# **Waltham Land Trust**

is a non-profit corporation dedicated to preserving our community's natural resources for the future through education, open space acquisition and protection.

## **JOURNAL FALL 2021**



## Waltham Field Station Site History— Part Two

Dee Kricker, WLT Land Committee member In anticipation of the one hundredth anniversary of Cornelia Warren's death in June, we shared in the Spring 2021 Journal a detailed history of a very special piece of land she generously bequeathed. Here is the remaining part of the article.

#### 1923 – 2021 The Waltham Field Station

The core of Miss Warren's Cedar Hill Farm designated to be used by the Massachusetts Agricultural College for its agricultural and educational purposes coincided with the needs of regional market gardeners for help resolving crop problems. A recently established Market Garden Field Station sited in Lexington was moved to the larger Beaver Street property in the fall of 1923 when the Warren's land was acquired by the College. A Cooperative Extension Service program was developed to provide technological resources and support to family farmers and commercial market gardeners.

With funding from the state, the Market Garden Field Station's grey building was completed in 1925. By 1930 its name was changed to the Waltham Field Station expanding over the next two decades into a comprehensive agricultural center serving the needs of professional growers, commodity groups and home horticulturists in Eastern Massachusetts. In addition to research on pests and diseases, faculty developed

#### continued on p. 6



Tractor at 1st Annual Field Day, 1925



Extension crop trials



Building the field station



Waltham Field Station 1950

# A Walk in the Park – a new nature guide to Prospect Hill Park

Lesley Sneddon, WLT Board Director, steward, and member of the Program Committee and Development Team

Shortly after moving to Waltham in 2018, I became a frequent and enthusiastic visitor to Prospect Hill Park. Having recently retired from my career as a vegetation ecologist, I naturally saw the park through an ecologist's eyes. I found that I wanted to continue the work I had done as an ecologist, to write a nature guide to the park in my own way.

If you see a wall of incomprehensible green when you walk in the woods, this guide may be for you. I started out the same way, wanting to make sense of what I was seeing in the woods, but not knowing how. It is nice to know the names of plants, but it can be more interesting

when you have a context to help you understand why that plant is where it is. Plant communities can provide this context. They tell you not just the names of plants, but the characteristics of their environment and history that can help you interpret what you are seeing.

A plant community is a set of plants that grows together in a similar arrangement, in similar environmental settings, in a repeating pattern across the landscape. Plant communities are not just a community of plants, although plants are usually the most visible. Plants provide food, shelter, shade, nesting sites and materials for wildlife, both vertebrates and invertebrates. In a word, they are habitats.

Plants are good reflectors of their environment. Since they are literally rooted to the spot, they must adapt or die. Those that grow in particular settings are there because they have found what they need to survive in those locations. There are a few basics that drive the "choices" these plants make, the reasons they are where they are. Water, sun, nutrients, climate, and competition with neighbors drive plants, just as they do people.

Prospect Hill Park is a special place. It is an attractive and interesting park for many reasons. It is one of few large parks inside I-495 west of Boston. It has amazing views of Boston at the summits of Little Prospect and Big Prospect hills. Its many steep slopes and rocky promontories provide the opportunity for a

"work up a sweat hike" to see the view. It also has paved roads that are open, except in winter, and provide handicapped access and an easier way to reach the summit for wheelchair users and the less hardy walkers among us.

Prospect Hill Park is special for another reason. It is situated in an area that supports two uncommon plant communities (Red Cedar – Hickory Outcrop and the Oak – Hickory Woodland), and a plant on the Massachusetts Endangered Species list (whorled milkweed). Both communities can be found at the top of Little Prospect Hill around Boston Rock. They are the most special and unusual types, not just in

the park, but also in the region. A possible reason for their being here may be the influence of the underlying rock. Most of the rock that gives rise to the soil in New England is acidic. Much of Waltham, however, is situated in a region of volcanic rock that contains small amounts of calcium and other minerals that enrich the soil and make it less acidic.

I wrote this guide for people who are interested in nature and want to learn more, without having to contend with scientific jargon. The guide describes sixteen plant communities of the park, with photos of the plants most characteristic of each one. There is a map of each plant community, and a



list of plants in table format that you are likely to find in each community. You can purchase the guide at **Awalkintheparkbook.walthamlandtrust.org** The cost is \$20, with free delivery to Waltham, Newton, Belmont, Lexington, Lincoln and Watertown residents. All proceeds benefit the Waltham Land Trust.

