

RIVER AND RAIL TRAIL CONNECTION

By Cynthia Henshaw

The Ware River is forty feet wide as it meanders along the edge of Wheelwright on its way to the Quaboag River. There are no riffles as it passes the Cernauskas property, but several broad “S” turns speak of the deep history of the river on the land. There is a low lying area that must absorb some of the excess high-water during spring floods, but mostly the western embankment is ten or twelve feet high. Perched on the edge surrounded by large oaks and hemlocks you can see the water flowing past, carrying leaves and sticks downstream. Occasionally you catch glimpses of a wood duck or muskrat. Beaver evidence is all around. At the right time of year, song birds create a cacophony as they set up housekeeping along the river’s edge. In the winter ice covers the surface, hiding the water as it glides downstream towards the ocean.

Once off the river, the land is fairly level and remarkably rock free. There aren’t stone walls forming boundary lines or paddocks within the property, clear evidence that the glacial deposits here were finer-grained silts and sands.

The Cernauskas family moved to the area in the 1920’s to raise their large family along the banks of the river. Then the land was open pasture. Now there is mostly white pine where the fields once stood. Joe Cernauskas lived near the banks of the Ware River most of his life. Before he died in 2011, Mr. Cernauskas came to the land trust to see what he might do to keep the land open and undeveloped. He loved feeding the birds and squirrels.

Fortunately, Joe did speak to his siblings about his

desire to see the land conserved and in the hands of the East Quabbin Land Trust. After his passing Mr. Cernauskas’ siblings did contact the land trust, resulting in the opportunity to purchase the property for conservation purposes. Thanks to grant funding from the Massachusetts Conservation Partnership grant program, the Fields Pond Foundation and Mifflin Memorial Fund the East Quabbin Land Trust purchased the land at the end of 2013. The Hardwick Conservation Commission holds the conservation restriction on the land.

The 15.7 acre parcel is nestled between EQLT’s



A wood duck box along the Ware River at the Cernauskas property.

section of the Mass Central Rail Trail and the Ware River; a perfect property to expand recreational access to the river and rail trail. This is the northern terminus of the 3.2-mile rail trail purchased by EQLT in 2007. We envision a trail loop connecting the Mass Central Rail Trail with the river by running a walking path along the embankment.

Other specific plans for the property are under consideration. The woods are pretty young and growing well. The neighbors mention all kinds

of wildlife around. A black bear is seen regularly, along with foxes and deer.

The property includes over 1,800 feet of the Ware River, which is identified as Priority Habitat by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Wood turtle is certainly one of the species of concern in the area. Fresh-water muscels and a few dragonfly species are also probable species of interest along this section of the Ware River. ■



They're off! Fastest male finisher in 29:29 and fastest female finisher in 32:49

3rd Annual

Station Loop Ramble 5-miler

Sunday, October 12, 2014, starting gun at 10am

A hilly road and trail race with a flat, fast finish on the Mass Central Rail Trail

Entry fee: \$20 (includes tee shirt),
children 13 and under - \$10

Prizes for overall first place finishers, and the top finishers in each age category

Visit www.EQLT.org for more information

MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



Over 100 years of land conservation has left an indelible imprint on each of our 351 communities in Massachusetts. It might be a local farm, special play park, riverfront or deep woods. Regardless of the exact landscape, **collectively we have invested in the conservation of over 1.2 million acres, representing nearly 25% of our Commonwealth.**

We think of our state parks, conservation restriction lands and drinking water supply protection areas as being permanently protected. But their status can change if we allow it. **There is a threat to some of these lands right now.**

Tennessee Gas Pipeline Co., a subsidiary of Kinder Morgan, is proposing to build a new 30" (or maybe a 36") gas pipeline that will run along the northern tier of Massachusetts from Richmond to Dracut. This is part of a plan to expand the amount of natural gas coming from the Marcellus shale area in Pennsylvania. Right now the pipeline will cut through eighty conservation areas – wildlife management areas, state forests and conservation restriction lands – places that we've invested millions of dollars to conserve as undeveloped areas for future generations.

This proposal is problematic for a variety of reasons, but the East Quabbin Land Trust is especially concerned because conservation areas appear to be specifically targeted in the pipeline routing process. The pipeline requires a fifty foot swath to be cut to allow for creating a nine foot deep trench to install the pipeline. This will forever alter our intact forests, unique wetlands and rare species habitats. There has to be a better way to meet our energy needs while protecting our important conservation areas.

