

Views *from* Mount Grace

Volume 15, No. 3 • Summer 2004

C O N S E R V I N G T H E L O C A L L A N D S C A P E ™



PHOTO BY DAVID FOSTER, HARVARD FOREST, TAKEN FROM THE NEW SALEM OVERLOOK



Serving:

Ashburnham

Athol

Barre

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Gardner

Gill

Greenfield

Hardwick

Hubbardston

Leyden

Montague

New Salem

Northfield

Orange

Petersham

Phillipston

Royalston

Templeton

Warwick

Wendell

Westminster

Winchendon

Prospect Hill, Phillipston— Protecting a Site *of* Global Importance

B Y A L L E N Y O U N G

Mount Grace recently purchased a 100-acre parcel of wooded land northwest of Prospect Hill, the highest point in Phillipston, thus beginning the process of permanently protecting the acreage from development. Current Harvard Forest research on this site was featured in a February 2004 National Geographic article entitled "Case of the Missing Carbon." Scientists have been monitoring forest gases as part of their carbon tracking research on climate change. Preserving this property from development will protect the integrity of Harvard Forest's Long Term Ecological Research program, the most comprehensive record of ecological change and human history for any forest site in North America!

Each year, more than 100 scientists and graduate students join a group of 35 undergraduates for scientific studies at Harvard Forest. Development of this property would have threatened the integrity of the

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SAVE THE DATE!
Mount Grace
Annual Meeting
September 11th!



Dear Friends,

Summer's long days and lush greens seem to reflect the longevity and growth of this organization: Mount Grace turned eighteen in June. Our vibrancy and maturity make it possible to hire two additional staff to better provide conservation assistance in the region, bringing us to three full-time and three part-time employees. This represents significant growth for an organization that has operated for most of its history with only two paid staff.

After ten years of managing both land projects and the organization as a whole, I will be transplanting most of my land project responsibilities to a team consisting of a Director of Land Protection and a Land Protection Specialist. This will allow me to focus on financial matters and the long-term health of the organization.

The health of an active nonprofit depends on broadening membership and cultivating contributions that can sustain the work - in perpetuity, in the case of a land trust. One example is Mount Grace's Living Endowment Program™, whereby donations of forested land provide a renewable source of income while serving to demonstrate sound forest stewardship.

Another opportunity for making a commitment to Mount Grace, for the long run, is a gift or pledge to support my run in the *Bay State Marathon* on October 17 in Lowell, MA. Originally inspired as an event to mark my fortieth birthday, I'm dedicating the 26.2 mile effort to the Mount Grace Endowment Fund, *for the long run*. I hope you'll join me.

Thank you.

Leigh Youngblood
Executive Director

Views *from* Mount Grace

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust protects significant natural, agricultural and scenic areas and encourages land stewardship in North Central and Western Massachusetts for the benefit of the environment, the economy and future generations.

We welcome your articles, photographs, comments and suggestions. For information about becoming a member or to request a change of address, please contact our office at:

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Views from Mount Grace Editor

Susan LaScala

Views from Mount Grace Design and Layout

Donated by Annette Ermini

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long-term research projects. The headwaters of this long-term research site will now remain intact, allowing the scientists to focus their analysis on weather, long-term climate change, and changes in the forest composition.

The tract, with 3,000 feet of frontage, had the potential to be subdivided into eight to twenty house lots. The sellers were Donald Wilson of Phillipston, and his nephew, William Wilson. Donald said that his motivation in protecting the land is linked to his desire to see people have “more contact with nature and the real things of the world.” He added, “We are forgetting the value of many things—a bird, a tree, a plant, the woods, the forest. My grandchildren were amazed that we

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had salamanders! Our preference was to see this land go with Mount Grace, have a conservation restriction placed on it, and then see it passed on to Harvard Forest.” David Foster, director of Harvard Forest, looks forward to the day when Harvard Forest can assume ownership of the land.

This project is part of proactive conservation efforts of both Mount Grace and the

North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership to fill in a gap on the east side of the North Quabbin Corridor—a 60-mile circular greenbelt of protected land that extends from the Quabbin Reservoir into New Hampshire.

