Five decades later, the historic Grist Mill needs our help again

In 1966, in response to the fear that a treasured landmark in Mansfield would deteriorate, members of the Mansfield Historical Society and the Conservation Commission gathered together friends and neighbors and formed a non-profit corporation – Joshua’s Trust – so they could work together to safeguard the Gurleyville Grist Mill.

It took more than ten years, but they were eventually successful, and able to begin a much-needed restoration of the property. Because of their dedication and work, the Grist Mill, as well as the village of Gurleyville, became registered historic sites at both the state and national level.

Located on the Fenton River, the mill offers a unique opportunity to observe rural 19th century gristmill technology. It contains a complete system of preserved milling equipment as it was operated over many decades and to the middle of this century.

Settlers first built a sawmill on the site in 1723 and a grist mill was added about 1750. The latter was replaced in the 1830s by the present mill that continued to operate until 1941.

In the early 1950s an attached sawmill was destroyed by heavy snow and the dam was washed out in the winter of 1958-59. It had served for 200 years, repaired and maintained but never modernized. The Grist Mill itself, constructed of stone, remains in a remarkable state of preservation.

Now, some 50 years later, the mill once again needs more than just upkeep. Recently, GNCB Consulting Engineers was hired to determine what renovations and restoration will be needed to properly maintain the mill as a true historic property for the long term. This initial evaluation will cost $11,000.

Unfortunately, the Grist Mill fund, begun by the Cazel and Atwood families, does not have sufficient funds to cover the anticipated expenses. So the Trust is reaching out to our members and others for help.

Giving to the Trust can be business or personal

Joshua’s Trust has two new ways for people in the region to promote its mission.

Businesses and community organizations of all kinds are invited to become Joshua’s Trust sponsors. We are seeking organizations who would like to partner with our efforts to build a better and more sustainable community here in eastern Connecticut. A community sponsor will get exposure at our many events and activities, on our website and in our publications.

Sponsorship levels are: American Chestnut Sponsor - $5,000; White Cedar Sponsor - $2,000; Hickory Sponsor - $1,000; Sugar Maple Sponsor - $500, and White Pine Sponsor - $250.

As an individual, have you thought about leaving your property to Joshua Trust? Perhaps you have thought about naming Joshua’s Trust as a beneficiary in your will, or maybe you already have. Too often individuals are not recognized for such generosity.

We would love to recognize you by making you a member of our newly formed Great Oak Society.

We will plan special events for the members and list them in our annual report on the Great Oak Society Honor Roll.

For more information on becoming a community sponsor or enrolling in the Great Oak program, please contact Trust Executive Director Michael Hveem or Development Chair David Parry at dfparry01@gmail.com.
In October the Trust lost one of its founders, Samuel Garland Dodd. Former President Warren Church and I went up to North Andover, Mass., for his memorial service, to meet his widow Anne and their three sons. I knew that Sam had been a real leader in the Trust, but hearing about the camping trips with his family, his love of the natural world, and how he inspired those around him gave us a new level of appreciation for this visionary man. Sam’s vocation was anesthesia, and the local doctors remember his fine work, but his chief avocation was Joshua’s Trust; in his obituary the family wrote that “he would regard his conservation work with Joshua’s Trust to be the best thing he did” and “those open spaces were his legacy and gift to future generations.” Sam was one of the five original signers of our Articles of Incorporation in 1966. He also wrote all four editions of the Joshua’s Tract Walk Book, updating each with new properties and trails, many of which he had a hand in designing. The last edition was published in 2005, when he was 84 years old.

Sam was still writing stewardship reports for our newsletter well into the early 2000s. It’s up to us to build on what Sam and the other founders began, to contribute our own vision of what is possible to achieve. The 2017 report from Wildlands and Woodlands states that “Land protection serves as an insurance policy: investing in it ensures that the valuable social, environmental, and economic benefits New Englanders reap from forests and farms will be there in the future.” Sam’s foresight, intelligence, and dedication inspire me to work harder to understand the ways that the Trust can best serve the community, and how the community can help make the Trust the best we can be.

— Karen

Have you volunteered for the Trust, recently or in the past? If so, to celebrate and to say “thank you,” we invite you to an afternoon Victorian tea with Charles Darwin.

Valentines for Volunteers

Saturday, Feb. 3
2 to 4 p.m.
at the
Atwood Farm

(Snow date, Feb. 4)

Send us your email, we’ll keep you posted

Want a reminder on upcoming Joshua’s Trust activities, or rain date postponements, or when your membership is going to expire? We promise not to overdo, but if you send us your email address we will keep you in the loop.

