

# Area eyes bypass plans with concern

## Ponemah fears road would ruin its rural charm

By SHIRLEY L. SMITH  
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AMHERST - Years ago the Ponemah area, lying in the southwest tip of Amherst, was a close-knit community populated by country folk who appreciated the open land, pine forests and their farming existence, residents say.

Everyone knew everyone. Life was simple.

There was a hotel in the area, a school house, a railroad station and even a house of ill repute, as Hazel Scott, 49, politely terms it.

Much has changed, she says. Only a few farms remain. Route 122 has become commercialized. What used to be a forest is now an industrial park. The area's character has become less rural.

And Scott laments: "There are no more country folks."

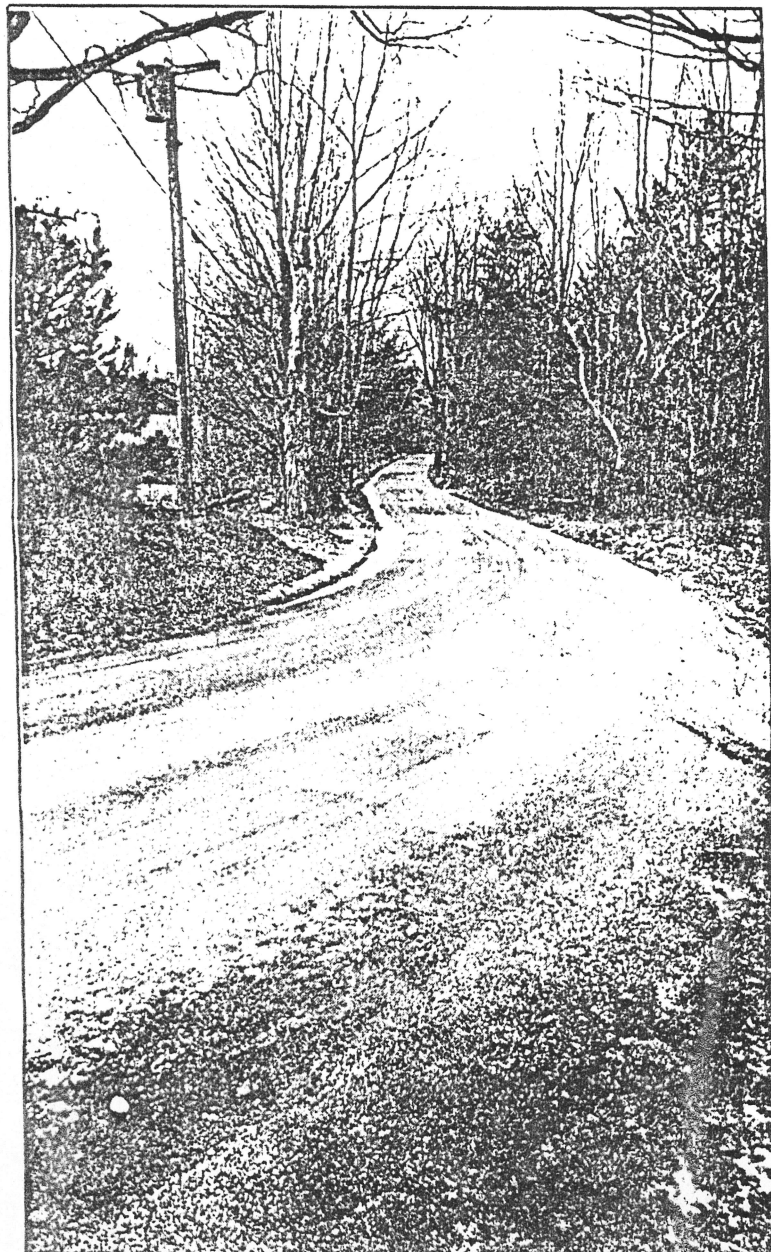
As Amherst has grown, so has traffic through the town and into Nashua. This traffic has prompted plans for a new east-west highway that would bypass already congested Route 101A. Three corridors are currently under study. All three would cut through Amherst, one close to Scott's 150 Hollis Road home.

Scott and other residents worry that the highway, no matter which route it takes, will further remove them from the coun-



Photos by Kathy Seward-MacKay

Leo Dadoly opposes one of the three plans for the proposed 101A bypass because it would place the road near his historic 18th-century home on Ponemah Hill Road.