Mount Grace borrowed \$410,000 from the Norcross Wildlife Foundation and our own revolving loan fund to purchase the land. The goal is for a state conservation agency to purchase a conservation restriction with funding by the U.S. Forest Service’s “Forest Legacy Program.” Once the restriction is in place, Mount Grace expects to sell the protected land to Harvard Forest. Both Mount Grace and Harvard Forest are actively seeking donations to help achieve our common goal. ■

CONGRESSMAN JOHN OLVER BEGINS DISCUSSION ON LOCAL ISSUES

Congressman John Olver was the honored guest at the May 26 meeting of the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP). Mr. Olver spoke to the group about his Northern Tier Investment Initiative, designed to address the loss of the region’s manufacturing economy.

In the past, Olver’s office supported similar initiatives, including the Western Mass. Enterprise Fund, which provides seed money to small businesses by offering them low-interest loans.

As a member of the House Appropriation Committee, Olver said there is little federal money to fund projects aimed at economic improvement, but if conservation groups and businesses agree on how to best utilize the region’s resources there may be a better chance of getting future funding.

Olver’s Initiative focuses on five areas that could offer the most in the way of economic improvement for the region.

The initiative’s focus includes:

- increasing the effectiveness of remaining manufacturing businesses;
- attracting new entrepreneurs and jobs, specifically in the field of technology;
- enhancing the arts and cultural opportunities;
- building ecotourism; and
- developing renewable energy projects.

The challenge is to make economic progress while also preserving the natural environment that makes the area so attractive.

The attendees expressed concerns that either conservation or industry might overpower the other, resulting in progress that would be unbalanced. There was a consensus that advances need to be simultaneous, and Olver said that opportunities for jobs and conservation should go hand in hand for overall economic betterment of the region. ■

Carter Pond Road, Conservation Buyers *in* Petersham

B Y D O U G S T E P H E N S

In December of 2003, Mount Grace purchased 103 acres of land off Carter Pond Road in Petersham. Mount Grace

pursued this project at the request of the Town of Petersham, who assigned us their right of first refusal under Chapter 61, in order to protect the land's diverse topography, and widen the protected land corri-

ties about this land. In their generosity, they are willing to purchase the property, protected by a Conservation Restriction, while covering what Mount Grace paid for it, plus costs. It is this commitment to protect and steward land, even though it is no longer "developable," that may drive conservation work in times of tight public funding. The funding provided by these conservation buyers will allow Mount Grace to spend energy and resources on other projects. The process of land protection continues, one project at a time. Conservation buyers make land conservation work. ■



A dramatic outcropping located on the land of the conservation buyer adjacent to the project.

The property includes a hilltop summit, a small wetland, coyote dens, and also connects Quabbin Reservoir land with Mass Fish and Game land.

dor along the Swift River. The property includes a hilltop summit, a small wetland, coyote dens, and also connects Quabbin Reservoir land with Mass Fish and Game land. We are now working with two landowners whose proper-

Hockanum Road, Warwick—Land Purchased *by* Town

B Y D O U G S T E P H E N S

Congratulations Warwick!! On June 21, Mount Grace celebrated the solstice by conveying three lots on the south side of Hockanum Road, 36.03 acres in all, to the Town of Warwick. Originally the Town was going to purchase one lot and a conservation restriction on the other two. Town meeting considered an alternative plan and approved purchasing the restricted interest on the other two lots. In effect, the Town purchased all three lots, in what we believe is a wonderful outcome and a win for conservation in Warwick. With successful grants from the Commonwealth of MA (\$81,840), the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts (\$3,000), raffles and hike-a-thons (\$825), and generous private donations (\$8,500), fundraising is well on its way. You can help us reach our remaining fundraising goal of \$41,500, which will fully reimburse Mount Grace and the Town for the project costs. Get inspired: park at the new trailhead and take a 7-minute hike to the summit! Donations can be made to Mount Grace or directly to the Town of Warwick. Contact Mary Williamson for details at 978-544-7133. ■



Hockanum Hill Parking lot Dedication Day. Pictured left to right are: Claire Green, Chris Duerring, Taylor Loubris, George Day, John, Mary and Ethan Williamson.