We do not (and will not) share your email with (or sell it to) any other local, state or national (or international!) organization even as reciprocity. And, of course, you can always opt out.

To put yourself on our mailing list, send an email to:
president@joshuastrust.org.
Dodd leaves the natural world — and an important legacy— to us

By Rudy J. Favretti

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Dr. Samuel G. Dodd on Oct. 8, 2017. We send our condolences to his wife Anne, and to his three sons and their families, and we are pleased that Sam, Anne, and some of his family made the special effort to join us a year ago to celebrate the Trust’s 50th birthday.

About 40 of Sam’s 96 years were spent helping to organize Joshua’s Tract Conservation and Historic Trust and seeing that it carried out its stated mission.

Sam Dodd served the Trust in every capacity from organizer to president to trail blazer, as Dr. David Wagner, another past president, observed when he eloquently introduced Sam and family at our 50th anniversary gala.

As we attempt to analyze Sam’s beliefs and why he was always successful conveying them to others, two main concepts stand out.

First, he was a firm believer in conservation, working to stabilize the natural resources that the world brought forth for us. He would never have been a supporter of Shirley Temple’s theme song: “Oh, the world owes me a living, Deedle dardle doodle deedle dum,” because his philosophy was the exact opposite.

He felt that we, as inhabitants of this world, owe it a living.

And how should this be done? Through education.

Sam was a great educator. When he would call to persuade you to head a particular project, he always mentioned that we owe the world “a living” through whatever conservation project he was promoting. In his own gentle manner, he was usually successful in conveying his concepts of conservation and getting you to do a job as either a trail blazer or as a subcommittee chair.

Sam was a great communicator. Very early in the Trust’s history he wrote and printed the first newsletter. It was not published on a quarterly schedule as now, but always in early December, and at least seeking a year’s-end donation. Sam was a firm believer in the newsletter to keep membership active and informed. He believed that you would work hard if you knew what the goals were, and why certain sites were conserved.

This is also why he wrote and published his well-known and popular walk books.

Sam will always be remembered for his gentle manner and his ability to persuade us to get the job of land conservation done.

The Grist Mill needs more restoration work

Continued from Page One

To get us started (with a song, no less!) the local a cappella group, Take Note! will perform a benefit concert on Sunday, March 4, at 3 p.m., at Knowlton Hall in Ashford. (Details about the group at right.)

We hope you will join us for this important kick-off event! And, as the work proceeds, we will keep you up-dated via the website and the newsletter.

If you have an interest in supporting this important effort, your contributions will be most welcome. They can be sent to the Joshua’s Trust office. When doing so, please note that you are supporting the Grist Mill engineering analysis.

Take Note! — they’re remarkable

Come celebrate the end of the hibernating season and support the Trust’s historic Grist Mill property at a March 4 concert by Take Note!

If you have never been to this a cappella group’s concert — treat yourself! Comprising about 20 singers from around the region, the group’s repertoire is broad and eclectic.

Even more remarkable, they only give concerts for non-profit groups (like Joshua’s Trust), stating that “singing is our gift, which we contribute to support the charitable efforts of community organizations.” Thus, they do not charge for their performances, but attendees are encouraged to give a free-wheeling donation to the sponsoring organization.
A windstorm demands our best stewardship

By Ann Dunnack, Stewardship Chairman

A wind storm with near-hurricane force winds surprised New England this fall, causing power outages and forcing area schools and businesses to close for several days. The storm did some damage to Joshua’s Trust properties, too, bringing down trees, limbs, and branches on our many trails.

Andy Woodcock, our coordinator of volunteers, sprang into action right after the storm, sending out the call for all 100 stewards to go out and check the 70 JT properties for damage. Then he recruited volunteers to respond to their reports.

In one case, a large tree fell on an abutting property, so Rob Beach and Vern Beausoleil cut it up, stacked it and informed the property owner, who responded by offering them tea.

The pair politely declined, but apparently inspired the property owner to make a donation to the Trust.

In another case, Warren Church hauled a leaner with his tractor at Hubbard Sanctuary.

Many of the stewards were able to take care of the storm clean-up on their own, but others needed help with more muscle and chainsaw skills.

Within a short time, thanks to all the volunteers and Andy’s leadership, the situation returned to normal.

Excellent Stewardship!

Responding to global warming is part of our responsibility as land stewards

By Ann Dunnack, Stewardship Chairman

Joshua’s Trust is looking toward forest management to prepare our many acres of forested land for global warming.

Healthy forests are so important for carbon sequestration, habitat, and water quality, to say nothing of the peace of mind and health of the humans who walk in them.

