

Views *from* Mount Grace



FALL 2021
VOLUME 32, NO. 2

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The scenic view of Mount Monadnock and Mount Grace from the Richardson Overlook. ©Paul Rezendes

An Outstanding Recreational Opportunity

BY TESSA DOWLING

A cheerful red cabin sits at the top of Stratton Mountain in Northfield, taking in the wide eastern view that on a clear day stretches all the way to Mount Monadnock in New Hampshire. Picnic tables scattered around the mowed clearing invite New England Trail hikers to stop and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere of the area. The vision of the landowners, Sam and Barbara Richardson, as well as a wealth of fruitful partnerships, has led to the protection of this view and the 38 acres around it.

The Richardsons bought the land in 2001 when it contained a section of the Metacomet-Monadnock (M-M) trail. They played an integral role in Northfield when Representative John Olver and the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) Western MA Chapter designated it the New England National Scenic Trail. To date, only eleven trails have received the national designation as a scenic trail, which highlights “routes of outstanding recreation opportunity.” The property exemplifies what is outstanding about the New England Trail: amazing views, critical wildlife habitat, and overnight stays available on the tenting platforms or by renting the Richardson-Zlogar cabin. Mount Grace recognized the uniqueness of the site and became involved, first by facilitating the sale of a conservation restriction on the land to the Town of Northfield under a federal Forest Legacy grant, and now by purchasing the land from the Richardsons. Mount Grace and the AMC-Western MA Chapter are busy writing an agreement that ensures the trail network, camping sites, and cabin will remain accessible to the public.

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Dear Friends,

It has been an exciting summer at Mount Grace since the public launch of The Land Forever. I see this as a galvanizing moment where we have the opportunity to take two critical actions: solidify the rich legacy of Leigh Youngblood and launch the next 35 years of this organization that we love. The goal of the campaign is to raise \$3.5 million, of which we have already raised more than \$2.7 million! This past year and a half has shown us that land conservation is a necessity. Protecting our natural resources and access to the outdoors for recreation, clean air, clean water, biodiversity, and resilience has never felt quite so urgent.

The vision of The Land Forever is to secure three promises: to be the long-term stewards of the land we protect, to create a reserve that will enable us to quickly respond to conservation opportunities, and to make critical energy-efficient improvements and much-needed repairs to our buildings. We ask each of you to remember that our Annual Fund is also a crucial part of ensuring our capacity to protect special places like the Richardson Overlook, and our ability to

invest in not only farm conservation but also farm viability. We hope you will maintain your support for today's needs while also participating in this campaign for our future.

This morning I hiked Tully Mountain in the fog and a light drizzle, and I looked across the rolling forests to Wachusett Mountain, Mount Monadnock, and East towards the Quabbin Reservoir. I felt so overwhelmed with gratitude that I get to call this little green corner of the earth home and to all of you for doing so much to protect what makes it special.

Thank you for building Mount Grace and for ensuring that we keep up this critical work together for the next 35 years!

Warmly,
Emma G. Ellsworth
Emma G. Ellsworth
Executive Director

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.

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

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A Model for the Sustainable Future

BY DAVID FOSTER

The Earth faces a crisis of climate, biodiversity, and human inequity. When I joined many friends recently to recognize 35 years of remarkable accomplishments by Mount Grace, my thoughts centered on this modest organization as a model to address these challenges that face us all.

Technology is critical for our future. But, conserving our lands and waters is the only way to guarantee that the future is resilient and sustainable. To accomplish this, we need an integrated perspective and approach that embraces all lives, engages all possible partners, and scales from backyards and communities to regions, nations and the globe.

Mount Grace has pioneered such an approach, one that is continually improving and extending in influence. It embraces all lands and sustainable management, from farmlands and managed woodlands to forever wild lands, as it seeks to reinvigorate our towns, expand local food and wood production, and sustain our rural landscapes. It collaborates to scale its impact, by gathering landowners into large landscape conservation projects that expanded the scope of a national funding program and by coordinating private and public partners in the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership. That partnership inspired the Wildlands and Woodlands initiative and Regional Conservation Partnership network that now spans seventy percent of New England, is spreading down the East Coast, and is informing national and international conservation strategies. It focuses



Keith Ross of LandVest, MA Senator Anne Gobi, and Leigh Youngblood with other partner representatives celebrate the completion of a Landscape Partnership Program project in Templeton.

on people and communities through regional planning; the mentorship of future leaders through the MassLIFT/TerraCorps program; and the Campaign for Affordable Farms that connects families with land, yields healthy food to outlets like Quabbin Harvest Food Coop, and expands and improves our regional food system.

