General notes on Ciha property T-81-N, R-5-W N.W. 1/4 of N.W. 1/4 of section 13 Cedar Township, Johnson County, Iowa

Ownership: Howard and Phyllis Ciha, Rt. Lisbon

Location: One mile south, 1/4 mile east of Sutliff

Soil classification: Chelsea loamy fine sand, slopes ranging from 2 to 18 percent

**Description:** Approximately 40 acres. West 1/4; gently sloping n.w. to s.e., highest and driest, open pasture. East edge; gently sloping north to south, lowest, moist with shallow drainage ditch, lightly timbered around wet area, scattered oaks in remainder. North edge; medium slope west to east, well drained on west to poorly drained wetland 1/3 distance from east border. Remaining central region; rolling well drained uplands to wet depressions, two of which are ponds, lightly timbered east to medium timber west.

**Vegetation:** This area was historically oak timber (from original survey notes 1836-1840). Today, the forested area is predominantly white oak (*Quercus alba*) with gooseberry (*Ribes missouriense*), prickly ash (*Zanthoxylum americanum*) and red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) dominating the shrub zone. Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), bedstraw (*Galium sp.*) and stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) are the common forbs. Very little grass is present in the more heavily timbered areas. In more open areas, multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) and pasture rose (*Rosa carolina*) add to the undergrowth.

In the distinctly savanna-like areas, wild strawberry (Fragaria virginiana), early crowfoot (Ranunculus fascicularis), prairie ragwort (Senecio plattensis), pussytoes (Antennaria spp.) and bird's foot violet (Viola pedata) prevail with more grass present. Corydalis (Corydalis micrantha) is found on the south facing slope along the south fence line.

The open pasture is predominantly non-native blue grasses (Poa spp), with a

poor representation of native grasses. More forbs are present in these open areas, notably; cleft phlox (*Phlox bifida*), whitlow-grass (*Draba reptans*), mock pennyroyal (*Hedioma hispida*), puccoons (*Lithospermum spp.*) and vervain (*Verbena spp.*).

The wet depressions offer a sharp contrast to the overall sand prairie/savanna character of the area. Three major and distinctly different areas of wetlands are present.

The most unique wetland is the south-most and highest pond. Total water area is about 1-1/2 acres. Water depth varies to the middle where it is 30-36 inches deep, except on the eastern half which has been artificially dredged for a more reliable stock watering source (depth unknown). This dredging occurred when the pond went dry in 1988. Two tests by Dr. Robert Black of Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, lowa, in August of 1992 and January of 1993 showed a water pH value of 4.4-4.6 and 5.7-5.8 respectively.

This pond is ringed with river birch (Betula nigra) and button bush (Cephalanthus occidentalis) which is predominant on the north shore. A poor nutrient fen occupies the south edge, from the deepened area to the west end. This fen is about 3/8 acre in size, with a peat layer approaching three feet in depth, a muck layer up to ten feet in depth, and a dense sandy clay bottom of at least ten inches in thickness. The central part of the fen is a floating mat over the deepest portion of the pond. Mature button bush grows on this floating mat, as well as on portions that are submerged one foot or more (in the center of the pond). Small river birch also grow on the floating mat. The mat itself consists primarily of sedges. Around the base of some button bush can be found sphagnum (Sphagnum subsecundum) and moss (Aulacomnium palustre). Bladderwort (Utricularia vulgaris) is found in openings in the floating mat. Near shore, where the mat is submerged, literally thousands of mosquito fern (Azolla mexicana) are floating on the water. Cutgrass (Leersia oryzoides) borders the fen shoreline.

Directly north and slightly down hill is another 3/4 acre pond. The water is about one foot deep during wet periods and had a pH value of 7 in February 1992. A totally different plant community exists in this pond. It is ringed with a few river birch, but button bush is almost absent. Pickerelweed (Pontederia cordata) dominates the center of the pond with a healthy component of arrowhead (Sagittaria latifolia), bur-

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reed (Sparganium americanum) and softstem bulrush (Scirpus validus). In the shallower open water around this dense growth are hundreds of watershield (Brasenia schreberi), an endangered species in lowa. The northeast quarter of the pond has a nice population of water starwort (Callitriche heterophylla). There is no peat in this pond. This pond maintained a good reserve of water throughout the dry summer of 1991, but dried up in June of 1992.