## **HELP WLT GO PAPERLESS!**

Join the 125 Land Trust members who have selected to have their *Journals* sent to them electronically. Please send an email with your name to swadman@walthamlandtrust.org, with the subject header

"Electronic Journal" if you'd like the next one emailed to you. Please remember that receiving *The Journal* is a privilege of membership. Be sure your dues are up-to-date so you don't miss the Spring 2022 *Journal!* 

## **Run or Walk to Support the WLT**

Nadene Stein, WLT President, Special Events Committee Chair

Wouldn't it be great to spend a few hours enjoying the last of the fall foliage in your backyard while supporting the Waltham Land Trust? It absolutely would! And you can do that by participating in the *Western Greenway 5K Trail Run/Walk*, happening at 1 p.m. on Sunday, October 31. This race begins and ends at the spooky and very atmospheric McLaughlin Building on the Metropolitan Parkway—the perfect setting for a race on Halloween. Wear a costume if you wish, so long as it's safe for exercising!

The 5K (3.1 mile) course goes through and around a variety of habitats in Beaver Brook North Reservation and Rock Meadow, including cattail marshes, forests, vernal pools, and open meadows. In addition to flora, you may even get a glimpse of the local fauna since red-tailed hawks, foxes, mink, great horned owls and various migratory birds make their homes in this area.

The course is an awesome one for runners, as running in the woods is more forgiving than running on pavement. Grassy, woodland and earth paths are usually easier on the legs and the Western Greenway 5K offers all of these natural trails.

There is always a large number of people who walk the course (starting after the runners depart), enjoying

a more relaxed pace, so please do not let the thought of running intimidate you.

What? You are not a runner and do not want to walk the trail? The best part is this: you do not have to be a runner/walker to join the fun! We are looking for volunteers to help us with many tasks. We'll need folks at the sign-in table to register runners and give out bibs/goodie bags. We'll need parking attendants to direct people to the ample, on-site parking. We'll have treats postrace distribute to tired, hungry 5K participants and we'd like help serving them. Then we'll need to make sure that the area is cleaned up when the race is over so that other groups of community members can enjoy the space.



You can't be there but STILL want to help? Great news – we are looking for both individuals and businesses to sponsor the race. There are several levels of sponsorship available; your name or your company's name will look awesome on the official race t-shirt! For more information on sponsoring, visit walthamlandtrust.org.

Online registration ends at 10 pm on Thursday, October 28, 2021. The fee will be \$5 more to register in person at the bib-pick-up events: Bistro 761, in the evening of Oct. 29, and during the day Oct. 30, or before the race starts on Sunday at the McLaughlin Building. To register for the race as a runner or a volunteer, visit the Race Wire web site: tinyurl.com/wg5kreg

A few more pieces of information: this is a gun timed race; prizes are awarded to fastest in many categories; we hope to have extras for lucky bib numbers so everyone who registers has a chance of winning a prize! Most importantly, ALL proceeds from the entrance fees and sponsorships directly help the Waltham Land Trust keep protecting open space in Waltham. This year we celebrate our 22nd year of creating a legacy of land conservation in Waltham by promoting, protecting, restoring and acquiring open space; we'd love for you to be a part of supporting this work by running, walking, volunteering at and/or sponsoring this year's Western Greenway 5K.



## **Member Spotlight**

In each Fall Journal, we highlight a member of the Waltham Land Trust who goes above and beyond the call of duty volunteering their time and energy to further our mission. Cathy Mullooly, a WLT member since 2018, lives in the Lakeview neighbor-

hood and is a very engaged member of the Hardy Pond Association (a project of the WLT). A WLT steward and part of our chain saw team, she has been assisting with restoration efforts in the Hardy Pond watershed at Lazazzero Park, Smith Point, Seminole Path, and Graverson Playground. Working with WLT map-maker Lesley Sneddon, Cathy led the effort to create the new "Hardy Pond Pondside Walkway" trail guide (now on walthamlandtrust.org/trail-guides) and has been coordinating with Windsor Village management to establish a pathway along their property. We asked Cathy to take time out of her busy schedule to answer a few questions.

**WLT:** What is your first memory of enjoying open space and nature?

**CM:** I grew up in WV helping on the family farm. My siblings and cousins worked the hay fields, in the vegetable garden and had full access to acres of cow pastures and wooded areas. We picked blackberries, elderberries, walnuts and apples that grew on the farm. In our spare time we looked for tadpoles and minnows in the "crick." My mom and grandmothers canned and stored much of our food in root cellars. My father loved the mountains and we spent many weekends camping in nearby state parks. Of course, it wasn't until I left WV, and became a busy adult, that I truly appreciated how special it was to grow up as I did.