Mount Grace is our local land trust. It is also local heroes who inspire national conservation, like Keith Ross, Leigh Youngblood, Cynthia Henshaw, David Graham Wolf, Jay Rasku, Jamie Pottern, Sarah Wells, and Emma Ellsworth. Its work and people are our best hope for the Earth's future.

Recreational Opportunity *> continued from page 1*

Conserving this property also protects surrounding wildlife habitat. Abutting Northfield State Forest, it is connected to a state conserved land corridor that stretches northeast from Sunderland to Warwick. The entire area is designated by The Nature Conservancy as critical for protecting state biodiversity. Moose are browsing in areas previously cut for timber harvests. Audubon focus species, such as the chestnut-sided warbler and the black throated green warbler, can be heard singing amongst the trees.

For Sam and Barbara, the continued presence of hikers on the land is important for the legacy they want to leave behind. Both Richardsons have devoted a considerable amount of time

maintaining the cabin and grounds. Sam Richardson has volunteered his time maintaining and creating trails since 1972. As a teacher at Northfield Mount Hermon, he shared his love of nature with students by starting an Outdoors Club that adopted a section of trail. In an interview with AMC, Sam explained that trails encourage people "to get out into the woods and hopefully develop an appreciation of and reverence for our natural environment." Trails are outstanding in the way they connect landscapes and people. Thanks to the natural beauty the Richardsons have worked to safeguard, people taking a walk through the woods may be inspired to become a life-long conservationist.

Leigh Youngblood's Legacy: The Land Forever

BY LEIGH YOUNGBLOOD



In 1994, supported by an array of partners and mentors, Leigh began enthusiastically building the Mount Grace we know today. She is shown here with co-worker Deb Becker (left) and board member Mary King at our New Salem cottage headquarters. Photo Credit: Alan Morgan



Leigh Youngblood with landowner Warren Facey.

When a group of young friends gathered in the mid-1980s to talk about doing something about land being lost to haphazard development, could they have imagined their dream still going strong 35 years later? With pro-bono legal assistance from the late Diane Esser of Greenfield, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust was incorporated on June 20, 1986. By the end of the same year, Mount Grace completed its first pre-acquisition of nearly 400 acres of land that would soon become the Lawton State Forest.

Thirty-five years later, Mount Grace has helped conserve more than 35,000 acres, primarily, but not exclusively, in its 23-town region that spans parts of both Franklin and Worcester counties. Working collaboratively to maximize effectiveness, flexibility, and efficiency, most of those acres are owned or managed by other nonprofit or public entities. Today, Mount Grace is the land steward for 10,000 of these 35,000 acres.

Bill Foye of Athol, Lake Mattawa in Orange, and Lexington was the first landowner I worked with when I was hired as a part-time land protection assistant to Keith Ross in 1994. Bill grew up fly fishing along the branches of the Swift River prior to the construction of the Quabbin Reservoir. Later, as a professor of medicinal chemistry, Bill began purchasing land in the 1960s along trout streams to protect their cold-water habitats. Our first project together was at the western base of Tully Mountain. Mount Grace still holds that conservation restriction and is responsible for it in perpetuity, or forever.

Peggy (nee Allen) Power Biggs of Greenfield, Athol, and Cambridge, MA bequeathed the former Willis Farm homestead she lovingly restored to Mount Grace in 1999. I worked with Peggy on the conservation restriction she donated to the Millers River Watershed Council on the 40 acres where the Mount Grace offices and Skyfields Arboretum are located directly adjacent to the Lawton State Forest, our first project.

For me, The Land Forever is an ambitious and practical way to fully realize the dreams of so many, including the hundreds of landowners partnered with during my tenure, before it, and into the future. Your support for The Land Forever is needed for our collective legacy to continue.

Work in Progress for Local Food

BY CATHY STANTON

A central part of Quabbin Harvest's mission is to support local agriculture, including farms that Mount Grace has helped conserve. Over the past year, we've sourced food from five of those farms in the North Quabbin: Diemand Farm (Wendell); the Farm School (Athol); Moore's Maple Grove and Seeds of Solidarity Farm (Orange); and Red Apple Farm (Phillipston).

We also buy directly from many other area farms. But a lot of our produce and some other products come to us through Marty's Local, a delivery company based in South Deerfield. Marty's partners with more than 70 farms in western Massachusetts, eastern New York state, and elsewhere in the region. They also make deliveries from the big wholesale produce markets so that small businesses like ours can offer non-local but popular foods like bananas and lemons. Marty's helps give us more range and variety—and therefore more appeal for customers—than we could achieve if we were trying to source everything directly ourselves. It shows how important the “in-between” players like wholesalers and distributors can be in helping rebuild and strengthen more local and regional food systems.



