



Pascommuck post

Fall 2018

President's Message

Surprise! Normally the Trust publishes a general newsletter once a year in summer, but thanks to Gerrit Stover, our Land Protection consultant, there is fodder for a short December version. In fact, we should call this newsletter “The Gerrit Express”, since he provides the meat and potatoes for this one.

Reaching back into a bit of trust and city history, Gerrit has re-discovered an old gem from an earlier issue, written by our former treasurer, Edward Dwyer. Ed, who passed away on us much too soon, had penned an interesting and enlightening piece on the history of our Edward Dwyer Conservation Area, off Terrace View.

Gerrit's other article deals with an update on our progress towards securing 23 acres along the hillside of Mt. Tom's northern section above East Street. We are in the critical last stages of obtaining grant funding for this important purchase. The project has taken years of a joint effort by PCT, Kestrel Land Trust, the City of Easthampton, and other groups, and we are eager to win closure on it as soon as possible.

So now it's time to board the Stover train, put on the reading glasses, and travel from our past into our present.

Enjoy the ride, savor the read.

John Bator



Ed Dwyer

The following article, reprinted from Pascommuck's 1994 newsletter, was written by the late Edward Dwyer. Ed Dwyer, who passed away April 19, 2006, was a Pascommuck Conservation Trust board member from 1986, just four years after the Trust was founded, until his untimely illness in 2004. Ed was the memory not only for Pascommuck, but also for Easthampton.

His thorough, comprehensive approach to history meant that Ed could recount the past of almost any building or parcel of land in town, and of many of the town's leading personalities over the years, including some of the less savory details which are -- fortunately or unfortunately, depending on one's appetite for the truth -- are probably now lost with him.

Ed's unwavering dedication to his position as long-time Trust Treasurer made possible complex land transactions unusual for an all-volunteer organization. His gruff exterior masked someone who was always ready and willing, and always passionate about conservation and his hometown.

In 1984, even before joining the Board, Ed persuaded his parents Margaret and John to donate the acre of Manhan riverfront behind their house on Lovefield Street. This was the second Pascommuck property. And though the exact history is lost, Ed's powers of persuasion likely also convinced neighbors Martin and Agnes Tichy to give their own 1-1/2 acre riverfront parcel.



To honor his fundamental contributions to the beginnings, endurance, and growth of Pascommuck Conservation Trust, in 2006 the board renamed the '40 acre' conservation area on Terrace View the 'Edward Dwyer Conservation Area'.

We like to think that Ed would appreciate that his own history of preserving Easthampton's landscape is now formally recognized and celebrated, and that his legacy of conservation is enjoyed by so many so close to his home.

Gerrit Stover

The Forty Acre Parcel

The Trust's largest land holding is the forty acre parcel, located behind Terrace View and Pleasant Street. It was donated to the Trust by the Town of Easthampton in 1985, and is now part of our greenbelt of nature tracts along the Manhan River. This parcel was, at one time, part of a much larger recreational area that was owned by the West Boylston Manufacturing Company.

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, this parcel was used as farmland. In fact, the houses at 179-81 Pleasant Street and 19 Lovefield had been farmhouses for the surrounding lands. In 1859, Samuel Williston started a cotton mill at the lower mill pond, and houses were built in the Pleasant Street area for the mill workers. When a successor company went bankrupt, the properties were sold to the West Boylston Manufacturing Company, which relocated here in 1898.

The new company was successful, and began an aggressive building campaign. The remaining farms on Pleasant Street were purchased and new mills and houses were built.

The land adjoining the Trust's 40 acres, which is now owned by Burt Ford Tractor, was a parking area. The land at the bottom of the hill was a baseball field, with the side hill used as a grandstand. Our tract was used as grazing land for the company's horses. The former stable is still located on Terrace View. The company also planted many decorative fir trees and maintained terraced hills, a trail along the Manhan, and a bridge across the river to provide access to Camp Cook, off Highland Avenue.

Like most New England textile mills, the West Boylston enjoyed great prosperity in the years during the First World War and the years immediately afterwards. Then a virtual depression set in the textile market, and the mills moved south. When the West Boylston closed in 1931, all the properties were put up for auction. At Town Meeting in 1932, the Town of Easthampton purchased the 40 acres, the ball field, a lot behind Mill #1 (the land where the Flaherty parking lot is now located), and Pleasant Green, for \$35,000. The town then sold both the ballfield and the parcel of land behind Mill #1 to the Hampton Company.

The Hampton Company used the ball field for a few years. When Daley Field opened, the field and surrounding lands were no longer used and returned to a natural woodland state.

