

QUARRY HISTORY PROJECT UPDATE

By Dorothy Napp Schindel

Inspired by theoretical history work already accomplished, the Becket Quarry History Project is continuing to expand with some very exciting activities! As a fact finding team, we (Dorothy Napp Schindel and Eve Cholmar) set out to begin exploring the creation of a museum at the quarry. Our first endeavor was to seek, and then consult with, an industrial archeologist. It was agreed that such a person could help identify the many objects found on site, and advise us as to which objects should be moved, left intact, safeguarded and/or archived. The problem of how to preserve and store specific objects is of utmost importance at this early stage, due to ongoing exposure to the elements and the possibility of vandalism. We also want to determine the best way to search for additional items. Through an internet search, we located Matt Kierstead, a practicing IA and the president of the Southern New England Chapter of the Society of Industrial Archeology. Matt, already familiar with the quarry, reiterated how impressed he has always been with the site: "I have visited a lot of extractive industrial sites, including many building stone quarries in New England, especially granite quarries. The Becket quarry stands out in my mind as probably the best granite quarry I have seen in Massachusetts. It is large enough to be very impressive, but small enough so that its operations and technology are clearly visible in the landscape and artifacts. It is also in a remarkable natural setting with spectacular views and abundant wildlife. "In comparing other sites to ours," he continues, "some quarries have been recognized as historic, but so much has been lost that their ability to convey their history has been compromised. I have certainly never seen a standing derrick at any of them."

As a first step, Dorothy and husband Steve walked the quarry with Matt and his colleague Jon Golden, a 3-D photographer who specializes in capturing the unique character of industrial sites. Matt and Jon had just come from photographing the stone railroad bridges in Chester, and were eager to embark on a late November trek through the quarry. As the leaves fell and the first flakes of snow began to cover the ground, Matt identified objects and spoke about quarrying. Matt and Jon then visited the Schindel's home to watch the Land Trust video about the quarry, and discuss a host of topics, such as funding, preservation, programming possibilities, and even the placement of a visitor's center. (*Note: There will be another walk-thru with Matt on a weekend in June – date to be announced.*)

Through our personal research and Matt's ongoing assis-



tance, we have identified many other historic quarry sites that have museum exhibits and programming, such as Halibut Point State Park in Cape Ann, the site of the historic Babson Farm Quarry. One of its programs consists of a Granite Discovery Path, for both sighted and visually impaired visitors. As an introduction to the site, thirteen touchable blocks illustrate and describe how granite was cut and used. We are looking forward to going to some of these historic sites and exploring how we can follow their lead in the design of interpretive trails, exhibits, school partnerships, and joint programming with other community organizations. The Chester Railroad Museum, for example, would be an appropriate partner for initial joint interpretive strategies, since granite was hauled by railroad cars from Becket, and cut in Chester. The Chester museum already interprets the quarry railroad and the remains of the cutting operation. We see rich potential for an array of multi-faceted activities and study, such as exhibitions of vintage images and artifacts, a continuation of the oral history project, and interactive interpretive projects which emphasize economic and social history of the area, the work of quarrying, local life in the quarry, geological aspects, machinery, and the quarry's impact on the architectural history of the region.

We have begun researching funding possibilities, and have received leads to various places and people to contact. In this same vein, according to the American Association of Museums' accreditation criteria, the Becket Quarry is positioned nicely to become a bona fide museum and a terrific community and Berkshire County resource.

We would love you to join us in this endeavor. Please call Dorothy at (212) 260-0111 or (413) 623-5692 (weekends), e-mail: dramamuse@nyc.rr.com OR Eve at (212) 260-3281 or (413) 623-6040 (May-September), e-mail: sidandeve@hotmail.com. 🐾



Photo by Rachel Weinman

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TRAIL WORK DAYS: MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The Land Trust has an ambitious goal for this season. To finish the work on the Loop Trail that the volunteers cleared last year, Americorp will be working on the property in mid June. If their time allows, they will also begin clearing work on the two ski trails, which are the East and West Trails shown on the map at right.

On Saturday, June 2, we will be celebrating National Trail Day with a membership trail clearing workday. Please mark this on your calendar and join us in a fun-filled and productive day. Those of you who were able to help out last year can attest to the spirit of community and the excitement of working with a group of neighbors to make a recreational trail through our beautiful property. National Trail Day is a good occasion to come out and celebrate our achievements of the last two years.

