The First Workshop: A Success!

The kick-off for the Feasibility Study drew well over one hundred eager participants to the Devens Officer’s Club on March 27. Jonathan Lane, of ICON architecture, inc., delivered a slide presentation that reviewed the concept of a National Heritage Area using examples from comparable projects to highlight why such an idea might benefit the communities in the study area. After Lane’s presentation, the workshop was divided into focus groups to solicit ideas about significant resources within the proposed heritage area.

Dozens of ideas were enthusiastically proposed which reflected their understanding of what the corridor has to offer. These included rivers, wetlands, farmland, natural views, and town commons; historic architecture; sites connected to Native American, immigrant, or African American history; sites relating to major movements in the growth of democracy; the Revolution; and literary figures and philosophical movements. The discussion was vigorous. Each focus group had a chance to compile, prioritize, and present the lists they had generated themselves about regional opportunities. After the workshop ended, many lingered behind, eyes sparkling—clearly this is only the beginning of a process that will continue over the next few months.

Attendees representing twenty-three cities and towns signed in at the door. We identified many faces we knew, but many missed the sign-up, so we never got an accurate head count. Of those who signed in, special congratulations to the point people and members of the Steering Committee who helped bring out town groups: Christina Sargent, Ashburnham; Elizabeth Tennessee, Ayer; Linda Englemann, Bolton; Emilie Coolidge, Boxboro; Lydia desGroseilliers, Gardner; Michael Sczerzen, Lancaster; Stacia Venturi, Leominster; Robert MacDonald, Stow; and Maria vonBrinnen, Sudbury. Hoorah! for those who travelled from the edges: from New Hampshire, Gardner, Lexington, or Mt. Wachusett. We’re proud of your dedication.

A synopsis of the results of the first workshop, including a list of the most frequently mentioned resources, is included on one side of the insert of this Newsletter and a detailed memo of the results is also available on request from the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association.
Regional Pioneers of Freedom

Before the Revolutionary War, seven men of color, Peter Boston, Daniel Giger, Thomas Hazard, Jacob Mitchell, Joseph Moffet, Thomas Ransellar, and Charles Treadwell, came to Shirley and, according to the Lunenburg Town records, created a colony on the “south slope of Flat Hill.” The colony existed from 1774 into the 1850s, growing through the years as the men established families, and also from new arrivals who often “appeared” in the area.

The top of that gentle hillside today is protected by a sandy-floored pine forest. Its base is bordered by a bubbling brook, with a sunny exposure and great views.

It could be imagined that two or three of these men met while travelling along the Old Bay Path. Once they became freemen, their occupations often took them over the path to Concord and other places. Jacob Mitchell and Joseph Moffet were indentured servants in Lunenburg who took their last names from their slavemasters when they were released from service at age 21. Daniel Giger was a Natick Indian, probably a survivor of King Phillip’s war. Thomas Ransellar and Thomas Hazard earned their freedom through service to officers of the Revolutionary War.

Our oral family history is that Thomas Hazard was a slave in Hazardville, (Enfield), Connecticut after having been bought off a ship in Boston. To earn his freedom, he took a wagon load of gun powder from Connecticut to the Battle of Lexington and Concord. During the fighting he had two fingers shot off. According to Leon Hazard, a nonagenarian family member, Thomas became an orderly to Col. John Stark and campaigned throughout New Hampshire.

These pioneers and revolutionary veterans worked at a Shirley coagery, as hostlers (horsemen) and as farmhands. Most worked for Capt. James Parker who grew hops. Women were employed among his hop workers. They braided leaves into palm hats which Capt. Parker took South to sell.

Marriages took place among the workers. Checking into the women’s birth records, many were listed as having been born in Mississippi, Virginia, and Boston. All seven men were married. The hard life took its toll, deaths were frequent and surviving spouses married again. They had large families and the sons often hired themselves out to neighboring farms.

On May 25, 1786 in Littleton, Thomas Hazard married Elizabeth Boston, a full blooded Penobscot Indian. Elizabeth and her brother Lovewell had been kidnapped from their tribal home in Maine. Little is known about them until the siblings were taken in and raised by Peter Boston’s family. Thomas and Elizabeth lived near Spectacle Pond in Littleton and later bought land in Shirley. They had 12 sons and 4 daughters.

