



Freedom's Way

National Heritage Area

Working in partnership with



Newsletter 4 | February 2015

Table of Contents

- 2 Management Plan Update
- 3 Walden Pond Visitor Center
- 4-5 Year in Review
Connecting Communities—
Along Our Trails
- 6 Field Farm Forest in Nashua River Watershed Area
- 7 Community Character & Common Themes

To become a member, please visit
www.freedomsway.org/friends/join.html

To learn more about heritage areas please visit:
<http://www.nps.gov/heritageareas/FAQ/>

Did You Know....

Freedom's Way National Heritage Area has

337 Historic Places on National Registry

21 State Parks, State Forests & other State Public Recreation Areas

3 National Wildlife Refuges

158,531 Acres of Protected Conservation Land

Freedom's Way Initiates "Hidden Treasures Weekend" May 16 and 17, 2015

by Polly Kienle

In the early hours of April 19, 1775, an alarm rider reaches Hollis, New Hampshire, calling the town Minute Company into action. The three Nevins brothers hear this news just as they are in the midst of shifting a pesky boulder in one of their fields. They prop it up with smaller stones and rush to muster with the rest of the company, which will soon march off toward Concord, about thirty miles distant, to confront Regular Army troops sent there from Boston.

The Nevins brothers never finished their task – the boulder was left propped up, the work half-done, a modest but enduring reminder of ordinary lives interrupted. Nevins Stone now sits on Hollis Common, brought there decades ago from its original location.

This story inspires the Heritage Commission members to find many ways of making this vivid moment in history come alive – with artifacts from 18th-century daily life, through re-enactors stationed on the Common, via research on the lives of some of the men who marched out of town that day, by asking visitors to imagine themselves in the shoes of Hollis townspeople at this historic watershed moment. For Hidden Treasures Weekend, they will tie all of these ideas together into a program that captures a significant moment in Hollis' history that is no longer remembered by many in this vital and growing community.

The Hollis Heritage Commission is only one of many groups in the Freedom's Way Heritage Area planning a program that will share a piece of community identity with the region. Freedom's Way and towns in the Heritage Area are collaborating on a two-day regional celebration entitled "Hidden Treasures Weekend." On Saturday, May 16th and Sunday, May 17th, 2015, each participating community will offer a free, public program featuring a "hidden treasure" in their city or town. The weekend event will promote community treasures across the 994-square-mile Freedom's Way area, home to over 750,000 people.



On the common in Hollis, NH is Nevins Stone, the rock the brothers were moving when the call to arms came on April 19, 1775. Photo courtesy of David Sullivan, Hollis Historical Commission

Approximately thirty communities and community organizations in the Heritage Area are participating. In November, two kickoff meetings were held at Minute Man National

continued on page 2

Management Plan Update

We are pleased to announce that the Freedom's Way Heritage Association is in the final stages of completing its management plan with a draft being prepared for review as this newsletter goes to print.

Begun almost a year ago, the plan represents the combined efforts of the organization and its many partners and will serve as a blueprint for heritage area-wide activities for the next ten years. Recommendations are included for interpretation and education, historic preservation, conservation, agriculture, communications, collaboration, community planning and cultural heritage tourism.

Throughout the planning process four overall goals have been identified to guide the work of the heritage area. These include;

1. Foster a culture of pride and stewardship to preserve the natural, cultural and historic and cultural resources of the heritage area as a legacy for future generations.
2. Engage and collaborate with organizations, interests and individuals to create a shared regional vision as a living link across landscapes, history and time.
3. Promote sustainable communities throughout the heritage area to reinforce and celebrate their character, memories and traditions to create a sense of place.

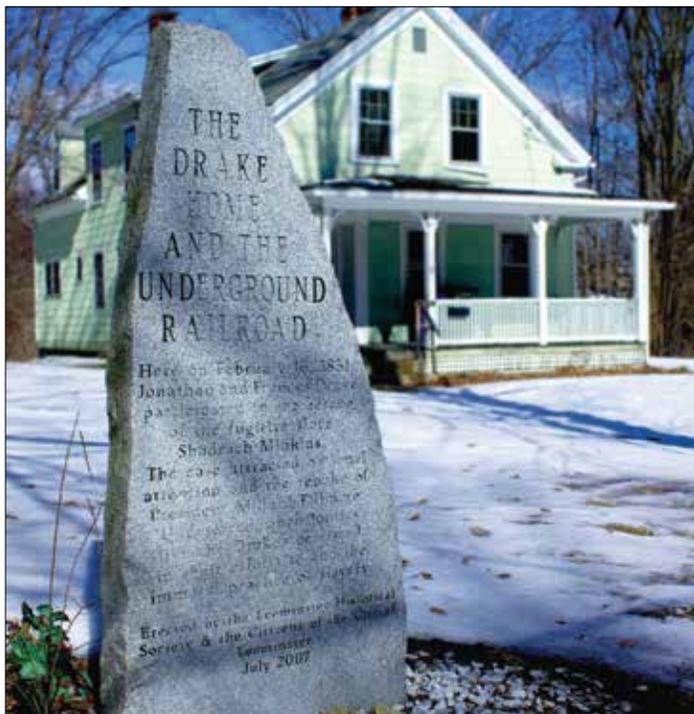


Gravestones softened by winter snow in cemetery in Shirley Center.
© 2014 Adam.