**WLT:** We know you are a very active steward in the Hardy Pond watershed. Thank you! What is the oddest and/or most beautiful thing you've encountered there?

**CM:** Our neighborhood has a 24/7 wildlife preserve. Hardy Pond has furry, feathered and shiny inhabitants that show themselves everyday. You never know what you will see. But what I enjoy most are the Great Blue Herons. They are majestic whether they are standing by the water or flying over the pond. I have seen them in the rain, in the fog, in sunshine and with a background of Fall colors. They never fail to impress me.

**WLT:** Why should someone consider becoming a volunteer steward with the WLT?



**CM:** When I found the WLT I admit I was not sure what it would offer me and what I could offer it. Then, as it is with most things in life, you get out of it what you put into it. The "work" time is truly gratifying. Nothing beats standing up and looking back at what the group has accomplished in a few hours. And over time this has

added up to some substantial gains around Hardy Pond and many other places in Waltham. And then there are the people. Everyone is very friendly and is willing to share their knowledge. I can't remember a volunteer day where I didn't learn something new about plants, insects, birds, a best selling book or a new recipe to try.

**WLT:** What advice do you have for those looking to experience Waltham's trails and open spaces?

**CM:** I think people are surprised at the number and length of trails that exist in Waltham. I have had many conversations with neighbors and friends urging them to go to the WLT page and check out the trail brochures. Most only know one or two places and are eager to try out someplace new that is close to home. So check out the brochures and explore, explore, explore!

**WLT:** Do you have a favorite natural place in Waltham that you can share with our readers?

**CM:** While I tend to stay around my neighborhood and the Chester Brook section of the Western Greenway, I really enjoy the variety of each trail I have explored. The Charles River trails offers different views than the overlooks at Prospect Hill. The sounds of spring peepers at Berry Park are just as exciting and as the hooting of owls around Stonehurst. The scent of clethra at Smith Point is just as intoxicating as the smell of pine trees at Beaver Brook North. I can bike, kayak, bird watch or hike based on the day and what I feel like doing. I guess I am still in search of that favorite place!

**WLT:** Why do you support the Waltham Land Trust?

**CM:** The mission of the WLT is to promote, protect, restore, and acquire open space for land conservation. My childhood memories are largely based on spending time outside. Waltham was once a farming community and based its industry on the power of the Charles River. Times have changed and Waltham has changed with it. It's now home to a growing and diverse population. There is still an important role that open space can play in the development and enjoyment of all generations. And I enjoy being a small part of that legacy.

## **Seminole Path Gets a Redo**

Phil Moser, WLT Land Committee Member, Waltham Conservation Commission Chair

Over the past year, the WLT received several questions about work being done in the Hardy Pond watershed at Seminole Avenue. The restoration was a project of the Recreation Department to remove 2,554 cubic yards of urban fill (mix of dirt, rocks, asphalt and concrete debris, bricks, and trash) from former wetlands. When Mokema and Seminole Avenues were being developed in the 1960s, houses were built on filled land in the wetlands, which was legal at the time. There were plans to fill and develop the remaining section to connect the two ends of each road. Using the city's GIS map, you can still see the "paper road" and house lots in these wooded wetlands. They were in the process of filling it, working from both ends towards the middle, when the Wetlands Protection Act was adopted in 1972 and the project was abandoned. The fill was left in place on much of the undeveloped land. Eventually, a mix of native and invasive vegetation grew up on this urban fill, but chunks of concrete and asphalt were still visible if you looked closely.

How did the Recreation Department's contractor end up removing a substantial quantity of this fill? It turns out that during the Graverson Playground renovations a couple of years ago, 2,554 cubic yards of fill was erroneously placed in the park, which is entirely in a flood zone. (I don't have any inside knowledge of how

