

THE COUNTRY STORE in PETERSHAM

By Cynthia Henshaw

Imagine pressing down on the latch and swinging the door open. The bell tinkles your arrival as you pass the threshold and a warm “Good morning” greets you. The aroma of Country Store blend coffee and fresh blueberry muffins wafts over you. Neighbors comment about the latest news as you settle into a chair, newspaper and coffee in hand. Before leaving you pick up some local bread and cheese for lunch, plus a special pastry to dampen the afternoon energy low. Your stop at The Country Store has fortified you for another day!

In a few short months, the above scenario – or something similar – will be possible in Petersham again.

The East Quabbin Land Trust is pleased to announce the purchase of The Country Store building at 2-4 North Main Street, right in the center of Petersham. This transaction is the culmination of many months of work and negotiations to clear unique hurdles to the building’s situation.

Petersham residents played a pivotal role initiating the purchase, guiding the process, and raising sufficient funds to purchase the building and the first round of essential building improvements. Of course support to reopen the store has come from many parts of Massachusetts and beyond, but the unique role of the store has in town brought many residents out to events and committee meetings, offering their support. The East Quabbin Land Trust is grateful to everyone that has donated their time, talents and financial gifts to make this reopening possible.

The Board of Directors carefully considered our involvement with The Country Store initiative. After all buying buildings is not the forte of land trusts. Factors such as the deep community involvement, historic-nature of the building, commitment to local agricultural products, and a sound business model swayed us in favor of taking the risk and working with the Petersham community to reopen The Country Store. We are looking forward to the future! What is that future you ask?

Initial renovations are underway. Large ticket items include installation of a handicapped bathroom, a higher capacity reverse-osmosis water system and a backup generator. Floor repairs and paint throughout the interior

are also on the list. The permits are in place and work has begun. Original estimates are for about two months of work and then another month in setting up the store. The “No Peeking” blinds will be up so that the opening can be a grand surprise! The target date for reopening is April 1.

Ari and Jeanneane Pugliese will be the proprietors of The Country Store. The Puglieses are a wonderful match for this challenge – they live in town, have prior experience running The Country Store, excellent taste in wholesome exquisite food, and run their own restaurant, Picasso, on the Common in Barre. The East Quabbin Land

Trust is extremely pleased to be leasing the store space to the Puglieses. Monthly lease payments will support the general functions of the building, insurance and property taxes.

Though the Puglieses will be running the store – and making all the decisions about what to offer – the East Quabbin Land Trust and our community committee members will continue

to focus on the building needs. The first round of renovations is designed to get the store reopened. Other needs must be addressed such as repainting the historic facade, updating the roof, and energy conservation improvements. The building sub-committee will create a plan of action to address these and other identified needs.

Running a small business is risky, and stores have small margins making the path to profitability harder. However, reopening The Country Store with this model – where the purchase capital is already assured and the community solidly behind the proprietors – has better than average chances to succeed. The Puglieses have a business plan and the knowledge, skills and dedication to making this business venture a success. A “village market” concept displaying a diverse selection of grocery items with an emphasis on local goods with a vibrant cafe, deli, gift/antiques, catering services and ice cream are all included in the scope of anticipated offerings.

The East Quabbin Land Trust is honored to partner with Petersham residents to reopen The Country Store. We hope you all stop by starting in the spring and summer to show your support for a locally run small business that is critical to our sense of community! ■



MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



Whew! What a year we've just finished. Let me summarize some of the highlights and preview East Quabbin Land Trust's 20th anniversary year 'Outdoors in the East Quabbin'.

Our stewardship program got started on significant long-term management practices at the Coxhall Kitchen Garden, Deer Park Preserve and Frohloff Farm. Clearing the woods and overgrown pastures at the Frohloff Farm have dramatically altered the feel of the place. Now travelers on Church Street can see down the rolling hill to the Ware River. Next steps across the area are to control the common buckthorn and other invasive plants that will resprout come springtime. Down along the river is a several acre area with pitch pine, an unusual tree in our region. Pitch pine seeds sprout best after a fire has burned the area, removing the competing plants and leaving fertile soil. Our plans are to intentionally burn the area, thereby enhancing the possibility of keeping a healthy pitch pine community on the property.

