



Pascommuck post

Summer 2011

Paul Street

Property Acquisition



Pascommuck Conservation Trust has been actively working for nearly a year to acquire a 22 acre parcel of land near Paul Street, in the South Street neighborhood of Easthampton. While there have been some delays, all areas of the project are now moving forward and we hope an agreement will be in place at the end of the summer.



The Paul Street parcel will be an exciting addition for Pascommuck. The property is biologically rich and is right on the Manhan River adjacent to our existing 15 acre Pomeroy Meadows conservation area which we currently do not have access to. It is not often we have the opportunity to acquire a large parcel of land that is adjacent to one of our existing properties. We hope to create a trail network throughout the combined 37 acre conservation area.

preservation

This property includes a variety of animal and plant habitats:

- Rich flood plains by the Manhan River
- Upland mixed forest that includes many massive old pine trees
- Red pine plantation forest
- A 3 acre meadow

The upper portion of the property also contains what we affectionately call dingles but which are deep ravines left over from glacial processes. These dingles provide additional interest to the property but will also offer some challenges to trail building. We anticipate we will need to build some bridges to help hikers negotiate their crossing.

All land protection projects have elements that are unique. In this project the current landowner has an interest in conserving the backlands while developing approximately three level acres in the front field. David Garstka, a local builder, entered into an agreement with the landowner to extend Paul Street and build approximately eight homes on those 3 acres. He has been working to develop a plan which fits in with the Paul Street neighborhood, protects the environment, provides trail access, and is economically feasible. Mr. Garstka has listened very carefully to the Trust

regarding trail access from both the new Paul Street extension and the adjacent Ranch Avenue. As of this writing, Mr. Garstka is about to begin more thorough planning and environmental reviews of the proposed plan.

At the same time, Pascommuck has secured a trail easement from an adjacent property owner that will help to alleviate some of the challenges in trails crossing the dingles.

Thanks to the City and citizens of Easthampton, the Trust has secured \$45,000 in CPA funding for this project. Come this fall,

Pascommuck anticipates developing a network of neighborhood and city-wide residents to help plan and build trails as well as fund raise to off-set another \$20,000 in acquisition costs and the yet to be determined trail building costs.

If you are interested in getting more involved please email
Patty Gambarini at pgambarini@verizon.net or
Doug Wheat at doug_wheat@yahoo.com.



Doug Wheat

Overcoming Bad for Good

Throughout my life, fear of the unknown has been a great obstacle for me. However, when I have been able to put that fear aside, mostly good things have happened. So it has been with my journey to become a member of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust. I say journey, because as corny as it may sound, that's what it's been. It took me almost 5 years from the time I sent in my first membership form/fee with full intentions of going to the next annual meeting, before I actually made it to one.

Each year I sent in my membership form with some volunteer positions checked off and more than once started on my way to attend the meeting. However, as I drove along the road, that corrosive thread (fear) which is woven throughout the fabric of my entire being would take over. I would then turn around and go home. If fear has been my greatest obstacle in life, I must say that being outdoors with Mother Earth has become my greatest comfort. It is when I am in the woods that I feel most at home and the least uneasy.

Approximately 2 years ago, along with the annual membership renewal form came a request for land monitors. This requires someone to watch over a Trust property and report to the board any problems or perhaps improvements that need to be made at that particular property. This sounded really exciting to me since I knew I could spend time in the woods, which I love, and not have to interact with people, which made me very uncomfortable – the proverbial “dangling carrot”, so I immediately signed on to act as a Land Monitor for a site near my home. I attended a monthly meeting and found a very welcoming group of people who shared the same interests and love of Mother Earth as I do.

After attending one meeting, I decided to try the next one, and the desire to do something worthwhile, together with being outdoors helped me to overcome my fear. What I found that evening once again, was a very welcoming group of people who did their best to make me feel as if I had always been a member, while also giving me needed background information of current projects, and allowing me to ask any questions I wanted. People who, in many instance, had dedicated much of their life to the conservation and protection of our greatest asset, Mother Earth and the things both in and on it. I knew I had made a good choice.

