Celebrating 40 years of service to Mansfield with a Conservation Fair

by Denise Brown

In celebration of our 40th anniversary, the Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield will host a Family Conservation Fair on Saturday, October 1, 2011, 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM, on the Mansfield South Common. (Rain date of Sunday, October 2, 2011, starting at 11:00 AM)

Many interactive activities and exhibits are in store for this family friendly day. You can compete in our pumpkin growing contest, shop the farmers’ market, or try kayaking on Fulton Pond. You can learn about alternative energy sources and fuel efficiency for your home. There will be pony carriage rides, good food, and the opportunity to build a duck house. There is something for everyone.

See you at the Family Conservation Fair, where you’ll surely be inspired by conservation ideas and information for you and your family.

A new bridge to our past, present and future

by Harry Chase

A year ago, Mansfield residents were cut off from walking on a 106-acre tract of conservation woodland they’d bought and paid for.

The land, off Fisher Lane south of Willow Street, is part of our 686-acre Great Woods conservation area. It’s one of the prettiest woodlands in town and also the most historic.

The reason no one could walk there was that the sole access, a footbridge over Rumford River, had collapsed from the ravages of vandalism and age.

This spring a fine new footbridge is in place, designed and built by volunteers and by several firms that furnished material and labor at cost.

The bridge design was contributed by structural engineer Rick Campbell of Mansfield. Turner Steel Co. of West Bridgewater provided two 6 x 10 steel girders. Contractor Jack Smith and his son John used their Gradall to widen and level the path from Fisher Lane to the river.

They also removed the old bridge. Andrews Concrete Co. built four new footings and bolted them solidly to the existing stone abutments. The Smiths then placed the new girders.

The project was organized by NRT Vice-president and Conservation Commission chairman Colin Cauldwell of East Mansfield.

(Continued on page 3)
Odds and Ends

by Lou Andrews

NRT accepts Conservation Restriction

Ten properties in the Great Woods now have better protection thanks to a Conservation Restriction (CR) given by the Town to the NRT. Most important, this CR adds an extra layer of protection to the Taylor’s Hill and Cobbler’s Corner properties. You can access the properties from the new bridge at Judy’s Lane. Unlike the land at the Oak Street entrance, these properties contain a hillier environment and offer a pleasant, short walk of a little over a mile. See the Yellow Trail on the Great Woods map available at our web site: www.nrtma.org.

NRT works with Conservation Commission to transfer land

We added another 78 acres of conservation land at the 2010 Annual Town Meeting. The NRT was instrumental in transferring four parcels of land at the rear of Gilbert Street to the protection of the Conservation Commission. Though not easily accessible, the properties will help protect our watershed and add to our wildlife habitat.

Scouts restore “Cobbler’s Corner” sign—Nice Job!

See for yourself. The sign is just a few steps past the new bridge on the Yellow Trail.

Boundary markers to be installed

The Natural Resources Trust owns over thirty parcels of conservation land in Mansfield. This year we plan to perform site visits, and put up boundary markers along our property lines.

South Coast Rail: Went the other way.

In our last newsletter we wrote about the NRT’s objection to the South Coast Rail Attleboro route. The route would have required a third rail line through the Great Woods and Mansfield Center. Common sense prevailed and the Stoughton route was selected. There are still many hurdles before this project goes forward. Stay tuned.

Conservation History

<< Mansfield's First Conservation Commission

(L-R) Charles Meszoely, Fred Rys, Doris Webb, Paul Boyd, Robert Jones, Stu Sweet (back to camera).

We’re on Facebook. Send us your thoughts. Just log in to your Facebook account and search for Natural Resources Trust or go to our web site and click on:
Conserved -- 25 Acres at Plymouth Street

By Leonard Flynn, Acquisitions Director

The Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield recently has acquired twenty-five acres of conservation land from John P. Smith for nominal consideration. The land is situated between Smith Road and Plymouth Street in West Mansfield and abuts eighty-nine acres of NRT land and the town’s Plymouth Street Recreation Area.

Since the property is landlocked and contains considerable wetland, it has limited development potential. Its best use is for wetland/wildlife protection and it will provide excellent hiking and bird watching opportunities. The wetland areas drain to the Wading River and Hodges Brook. The brook flows under (and sometimes over!) School Street, the railroad tracks, and on through the Great Woods conservation area.

A walking and running trail through the Plymouth Street conservation and recreation land might be considered as a future NRT project. I regularly see local runners and lunch time joggers from the Cabot Business Park running the narrow, no-sidewalk roads of West Mansfield – a rather hazardous exercise experience!

Large contiguous parcels of land like the Plymouth Street conservation area and the Great Woods are critical for providing wildlife habitat and biodiversity. Leaving the land in its natural state also will help mitigate the flooding of the soccer fields and School Street and provide a scenic and natural buffer for the recreation area.

(Continued from page 1)

who also pre-cut the deck boards and railings, trucked them to the site and fastened them in place. The total cost, far less than if the town had to build it.

