

## 23# A Changing Wetland

Wetlands are teeming with life, and the Class of 1918 Marsh is no different. Listen to the birds call. Watch the dragonflies dart around you. Feel the soft tops of the cattails. Here, you can experience the diversity of life with all five senses.

Wetlands, however, haven't always been portrayed so positively. When the university acquired this land in 1910, the Marsh was a wet sedge meadow. It was thought to be "unproductive"—a sentiment echoed by the scientific thought of the time. To make it "productive" and profitable, the university drained and tiled the wetland, using an electric pump. The old pump-house is still here—just east of the marsh on University Bay Drive.

Once drained, the University fertilized the land and transformed 84 acres of sedge meadow into 84 acres of corn. As time passed, however, the drain tiles underneath began to show. This made plowing and farming impossible, and so the university let the land re-flood and used it as a dump.

Why, you might ask, would anyone want their name associated with such a place? In 1969, an environmental studies class spearheaded an effort to restore the marsh with the hope it could be returned to wildlife habitat. The Class of 1918 provided the financial support for the project, donating funds from their fifty year anniversary gift to help restore the wetland. That's why it's called the Class of 1918 Marsh.