

Views from Mount Grace

MOUNT GRACE LAND CONSERVATION TRUST • CONSERVING THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE



WINTER 2017 - 2018
VOLUME 28, NO. 3
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Winchendon



Tracks of wild and domestic animals crisscross the newly-protected Hakkila property, turning any walk on the land into an impromptu tracking hike.

Protecting the Land Because It's Right

BY DAVID KOTKER

Jason Hakkila's grandmother always wanted him to have "a little chunk of land to build a house on," ideally on the Phillipston land that has been in the family for three generations.

Jason took that wish to heart, building his own home, working mostly solo from 7am-noon and then midnight-2am each day sandwiched around his second shift job with the Hampshire County Sheriff's Department. "My best friend's a plumber and my neighbor's an electrician, so that really helped, but most of the rest I did myself," he explains.

Jason inherited the 177 acres the house sits on from his grandmother and he and his wife Angela are now raising two children on their land. In 2013, the Hakkilas, along with more than 30 of their neighbors, became partners in Mount Grace's Quabbin to Wachusett Forest Legacy Project. This year they completed a bargain sale of a conservation restriction on 177 acres to the Phillipston Conservation Commission. Jason and Angela then worked with Jay Rasku, Mount Grace Community Conservation Director, to apply for a Conservation Land Tax Credit—a Massachusetts program that makes it possible for landowners to permanently protect their land but not lose out on its value. *> continued on page 3*





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Dear Friends,

Celebrating the lives of two long-time friends of Mount Grace reaches both ends of what can be seen as a spectrum of conservation: from farms to wild nature. Having grown up on one, Mick Huppert loved to see farms protected and worked by young farmers learning from earlier generations. Elizabeth Farnsworth loved the ecology of wild things, for decades she passed on her passion as an author, illustrator, ecologist, and gifted teacher.



Mick and his wife Louise became Mount Grace members in 1994. Two years later they protected part of their farm in Barre by donating a conservation restriction to Mount Grace before moving to a farm in the next town that was also conserved. Mick served on our Board of Directors from 1999 – 2008 as Treasurer and then President until term limits ended his formal role here. Our Huppert Conservation Area on Narrow Lane in Petersham was established in 2011.

Mick was in of that group of landowners the rest of us owe so much to, our friends and neighbors who love haying every year, even though, or maybe because, it is hard work. Mick's deep concern, insights, and active involvement will continue to be an inspiration as we remember and miss him.

In 2002, Elizabeth and her former husband and collaborator, Aaron Ellison, purchased a home and land in Royalston conserved by Mount Grace in the Tully Initiative. Within months they joined as members. She and Aaron facilitated the Friends of Tully Lake group who watchdogged and stopped an ill-conceived plan to build a subdivision on one of the steep slopes around this beloved and wild-feeling place. Elizabeth worked at Mount Grace briefly and later authored our booklet on Forest Stewardship.

In her 54 years, Elizabeth accomplished a lot. To give you an inkling, she co-authored a field guide to the Connecticut River. This included her building a kayak by hand, paddling from Canada to Long Island Sound, writing parts of the book, illustrating it, composing songs along the way; and then singing accompanying herself on guitar at book signings. It is an honor that Mount Grace is mentioned in her will.

Thank you for caring for the land, too,

Leigh Youngblood
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.

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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Join Us on the Land with Mount Grace Trail Maps

BY DAVID KOTKER

Mount Grace encourages all our members and neighbors to enjoy the thousands of acres we have worked together to protect.

The conservation areas Mount Grace owns comprise 1,700+ acres of diverse landscapes, including miles of trails that are open to the public. To make it easier for people to enjoy places like these, Mount Grace's stewardship team is updating a set of maps for our public trails, and has been upgrading the signage at our public conservation areas.