On a back road in Hardwick even a casual passerby will notice the amazing stone wall that is surrounded by trees. Two and a half centuries ago the trail we now call Simpson Road went past the Cox property. Brigadier General Timothy Ruggles purchased the property and began to establish a grand estate there, including the eight foot tall wall enclosing an acre to be used as a kitchen garden. Now only an average of five feet showing above ground are showing. Recently the trees within the wall were removed to allow better access to the area. Coxhall Kitchen Garden and the adjacent Deer Park Preserve will be dedicated on June 14th.

December saw the culmination of several important conservation efforts, including the acceptance of the Dewey Taft Woods in Barre, which is part of EQLT's Prince River Preserve, and a gift from members of the Dewey and Taft families. As stated by the name, the land meanders along the Prince River which was dammed over a century ago to provide power for the mills downstream. Heavy rains, dam breaches, and rebuilding are part of the history in this stretch of the Prince River. The current dam was intentionally breached decades ago, but industrious beaver keep the water level up in the Old Reservoir providing resting and feeding places for waterfowl. On May 4th we will be conducting a Bioblitz at the property, looking to identify all the different plants, animals and other living species we can identify.

The purchase of 15 acres along the Ware River rounded out an active year of land conservation. Nearly 300 acres were conserved in 2013, working with seven landowners. Farmland, wetlands, woods and historic sites are all part of this conservation mix. In addition, the Country Store building was purchased, and represents a special historic and community-based initiative for the East Quabbin Land Trust. In the coming months more land conservation is expected in Petersham, Barre, North Brookfield and Hardwick, as we assist landowners and communities in meeting their conservation visions.

Be sure to check out page 7 for Outdoors in the East Quabbin and check back at our website often for up-to-date information about the varied events scheduled throughout the year. I'm especially pleased to be walking the eastern shore of the Quabbin Reservoir. This is a wonderful way to explore our namesake across the seasons. Please join me for these and other East Quabbin Land Trust events as we celebrate our twentieth year making a difference in the region. **You are a big part of the organization's success. Come celebrate!** ■

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:

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Visit our website at www.EQLT.org

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SHEILA YOUD: VOLUNTEERING IS ART

By Clarisse Hart

If you've attended any of EQLT's "Restore the Store" events, chances are, one of the first smiling faces you encountered was Sheila Youd's. Whether she was organizing auction bids, listening to stories from the Store's oldest friends, or doling out free cups of coffee, her smile has been a constant presence.

Sheila and her husband Paul are longtime members of EQLT, but it was the prospect of restoring the Petersham Country Store that first encouraged her to volunteer. "The Store means so much to everyone," she said recently during an interview in her Petersham home. "It's a natural place for people to go and enjoy each other's company, and meet new friends as well. Ari and Jeanneane are really going to make it nice, with good and wholesome food."

Like many Quabbin area residents, Sheila has a personal connection to the Country Store. For her, that connection begins next door, at the Petersham Historical Society—where, with locals Ann Townsend and Barbara Corey, she maintains the charming shade garden. They call themselves the "inch by inch" club. Sheila cheerfully chants, "Inch by inch, row by row, we're gonna make this garden grow," before recalling the winter, seven years ago, when the small group first met at the Store to discuss the plants they wanted to place in the garden. This was no ordinary catalog-browsing meeting: their mission had a local flavor. They brainstormed plants that were historical to Petersham—recalling how "so-and-so really loved that plant," and in many cases, sourcing the plants from that very person's garden. This fall, when the inch-by-inchers cleaned up the garden for winter, Sheila noted how nice it will be in the spring to follow garden work with a trip to the Country Store for coffee and a snack. "The Store brings the town to life," she says.