A grandson, Tower Hazard, lived in Harvard on East Bear Hill Road, near the Bolton town line, in a large white farmhouse south of where Route 111 winds east. Near the Hazard farmhouse, family stories tell of a large cave on Avery Jones’ land, (possibly blocked up now), which was one of several dotted throughout the area. Reportedly some of these caves contained niches in which candles were placed. The exact origin and use of the snail-shaped interiors has never been researched. Jones’ cave near Tower’s home was convenient for his use because it was a “stop” on the underground railroad. His granddaughter, Mrs. Carrie Blue, a former resident of Leominster, remembers, “I have never seen the cave on the Avery Jones place, but I have

Interpretive Themes

The Freedom’s Way Heritage Area is composed of many cultural, historical and natural resources. Many of these resources are unique to the region and are linked to political and cultural movements which had national impact. These resources are not all of equal significance and can be assessed from many perspectives. One aim of the feasibility study is to develop a hierarchy of interpretive Themes which can help visitors and residents understand the “why” of the area and how its resources are important. One approach to themes would be oriented to man’s changing relationship to the landscape:

The Native Landscape - conveys the defining role of natural features and geologic landforms and their use by Native American people before the colonial era.

The Landscape of Democracy - is reflected in settlements and towns whose development was based on democratic principles as well as the region’s transportation network, early industries, and institutions.

Locus for Social Ideas and Experimentation - the region enabled early religious freedoms nurtured by a climate of democracy. Groups and individuals within the region stretched the definitions of “community” and developed new ideas about man’s relationship to nature.

The Land Rediscovered - Originating with the seminal work of Thoreau and Emerson, the region has nurtured an appreciation of man’s relationship to nature which was important in the development of the nation’s conservation movement and is manifest today by strong regional land preservation efforts.

In Workshop 2, other approaches to thematic structure will be developed, discussed and revised, and key identified resources will be associated with interpretive themes.
heard my older brothers and sisters speak of it. My mother often told us that as a child, she might hear a certain knock on the door. Her father would get up and she would hear voices talking in low tones. Then her father would come back in the house. After about 15 or 20 minutes, he would hitch up the horse and buggy and be gone for most of the night. But always she was warned never to speak of what she had heard."

The ability to keep one's mouth shut could and did save many a life; not much is known about operational details. Everyone was aware of what escaped slaves and their protectors faced if details were uncovered. When "passengers" arrived and joined "cousins" at the dinner table, still not much was said.

One such passenger was the wife of a great-grandson of Thomas Hazard, Mary E. Marshall, who had been a slave in Virginia. She often told her daughter, Mrs. Alice Hazard, the account of her escape as a small child. She recalled being very hungry, so hungry that she dipped her fingers into a great bowl of beans that had been prepared for the farmhands. Caught in the act by her mistress, she was forced to sit down with the bowl of beans and as punishment eat until she vomited. And then she was severely whipped. She eventually ran away, hidden in a watermelon cart by abolitionists to make her way North. She was taken in by a family in Sterling where she lived until she married Henry Hennessey at age 16 and there they raised their own family.

Knowing the origins and trials of their predecessors, elder family members still suppress information by tradition. But enough is known to place some of history's chapters before our eyes. In our hearts, I want us to remember the bravery and courage of the people that struggled to gain their own freedom, the others who aided along the way, and the many who took them in.

_Elizabeth Tennessee is a member of the Freedom's Way Study Steering Committee. She lives in Ayer and is a descendant of the Hazard family. Mrs. Tennessee's family origins are both African American and Nipmuc._

### MAP TO THE FORT DEVENS FACILITY

_Directions: From Rt. 2, and I-495 interchange go West 6.5 miles to "Fort Devens - Jackson Road", (exit #37B), go North on Jackson Road 1 mile from gate house to T-junction at Girvey St.; turn left and go 350 ft.; turn right on Sherman Ave. and go to the entrance of the Officers Club, (1-storey building on Right, adjacent to the parade ground.)_

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**The Fruitlands Museum**

Fruitlands was founded in 1914 by Clara Endicott Sears, (1864-1960), descendant of several important colonial figures and a person of considerable financial resources. She moved to the site in 1910 to establish her summer home, seemingly with little interest in the history of the place. In fact, she initially intended to raze the Fruitlands farmhouse. Discovering its use as the site of Bronson Alcott's Utopian community "Fruitlands", she was stimulated to write her first book, a history of Alcott's experiment. More importantly, she acted to restore the house, becoming one of the earliest preservationists in New England.

