



Pascommuck post

Summer 2016

Mutter's Field Accessible Trail ... Finally!

As I write this in late June, work continues to progress, slowly but surely. By the time you receive this newsletter though, I expect that 95% of this exciting new PCT project will be complete. Since my last newsletter article last year, the Mutter's Field Accessible Trail has gone from the drawing board to the ground. Here's a roundup, in case you haven't yet visited this outstanding property...

Around the Meadow

Since the early spring, visitors have been enjoying and using the loop trail around the meadow. Alongside the trail, we've installed five beautiful, accessible benches and two accessible picnic tables, built by Easthampton's Kevin Mulligan. We've put up several bird nesting boxes around the meadow, as well. (New development in great neighborhood seeking tenants...)

Speaking of the meadow (and the surrounding area...if you've been there, you know that much of it has been overtaken by unwanted vining plants such as black swallowwort, bittersweet (invasives) and poison ivy. It's a sad sight to see a few native plants, such as milkweed, daisies, goldenrod and others struggling to hold their ground amidst the tangled growth. Unfortunately, none of the "undesirables" are easy to eradicate. Our trail must be clear of all obstacles, so maintenance around it is not optional.

We have researched a variety of solutions and after much discussion, have decided to kill all the plants in the meadow, using a conservation-approved herbicide and over time, we plan to restore it to a place where native species, that would otherwise be there, can thrive. It won't happen overnight and this was not our first choice, but we intend to use the restoration to demonstrate how it can be done.

To add more botanical interest and to provide visitors with a more sensual experience, we've added two beautiful, stone-walled, raised bed, gardens along the loop trail. A long-time PCT supporter and horticultural virtuoso, Lesley Harrington, designed the plantings and generously donated/purchased all the native, flowering plants growing there. We hired North Wind Stoneworks of Ashfield to construct these beautiful raised beds for us. We seek volunteers to water and maintain these beds (and more) Please contact us for details.



Mutter's Field *Accessible Trail*

Other Improvements

The entrance at E. Green St. has been redone, properly connected to the loop trail and is now more accessible to those using assistive devices.

We've created an extension/connection from the meadow loop trail to our existing (non-accessible and popular) Brickyard Brook Conservation Area trail, in the woods by the memorial rock and Stella Wiernasz granite bench. Approximately 25' in length, the extension leads to a viewing area that overlooks the ravine, brook and beyond the trees, Mountain View Farm. It allows all visitors to experience a different habitat than what they encounter elsewhere at Mutter's Field.



East St. Entrance

Here is our new parking area and trailhead, with an accessible ramp leading down to the trail, landscaped with native plants and featuring an environmentally friendly "rain garden", designed to manage stormwater runoff. In addition to other signage, we've installed a kiosk there with a trail map and information about the PCT and the trail.

In the coming months, we will be adding some beautiful interpretive signage along the trail to educate visitors about some aspects of nature they encounter there. These will include: Mount Tom, pollinators, invasive plants, birds, etc. We will be purchasing them from a company in Illinois that makes interpretive signage for parks and trails.

Maybe at this point, you're saying to yourself - "Wow! This sounds amazing! But how the heck are they paying for all this?"

Fair question. The total cost for this wonderful addition to our green necklace is nearly \$300,000! Not including the maintenance endowment we're hoping to establish for this relatively maintenance-intensive property. It's an ambitious undertaking for us, to say the least. But, I've known, since the idea was hatched three years ago, that it would be an *easy** one to fundraise for. By that I mean easy to make a case to potential funders. (Just slightly less appealing than a puppy shelter.) As our population ages and becomes more inclusive (and disabled), the need for accessible recreation opportunities has increased greatly.

The generous support, both public and private, that we have received to date, reflects that need. \$47,000 from a MA DCR Recreational

Trails grant, \$205,000! from Easthampton's Community Preservation Act fund, \$5,000 from the Field's Pond Foundation in Boston and \$15,000+ from many other donors.

THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH!!

Do the math though and you'll see we're still in need of additional support. The Trust is seeking that in a variety of ways, as we've already demonstrated. Have you visited Mutter's Field yet? When you experience it firsthand, I'm confident that you will understand the awesomeness (forgive me) of what we've created here for you and the community at large. Please show your support with a generous donation of money or time. Trust me...it's a feel good thing!

Marty Klein
Director, Project Manager

**Easy* is a relative term. I and others from the PCT have volunteered/toiled hundreds of hours to make this vision come to life.



new projects

President's Report

It seems as though Mother Earth is spinning at a faster pace these days – people are busier than ever, and life keeps getting more complicated with each passing year. Certainly, trust activity has been no exception. In fact, for a small volunteer organization, we often find ourselves overwhelmed with a workload worthy of a team of mules. Since most of our members and supporters don't have the opportunity to see what occurs on all fronts and behind the scenes, I'll attempt to summarize the bulk of this year's trust adventures, so to speak.

