

Views from Mount Grace

MOUNT GRACE LAND CONSERVATION TRUST • CONSERVING THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE



FALL 2016
VOLUME 27, NO. 2
INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Tri-Town Trails Protected for Posterity
- Joining Together to Protect a Neighborhood
- Margaret Power-Biggs Society Profile
- Making Conservation History in Petersham
- Supporting our Region's Farmers, Strengthening our Local Food Systems
- New Signs Invite Visitors to Discover Mount Grace
- Fall Events with Mount Grace
- Mount Grace Updates

Since 1986 serving:

Ashburnham
Athol
Barre
Bernardston
Erving
Gardner
Gill
Greenfield
Hardwick
Hubbardston
Leyden
Montague
New Salem
Northfield
Orange
Petersham
Phillipston
Royalston
Templeton
Warwick
Wendell
Westminster
Winchendon



Stop by the tri-town marker and tour the scenic trails when you join us on the Feldman property this fall for Mount Grace's 30th Anniversary Annual Meeting!

Tri-Town Trails Protected for Posterity

BY DAVID KOTKER

In 1947 Barbara and Richard B. Ellis bought 40 acres at the top of Briggs Road in Athol. The hunting cabin and colonial barn on the land had no electricity or running water, so the couple embarked on the first of a series of remodels and additions as they raised their children on the land.

Barbara and Richard began purchasing other neighboring parcels as they became available to reassemble what had been the historic Briggs Farm. When their daughter Susie moved back to town, after marrying Ben Feldman, the family owned hundreds of acres in Phillipston, Petersham, and Athol.

This June, as Mount Grace celebrated its 30th Anniversary, Ben and Susie protected 297 acres with a conservation restriction (CR) which allows the family to continue forest management, trail building, and recreational uses. "We are conserving the land so our grandchildren's grandchildren's generation will be able to walk in the woods and feel the magic of growing trees," says Susie. "We are also doing this for the plants and animals that share our planet, whose habitat has been sorely reduced."

When Susie, then an art teacher in the Orange Elementary schools, and Ben, Treasurer for the Town of Athol, moved to the house in 1998 they brought Susie's Norwegian Fjord horse Elke and a love of trails, trail building, and rustic statuary. Today garden gnomes and the occasional mermaid are scattered throughout the property, peering out at hikers and riders as they use the miles of foot and equestrian trails.

> continued on page 3





Views from Mount Grace

FALL 2016
VOLUME 27, No.2

Dear Friends,

June 20, 2016 marked thirty years since Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust's formation by local forester, Keith Ross, and a small group of citizens concerned about the impacts of increasing rates of haphazard development on the amazingly intact landscape of north central Massachusetts.



Innovative from the start, Mount Grace was the first land trust to be assigned the right of first refusal granted to towns in exchange for Chapter 61 forest, agricultural, and recreation property tax reductions. Collaborating with the Town of Athol, the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation, and local voters, business leaders, and community members the beloved 365-acre Lawton Tree Farm became the Lawton State Forest as our first project.

Urged on by intensifying cycles of rash development and multiple recommendations, our strategy has long been to accomplish more conservation and land stewardship by working with others. Since 1997, Mount Grace has staffed, at varying levels, the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership. In 2010, we expanded our 4-member Commonwealth Corps program into the highly lauded, now 36-member, statewide MassLIFT AmeriCorps program. Closer to home, in 2013 Mount Grace initiated the Greater Quabbin Food Alliance. Energetic community involvement is helping power great, long-lasting results.

This June we completed several projects conserving a total of 1,800 acres. What better way to celebrate 30 years of community conservation. The celebration was made so much sweeter by the withdrawal of the Northeast Energy Direct (NED) methane pipeline proposal that would have bulldozed more than 100 conserved properties from the Berkshires to the North Shore, including many that Mount Grace helped landowners to protect. After two years of working with legislators and grassroots groups on this enormous, unnecessary, and detrimental threat to already conserved land, we are all joyously relieved and more fully aware of the connections between our lifestyle choices and the land that we love.