We encourage you to learn more about this proposal. Several websites have relevant information, including:
www.MassPLAN.org
www.NoFrackedGasInMass.org
www.NorthQuabbinEnergy.org/wordpress
www.NashobaTrust.org

As conservationists we all need to work to protect our conservation areas. Learn more and speak up! **Tell your friends and neighbors, and especially our state and federal legislators that this gas pipeline proposal needs to stay off the Commonwealth's conservation lands.** ■

THE EAST QUABBIN LAND TRUST

works to foster the sustainable use of our natural and historic resources for the benefit of all generations through the conservation and stewardship of the farmlands, woodlands and waters in our region of Massachusetts.

As a non-profit organization the East Quabbin Land Trust envisions a regional community that continues to care for its natural environment and supports a sustainable local economy, ensuring a high quality of life for generations to come.

We welcome your thoughts, articles, and photographs on events in our area. For more information about the land trust, to become a member, or request a change of address, please contact us at:

East Quabbin Land Trust
 120 Ridge Road, P.O. Box 5
 Hardwick, MA 01037-0005
 413-477-8229 (tel & fax)
 email: EQLT@comcast.net

Visit our website at www.EQLT.org

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HARRISON ACHILLES, a.k.a. Archie: For the love of it

By Cynthia Henshaw

Being called “Archie” is a family trend. His father was called Archie and his brother is also called Archie. Why? Friends in Brookfield mispronounced their last name to Archilles, and shortened it to Archie. His father never objected, so Archie stuck. Harrison and his brother inherited the nickname, though locals now pronounce his last name correctly – ‘after the Greek God, not the tendon’ – thanks to his wife Pam. Harrison still answers to both names.

Harrison first found the land trust because Caren hosted a walk at Mandell Hill. Harrison’s business cards read “The Joys of Bluebirds” and he has perfected the bluebird box. Mandell Hill was ripe for more boxes and Harrison had some to share. The land trust was also in the midst of building the Ellison Memorial Birding Platform. Well, shall we say that one project lead to another? Today Harrison’s touch is visible at nearly all of the land trust’s preserves.

“I am a workaholic, and blame my mother and father for having good work habits” joked Harrison. “Being raised on a farm, you learn that there is always weeding or something to do.” When he was nine years old his family moved off the farm and into a new house down the road. Harrison’s father had planted a new lawn which was growing well and was ready to cut. The plan was to use the scythe (his father) and the sickle (Harrison) to mow the grass after work. Instead Harrison spent the whole day using his small sickle and cut the whole area before his father came home. “Every time I start a project I want to finish. The real satisfaction is in the results!”

For anyone that drives past Mandell Hill on Barre Road in Hardwick you can see the transformation from Harrison’s touch at the Ridge Road turn. The stone wall once buried in vegetation is now revealed after Harrison’s dogged efforts last year to release it. “Now it takes only 45 minutes to cut using the grass weed whacker, instead of the days cutting through the woody growth last year.” New heritage apple tree whips were also planted in memory of Raymond Buelow by his son Chris. Harrison also keeps the whips cleared of competing grass. He’s done the same thing to the old barn foundation across the road. Take a minute to park your car and walk at Mandell Hill. You’ll see Harrison’s handy work.

“Often I’ll be out working and people I don’t even know will stop and tell me how nice it looks. That means a

lot that people recognize the changes and appreciate the work done.”

Harrison recently retired as the head of the maintenance department at Brookfield Elementary. He served for nine years on the school building committee, and also fifteen years on the Tantasqua building committee. It takes many years to get a school built, and the dedication of many, many people. Harrison recalled “We’d gotten the school built



Harrison clearing the stone wall at the Coxhall Kitchen Garden in Hardwick

and I was getting crossing lights installed along Route 9. The lights were up and I called the electric company to hook them up. The guy on the phone said it would be eight weeks before they could come. School was starting in four weeks, but he wouldn’t budge. It was suggested to call Senator Wetmore’s office and speak with his aide Steve Brewer. I’m thinking, ‘Yeah, right, a politician is going to help’. This was a Friday afternoon; I called and explained the issue. Steve said that he

wasn’t sure if he could help but that he would make a phone call and would get back to me. And he did! Steve said that someone from the electric company would call on Monday. Well the phone call came that same afternoon and they hooked up the lights the following Monday. I was impressed and can’t say enough about Steve Brewer.”

