Milestones

It was a blustery Mid-April morning when a woman walked into our office looking for directions to the Rattlesnake trails. She had driven from Western Massachusetts with her husband in search of an outdoor adventure to celebrate her seventieth birthday. “Sorry, but the Rattlesnake trails are closed during mud season. Have you tried Whitten Woods?” She left with a map, so we didn’t give it a second thought. Four hours later, she was back, to thank us for finding a perfect spot for her celebration. She had high praise for Whitten Woods, and even left cash in an envelope. She also left something else: a reminder of why we do what we do.

Whitten Woods offers a sanctuary for everyone. Native or visitor; it’s open for all, and is an amenity for the entire community. Meanwhile, by design, it’s also a sanctuary for wildlife. Conserving land strives to balance the impact of people on the places whereby nature should be allowed to prevail.

We’ve learned a lot about the “why to conserve” from Whitten Woods. We also learned a lot about perseverance and partnerships. It took over two years to complete, but we finally recorded all the related deeds on April 10, 2017. We first thought we were buying 414 acres. After an extensive survey, the property was actually 453 acres. With the purchase of the 39 acre Greenleaf Lot from Courtney Smith, and a gift of three acres from Susan Jackson, the conserved property is now 495 acres!

The project could not have been completed without the full support of key partners. The New England Forestry Foundation is now the land owner who will manage the forest resources. The Squam Lakes Association improved the trails and built a new parking area. For the first time, we had support from the State of NH through its LCHIP program. The Town of Ashland provided their full support. And, of course, it would not have been possible without the 212 investors who helped fund the project. All told, this partnership was as strong as the project was complex, and will serve as a model for future conservation.

Like our anonymous hiker’s milestone adventure, Whitten Woods is a milestone in how we measure the positive impact land conservation can have in our community. Onward…

Photo by Kenneth Hamilton
Squam lost three conservation champions who loved Squam and believed strongly in the importance of conserving its natural beauty for future generations.

Dick Davenport, a native of Newton, MA, attended Harvard College for two years before enlisting in the Army Air Corps during WWII. After the war, he graduated from Harvard and began a 40 year career teaching secondary school in Westchester County, NY. Along the way he earned Master's degrees from both Columbia and Brown Universities. In retirement he spent most of his time at Squam with his spouse Derry Woodhouse and became very involved in environmental causes. He served on the SLCS Board from 1996 – 2005 and became an Honorary Board Director in 2005. He was one of our first property stewards, faithfully monitoring multiple properties each year. Dick’s spirit lives on through the presentation of the Davenport Award, awarded each year to a steward of conservation who has shown “exceptional commitment and service to the Squam Community as steward of its Protected Properties.” A memorial gathering will be held at the Fisher Barn on July 15 at 5 PM.

Russ Orton grew up on the shores of Squam Lake as the son of the local town doctor. Russ attended the Ashland Public Schools and graduated from Holderness School in 1940. He proudly served his country during WWII as part of the 351st infantry division in Italy and was awarded a Silver Star for valor in combat. In 1948 he received his BS degree in Mechanical Engineering from UNH and went on to receive an MBA from the Harvard School of Business in 1953. He had a successful career helping New England-based inventors acquire patents, develop business plans, and secure venture capital funding. Russ was an avid fly fisherman, a skill he practiced often in retirement while enjoying summer months with his wife Mary at their Squam home. He served on the SLCS Board from 1985 – 1994, later becoming an Honorary Director.

Thomas Beal Jr. was raised in Chestnut Hill, MA as the son in a long line of prominent Boston bankers, but instead chose a career in education. Tom graduated from Williams College in 1951 following two summers traveling in England and Norway helping rebuild post-war communities before serving in the US Army MASH unit during the Korean War. He was a disciple of Henry David Thoreau and could spend hours in silent contemplation. But most of all, Tom was a dedicated teacher, having taught in Williamstown, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Weston, MA, and eventually retiring from the Fenn School in Concord, MA. He revived the JSLA program in 1961, which continues to flourish. Tom was well known for connecting students with nature and, along with Barbara, for convening members of High Haith for annual gatherings to advance conservation and build a stronger community of engaged citizens. A memorial service will be held on Saturday, July 15 at 3 PM at the Chocorua Island Chapel.

Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Renewal

The land trust accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. SLCS has announced its application for renewal of its accreditation. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission is an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance.

The Commission invites public input and accepts written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how SLCS complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards see http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org/help-and-resources/indicator-practices.

