

Views from Mount Grace

MOUNT GRACE LAND CONSERVATION TRUST • CONSERVING THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE



WINTER 2015 - 2016
VOLUME 26, NO. 3
INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- \$25,000 Challenge from Bromley Charitable Trust Supports Mount Grace Annual Appeal
- Margaret Power-Biggs Society Profile
- Forest Legacy News from the Quabbin to Wachusett Project
- Feeding the Community at Quabbin Harvest
- Mount Grace in the Classroom
- Winter Events with Mount Grace
- Mount Grace Updates

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Susan Parke-Sutherland watering the pigs during the Wingate Farm tour.

Affordable Farms Model Succeeds in New Hampshire

BY DAVID KOTKER

Friends and supporters of local farming gathered in Hinsdale, New Hampshire this Fall to celebrate Mount Grace's first out-of-state project—the permanent protection of Wingate Farm. This is Mount Grace's second farm conservation project based on the Affordable Farms model, pioneered by Mount Grace in partnership with Red Fire Farm.

“We are incredibly fortunate to have access to this prime farmland and to have so many dedicated people help us protect our family farm, and we are grateful to have such a supportive and inspirational farming community around us,” said new farmer Olivia Pettengill, who now co-owns the land with her brother James and operates the farm with her business partner, Susan Parke-Sutherland.

In its second season of growing, the farm, which is located just a few hundred yards north of Northfield, has raised 700 pastured laying hens, hundreds of broiler chickens, eight forest-raised pigs, and a wide variety of vegetables and flowers. The laying hen operation began with the guidance of neighboring Picadilly Farm, and Wingate eggs are featured in CSA shares for Picadilly Farm and Red Fire Farm, in Montague, Massachusetts, and are sold in local co-ops. Wingate Farm's organically grown produce and flowers are sold at farmers markets year round.

> continued on page 3



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Dear Friends,

For as long as I have been alive and long before Mount Grace came into being, Mason and Ina Phelps were quietly and persistently acquiring land for conservation, primarily in Wendell, near their home that Mason designed and built. From the mid-1960's to this year the Whetstone Wood Wildlife Sanctuary, now owned by Mass Audubon, grew from a notion to 2,700 acres of land.



During those 50-plus years, there were few conservation-related meetings that Mason didn't attend. He was a founding and continuous member of the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership, for example. I learned a lot from Mason, especially in my earliest days at Mount Grace beginning in 1994. By the end of that year Mount Grace had pre-acquired the first of the seven parcels that would protect 400 acres of Bear Mountain on the south side of Route 2 where it comes closest to the Millers River. That land became part of the Wendell State Forest.

Through example Mason taught how attention to detail and accuracy (he was a mathematician), creative problem solving, working with others, focus, and a steadfast love of the land produces solid results -- and, that keeping a sense of humor, especially in the face of adversity, helps tremendously.

On reflection it seems quite obvious that my own work and perspectives on conservation are influenced by his good example and that, by extension, the other Mount Grace staff and even MassLIFT AmeriCorps members are as well.

When Mount Grace is willing to test new conservation tools, like whole farm affordability, and write collaborative grant applications, as with the Q2W project, it is in the spirit of leading by example. Your end of the year support will help continue this approach into our 30th anniversary year and beyond.

Thank you,

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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Bromley Charitable Trust \$25,000 Mount Grace Challenge

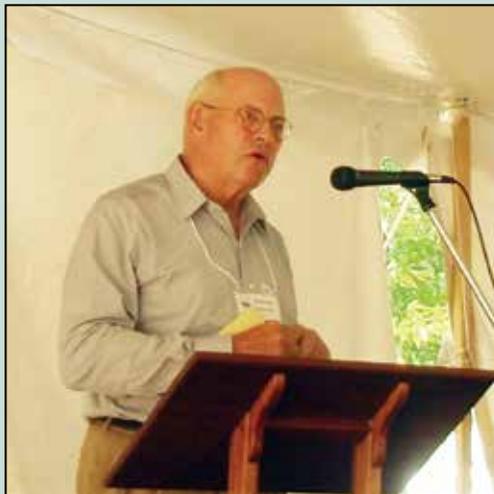
BY DAVID KOTKER

Duncan and Ellen McFarland of the Bromley Charitable Trust have issued a challenge to Mount Grace supporters to deepen their commitment to the land.