The third wetland of significance is north of this second pond and further downhill. Its depth probably never exceeds about six inches. It dried to solid mud in the summer of 1991 and in June of 1992, but was very wet the rest of that year. Little plant growth occurs in the center of this area. Mousetail (Myosurus minimus) occurs in abundance around the drier edges as well as three species of water horehound (Lycopus spp.). This area receives the most damage from livestock of the three wetlands.

A moist area is present along the east border of the study area, but it is not distinctive.

Vertebrates: This area provides some limited benefits to deer and other common lowa mammals, but lacks heavy cover. The fen mat always shows flattened areas of vegetation that can be attributed to raccoon activity. A study of small rodents conducted by Greg Wilson and Justin Van Zee (in association with Central College and the lowa DNR) June 3-5, 1991 resulted in the capture of five western harvest mice (Reithrodontomys megalotis dychei) and one white-footed mouse (Peromyscus leucopus noveboracensis) in the brome field north of the study area. No specimens were caught in the grazed study area. The study skins are located at the Natural History Museum in lowa City.

Mallards, blue-winged teal, green-winged teal, shovelers, gadwall, ringneck, wood ducks and canada geese utilize the vegetation and animals in the ponds as an important migration food source. At least 10 female red-winged blackbirds have been seen nesting at one time among the button bush on the fen mat.

Both ponds abound in frogs, notably the bull frog (Rana catesbeiana), the leopard frog (Rana pipiens), Blanchard's cricket frog (Acris crepitans blanchardii) and the western chorus frog (Pseudacris triseriata triseriata).

Six-lined racerunners (Cnemidophorus sexlineatus sexlineatus) have been observed just across the west boundary fence in similar non-pastured ground. There is probably not enough cover for them on the Ciha property.

Ornate box turtles (*Terrapene ornata ornata*) are found throughout this area, but have not been observed by me on this property. Almost all of my trips have been in the afternoon, which is probably not ideal for locating this species. A carapace of the redeared turtle (*Chrysemys scripta elegans*) was found on the shore of the south most pond. This is the extreme north limit for this species in Iowa. Painted turtles (*Chrysemys picta*) and Blanding's turtles (*Emydoidea blandingi*) have been observed in the south pond in healthy numbers. A snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) was observed in the north pond in April of 1992.

Trapping for salamander larvae in June of 1991 resulted in the capture of one eastern tiger salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum tigrinum*) in the south-most pond, and one as yet unidentified specimen from the northern pond. Additional trapping (February 25 through March 9, 1992) resulted in the capture and release of adult tiger salamanders. Four were caught in the north pond on March 3, and two on March 4. Four were caught in the south pond on March 5, two on March 6, and one on March 8. Tiger salamander larvae were also trapped in the south-most pond on May 24, July 7 and July 9, 1992. These were raised until adults to confirm their identities and released.

Fen Data: A few points make this a unique fen. It has a pH of about 4.4-5.8 (slightly acidic). It has a floating mat that will support people. It is in a pond. It is the only known fen in Johnson County, and may be only the second known poor fen in Iowa, (Dead Man's Lake in Pilot Knob State Park, Hancock Co., being the other). A comparison between my plant list and a combination of Marten L. Grant and Robert F. Thorne's 1955 list and William C. Watson's 1989 list of the plants in Dead Man's Lake fen, produced a similarity index of .19, disregarding the sedges which are unidentified and not included in my list. Given that a few of the sedges may be common to both areas, the similarity index is still likely to be less than .25. This would indicate that this fen is even more unique in lowa.

Temperature readings taken through the fen mat in February 1992 are as

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follows.
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Air Temperature - 27 F
6" depth - 36.6 F
12" depth - 37 F
18" depth - 37.4 F
24" depth - 39.7 F
36" depth - 42.5 F
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Temperature readings through the mat on August 10, 1992 were as follows:

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Air Temperature - 68.1 F
Surface water - 71.9 F
6" depth - 71.2 F
12" depth - 71.5 F
18" depth - 71.4 F
24" depth - 71.3 F
30" depth - 63.6 F (probably below the mat proper)
36" depth - 62.0 F
42" depth - 61.6 F
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It is my conclusion that the decomposition of vegetation is responsible for the elevated temperature of the mat interior in the winter.