Thank you for your support,

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:

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

1461 Old Keene Road
Athol, MA 01331
978-248-2043 (tel)
978-248-2053 (fax)
landtrust@mountgrace.org
Visit our web site at mountgrace.org
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter

MOUNT GRACE STAFF

Leigh Youngblood, *Executive Director*
David Graham Wolf, *Deputy Director*
Jay Rasku, *Community Conservation Director*
Marcela Maldonado, *Stewardship Program Manager*
Sarah Wells, *Director of Land Protection*
Jamie Pottern, *Land Conservation Specialist*
Sean Pollock, *MassLIFT-AmeriCorps Program Director*
Lisa Cormier, *Administrative Director*
Carol Mayer, *Administrative Assistant*
David Kotker, *Major Gifts and Grants Manager*
John Dooley, *Finance Director*
Ben Carver, *MassLIFT-AmeriCorps Impact Manager*

MOUNT GRACE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Allen Tupper Brown, <i>President</i> | Gill |
| Nancy Allen, <i>Vice President</i> | Petersham |
| Pam Hanold, <i>Treasurer</i> | Montague |
| Max Feldman, <i>Clerk</i> | Petersham |
| David Christianson | Ashburnham |
| Warren Facey | Leyden |
| Lenny Johnson | Carlisle |
| Mimi Hellen Jones | Petersham/Washington DC |
| Ann Meilus | Barre |
| Gail Oswald | Royalston |
| Steve Rawson | Winchendon |
| Joel Shaughnessy | Athol |
| Al Siano | Greenfield |
| Jerry Wagener | Northfield |

MOUNT GRACE MASSLIFT-AMERICORPS MEMBERS

Chelsea Farinacci, *Regional Conservation Coordinator*
Fletcher Harrington, *Land Stewardship Coordinator*
Margaret Hensel, *Regional Conservation Coordinator*
Katherine Ziernac, *Community Engagement Coordinator*

mountgrace.org

@MountGraceLCT



Joining Together to Protect a Neighborhood

BY DAVID KOTKER

Bill Facey has owned Sugarbush Farm, a 75-acre farm in Wendell where he raises grass-fed beef cows and hay and taps maple syrup, for almost 50 years.

Raised on a farm originally owned by his great-grandfather in Greenfield, Bill came to Wendell in 1967. “When we arrived, Al and Elsie Diemand got all the neighbors together and they all came up here and threw us a welcoming party down the road at Diemand Farm,” Bill remembers. They have all been good neighbors ever since.

Local small farms face big challenges. They are less likely to qualify for an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR)—the Massachusetts program which pays farmers for the development rights on their land. When Bill and Laurel Facey approached Mount Grace in 2013 to discuss protecting their land, Sugarbush Farm did not qualify for an APR.

That’s where the neighbors stepped in. The Faceys met at Diemand Farm with local families, including neighbors Nina and Dan Keller, to discuss ways to help keep local farming alive. After several meetings, seven families joined together to protect their land through the Massachusetts Land Partnership Program—which offers funds for conservation projects involving at least 500 acres of land.

Ultimately, thanks to support from the 1772 Foundation and the Russell Foundation, Sugarbush Farm was protected this summer. The farm’s house, buildings, and land were covered with an option to purchase at agricultural value—a legal agreement ensuring that the farm and buildings will always transfer together to a farmer at fair market agricultural value. This is the first use of an option to protect farm buildings in southern New England.

While Sugarbush Farm is already protected, several of Wendell and Montague’s most treasured farms won’t be far behind. The Facey’s neighbors have decided to continue with plans to protect their farms and land together. The Mormon Hollow Landscape Partnership projects are expected to be completed next year, protecting more than 600 acres including the Keller’s farm, Stoney Hollow Farm, and the Montague farm owned by sixth-generation farmer Willie Hunting.



Sugarbush Farm is the first farm in Massachusetts to be protected as a whole farm.

Tri-Town Trails Protected for Posterity *> continued from page 1*

The Feldmans will host Mount Grace’s 30th Anniversary Annual Meeting on Saturday, October 1st. The celebration, which will highlight community efforts to save the region’s farms and forests, will feature nature walks, a gnome scavenger hunt for families, and great food and music.

The land borders Harvard Forest and provides a critical wooded buffer to Harvard’s long-term ecological studies. The new CR is one of a dozen conservation projects making up the Quabbin Heritage Landscape Project, which is funded by the Massachusetts Landscape Partnership Program and will conserve 2,600 acres. “We knew we wanted the property to be open land forever,” says Ben, “and we wanted to settle the ultimate fate of the land now so that it wouldn’t become an issue for future generations, so that it would always be one piece.”

“I’m glad we’ve done this,” adds Susie. “I think the big picture is to leave the place better than it was, and this is a way we can do that. As we have been entrusted to care for a portion of land, this is how we feel we can best assure its health and longevity. Forever.”



Be on the lookout for gnomes when you tour the trails!

