

Views *from* Mount Grace



FALL 2022
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Persistence Pays Off at Tully Lake

BY DAVID KOTKER

One of the first things I heard about on coming to Mount Grace in 2007 was the fate of a wooded hilltop on the southeastern shore of Tully Lake. The property had been slated for a 55-lot subdivision by owner Gregg Duquette and neighbors were concerned at the impact dozens of houses would have on the rural character of the lake—then as now a magnet for tens of thousands of walkers, paddlers, and lovers of nature each year.

Years went by, but no year ever went by without numerous conversations about what could be done to protect Tully Lake. Mount Grace's efforts to purchase the land from Duquette did not succeed, but neighbors, joining together as the Friends of Tully Lake, were able to raise awareness about the myriad environmental risks of the proposed subdivision. The Athol Planning Board ultimately reversed its preliminary approval for the project.

Over time, the stories and characters involved changed. The land was auctioned in 2015, but Mount Grace was outbid by new owner Ed Jardus. Conservation staff met frequently over the next several years with Ed and his brother Michael as they considered the ramifications of either conserving the land with Mount Grace or leasing it for a massive commercial solar array.

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Dear Friends,



My father-in-law Bill Ellsworth was an outdoorsman, more comfortable amongst the trees than anywhere else. Since Bill's recent passing, evenings have been spent sharing our memories of Bill's many antics. Each of these tales centered around landmarks from his beloved woods that have names passed down for generations: "the old chestnut," "the red gate" (that has long since lost its paint), "Gram's run," where Bill's mother shot a deer that got the family through a hard winter.

The stories reflect not just the familiar landmarks, but also intimate knowledge of the land - where to find wild cucumber, the song of the wood thrush, the best fishing holes for brook trout. These are survival skills, but also life skills: learning to sit and be still, to find calm. The community's relationship with these woods gives them sustenance.

Mount Grace helped conserve Bill's land, the place where he grew up and raised his children. This enabled Bill to retire with dignity, without betraying his devotion to the land he loved and nurtured. When we conserve land we protect wildlife connectivity, biodiversity, good soils. We also protect generational relationships with the land.

This is at the core of Mount Grace's mission and culture. It is at the core of the urgent work ahead of us all: to work to restore our relationships with the land.

I am grateful to be able to visit the landmarks that guided Bill's life. I am grateful to all of you for making such a deep and profound impact on our region, on our forests and farms. Thank you for helping protect Bill's and all our legacies.

Warmly,

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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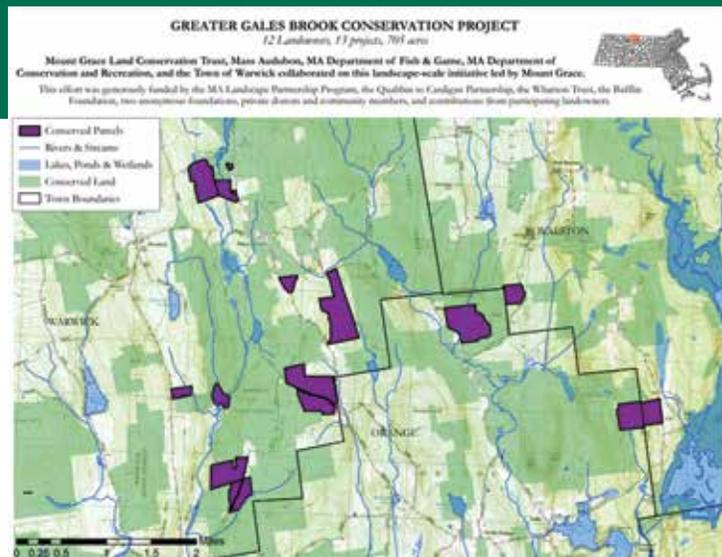
Greater Gales Collaboration Yields Greater Results for Conservation

BY SARAH WELLS

When I was a little girl, my mom would watch the skies when a summer storm was approaching. She'd wait until the wind picked up, and before the first raindrops fell, she'd take us outside and tell us to listen to the trees.

Back in September '19" I met Kate from Mass Audubon and Jen from MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) at a bakery in Greenfield. We nibbled on pastries and drank coffee while looking at maps and dreaming up a potential collaborative project. We didn't know then that a storm was brewing, that COVID 19 would toss our outreach plans out the window. That day, we planted a seed that we'd nurture for the next two years through all manner of stormy weather. With sunshine and sustenance in the form of truly fantastic local and state partners, eager landowners, and \$1.4M of public and private funding, our idea took root and grew into a real and sturdy project.