Current Management Practice: This property has been and continues to be managed as a pasture for both sheep and cattle (in different years). Generally, they are introduced in early June and remain until the grass and forbs are depleted. In 1991, this was about a two week period. The cattle were then moved to an adjoining pasture, with access to the study area for shade and water. Usage of the study area by cattle was quite limited when better pasture was available. The grasses did not recover enough to provide attractive forage after the initial two week period in 1991. However, in July and August of 1992 rains promoted enough additional growth that the cattle spent a lot of time in this pasture, with a corresponding degradation to both the pasture and wetlands.

A cattle exclosure (approximately 25 feet square) was installed at the west edge of the timbered area. The grasses inside the exclosure grew to about 6-8 inches tall in

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1991, and were anything but luxurious. This plot was burned on February 27, 1992 as a demonstration of fire management. Two previously unidentified specie of dropseed appeared within the exclosure (Sporobolus aspera, S. cryptandrus). Hairy grama (Bouteloua hirsuta) was also discovered along the north fence line. A second burn was conducted on March 14, 1993.

It would appear from the species list that delaying pasturing has benefited the early spring species by allowing them to mature and go to seed, and possibly by limiting grass competition. However, there is a poor early summer species representation in the list. The summer list consists of many species that normally increase with disturbance (Verbena spp., Erigeron spp., Plantago purshii, Rumex acetosella, Taraxacum officinale). The shrub component has been selected for those species that can defend themselves with thorns and prickles. The native grasses that survive are severely depressed (Sporobolus spp.), unpalatable (Panicum spp., Paspalum spp.), early maturing (Koeleria cristata), exist only on the fence border (Stipa spartea) or in the ponds (Leersia oryzoides).

Damage to the wetlands is most evident in the hummock nature of the north-most wet area and by the deepening of the southern pond. The two deeper ponds are apparently soft enough on the bottom to discourage deep incursions by livestock, but suffer great disturbances around the edges. It is uncertain whether the dredging operation destroyed any of the fen, because nobody recognized it for what it was at the time of dredging. However, reference to aerial photographs dated July 1937 and 1979 show a much more extensive mat that extends well into the dredged area and may have covered three-forths of the total surface area. It is also unknown whether the hydrology has been altered and what effect that might have in the long term. It is fairly certain that additional dredging will damage the fen.

Some logging has occurred in the past for barn beams, etc., and dead oaks are still being cut for firewood. The remaining oaks contain some magnificent specimens, including one with a 15 foot circumference on the south fence line. They vary in stature from tall and straight to low branched and spreading. Little or no oak reproduction has taken place in decades although small oak seedlings can be found until they gain the notice of the livestock. New woody growth has been undesirable in terms of historical restoration (Acer negundo, Prunus virginiana, Gleditsia triacanthos,

Juniperus virginiana and Morus rubra).

An aggressive spraying campaign in the summers of 1991 and 1992 against the multiflora rose bushes appears to have checked their advances. Management of the red cedar invasion would also be justified.

Rental Agreement 1993: Paul Christiansen and myself entered a rental agreement with Howard and Phyllis Ciha from March 1, 1993 through February 28, 1994. This agreement is for approximately 30 acres of land west of a line starting 244 feet west of the property's north-east corner, running south-south-east to a post supporting a wood duck nest box in the east central part of the south-most pond, and hence due south to the south fence line. This line will be electric fenced by the Ciha's to prevent cattle from going west of said line, but will allow access to the dredged end of the south-most pond for livestock watering. Access to the west of this line will be permitted for the Ciha's to saw dead timber for firewood.

