Freedom's Way Convenes Think Tank

By Maud Ayson

This summer, a diverse band of colleagues took time away from hectic schedules to attend an Educational Think Tank convened by Freedom's Way Heritage Association. Hosted by the Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce, at their offices, this forum was designed to launch Freedom's Way's management planning efforts. These passionate advisors offered thoughtful and frank discussion on a range of the organization's activities, from programs and services to marketing, communication and outreach.

Everyone arrived with an "interest" in Freedom's Way and left with a broader appreciation of what Freedom's Way means to the people living in and visiting, not just Central Massachusetts, but all of New England.

"I found the gathering to be remarkably intriguing. We met as a group of professionals from different areas—museums, historic sites, universities, libraries, etc. By day's end we collectively envisioned Freedom's Way as an organization that can seamlessly blend many things (history, art, science, recreation, preservation, architecture, literature, sports, and culture) and easily cut across municipal borders. We came to see that it, in concert with a growing list of partners, was well positioned to offer truly innovative, educational and fun programming for a variety of audiences."

— Thomas Conroy

Think tank participant
Jayne Gordon

Alternating small and large group discussions on topics such as community engagement, lifelong learning, service, trails and collaborations, this accomplished team continued their dialogue while enjoying a box lunch catered by the Culinary Department of Shriner JobCorps. Their candid conversations explored the many ways that the National Heritage Area adds value to the local and regional economy. The Strollin' &

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Rollin’ project was applauded as a model outreach initiative that, using existing Freedom’s Way templates, combined with local expertise and working town partnerships, will strengthen regional recognition.

Together they enhanced ideas with exemplary sites and resources, and then prioritized the strategic goals as planning continues to unfold with stakeholders from the 45 Massachusetts and New Hampshire Freedom’s Way communities.

“Freedom’s Way ... was the way of native Americans moving through the forests and down the rivers to hunt and trade, the way of colonial farmers carrying produce and driving livestock to market, the way of early entrepreneurs harnessing the power of the local waters for industry. It was the way ... for writers and philosophers seeking serenity and inspiration in the landscape, for fugitive slaves riding the railroad to freedom.

It is today the way for residents and visitors who drive the quiet byways, hike the footpaths, climb the mountains, and paddle the rivers, wander through town centers and explore the countryside of this delightful region along the Massachusetts/New Hampshire border.”

—Jayne Gordon

Attendees sent in additional thoughts on sustainable ways to collaborate and share resources, including:

- Promote the FWNHA as a “heritage hub” by bundling adjacent towns into Go- Relax-Eat-Discover experiences.
- Develop collaborative trail experiences (real and virtual) using compelling ideas like Gathering Places, the Home Front, On the Move, and Get Outside!
- Make the Educational Think Tank an annual event.

“We may have entered that room as strangers and as a quirky assemblage of individuals from assorted agencies. But we became a singular force for advancing and promoting a place that we love and want to share with others. It was an honor and an inspiration to participate in such an endeavor.”

—Corrine Smith

Freedom’s Way is enormously grateful to the attendees of the Think Tank for giving generously of their time and advice. In the days and weeks to come we will try to thoughtfully respond to their suggestions and we look forward to their continued advice and counsel.

**In Attendance**

First Annual Think Tank participants: Dr. Thomas Conroy, Professor, Worcester State College; Jayne Gordon, Mass. Historical Society; James Moran, American Antiquarian Society; Leslie Obleschuk, Minute Man National Historical Park; Maggie Green, Fruitlands Museum; Denise Morrissey, Wachusett Mountain State Reservation; David Outman, The Trustees of Reservations; Debra Spratt, Pepperell Public Library; Corinne Smith, Mondor-Eagen Library; Marilyn Zavorski, Hudson Public Schools.
A beautiful summer has moved on to an exciting Fall. There are so many activities in all 45 of our Freedom’s Way communities to celebrate this season of harvest. Now that the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area is official, we are gearing up to meet the challenge of preparing a management plan in cooperation with the National Park Service and to continue and build on the programs that we have initiated. It is an exciting time to be involved in the Association and an opportunity to shape the Heritage Area program. We are always looking for new members and there are so many ways that you and your friends can get involved.

Over the past year, the Association has had the benefit of having two very competent staff members. Alene Reich, our Executive Director has enthusiastically undertaken the development of a management plan along with the other responsibilities of the organization. Linda Bowie, her Administrative Assistant has provided excellent support.

These are just a few of the many ongoing projects and partnerships that the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association has been working on this past year:

**Strollin’ & Rollin’:** Freedom’s Way has worked with local town organizations to develop a walking/riding tour of town historical sights known as “Strollin’ & Rollin.” A template for a printed multi-page brochure illustrating the tour highlights and providing self-guided maps for touring. We hope all of our communities will eventually take part in this project.

**Saving Voices, Saving Farms:** This year a series of workshops on oral history called, *Saving Voices, Saving Farms* has been funded with a grant from the B.J. Anderson Foundation. Documenting the changing landscape and archiving the stories of local farmers and their families is the goal of this project. Kits with instructions and best practices for conducting oral histories are available to communities interested in this project.