Ed Dwyer

easthampton history

Mount Tom North

For many, many years, for Easthampton Mount Tom has been 'so near, yet so far'. While to require a drive to Holyoke or the sometimes reluctant consent of private landowners or the p major land protection projects over the years, much of the hillside along East Street remain intrusions dot the fields and forest along the mountainside. **But in 2017**, dramatic change s estate lots with an expected tenth covering the prominent knoll between the power line and E of Mount Tom for protection. In fact, 17 years ago they met with the late owner of the very sa **around**, though it took a year of negotiation, thanks to Mark Wamsley and Kestrel Land Trust, city planner Jeff Bagg, the Community Preservation Committee and City Council, and -- defini property was obtained. That option bought time to assemble local, state, and non-profit fund which will complete the municipal and land trust appropriations: The City and Kestrel appl purchase of the land could happen as early as next summer, with the help of a modest amount followed by a second phase for design and fundraising to transform the property into Mount T from the spot where the previous owner's house stood, plus a picnic area and educational sig New England National Scenic Trail -- and everyone else -- will be able to enjoy and appreciate historic Eyrie House property -- will provide visitors and residents of Easthampton with easy a

2,000,000 BC: Mount Tom arose 1754: Easthampton formed 1861: Eyrie House built 1



h Trailhead Park

There are ways to get up on to the ridge which forms the iconic backdrop to our city, they all require a power company -- and a little local knowledge. And while the Holyoke side has seen several areas vulnerable to development; though, thanks to the landowners there, to date only a few seemed likely with filing of a plan for development of the northwest tip of Mount Tom into nine lots on East Street. **The City and Pascommuck Conservation Trust** have long targeted the slopes of the property slated for a subdivision, but were unable to come to an agreement. **This time** with unanimous support from the City of Easthampton's government (including the Parks Dept., and not least! -- a \$50,000 investment by Pascommuck Conservation Trust, an option on the property. **Everyone has fingers crossed** for good news on the second major funding component being applied for state grants which should be announced before the end of the year. If all goes well, that plus a number of additional donations through Pascommuck and Kestrel. **Purchase of the land** will be the first step in the creation of Mount Tom Trailhead Park: Parking down at East Street, an accessible trail up to the glorious views, and restoration of wildlife and plant habitat on the site. The plan is that hikers on the trail will enjoy these 23 acres. **Once again, the 'Picnic Lot' and the 'Mountain Lot'** -- once part of the subdivision, will provide access to Mount Tom's beautiful views, miles of trails, and unique natural treasures.

1901: Fire 1902: Reservation created 2001: Protection efforts begin 2019: Land saved?



Old Mount Tom Junction

I am thrilled to hear about the new Trailhead Park!

As a kid growing up in Mount Tom (that section of Easthampton that extends from Route 5 up East Street to the old brick school house), we spent a lot of our summer and fall hiking the mountain. Route 91 had not interrupted our idyllic summers yet. We could access the mountain by hiking up the old Christopher Clark Road, the remnants of which ran behind my grandmothers house and ended down on Route 5 near the old bait shop.

The Eyrie house and its broad foundations were our usual destination. But, there was also a ruined foundation of an old house part way up the trail in a shady glen. We knew where it was off the trail, because there was a beautiful arch of young saplings on the trail, which was our clue to its location. It was fun to imagine the life that had existed there years before. We spent time picnicking next to the small round spring which may have supplied water to the house.

The construction of Interstate 91, in the mid sixties, changed our whole way of life in Mount Tom. Many of our neighbors houses were taken by eminent domain and torn down. The old Mount Tom Post Office had to be moved to another house. We endured many years of blasting of the rock on our beloved mountain and the end of our trail. It was a hard lesson of my youth.

The possibility of this new Mount Tom Trailhead Park close by is such wonderful news. Restoring the East Street access to Mount Tom will be a joy to local residents and the broader community. I want to thank all the parties involved who are bringing this to fruition.

Beverly Wodicka

The Trust is looking for a new Treasurer and if anyone is interested in volunteering for this position, they are asked to contact the President, John Bator at jbushman56@charter.net or 527-3584 – after 5 pm in the evening.”

Pascommuck Conservation Trust Board

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PLEASE INDICATE VOLUNTEER INTERESTS

- Donate plants for plant sale
- Prepare plants for plant sale
- Donate prizes for raffles
- Setup/take down at plant sale
- Monitor a Trust area near me
- Grant Writing /Fundraising
- Land Conservation
(Landowner contacts, Planning, etc.)
- Trail/Property Maintenance



***Pascommuck Conservation
Trust, Inc.***

*Preserving our past . . .
protecting our future*

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Pascommuck is a 501 (3) (C) non-profit charitable organization. Your gift is tax deductible.



Pascommuck Conservation Trust

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