Botanical survey of Ciha property T-81-N, R-5-W N.W. 1/4 of N.W. 1/4 of Section 13 Cedar Township, Johnson County, Iowa

Compiled by Aaron Basten

Scientific Name

Common Name

Comments

BRYOPHYTES

**AMBLYSTEGIACEAE** 

Campylium cf. radicale

Moss

**AULACOMNIACEAE** 

Aulacomnium palustre

Moss

Center of S. pond. Probable county record

BRACHYTHECIACEAE

Brachythecium oxycladon

Moss

BRYACEAE

Pohlia nulans

Copper Wire Moss

DITRICHACEAE

Ditrichum pallidum

Moss

FUNARIACEAE

Funaria hygrometrica

Moss

**LEUCOBRYACEAE** 

Leucobryum glaucum

**Cushion Moss** 

MNIACEAE

Plagiomnium cuspidatum

Moss

POLYTRICHACEAE

Atrichum altecristatum

Moss

Polytrichum commune

Hair-cap Moss

RICCIACEAE

Riccia fluitans

Liverwort

Floating on south side of fen mat and n. pond

Ricciocarpos natans

Liverwort

On wet mud shoreline south side of fen mat, floating n. pond

**SPHAGNACEAE** 

Sphagnum subsecundum

Sphagnum

Center of S. pond. Probable county record

THUIDIACEAE

Thuidium delicatulum

Moss

**PTERIDOPHYTES** 

AZOLLACEAE

Azolla mexicana

Mosquito Fern

S. pond

<u>GYMNOSPERMS</u>

CUPRESSACEAE

Juniperus virginiana

Red Cedar

**DICOTYLEDONS** 

**ACANTHACEAE** 

Ruellia humilis

Wild Petunia

ACERACEAE

Acer negundo

Box Elder

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comments
AIZOACEAE		•
Mollugo verticillata	Carpetweed	Non-native
AMARANTHACEAE		
Froelichia floridana	Cottonweed	
APIACEAE		
Sanicula gregaria	Common Snakeroot	
Sanicula marilandica	Black Snakeroot	
ASCLEPIADACEAE		
Asciepias verticillata	Whorled Milkweed	
ASTERACEAE		
Achillea millefolium	Yarrow	
Antennaria neglecta	Pussytoes	
Antennaria plantaginifolia	Pussytoes	
Artemisia ludoviciana	Dark Leaved Mugwort	
Aster laterifloris	Starved Aster	
Aster parviceps	Small Headed Aster	
Bidens cernua	Bur-marigold	S. pond. Fen mat
Erigeron annuus	White-top	
Erigeron canadensis	Horseweed	weedy
Erigeron philadelphicus	Philadelphia Fleabane	
Eupatorium perfoliatum	Boneset	Also on fen mat
Gnaphalium obtusitolium	Sweet Everlasting	s.e. shore of n. pond
Helenium autumnale	Sneezeweed	•
Hieracium canadense	Canada Hawkweed	South bank of south pond - rare
Krigia billora	Twin-flowered Cynthia	
Lactuca canadensis	Wild Lettuce	
Senecio plattensis	Prairie Ragwort	
Taraxacum officinale	Dandelion	Non-native
Tragopogon pratensis	Common Goat's Beard	Non-native
Vernonia fasciculata	Western Ironweed	
BERBERIDACEAE		
Berberis Thunbergii	Japanese Barberry	
BETULACEAE		•
Belula nigra	River Birch	Pond borders
BORAGINACEAE		
Lithospermum caroliniense	Hairy Puccoon	
Lithospermum incisum	Narrow-leaved Puccoon	
Myosotis verna	, Early Scorpion Grass	Infrequent to rare
BRASSICACEAE		
Capsella bursa-pastoris	Shepherd's Purse	Non-native
Descurainia pinnata	Tansy-mustard	
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Whitlow-grass