To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment about SLCS, visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org, or email your comments to info@landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may also be faxed or mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments: (fax) 518-587-3183; (mail) 36 Phila Street, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.
Haring-Smith

In December 2016, SLCS member and friend Robert Haring-Smith donated a conservation easement permanently protecting all of his 12 acre forested lot located off Owl Brook. This tract connects Highland Street in Ashland to the Pedersen property uphill. We have been giving special emphasis to lots which connect with other protected lands in order to achieve wildlife and water quality connectivity on a larger scale. Among other features, our ecological investigations established that the Haring-Smith and Pedersen properties contains hardwood habitat supporting *Pseudofistulina radicata*, a very rare and unusual mushroom species, which is now one of twelve recorded locations in North America.

Pedersen

The 78 acre Pedersen tract in Ashland, also known as the MacDonald Farm, shares a long common boundary with Whitten Woods. It now also shares a similar conservation strategy. In partnership with the New England Forestry Foundation, who holds the fee title while we hold the conservation easement, the land was purchased on March 7, 2017 from Cecilia Pedersen, owner of the property since 1989. The only remaining building from its days as an active hillside farm was the barn, which was not salvageable, so it was removed. While the forest will take time and effort before it is once again healthy and productive, this property provides additional access to the Whitten Woods parcel while adding to the block of managed habitat that is approaching a thousand acres. This project was another of the now completed Squam Uplands projects.
The Journal of Mill Brook Preserve – Writing the Next Chapter

There are folks who believe that they can make a difference. Fortunately, there are a lot of them around Squam. I’ve witnessed them on many occasions, marveling at their ability to keep giving when others have given up. It’s happening at SLCS’s Mill Brook Preserve, and it’s making a difference. I’m hoping that some of you reading this might help us make this a very special place in and for the future.

But before we get there, a little history about this spot... In 1763, the very first settlement in Holderness was established by Susanna and William Piper on the land that “lay between Squam Lake and White Oak Pond, on the west side of the connecting brook.” (Hodges, 1907) In the mid-1800’s, W.H. Berry’s water-powered saw mill was constructed in this “connecting brook,” now called Mill Brook, where the remnants of the mill’s stonework is still visible. In the 1980’s this property was proposed for development. A gravel driveway, turn-around, and walkway leading to Piper Cove were filled in, and if you look closely, can still be seen today.

In 1997, SLCS acquired the property from Rowland Keith because of its wonderful diversity of habitat types: a year round brook, frontage on Piper Cove, extensive wetlands, rich soils, and beautiful native plants...and a site abundant with local history.

So what’s the issue? Well, over the years, non-native land-based plants, generally known as “invasives,” have become an ever increasing problem along this portion of the Squam shoreline. These invasives have characteristics that allow them to thrive in areas where soils have been disturbed. (Remember the mill, the driveway and turn-around?) You can often see invasives along roadsides and highways, and following drainage ditches downstream. Invasives also “leaf out” early, meaning their leaves pop long before native plants do and it allows them to use energy from the sun much sooner than native plants. Not only that, in the fall they hold their leaves long after native plants do, allowing them to continue growing when native plants have stopped for the season! These characteristics give them a competitive advantage over native plants, permitting them to expand rapidly at the expense of native habitat.

Mill Brook Preserve is a really special place, and we think we could make it...well, “special-er” and more visitor friendly... A place to bring your family to see three-pound fish jumping upstream in the spring, a place where eagles perch and herons wait in search of an easy meal, a place where evidence of beaver abound, a place where native trillium and other wildflowers are plentiful. BUT, we have a lot of work to do to get there! And we could really use more help, and would like to know whether you and your family would value such a place. We’re thinking about small steps, but lots of them!

The SLCS Land Management Work Group and Stewardship Committee will be creating a vision for this property in the near future, with the understanding that it may take some time. Might you be willing to help restore this area over time? Or organize simple refreshments for work sessions?

Please join us every third Thursday through October, 4-6 pm
Meet at SLCS, have some fun and make new friends along the way!
2017 Activities

**Third Thursdays**
May 18th - October 19th, 4 pm to 6 pm
Invasive plant work group on Mill Brook Preserve. Bring sturdy gloves, boots and a set of loppers if you have them. Refreshments to follow!

**Volunteer Paddle and Picnic on White Oak Pond**
Thursday, July 6th, 5 pm
Potluck on Pine Island, for Property Monitors.

**Nearer to Nature Walk: Pettitt Forest, Ashland**
Thursday, July 13th, 2017, 9 am to 11:30 am
Explore a secluded gem with SLNCS Naturalist, Margaret Gillespie and SLCS Stewardship Director Pete Helm. We’ll search for wildlife sights and sounds along with unusual flora. Call Squam Lakes Natural Science Center, 968-7194 to register.

**Stewardship Training Session**
Monday, July 24th, 9 am to 12:30 pm
Contact pete@squamlakes.com for more details.

**Passing it on…Generational Property Transfer**
Thursday, August 10th - 9 am to 11:30 am
SLA Fisher Family Barn, US Route 3, Holderness
A thoughtful discussion for any landowner seeking to ensure the land they love will be enjoyed for generations to come. Sponsored by: Squam Lakes Conservation Society, Squam Lakes Association, Lakes Region Conservation Trust and NH Preservation Alliance.