Right now, you can download maps for these conservation areas for free at mountgrace.org:

- Arthur Iversen Conservation Area, Warwick: moderate 1.5-mile trail to Devil's Washbowl and easy .2-mile trail to Rum Brook
- Fern Glenn, Winchendon: easy/moderate 1 mile loop heading up a steep talus slope at the start and then following stone walls sloping gradually back to the trailhead
- Fox Valley, Phillipston: easy/moderate 1.2-mile loop crossing Popple Camp Brook, prime songbird habitat in the 6-acre clearing near the trail kiosk
- Gifford Family Memorial Forest, Orange: easy .5-mile trail to the Senator Robert D. Wetmore Memorial Fishing Hole and along the West Branch of the Tully River
- Hidden Valley, Wendell: moderate 1.5-mile loop reachable via a 1-mile hike on the New England National Scenic Trail, includes Jerusalem Hill overlook, and Lynne's Falls
- Paul C. Dunn Woodland Preserve, Ashburnham: easy 1-mile loop along a glacial esker and through a managed woodlot
- Red Fire Farm, Montague: two easy loop trails, a 1.1-mile tour of the farm and a 1-mile trip across the Sawmill River (some wading required) out to the bank of the Connecticut. Red Fire Farm is a working farm, so please follow the three farm rules:
 - * Please sign in before you begin your tour (at the pick your own station from June-October) and at the office all other months
 - * Please stay on the trails, which keep to the field edges, and do not walk among the crops
 - * Dogs are not allowed, for food safety



And look for an updated map of our Skyfields Arboretum headquarters and for maps of our two new accessible trails: at Alderbrook Meadows in Northfield and at the Royalston Eagle Reserve when the trails are completed next year!

Protecting the Land *> continued from page 1*

The Hakkila family moved to Phillipston when their original home was taken to create the Quabbin Reservoir in the 1930s. By choosing to protect their land with a conservation restriction, Jason and Angela have ensured that they can keep the land in the family for future generations. That's a prospect that wouldn't surprise either parent. "I grew up around this land, and after you grow up on it you want to protect it," Jason says. "You're down at the pond most days, or you're in the woods, and you don't want to leave."

Those woods run west to Mount Grace's Fox Valley Conservation Area. Sign of fisher and bobcat can be found in the rough terrain, predators that are probably hunting the plentiful squirrels and the chipmunks which take advantage of miles of stonewalls remaining from the property's days as pasture. Today, the Hakkilas grow food for their own kitchen on a half-acre and have started growing Christmas trees as well.

Asked to sum up his experience working with Mount Grace, Jason says, "The people who protect land don't do it to get rich or famous. They do it because they think it's right, and I like that."—a description that applies equally to the dozens of families in Phillipston, Barre, Hubbardston, Petersham, Princeton, and Westminster who joined together to make the Quabbin to Wachusett project a reality.

MARGARET POWER-BIGGS SOCIETY

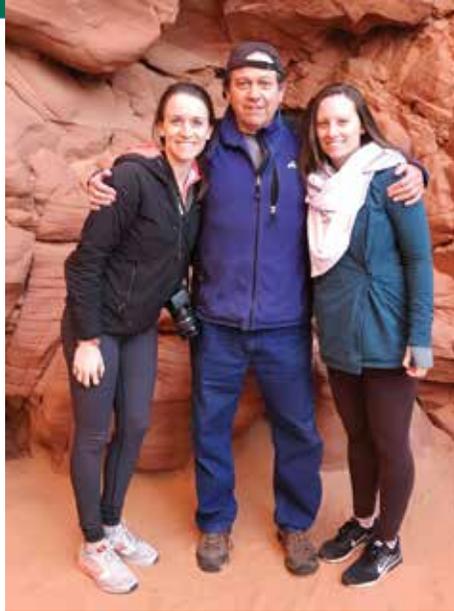
MEMBER PROFILE: David Spackman

BY DAVID KOTKER

When David Spackman joined Mount Grace in 1991, the big new project was the Arthur Iversen Conservation Area—26 acres of land on Hastings Heights Road in Warwick donated by Myra Iversen in memory of her late husband. Spackman and his then wife Judy Selednik protected 68 acres they owned nearby, starting a trend of neighborhood gifts and sales of land that has led to Iversen growing to more than 500 acres (so far).