“My hobbies are hunting, fishing, and gardening, pretty much anything to do with nature. Lately I can’t do as much hunting because of my knee and I haven’t taken the time to go fishing. When I have gone fishing I sit in my boat and think about the other things that need to get done. Then I’ve pulled up the anchor and got back to work.” If you visit Wendemuth Meadow Preserve at 25 Bates Street in North Brookfield you’ll see a property in transformation. “The bigger the challenge the more I like it, and dealing with ten foot tall multiflora rose entwined in overgrown tree nursery stock is a challenge!” Harrison is working to expose the stone wall and barn along Bates Street. He’s made great progress with more to come.

“My wife Pam has put up with me for forty years. Every morning she says ‘Have fun!’ as I leave the house. And I do. I really enjoy working outside. The results make all the difference.”

The results are clearly evident – at Mandell Hill, at Wendemuth Meadow, at Pynchon’s Grist Mill, at Coxhall Kitchen Garden, and at Deer Park.

Harrison, thank you!! ■

GARDENS OF NORTH BROOKFIELD AND NEW BRAINTREE: *A Benefit Garden and Farm Tour that raised over \$700 for EQLT!*



*Sincere Thank You to our
2014 Garden Hosts:*

**Karen Bessette
Deb Houston and Lee McLaughlin
Elisabeth Hyder
Sue Lewandowski
Jan Moran
Genevieve and Glenn Stillman
Judy Willey and Gene Evans
Sarah Durham Winer and Craig Winer**

*Many thanks to Doug Anderson and
Elisabeth Hyder for organizing this year's tour*



DEDICATION OF THE COXHALL KITCHEN GARDEN AND DEER PARK PRESERVE

By Caren Caljouw

Exploring the special features of this 81 acre preserve just became easier, thanks to the dedication of many hardworking volunteers. East Quabbin Land Trust and friends dedicated the opening of the preserve and the new trail system on a sunny afternoon in mid-June. A memorial plaque was placed along the “Noble Wall” recognizing the generous gift of land, upon which the Kitchen Garden sits. This land was donated to the East Quabbin Land Trust in 2006 by Paul Gabens in memory of family members, Helen and Paul Vitkus and Mary and Peter Skraliskis.

An historic marker at the entrance to the walled enclosure highlights the history and significance of the site. Thanks to research by Susan Gainley and other local historians, we know that the tall and impressive walls surrounding the one-acre enclosure were built over two centuries ago for Brigadier General Timothy Ruggles



Eric Vollhiem, dressed in colonial garb, presents the finer points of 18th century stone masonry to the group at the dedication.

who purchased the land from Elizabeth Cox in 1771. General Ruggles was a Hardwick resident who owned several estates in town. He was a major figure in the French and Indian Wars, a Chief Justice of Worcester’s Court of Common Pleas, and a Loyalist in the Revolutionary War.

Ruggles was building a new estate in the area and intended to use the walled enclosure as a kitchen garden. The tall walls of the garden were thought to keep animals out and provide a microclimate for growing plants at different times of year. After Ruggles’ final departure from Hardwick in 1774 at the start of the “Worcester Revolution”, the land reverted back to the Cox Family, hence the name Coxhall Kitchen Garden. We are very fortunate to have such a fine example of 18th century stone work preserved for the benefit of future generations and to know the date the wall was constructed based on correspondence in 1774 from Elihu Ashley.

Until recently many believed the walled enclosure and the adjacent lands to the south were part of the historic deer park maintained by Brigadier General Ruggles. Examination of historic records indicates that Ruggles’ deer park was located south of this property, on Upper Church Street. Today, local folks who live and work in the area and visit the preserve to enjoy the natural world, call this popular destination point “Deer Park”. To acknowledge this colloquial name as part of our cultural heritage and its connections with the surrounding landscape history, we are keeping this special place name for the preserve.