Draba reptans

Comments Common Name Scientific Name N. pond Marsh Yellow Cress Rorippa palustris CALLITRICHACEAE Northeast quarter of north pond. Threatened in lowa Water Starwort Callitriche heterophylla CAMPANULACEAE Indian Tobacco Lobelia inflata Lobelia Lobelia spicata Venus' Looking-glass Triodanis perfoliata CARYOPHYLLACEAE Cerastium vulgatum Mouse-ear Chickweed Deptford Pink Non-native Dianthus armeria Sleepy Catchily Silene antirrhina Non-native Silene noctiflora Night-flowering Catchfly Starry Campion Silene stellata CHENOPODIACEAE western north fence line - open sand area Cycloloma atriplicifolium Winged Pigweed CISTACEAE western north fence line - open sand area Frostweed Helianthemum sp. COMMELINACEAE Spiderwort Tradescantia ohiensis CONVOLVULACEAE .. Dodder Cuscuta sp. **EUPHORBIACEAE** Flowering Spurge Euphorbia corollata FABACEAE Leadplant Amorpha canescens Chamaecrista fasciculata Partridge Pea western north fence line - open sand area Rattlebox Crotalaria sagittalis Illinois Tick Trefoil Desmodium illinoense Gleditsia triacanthos Honey Locust Prairie Bushclover Lespedeza capitata Seeded Alfalfa Medicago sativa Blacklocust Robinia pseudoacacia Small Wild Bean Strophostyles leiosperma White Clover Trifolium repens **FAGACEAE** White Oak Predominant Quercus species Quercus alba Black Oak Quercus velutina GERANIACEAE Wild Cranesbill Geranium carolinianum

S. pond fen mat. Probable county record - rare

HYPERICACEAE

**JUGLANDACEAE** 

Triadenum fraseri

Marsh St. John's-wort

Comments Scientific Name Common Name Single tree near s.e. corner Shagbark Hickory Carya ovata Black Walnut Juglans nigra LAMIACEAE Mock Pennyroyal Hedioma hispidum Non-native Leonurus cardiaca Motherwort Cut-leaved Water Horehound Lycopus americanus Water-horehound Lycopus uniflorus Infrequent to rare Water Horehound Lycopus virginicus Horsemint Monarda punctata Catnip Nepata cataria Heal-all Prunella vulgaris Hairy Mountain Mint Pycnanthemum pilosum Slender Mountain Mint Pycnanthemum tenuifolium Skullcap Scutellaria lateriflora Teucrium canadense Germander LENTIBULARIACEAE Center of S. pond Bladderwort Utricularia vulgaris MORACEAE Cannabis sativa Hemp . , Mulberry Morus rubra NYCTAGINACEAE Four-o'clock Mirabilis nyctaginea NYMPHAEACEAE N. pond. Endangered in Iowa Watershield Brasenia schreberi ONAGRACEAE Enchanter's Nightshade Circaea lutetiana Common Evening Primrose Oenothera biennis Slope facing road Cut-leaved Evening Primrose Oenothera laciniata OXALIDACEAE Yellow Wood-sorrel Oxalis stricta PAPAVERACEAE Probable county record Corydalis Corydalis micrantha **PHYTOLACCACEAE** Pokeweed Phytolacca americana PLANTAGINACEAE Non-native Common Plantain Plantago major Salt-and-pepper Plant Plantago patagonica POLEMONIACEAE

Cleft Phlox

Blue Phlox

Milkwort

Phlox bifida

Phlox divaricata

POLYGALACEAE

Polygala sanquinea

Abundant but rare statewide

Comments Common Name Scientific Name S. pond Common Smartweed Polygonum pensylvanicum S. pond Dotted Smartweed Polygonum punctatum Tear Thumb Polygonum sagittatum Sorrel Rumex Rumex acetosella Pale Dock Rumex altissimus Non-native Curly Dock Rumex crispus PRIMULACEAE Androsace occidentalis Androsace N. pond. Probable county record. Needs verification Creeping Loosestrile Lysimachia radicans? Center of S. pond. Good population - rare statewide **Tufted Loosestrife** Lysimachia thyrsiflora RANUNCULACEAE Columbine Aquilegia canadensis Probable county record - infrequent Mousetail Myosurus minimus Kidneyleaf Buttercup Ranunculus abortivus Abundant Early Crowfoot Ranunculus fascicularis Infrequent to rare Prairie Buttercup Ranunculus rhomboideus ROSACEAE Wild Strawberry Fragaria virginiana Prairie Cinquefoil Potentilla arguta Rough Cinquefoil Potentilla norvegica Common Cinquefoil Potentilla simplex Choke Cherry Prunus virginiana Pasture Rose Rosa carolina Sprayed in 1991,92 - Non-native Multiflora Rose Rosa multillora Black Raspberry Rubus occidentalis RUBIACEAE Dominant Shrub esp. S. pond **Button Bush** Cephalanthus occidentalis Bedstraw Galium sp. Abundant - infrequent statewide Bluets Hedyotis crassifolia RUTACEAE Prickly Ash Zanthoxylum americanum SALICACEAE Cottonwood Populus deltoides SANTALACEAE Bastard-toadflax Comandra umbellata SAXIFRAGACEAE Alum Root Heuchera richardsonii N. pond Ditch Stonecrop Penthorum sedoides Gooseberry Ribes missouriense SCROPHULARIACEAE