Through May 31, 2016, the Bromley Charitable Trust will match the gift of any individual, foundation, or business giving \$25,000 or more over the amount they contributed last year.

The Bromley Charitable Trust supports “environmental and inner city educational and community development initiatives, in order to positively impact physical and social environments for the future. The trust supports environmental groups that: protect natural and working environments and conserve natural resources and preserve habitat for wildlife, agriculture and horticulture - locally, regionally, nationally and globally; have committed, visionary leaders who are compassionate about their mission; and keep administrative overhead as low as reasonably possible.”

Trustee Duncan McFarland currently serves on the boards of New Profit, a nonprofit venture philanthropy fund supporting education and social innovation; Panthera, which works to ensure a future for the world’s big cat species; and Rare, an international conservation organization offering social marketing and technical help for communities addressing environmental threats.



Duncan McFarland speaking at the 2010 Mount Grace Annual Meeting

The Bromley Charitable Trust supports some of the most innovative conservation work in the world today. The Trust became involved with Mount Grace in 2010 after learning about our innovative farm conservation work, and has consistently encouraged the Mount Grace community to recognize the value of Mount Grace programs and increase their support to fund the full range of Mount Grace’s trailblazing conservation work.

The challenge is capped at \$100,000. Gifts of \$25,000 or more from new donors qualify for the match. Gift of stocks or securities, pledges, or monthly giving exceeding the previous year’s gift by \$25,000 will also be matched.

All contributions to the Mount Grace Annual Appeal of any amount are always welcome and are put to good use. Your gift supports Mount Grace’s innovative and important land conservation work!

As this newsletter goes to press, two Mount Grace members have stepped up to the challenge. Thanks to Anne Covert of Brookline and to an anonymous member of the Mount Grace Board of Directors for helping us make a start on meeting this exciting challenge before May 31, 2016!

Affordable Farms Model Succeeds in New Hampshire *> continued from page 1*

Wingate Farm covers nearly 60 acres in the towns of Hinsdale and Winchester, New Hampshire and, until recently, was jointly owned by sisters Carroll Pettengill and Alma Niemiller. In addition to transferring the land to the younger generation, the family conveyed an agricultural conservation easement to Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust. Language in the easement prevents the land from ever being split apart from the house and barns—protecting the whole farm.

An option to purchase at agricultural value (OPAV) has also been placed on the land. These options are increasingly used to guarantee that protected farms stay in agricultural production and in the hands of working farmers. The option allows Mount Grace to ensure that a sale of the farm would be to a farmer at agricultural value.

This is the first time an OPAV has been used to protect farmland in New Hampshire. Without this tool, farmers will continue—as is happening across the country—to get outbid by non-farmers, taking irreplaceable land out of farm production.

The project was described as “a model of innovation in New Hampshire’s farmland conservation” by Ian McSweeney, Director of the Russell Farm and Forest Conservation Foundation, which supported the project along with the USDA Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, the New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), the Tortuga Foundation, the Bromley Charitable Trust, the 1772 Foundation, and the Conservation Commissions in Hinsdale and Winchester, New Hampshire.

MARGARET POWER-BIGGS SOCIETY

MEMBER PROFILE:

Polly Bixby and Karen Grzesik

BY DAVID KOTKER

Like many Mount Grace members, Polly Bixby and Karen Grzesik are avid devotees of the outdoors. Their love of physical activity and the local landscape has inspired them to hike throughout the North Quabbin, including the trails that begin behind their home near Lake Mattawa and head up past Gidney Road to the protected woods beyond, as often as they can, including snowshoeing and skiing the trails in the winter. It has also inspired them to support Mount Grace.