Kristen Wilson of The Farm School in Athol delivers fresh produce to Quabbin Harvest's store manager Julie Davis for the 2021 summer senior farm share program. Photo: Cathy Stanton.



Ricky Baruch of Seeds of Solidarity Farm in Orange harvests kale and spinach in one of the farm's season-extending, climate-resilient hoophouses. Photo: Oliver Scott Snure.

The role that Marty's plays in our supply chain also shows that the definition of “local” can be less clear-cut than we tend to think. Take milk. No North Quabbin farms sell liquid milk directly to retailers, so we source from Mapleline Farm in Hadley. Is it “local”? It's the closest we can get in the quantities we need. And it supports another small North Quabbin business, Bear's Dairy in Royalston, which delivers it to us every Tuesday morning.

We also sell a lot of coffee from Dean's Beans, roasted in Orange. We think of that as translocal—that is, one mid-sized North Quabbin company sourcing ethically to support small farms and co-operatives all over the world.

Over the past 12 months, Quabbin Harvest has purchased more than \$236,000 worth of products from local and regional food suppliers. That represents well over half the foods we sell, a proportion that keeps rising all the time as we strengthen our inventory mix, work with new farms and other producers, and continue to partner with other companies like Marty's Local as they also expand their offerings. It's all a work in progress!

MARGARET POWER BIGGS SOCIETY

Member Profile: Beth and Eliot Nottleson

BY DAVID KOTKER

Beth and Eliot Nottleson have always found many ways to encounter and appreciate the outdoors. Whether biking on roads or on trails, skiing cross country or downhill, paddling, running, mountain climbing, or plain old hiking, their joy for getting out in the fresh air and nature is unmistakable.

This love of nature ultimately led them to Mount Grace after the two moved to the region to work in medicine. Beth is a family doctor at Tully Family Medicine and Eliot is a physician's assistant at the Winchendon Family Health Center. "We came here partly because Heywood Hospital was a really friendly environment for family doctors," Beth explains. "About half their deliveries were performed by family doctors, which was rare 20 years ago, and that made it a great place to start."

After moving to Orange, they immediately began to explore the area. "The mountain bike trail around Long Pond had its ribbon-cutting two weeks after we moved in," Eliot says, "so that was ideal for me. I'm there all the time." Beth adds, "We go up to the top of Tully Mountain a lot too. It's great for sunrises. That's the hike we take our friends on when they visit to say: 'Here's our area. This is where we live.'"

Eliot and Beth became Mount Grace members in 2013, joining the Margaret Power Biggs Society in 2019. "We have wanderlust, we're always looking for new places to see," says Beth. "That's part of why we care about Mount Grace. I'm so impressed by the number of different places Mount Grace protects, and we probably haven't been on more than 1/3 of them."



Beth and Eliot Nottleson hiking during the winter with Mount Grace in the background.

"I want everybody to know about Mount Grace," Eliot explains. "I sometimes describe places in Royalston to people in Winchendon and they've never heard of them. I want to say 'hey, look at this treasure we have here!' You don't have to pay a bunch of money to travel, there are some amazing places right here."

If you would like information about joining the Margaret Power Biggs Society, please contact David Kotker at 978-541-1767 or kotker@mountgrace.org.

Fall 2021 Upcoming Events - Join Us!

Richardson Overlook Hike

Sunday, September 26th
Top of Alexander Hill Rd, Northfield
RSVP Required

Forest Hike

Friday, October 15th
Fern Glenn Conservation Area, 633 Teel Rd,
Winchendon
RSVP Required

Mount Grace's 35th Annual Meeting

Saturday, October 2nd, 2021
Captain's Farm
106 Elmwood Rd, Winchendon
See attached insert to register!

Visit our website at mountgrace.org/events for up-to-date event information.

Thank You To Our Supporters

Grants Received

\$205,492	Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game In-Lieu Fee Program
\$30,000	Mifflin Memorial Fund
\$10,000	Fields Pond Foundation
\$9,780	Robinson Broadhurst Foundation
\$7,500	Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts

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*Our wonderful crew of volunteers over the spring and summer for helping us run events,
take care of properties, and everything in between!*

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Mount Grace has launched **THE LAND FOREVER** campaign!

The Land Forever is our \$3.5M campaign that will secure three promises:

Caring for the Land

To ensure Mount Grace's work in perpetuity and allow us to be the long-term stewards of the lands we protect.

Responding to Opportunity

To expand our revolving conservation fund: the Leigh Youngblood Conservation Opportunity Fund.

Working Responsibly

To provide public access and energy efficiency improvements to our buildings.

Mount Grace has raised more than \$2.7M for the campaign so far, but we need your help to meet our goal!
Visit mountgrace.org/thelandforever to learn more and donate.