What began as a casual curiosity a few years ago has finally come to fruition in 2012.

When past FW think-tank and committee discussions considered a variety of regional themes, the name of Henry David Thoreau continued to surface. A native of Concord, Massachusetts, this Transcendental writer and naturalist was known to have traveled throughout our area on occasion during the 19th century. At the very least, we understood that he passed through a few FW towns whenever he was headed to Worcester to visit friends. Scrutiny of Thoreau’s journals, letters, and other writings led this researcher to determine that Henry had indeed held a presence here. More specifically: during his lifetime, Mr. Thoreau could be proven to have visited 39 of the 45 present-day FW towns.

Now that we had the information, what would we do with it? How could we use the documented activities of one representative man from the past to connect people and places in the present? A two-pronged approach gradually came into view.

The first one focused on a few specific towns with which Thoreau had a distinct relationship. Freedom’s Way embarked upon partnerships with groups in Ayer, Fitchburg, Medford, and Westminster. We applied for and received local cultural council grants in those towns. As a result, we planned and scheduled Thoreau-based talks and additional activities there in 2012. The first event was “Transcendental Travelogue” that was held at the Fitchburg Public Library on March 28th. Forty people attended this lecture and slideshow. They added worthwhile comments and asked terrific questions. Their interest and support confirmed the relevance of our undertaking.

Continued on page 9.
DEAR FRIENDS OF FREEDOM’S WAY,

I am pleased to serve as the new President of the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association. Fortune has blessed me and Freedom’s Way with the continued presence of the two most recent past-Presidents: John Ott and Pam Resor. We have a lot of history here to put towards growth. Freedom’s Way is, after all, about planning for the future through an appreciation for all that has come before us.

The first example of this growth has come through a most concrete sense of the word. This January, we moved to a new office at 94 Jackson Rd. in Devens, Massachusetts. A second example of this growth is an impressive expansion in our programming, thanks to the addition of Maud Ayson as our Director of Education and Public Programs.

My third example of growth is, well, continued growth. Each year, Freedom’s Way builds new collaborations in the region to turn individual efforts into shared accomplishments. There are so many organizations in our region struggling to recreate the wheel, to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to experience and appreciate the historic, natural, and recreational resources of their towns. Send them our way! We can all work together as partners to make this region an even better place to live, work, and grow.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Peter Webb, President
Harley House Inn Hosts
Annual Meeting 2011

On October 16th, members of Freedom’s Way gathered at the Harley House Inn for dinner and the Annual Meeting. As usual, the company was good and the food was great. But once the dinner and meeting were complete, the topic turned to the paranormal.

Executive Director, Alene Reich, took the chance to stray from the Halloween theme into the realm of Thanksgiving, citing great appreciation for our members and our volunteers. The Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area is fortunate to stand on the shoulders of “giants”- Marge Darby and Milly Chandler and we continue to build strong networks of talented volunteers who are passionate about their communities. As a prime example, President Pam Resor recognized the Hollis Strollin’ & Rollin’ Committee for their extraordinary hard work, bestowing upon them the annual Crystal Eagle Award. Committee member Bette Finnern was presented with the President’s Award for her outstanding service in creating the Strollin’ & Rollin’ tour guide for Hollis, NH.

Resor presented certificates to several retiring Board members, expressing gratitude for their many years of service on the FWHA Board. The organization also welcomed new leadership: Peter Webb, President; Tom Conroy, Vice-President; Melissa Fetterhoff, Treasurer, and Margaret Coppe, Secretary.

The Tales of Haunted Heritage program followed the meeting with stories by Hatzie Hornblower and a spirited presentation on ghostly hauntings and the paranormal by Adam Ingano, of Clinton.
NOTES
from the Executive Director

To All Our Friends in Freedom’s Way,

Freedom’s Way has had some landmark years in recent history. In 2009, we received federal designation. In 2010, we transitioned to new staff and new goals—designation had been the Holy Grail for so long. In 2011, we kicked off our Management Plan with public sessions in the Spring. 2012 is the year of PROGRAMS.