Spackman was introduced to nature at his grandfather's farm, where he spent summers building and repairing stone walls and clearing land. They bought the Warwick land in 1985 with an inheritance received from that same grandfather.

“Through Mark and Jeannette Fellows, who hayed our land, we met Keith Ross, who helped us protect it,” he recalls. “Art and Myra Iversen were really delightful. They bought their house 50 years to the day before we bought ours, and I always remembered Myra saying, after Art passed away, that they had waited too long to move here full-time.”



David Spackman, with his daughters
Britt and Jenna

Now a full-time resident himself, Spackman joined the Margaret Power-Biggs Society in 2015, and got further involved by hosting a fundraiser. “That’s really a function of approaching retirement,” he explains. “One of the thrills of scaling back is discovering trails I never knew existed. Before I always came up here with chores to do. Now I’ve finally got the time to get out and explore, and to get involved.”

A lawyer specializing in nonprofit and health care law, Spackman served as Chief of the Massachusetts Division of Non-Profit Organizations and Public Charities, an experience which informs his decision to support Mount Grace; as he says: “I wanted to support a local charity that I know, something you could touch and feel and see the results yourself. And I really like Mount Grace’s projects. They cover a wide spectrum, but each one of them makes sense, and they fit what we need here locally.”

If you would like information about joining the Margaret Power-Biggs Society, please contact Major Gifts and Grants Manager David Kotker at 978-248-2055 x19 or kotker@mountgrace.org.

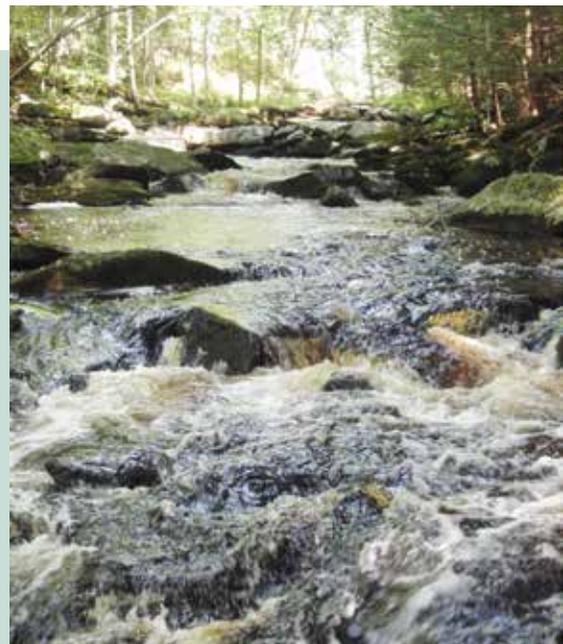
The Work of Trees

BY SARAH WELLS

It’s raining.

Stream 1 is fed by the rain pounding on an asphalt parking lot, coursing through little patches of dried oil, discarded cigarette butts and wads of gum, all while picking up traces of whatever hitched a ride on the bottoms of the hundreds of pairs of shoes that crossed over the lot that day.

Stream 2 is fed by the rain hitting a broad canopy of leaves, trying to penetrate but forced instead to trickle down the latticed leaf layers and bark as it tries to find the ground, intercepted by the fern fronds and met by a thick horizontal wall of last year’s



Our Q2W projects protect more than a mile and a half of coldwater streams, including this one.

A Wildlands Legacy in New Salem

BY SARAH WELLS

After moving to Wendell in 1982, Mason and Ina Phelps set about on a mission that would span the rest of their lives: creating the 2,700-acre Whetstone Wood Wildlife Sanctuary. Mason and Ina wanted to protect nature for the sake of nature. They were committed to creating a true sanctuary that wouldn't be tarnished or fiddled with by any management decisions made by people, well intentioned or otherwise. MassAudubon carefully stewards this vision and the sanctuary that Mason and Ina grew piece-by-piece through conversations with their neighbors. In 2012, Mason helped his neighbor Sarah Kohler purchase a piece of wooded and wild property located between her home and the Sanctuary. Their shared plan was to some day conserve this land.