Thanks also are due to John Southard of West Mansfield for his generous contribution.

This welcome new footbridge lets us walk into Mansfield’s present, past and future.

Beyond the bridge is Cobbler’s Corner, site of the earliest recorded event in our local history. It marks the northwest apex of old Taunton township, the Eight Mile Purchase.

The Purchase was surveyed in 1640 by Myles Standish of “Mayflower” fame. When he and his party reached the

Colin Cauldwell got the bridges designed, coordinated the installation of the footings and steel beams, and built the decking and railings.

while he sat on a boulder and cobbled his footwear.

Colin Cauldwell

A color trail map of the Great Woods is available at our web site

Harry has camped, hunted, surveyed, mapped and observed plant and animal life in The Great Woods for over 70 years.

By the 1730s the area had become the farm of Joseph and Rebecca Harris. Their 50 acres included what we call Taylor’s Hill, the sledding place for generations of youngsters, the nearby Taylor’s spring and Devil’s Rock.

East of Harris’s was another farm bought by our first minister, the Rev. Ebenezer White, in 1737. To the west lay Reuben Wellman’s 1760 Homestead Farm.

About 1800 landowners began marking their fields with stone walls which exist to this day.

Several generations ago, farming on these properties was given up. Seeds carried on the wind filled the abandoned fields with stately groves of pines.

When the Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield and our Conservation Commission began working to save the woods, one skeptic asked, “Save the Great Woods for what?”

The answer’s a no-brainer. For a great green lung that inhales carbon dioxide while cleansing and cooling our air. For the present and future pleasure of hikers, hunters, Scouts, students, dog walkers, bird watchers, horseback riders, kids who love to explore. For unspoiled nature.

Our Great Woods is a natural treasure trove in which 134 species of birds, 17 kinds of mammals, 104 trees and shrubs, and 137 varieties of wildflowers can be found.

This woodland belongs to all Mansfield residents, now and future. Cross the new bridge, walk through the groves, draw a deep breath of pine-scented air and enjoy!
The Birth of the NRT of Mansfield

by Jane R. Sheehan

Little did I dream on that sunny fall day of 1968, when I rode “Little Britches” over the Rumford River’s make-shift bridge, just how far that trail would lead.

Someone had told me that the Great Woods was a good place to ride horseback. Well, it was true! Never had I encountered such good footing with a variety of terrain, over wide, inviting, abandoned logging roads. I rode on for quite a while, exploring, crossed some swampy places and a railroad track. Then I realized that I was lost. Finally I emerged near the School Street bridge, dismounted, and led the tired pony down Willow Street, home to our South Main Street farm, ecstatic over my discovery, I shared my adventure with neighbor Roger Vickery who was gassing up my car at Vickery’s Garage. Roger, who was always helpful, offered to get me a map of the woods from Harry Chase. Harry was a former Boy Scout leader who knew the Great Woods of Mansfield and Norton like the back of his hand. I never got lost out there again!

With each ride I came to know the woods better. I never met a soul. It seemed to me that this was a special place. My enthusiasm for the trail system of the Great Woods spilled over to my neighbors Rob and Doris Webb, who had given me permission to ride on their property on Fruit Street. (Now owned by Lou and Mary Andrews.) They started to hike there with their two children, Billy and Marybeth. Together we became more convinced that these woods were an unheralded asset to Mansfield and Norton, and that a plan to preserve them was needed.

Who in the town should we approach? Who made plans for the future? In our naiveté, we decided that we would go to the Planning Board. After all, a Planning Board was for planning weren’t they?

Our reception was less than enthusiastic. We left feeling that we had been patronized and perhaps even ridiculed. Later we were angered to hear that we had been referred to as “the bird-ladies of South Main Street.”

However, upon analyzing why the meeting had gone badly for us, we learned some important lessons. First of all, do your homework! Have lots of facts and figures to present.

Get public support. Try to enlist the Town Fathers, but if you cannot, get lots of other people interested. Find out what avenues to pursue to make preservation possible. We read a lot. We wrote letters to the state to find out if a state park was a possibility. About a dozen other conservation-minded people joined us as we explored options.

Adding urgency to our cause was the announcement that an extension to Route 25 was planned that would destroy and divide much of the Great Woods’ 3000 acres.

We decided to follow the lead of a group in Easton which had incorporated the previous year as a non-profit land trust. (The Easton Natural Resources Trust). Thus, in 1971, The Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield was incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

We broadened our interests to include conservation education and the protection of the other natural resources of the Town of Mansfield.

The incorporators were: Beatrice C. Alperin, Nancy Bielan, Harry Chase, Nancy F. Jones, Robert J. Jones, Richard A. Morse, Jane Sheehan, Richard J. Sheehan, Roger Vickery, Doris Webb, and Robert Webb.

The first Board of Directors were: Robert Webb, President; Doris Webb, Vice-President; Jane Sheehan, Secretary; Robert J. Jones, Treasurer; Janice Meszoely, Membership; Directors: Beatrice Alperin; Herbert George; Virginia George; Patricia Marcus, and Betty Roche.