4. Inspire generations of lifelong learners through innovative educational and interpretive initiatives that connect stories — past and present — to those who live, work and visit the region.

The planning process has provided new insights into the heritage area while reaffirming the mandate of its enabling legislation, signed into law by President Obama in 2009.

Hidden Treasures Weekend, *continued from page 1*



Drake's home in Leominster was a stop along the Underground Railroad and a focus on Hidden Treasures Weekend. Photo courtesy of Bruce Colter.

Historical Park and at Townsend's Memorial Hall. At these, prospective participants met with Hidden Treasures project manager, Polly Kienle, asked questions, and shared ideas.

Hidden Treasures Weekend builds on the earlier success of *Strollin' & Rollin'*, a series of self-guided tours of historically significant sites and landscapes, while including many more communities in the two-day celebration of local nature, culture, and history. The public can participate in fun and creative activities that will entice families to explore the history of our 45 communities and to engage directly with the organizations that preserve them.

Choosing the treasures from so much rich regional history has proven to be a challenging task. While Freedom's Way initially asked for a single document or object, structure or landscape to be selected, some communities have chosen to build whole programs around one idea, such as early industry or the arts. Others have struggled to select a treasure and design a program with limited volunteer resources or within the scope of other long-term projects and commitments. Many communities are building program teams made up of people from more than one organization. Creativity is the key to developing

Walden Pond Visitor Center

In early December the first phase of construction began on a new visitor center for Walden Pond. Designed by architect Maryanne Thompson, the 5,700 square foot facility has a zero net energy footprint, is LEED silver certified and fits gently on the land, providing a gateway to educating the public about Walden's cultural and natural history.

The new building will include interior and exterior exhibits, public bathrooms and meeting and administration space and will be powered by a solar parking canopy and electric vehicle charging stations. Reconfigured site circulation and pedestrian safety improvements, designed by

Michael van Valkenburgh Associates, will improve accessibility for people of all abilities.

For the 500,000 who visit Walden Pond each year, the visitor center will serve as a gateway for other Thoreau-related sites in the heritage area such as the Walden Woods Project, Concord Museum, Brister's Hill, Thoreau Farm and Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. Interpretive exhibits will provide an opportunity to learn about the significance of Walden Pond and the birth of the conservation movement encouraging stewardship.

For detailed information on this project, visit <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/news/public-meetings/materials/parklands/2014-9-30-walden-presentation.pdf>



Walden Pond Visitor Center Interpretive Design and Views as presented by DCR on September 30, 2014.

Hidden Treasures Weekend programs – no community or organization should be prevented from participating because of limited resources.

Just as residents will be able to experience a range of local stories over the course of the May weekend, participating organizations are benefitting from the ideas and experience of their peers. Hidden Treasures participants are linked through a shared project website, Facebook page, blog, and support plan. They are able to support each other in planning, refining, and implementing their programs, as

well as turning to the project manager for expert help. They will also be invited to participate in the National Heritage Area conference on interpretive practice that Freedom's Way is hosting in late March. As Freedom's Way is engaged in writing a new management

plan with new interpretive themes for the region, the stories and ideas behind Hidden Treasures Weekend programs will contribute to the development of local interpretive themes that strengthen community identity.

Look for more information about the Hidden Treasures Weekend on our website, the Facebook page, and in the local press. Freedom's Way is very excited to launch this new program, which we hope will be an annual feature of our calendar. We extend our thanks to the communities and organizations sharing this new adventure with us.

If you are a member of an organization in a Freedom's Way community that is not already participating in the Hidden Treasures Weekend, you are welcome to submit a program proposal. If you are not sure whether your community has already signed on, check with us. Contact Polly Kienle at pkienle@freedomsway.org or at this address: Freedom's Way Heritage Association, 94 Jackson Road, Suite 311 Devens, MA 01434.

The public can participate in fun and creative activities that will entice families to explore the history of our 45 communities and to engage directly with the organizations that preserve them.