MARGARET POWER-BIGGS SOCIETY

MEMBER PROFILE:

Carl Kamp and Alyce Mayo

BY DAVID KOTKER

Avid nature photographers Carl Kamp and Alyce Mayo can sometimes be found at the last house on the edge of Royalston's historical district. They are just as likely to be outdoors, kayaking, hiking, or enjoying and recording the birds and insects they encounter.



An accomplished classical guitarist who has played at Mount Grace events, Carl owns and runs Union Music in Worcester. "Moving here from Worcester, the attraction was nature: birds and butterflies, and even bears," he says. "We truly appreciate having Mount Grace here to do so much."

Carl began birding while at UMass, participating in the annual Audubon bird surveys. One of his prime survey spots is Royalston's Eagle Reserve—where he and Alyce have documented the eagles, pied billed grebe, and other rare birds. Carl is also a proficient amateur entomologist, and former President of the Massachusetts chapter of the North American Butterfly Association. He was the first person to find a Hessel's Hairstreak butterfly in the region, photographing one in a Winchendon cedar swamp protected by Mount Grace.

It was at a NABA meeting in 2000 that the two met, on a bus heading to the Everglades. For Alyce, a Brooklyn-born self-described city girl, a connection to the outdoors sprung from wanting to teach her child about nature. "When my daughter was young, I said 'Let's get a bird feeder,' and that was it, the seeds were planted," she explains. Birdwatching led to photographing both birds and insects, which she and Carl now teach her four grandchildren.

Her images can be seen at the professional women photographers' website pwponline.org.

Recently retired from Baruch College, where she founded and directed the Financial Women's Association Mentoring Program, Alyce can now spend more time hiking and kayaking the Eagle Reserve. Carl and Alyce became members of the Margaret Power-Biggs Society this year to support the permanent protection of the Reserve. "What's inspiring about Mount Grace is knowing you are right there making a difference," Alyce says, "and you can see it in the land."

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.

Making Conservation History in Petersham

BY SARAH WELLS

On June 29th, the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership had a day for the history books. The Department of Conservation and Recreation-Division of Water Supply Protection (DCR) recorded Watershed Preservation Restrictions on the two largest properties within our nationally recognized Quabbin to Wachusett initiative: Chimney Hill Farm and the Tom Swamp tract owned by Harvard Forest.

Working with DCR and others, we are conserving more than 4,000 acres of working woodlands owned by more than thirty landowners between Petersham and Princeton. This work is funded by a \$7 million federal grant from the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program.

The community of Petersham has a strong conservation legacy, thanks in no small part to the "accidental wilderness" surrounding the Quabbin Reservoir. It's also home to some of the largest contiguous parcels in single ownerships in our region, including the Tom Swamp land owned by Harvard Forest and the Hall family's multi-generational Chimney Hill Farm. Totalling 1,231 acres, both are now permanently conserved. Together, these properties represent a mosaic of land uses and demonstrate how land protection can be a proactive tool for maintaining balance in our rural communities.

These two properties alone represent world-class forest research, sustainable forestry and farming, and decades' worth of careful

Supporting our Region's Farmers, Strengthening our Local Food Systems

BY JAMIE POTTERN

Over the last 30 years, Mount Grace has helped protect more than 50 farms, including well-known commercial farms and many smaller homestead farms. In 2002, Mount Grace worked with John Moore to protect his ninth-generation family farm in Orange. “We preserved the land because of all the generations of us who have farmed all our lives,” said Moore at the June 2016 “Celebration of Food & Farms” at the Orange Town Hall honoring Mount Grace’s 30 years of farmland conservation and the farmers who made it happen. “We didn’t want to see everybody’s sweat and hard work turned into house lots – we wanted to keep the land in the family to continue farming and growing food.”

However, for many farms like Moore’s to survive, conservation alone isn’t enough. Farmers need to keep their businesses viable; they need customers. Recognizing the challenges that many of our region’s farmers face selling their products, in 2014 Mount Grace purchased 12 North Main Street in Orange for the expansion of the North Quabbin Community Co-op into a retail space, now called Quabbin Harvest. Moore sells his produce through Quabbin Harvest as well as through the Athol and Orange Farmer’s Markets. Our local farmer’s markets have also been struggling to gain customers. This year, Mount Grace teamed up with Moore

and other farmers, Quabbin Harvest, and community partners in the Greater Quabbin Food Alliance to work together on joint marketing around local food and highlighting stories of local farmers. The Food Alliance is a regional network run by Mount Grace to bring people together to share ideas and develop creative solutions to challenges in our food system. quabbinfoodalliance.wordpress.com/

In addition, our MassLIFT-AmeriCorps member Kathleen Doherty produced the region’s first community food system assessment, *Food and Farming in the Quabbin Region*, which highlighted the voices of stakeholders from across a 6-town region (Athol, Barre, Hardwick, Orange, Petersham, and Warwick) to better understand the health of our local food and farm economy. The Farm School’s Tyson Neukirch calls the report “an incredibly useful document that will be well used by farmers, policy makers, community advocates, business owners, (and others) for years to come.”