Let's begin with a roundup of properties maintenance. So far in 2016 we've had three work sessions to deal with fallen branches and trees along the trails, cutting back overhang, and weed whacking. Mutter Field also required professional tree work along the borders of the new accessible trail, to remove dead, overhanging limbs. Old Trolley Line Conservation Area off Clapp Street gave us quite a workout this year, since we are striving to keep a pathway through the fields for the first time. Yes, we have a riding mower, but I didn't want to take a chance on blowing the thing up trying to mow five-foot tall grasses and tough weeds like goldenrod. Weed whacking over 600' of this jungle nightmare was no French picnic! Gratefully, we were rescued by the Cavalry at the last minute, before the enemy got the best of us... well, not exactly the cavalry; Jonah Keane, Director of nearby Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, sent over one of their crew members, who mowed over what we had done, and then some. Now we have a new trail system there that can be maintained by our mower for the remaining growing season. Thanks ever so much, Jonah and company.

Bird houses were replaced and/or cleaned out at Old Pascommuck and Old Trolley Line Conservation Areas this spring. A new gazebo replaced the old one at John Bator Park, thanks to Skip's Outdoor Accents and a UPS grant, while Kevin Mulligan replaced the old bollards around the parking lot. Robert and Nance MacDonald, who take care of the Angel Monument and most of our park, are in the process of replacing the old wooden benches with attractive red granite ones. Gerrit Stover is clearing a new entrance trail at the end of Paul Street, to connect with our Pomeroy Meadows trail network. Brave soul, that Gerrit, pulling all that poison ivy by hand. Red, itchy patches on the arms, but who needs Calamine Lotion? We are collaborating with Arcadia to install an entrance sign for our Old Trolley line Conservation area, where Arcadia's Trolley Line Trail crosses Clapp Street. Also, the two observation decks at Pomeroy Meadows Conservation Area will be given a fresh coat of weather proofing sealer this summer, courtesy of Patty Gambarini and volunteers from the nearby neighborhood. With all this labor taking place, we are in the process of revamping our Properties Maintenance data sheets to include provisions for extra funding. Hopefully, we'll be able to hire outside contractors to handle some of the more regular maintenance in the years to come, thus easing the burden on what I and other volunteers now do. Should this not pan out, look for me on the streets downtown, singing and playing my guitar, accompanied by a monkey holding a tin cup. Our Mutter Field Accessible Trail project is taking shape, though slower than expected. Many delays, twists and turns, with additional mini projects being added from time to time. More on this from Marty Klein in his article.

Speaking of revamping data, board member Linda Bush has volunteered to be our database manager. She, with advice from a professional we hired, treasurer Brian Dillon, and a few other board members, has successfully revived our ailing old system, and now we have a database that actually works and can handle all the tasks that are required to enable us to operate efficiently. Thanks, Linda and helpers.

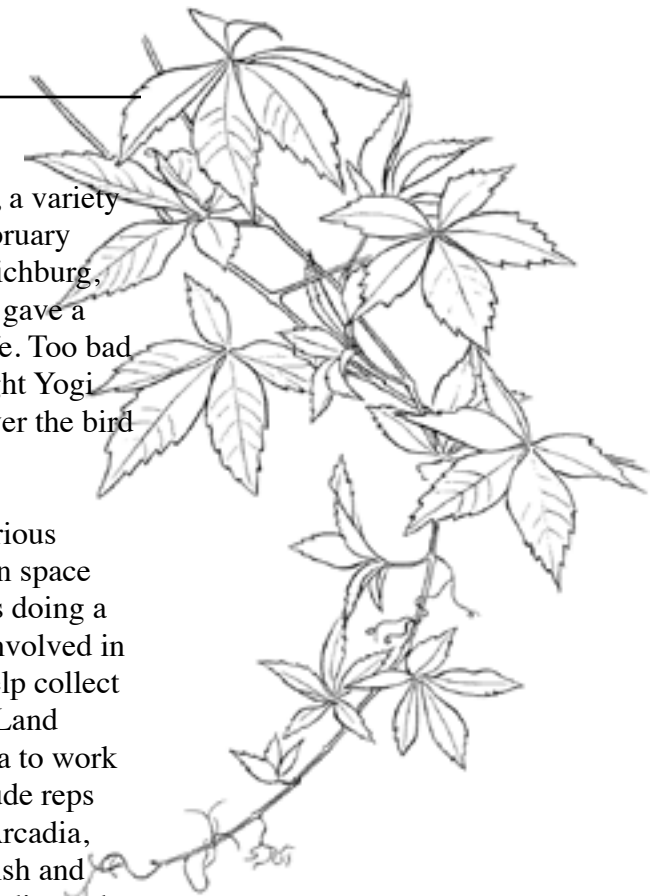
Our spring plant sale was successful – wonderful raffle prizes, a variety of plants and related garden items. The Annual meeting in February was well attended and informative. Guest speaker, Dr. Julie Richburg, Western Regional Ecologist for The Trustees of Reservations, gave a presentation on using trail cameras to learn about local wildlife. Too bad she didn't set up a camera in my back yard – would have caught Yogi Bear and Booboo destroying my bird feeders and knocking over the bird baths.