The Wildlands and Woodlands (W&W) vision, crafted by our neighbors at Harvard Forest in Petersham, calls for the protection of 70% of New England by the year 2060, with 10% to be saved as “wildlands,” places where nature alone calls the shots: no forestry, no farming, no management devised by human minds. Mason articulated this definition and the need to save these places back in the 1980s, just as John Muir did a century before.

The W&W goal of focusing predominantly on protecting well-managed woods broadly mirrors Mount Grace's approach over the past thirty years. We've protected dozens of working farms and woodlots—a testament to our region's rural roots—but we have also deliberately saved a few wildlands. In late July, we added

leaves, then dancing through the cracks until finally touching the forest floor, where it slowly penetrates the soil and allows gravity to beckon it toward the stream.

There's a third scenario, too, where it's too dry to rain. There simply is no stream.

Which stream would you want to make its way to your family's faucet? Land use—and land cover—matter. In a world plagued by water scarcity and contamination, we are incredibly fortunate to live in a water-rich area that is still home to healthy woodlands.

There's a 120,000-acre blanket of trees hugging the Quabbin



Large white ash tree on Sarah Kohler's land.

our newest wildlands project by helping Sarah Kohler protect her deeply-loved 30 acres in New Salem, fulfilling the promise she made to her friends, Mason and Ina.

Reservoir, and our federally-funded Quabbin to Wachusett initiative (Q2W) is adding nearly 4,000 acres of insulation to that blanket. Three dozen local landowners and conservation partners are working with the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership to deliberately safeguard the forests that filter drinking water for 40% of the people living in Massachusetts. Keeping our woodlands intact is one of the greatest challenges we face, and we are grateful for the thousands of Massachusetts families choosing to steward their woods for the good of us all.



A Great Way to Give Back

BY DAVID KOTKER

When the call came asking him to volunteer, Arthur Dumont was ready.

Dumont, who moved to the area 25 years ago to raise a family “somewhere we could take the kids outdoors to hike,” describes himself as an empty nester, who was “actually looking for something to do outdoors.”

That proved to be a perfect match for the Mount Grace volunteer stewardship program, which supports 31 volunteers monitoring conservation land and maintaining trails. Dumont’s beat is Baldwin Hill Conservation Area in Phillipston, where he could be found this October walking the land to record what he observes and see if there are any issues Mount Grace, which holds a conservation restriction on the land, needs to address.

It takes him three or four hours to traverse the trails and boundary lines of “his” 60 acres of forest and wetlands. After a few years of monitoring, he’s decided he prefers volunteering in the fall because it’s easiest to spot boundary markers—which can often be unobtrusive iron pins. Also, fewer bugs!



Baldwin Hill looks out on hundreds of acres of protected wetlands feeding Thousand Acre Brook.

Once the hike is done, he’ll write it up and check in with Stewardship Coordinator KimLynn Nguyen, a TerraCorps member at Mount Grace. It’s a full day, but as Dumont says, “it’s a great way to give back to the community and to the families that protected this land, to make sure these places are always taken care of.”

If you would like to join our monitoring team, please contact Land Stewardship Coordinator KimLynn Nguyen at 978-248-2055 X14 or service_ameriacorps@mountgrace.org.

WINTER 2017 - 2018 UPCOMING EVENTS – *Join Us!*

Winter Tree ID

171 Fitchburg Road, Ashburnham
Saturday, December 16, 1-3pm

Learn to identify trees and other plants after the leaves have fallen! Join Paul Somers, retired State Botanist for the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, and learn about bark, twig, bud, leaf scar, and other woody plant winter characteristics to help increase your ID skills. We will walk on conserved land through hemlock and northern hardwood forests and along the edges of Brown Brook, vernal pools and beaver impounded wetlands. Come dressed for cold and possibly snowy weather. Hot chocolate and cookies will be available after the walk!