In the Footsteps of Thoreau
Paths of the Patriots
Strollin’ & Rollin’
Sustaining Working Farms

This Spring alone has shown a magnificent leap in what we are able to offer to our region. Through the support of our members, our volunteers, and our sponsors, we have been able to make an important decision for the growth of our organization. We heartily welcome Maud Ayson as our Director of Education and Public Programs. Maud joins our team with such a breadth and depth of knowledge of heritage and culture, an appreciation for sense of place and people, that I find myself and Freedom’s Way to be extremely lucky.

Like any non-profit leader, I cannot luxuriate for long in my “luck”; even with all of these annual victories, where exactly do we find ourselves?

We are weather-beaten, but still hopeful. We are pinching pennies, but making headway. We are excelling in many areas (programs!) and struggling in others.

We are not blind to our weaknesses. They include fundraising, consistent communication, and the persistent inability to create more hours in the day.

The challenge right now is to be truly “known”. Many think of Freedom’s Way as the organization that worked so hard to earn designation of the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Areas. Perhaps some believed that Freedom’s Way was the means to an end. We have not ended! We have transformed!

Now, we work to be known for programming, technical support, and community building—the richness that National Heritage Areas can bring to their constituencies. That is the work we are doing right now. I am happy to report that there is no more “will be doing”.

For your part, I ask that you please bask in the shine of what we have created. Check out our calendar of events, (last page, more to come), and bring a friend. Introduce them to Freedom’s Way and help us to become truly “known”.

Most sincerely,

[Signature]

Alleke W. Kind
Since 2006, Freedom’s Way has been casting spotlights on the local treasures that make this heritage area such a special place for living, working, and playing! Accomplished in collaboration with organizations across town and state borders, communities have been creating singular heritage guidebooks, tour brochures, and events that offer fascinating glimpses into the landscapes that continue to shape the sense of place, character, and connectedness found in every town.

During National Preservation Month, the “neighborly towns” of Lancaster, Bolton, and Clinton will offer tours of their distinctive—built, cultural, scenic, and recreational—places. Visit www.freedomsway.org in May to join the Strollin’ & Rollin’ celebration! Download a brochure, or access our online and Smart Phone maps.

Lancaster was the birthplace of such notable people as John Chapman, a.k.a. Johnny Appleseed, Mary Rowlandson, a King Philip’s War captive, and Luther Burbank, the most inventive plant breeder of the 19th century. The town green, home to the First Church, a designated National Historic Landmark, designed by America’s “first native” architect, Charles Bulfinch. The belfry holds a bell from the foundry of Paul Revere & Son. Now automated, this famous bell can still be rung by hand to announce special services and celebrations.

At Bolton’s Old South Burying Ground look for the “New” Revolutionary soldier’s stones. The Bolton Historical Society has replaced markers that were lost due to decades of damage caused by erosion and weather. This cemetery is an important open space and historic landscape.

Laid out in 1854, Clinton’s much used Central Park is surrounded by numerous older structures that, in their day, embodied permanence, stability, and a faith in a better tomorrow.

So as Spring arrives, we invite you to stroll or roll by foot, car or bike through all three towns. Enjoy these family-friendly local destinations — they have been preserved for your use and enjoyment and that of many more generations to come.

Visit www.freedomsway.org to plan your “must-see” list of things to do nearby.
It's a Lifestyle Choice - Farmers' Voices from Groton

By Electa Kane Tritsch

Groton Farms, a project begun as an inventory of vanishing heritage, ended as a broad-based planning exercise supported by the town’s Historical Commission, Agricultural Commission, Conservation Commission, town planners and local farmers. A local CPA grant made it happen.

I sat down with a dozen of Groton’s hands-on agricultural experts and talked with them about their lives and their views on farming. Using one of FW’s interview kits, I recorded some of those conversations, now part of the growing FW “Farmers’ Voices” project.

The Groton voices came from many agricultural environments, from the hillside land repurposed as Christmas tree plantation, to the 300 year old valley farm housing a five-generation butchering business. The voices described vastly different operations, from cultivation of high-grade feed hay on parcels scattered across town, to a dramatic example of land collecting to pasture an expansive Angus herd.

The issues that concern Groton’s farmers are best expressed through their own words. Some concerns are personal. Many are broad-based issues such as taxation. They are reflections on agriculture and its place in the world today. Here is a sampling of phrases that jumped out as “aha!” moments for me, ways of thinking about the importance of working lands.

- Let’s face it, nobody wants a farm in their backyard. All that dust and noise....