As if this is not enough, the trust also has been involved in various collaborations with other conservation groups concerning open space and conservation. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission is doing a water quality study on the Manhan River, and we have been involved in the planning stages. Some members will be volunteering to help collect water samples along strategic sites on the river. Easthampton Land Protection Collaborative has been meeting quarterly at Arcadia to work on saving open space in the Easthampton area. Members include reps from PCT, Kestrel Land Trust, Winding River Conservancy, Arcadia, the city Planning Department, and the Mass. Department of Fish and Game. A Bird language Workshop, sponsored by Kestrel, Arcadia, and PCT, took place this June at our Old Trolley Line C. A. Bird lovers of all levels came in droves to unlock the secret messages shared in the natural world through the voices of birds. In May, Marty Klein and I gave a presentation at the library on our trust properties.

Southampton, Easthampton, and PCT have been collaborating on a very ambitious project to connect Southampton's Whittemore C. A. off Meadow Lane with PCT's Pomeroy Meadows C. A., via a fiberglass footbridge across the Manhan River. This is an important step, since trail and community connectivity is becoming more and more popular. Not only will this increase availability to nature trails in the area, but Whittemore has an impressive section of the historic Old Canal on its portion, and the area is not far from the Manhan Rail Trail. Many complications, permits, and funding procedures to deal with, but Pioneer Valley Planning Commission has promised to help us with getting our plans in order. Hopefully, work will start this fall or next spring. This will definitely be a big plus for the our region, once completed.

Gads, there's much more, but this is more than enough to digest for now, and I'll need a year to recuperate from writing this longish article. Stay tuned.

John Bator



Fond Memories of the Edward Dwyer Conservation Area

I grew up on Arlington Street and the area now known as The Edward Dwyer Conservation Area is where I played, explored, and created many fond childhood memories. “The Hill” as we called it back then was frequented by just about every child living in the neighborhood. I have no idea why we called it “The Hill” nor did my oldest brother Ed when I asked him, but it was likely because of the high banks and then the lower areas near the Manhan, which we often frequented.

There were about 6 entry points at that time. One was from Terrace View and led straight down the hill until just before the Manhan River, then the path would split in two directions. While one led to the Manhan, the other led to a small open Prairie that we called a ballfield. I recall playing ball with my Mother and a bunch of friends on this ballfield. The field was lumpy with many clumps of prairie grass and the ball would bounce all over, but I was proud to be there playing ball with my Mother. Bypassing the ballfield, the path eventually led to the “Green Bridge” on Lovefield St.

There were also two points of descent on either side of the M&L Plastics mill. One of the paths led to a very steep descent to the bottom of the hill, which had some enormous white pines growing there. My brother Ed and some of his friends built a tree fort among those trees which stood about 20 ft above the ground. To reach it required a climbing ladder concocted of wood pieces nailed horizontally into the white pine trunks. I was in total awe the first time I walked on the floor of that fort. It was the most incredible structure I had ever seen! Many good times were had there.

After leaving this area, the path led thru a small mire where skunk cabbage grew prolifically. On occasion, just to gross someone out, we’d grab a long, fallen branch and whack a few skunk cabbage plants. Whew! The odor of the shredded leaf and animal scent was indistinguishable.

There were also two additional points of entry in the Pleasant Green area. I used the East path most often since it was the widest path and it felt like smooth asphalt from so many little bare feet using it daily. On the West path, there was a fallen tree which we’d cross and then hike across a pasture to buy a 10 cent ice-cream over on Rt.10. Jumping off that tree into the water was a “blast” on a hot day! Dave, Mike and I would jump off the top of the path into the sand below with the water not more than 4 ft. deep but it was refreshing on a hot, humid day. It was also the spot where I caught and released my first pickerel frog. I had seen green and leopard frogs before but what struck me about the pickerel frog was their gold colored folds of skin. This was also the spot where I carved my initials WTS in a beech tree and I wonder if that tree still stands today?