We encourage visitors to explore our new trail system linking this historic site to many natural features in Deer Park Preserve. Parking is provided along Barre Road, just one mile east of Hardwick Center on the north side of the road. From the information kiosk, the trail meanders northerly along the edge of a hay field to a board walk over the Fish Brook Wetlands. From here you may take the trail north to the Coxhall Kitchen Garden and loop back along Simpson Road to the Ridge Trail or take the Ridge Trail southerly through oak and hickory forest and admire the unusual rock outcroppings along the way. You will pass areas where successful controlled burns were carried out to reduce white pine and grey birch in the forest understory. You may wish to pack a lunch and have a picnic on a large sitting rock with open views of the Fish Brook Wetlands and rolling farmland beyond. Be sure to listen for Indigo Buntings and Eastern Towhees in the wildlife openings. The entire loop to the Coxhall Kitchen Garden and back is 1.5 miles and the trails are marked with blue diamonds. ■



The Bancroft family enjoy a leisurely stroll along the shaded boardwalk trail.

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EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS

By Nathan Grady

Working as a project coordinator can be an enlightening experience: if perceptive, you can learn a great deal about different people's working styles and temperaments, if effective, you figure out ways to tailor your leadership techniques to best suit that temperamental range. When bringing in project partners and volunteer assistants, it quickly becomes second nature to identify strengths and weaknesses, and assign tasks accordingly. Invariably, you run into some people that require consistent guidance and oversight to accomplish the tasks you set before them, and though still productive, this type of volunteer is by nature less efficient. Occasionally, however, you also get to work with a truly competent individual, someone who you can implicitly trust with all manner of assignments and know with a safe certainty they will be completed in a high quality and timely manner. I am pleased to say the two Eagle Scouts I worked with this past winter and spring were of this latter type, and accordingly, their projects were an unequivocal success.

Patrick Mardirosian and Sam Arcikowski, aspiring Eagle Scouts from Rutland Troop 141, both approached me last fall to explain the parameters of their upcoming Eagle Scout projects and to see if the East Quabbin Land Trust might have project ideas that they could take on. Both were interested in doing something construction related, and both wanted to work outside on one or more of our preserves. After a little brainstorming, we came up with two projects that, though large in scope, would be a big help to the land trust if effectively completed. Patrick was to build and install three information kiosks for three new preserves, and Sam was to build a new bog bridge over an intermittent stream and do some trail stewardship work at Moose Brook Preserve.

By the start of the new year, both projects had been approved by the scout council. It being the middle of winter, Sam was forced to put his project on hold until the ground thawed, but Patrick was able to begin construction immediately. Patrick began first soliciting donations of lumber and hardware, and then engaged in a number of fundraising campaigns to cover the cost of the remaining materials. When all was said and done he proudly told me his personal out-of-pocket expense came to less than \$20!

He then organized a series of work days with other scouts and family members to 'prefab' the kiosks as much as possible before putting them in the ground. When spring finally rolled around, he was practically itching to install them at the preserves, excited to finally see the fruits of his labor serving their long-term purpose. Meanwhile Sam pre-

pared a few highly productive workdays with friends, family and other scouts, and in just a few short weekends had built the entire bog bridge and completed stewardship work on the whole trail loop.

Though both came to me for support and advice at different times throughout the process, both also worked with a high degree of autonomy and completed their projects well within the projected time frames. Furthermore, the kiosks and bridge are not only functional, but they look great – they're very well built and aesthetically pleasing, and they will serve hikers from the community and beyond for many years to come. On behalf of the Land Trust staff and community I want to extend our deep gratitude to both Sam and Patrick for their hard work, dedication, and maturity.

Of course, considering we now own nearly 1,000 acres and manage an additional 800 acres of conserved land, we have A LOT of potential projects for enthusiastic young volunteers like Sam and Patrick. These range from other construction type projects such as a rainwater collection system for the Frohloff Farm or a bridge over Fish Brook at Deer Park Preserve, to biological monitoring projects of blue birds and kestrels, to stewardship projects such as planning and carving a new trail at Prince River or mapping and managing invasive plants at Mandel Hill. And though this article has highlighted the work of our Eagle Scout volunteers, we have also recently hosted internships for local high-schoolers, partnered with nearby college seniors on their capstone projects, and worked with all other manner of volunteers young and old, and all are welcome and encouraged to take on a longer-term project such as those described above. ■



One of three kiosks built by Eagle Scout candidate Patrick Mardirosian



New bog bridge installed at Moose Brook Preserve by Eagle Scout candidate Sam Arcikowski

CELEBRATING TWENTY YEARS

This year we set out an ambitious schedule of events and activities out on the land. You have worked on trails, walked the east coast of the Quabbin Reservoir, documented Preserve biodiversity, dedicated new conservation lands, and continued to build our community! Several founding Board members share their thoughts about what the East Quabbin Land Trust means to them and our communities.