Food and Farming in the Quabbin Region was written with support from the Henry P. Kendall Foundation. Copies can be downloaded at mountgrace.org/sustainable-vision-local-farming.

attention to the land. They also represent a promise for the future, guaranteeing that these large properties will continue to filter the drinking water for the millions of people in the metro-Boston area while providing critical wildlife habitat.

“The foresight of individuals like the late John Woolsey, Jr. helped build the foundation for the peaceful rural character that defines today’s Petersham,” says Mount Grace Executive Director Leigh Youngblood. “Landowners tell us it is important personally to them to maintain that quality.”

We are now a two big steps closer to keeping our unique North Quabbin region a connected and resilient landscape.



More of Dave Malysa’s Petersham nature photos can be found on Mount Grace’s facebook page.

New Signs Invite Visitors to Discover Mount Grace

BY DAVID KOTKER

Thousands of people visit and enjoy the places Mount Grace has protected each year. Most of them don't even know it!

The Mount Grace Signs Committee, volunteers working with Stewardship Program Manager Marcela Maldonado, plan to change that—creating standardized signs to be installed at our conservation areas and at other protected properties that offer public access, including farms and land with trail easements.

Working as part of Mount Grace's 30th Anniversary planning group, the Committee has finished the design phase and is currently scouting sites with a goal of having at least 30 signs up by the end of 2017.

So next year, when hikers walk the New England Scenic Trail; or families pick fruit or pick up CSA shares at local farms; or when people look at a waterfall, a spectacular vista, or a wild animal on the land, will they have a chance to learn about Mount Grace's role in protecting the places they love? Signs point to yes!

If you are interested in adding a sign on protected land you own, or would like to be a Mount Grace stewardship volunteer, please contact Marcela Maldonado at 978-248-2055 x12 or maldonado@mountgrace.org.



Volunteers joined the Committee to install a new kiosk designed by Jerry Wagener at our flagship Arthur Iversen Conservation Area on Gale Road in Warwick this summer.

FALL 2016 UPCOMING EVENTS *Join Us!*

North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival
Forster's Farm
Chestnut Hill Road, Orange
September 24-25
10am-5pm

Experience the agricultural, artistic, and cultural bounty of our region in a landscape of protected farms and hills. Stop by the Mount Grace booth for updates on local land protection and to meet the staff, board, and MassLIFT-AmeriCorps members.

Annual Meeting
Ben and Susie Feldman's
Briggs Road, Athol
Saturday, October 1
10am-4pm
\$30 per ticket

Mount Grace worked with Ben and Susie Feldman to help conserve 297 acres of their land in Athol, Petersham, and Phillipston. Miles of walking and equestrian trails on the property connect to Harvard Forest and other protected land. Join us to celebrate 30 years of land conservation and to tour this unique mix of woods and trails.

A Celebration of Bob Wetmore
Gifford Conservation Area
Tully Road, Orange
Saturday, October 15
9am-1pm

Celebrate the life of conservation champion Bob Wetmore as Mount Grace dedicates The Senator Robert D. Wetmore Sr. Memorial Fishing Hole, in collaboration with the Wetmore and Gifford families. The Gifford Conservation Area contains a nearly half-mile stretch of the West Branch of the Tully River, and the fishing hole will be at the northern property line where a diverse floodplain forest with oxbows and numerous deep vernal pools offers excellent opportunities for anglers.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Grants Received:

| | | |
|---|-----------|--|
| Massachusetts Landscape Partnership Program | \$790,300 | Mormon Hollow Working Lands Corridor |
| Massachusetts Landscape Partnership Program | \$578,075 | Gardner-Winchendon Landscape Connection |
| Massachusetts Service Alliance | \$494,280 | MassLIFT Program |
| Stifler Family Foundation | \$325,000 | MassLIFT Spin Off Challenge |
| MA DCR Recreational Trails Program | \$39,354 | Alderbrook Trail Construction |
| The Bafflin Foundation | \$25,000 | Quabbin to Wachusett Project |
| Fields Pond Foundation | \$20,000 | Eagle Reserve Project |
| Natural Resources Conservation Service | \$15,900 | North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership |
| The Land Trust Alliance | \$15,000 | Organizational Development |
| Community Foundation of North Central MA | \$15,000 | Eagle Reserve Project |
| MA Society for Promoting Agriculture | \$12,500 | Farm Conservation Program |
| Fields Pond Foundation | \$10,000 | Gardner-Winchendon Landscape Connection |
| Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts | \$3,000 | Unrestricted-Valley Gives |
| Norcross Foundation | \$1,500 | Equipment Purchase |