Plates line rafter above windows in the Poole House-Hackett Barn, Hollis, NH. (c) 2014 Todisco.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



(Top) In March the *Defending Freedom: Communities in Conflict Workshop*, presented in partnership with Mass Historical Society, The American Antiquarian Society and Minute Man National Historical Park, offered four sessions designed to help participants (shown here) gain skills in turning local resources into compelling programs and experiences. © 2014 Todisco



(Left) During the October 2014 FWHA Annual Meeting held at the historic Shirley Meeting House, Jim Moran, Director of Outreach, The American Antiquarian Society, narrates the premiere performance *The Untold Story: Steps Along the Road to Revolution*, written by historian Mary B. Fuhrer based on the research collected as part of the Patriot's Paths project. © 2014 Courtesy of Holly Hasse.

Montachusett Regional Trails Coalition Partnership Promotes Community Trail Walks

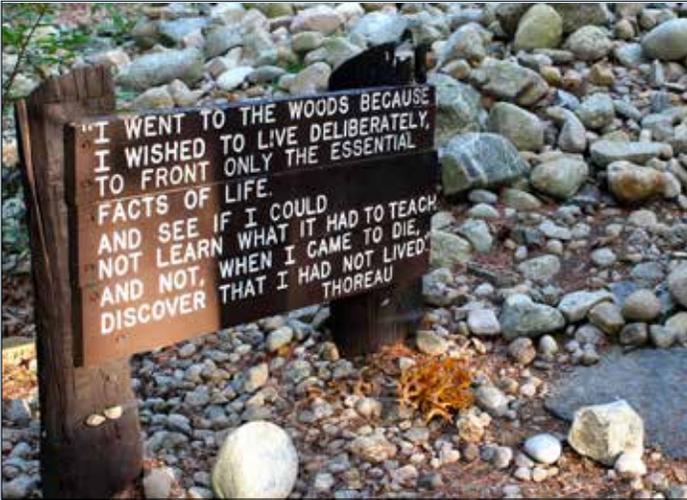
One year ago **Freedom's Way (FWHA)** initiated planning for a trail initiative with **Montachusett Regional Trail Coalition (MRTC)** with the goal of promoting trail-based events within the heritage area. This community outreach project grew out of MRTC's larger vision to increase awareness, accessibility and appreciation for recreational trails and greenways throughout the region, which provides tremendous benefits to residents and tourists alike. Trails are the pathways that connect us to our communities and special places, inviting us to retrace earlier footsteps and explore our rich heritage and hidden treasures.

Working together, FWHA and MRTC created **Connecting Communities—Along Our Trails**, a series of twelve trail-based events hosted by a different community

each month from June 2014 through May 2015. In addition, Montachusett Trail Guide was created highlighting the trails and sites in twenty-three communities.

During the past year, community and historical organizations, trail stewards, land trusts, naturalists and volunteers planned unique trail experiences which have included: Fort Devens Museum Tank Trail Walk & Trolley Tour (Devens), the Benton MacKaye Memorial Walk (Shirley), and the Winter Hike at Waushacum Overlook with behind-the-scenes tour of Rittenhour House (Sterling). The response has been overwhelmingly positive and more trail walks are scheduled through December 2015.

For more information, please visit: <http://freedomsway.org/projects/along-our-trails.html>



September saw the first annual Walden to Wachusett Weekend, an *In Thoreau's Footsteps* event exploring two of Thoreau's favorite places: Walden Pond State Reservation and Wachusett Mountain State Reservation with programs for all ages.



(Left) The Worcester Barn [shown] was one of seven barns showcased in September as part of The Hollis Barns: Tour & Lecture. John Porter, co-author of *Preserving Old Barns*, opened the event speaking on features of NH barns. Sponsored by the NH Preservation Alliance in association with Freedom's Way and the Hollis Historical Society. (Right) View looking out to fields from inside the Linden Barn. © 2014 All photos by Todisco



Senator Jamie Eldridge addresses the trail group prior to the Devens Tank Trail Walk in June.



Marion Stoddart, founder of Nashua River Watershed Association & Senator Eldridge on Devens trail walk.



Hikers enjoy the December sunshine during the Sterling Trail walk at Washacum Overlook.

Farms, Fields, and Forests in the Nashua River Watershed: Stories from the Land

Freedom's Way Heritage Association is collaborating with the Nashua River Watershed Association on the oral history project "Farms, Fields and Forests: Stories from the Land" to preserve a record of the region's rapidly changing cultural and natural landscapes. Focusing on working landscapes, the project is an extension of the Association's "Apple Orchard Oral History Project" and will focus on the 27 communities located within both organization's service areas.

John Mickola recalls a time when there were undeveloped forests and beautiful fields on all sides of the Mickola Farm in Ashby. When John was a child, all the nearby homes were working farms, and the families knew each other. "If I heard the rattle of a car I would know who it was."