Those of us involved in the stewardship of Joshua’s Trust lands are studying how to promote healthy forests. Several have attended the Coverts Project for Forest Landowners; and many of us attend workshops at the Connecticut Land Conservation Conference and CT Association of Conservation and Inland Wetland Commissions. We also collaborate with the University of Connecticut’s Department of Natural Resources and the Environment.

In October Joshua’s Trust and this UConn’s department co-sponsored a workshop in the UConn Forest led by Tom Worthley, UConn Extension Forester and adjunct professor. We hiked to several locations in the UConn Forest to see demonstration sites managed for varying purposes.

The first site was a harvest of ash trees. First, the invasive plant, Japanese Barberry, was cut to control its spread after the harvest. Then only the ash trees were cut in this mixed deciduous site to claim the timber for sale before the Emerald Ash Borer killed the trees.

(The Emerald Ash Borer was first discovered in central Connecticut in 2012, but since then has slowly spread into all eight Connecticut counties. Its destructive nature has the potential to decimate the state’s ash population.)

At another site we observed a selective cut for different reasons. In this stand, selected trees were harvested to open the canopy to promote the growth of oak seedlings. Oak trees are an important food source for wildlife.

We were also treated to a demonstration of a new free app developed by Northeast State Foresters Association, called “About My Woods.” It is available for Android and iPhones and it is a comprehensive guide to everything you may find in the woods: trees, mammals, insects, birds, reptiles, flowers and plants.
This volunteer is helpful in any environment

Looking for a volunteer who has skills for both the out-of-doors and indoors? The Trust has such a person – Vern Beausoleil.

Vern began volunteering several years ago as a trail worker. When the call went out for an IT specialist, he stepped up again. And, if we need a stone wall specialist, he will again have the needed skills.

Vern grew up on a small farm in Plainfield, spending his free time out-of-doors. Though he thought about becoming a forester, his love of math and science led him to computer science. He worked for over 30 years for Gerber Scientific; when the opportunity came to retire a bit early, he seized it as he realized it would give him time to be where he prefers – in the out-of-doors.

At first, he spent his time re-building stone walls from the ground up. Then, he heard about the mountain hikers who are inspired by climbing all the peaks over 4,000 feet in the region. Vern currently has completed New Hampshire’s 48 peaks and is now working on New York’s in the Adirondacks and is two third’s done. When not climbing, he is camping, canoeing or biking. Occasionally, he can persuade his wife of 27 years to join him, or his two adult children.

Vern is the go-to person for all things IT at the Trust. He has successfully helped the Trust migrate to a cloud-based environment, as well as ensuring better cybersecurity. He is currently working with Paul Pribula and Julia Rogers on the mapping of the Trust’s properties, using ArcGIS. In addition, he is a steward for the Couch property in Coventry – near to where he lives.

He has hiked all the Trust property trails, which has helped him determine which ones need upkeep.

“I love working here, love the people, meeting new people … who share my interest in nature and in being outside and volunteering.”

One good Joshua’s Trust book club deserves another

Due to the popularity of the Trust’s first Sunday book group, moderators Kristine and Thor Thorson have agreed to host a second book group.

This new group – called JT Readers - is scheduled to hold its second meeting on Sunday, Dec. 10, at 3:30 p.m. Beginning in January, however, the club will meet on the third Sunday of each month.

The Dec. 10 meeting will be on THE NATURE FIX: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier and More Creative by Florence Williams.

Many libraries have this book (published Feb. 2017) in hardcover (or audio). The book can also be purchased through booksellers like Amazon or Barnes n Noble. (258 pages before end notes).

Newcomers are welcome. Please email Kristine at kris-thorson@yahoo.com to let her know you are coming, or of your interest if you cannot attend the December meeting.

(If there is a weather-related or other change in plans, Kristine will send an email.) The club will meet at the Atwood Farm, 624 Wormwood Hill Road in Mansfield.
Support conservation as part of your annual giving

This is the time of year when many people do their charitable giving; and it is a good time to think of Joshua’s Trust. As always, the Trust’s continued success at protecting Connecticut open space depends on the support of its members. All contributions include membership and are tax deductible.

Name______________________________________________________________
Address________________________________________________________________
Phone________________________ E-mail_______________________________

$20 Friend; $35 Supporter; $100 Caretaker; $250 Patron; $500 Preservationist; $1,000 Conservationist; $ _______ Other)

New member Check here [ ]
Gift Membership: List names and addresses below. We’ll send a gift card.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Go green, please! Read the newsletter online and save us the expense of mailing by checking here: □

Please mail this form and your check to Joshua’s Trust, P.O. Box 4, Mansfield Center, CT 06250-0004