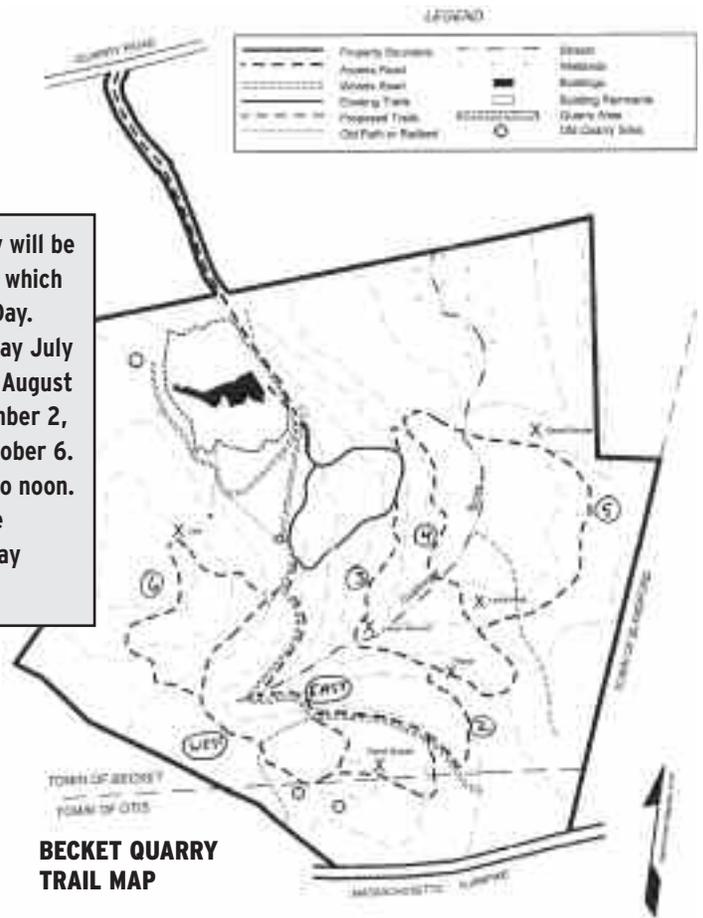
This year, in an attempt to make scheduling simpler, we are organizing monthly workdays. We are doing some on Saturday and others on Sunday in order to give those of you with a regular weekend commitment a chance to attend at least some of the sessions.

Anyone and everyone is welcome. Please remember to bring sturdy shoes, work gloves and especially important is plenty of drinking water. Non-motorized brush clearing equipment is also useful, although the Trust does provide some tools. You may wish to have bug repellent as well. For questions about rain cancellations, etc. check your email the day of or before the workday. If you are not on the Trust's email list, send a note to BecketLandTrust@AOL.com. For last minute questions, you can try calling Ken Smith at 243-1765.

In addition to clearing the East and West Trails this year, we hope to have Open Space Management come in during the fall and do the heavy treadwork on these trails so that we can use them for X-Country skiing next winter. We also plan to install a simple bridge on the trail. If you are lucky, that activity may occur on one of the volunteer days you choose to attend.

We look forward to sharing some fun workdays with you and hope that you will be able to attend the Annual Meeting yet to be scheduled for some time in the fall. 🐾

Our first workday will be Saturday June 2, which is National Trail Day. Next will be Sunday July 8, then Saturday August 4, Sunday September 2, and Saturday October 6. Hours are 10AM to noon. The die-harders are encouraged to stay longer.



Above and left: The scenic beauty of the Becket Quarry. Opposite: Trillium is one of many precious species in the Quarry forest. Photos by Rachel Weinman

CONSERVATION RESTRICTIONS PROTECT LAND AND PRIVACY

Does this landowner's question strike a chord with you: "I want my land to stay undeveloped forever, but I don't want to give it away to a conservation group – I want to keep living on it. How do I do it?"

Many landowners in Berkshire County have solved this puzzle by placing a conservation restriction on their property. A conservation restriction is a legal instrument by which a landowner enters a binding agreement that his or her land, or a portion of it, will never be developed. The landowner is free to maintain his use of the land, and can sell it at his pleasure. However, the conservation restriction remains with the land, binding succeeding owners. So long as the natural values of the property are protected, the terms of conservation restriction can be tailored to the individual landowner's needs and desires.

