

Check it out:
www.bctrust.org

- See photos of town conservation areas
- Print out trail maps before you hike
- Link to other conservation websites
- Make a donation on-line!

BCTrust receives \$10,000 from the Wharton Trust

The William P. Wharton Trust made a \$10,000 grant in March to the BCTrust to assist in the acquisition of the 23-acre Mitchell/Kularski parcel off Liberty Square Road.

William P. Wharton, who died in 1976, was a long-time resident of Groton. According to the trust's website, "His interests and accomplishments spanned the entire gamut of environmental concerns, from chairmanship of the Town Forest Committee in Groton, to the presidency of the National Parks Association. His years of active service to these organizations spanned

almost three quarters of a century in an era when such causes were more often the subject of derision than popular support."

With a modest income, the Wharton Trust "prefers to support projects where its grants will make a real difference and where the hoped-for results will be tangible, promptly accomplished, and lasting." Its primary focus is conserving natural areas, "primarily in Massachusetts and New England, including funding acquisitions of land for conservation purposes."

BCTrust Annual Meeting

Alan Rohwer, member of the Boxborough Historical Society and long-time admirer of Henry David Thoreau, was the guest speaker at the BCTrust's annual meeting in March. Look inside for his report on the three visits Thoreau made to Boxborough and Inches Woods in 1860.



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Reduce, Reuse and Recycle!

The BCTrust joined the Blanchard PTF (Parents, Teachers, Friends) and Roche Brothers in donating funds to provide every student and staff member at Blanchard Memorial school with a reusable shopping bag. The entire school competed in a 21-day Reusable Bag Challenge in April to see which class would be most successful at getting their families to shop with reusable bags instead of plastic or paper. Why 21 days? Ask any Blanchard student: "It takes 21 days to start a new habit!" Please see the school's web site to find out who won: www.boxboroughschool.org.



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Boxborough
Conservation
Trust

Common Ground

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Preserving and Protecting Boxborough's Undeveloped Land

Letter from the President

By Rita Gibes Grossman

"Think globally, act locally." I find this phrase a comfort when I'm confronted with overwhelming news about our threatened environment. By supporting the BCTrust, you can "act locally" to protect our land to preserve habitat and our most important natural resource, water. The BCTrust has been working diligently on preserving approximately 23 acres of prime conservation land known as the Mitchell/Kularski parcel off Liberty Square Road, abutting the Reed Farm neighborhood. About half of the land penetrates the Half Moon Meadow conservation land, increasing its preservation value.

The trust has been working with the landowner for the past several years to preserve this parcel at minimal or no cost to the town through limited development and grant funding.

The worthiness of this project was reinforced by the state's award of a Self-Help Grant that would have funded 56% of the town's purchase price for the conservation parcel of the land. To receive the grant award, town residents would have to have voted to approve the land purchase at a Special Town Meeting (STM). Because of issues that could not be resolved prior to the Self-Help Grant deadlines, the BCTrust chose to request a postponement of the STM vote. We anticipate that the town will be able to successfully reapply for a grant.

The BCTrust was also fortunate to receive a \$10,000 grant from the William P. Wharton Trust towards the preservation of the Mitchell/Kularski land. Despite the level of complexity surrounding this acquisition, we are forging ahead to save this important parcel. Your continued financial support will help us achieve this acquisition. BCTrust funds have been, and continue to be, spent

"The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe, the less taste we shall have for destruction."

-Rachel Carlson

on the engineering, appraisals and other costs associated with the development component of this project.

Thanks and welcome!

Thank you to everyone who responded to our annual appeal letter in December. Your donations are greatly appreciated and were immediately put to work. For some of you, perhaps your appeal letter got lost on "Mount Papermore," that geological formation on the kitchen counter. It's not too late. Even a small donation helps!

Thanks to Alan Rohwer, chair of the Boxborough Historical Commission, for his enlightening talk at our annual meeting. You will find a summary in this issue.

Thanks also Matt Tyndall and Anna Bograd of Tyndall Design for donating their graphic design services on the last three issues of Common Ground. We are pleased to welcome Boxborough resident Kirsten Holmes as our new graphic designer.

We are also pleased to welcome new board member Jessica Eichelburg. Last year, Jessica was instrumental in reviving the town's Agricultural Fair, and we are grateful to have her "on board."

Finally, for a successful Seniors' Luncheon, thank you to our co-hosts, the Friends of the Library; to Mitzi Weil and Pascal White for preparing a gourmet main course, and to Hugh Fortmiller for assisting at the event.

Conserving land requires public and private efforts

At the May 12 Special Town Meeting, representatives from two Boxborough conservation groups spoke in favor of converting all of Flagg Hill to conservation land. One was Charlene Golden, chair of the town's Conservation Commission. The other was Rita Gibes Grossman, president of the BCTrust. While many town residents can't easily distinguish between the two, each group plays a distinct role in preserving the town's open spaces.

The Conservation Commission (ConsCom) is a municipal agency with regulatory obligations, such as administering the Wetlands Protection Act. The BCTrust is a private land trust incorporated in 1997 and funded solely by donations. As a private organization, the BCTrust can work behind the scenes to facilitate the land acquisition process, something the ConsCom by law is not permitted to do. The BCTrust can also respond quickly to requests for information, unlike the ConsCom, which is required to seek public bids for any services.

Some of the BCTrust's work is publicized, such as its contribution of \$50,000 toward the purchase of the Patch Hill Conservation Area. Other efforts go unreported, such as helping the town apply for grants or advising landowners on their conservation options. The bottom line is that any work the BCTrust does to acquire land yields a valuable saving to the town.