In twenty years of living and volunteering in Petersham, Sheila has become a mainstay in many of the town's most enduring institutions. She is co-president of the Petersham Art Center; volunteers for the Harvard Forest Fisher Museum; and serves on the town's Energy Committee, Library Building Restoration Committee, and Cemetery Commission. She recently joined the Petersham Grange, and is scheming with other locals to create a town-wide giant pumpkin contest for next year's Horticultural Fair.

Many residents know Sheila for her exquisite paintings, which bring to life some of the town's most beloved landscapes, including the Country Store, Historical Society, Brooks Law Office, and Town Common.

Sheila has only been painting since she moved

to Petersham twenty years ago. It was renowned local artist Barbara Ellis, for whom the Petersham Art Center's major gallery is named, who first encouraged and critiqued her work. The two traveled around the region together – twice to Nantucket. "At 87," Sheila remembers, "she must have walked three or four miles down the shore. She was such an inspiration."

Sheila grew up in Canton, Mass., and attended Bridgewater State University. She never took an art class after high school. But today, her small home studio is filled with beautiful pieces, including French garden-scapes, a charcoal drawing of her husband, and two true-to-life paintings of her adopted cats, Panda and Michaelangelo. Mostly, she prefers to paint what she finds outdoors. "What I love to do is Petersham," she says. "I love the architecture and the buildings. The people, the vistas, the flowers." Her artistic role models include John Sargeant (his watercolors) and Beatrix Potter.



Sheila in front of her window boxes readied for winter.

Before moving to Petersham, Sheila and Paul – married now for 47 years – raised their two sons in nearby Rutland, Mass. Sheila encouraged art in her own children, even though she never found much time to do it herself. Today, one of her sons is a professional artist. The other son teaches Chinese literature. In her days in the workforce, Sheila taught handwriting—often teaching eight or more classes in a day. "Handwriting is really quite artistic," she points out.

She's also an artist with her home gardens. Two sizeable, hand-dug vegetable gardens, plus perennial flowers, landscaped shrubs, and tidy windowboxes are evidence of her talent.

Finally, Sheila is what you might call an artist of friendliness and geniality. You would be hard pressed to find a more welcoming person, and she's keen to make connections between Petersham's various attractions to improve visits for tourists.

Her favorite place to send visitors for a hike is Quabbin gate 40, which leads to Dana Common. "It's just wonderful!" she exclaims. "All those cellar holes. So much history." Other favorites include the Harvard Forest, and the North Common Meadow, a Trustees of Reservations property.

Fellow EQLT and "Restore the Store" volunteer Nancy Allen notes, "Sheila always brings a brightly lit spirit to her community work. Her modus operandi for volunteerism includes the critical motto of 'Have fun!' as she generously shares her interests, time, and talents."

We couldn't agree more. ■

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Every gift is important to us and helps to fulfill our mission together. We apologize for any errors or omissions.

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GILBERTVILLE FITNESS TRAIL

By Nathan Grady

During my first week at the East Quabbin Land Trust, I found myself bushwhacking through chest high weeds like some 19th century British tiger hunter, sans the machete. “This used to be a trail?” I wondered aloud, as I squeezed under a massive downed beech tree and nearly face planted in someone’s old tire. In fact the only indication this area had ever been cleared was its truly remarkable diversity of invasive species: barberry, bittersweet, knotweed and multiflora rose seemed to be engaged in an epically evil, many-fronted war. Despite all this, I pushed on a little further and to my pleasant surprise the trail opened up and leveled out into what was clearly an old railroad bed. The ground to my right gradually fell away, and I was astonished to find myself walking along a breathtakingly gorgeous stretch of land, 50 feet above the mighty Ware River. I began to understand why my land trust predecessors had put so much energy into this property some 20 years ago.