For instance, a landowner might reserve the right to harvest timber, or build a barn, or even build a house in a specified location. While landowners sometimes sell conservation restrictions (or conservation easements, as they're called in other states), more often a family gives a conservation restriction to a qualified charitable conservation organization, such as a land trust or a state conservation agency.

In return for the gift, the recipient charity undertakes the obligation to ensure that the terms of the restriction are not violated. Gifts of conservation restrictions sometimes provide landowners with opportunities for income tax or estate tax savings. Encumbering the land with a conservation restriction lowers its value, thereby reducing or eliminating inheritance taxes when the land is passed from one generation to the next.

The Berkshire Natural Resources Council holds conservation restrictions on lands all over Berkshire County. The Resources Council has assisted in the preparation of nearly 100 restrictions or similar instruments, and would be pleased to provide further information to any interested party.

To contact the Resources Council, call George Wislocki or Tad Ames at (413) 499-0596 or write to BNRC, 20 Bank Row, Pittsfield, MA 01201. 📧



Photo by Robert Watroba

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:

While the Land Trust has been in existence for the last ten years, 2000 was certainly our most exciting and rewarding year. The Historic Quarry and Forest, as it is now officially named, is a project that exceeds our wildest dreams in its scope; never did we believe that we would be able to have such a wonderful area to preserve and make available to our community. Thank each and every one of you who has helped us on this journey and please keep in mind that the fun has only begun. Many of you have already spent some time exploring the quarry, helped clear our first trail and gotten a taste of what this area is all about. I hope you will join us in the upcoming season in what will prove to be another rewarding series of projects.

The Trust's Board has been meeting regularly to get ready for our second phase of making this property a natural preserve which we can all enjoy year-round. We will need continued support from our members, but we have been joined by groups well beyond the town limits. Americorp, a national organization, will be providing us with a crew of 5 or six workers for a two week session this June. We are optimistic that they will be able to do the heavy treadwork on the trail the volunteers cleared last summer. We have received a \$5,000 grant from the Fields Pond Foundation, a Massachusetts organization devoted to supporting small groups like ours in trail making efforts. This money will help cover some of the costs we anticipate in the current phase of making this property a place that we can all easily enjoy.

The Trust has received a lot of attention from the documentary video that Dan Woiski made last spring with Allen Williams describing the industrial archeological gems that are so prevalent throughout the quarry area. If you have not seen this film, you can get a copy from the Trust for a donation or you can borrow it for free from either of the stores in town or the Athenaeum.

We have accomplished a great deal in a short time. I would like to thank all the members for their generous support of funding for the purchase of the property. Without you, we would be watching ten tractor trailers an hour thunder through town on our once quiet roads. I would also like to thank our Board members for their efforts and insights. We have succeeded in steering this unwieldy beast through its early stages and we are in good stead for a successful future.

Respectfully,

Ken Smith

President, The Becket Land Trust



POST OFFICE BOX 44
 BECKET, MA 01223
 BECKETLANDTRUST@AOL.COM

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MEMBERSHIP APPEAL

We hope that you are sufficiently interested and enthusiastic about what the Land Trust has done since the acquisition that you will continue to support the Trust.

Please be as generous as you can so that we can achieve this year's goals. Remember, the grants we have received will cover only about two-thirds of all we want to do. We need to raise several thousand more from the membership.



The "view from the top" of the Becket Quarry. Look closely - that's Mt. Greylock in the far distance! Photo by Robert Watroba

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES Premiums for each category include premiums for all lower categories:

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|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------|---|
| \$1000 Quarry Masters | Invitational archeologist-led tour of the Quarry | \$50 Tree Lovers | Guided Trail Hike |
| \$500 Bridge Builders | Family name included on plaque for Cushman Brook Bridge | \$20 Rock Hound | Becket Land Trust Newsletter |
| \$250 Derrick Climbers | Becket Land Trust cap, suitable for workdays | \$___ Other | Member |
| \$100 Trail Blazers | Historic Quarry Documentary Video | | 4 or more volunteer trail work hours gets you a membership. |
| | | | Volunteer at 4 trail days and you get a hat. |

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____ EMAIL _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Please make check payable to Becket Land Trust and mail to: P.O. Box 44, Becket, MA 01223