Thirty years later, I look back in awe at the volume of letters, the public hearings, the Town Meetings and the media coverage of the various threats to the Great Woods and to the environmental integrity of the town. I shake my head in wonder at what one little incident in my life led to . And I feel so proud and privileged to have been able to take part in some of the NRT’s accomplishments.

Editor’s note: On our 40th anniversary, I thought it appropriate to reprint this article which was in our Spring 2001 newsletter.
NRT Through the years*

Compiled by Lou Andrews

I think we deserve the right to pat ourselves on the back for everything we accomplished over the past 40 years. Here are the highlights.

1971 Incorporated
1971 Instrumental in the formation of the Great Woods Study Committee (GWSC) (*The Great Woods Study Committee was chartered by Town Meeting to generate a plan for the Great Woods*).

1972 The First Conservation Fair; Great Woods and Canoe River Walks; Great Woods booklet printed; Fight over Rt. 25 (now Rt. 495) cloverleaf interchange begins.

1973 NRT established land acquisition fund; purchases first property in Great Woods

1975 100 more acres in the Great Woods for the conservation. Conservancy award given to Stanley and Dorothy York for their support in offering land for conservation to the town (*Marie F. Strese Conservancy on area on Branch Street*); Rob and Doris Webb receive conservancy award as founding members of the NRT.

1977 Sweet Conservancy area acquired by Town.
1976 NRT members on the GWSC instrumental in acquiring Taylor’s Hill property; NRT awards Robert (Bobby) Jones for his conservation efforts.

1978 NRT receives first gift of land from Arthur and Myra Freeman.
1977 NRT gives 25 acres on Branch Street from Dorothy York; NRT guides over 500 school children on Great Woods field trips.

1978 NRT builds bridge across the Rumford River at Judy’s Lane.

1982 Over 3000 people attend NRT Conservation Fair.
1983 NRT sponsors children to Stony Brook Day Camp.
1984 Great Woods Fisher property purchased, including “Cobbler’s Corner” adding to the Taylor’s Hill property.

1992 NRT helps thwart Lego World, and road through the heart of the Great Woods, from building in the Norton; NRT plants trees on South Common in honor of long-time board members Jean Findlater and Eleanor Brady.

1993 NRT facilitates forty more acres a Great Woods conservation on land purchased by the town; SRPEDD supports NRT stand and opposes Route 140 relocation through Great Woods.

1994 State returns 88 acres of excess land in the Great Woods to the town for conservation. (*Land was taken during the Route 495 construction*).

1995 NRT gives 83 acres on Plymouth Street.

1997 Through the efforts of the NRT’s Lenny Flynn, the town purchases the Sco /Goyea Farm; NRT receives first Conservation Restriction on Sco /Goyea Farm; town acquires additional Great Woods land linking land from the north to the south.


2000 NRT leads the fight to stop Great Waves Water Park and wins! NRT acquires 58 acres in Great Woods in deal with Heath Development and TPC Boston and is given 23 acres on Mill Farm Drive from Martha Flint. We now have a web site.


2003 NRT is given 17.1 acres in Great Woods from Norman Freeman; Vicky Connors and Lenny Flynn awarded certificate for 30 years of service; 48 acres on Essex Street purchased by Town.

2004 Town and NRT name “Leonard F. and Marydee Flynn Green Belt” along Canoe River, south of East Street to Norton Town Line in honor of their 30 plus years of service.

2010 Town Meeting approved Conservation Restriction on to NRT on over 200 acres of Great Woods Property; 78 acres of land at Gilbert Street rear transferred to Conservation Commission, NRT rebuilds bridge across the Rumford River at Judy’s Lane.

* List only includes major accomplishments that the NRT members helped facilitate.

Help us save time and money by getting on our e-mail newsletter list to receive future newsletters in color via e-mail. Please e-mail us at membership@nrtma.org.

Thank you
**WE’RE ON THE WEB:**
www.nrtma.org

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**2011 Officers and Board of Directors**

**Officers**
- President: Lou Andrews
- Vice-President: Colin Cauldwell
- Secretary: Meredith Holford
- Treasurer: Denise Brown

**Board of Directors**
- Leonard Flynn, Acquisitions Director
- Peggy Flannery
- Marydee Flynn
- Mary Kate Flynn
- Robert Goldman
- Steve Holford
- Gerry Huiskamp
- Janice Meszoely
- Charles Meszoely
- Betty Roche
- John Russo
- Jane Sheehan
- Deborah Snyder

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**Membership**

*The NRT welcomes new members!*

Our dues are $25.00 per year.

Dues can be sent to:
Natural Resources Trust
545 South Main Street
Mansfield, MA 02048

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**2012 Dues**

Please renew your membership.
Membership is only $25.00.

Mail your dues to the NRT,
545 South Main Street, Mansfield, MA 02048
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