Wilton's "nude recreation area". The blurb starts with "Actually a former gravel pit," followed by advice that "you may be able to establish nude use before 10 a.m." and almost

as an afterthought, that "the land is state owned." So whether it was too early in the season, too late in the day or proof that the "No Trespassing" signs peppering the site were enough of a deterrent to keep people from entering, the existence of Wilton's nude beach remains a mystery to me; I never ventured there again. But on that May afternoon, as we walked out of the Gravel Pit, Dave and I decided that the world's quality nude recreation areas were probably located a little farther away from home than Wilton.