Using her personal wealth, she created three more museums, all concerning elements of history that were threatened by historical changes. She opened the first Shaker Museum in 1922. In 1923, she assembled an Indian collection and established an Indian Museum. Between 1940-47, she built an art gallery and installed her collection of landscape paintings and early American portraiture.

What makes this story more than a personal crusade and gives it broader historical meaning is that other Americans of the early 20th Century were also embarking on similar collection efforts. Historians argue that during this time, upper class Anglo-Saxons Americans saw modern American life as banal and mechanistic; the rapidly changing country was threatened by revolutionary Russia, and immigrants and other factors endangered their positions. In response, Miss Sears and better known personalities such as the Matrons and Rockefeller's looked to earlier times to find and preserve a history that was more authentic, intense, and evocative.

Between Miss Sears' death and the late 1980's the museum lost much of its sense of direction and purpose. In 1989, however, the museum hired its first professional curator, development officer, and education staff. Collection care and installations were enhanced. Attendance increased 40% between 1989-1996, sources of income from store, rental, and food service were enhanced, and Fruitlands was no longer a "well kept secret". Fruitlands is now in a position to take new steps, a master plan is in place, and a capital campaign approved.

Miss Sears' role as a preservationist and historical figure are integral to the museum's interpretation, and her desire to collect and preserve are formally reflected in the museum's mission statement.

_By Bob Ferranti, a member of the Freedom's Way Heritage Association Steering Committee, and Director of The Fruitlands Museum_
**BY THE WAY...**

APRIL 23
Vacation Week Festivities
Concord Museum 508-369-9763

APRIL 24
"Bugs, Books and Web Surfing"
Nashua River Watershed Resource Center,
Groton, Open House- Free!

MAY 4
Louisa May Alcott Returns to Fruitlands
Museums
Harvard, 3 p.m.
Reservations 508-456-3924

MAY 10
Apple Blossom Festival
Harvard Common 10-4, Rain Date 5/11, 12-4

MAY 11
Family Activity Day
Fruitlands Museum, 2-4

MAY 19
Project WET
Teacher Workshop 9-3, Gardner Heritage State
Park Reserve by 5/12 508-630-1497

JUNE 8
La Rondinella Concert
Fruitlands Museum Picture Gallery, 11:30-1

JUNE 8
Riverfest
Nashua River Watershed Resource Center,
508-448-0299

**UPDATE...**

1. The results of the first workshop are briefly reviewed in this newsletter. A detailed memo of the results of the workshop has been compiled and is available to anyone with further interest from the Freedom's Way Heritage Association, (see address below)

2. A collection of local resource assessment information has been received from nearly every community in the study area. Please send any additional information to: Mildred Chandler or Marge Darby at the Freedom's Way Heritage Association 43 Buena Vista Street, MA 01433; Tel: (508) 772-3654

**WHAT'S AHEAD...**

WORKSHOP 2 - APRIL 24
We will return to the Devens Officer's Club for the second workshop which will focus on Resource and Theme Analysis. Our proposed study area from Nashua, New Hampshire to Mt. Wachusett, Lexington to Gardner, is large and the selection of the Officer's Club as a site for the workshops makes available a room large enough for both the presentation and small group discussions. Additionally, this site is a central location which has the best potential to maintain involvement from all the communities of the study area.

* A map with directions to the Officers Club is included on the inside of the Newsletter.

