

Petticoat Hill Reservation – History and Chronology As per Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Hastings for the Trustees of Reservations - 2006

The earliest settlements in Williamsburg were established in high areas such as Miller's Hill, Shingle Hill, near Haydenville, and on Petticoat Hill and Meeting House Hill near the center of town. The terrain between the hills was largely marsh and, as less desirable, was not settled until the pressure of increased population and the need to make use of the resources of the Mill River became important.

Williamsburg is 26.4 square miles in area – situated on the Western uplands of the Connecticut River Valley at the foot of the Berkshire Hills. It was incorporated in 1771.

Among the first settlers were John Miller, Frank Clapp, Cotton Hayden and **Thomas and Martha Nash**. Petticoat Hill, the location of the settlement, is a mile or so beyond Scott Hill, the location of the Reservation, on Petticoat Hill Road. The schoolhouse there once had 75 pupils. It seems that the Reservation was so named after the road itself so travelers could easily locate it.

Originally covered with a forest of chestnut, hickory, walnut, oak, and pine, it was host to wild plums and grapes, as well as wolves, bears, and wild turkeys. Fish and game were abundant; early crops grown by Petticoat Hill farmers included rye and wheat plus clover and grass for dairy cows. Agricultural products from Williamsburg were sold in Boston.

1904 – Martha Winslow Nash buys 50 acres from Charles Brewster as a memorial to Edward Worthington Nash, her husband, and donates it to the Trustees of Reservations.

1923 – Trustees use Nash endowment to buy 7 more acres

1924 – W. Hans Nietzsche donates 10 acres in SE corner next to

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Graves property

1930 – Stories about the hill proliferate. (see Mather article, 1972)

1. Women dominate and predominate in the Hill settlement around 1771
2. Hill muddy and dangerous due to occasional Indians, so petticoats are carried down then put on before church
3. One resident had 7 daughters and on wash day all the petticoats were hung out to dry in the wind

*Question of water rights to spring near entrance to reserve?
Believed to be dry now.*

1972 – Ruth Beebe and other residents off to help the Trustees restore the view and create a sanctuary for birds and game.

1973 – Work is done creating signage, trails, benches, and an improved view.

1989-91 – Local residents with support from Trustees stopped highway department from cutting trees along the road bordering the Reservation. New trail map sketched and marked. (Robert Shycon and Linda Dell.)

Residents interviewed: Ralmon Black, Gwen Blodgett, Eric Weber