- Dairy farming these days is the surest way in the world to make a rich man poor.

- One of the problems with CSAs is that, no matter how much you explain this is a way to support local agriculture, most members expect more, cheaper, and more variety of product than they could find at the supermarket.
No American would do what the Jamaican workers do, and if you do find a college student to work seasonal, it’s only one season and every season we have to train new people to drive the trucks, work the farmers markets.

Neither of the kids ever liked to work on the farm. What’s going to happen to this place down the road?

Everybody talks about rural vistas, but the vista is strictly a byproduct of farming. An estate owner who hires a farmer to rotary mow his land is maintaining open space, not doing agriculture. His land is what I call ‘passive agricultural land’.

You’re never going to do anything to make agriculture profitable in Groton. Agriculture in this town is in transition from vocation to avocation – people do it because they are passionate about farming. So perhaps the real question is how can we make it easier for people to do agricultural activity here?

One farmer sums it up very succinctly. “This is what I want to do,” she says. “It’s a lifestyle choice.”

Groton Historical Commission’s agricultural survey project resulted in two publications: Groton Farms, the historical survey and planning report that includes the interviews described here, and Resource Guide for Local Farmers (“where to turn when you have more questions than answers”). Both are downloadable from the Town of Groton website at www.townofgroton.org. Contact Michael Roberts, redhawkma@gmail.com with questions.

Oakfield Research is a consulting firm specializing in cultural landscape history, planning and interpretation. For more information on Oakfield and Electa Kane Tritsch see www.oakfieldresearch.com or email e.tritsch@comcast.net.
Long-time supporters and friends of Freedom’s Way took time out of their busy holiday schedules to gather at the Jonas Merriam House, home to Jared Wollaston and John Cunney. Senator James Eldridge attended and spoke to guests, encouraging all to recommit themselves to achieving the visions of the National Heritage Area.

John Ott, board member and former Executive Director of National Heritage Museum, moderated. FWHA president Peter Webb thanked hosts for this opportunity to bring supporters and friends together in support of the National Heritage Area. Ron Ostburg, member AIA and Fruitlands Museum Board member, spoke about the synergy that occurs among organizations that are part of national heritage areas. Host Jared Wollaston talked about his long-time commitment to the heritage area. All speakers pledged their continued support. On hand to answer questions was Executive Director Alene Reich.
“In Thoreau’s Footsteps” Continued from page 1.
The second approach will advance the move-
ment to a regional level. Henry Thoreau and
friend Richard Fuller (one of Margaret Fuller’s
brothers) walked from Concord to Mount
Wachusett in July 1842. The trip resulted in
Thoreau’s essay, “A Walk to Wachusett,” which
was published in a magazine the following Jan-
uary. Present-day Leominster resident Robert
Young recently re-traced the Wachusett walk
Using Mr. Young’s findings, Freedom’s Way has
been able to establish a loop “trail” that traces
the and published a book about his experi-
ence. famous 1842 walk. Using existing two-
lane roads, the route leads through 10 Free-
dom’s Way towns. Both print and online mate-
rials will soon be released to promote Thoreau’s
Wachusett walk to residents and to visitors
alike. The unveiling comes in time to mark 150
years of Thoreau’s enduring reputation (after his
death on May 6, 1862) and also the 170th anni-
versary of that first Concord-to-Wachusett walk.

Freedom’s Way plans to continue to employ Mr.
Thoreau’s life and works as vehicles to connect
people across town lines and across the centu-
ries. Through his example, we can illustrate how
the past shapes the present in our region. More
ideas are churning! We hope to launch addi-
tional events in 2013 and into the future.

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.

☐ Renewal  ☐ New Membership

Annual Membership Categories
☐ Individual $35
☐ Family/Nonprofits/Community $50
☐ Business Roundtable $100

Supporting Membership Categories
☐ Minuteman $250-$499
☐ Thoreau Associate $500-$999
☐ Patriot’s Circle $1,000-$4,999
☐ Golden Eagle $5,000 & up

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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, 94 Jackson Road, Suite 311, Devens, MA 01434
Adaptive Reuse — Old is New Again

by Maud Ayson

Join Freedom’s Way at the Museum of Russian Icons on May 19th in Clinton, MA, and learn how adaptive reuse creates vibrant, healthy, and dynamic communities.