**White Blackberries of Luther Burbank:** In partnership with the Bulfinch Fund and *Wild Apples* (a publication), Freedom’s Way has developed a cooperative educational program called “The White Blackberries of Luther Burbank/Bulfinch Church.”

**Sunday, November 14th at 4:30 pm we will hold the 2010 Annual Meeting** of Freedom’s Way Heritage Association at The Bulfinch Church in Lancaster, MA. We urge you to attend and learn more about the Association and how you can become more involved in its activities in the Area and in your community.

I look forward to working with you to make Freedom’s Way our way to preserve our heritage!
NOTES
From Executive Director

Alene

To say I have learned a lot in the last year would be a great understatement. I recently celebrated one year at the helm of Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and during that time I have also welcomed a daughter into the world. There is no shortage of books about how to get through the first months of parenthood, but there is no manual for new National Heritage Areas.

So, we have taken to writing the book ourselves. We started by formalizing our relationship with the National Park Service (NPS), and we are now working closely with Minuteman National Historical Park, the NPS, Northeast Regional Office, and the National Heritage Area program office in Washington, D.C. to learn what to do month-to-month to help our organization grow.

As a new parent, everyone has an opinion on what I should do for teething, naptime, and the minutia of raising a child. While that can be helpful, where I am especially seeking everyone’s opinion is in the management planning process. So, if you see us in the grocery store, feel free to play peek-a-boo with Izzy, but also give me your thoughts on how Freedom’s Way can help your group or your town cross boundaries and move into beneficial partnerships. We all get to write the book on how to raise the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area—so jump in with your thoughts and advice!

The coming year will be filled with milestones. We’ll hire a planning consultant to begin developing a plan with our Board of Directors and our stakeholders. Izzy will start eating finger foods. We’ll be celebrating National Preservation Month in style as we expand our “Strollin’ & Rollin’” heritage tour event and loudly proclaim that “This Place Matters!” And before we know it, Izzy and Freedom’s Way are going to take off running.

Newest Freedom’s Way Members

Miss Izzy Reich spent Independence Day 2010 at Minuteman National Park.

Miss Juliet Skye Hemmer, granddaughter of FWHA board member Hugh Field.
Oral Histories:
Saving Farms, Saving Voices

By Marge Darby

This project is focused on Apple Orchards and we have eight histories thus far. In addition, we also conducted two interviews with area farmers whose crops are varied and do not have any orchards at all. These two farms are part of the regional history of farming; they are not large and rely mostly on roadside stands or farmer’s markets rather than trucking their produce to the big markets like Boston. With these two stories, we have included a couple of the traditional kinds of farms as part of the general background of the area. Hillsides of neat rows of fruit trees seem to have become the iconic image of our New England communities, perhaps because they are so visible from the roads. The towns make use of apple festivals and blossom times for homecomings and special events, further highlighting the sense that the orchards play a major role in the way we define ourselves.

Training Workshops

We held two workshops this year as part of our oral history project to acquaint prospective oral historians with the project. Thanks to the B. J. Anderson Foundation, we created kits for interviewers to conduct oral histories. Each kit includes: a digital recorder, camera, guidelines and articles on best practices for interviewing farmers, permissions slips and suggested questions. Once an interview is completed, it is transcribed into hard copy and the digital recordings are made into audio CDs.

Old Frog Pond and Kirk Farm

For demonstration purposes to acquaint prospective interviewers with the process, we interviewed Debbie and George Kirk from Kirk Farm, Groton and Linda Hoffman of Old Frog Pond Farm, Harvard. Because we were showing how interviews are conducted, in each instance follow-up interviews will be concluded at a later date.

This is a fun project to work on – everyone loves the opportunity to ask questions and the farmers appreciate describing what they do. Volunteer opportunities include: interviewers, appointments person, transcribers, photographers and researchers to research farm maps, and other related materials and industries.

Building a history of the area’s farmers while learning about their pleasures and challenges provides a wonderful opportunity for us to support our farms at a crucial time. It is becoming more and more difficult for farmers to continue as the pressure for development threatens their existence and our sense of our communities.

If you participate in this project, you will learn first hand what it means to your local farmer if you “buy local”. Call 978-772-3654 for more information.
Member Services:  
Preservation Briefs

_Preservation Briefs_ are short informational papers outlining best practices in historic preservation especially in regard to the Secretary of the Interior's standards. Any one of these 44 briefs will be available on our website [www.freedomway.org](http://www.freedomway.org) in the downloadable documents section of the management plan tab.

In addition, several of our board members have particular expertise to augment the briefs or to help you navigate through the list. Please address your questions to mail@freedomway.org and we will be able to connect you to someone who can help.