As a Land Monitor I have once more been able to overcome bad for good, and as a result I've received much more than I've given. At this year's annual business meeting I was nominated and voted in as a new member of the Board of Directors, and was also given a side position of “trash removal specialist”, which is a job where “things are always picking up”. Who could ask for more?

Stan Jasinski



land monitor

Dedication in Memory of Stella

commitment



On a breezy, warm June 3rd, filled with sunshine, over 30 people gathered at John Bator Park, located at the corner of Williston Ave and Lake Street in Easthampton, to dedicate a bench in memory of our long time member, and very special friend, Stella Wiernasz, who passed away on May 1, 2010.

The first speaker was Pascommuck Conservation Trust president, John Bator who spoke of Stella's many special qualities. She was a very dedicated member and a hard worker, always finding a way to encourage the same attitude from others. He shared a humorous story involving the moving of a stone bench and how Stella had recruited a group of unsuspecting volunteers to put in place what turned out to be a very heavy bench at the Old Pascommuck Conservation area, which is way off the beaten path. Stella just had a way of getting things done. "Can't" wasn't in her vocabulary.

Mayor Michael Tautznik, a founding member of PCT, and current member, spoke next and said that he was in attendance as both the Mayor of Easthampton and also as Stella's long-time friend. The theme of Mike's remarks was that no one could take Stella's place, but that the one thing Stella taught everybody was that "one person can make a big difference" in whatever needs to be accomplished. He further commented that Stella's life, and how she lived it, showed the importance of friendship, cooperating and collaboration, (i.e. working hard together).

Other speakers included Bill Burgart, also a founding member of PCT, and a current board member, John Watling, another long time board member and former Clerk of PCT, and also Robert and Nance Mac-





Donald, who knew Stella well and who take such wonderful care of the Angel Monument area as well as the park in general. All shared heartfelt reminiscences of Stella.

Ilona Murray, a long time friend of Stella, spoke of how Stella helped her and encouraged her in turn to help others. Judy Poulin, retired school librarian, spoke of Stella's volunteerism in the elementary school library and also her love of children. Roger Anderson, currently a PCT board member shared a story about Stella's spirit and Stella's daughter, Elaine Williams spoke of Stella's continuing presence felt in her life. In closing, Stella's son, Michael thanked all of Stella's friends for being there in her life and for gathering once again in her memory. Many other memories of Stella's positive impact on lives were shared with the group as people mingled.

John Bator Park looked beautiful for the occasion! A huge "thank you" to Bob and Nance MacDonald and their crew of volunteers for painting the Gazebo, the benches and the sign for the Stella Wiernasz Trail- a lot of work! The gardens they so carefully tend all looked lovely, as they always do. Thank you all...

Sue Walz



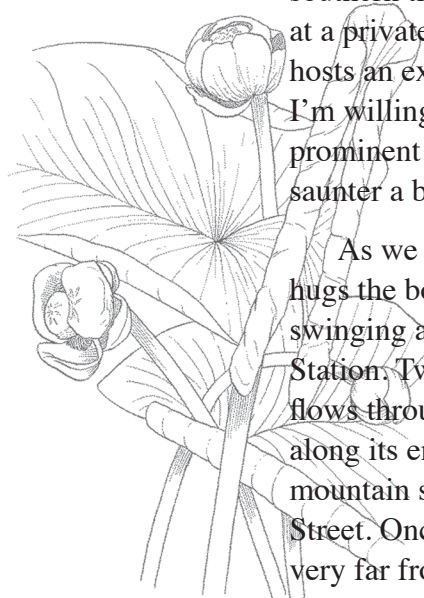
Rediscovering Broad Brook

Some folks may know that Broad Brook enters Nashawannuck Pond at its southern tip, fairly close to where Lang Avenue (side street off Holyoke Street) ends at a private residence with a wooded embankment leading to the water. The area hosts an expanding cattail marsh where years ago open shoreline existed. However, I'm willing to bet that hardly anybody has the slightest notion of exactly where this prominent stream originates. So, let's do what Henry David Thoreau loved to do, and saunter a bit – merely to see what there is to see. There are some surprises.