or why this mistake happened, but the City of Waltham, the contractor, and the landscape architect were transparent in acknowledging that it did occur, and worked together to resolve it amicably.) The Wetlands Protection Act does not allow filling a flood zone because this could displace the floodwaters onto adjacent properties and make their flooding worse. To resolve this error, the project team could have torn up the newly renovated park, removed the fill, and started over, at significant cost. When this issue came to the Waltham Conservation Commission's attention, the Commission suggested resolving it by removing an equivalent quantity of older fill from the Seminole Avenue Woods (in the same flood plain) to compensate for the new fill added to Graverson Playground. This solution turned out to be a real win-win because it cost less than tearing up the newly renovated playground, avoided disrupting the public's enjoyment of the playground, and cleaned up a conservation area in a way that has been on the Hardy Pond Association's (a project of the WLT) master plan since at least 2007, but which the city might otherwise have never executed. Members of the WLT's volunteer stewardship program focused on Hardy Pond became involved, working with the Recreation Department and Conservation Commission to recommend native tree and plant species to put in the ground, as well as advocating for improved access for residents, improved signage, and more.

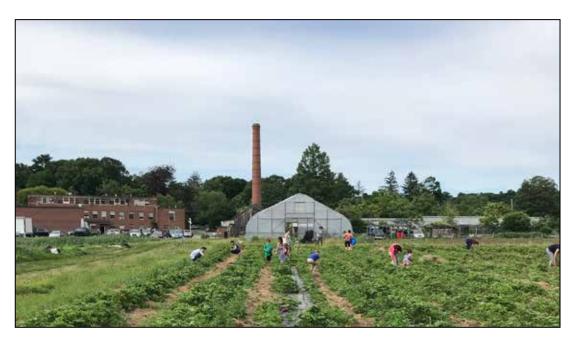
Before the project, a popular path went through these woods. Now post-project, the path's route has not changed much, although it's now more of a "causeway" that was left high as the fill was removed from both sides, creating a clear view from the trail into the restored wetlands. There have been real but temporary impacts during construction, due to noise, truck traffic, and disruption to the existing vegetation that was growing in the fill. Fortunately, the contractor was able to save the existing large trees on the causeway to line the path, and also left a few piles of boulders, logs, and brush for wildlife habitat. Unfortu-

nately, this work took longer than hoped, but we think people will be happy when they see the finished product. I've already seen an increase in trail use by area residents, and have seen snapping turtles, mallards, killdeer, and other wildlife return to the newly restored wetlands. If you aren't familiar with this area and would like to explore, check out the new Hardy Pond Pondside Walkway trail map and guide developed by WLT member Cathy Mullooly and her fellow volunteers! <hardypond-gos.walthamlandtrust. org> The restoration project is located where Area of Interest #3, Hardy Pond Conservation Area, is marked on the map.



from page 1 History and tested new crop varieties including the Waltham Butternut Squash and Waltham Broccoli 29.

An expansive new structure complete with a 400-seat capacity auditorium was completed in 1950. The iconic brick building was designed as an academic research facility to support scientific inquiry and new agricultural technologies tested in



the laboratories, greenhouses and fields surrounding the buildings. For both professional growers and the general public, the station provided specialized services being equipped with four diagnostic labs: soil testing, avian testing, shade tree and plant pathology labs.

During the 1980s and 1990s, many of Waltham's family farms were closed and sold, including DeVincent's, Pizzi, Ricci, and Arrigo farms. During that period, UMass programs started to be transferred to Amherst leaving dormant fields on Beaver Street. The opportunity for community farming and gardening became realized with the emergence of Waltham Fields Community Farm and the Green Rows of Waltham community gardens in 1995.

The history of the Waltham Field Station parallels the story of our nation's history in the twentieth century. Its changing mission over time reflected the broader societal changes in population growth, industrial expansion, transportation, education, scientific research, land use, and especially, agriculture. The field station became a microcosm of national trends within the agricultural realm.

In summary, the Waltham Field Station site has been cultivated since 1650 and epitomizes the long history of agriculture from the earliest days of European settlement to the present day. Long before the researchers and community groups came to reinvigorate agriculture here, Waltham's greatest benefactor, Cornelia Warren, farmed these acres and intended that the land be preserved for the public's benefit. This one unique place incorporates the history of American agriculture, the legacy of Waltham's foremost benefactor, an irreplace-

able link in the Western Greenway, the best farm soils in our region, and an invaluable resource of nutritious food, sustainable agriculture, education and land stewardship to the community.

Editor's Note: In the fall of 2019 and spring of 2020, Waltham Mayor Jeannette McCarthy and the Waltham City Council agreed to use Waltham Community Preservation Act funding and money from the city's general fund to enter negotiations with UMass for the City to purchase the 28-acre Waltham Field Station property located at 240 Beaver Street. Legislation allowing the sale was signed into law by Governor Charlie Baker in November 2020. As of press time, the sale has not been finalized.