Together, we conserved 704.5 acres across thirteen projects in our Greater Gales Brook Conservation Project in Warwick, Orange, and Royalston. Mount Grace now has two new Conservation Areas, one by the Tully Trail on Butterworth Road in Royalston, and the other to be used by the cows of Chase Hill Farm on Hastings Heights Road in Warwick. Thanks to two Warwick families, we also have two new Conservation Restrictions on properties that have been carefully and lovingly maintained for decades. Warwick State Forest, the Fish Brook Wildlife Management Area, and the Tully Mountain Wildlife Management Area have all been expanded. Mass Audubon has



a new Wildlife Sanctuary, and Warwick has a new Town Forest that citizens voted unanimously to create. The underlying partnership made this landscape-scale conservation possible.

Partnerships are a bit like trees. In the best cases, when everything lines up just right, the tree withstands the storm. It stretches into new limbs, drops new seeds, grows deeper roots, and fortifies its support network in the soil. Our partnerships aim to do the same.

The Greater Gales Brook Conservation Project was a collaborative effort of private landowners, Mount Grace, Mass Audubon, Massachusetts (MA) DCR, MA Department of Fish and Game, and the Towns of Warwick and Royalston. It was supported by the MA Landscape Partnership Program, the Amelia Peabody Charitable Fund, the Baffin Foundation, the Quabbin to Cardigan Regional Partnership, the William P. Wharton Trust, an anonymous foundation, and many generous donors.

Persistence Pays > *continued from page 1*

In 2020, Michael Jardus listed the property. Once again, Mount Grace hoped to protect this land. However, almost at once we learned the property was already under agreement with a buyer. In the spring of 2021, we began discussions with the new owners, Paul and Jill Vento. This time conservation began to move forward swiftly. The Ventos, who live in the house on top of the hill, were motivated to ensure that the woods were permanently protected.

The property has been split, with the 18-acre house lot abutting a second lot of 187 wooded acres. After negotiations involving Mount Grace, the Ventos, and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the partners agreed Mount Grace would pre-acquire the 187 acres for transfer to DCR. "Jill

and I are so happy to have moved to such a gorgeous part of Massachusetts," Paul Vento explains, "and we are honored to be part of the long effort to protect the beauty of Tully Lake. We are thrilled that these acres will be conserved for perpetuity."

Today, after more than 20 years of persistence by Mount Grace and unflagging efforts by the whole community, this hillside serves as a monument to a community that would not give up on the land.

This project was supported by the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts.

Blazing Trails at Richardson Overlook

BY DAVID KOTKER

If you've ever hiked in Northfield, you've almost certainly enjoyed the work of Sam and Barbara Richardson. Since the 1970s they have been building trails, as Sam explains, "to encourage people to get out into the woods and develop an appreciation of and reverence for our natural environment."

This summer, Sam and Barbara took a huge step to secure their conservation legacy forever by transferring the crown jewel of their trail kingdom to Mount Grace.

Known as the Richardson Overlook, these 38 acres sit atop Stratton Mountain with a panoramic view from mountaintop to mountaintop all the way to Monadnock in New Hampshire. The view can be reached by hikers along the New England National Scenic Trail, which runs right through the site.

Bringing the trail to the overlook took some hard work on Sam and Barbara's part as the original route was closed a decade ago and the Richardsons worked with local hikers to map, blaze, and clear a new trail from the Northfield Town Forest on Gulf Road north to their vista.

But reconnecting the trail was only the first step. Assisted by their friend Mike Zlogar and local volunteers, Sam and Barbara built a cabin, firepit, and other amenities making the site a destination for overnighting hikers.



U.S. Congressman John Olver cuts the ribbon while Mike Zlogar, Barbara & Sam Richardson look on. (May 2011)

This summer, the Richardsons completed an agreement with Mount Grace and the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) under which Mount Grace will own the land and AMC will manage the cabin in perpetuity.

The new partnership will ensure that hikers, walkers, and members of the community are always welcomed at one of the most magical spots on New England's National Scenic Trail.