Student Conservation Association Workers Assist Mount Grace

B Y A L A I N P E T E R O Y

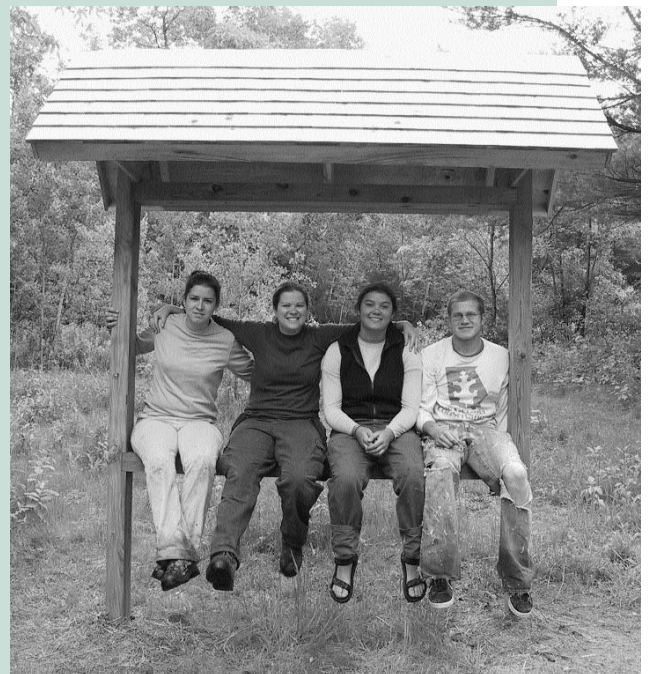
Late last winter, Mount Grace learned that we would be hosts to a Student Conservation Association (SCA) Mass Parks Corp work crew for one week in May. Pam Kimball-Smith, Development Administrator for Mount Grace, requested assistance with trail building and maintenance for several of our conservation areas, and also for the construction of a display kiosk for Skyfields Arboretum in Athol. The four intrepid workers, Kristen Georger, Jessica Popp, Jacob Adam Bellott, III and their crew leader, Lisa Ferensak, arrived in late May to begin a busy week.

In preparation for the SCA work, Alain Peteroy, Stewardship Coordinator for Mount Grace, visited each conservation area to flag the trails and assess the work needed. Four trail systems were upgraded including the trail loop at the 66-acre Hidden Valley Memorial Forest in Wendell (see story page 7); the trail loop at the 166-acre Paul Dunn Woodland Preserve in Ashburnham; two trails at the 511-acre Arthur Iversen Conservation Area (AICA) in Warwick; and two spur trails that lead from Skyfields Arboretum in Athol to the abutting 440-acre Lawton State Forest.

Under the gentle and expert guidance of Board President Richard French, the SCA crew also constructed the informational kiosk at the entrance to Skyfields Arboretum. The kiosk will display a map of Skyfields Arboretum along with educational materials relating to the site, including its natural and cultural history and plant communities.

We wish to thank the SCA crew for their dedication to the conservation of our natural resources, and for their good nature during a rainy week of work and camping in the meadows of Skyfields.

Contact Mount Grace for a complete list of directions to these and our other conservation areas. ■



Student Conservation Association (SCA) workers pose under the new Skyfields Arboretum display kiosk built with their assistance.

Grants Received

Since last spring Mount Grace has received support for our land protection work from the following sources:

- **Boynton Foundation**—the Skyfields Arboretum Kiosk and Brochure;
- **Community Foundation of Western MA**—the Eagleville Pines Project in Athol and New Salem, the Waslaske Farm in Athol and Orange, Bascom Hollow in Gill, and Hockanum Hill in Warwick;
- **Fieldstone Foundation**—the Fiske Pond Project in Wendell;
- **Student Conservation Corp**—for a work team of 4 volunteers for 10 days;
- **William Wharton Foundation**—the Eagleville Pines Project in Athol and New Salem, Cass Farm in Athol, and the Priest Brook Project in Royalston.

The grants from these Foundations have provided a strong show of support for many worthy projects. They have bolstered donations from individual donors while also serving as matching monies for projects involved with state and federal funding programs.

We truly appreciate their generosity!

Special Thanks *from Mount Grace to:*

- Harold Goldman for a computer system
- Kevin Scherer and Dave Small for volunteering to lead hikes for Mount Grace
- Dick French for building the Skyfields Arboretum kiosk with Student Conservation Corps volunteers
- Don Flye for mowing the Skyfields Arboretum paths
- Ken Matthews, Mick Huppert and Ted Cady for window glass for the stewardship shed
- Annette Ermini for continuing to work with us on improving our quarterly newsletter
- Carol Hillman for assistance with our Annual Meeting preparations
- Janet McGowan and Tom Musco for volunteering to manage our Conservation Buyers and Sellers program
- Celt Grant for one large filing cabinet
- Adam Laipson for design and photos for the Cass Farm brochure

Thanks to all for your generous contributions!