The back story is, when the East Quabbin Land Trust was first taking shape, some of our particularly enthusiastic volunteers got involved in a property acquisition in the village of Gilbertville. Working closely with the Hardwick Conservation Commission, they ensured the property was conserved and then helped craft it into a riverside trail following the path of the old rail bed, with a boat landing for intrepid canoeists and a pleasant picnic spot with a gazebo

look out. The ownership was passed to the town, and a joint maintenance plan drafted. In the ensuing years, the land trust expanded exponentially and gained a whole new portfolio of projects. Meanwhile, membership on the town Conservation Commission gradually turned over and, sadly, this lovely trail was forgotten, allowing entropy and nature to erase the path and consume the pavilion.

Fortunately we have good records of that early work, not to mention testimonials from community members who enjoyed the trail when it was first dedicated and who have wanted to revive it ever since. When I was wading through the weeds at the trail’s entrance, and navigating the accumulated debris, I saw its potential for excellent service projects but was not yet sold on the idea of leading the clean-up. It wasn’t until I saw the hidden beauty of this unique trail further down, and talked with eager volunteers about all the things

it could offer the residents of Gilbertville that I was truly hooked. That was when that I decided to make its revival one of my primary service projects.

To begin, I assembled a small group of interested volunteers and we brainstormed different ways to approach this project. Liz Reilly, a prominent member of the Hardwick Youth Center (located only yards away from the trail head) proposed we convert it into a fitness course, rather than simply clear it and clean up the trash. A fitness trail, she argued, would not only draw out local residents, it would also be a major public health resource for a population with extremely

limited access to fitness equipment. Not only would it benefit the kids at the youth center, but also parents and neighbors throughout Gilbertville, not to mention the rest of Hardwick and nearby Ware. Though we all loved the project idea, we had no budget and knew creating such a resource would require significant funding. Liz knew of a possible grant we could apply for from the Bay State Mary Lane Hospital in Ware, and though the deadline was only a few weeks away, we decided to go for it.

Despite encountering some bumps and setbacks along the way, we managed to submit our grant proposal on time. I am excited to report that on Dec. 2nd we learned that our project had been fully funded in the amount of \$10,000, which will cover all the fitness equipment and installation costs!

The plan going forward is to assemble teams of volunteers and clear the trail and prepare the sites for the 10 fitness stations throughout the late winter and early spring. Then starting in the late spring we will build and install the fitness stations, and hopefully reopen this property to the public by mid-summer, 2014.

I am thrilled to be a part of this process; there is something deeply satisfying about continuing the very first project attempted by the earliest visionaries of the East Quabbin Land Trust. It will be exciting to witness the revival of this once loved property and to take part in building a new resource that will benefit residents for generations to come.

What a wonderful opportunity to serve this vibrant community, and to be able to contribute my energy and passion to make a lasting difference on the local landscape! ■



OUTDOORS IN THE EAST QUABBIN

A Year of Science, Stewardship and Exploration

Throughout 2014 the East Quabbin Land Trust will be celebrating its 20th anniversary by inviting you to explore our natural world through a variety of events and activities out on the land.

Together we can notice the ice melting along the stream, catch a faint glimpse of a warbler high in the trees, and revel in the memory of deep bark grooves on some of the oldest trees in Massachusetts. Much continues on, year after year, because together we have worked to conserve more than 4,000 acres of fields, woods and waterways since 1994.

Come, explore some of these space where your mind, body and soul can still roam free.

Check our website www.EQLT.org regularly for updates on events happening throughout the year. A brochure including a map of the region is available. Contact Cynthia at chenshaw@EQLT.org or (413) 477-8229 to receive your copy.

BioBlitz

A bioblitz is when volunteers team up with naturalists to spend one day documenting the biota - all the animals, plants, fungi and other living species - on a particular preserve. Participate in these intensive days exploring two new preserves - May 4 at the Dewey Taft Woods in the Prince River Preserve in Barre and July 12 at the Wendemuth Meadow Preserve in North Brookfield.

Preserve Dedication

Two new preserves will be opened with formal dedication ceremonies to welcome you and your families to explore the trails and preserves. The Coxhall Kitchen Garden and Deer Park Preserve will be dedicated on June 15, while the Pynchon's Grist Mill Preserve will be dedicated on November 1.