Stewardship Innovations

BY JENN ALBERTINE

Mount Grace's Stewardship program is adopting a "two lens" approach to our relationship with the land that we steward. The "two lens" approach merges the "high-tech" with the "TEK" (pronounced tech).

"TEK" means Traditional Ecological Knowledge – knowledge held by Indigenous people and passed down over thousands of years across generations. Indigenous Tribes sustainably

managed these lands for thousands of years before colonial management practices brought the environmental degradation we are mitigating now. Their way of knowing and being in relationship with the land gives a different perspective of what the land needs to be healthy and thriving. Partners from the Nipmuc Tribe are now working with us to integrate TEK into our stewardship tools.

Not Just a Grocery Store

BY CATHY STANTON

What is Quabbin Harvest? After nearly eight years in our Mount Grace-owned location, that may seem like a strange question. And we certainly have lots of customers who simply see us as a small grocery store with a focus on local, fresh, and organic foods.

But a closer look at the store sometimes proves puzzling. For one thing, we work hard to give away as much food as we possibly can. A lot of food stores do this, including big supermarkets. But that food is usually unsold surplus or things nearing their “sell by” date, not the top-of-the-line fresh and often locally sourced produce and other good things that we distribute through the Healthy Incentives Program and other Community Shares programs.

We also hold periodic fundraising campaigns, which can make us seem more like a non-profit organization than a regular business. But we’re trying to do something that is very close to impossible, which is to turn a profit selling (or giving away) high-quality food at a very small scale in an economically challenged area. And we’re not just a regular for-profit business; like our fellow food co-ops we are deeply mission driven. We’re continually working to strengthen our business operations, but fulfilling our mission—to provide healthy food at an affordable price, while building community, supporting local agriculture, and supporting the environment—is always at the center of what we’re doing.

As we head into our fall fundraiser, and as Mount Grace wraps up its successful capital campaign, the synergies between our two missions are clearer than ever. We’re both connecting the dots among environment, economy, and community. And we both recognize that the land and water of our beautiful part of the world is a vital underpinning of our shared lives here. As we move together into an uncertain climate and future, we’re proud to be adding this unique hybrid grocery store into the local landscape.



Volunteers Norah Dooley and Maureen Blasco, both of Royalston, are kept busy packing vegetable shares on distribution days.

On the “high-tech” side of things we have begun to use satellite imagery to complete our annual monitoring remotely. Not only do these satellites allow us high resolution imagery to monitor for conservation violations but they also use infrared imagery to allow us to monitor forest health by measuring photosynthesis rates of the forest and tracking landscape level changes in hydrology and forest cover. We can track the regeneration rate of a forest after a timber harvest or storm blowdown. We can detect an outbreak of a pest, like the gypsy

moth, that might be damaging the forest. And we can detect the impact of heavy rains on flooding and identify where mitigation could help reduce these impacts.

This “two lens” approach teaches us to not treat land like a resource but rather to be in relationship with the land and to focus on what we can give to the land in order to best care for it. In the process we not only heal the land, but we begin to heal ourselves.

MARGARET POWER BIGGS SOCIETY

Member Profile: Max Feldman

BY DAVID KOTKER



Max Feldman joined Mount Grace in part because “the ways Mount Grace supports farms are so innovative and inspiring I just wanted to help any way I could.”

For Lynne Feldman, who serves on Mount Grace’s Climate Committee, the motivator was a warming planet: “Mount Grace has really done great work looking at ways to address climate change through forest conservation. Making that connection between protecting the trees and the climate is something more people should hear about.”

Both agree that Mount Grace plays a central role in the North Quabbin, where they moved to raise a family after meeting in New York City.

For Max it was a homecoming. “Growing up around here I didn’t really focus in on the blessings of nature,” Max explains. “I wanted to be a city kid. It was living in New York that really taught me to appreciate nature. I’d come back for visits, and it would be such a relief to be in the hills and woods amid the quiet.”

Max and Lynne studied music technology at NYU, but really got to know each other later while working at the same recording studio. Lynne has been Emmy-nominated for her work while Max worked for years behind the scenes to put on the Grammys.

After many visits, the couple moved to Petersham in 2009. “The quiet and peaceful nature of it just pulled us back,” says Max. There were other things to consider, Lynne adds, “I was thinking how are we going to get a stroller up to a sixth floor walk-up?”