Coinciding with National Preservation Month, this informative morning, will bring people together in an inspiring town and place, to share perspectives and ideas on the ways that sustainable preservation can balance the economic benefits, environmental values, and community character by adaptively reusing old buildings.

Knowledgeable speakers—Lynne Spencer, Mendes, Torrey & Spencer, Robert Adam, founder and former head of the Preservation Carpentry program at the North Bennet Street School in Boston, and Maureen Hart Hennessey, independent curator and grant writer—will share compelling research, planning models, resources, and funding successes drawn from a variety of regional projects.

The workshop is being held in not one but two historic buildings that changed along with Clinton, (from tenements and courthouse to social club and police station) to what has become a world-class Museum, education center, and popular cultural destination.

The morning concludes with tours of this hometown “Green” Museum and Clinton neighborhoods led by Museum of Russian Icons CEO Kent dur Russell, designers Pam and David Durrant, and Community and Economic Development Director Phillip Duffy. Tours will show why reuse and going green has become a powerful sustainable development movement embraced by town agencies, institutions, and communities.

This affordable workshop —$10 Members / $25 Non-members— is generously sponsored by the Museum of Russian Icons and Murray Brothers Construction.

To register visit www.freedomsway.org — The workshop is limited to sixty people.
The town of Lancaster, one of the oldest inland settlements in Massachusetts, also boasts one of the most attractive Town Greens in the Commonwealth. It is the location of the First Church, architect Charles Bulfinch’s greatest “ecclesiastical masterpiece” and a National Historic Landmark, a handsome Victorian gem in the form of the Thayer Memorial Library dedicated in 1868 as a Civil War Memorial, and an elegant Georgian Revival Town Hall erected in 1907-8. A fourth historic building on the green was originally built in 1903-4 as the Center School serving grades 1 through 12.

A town’s buildings provide singular footnotes to our hometown stories, people, and achievements. This is especially true for the Center School. The town of Lancaster recently allocated matching funds for a Massachusetts Historical Commission Preservation Project Fund Grant (MPPF) for exterior repairs, and generous funds for interior clean up and maintenance, and a feasibility study for the rebirth of this former school building.

For several months, the Lancaster Historical Commission (LHC) has been meeting with town officials and a team from the architectural firm of Menders, Torrey, and Spencer, Inc., to rescue and reopen this historic old building, vacant since 2000, which served so many students, teachers and residents for nearly a century. Re-use plans for the “new” Prescott Building will include potential first floor rental spaces and a permanent second floor home for the Lancaster Historical Commission with areas for research, archival storage, museum displays, and community meetings. Money generated from the rental spaces would go toward an operating budget to maintain the building.

Lancaster leaders and residents are “dreaming big” and envision a time in the near future when this building will be “reborn” and become a vibrant part of Lancaster’s Town Green and Cultural Campus.

**New Life for an Old School**

Lancaster High School Class of 1906-1097

**Prescott Building, formerly the Center School.**

**SHINE A LIGHT ON YOUR COMMUNITY’S BIG PROJECT**

Share your story in the next Freedom’s Way newsletter. Just send us an email with pictures of the site and a 200-300 word description of your project: Are you raising awareness for a threatened site? Do you have a plan and funding in hand? Is it time to celebrate a restoration and reopening? Feel free to contact us with questions.
Calendar of Upcoming Events

May National Preservation Month — This Place Matters
Strollin’ & Rollin’ Heritage Tours
Lancaster—Bolton—Clinton
Visit www.freedomsway.org/projects/strollin.html

May 5th On the Green: A Preservation Celebration
Saturday, 11:00 AM — 3:00 PM
Town Green, Lancaster, MA

May 19th Adaptive Reuse: OLD Is NEW Again*
Saturday, 8:30 AM — 12:30 PM
Museum of Russian Icons, 203 Union Street, Clinton, MA
* Registration required at www.freedomsway.org

June 14th Sustaining Working Farms
Thursday, 6:30 PM—8:30 PM
Harbor Church, 80 Main St (Rt 119), Townsend, MA

June 21st Words to Ponder: Thoreau’s Economy (In Thoreau’s Footsteps)
Thursday 7:00 PM — 8:30 PM
Medford Public Library, 111 High Street, Medford, MA

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.