Pumpkin Treats

Heirloom pumpkin seeds and a few plants donated by Priscilla Williams of Pumpkin Brook Organic Gardening were given out at the Oral History Workshop at the Groton Grange. We planted our seeds and three lovely pumpkins grew by the end of the summer. Actually, it was two pumpkins — the grandchildren rejected one because it had bumps, but it made delicious soup. The other two are waiting for Halloween after which the plan is to make pies.

If you planted yours, please send us a picture and we'll put it on the web site. The pumpkins planted at the office fed small critters, so didn't grow. Such is the life of a farmer.

Join Freedom's Way

There is no other organization in this region that brings such diverse interest as museums, cultural institutions, government officials, businesses, and educators, to capitalize on our regional features. Our cultural heritage resources are plentiful, but the larger community may not have grasped its potential. If you have been receiving this newsletter without ever making a contribution, consider changing your status now. With your help, we can do this together.

![Membership Categories](image)

**Annual Membership Categories**
- Individual: $35
- Family/Nonprofits/Community: $50
- Business Roundtable: $100

**Supporting Membership Categories**
- Minuteman: $250-$499
- Thoreau Associate: $500-$999
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_Important for email newsletter and other FWHA information_

Thank You!

Freedom's Way is a 501(C) 3 non-profit organization and, as such, your contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Mail with your check made out to FWHA, 100 Sherman Avenue, Suite 2; Deveris, MA 01434
Nashua River Valley Awareness Paddle

As you drive across the state of Massachusetts, rarely is there a vista as stunning as the one from Prospect Hill and Fruitlands Museum. Coupled with the beauty of the Nashua River in the valley below, you realize that we are indeed blessed with awe-inspiring natural resources in our backyard. It is our obligation to protect and preserve these resources for the generations to come.

At the Oct. 8 Protect the Nashua River Valley Awareness Paddle, Fruitlands Museum’s CEO Tim Firment and Curator Mike Volmar paddled an expanse of the Nashua River along with pioneer environmentalist and a Freedom’s Way visionary, Marion Stoddart, in a dugout canoe. We were joined by a dedicated contingent of people who were interested in the protection of the river, the greenway and the Fruitlands extraordinary viewshed.

In addition to Firment, Stoddart and Volmar the list of attendees included State Senator James Eldridge, Lou Sideris, from Minute Man National Historic Park and Marge Darby from Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area.

The voyage of the dugout canoe was a success as well as a demonstration of the way Native Americans traveled. As Dr. Volmar explained, old canoes were often found with large stones in them. Earlier historians reasoned the canoes were stored this way to prevent them from floating away. This traditionally built native dugout was buoyant and a bit tippy until the ballast of heavy stones was added: a lesson learned.


Manegold’s story-telling skill brings to life a “tainted” period in eastern Massachusetts before the 1780’s. A story of family fortunes built upon the success of dealing in sugar and slaves, it shows the presence of slavery in the north. She reveals the slave-trading families of Governor John Winthrop, John Usher and Isaac Royall, all thriving, successive owners of the property known as Ten Hills Farm. Once 600 acres, it is now the “Royall House and Slave Quarters” on three-quarters of an acre near the Mystic River, Medford. Isaac Royall fled to England at the start of the Revolution. His estate’s be-

quest of six properties in Worcester County to Harvard University laid the foundation for its Law School. To this day, it uses its Benefactor’s signature, three sheaves of wheat, as its trademark seal. Manegold has drawn her data from dairies, family histories, town histories, and research in the American Antiquarian Society and Massachusetts Historical Society to provide a rich mine of notes and guides to further reading.


A large, full-color children’s picture book by an award-winning author-illustrator, “Farm” describes the sequence of tending a farm and brings the seasonal rhythms to life through the senses of color, feel, and even the heavy smell of dust. The required equipment used on a corn farm is explained, especially the harvesting, with a glossary. Illustrations will invite counting and naming. The flat, openness of the farm appears again and again emphasizing the human relationship to nature. For children ages four and up.
FWHA New Hampshire Advisory Committee

An advisory committee, comprised of representatives from the eight New Hampshire Freedom's Way Heritage Association member towns, has been meeting monthly to develop a plan to inventory the geographical, cultural and historical assets of each community. The committee is chaired by Freedom's Way Heritage Association Board member May Balsama, and the goal of the committee is to develop a common inventory template for each community to use to conduct its own inventory and describe its own geographical, cultural and historical assets.

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Thursday, October 28th at 7:00 pm in the Milford Town Hall. At the next meeting final plans for developing the template and disseminating information about the asset inventory to the eight New Hampshire towns will be finalized.

Freedom's Way Asks...

Where and what is this Freedom's Way site?
Look for the answer in the next newsletter
or visit our website at www.freedomsway.org.
If this is in your town, please refrain from playing — let others guess!

National Park Service: Freedom's Way Partner
Since 1916, the National Park Service has been caring for our national parks, preserving and protecting America's special places. The NPS also provides technical, planning and limited financial assistance to National Heritage Areas, including the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area. The NPS is a partner and advisor, with decision-making authority remaining in the hands of local people and organizations.