As we tread upstream in a generally southerly direction, we find that the brook hugs the border of Nonotuck Park, flowing parallel to Holyoke Street, then Hendrick., swinging away from the park and crossing beneath it at the bridge near the Pumping Station. Two characteristics of this creek are becoming increasingly apparent: It flows through wetlands for much of its journey, and numerous streamlets feed into it along its entire course. This includes Rum and Brandy Brook, which originate from mountain springs in back of the old Rum Brook Farm at the beginning of Hendrick Street. Once past the bridge, it edges along the foothills of Mt Tom, never straying very far from the roadway, crossing it again near its end. Here it quickly maneuvers under Wonderlich Street, Strong, and Pomeroy, where another long stretch of wetland continues the saga, as it eventually heads into the Southampton Wildlife Management Area off Cook Road, traversing it at a point a little past the Holyoke borderline.

After crossing Southampton Road, our rivulet finds itself skipping through the Rock Valley section of West Holyoke, running parallel to Rock Valley Road via a band of marsh that is surrounded by housing projects and scattered private homes. Two side streets break the continuity of the marsh, but culverts keep the stream moving.. Then comes the big turn around! Suddenly, Broad Brook loops to the left, passes under Rock Valley Road near its end, enters the swampy foothills of East Mountain, and slowly loops to head north. It now runs parallel to Mountain Road (not to be confused with Easthampton's Mountain road, part of Rt. 141). The many farms and fields along this lane, with the mountain in the background, offer a pleasant rural scenario. Once the stream traverses West Cherry Street, an avenue off Mountain road that ends at a gate near the Holyoke revolver Club, comes another unexpected revelation. It becomes a marshy pond held back by a small dam. Through the canopy of trees from this lane, Mt Tom's peak is remotely visible.

Leaving the pond, Broad Brook continues to navigate swampland, and as Mountain Road intersects with Southampton Road, it turns with the mountain to run parallel with Southampton Road, crossing it not far from where it meets Rt. 141 near the Holyoke Rehab Center. The situation really gets complicated here. Angling its way along a couple of back yards, it channels into a dense swamp of hardwoods and understory shrubs, eventually opening into a large marshy pond off Rt. 141, near the



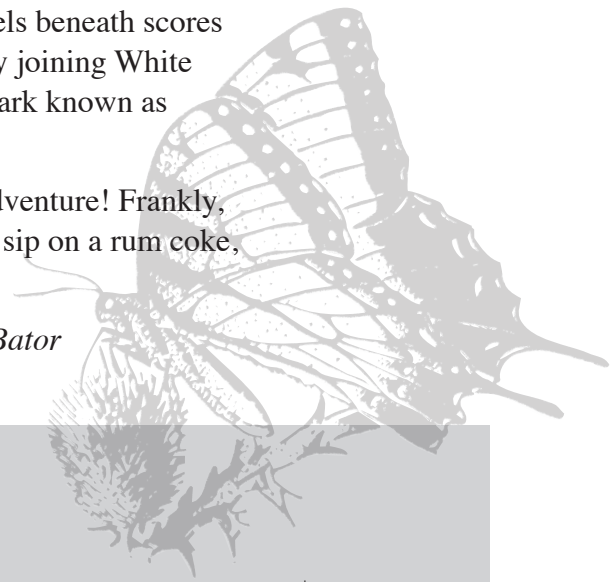
Holyoke Animal Hospital. Aha! Finally the source is located – the wetlands near the base of Mt Tom’s southernmost peak. But wait – don’t abandon the expedition just yet, because now here’s the rest of the story.