Wildlife Tracking Workshop

Skyfields Arboretum
1461 Old Keene Road, Athol
Saturday, January 27, 9am-Noon

Learn to spot and interpret the signs of local wildlife in a morning walk through the trails and woods around Skyfields led by veteran tracker and naturalist Paul Wanta. From mice to moose, the woods and wetlands behind the Arboretum offer denning, grazing, and hunting grounds for an all-star team of native species. This year’s workshop is limited to 25 participants, and is free for current Mount Grace members and \$10 for the general public.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Grants Received:

The Tortuga Foundation	\$55,000	Unrestricted Program Support
Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture	\$6,250	Farm Conservation Program

Gifts were Received:

In Memory of Elizabeth Farnsworth, Mick Huppert, Dorothy Meilus, and Jordan Rosenfeld.

In Honor of the wedding of Thai Ha-Ngoc and Sarah Kugel

Special Thanks *from* Mount Grace to ~

Nancy Allen, Tupper Brown, Anne Cervantes, Bill and Christine Copeland, Anne Covert, Christine Duerring, Rebecca Fletcher, Norm Flye, Clare Green, Bonnie House, Raynold Jackson, Pat Jackson, Lenny Johnson, Mimi Hellen Jones, Michael Humphries, Pat Larson, Bryan Long, Joanne McGee, Micky McKinley, Lis McLoughlin, Danny Monette, Gail Oswald, Conor Power, Steve Rawson, Joel and Jean Shaughnessy, Al Siano, Dave Small, Jim Solinas, Brian and Suzanne Szyndlar, Paul Voiland, Sarah and Ryan Voiland, Severine von Tscherner Fleming, Bethany Webster, Mary Williamson, Melanie Wise, and Glen Youngblood for volunteering to help host, lead, and coordinate Mount Grace events.

Belletetes for providing materials for the footbridge at our Eagle Reserve Conservation Area

The North Quabbin Trails Association, and the Carson Center for Human Services for supporting the creation of the Gunnery Sergeant Jeffrey S. Ames Accessible Trail with their trail day

Julia Blythe, Robin Conley, Warner Clark and the crew at Lane Construction, Joanne McGee, Lis McLoughlin, Dick O'Brien, and Jerry Wagener, for helping with the work at the Gunnery Sergeant Jeffrey S. Ames Accessible Trail

Atlantic Plywood Corporation, Farm Credit East, Michael Humphries Wood Working, Orange Oil Company, Rose 32, Kimball-Cooke Insurance, Orange Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram, Our Family Farms, and the Petersham Grange, for sponsoring our 2017 Annual Meeting

Clarkdale Fruit Farms, Franklin County Solid Waste Management District, Hardwick Farmers Co-op, Dan Leahy and Julia Rabin, Our Family Farms, Alden Booth and everyone at the People's

Pint, Red Apple Farm, and Smith's Country Cheese for providing food, supplies, and good cheer for the 2017 Annual Meeting

Harvard Forest, for hosting the 2017 TerraCorps Orientation and Rand Wentworth's Seminar on collaboration

Kyle Cormier and Arthur Dumont for monitoring conservation restrictions

Mount Grace has applied to renew its accreditation! Mount Grace was one of the first land trusts in Massachusetts to be accredited, in 2013. Trusts must re-apply every five years. A public comment period is now open during which the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, reviews our policies and programs.

The Commission invites signed, written comments on applications. Comments must relate to how Mount Grace complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust and can be found at: landtrustaccreditation.org/help-and-resources/indicator-practices.

To learn more or to submit a comment, visit landtrustaccreditation.org, or email your comment to info@landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may also be mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments: 36 Phila Street, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.

Comments on Mount Grace's application will be most useful by December 31, 2017.

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PHOTO: DAVID BROTHERS

Mount Grace's work to protect Tully Mountain and the landscapes which surround it began thanks to a bequest by Eleanor Whitmore.

Create a Lasting Legacy with Mount Grace

Land Conservation is a commitment to protect the places we cherish now and into the future.

One of the most effective ways of sustaining that long-term commitment to the land is through a bequest. Mount Grace's new legacy program can help you find a planned gift that's right for you—making it possible for you to support the land you care about in perpetuity.

Find our Legacy Program at: mountgrace.org/legacy,
or contact:

David Kotker, Major Gifts and Grants Manager,
at 978-248-2055 X19 or kotker@mountgrace.org.