Motivated by the “Think Globally, Act Locally” movement of the late ‘70’s and witnessing the destructive and non-productive efforts of radical environmentalism in Northern California, land protection through a non-governmental organization seemed like the logical and attractive alternative for our beloved New England countryside. When writing the first Open Space Plan, the Hardwick Open Space Committee concluded that a private, non-profit should be organized to protect our remaining agricultural and forest lands. Figuring that a facile and savvy private organization could effectively accomplish what government could not; the protection of ecologically sensitive, economically critical properties in a manner that was respectful of landowners rights. However we quickly learned that land protection was not the end all and what was probably more important was to create locally a “Land Ethic”, as Aldo Leopold termed in his epic Sand County Almanac. Creating a “Land Ethic” in the east Quabbin area meant enhancing the respect residents give to the land through education and proper stewardship of protected properties. To this end through the laudable efforts of so many EQLT supporters and volunteers under the guidance of EQLT staff, that original vision of the Open Space Committee 20+years ago has indeed become the ever more important reality of “thinking globally and acting locally”. I am so, so proud of our organization’s 20th anniversary !!!!

- Rick Romano

The motivating factor for me when starting the land trust was the guaranteed availability of agricultural lands. It was obvious that additional tools were needed to assure the farms could remain in agriculture. After research starting a local land trust seemed like a good choice to become the additional “tool”.

Since then, the passion for agricultural lands remains high, but what I missed at the time was what the importance of “local oversight” would be to me and to our community. The EQLT was organized locally and has a membership base of our fellow community members. By design, the EQLT offers the best vehicle to reflect our land philosophies, desires, and ethics for our local region. This level of detail or honest interplay between parties cannot be done at a state or federal level.

- Stan White



Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage

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www.EQLT.org

EQLT News | INSIDE...

**CONNECTING
RIVER
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TRAIL**



SUMMER 2014 | VOLUME 11 | ISSUE 3

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UPCOMING EVENTS

There are more events celebrating Outdoors in the East Quabbin than can be posted in the newsletter. Please check our website, www.EQLT.org regularly for updates.

JULY...

Saturday, July 12, starting at 7:30 AM

Wendemuth Meadow BioBlitz - 25 Bates Street, North Brookfield - A BioBlitz is an intensive one-day survey of biodiversity - looking for birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, insects, spiders, aquatic invertebrates, trees, shrubs, herbs, mosses, mushrooms, and anything else we might find! Trained naturalists, volunteer citizen-scientists and outdoor enthusiasts are needed. Register with Nate at servicelearning@EQLT.org.

Saturday, July 26, starting at 3:00 PM

Country Store Festival - On the Common, Petersham - A festival to benefit The Country Store in Petersham with kids' games, climbing wall, music, yak bingo, live and silent auctions, and more. Community potluck supper begins at 5:00pm and live auction at 6:00pm. The movie *Frozen* will be screened in the Town Hall at 7:00pm. Go to the website or Facebook page for more information.

Sunday, July 27, starting at 8:00 AM

East Quabbin Hike - Hardwick & Petersham, meet at Gate 37 to carpool - This is the second of a multi-day hiking series that traverses the east coast of the Quabbin Reservoir, the defining landscape feature of our region. The hike will start at Gate 43 and make our way north to Gate 37. This full-day hike will cover 10 miles. We will meet at Gate 37, off West Street in Petersham and carpool to the starting location. RSVP to Cynthia at chenshaw@EQLT.org or 413-477-8229 is required. Bring water, lunch and snacks.

AUGUST...

Saturday, August 23, starting at 8:00 AM

Bloodswamp Loop Hike - Barre - This loop walk includes part of the Mid-State Trail as it meanders through Barre. We will cross two sections of aqueduct while exploring the wetland edges.