The last point of entry near me was the one behind my uncle Abe’s house on Ridgewood Terrace, but since it was the farthest from my house I seldom went there. It was very much like the path on Terrace View with many steep spots. Sledding down that hill in the winter time was wicked. In the summer this area also had an ecosystem suitable for club

moss, lycopodiosida, common horsetail and snake grass and brushing up against the snake grass made the coolest hissing sound.

Fishing the Manhan was of particular interest the first few weeks of fishing season. There were a wide variety of fish such as trout, white and yellow perch, dace, suckers, and river eels. Suckers weren’t much fun to catch, since pulling one in was like pulling in a boot; heavy... but with no fight.

I joined the United States Air Force when I was 25; that was 35 years ago. While I do live in Ohio now, I visit my sister Louise about every 2 years and still have some very good friends who live in this area.

I am pleased to note that “The Hill” where I spent so many happy hours, has been entrusted to the care of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust of Easthampton, so that many other families are now able to walk there and gain some of the same enjoyment from being in such a natural environment that I enjoyed as a child. Perhaps I’ll take a walk there again when I next visit Easthampton just to bring back more old memories.

*William Sorensen
Beavercreek, Ohio*

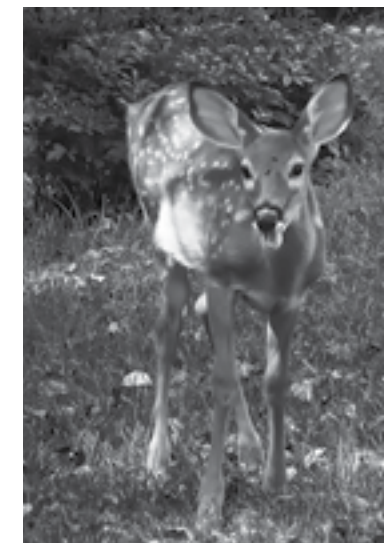
(this article was edited for length)

2016 Edward Dwyer Award Recipient

Alexis White, from Easthampton High School was the winner of the Edward Dwyer Scholarship for 2016, and had the following to say:

“ I am so happy to be receiving this scholarship because it has to much to do with what I plan on doing in the future. I am going to Simmons College in the fall where they have an amazing science department. I am majoring in Biology and hope to get my Masters in that field so that I can help the creatures of the earth. I hope to travel abroad and help collect data on our most endangered species. I have recently been very interested in environmental biology and hope to help our planet throughout my life using knowledge I will gain both inside and out of the classroom. I am so appreciative of the work that you do!”

recognition



The Name Pascommuck

The name Pascommuck means “where it turns or branches”. According to the book *Indian Place Names* by John Hutton, this word owes its origin to the Nipmuck people, who moved here from what is now central Massachusetts. It refers to land near the section of the Connecticut River where the Ox-Bow later developed. The Pascommuck Conservation Trust, as well as the Old Pascommuck Conservation Area, took their names from this word.

Others who used the name “Pascommuck”:

Pascommuck Village was a village of the town of Northampton. Settled in 1698, by five families, it was destroyed by a raiding party in 1704.

Pascommuck Boulder is the common name for the memorial boulder located at the Old Pascommuck Conservation Area. It was dedicated by the D.A.R. July 2, 1910.

Pascommuck Wheel Club was organized in 1892 by photographer Charles Keene, as a bicycle riding club. Later, the group became the Pascommuck Club, and has operated from the Union Street club house since 1903.

Pascommuck Street was the original name for Everett Street in Easthampton.

Pascommuck School was built on East Street in 1914 as a two room school for the students in the Mt. Tom area. It was closed in 1939 and the building has been used as a private residence since.

Pascommuck Cotton Company was the cotton buying arm of the West Boylston Manufacturing company. It was located in the company’s General Office building, and shared the same officers as the mill.

Edward Dwyer

Ed Dwyer was the town historian for years, a trusted friend and a valued member and Treasurer of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust for many, many years. Sadly, Ed lost his valiant battle with a brain tumor on April 19, 2006 and we miss him still.



Volunteers and New Members Needed

The Trust is looking for new members. If you are interested in joining the PCT and/or simply volunteering your time for various work parties doing cleanup and trail maintenance, please contact Molly Goodwin at goodmol@hotmail.com.