Polly and Karen are both retired after working as physical education teachers at Ralph C. Mahar Regional High School, Karen starting in 1972 after moving to the region from Wallingford, Connecticut, and Polly, an Orange native, beginning in 1976, after returning from California where she had lived for many years. “Growing up on Holtshire Road, I always walked in these woods,” says Polly. “I used to skip school the first day of fishing season every year and head down to some of the local brooks instead.”

“A lot has changed over the years,” she adds, “and there are certainly more houses, but you can walk up Gidney Road now and look at all the new farming that’s being done and the land that is opened up for pasture—I find that so encouraging!”



Polly and Karen

Polly and Karen joined the Margaret Power-Biggs Society last year. “We try to go local with our support and like the fact that Mount Grace has been so successful protecting land locally,” says Karen. “We are always happy to be outdoors whether it’s finding a new place to explore or learning more about the same place, and Mount Grace has really made a difference for the land.”

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

QUABBIN TO WACHUSETT SPOTLIGHT

BY JAIMEE BRIGGS

No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it. —HE Luccock

While the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership doesn’t play much music together, the idea of working together towards a common goal was the inspiration behind the creation of the Partnership in 1997. Almost 20 years later, this collaboration ethic has shown great results regarding land conservation.

Reinforcing the idea that we can do more together, the Partnership is continuing a multi-landowner, multi-partner approach to conservation with the Quabbin to Wachusett (Q2W) Forest Legacy Project. This project aims to protect an

additional 4,000+ acres in Worcester County, creating a corridor stretching from the Quabbin Reservoir to Wachusett Mountain. Twenty-three landowners are working together with the towns of Barre, Hubbardston, Petersham, Phillipston, Princeton, and Westminster and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership to protect their land.

Q2W landowners John and Rise Richardson of Phillipston own a 128-acre property which includes forest land, a sheep farm, and a small sugarhouse where they make about 30 gallons of maple syrup a year. The forested portion of their land has been in Chapter 61 for over 20 years, enabling them to maintain trails where Rise enjoys cross country skiing.

Expanding the Menu for Local Food

BY DAVID KOTKER

Before Quabbin Harvest opened at Mount Grace's building at 12 North Main Street in Orange, downtown Orange was classified as a "food desert" due to the lack of easy access to groceries.

The two groups take complementary approaches to supporting local farms. Protecting farmland and supporting local food markets where farmers can get a fair price are both key elements of a strategy to keep farming sustainable in New England.

Quabbin Harvest has now added two programs to make its healthy local food choices more available and more affordable for people of all income levels. The store's new Basics program provides healthy staple items to all at reduced prices. The store is also partnering with Common Capital and The Farm School to provide subsidized-rate CSA shares through the store for Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program recipients.

Quabbin Harvest also joined with Mount Grace this month to sponsor a presentation by local humanities scholar Cathy Stanton. Stanton's project: "Farm Values: Civic Agriculture at the Crossroads," examines local histories of small-scale farming to start conversations about how farmers have adapted to changing markets. Farm Values focused on six farms: Chase Hill Farm in Warwick, Moore's Maple Grove Farm in Orange, Adams Farm in



Just Roots' Greenfield Community Farm is just one of the new farms sprouting in the Mount Grace region. Partnerships to help market local food are an important way to support and sustain local farming.

Athol, the former King Farm in Petersham, Many Hands Organic Farm in Barre, and Stillman Quality Meats in Hardwick.

Although Massachusetts lost many of its farms in the latter half of the twentieth century, the current revival of interest in local food has led to an increase in farmers, including more young farmers, today, as well as helping to inspire the founding and expansion of Quabbin Harvest.

You can learn more about how our local farms have adapted at farmvalues.net. Or stop by Quabbin Harvest to see the local farm economy in action!