The serene landscape of Ponemah Hill Road will change considerably if the bypass cuts through here, as has been proposed by engineering consultants to the state.

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**- Jim Ryan,  
project manager**

try life they adore.

But there was a note of resignation in Scott's statements when she talked about stopping the highway proposal. She predicted the town will accept the highway and the commercial and industrial development that could come with it.

"Country people don't have the kind of income that newcomers have to pay the taxes that are going up," she said. "The money might be too much of a temptation."

Recently the Maguire Group Inc., the Massachusetts engineering firm conducting the bypass study, recommended that three possible routes be studied further to determine their environmental impacts. The recommended routes all start in Milford near the Route 101-101A intersection, and take varying paths through Amherst before ending in the northern part of Nashua at the F.E. Everett Turnpike at the new Exit 9.

One route, known as option O, would run from Milford along the Hollis border through the Ponemah Hill section of Amherst to the Everett Turnpike.

A second corridor, called option J, would go slightly north of the O route, pass north of the Bon Terrain industrial park in Amherst, join the O route at the Nashua border and end at the F.E. Everett.

The third route, called option K, follows the J route for a short distance but heads north along the Souhegan River in Amherst before entering Nashua north of the other two routes.

The proposal that Scott and other neighbors worry about is option O, the corridor that cuts through the Ponemah Hill area. The road would intersect or pass by Ponemah Hill, Stable and Hollis roads

in Amherst.

James Johns, transportation planner with the Maguire Group, said selection of a corridor is several months away. Jim Ryan, Maguire's project manager, said the firm hopes to have a draft of which alignment the road will take by late fall 1989.

"There is no way anyone, even at the state level, could make a projection on how many homes will be affected within any of the corridors at this point in time," Ryan said. He said maps of the routes do not detail what property will be taken by the routes.

If a final corridor is selected, however, eminent domain proceedings will be carried out. This would mean that the state would take what properties it deemed necessary for the project, appraise the affected land or homes and compensate owners the appraised amount.

Scott said the Route 101A bypass road proposal comes in the wake of continuous pressure by developers on land in her part of town. She grew up in the area, where she raised her four children and watched with frustration as land was taken by developers. The Tamposi family owns large sections of land in the area and has tried to buy out homeowners, she said.

Scott said she doesn't think the highway plan makes much sense because it is easier to build a road in a level area than in the Ponemah Hill Road section, which is hilly.

She said if the highway passes through her neighborhood it could have severe environmental impacts. Scott fears that the highway would destroy an aquifer in the area as well as underground springs on Ponemah Hill.

Leo and Maura Dadoly, of 23 Ponemah Hill Road, are also worried about the highway plans. The route that would cut through Ponemah Hill could pass through their property and perhaps take their historic colonial home, which sits on 17 acres.

The house, which the Dadolys say was built between 1740 and 1790, still maintains its antique features. The couple said they have discussed registering the home as an historic building. Now they say they will pursue those plans.

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"It's going to take some effort on their (the state's) part to make us (move) because we are not just going to let them go ahead and do it," Mr. Dadoly said. "Even if it (the road) went next door and didn't take the house, it would completely devalue everything around it."

"I think it's horrible," Mrs. Dadoly added. "The fact that it's going to destroy the house bothers me more than anything else."

Jack Conaway, who lives across the street from the Dadolys, is also worried about his home. He said as he interprets the corridor maps, the highway could go straight through his house.

"I think the whole thing is stupid. I think there is another agenda being pursued here that has nothing to do with the traffic," Conaway said.

The land around Conaways and the Dadolys homes has managed to escape much of the commercialization that has occurred on nearby Route 122. The Dadolys say they can look out their windows at times and see fox, deer and Canada geese. At night, owls can be heard.

It's the type of area where they say their children can play freely and where the biggest problem is screeching of tires from an occasional car speeding up the hill.

Most their neighbors are long-termed residents who own homes worth \$100,000 to \$200,000. The resi-

dents come from varying backgrounds, but all share a closeness to their surroundings, said Conaway.

"It's a shame that they would take an untouched portion of Amherst and

build on it for their convenience," Mr. Dadoly said. "I think it will be a damn shame if (the highway) came through this neighborhood, because it's an historic area."