Dave Small, Mount Grace Board member and President of the Athol Bird and Nature Club showing dragonflies and an American Toad to a first grade class from the Sanders Street School at Skyfields Arboretum.

NY Botanical Garden Scientist *to* Lead Cronquist Hike

B Y A L A I N P E T E R O Y

On Saturday, August 14, Dr. Brian Boom will lead a botany hike at Hidden Valley Memorial Forest in Wendell, which was the research camp of the late Dr. Arthur Cronquist, a prominent botanist, author, and curator and Senior Scientist at the New York Botanical Gardens (NYBG). This event will be especially gratifying for Brian because Dr. Cronquist was one of his major professors in graduate school.

Under the guidance of Dr. Cronquist, Brian completed his PhD in 1983, and is currently Senior Science Development Officer and Honorary Curator at NYBG. Brian is honored to lead a botany hike on the property that his mentor loved and camped on with his family for over 25 years.

The 66-acre Hidden Valley Memorial Forest was donated in 1996 to Mount Grace by Dr. Cronquist's widow, the late Mabel Cronquist. The property features spectacular cliffs, Lynne's Falls, named after their daughter, as well as views from Jerusalem Hill. The Metacomet and Monadnock Trail (M & M) also runs through the parcel. Recently, Student Conservation Association (SCA) volunteers cleared the Mount Grace trails and re-painted the trail markers at this conservation area located in the heart of the Wendell State Forest.

Please join Mount Grace and Brian Boom in celebrating Dr. Cronquist's life and love of the natural world. See below for details.

Upcoming 2004 Events

Botany Walk at Hidden Valley Memorial Forest

Wendell, MA

Saturday, August 14th

9:30am to 12pm

Join New York Botanical Garden's Brian Boom, PhD, on a botany hike through Hidden Valley, the research camp of renowned botanist Dr. Arthur Cronquist. Explore the seasonal asters and other wildflowers in bloom. All abilities welcome. Call Mount Grace to register. Space is limited to 25 people.

Mount Grace 18th Annual Meeting at The Hillman Orchard

New Salem, MA

Saturday, September 11th

10:30am to 1:30pm

Mount Grace celebrates 18 years of protecting land in the region. Join us on an optional morning hike from 9am to 10am with Bruce Spencer and Sue Cloutier. Annual meeting to commence from 10:30am to 1:30pm. Lunch will feature locally grown foods prepared by Chef Chris Pullin. Tickets are \$25 per person and can be purchased or reserved.

Skyfields Arboretum Stewardship Afternoon

1461 Old Keene Road,

Athol, MA

Tuesday, September 21

3:30pm to 5:30pm

Help weed flower gardens, prune brush and mulch shrubs. All abilities welcome. Please bring gloves. Refreshments provided.

Wetland Plants at Arthur Iversen Conservation Area

Warwick, MA

Saturday, October 9th

9am to 11:30am

Join Elizabeth Farnsworth of Royalston on a wetland exploration thru the 511-acre property in the heart of Warwick. Elizabeth is currently the Senior Research Ecologist at New England Wildflower Society in Framingham. Call Mount Grace to register. Space is limited to 25.



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Annual Meeting Invitation Inside!

MOUNT GRACE LAND TRUST MEMBERSHIP FORM

Think Globally, Donate Locally!™

Please join Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust. Thanks to our members, Mount Grace is one of the most active land conservation organizations in Massachusetts, saving over 18,000 acres in the local region.

Name _____
Address _____ Town _____ State _____ Zip _____
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Please check all which apply:

- I would like to renew / start my membership with a tax-deductible contribution of:
_____ \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$250 _____ \$500 _____ \$1,000 _____ other
- I would like to pledge \$_____ per month to Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust.
- I would like more information on how to protect a piece of land that is special to me.
- I would like to include Mount Grace in my will or as part of my estate. Please send me more information.
- I am interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities at Mount Grace.
- Please do not use my name in your lists of contributors.
- Please do not share my name with other organizations.

Please forward to Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, 1461 Old Keene Road, Athol, MA 01331-9689. Thank you!