John and Rise are currently putting a Watershed Preservation Restriction on their land with the help of Jim French from the Department of Conservation and Recreation – Division of Water Supply Protection. The Richardsons were not originally looking to purchase a farm several decades ago when they bought the land, but as soon as they saw the area, "it sold itself." Now that they're in their 60s, John and Rise are "looking toward the future," and want to preserve their land forever.

Partners in the Q2W project include the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, East Quabbin Land Trust, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, the Nashua River Watershed Association, North County Land Trust, and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership.



The Richardsons have been raising sheep and selling the wool locally since 1987.

Mount Grace in the Classroom

BY NICK ATHERTON

Beginning this fall, students in the Athol and Orange public schools will be hearing the call of the wild as part of their regularly scheduled lessons. Members of Mount Grace's stewardship team and MassLIFT-AmeriCorps will be serving in area classrooms, planning field trips, helping teachers and students plant gardens, and occasionally even teaching lessons on ecology and natural history. The project will be spearheaded by Nick Atherton, MassLIFT Service Learning Coordinator at Mount Grace.

"If your goal is to build community, curb unplanned growth, and create a legacy of sustainable land use within a region, there can be no more effective way to do so than to educate the next generation who will live there", says Atherton. Mount Grace staff and volunteers are already introducing students at Dexter Park Elementary and Athol High School to the natural communities of the North Quabbin, and will reach hundreds more as the program expands to three additional schools. Although classroom teaching is new territory for MassLIFT members serving with Mount Grace,



Service Learning Coordinator Nick Atherton helps Dexter Park students sort garlic for planting.

this project builds on curricula developed by former MassLIFT members, and is made possible thanks to a generous grant from the John W. Boynton Fund.

WINTER 2015 - 2016 UPCOMING EVENTS *Join Us!*

Long Pond Loop Hike Tully Lake Reservation Doane Hill Road, Royalston Saturday, January 9, 9:30am-3pm

Meet at the Tully Lake Campground parking area at 9:30 to walk the 7.5 mile Tully Long Pond trail. The moderately strenuous hike will be geared towards snowshoers, cross country skiers, or hikers, depending on snow coverage. Please bring a lunch or trail snacks and wear weather-appropriate clothing.

Rum Brook Wildlife Tracking Arthur Iversen Conservation Area Gale Road, Warwick Saturday, January 30, 1-3pm

Tracker and naturalist David Brown will lead an afternoon wildlife walk at our Arthur Iversen Conservation Area. The 518-acre woodland is Mount Grace's largest conservation area and

hosts a tremendous variety of wildlife in several contrasting natural communities. This walk will focus on the eastern part of the property, including the wetlands around Rum Brook.

Brown is the author of *The Next Step: Interpreting Animal Tracks, Trails and Signs*. His website is www.dbwildlife.com

Community Storytelling Woods Memorial Library 19 Pleasant Street, Barre Thursday, February 4, 6:30-8:30pm

Join MC Steve Brewer and new and veteran storytellers for an evening of storytelling celebrating the community and the New England countryside! Featured storytellers include: Senator Steve Brewer; Linda Spink, of Insight Meditation Society; and more!

Wildlife Tracking Workshop Skyfields Arboretum 1461 Old Keene Road, Athol Saturday, February 6, 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. Last year's attendees saw signs of rabbits, deer, wild turkeys, porcupine, and many other inhabitants of our local woods and wetlands. This year's workshop runs from 9-noon and is limited to 25 participants, with precedence given to Mount Grace members based on order of pre-registration.



THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Grants Received:

Tortuga Foundation	\$50,000	Unrestricted / Program Support
The Russell Farm and Forest Foundation	\$37,500	Campaign for Affordable Farms
The Bromley Charitable Trust	\$37,500	Campaign for Affordable Farms
John W. Boynton Fund	\$25,000	Unrestricted
Henry P. Kendall Foundation	\$25,000	Unrestricted
Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts	\$15,000	Quabbin to Wachusett Project
Tortuga Foundation	\$15,000	MassLIFT Americorps Support
George H. and Jane A. Mifflin Memorial Fund	\$10,000	Quabbin to Wachusett Project
Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts	\$3,500	Community Engagement Support

Gifts were received *In Memory of*: Hank Cramer, Mason Phelps, and Michael Solfiell

Gifts were received *In Honor of*: Melinda Godfrey

Special Thanks *from* Mount Grace to ~

Bill and Laurel Facey and Sugarbush Farm for hosting our 29th Annual Meeting

Larry Buell and Earthlands for the tent and tent set-up

Dean's Beans, Michael Humphries Woodworking, Ken Levine at Frames Inc., Red Apple Farm, Smith's Country Cheese, Uptown Package Store, and Allen Young for donating food, beverages, framing, and flowers for the Annual Meeting

Al and Bonnie Benjamin; Steve DeStefano; Aaron Ellison; Ben, Susie, and Josh Feldman; Max and Lynne Feldman; Maud Ayson, Desiree Hamelin, and Freedom's Way Heritage Association; Celt Grant; Pam Hanold; Sean Mahoney; Joe Serio; and David Spackman for helping to host, lead, and coordinate Mount Grace events

Phil Ringwood, Allison Scott, and the DIAL/SELF RISE AmeriCorps members; Nancy Hazard and Greenfield Energy Park; Aaron Drysdale, Andy Grant, Jay Lord, Wisty Rorabacher, and everyone at Just Roots; Suzana Kantardzic from the Massachusetts Service Alliance; and Tim Craig and the SCA Massachusetts AmeriCorps members; for hosting, supporting, and participating in the 2015 AmeriCorps Day of Service

Hank Cramer, Mason Phelps, and Michael Solfiell for their creative efforts to bring home the importance of nature to a wider audience, for their work in support of land conservation, and for their deeply felt love of the land

Anne Cervantes, Cindy Cetto, and Judy Collette for office support

Mount Grace thanks Susan Sarandon, for joining the fight to protect the irreplaceable natural heritage of Massachusetts and New Hampshire from the proposed Tennessee Gas Pipeline. Hear her statement on our youtube channel!



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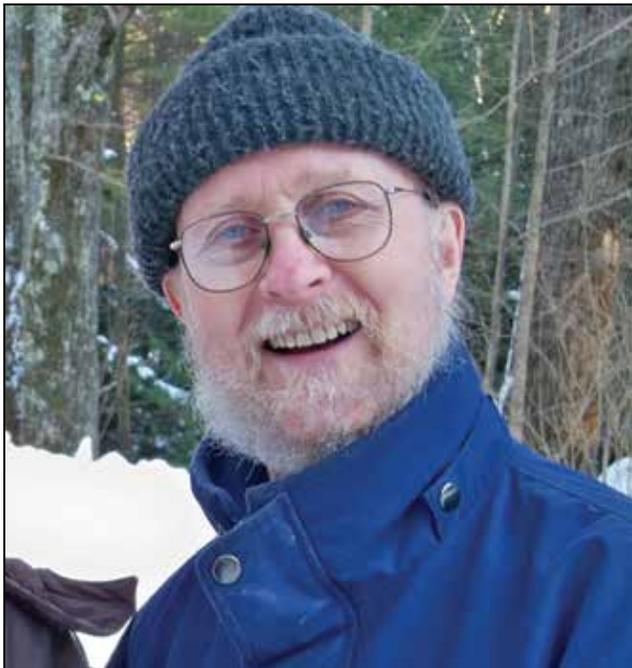
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Hank Cramer



Mason Phelps

Mount Grace commemorates Hank Cramer and Mason Phelps. Each a member of Mount Grace for more than twenty years, they showed their love of the land creatively. Hank's film *Wild Things of North Quabbin*, and Mason's Whetstone Woods Sanctuary are lasting legacies that will always be cherished by the Mount Grace community.