Slender Gerardia

Hedge Hyssop

Agalinis tenuitolia

Gratiola neglecta

Comments Common Name Scientific Name N. pond - rare non-native Gratiola virginiana Hedge Hyssop Early Figwort Scrophularia lanceolata Non-native Mullein Verbascum thapsus Culver's Root Veronicastrum virginicum SOLANACEAE Black Nightshade Solanum americanum Horse Nettle Solanum carolinense weedy Buffalo-bur Solanum rostratum ULMACEAE Single tree in s.e. corner Hackberry Celtis occidentalis American Elm Ulmus americana URTICACEAE spoil area of s. pond Pilea pumila Clearweed Stinging Nettle Urtica dioica VERBENACEAE Moist n.w. edge of s. pond Fogfruit Phyla lanceolata Blue Vervain Verbena hastata Hoary Vervain Verbena stricta White Vervain Verbena urticifolia Vervain Verbena x blanchardi VIOLACEAE Rare White Violet Viola lanceolata Large population esp. between ponds Bird's Foot Violet Viola pedata Violet Viola pratincola Infrequent to rare Purple Violet Viola sagittata VITACEAE Virginia Creeper Parthenocissus inserta Virginia Creeper Parthenocissus quinquefolia MONOCOTYLEDONS ALISMATACEAE Water-plantain Alisma plantago-aquatica N. pond Arrowhead Sagittaria latifolia CYPERACEAE Three-way Sedge S. pond - rare Dulichium arundinaceum Wool Grass Scirpus cyperinus N. pond Softstem buirush Scirpus validus LEMNACEAE Duckweed Lemna minor LILIACEAE Yellow Stargrass Hypoxis hirsuta

Small Solomon's Seal

False Solomon's Seal

Polygonatum biflorum

Smilacina sp.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comments	٠.,
Smilax sp.	Catbriar		
POACEAE			
Agrostis perennans	Upland Bent Grass		
Alopecurus aequalis	Marsh Foxtail	Infrequent to rare	
Alopecurus carolinianus	Foxtail	Pond edges - infrequent to rare	
Bouteloua hirsuta	Hairy Grama	Probable county record	
Dactylis glomerata	Orchard Grass	Non-native	
Dichanthelium acuminatum	Hairy Panicum		
Dichanthelium oligosanthes	Scribner's Panicum		
Echinochloa muricata	Barnyard Grass	South pond edge in water	
Koeleria macrantha	June Grass		
Leersia oryzoides	Cutgrass	South pond between fen and bank	
Panicum dichotomiflorum	Fall Panicum	Weedy grass	
Paspalum setaceum	Ciliate leaved Paspalum	Infrequent to rare	
Poa compressa	Blue Grass	Non-native	
Poa pratensis	Blue Grass	Non-native	
Sporobolus asper	Tall Dropseed	Probably abundant if allowed to grow	
Sporobolus cryptandrus	Sand Dropseed	Probably abundant if allowed to grow	٧
Stipa spartea	Spear Grass		
PONTEDERIACEAE .		/	
Pontederia cordata	Pickerelweed	N. pond - infrequent to rare	
SPARGANIACEAE			
Sparganium americanum	Bur-reed	N. pond - infrequent to rare	

Map 4 (Solon Quad) Site 3: Restored Prairie

This is the property of Aaron Basten, reported by Aaron Basten. He has a site list.