**SLCS Annual Meeting**
Saturday, August 19th
See page 8 for details

**Stewardship Training Session**
Friday, September 8th, 9 am to 12:30 pm
Monday, September 18th, 9 am to 12:30 pm
Contact pete@squamlakes.com for more details.

**Volunteer Full Moon Potluck**
on Doublehead Preserve for Monitors
Friday, October 6th, 5:30 pm
Bring your own blanket or chair!
Sipping some soup last winter and looking across the snow-covered fields, B and I watch a mammoth SUV with tinted windows and out-of-state plates, stop in front of our house. The windows quickly roll down and two giant camera lenses – covered with a camouflage finish - emerge and point our direction. With the soup spoon halfway to his mouth, B says, “What the heck (or something close to that),” and heads to the door as I watch the camera lenses roll around like synchronized missile launchers trying to find a target. As B engages with the driver, I realize this may be today’s only connection with the outside world, so I hurry to put on my boots and coat.

We quickly learn that the SUV’s occupants - birders acting on a tip - have driven up from MA to photograph a flock of Bohemian Waxwings that are down from Canada in search of berries and crab apples. We’d watched this flock in the morning swoop and soar in remarkable, Disney-like sync. While we’d failed to identify the species, we did learn the term for hundreds of birds flying in this fantastic formation - a mumuration.

After just a few minutes, the birders took off. The Bohemian Waxwings disappeared the next day after consuming most of the berries around. We imagine they’ll come this way again.

Observed this winter in Sandwich, “The Bohemian Waxwing is an irregular winter visitor from the far North… The name ‘Bohemian’ refers to the nomadic movements of winter flocks,” according to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Vicky West and her husband Brewster Lee live in the fields by Mead Base in Sandwich.

Save the Date - Annual Meeting
August 19, 2017, 10:00 am · Asquam Road, Holderness, NH
At the site of the former Asquam Hotel
Courtesy of Dorothy Smith and Family
Since 2005, SLCS has found unique locations to hold our Annual Meeting; places that showcase the beauty of Squam from different perspectives. We’ve been in five barns, three farm fields, two private residence fields and two Summer Camps. We gathered five times in Holderness, four times in Sandwich and once each in the towns of Moultonborough, Center Harbor and Ashland. And every year we have managed to find a spectacular new view of our watershed.

This year we are thrilled Dorothy Smith and her family will host our meeting on their Shepard Hill property, once the site of the Asquam House, one of Squam’s first and largest grand hotels.

Opened in 1881, the Asquam House had a 200-foot long, three-sided porch and a rooftop widow’s walk that treated visitors to a panorama of the Squam Lakes, the Squam Range, and the Sandwich Range. Guests, many of whom spent entire summers at Squam, also had use of tennis courts and a private beach at Piper Cove.

"Much more than a mere lodging for tourists, the Asquam House became an informal clubhouse for the entire community." (Carley, 2004) People from the nearby cottages often went to the hotel in the evenings to "enjoy a meal, a chat on the sprawling verandah, an evening performance of chamber music, a game of bridge or tennis on the hotel court." They also attended church services in the hotel parlor every Sunday until St. Peter’s-in-the-Mount chapel opened its doors in 1888.

We had a very pleasant journey, reaching Ashland about 5:00 where we found the Asquam House wagon and drove five miles here...There is no village at all here, just the great hotel dominating the top of the hill and the summer cottages built around the lake. The views are splendid, Great Squam Lake on the left and White Oak Lake on the right. Squam is especially beautiful with the windings and deep bays and long tongues of land running out, and islands surrounded by a beautiful picturesque range of mountains and hills...The days pass most pleasantly and idly - here we are half through our second week! Bathing is the chief amusement...We have lovely quiet on the piazza, chatting over our sewing, reading and writing...Does it not seem wonderful?

- Anna Muirson Bellamy,
writing to her sister
Kate Bayard Johnson, Summer 1896
Excerpt from Rachel Carley’s SQUAM, pg 65
Passing it on…
Generational Property Transfer

Thursday, August 10th, 2017 - 9:00 to 11:30 am
SLA Fisher Family Barn - US Route 3, Holderness

A detailed and thoughtful discussion for property owners seeking to ensure the land they love will become part of a family legacy that will be enjoyed for generations to come. Four property owners discuss their challenges, limitations, and triumphs in dealing with this important issue.

Details at foreversquam.org

Photo courtesy of Susan Gurney

COMING THIS SUMMER…the new and improved
foreversquam.org

The Society’s mission is to preserve the unique quality and character of the Squam watershed by protecting lands for present and future generations.

Squam Lookout is printed on 100% post consumer recycled paper manufactured from sustainable raw materials and free of chlorine chemistry.