You see, back at Southampton Road, a little closer to Rt. 141, on the East Mountain side to the right, a small private pond merges with a spring-fed swamp stream, tunnels beneath the road, remains hidden for fifty feet underground in a culvert, then resurfaces to feed into the original stream we had followed into the swamp and marsh pond. Holy Holly! Broad Brook has a second source – the wetlands at the base of East mountain, as it begins in back of the Rehab Center.

There you have it – a local brook that springs from the wetland foothills of two distinct but closely related mountains, flowing south at first, then looping gradually to the north, courses through an extensive expanse of wetlands, tunnels beneath scores of roads, visits forest glens, meadows, and a park before ultimately joining White and Wilton Brook to form Easthampton’s pride and joy, the landmark known as Nashawannuck Pond.

Well, that was one confusing, complicated, but enlightening adventure! Frankly, though, the next time around I think I’ll simply relax in the shade, sip on a rum coke, and just ask a brook trout where the damn stream begins....

John Bator



***Congratulations to Allyson Yarra,
Recipient of the Ed Dwyer Scholarship Award***

The 2011 recipient of the Easthampton High School Ed Dwyer Scholarship Award of \$250 is senior Allyson Yarra. The Pascommuck Conservation Trust takes great pride and pleasure in supporting young people from our own town of Easthampton who are embarking on the field of conservation or who have a significant interest in the natural world.

After being raised by nature enthusiasts and attending the Massachusetts Junior Conservation Camp in 2008, Allyson’s passions for science and preserving the natural world ensued. She attended Easthampton High School and was National Honor Society President, Student Council President, Model United Nations President, Key Club member, Regional Student Advisory Council and Girl’s State 2010 representative. She will be attending the Commonwealth Honors College at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst to study Biology and Natural Resource Conservation.

Congratulations, Allyson! We are thrilled to have the opportunity to support you! Best wishes in your future endeavors! Don’t be a stranger!

Property Monitoring -a Huge Success



Whether you have a particular skill or just feel like spending an hour helping the **Pascommuck Conservation Trust**, you will always be welcomed.

Please contact **Molly Goodwin** at 529-1805 or goodmol@hotmail.com.

Also check our website pctland.org

We have been graced this year with some incredible people who have stepped forward to be property monitors for some of our properties. PCT has been hoping to pull this program together for some time and it has finally jelled. Each property monitor claims one of our properties and takes responsibility for alerting the Board of issues needing attention such as trail maintenance including clearing trails, bridge or stair repairs, downed trees or limbs, erosion issues, etc., evidence of encroachment such as mowing, dumping, erected structures, etc., needed trash clean up, evidence of ATV or dirt bike use or other misuse of property, invasive plants, damage to benches, signs, fences, etc., boundaries that need to be marked, signs that need to be installed or replaced, and brush clearing or mowing. Often the property monitors take care of some of these issues independently if appropriate. They become familiar with the area and can easily assess when something has changed or is amiss. They also often point out significant plant, bird or animal species or just a particularly lovely aspect of the property that others have yet to discover or a trail that might be able to be developed.

We are very grateful to Stan Jasinski who is monitoring Broad Brook and has also become a very valued new Board member, to Michael Caron who is monitoring Old Trolley Line and has also become a much appreciated new Board Member, to Joel Walz who is monitoring Hannum Brook and has been a long time support to PCT, to Sue Walz who monitors Brick Yard Brook and is also a long standing Board Member and now Vice President, and to Gerrit Stover who monitors Old Pascommuck and is just generally invaluable to PCT for a variety of reasons that would take pages to elaborate and he'd deny anyway.

We are also very appreciative to our many volunteers who help out with the property maintenance and many other aspects of PCT. In particular, Peter Brooks, Ed Pocon and Don McQuillan have been very helpful with the momentous and back breaking work going on at Brick Yard Brook this spring. Many members of the Board such as John Bator, Bill Burgart, Michael Caron, Stan Jasinski and others have also been involved in this work. We have been moving trails and bridges and rebuilding steps; much of this constitutes some of those things that we appreciate about Gerrit Stover. If you haven't been there recently or have never been, you must make your way to Brickyard Brook at the end of Mt. Tom Avenue or off of East Street. It is truly a jewel of Easthampton.