Mickola family farmhouse in Ashby, circa 1910. Photo courtesy of NRWA.

The house and land where John and his family live today is the farm that John's Finnish grandfather bought in 1907 for roughly \$20 an acre. "The Finns jumped at the chance to own land as they had knowledge of farming tough homesteads and brought with them traditional ways to 'enliven' the land again," says John. Blueberries were an important crop on this and other area farms. The many paper mill workers in Fitchburg would be unemployed during the summer when the factories became too



Farmer and conservationist, John Mikola, is a third generation landowner in Ashby, MA. Photo courtesy of NRWA.

hot, and these workers and their families were brought out to pick high-bush blueberries at ten cents a quart for extra money. The berry fields were managed communally in the fall among the Finnish neighbors when the fields were burned, and everyone helped each other during haying season as well. John has continued to mow the hayfields. John was a member of the Ashby Grange from when he was a teenager to when it closed its door for the last time in 2011.

Today, not even one of the properties near John is a full-time farm. John values open spaces, and he has preserved the family land in perpetuity.

John's story has been recorded by Al Futterman, Land Programs Director at the Nashua River Watershed Association.

National Park Service Centennial 2016

The National Park Service has announced that the centerpiece of its 2016 Centennial will be a broad public engagement campaign that reintroduces the national parks and the work of the National Park Service to a new generation of Americans inviting them to visit and get involved.

Launched in March of 2015, the two-year campaign encourages Americans to "Find Your Park" and discover a personal connection to a place or story that provides inspiration or enjoyment to them, as they join the National Park Service in its second century of stewardship of America's most treasured places.



Created on August 26, 1916 the National Park Service comprises 405 areas covering more than 84 million acres in every state, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Their portfolio includes national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House.

To see the complete list of National Park Service sites and affiliated areas by type and number visit: <http://www.nps.gov/findapark/index.htm>

To learn more about the 2016 Centennial visit: <http://www.nps.gov/subjects/centennial/index.htm>

Community Character and Common Themes The Memory and Meaning of Place



Town Center of Concord, MA; Historical Collections, Relating to the History and Antiquities of Every Town in Massachusetts, Barber (1848).

COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND COMMON THEMES is the focus of a three-day interpretive conference in Concord, MA on March 26, 27, and 28. Using this historic town as laboratory, participants will investigate engaging ways to interpret the meaning and memory of place through a variety of innovative sessions and field excursions.

In a rapidly globalized increasingly homogeneous world, it is the character of the places in which we live that define us. Local stories and places provide a lens through which to develop community identity and sense of place. The conference will explore the intimate link between discovery and interpretation as a means of bringing local stories to life within individual communities, connecting them to themes within the National Heritage Area.

Behind the scene tours will be offered of Minute Man National Historical Park, The Thoreau Institute at Walden Woods and The Old Manse as well as field excursions throughout Concord. Case studies, presentations and round tables will explore best practices in interpretation and educational programming and will include sessions on revealing, evaluating and interpreting local resources, framing and creating desired visitor experiences and developing and articulating community – based themes.

Harvard University Robert & Lois Orchard Professor in the History of Landscape, John R. Stilgoe will deliver the keynote address. Historian Bill Fowler of Northeastern University will open Friday's sessions and speak on the role of regional history in shaping the way we think, with an emphasis on heritage areas.

The conference is offered in partnership with the U.S. National Park Service. Presenting organizations include: Minute Man National Historical Park, Boston National Historical Park, John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, American Antiquarian Society, The Drinking Gourd Project, Fitchburg Art Museum, The Guild of Historic Interpreters, Mass Audubon Society, Nashua River Watershed Association, New England Scenic Trails, The Thoreau Institute at Walden Woods, The Thoreau Society, The Trustees of Reservations, Walden Pond State Reservation (DCR) and Wachusett Mountain State Reservation (DCR).

For more information visit: www.freedomsway.org

Community Character and Common Themes

The Memory and Meaning of Place

Thursday, March 26th

Behind the Scene Tours
Introductory Workshop + Case Studies
Keynote Address

Friday, March 27th

Regional History + The Power of Place
Presentations and Workshops
Reception

Saturday, March 28th

Local Stories + Interpretation
The Freedom's Way Experience

Attendance is limited. For full details & to register:
www.freedomsway.org



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A view from Prospect Hill after the blizzard. Harvard, MA © 2015 Todisco.

For more information about Freedom's Way, the management plan,
and National Heritage Areas, please go to:

Freedom's Way www.freedomsway.org

Management Plan www.freedomsway.org/mgmt/mgmt.html

National Heritage Areas www.nps.gov/heritageareas