East Quabbin Hike

We'll walk the coast of the Quabbin Reservoir over three Sundays: April 27, July 27, October 26. Reservations required.

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Chester Holda
Chuck Kidd
Darlene and Joseph Mastrogiovanni
Elizabeth W. Morss
Thomas R. Mountain
Harold and Hazel Patterson
Rev. Arthur W. Perkins
Charles Prichard
Hans Thoma
Helen and Paul Vitkus
Magi Durham Ziff

Foundations

The Bafflin Foundation
Comm Fdn of Western Mass
J.Irving & Jane England
Charitable Trust
Fields Pond Foundation
The Fieldstone Foundation, Inc.
The Mifflin Memorial Fund
Saint Gobain Corporation Fdn.
William P. Wharton Trust

Corporations

Barre Mill Restaurant
Berube Real Estate
Colonial Hill Alpaca Farm and B&B
Country Bank for Savings

Dresser and McGourthy, LLP
Family First Bank
R.N. Glidden Landscaping
Hardwick Cultural Council
Hardwick Farmers' Coop
Hardwick Sugar Shack
Hardwick Vineyard and Winery
Hartman's Herb Farm
Hewlett-Packard Company Match
R.C. Keddy Building Contracting
Kip's Christmas Tree Farm
Lake Wickaboag Preservation Assn.
Mount Grace Land Conservation
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New Harbor Financial Group
Nipmuck Indian Council, Inc.
North Quabbin Trail Association
Peak Expeditions Extreme Nature Tours
Petersham Pump Co.
Petersham Sanitary Services
Pioneer Wallpaper and Painting
Pioneer Valley Environmental
Quaboag Historical Society
Reed's Country Store
Stillman's Farm
Swift River Farm
The Garage, Petersham
The Maronite Monks of Adoration
Turley Publications
Trail Head
Tri-Parish Community Church
T.S. Mann Lumber Co.
WJDF - The Deane Brothers
Ware Cultural Council
Waters Corporation
West Brookfield Historical Comm.
Winterwood Inn

East Quabbin LAND TRUST



Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage

P.O. Box 5
120 Ridge Road
Hardwick, MA 01037
Phone/Fax 413-477-8229

www.EQLT.org

EQLT News | INSIDE...

The Country Store in Petersham

*An initiative of the
East Quabbin Land Trust
and the
Petersham community*



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UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY...

Saturday, February 15, starting at 5:00 PM

Thirteenth Annual Dinner and Silent Auction - This is the land trust's Gala fundraising event of the year and is hosted at the Cultural Center at Eagle Hill. Tickets are \$55 with tables set for eight or ten. Tickets can be purchased under the Events tab at www.EQLT.org.

MARCH AND APRIL...

Saturday work days, March 1, March 22 and April 5, beginning at 9:00 AM

Bob Marshall Trail, Petersham – Continue clearing the two mile trail that will connect Tom Swamp with the Harvard Forest in honor of Bob Marshall, a co-founder of The Wilderness Society and avid hiker and advocate for wild spaces.

Pynchon's Grist Mill Preserve, West Brookfield – Start repairs to the existing cart road and removal of invasive plants along Sucker Brook in preparation for dedicating the property on November 1.

Rail Trail Workday, Gilbertville – Clear and clean up the 1/2 mile section of the Mass Central Rail Trail in preparation for installation of the fitness equipment. Projects for all ages and abilities are available.

APRIL...

Sunday, April 27, starting at 8:00 AM

East Quabbin Hike - Ware & Hardwick, meet at Gate 34 to carpool – This is the first of a multi-day hiking series that traverses the east coast of the Quabbin Reservoir, the defining landscape feature of our region. We will start hiking at the Quabbin tower and make our way north to Gate 34. This full-day hike will cover 11 miles. RSVP to Cynthia at chenshaw@EQLT.org is required. Bring water, lunch and snacks.