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**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

1. Review of Workshop I
2. Interpretive Themes
3. Pioneers of Freedom
4. The Fruitlands Museums
5. Patriot's Day Events '97

*This newsletter is an invitation to membership. Your involvement can make a difference by helping to shape our area's plan. Together, we can protect our area's uniqueness through the creation of a Freedom's Way National Heritage Corridor.*
Workshop 1: Results

The object of the first workshop was to have an initial brainstorming session about resources in the study area. The response was tremendous (over one hundred people attended), and resulted in a long list of recommendations. The discussion ranged widely, and what emerged is something more than a laundry list of people and places: many groups noted that the richness and variety of the area’s assets is a distinguishing characteristic. Many people wanted to lay stress on the relationship between the different aspects of the area’s history: on the role of “the family farm as an economic base for a free society,” or on the importance of the landscape in the formation of the “New England character.”

The most prominent issues that came up in the discussion were the following (not necessarily in order of importance):

- **Natural history and conservation:** most of the groups proposed conservation projects, or wanted to give encouragement to existing conservation areas. Many placed an emphasis on the area’s natural history, as well as on the protection of wildlife or the maintenance of watersheds and waterways. A few discussed the history of the conservation movement itself.

- **Literary, philosophical, political, and religious developments:** almost every group mentioned the incredible “independence of thought” that has marked this area’s history.

- **Native American history:** many participants suggested Mt. Wachusett, or the Fruitlands site. Also other Native American sites, and trails.

- **Mt. Wachusett:** was mentioned as a “living museum” -- a historic site, a significant natural area, and also an economic asset.

- **History of the Revolution:** especially events and sites in Lexington and Concord, and their linkages to surrounding area.

- **Early architecture and early patterns of settlement:** especially town centers, town commons, and early churches. There was concern to preserve significant and precious viewsheds, to maintain the “character” of old towns, to mark out traditional transportation corridors (railroads, post roads, carriage roads, etc.), and to point out early land-use patterns.

- **Agriculture:** its development and importance in the history of the region. Also farming specialties, such as orchards and wineries.

- **Early industry:** its growth and evolution. Also cottage industries and the old mills.

- **Immigration:** the experience of immigration and its influence on the area.

- **African-American history:** especially the movement for abolition and the history of the Underground Railroad.

- **Trail network:** there was much support for the creation of a network of bicycle and walking trails.

What is necessary in the second workshop is to discuss how we may bring together these many separate issues and organize this material. An outline of early thoughts on themes is presented in this newsletter -- please give it some thought, and let us hear your opinion on April 24!
Patriots’ Day 1997
Events in or near Minuteman National Historic Park

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sat., April 19</td>
<td>5:30 am</td>
<td>Buttrick Hillside, near North Bridge</td>
<td>Dawn musket and cannon salute, arrival of alarm rider Samuel Prescott</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6:30 am</td>
<td>North Bridge, Concord</td>
<td>Remembrance ceremony</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>at 8:30 am</td>
<td>roads throughout Concord Center will be closed to vehicles for the parade</td>
<td>North Bridge battle commemoration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>North Bridge, Concord</td>
<td>Patriots’ Day parade crosses North Bridge</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9:45 am</td>
<td>North Bridge, Concord</td>
<td>Grand Opening celebration--new history galleries (through Apr. 21)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>from 11:00</td>
<td>Concord Museum</td>
<td>Sudbury Minutemen ceremony</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11:30 am</td>
<td>North Bridge, Concord</td>
<td>Fenn School Treble Chorus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun., April 20</td>
<td>2:00 pm</td>
<td>North Bridge Visitor Center</td>
<td>Battle reenactment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon., April 21</td>
<td>6:00 am</td>
<td>Lexington Green</td>
<td>Acton Minutemen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9:00 am</td>
<td>North Bridge, Concord</td>
<td>British Grave ceremony</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>North Bridge, Concord</td>
<td>Middlesex County Fife and Drum Corps in performance at North Bridge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2:00 pm</td>
<td>North Bridge, Concord</td>
<td>Lexington Parade</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:00 pm</td>
<td>Lexington</td>
<td>&quot;Make your own&quot; children's event</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat., April 26</td>
<td>10:30 pm</td>
<td>Major John Buttrick House, near North Bridge Visitor Center</td>
<td>&quot;Make your own&quot; children's event</td>
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This listing is provided as a courtesy of Minuteman NHP. The events themselves are coordinated among many different groups, and actual starting times are subject to change. Parking near events may be difficult—allow extra time. Lexington’s and Concord’s fine museums and historic houses will be open.

Lexington and Concord Area Map