Now rooted here, both plan to stay involved with Mount Grace. “It’s like being a parent when your kid goes to college,” says Max, who’s term as Board President ends this Fall. “You know you’ll always keep an eye on them.”

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 2022 Upcoming Events ~ Join Us!

ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, October 8, 2022 at 2:00 – 5:00 pm
The Vento Property
3824 Chestnut Hill Ave, Athol MA
\$35 per person (Free for children 12 and under)

*Graciously hosted by Paul and Jill Vento,
join us to celebrate the protection of farms, fields, and forests for 36 years!*
RSVP at mountgrace.org (click “Get Involved > 2022 Annual Meeting”)

Visit our website at mountgrace.org/events for more information.

Thank You To Our Supporters

Grants Received

\$100,000 Alice S. Pasterczyk and Helen Czech Conservation Fund
\$100,000 Anonymous Foundation
\$75,000 Greenfield Savings Bank
\$40,000 Anonymous Foundation
\$20,000 Lincoln Institute of Land Policy
\$10,000 Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts
\$10,000 Fields Pond Foundation
\$5,000 Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts

Gifts were Received *In Honor of*

Mimi Helen Jones
Johanna and Darlene Lawlor-Moore
Starting conversations with the Nipmuc
Jay Rasku
David Spackman
Allen Young

Gifts were Received *In Memory of*

William Ames
Helen Czech
Jeffrey P. Holston
Emily Jones
Peter Knowles
John and Dorothy Meilus
Kay Newcomb
Stan Piro
Edith Potter



Special Thanks *from Mount Grace to ~*

Nancy Allen for loaning a tent and helping set it up;

Petersham Police Chief Peter Buck for free crowd control;
Andy Cole for Skyfields renovations and answering questions during the tour;

Tom Chalmers for drafting our plans for the new building at Skyfields;

Paul Grzybowski for researching the history of Skyfields and other conservation areas;

Christian Hains for moving and organizing our server in the new server closet and for providing power to the stage at New Salem Preserves;

Carol Hillman for hosting our 2022 Margaret Power Biggs Society gathering at New Salem Preserves;

Mimi Jones and Unitarian Church in Petersham for loaning chairs and a rain-out location;

Janice Kurkoski for researching Skyfields building renovations, helping to plan the open house, answering questions during the tour, and tabling;

Jim Levitt for assisting with our 2022 Margaret Power Biggs Society event;

Bryan Long and Ingrid Schatz donating a 10x10 tent to Mount Grace;

Howard Mathison for work on the doors to the server closet;
Al Rose and Red Apple Farm for letting us use tables and chairs;
Garth Stevenson for his wonderful performance at New Salem Preserves;

Norm Eggert for taking many beautiful pictures;

Event volunteers Emily Anderson, David Lockesmith, Elda James, Tom Russo, Joan Meyer, Magda Ponce-Castro, Tyson Neukirch, Max Feldman, Lynne Feldman, Sharon Hogan, Joanne McGee, Katherine Buell Parcell, David Spackman, Kathleen Geary;

Whitney Memorial Forest new trail project volunteers Tom and Debra Kane, Steven Rawson, Ray Jackson, Marie Urquhart, Livvy Tarleton, Avril Wilson, Bruce Clapp, Todd Olanyk (Fish & Wildlife), Scott Kemp (Fish & Wildlife);

Our TerraCorps members Amanda Carotenuto, Will Durkin, Julia Fitzpatrick, and Margaret Thurston for an excellent year of service.



Welcome to New Staff

Jessica Bryant has joined our staff as the Communications and Engagement Coordinator. She comes to us from Greenfield with an extensive background in farming, conservation, and education. She will be working on Mount Grace's print and online media, planning events, coordinating volunteers, and fundraising. Feel free to reach out to her at bryant@mountgrace.org with any questions or feedback.



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A photograph of a duck, likely a mallard, on a body of water. The duck is facing away from the camera, with its wings fully extended in a display. The background shows a shoreline with trees and a clear sky.

Greenfield Savings Bank has graciously extended its \$75K matching grant through October 1st! Donate to Mount Grace's The Land Forever Capital Campaign today to double the impact of your gift. We've raised more than \$3,230,000 of our \$3.5 million goal, help us to reach the finish line this fall and secure funding for the next generation of land conservation and stewardship.