Some New Directions with Volunteering for PCT

As always, the PCT Board is infinitely thankful to those of you who have ever volunteered for PCT. We appreciate your plant donations and help with the plant sale, your raffle contributions, your trail work, your kind words and encouragement, your financial contributions, your property maintenance and property monitoring, your help with newsletters and publicity and any and all of the countless ways that you have all pitched in over the years.

We are in the process of changing our volunteer process a bit. Generally, if there is an event that requires extra help, I send out an email alerting self-identified volunteers in hopes to gather some support. We often get a great response but sometimes folks are busy and we end up with a very small crew usually including John Bator and a board member or two. Right now we are having a monthly work event on the third Saturday of the month to tackle some of our projects so try to put that day aside if you can. If you don’t think I have your contact information or are unsure if you have signed up as a volunteer, please let me know!

Our new vision is to create a grid of the on-going work needs we have such as weed whacking a particular trail or pruning a certain area or possibly some mowing. We will then ask for volunteers to claim a task and be responsible for that throughout the year (which usually just means two or three times during the growing season). This is currently a work in progress but the hope is to create the template and then get it out to people so that they can review it and claim a task. This does not mean that there won’t still be single work events throughout the year but we are hoping to create more of an on-going method of property maintenance. We are also considering hiring a person/persons to take on some of the on-going upkeep. So if you are someone with gardening/landscaping experience who might be interested, let us know!

Once again, thanks for your interest in PCT and in preserving our beautiful open space in Easthampton.

Molly Goodwin

Please check our ongoing News and activities at www.pctland.org. For those of you who have not been able to get out and hike the Pomeroy Meadows trail there is a Virtual Tour of the trail on YouTube. The link to the video can be found on the home page. Enjoy!

Pascommuck Conservation Trust Board

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Reflections on Three Generations of Special Places in Nature

As a new Pascommuck Conservation Trust board member – and a newcomer to Easthampton – I would like to introduce myself. The previous owner of the house on Nashawannuck Pond where I now live encouraged me to volunteer for the land trust when I moved here a year ago. He knew that I had spent my career working in the land conservation field: 25 years with The Nature Conservancy helping protect land all over the northeast, 3 years with the Trustees of Reservations here in Massachusetts, and the last 10 years with Sweet Water Trust, a small foundation that supports wilderness land conservation by land trusts in the North Woods, much of it in Maine.

After so many years in the land trust field, I have seen a pattern in the staff and volunteers of land conservation organizations: most of us spent time in our childhoods exploring nature -- near home, at camp, at a grandparent's house. My early Eden was a nature preserve that bordered our farm in northwest Connecticut, hundreds of acres of forest set aside at the turn of the last century by a benefactor who couldn't bear to see the old growth forest cut. My childhood friends and I roamed the property's glades and riverbanks, looking for blooming mountain laurel and pretending to be the Native Americans who had created the trails we followed.

Such remnants of "wild nature" are particularly important in cities and towns. Where I raised my two sons, a stone's throw from Fenway Park, there was a four-acre nature preserve down the street. I'm sure that, to my young sons' eyes, the little park's winding paths and dense undergrowth made it as magical a place for imaginative play as the much larger forest of my youth.

Now that I have a two-year-old grandson growing up in Easthampton, I am very grateful that the foresighted board and members of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust have preserved so many natural places in the town. I look forward to exploring them all with my grandchild; I am glad they are there for the other children of the community to explore.

I don't take these special places for granted, either. I enjoy getting out on the land with the indefatigable John Bator and his crew of hardworking volunteers to keep trails clear, as well as working on the plant sale and other volunteer fundraising efforts to help protect the next important open space in town that comes under threat.

Having served previously on the Town of Conway's Community Preservation Act committee, I know how critical it is to have town backing for the protection of open space, and I am grateful to live in a community where the citizens support those efforts. All in all, I am glad I moved to Easthampton, home of an array of beautiful, preserved natural areas and of the visionary Pascommuck Conservation Trust!

Eve Endicott

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Please check desired membership level and mail this form with your check to:

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Conservation Area Stewardship: \$ _____

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO HELP THE TRUST BY

- Donating plants for plant sales
- Plant preparation/gardening
- Donating prizes for raffles
- Event setup/takedown (Fall Festival, etc.)
- Event staffing
- Monitoring a Trust area near me
- Trails/property construction and maintenance
- Preparation of mailings
- Office work (filing, database, etc.)
- Publications (editing/design/photos/writing)
- Publicity/media relations
- Grantwriting/fundraising
- Professional services (accounting, etc.)
- Land conservation (landowner contacts, planning, etc.)
- Advocacy (letters/emails/phone calls to support conservation)
- Serving on Board of Directors
- Other: _____



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