Join the BCTrust!

To continue preserving undeveloped land, we need your support. Please join today by sending your tax-deductible contribution to: BCTrust, PO Box 626, Acton, MA 01729-0626 or make a donation online at www.BCTrust.org.

Walking Boxborough's Woods with Henry David Thoreau

By Glynis Hamel

Annual meeting speaker Alan Rohwer took his audience back to the fall of 1860, when Henry David Thoreau made three visits to Boxborough and Inches Woods. Using historical documents and Thoreau's own writings, Alan pieced together a picture of Boxborough in the mid-nineteenth century and described "how Thoreau's ramblings, writings and personality relate to our sense of ecology and landscapes today."

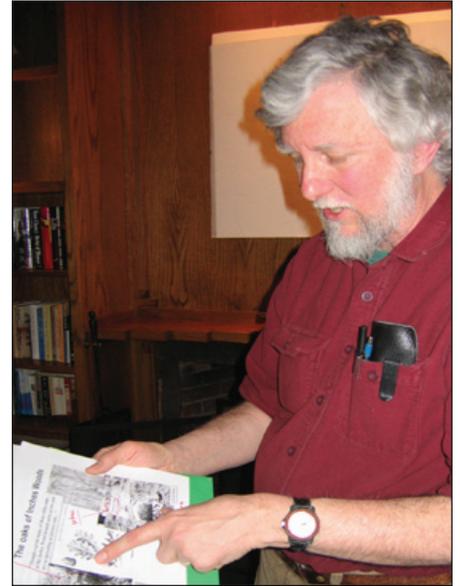
Alan's reconstruction of the Boxborough known to Thoreau begins with a deed survey map that describes the 1668 land holdings of Daniel Gookin, remembered today as "Guggins." Fast forward to 1800, and Gookin's property forms the core of the wooded parcel bought by Henderson Inches that year. Two survey maps, one dated 1800 and the other 1840, define the Inches property. Over the years, the woods are cleared. In 1863 the property is sold again, and the remaining wood is harvested to fund the Civil War effort.

By overlaying the original survey maps of 1800 and 1840 onto a current Town Assessor's map, Alan was able to locate the area once known as "Inches Woods." With Alan's overlay map as a guide, Thoreau's descriptions of his travels through Boxborough come to life. Thoreau's

first visit, in 1842, is chronicled in his essay, "A Walk to Wachusett." There followed in 1860 two journal entries in which Thoreau provides details of his walks in Inches Woods.

References to West Acton center and the "turnpike" (Mass. Ave.), plus compass headings and distances traveled, provided enough information for Alan to plot Thoreau's exact route through town. The area is bounded today by Liberty Square Road to the east, Depot to the north, Middle and Stow Roads to the west, and Burroughs to the south. Thoreau wrote: "[F]irst from Harvard turnpike at where Guggins Brook leaves it...due north along near the edge of the old wood...across open land to the high hill northeast of Boxboro Center." (In his journals, Thoreau used the abbreviated spelling.)

Perhaps most revealing of the landscape are Thoreau's descriptions of the woods themselves: "[T]he handsomest thing I saw in Boxboro was this noble stand of oak wood. I doubt if there is a finer one in Massachusetts... sturdy trees from one to three and even four feet in diameter, whose interlacing branches form a canopy...there is little or no underwood and you walk freely in every direction, though in the midst of a dense wood...Seeing this, I can realize how this country appeared when it was discovered."



Alan Rohwer retraces Thoreau's visits.

Thoreau's observations are providing valuable reference points for scientific study today, Alan noted. Researchers studying the effects of global warming are using botanical data collected by Thoreau to track the mean first flowering date of flora in Concord.

For a map and description of Thoreau's visits, see the Boxborough Historical Society's site: www.multimgmt.com/BHSociety/bhs1.htm.

Glynis Hamel is a member of the BCTrust and a frequent contributor to Common Ground.



Annual meeting co-host Ruth Zimmerman and Frank Coolidge, a founder and first president of the BCTrust.



Board member Jeff Coldwell and wife Susane.

BCTrust Marks 10th Year

About two dozen members gathered at the home of Ruth Zimmerman and Simon Bunyard on the last Saturday in March to conduct the annual business meeting of the Boxborough Conservation Trust. While the annual meeting requires a report on the trust's activities and finances, it's also an opportunity to enjoy an evening with people who share an interest in conservation.

As she opened the meeting, President Rita Gibes Grossman noted that the BCTrust is celebrating its 10th anniversary in the same year that Boxborough is celebrating its 225th. In her financial review, Rita reported that the majority of the trust's funding comes from donations from members and from the annual appeal. This year, the BCTrust also received \$10,000 from the Wharton Trust. Costs associated with efforts to acquire the Mitchell/Kularski land off Liberty Square

Road have dominated the BCTrust's expenses, Rita said. While expenses slightly exceeded income last year, the trust is back in the black this year.

In addition to its land preservation work, the trust also promotes conservation awareness throughout the year in various ways:

- Conducting the annual T-shirt design contest and writing contest at Blanchard Memorial School.
- Leading guided hikes on town conservation land for the community at large.
- Updating BCTrust.org with news, photos, and conservation links.

The last order of business was to thank two members who left the board in the past year: Francie Nolde and Dave Bull. Each received a framed collection of winning T-shirt designs from contests over the years.

Thank You to Our Members!

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 Awiszus Family
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* **Charter member** (donated \$500 before first annual meeting in 1999)
 + Sustaining member (active donor for 5 years or longer)
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 Tara Zantow, special projects
 Hugh Fortmiller, board liaison

The Boxborough Conservation Trust is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.