If you have any interest in becoming a Property Monitor or volunteering in any way, please contact Molly Goodwin at goodmol@hotmail.com or 529-1805. We are so appreciative of all of our wonderful volunteers who help out in so many ways!

Molly Goodwin

Spring Plant Sale

We had checked the weather forecast for days, noting that rain was forecast for Saturday, May 15th the day of our annual Spring Plant Sale. Undaunted, however, we arrived at Big E's Supermarket, on Union Street, shortly after 7 am and began the task of organizing, tagging and pricing plants as donors began dropping them off, and in our spare time also organizing those plants our group had painstakingly readied for the largest fundraiser PCT has each spring. Thankfully, the weatherman's prediction was premature and people started to purchase plants almost before we could unload them from the trucks.

The sale officially starts at 8:00 am, however the early-birds were already busy filling shopping carts with the great buys. If you have visited either our Spring or Fall plant sale in the past, then you know that the prices are unbeatable. There was the usual selection of perennials; Hosta's, daylilies, Siberian iris, annuals, some houseplants, together with many shrubs and small trees, plus a varied assortment of wetland plants, with those last items being generously donated by Gerrit Stover, our land preservation consultant, who had extra plantings from his own gardening venture. Sales were brisk and when it was finally concluded at 12:30 pm we had once again had a very successful sale, and made many gardeners happy with their great buys. Many of our board members are also gardeners so they also know that great feeling of finding that special plant to go in "just the right spot".

We conducted a Raffle, as in past years. The first prize of the garden bench with gardening supplies included, was won by Lisa Downing. This bench was donated by Sue Bishop, a long-time trust member, who puts some very nice raffle items together for us each year. We sincerely appreciate her attention to detail and the thoughtful choice of items. Terry Perrea also donated three baskets, each one containing a variety of items for the garden, with some other timely and unique items included. We thank Terry also, for her thoughtfulness in preparing these items for our raffle. The baskets were won by Beverly Wodicka, Deb Tryon, and Elaine Williams.

If you have never visited one of our plant sales, then we invite you to do so this fall. We will be sending out postcards to our members later on, and a notice will be placed in the Summit with the date. It will likely be held at Big E's Supermarket parking lot once again.

We'll look forward to seeing you there.....

Shirley Smith

Pascommuck Conservation Trust Board

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Bill Burgart's Way

Protecting Land . . . Nickel by Nickel

The following is a tale of dedication, commitment and love. When Bill first shared this with me a few months ago, my initial reaction was - Holy Cow, you're kidding! (Ok, I paraphrased.) Later, I decided this is a story deserving of a wider audience.

His devotion to the cause of land protection goes back to 1982, when he was one of the original founders of PCT. Over the years, he's worked with land owners, given financial support, done trail maintenance work, attended countless meetings and promoted the cause with his distinctive style.

In May of 1987, following the death of his wife, Bill decided to continue an activity that the two of them had done together previously - picking up cans and bottles from roadsides, trails, wherever, and redeeming them for pocket money. At the same time, they were doing their part to beautify Easthampton and the Valley by ridding the landscape of litter. Bill made a pledge to himself to honor his late wife by donating all the money he received from those redeemables to the cause of land protection, primarily in Easthampton.

As many of you know, Bill is an avid bicyclist and hiker. Whenever he's out riding or on a trail, he stops if he sees a can or bottle, bags it and continues on til the next one appears. In recent years, the numbers are down from previous years, he says, possibly owing to the economy or maybe because people are more conscious about littering. Some years, he admits, he picked through the trash cans at the Fall Festival.

In 1994, Bill convinced his bike club to emulate him. They collected \$1100 in total, 200 of that from Bill's pick-ups. The money was given to Valley Land Fund, as the club members lived in different towns in this area.