Gifts were received *In Memory of*: Nina Barszcz, Leslie and Teresa Burgess, and The Centenary of John Woolsey

Special Thanks *from* Mount Grace to ~

Sean Ashcraft and Peak Expeditions in Orange, Maureen Blasco, David Brown, Ted Cady, Jay Closser, Brad Compton, Bobby Curley and the North Quabbin Trails Association, Amy and Len Engman, Virginia and Oliver Fellows, Lula Field, Celt Grant, Christian Haines, Mimi Hellen Jones, Michael Humphries, Rick King, Dan Leahy, Jeff Legros and the City of Gardner, Diane Lincoln, Mike Mauri, Tom Montagnano, Jetta Petrie, Chris Picone, Doug Plavin at Heywood Hospital, Red Apple Farm, Red Fire Farm, Keith Ross, Dave Small, Paul Somers, Cathy Stanton, Molly Superchi, Uptown Package Store in Athol, Tom Wansleben, Mary Williamson, Pat Worth, and Michael Young, for helping to host, lead, provide supplies for, and coordinate Mount Grace events

Anne Cervantes, Cyndy Cetto, and Pat Worth for office support

Diane Lincoln for giving the gift of song!

Jeff Blanchard, Karen Bulbuk, John Burk, Norm Eggert, and Dave Malysa—photographers extraordinaire

Patience Bundschuh, Barbara Corey, Carl Kamp, Micky McKinley, Alan Morgan, Keith Ross, Charles Thompson, and Allen Young for hosting, playing, and speaking at the 2016 Margaret Power-Biggs Society gathering commemorating Mount Grace's 30th Anniversary

MC Michael Humphries, Sterling Clark and the First Congregational Church of Montague, Jay Goldspinner, Sam Lovejoy, Lisa McLoughlin, Haley Norris, Paul Voiland, and Sarah and Ryan Voiland, for sharing their stories, time, and expertise at our Montague Storytelling Evening

Principal Chris Dodge and the students, teachers, and parents at Dexter Park School; Nancy Regan and the Mount Wachusett Community College Mountaineers Hiking and Recreation Club; Jeff Sautter's Ecology class at Athol High School; and Brian Snell and the Royalston Community School for their collaborations with our MassLIFT AmeriCorps program

Kiosk carpenter Jerry Wagener and Nancy Allen, Mimi Hellen Jones, Dave Malysa, Steve Rawson, and Stephanie Selden for their work on Mount Grace's new conservation area signage

The Agricultural Commissions of Bernardston, Gill, Greenfield, and northfieldfor collaborating on our recent farmland inventory

The 2015-16 MassLIFT AmeriCorps cohort at Mount Grace: Maya Apfelbaum, Nick Atherton, Jaimee Briggs, Kathleen Doherty, and Mallory Durkee for making Mount Grace proud!

Thanks to thousand of citizen volunteers in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, and to allies like MassPLAN, No Fracked Gas in Mass, North Quabbin Energy, the Union of Concerned Scientists, and a host of other groups for sticking together to resist an unnecessary, environmentally detrimental pipeline threatening protected land.

mountgrace.org
[@MountGraceLCT](https://www.instagram.com/MountGraceLCT)





MOUNT GRACE LAND CONSERVATION TRUST
1461 Old Keene Road
Athol, MA 01331

Non Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 183
Greenfield, MA

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

This issue of *Views from Mount Grace* is sponsored by:

**Michael Humphries
Woodworking, Inc.**

158 Birnam Road
Northfield, MA 01360
Phone (413) 498-0018
MHW@michaelhumphries.com
www.michaelhumphries.com

*"Fine Craftmanship in Wood
Interior Architectural Millwork
Custom Cabinets and Furniture"
Since 1975*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Humphries".

Michael Humphries Woodworking, Inc.



Please join us for the 30th Annual Meeting of Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust! This year's meeting will be held at the Feldman's newly-protected property (see page 1) on Saturday, October 1, and will feature tours of the extensive trails on the land before and after the meeting.

RSVP using the invitation inside!