Here are some numbers to consider...Over the past 24 years, Bill has kept records of the amount of money he's received and the number of cans redeemed. His total - 92,055 cans and bottles! (how many acres would they cover?) Using only cans, lined up end to end, I calculated they'd stretch for 6.5 miles! But, even more impressive is what Bill's done with all those nickels (and some dimes).

Bill has contributed to the following land protection projects:

MA Audubon Arcadia land purchase - \$1,020

Mt. View Farm (formerly Ole Turtle) - \$2,310

Echodale Farm - \$300 to date (goal is \$1000)

TTOR - Little Mt. Tom purchase - \$1,000

A total of \$4530 (which works out to 90,600 nickels!)

In Bill's words - *"This is a game of persistence, a nickel at a time, with the goal of protecting the environment"*, adding that occasionally people have given him their cans and bottles. He has no intention of stopping and will accept contributions. You can call him at 527-9080, if you'd like to add your 2 cents, well, nickel's worth, to his Herculean efforts on our behalf. Bill Burgart is a true local hero and an inspiration to all who support the cause of land protection in Easthampton and beyond.

Marty Klein

Brickyard Rebuilt

Q.: *What looks like a lumberyard, has twenty legs, goes up hills, and takes weeks?*

A.: Reconstructing bridges and steps at Brickyard Brook Conservation Area, that's what!

As the newsletter goes to press, a stalwart crew of rather old people is finishing up with rebuilding in a matter of (work)days what it took an Americorps crew of twenty-somethings a month to construct, way back in the 20th century. Clear proof of the superior technology of this more modern age: the shovel, the sledgehammer, the sawz-all, bug dope, and, of course, that marvel of high-tech, the laundry marker. It all got done in the end thanks to a lot of hard work by volunteers Roger Anderson, John Bator, Peter Brooks, Bill Burgart, Michael Caron, Connor Crocker, Molly Goodwin, Stan Jasinski, Don McQuillan, Ed Procon, Gerrit Stover, and our refreshment-bearing lifesaver, Sue Walz.

Brickyard Brook is the Trust's most visited holding, but the deterioration of the bog bridges, stairs, and 'the big bridge' over the past few years was making passage hazardous. Although Mountain View Farm kindly let visitors detour through their fields to avoid the widening chasm on the Brook Trail, that was clearly only a temporary fix.

So, in a fit -- er, feat! -- of logistical planning, we measured, calculated, brainstormed, and then reviewed new and old choices for ecologically responsible lumber to use in the project. Also on the list were materials to finish off similar rebuilding at Old Pascommuck and to prepare for upcoming work on the first formal trails at Old Trolley Line Conservation Area.

While pressure-treated wood is now considered much safer (copper has been substituted for arsenic), we also are trying out tamarack (larch), a wetland species claimed to be durable for outdoor use, and have purchased posts made out of 100% recycled high-density polyethylene. 'HDPE' is the green alternative to 'plastic lumber' products made of PVC, which while long-lasting often uses virgin plastics and contains toxic chemicals. Unfortunately, recycled HDPE lumber distribution in the east is almost non-existent, so Pascommuck had to order it retail from Oregon.

A series of deliveries from Fleury Lumber, Resco Plastics, and Lashway Logging left a huge pile of 8x8s, 6x6s, and 2x6 tamarack planks in Bill Burgart's driveway. The aforementioned crew used the aforementioned tools and a good deal of brute force to reduce that pile into orderly stacks of cut, drilled, jointed, and labelled lumber destined for each conservation area.

Then the real work began at Brickyard Brook. After the full contingent carried the old bridge down hill to its new, erosion-proof location, fresh 'crib steps' were dug into the slope to climb back up to the existing trail. The next job was to tear out and reconstruct another fourteen stairs near the three-way trail junction. And, last but not least, 'Bill's Bridge' over at the East Street entrance was completely rebuilt, relocated to minimize its footprint on the small intermittent stream there.

So come pay a visit, and be sure to look down -- this time, not to avoid a crumbling or absent step, but instead to admire our handiwork.



Pascommuck Conservation Trust

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