#### **Works Cited**

Sanderson, Edmund L. *Waltham as a Precinct of Watertown and as a Town 1630-1884.* (Waltham: Waltham Historical Society, Inc., 1936).

Warren, Cornelia. *A Memorial of My Mother.* (Boston: Privately Printed, 1908).

Daly, Marie. "Three Hundred Sixty Nine Years of Farming at the Waltham Field Station." *Waltham Land Trust Journal*, Spring 2019, 1-2.

Last will and testament of Cornelia Warren. 29 July 1920. Witnesses: Murray F. Hall, Cambridge, Mass. Mary A. Munro, Brighton, Mass. Albert W. Rice, Worcester, Mass.

Young, Robert E. *A Short History of The Waltham Field Station*. 1963. Unpublished.

Historic photos courtesy of *Special Collections and University Archives*, UMass Amherst Libraries, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Suburban Experiment Station, Waltham, RG 15/9

## **Upcoming Events with the Waltham Land Trust**

## **Green Possibilities City Council Candidate Forums**

At Large candidates: Tues., Oct. 5, 7:00 – 8:30 PM Contested Wards (5, 7, 9): Wed., Oct. 13, 7:00 – 8:30 PM Uncontested Wards (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8): Tues., Oct. 19, 7:00 – 8:30 PM.

Via Zoom. Register at bit.ly/WalthamGreenForum

WLT has joined a coalition to sponsor three virtual forums to hear from City Council candidates. We will ask prepared questions to allow candidates to share their visions for a sustainable future.

## Guided Walk along the Charles River Pathway— Newton to Moody Street

Saturday, October 9, 2021, 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM Lyons Field, Commonwealth Ave at Islington Road, Auburndale, 02466

Join the Newton Conservators and WLT for a oneway 2-mile walk on the Charles River Pathway. We'll discuss historic and natural points of interest along the way to Waltham's vibrant Moody Street to pick up produce and snacks at the Waltham Farmers' Market, stroll a closed-to-traffic Moody Street, or maybe grab lunch al fresco on "Restaurant Row."

## **Wellington House Lands Work Party**

Saturday, October 16, 1:00 - 4:00 PM

Sunday, October 10, 1:00 – 4:00 PM
Park on Sherwood Lane, Abbot Road, or Temple Road
Help finish the effort we started preparing the historic Wellington House fields on Trapelo Road for use. There will be tasks for all ages and abilities.

## **Waltham Farm Day**

Toast to Cornelia Warren at WLT Table at 2:00 PM Waltham Fields Community Farm, 240 Beaver Street
Learn about and celebrate Waltham's only community-supported-agriculture (CSA)! Enjoy demonstrations, fun activities, and games for all ages. Groove to live music while strolling through the farm fields and visiting outreach tables from various non-profits like the WLT, where we'll celebrate Waltham philanthropist Cornelia Warren who bequeathed her land 100-years ago, with a "toast" at 2 PM.

## Western Greenway 5K Trail Run/Walk

Sunday, October 31, noon start time Start/end at McLaughlin Building, Metropolitan Parkway, off Trapelo Road, opposite Forest Street. Be part of our annual fall Race for Open Space fundraiser as a walker, runner, or sponsor! Registration fees (\$25 for WLT members before October 28) and race sponsorships help raise money to keep building this community path and outfit our volunteer stewards. Wear a costume if you want! Walkers will begin shortly after the runners depart. Families welcome!

## **Chester Brook Corridor Western Greenway Hike**

Saturday, November 13, 1:00 – 2:30 PM
Park/meet by trail in Our Lady's lot, 920 Trapelo Road
Come for a walk in the Chester Brook corridor of
the Western Greenway between Trapelo Road and
the Shady's Pond Conservation Area. Our trek will
take us behind the church through sumac trees and
former farmland towards the valley where Chester
Brook flows and Shady's Pond sits.

## Waltham Land Trust 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting

Tuesday, November 16, 7:00 – 8:30 PM, Online via Zoom Help celebrate our 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary by attending our virtual annual meeting! We'll highlight all the amazing stewardship projects we've undertaken in the past year and the dedicated volunteers making them happen. We'll also provide updates on the projects we're tackling, celebrate our *Inge Uhlir Environmentalist of the Year*, and vote on returning WLT Directors.

## **#GIVING TUESDAY**

Tuesday, November 30, all day at walthamlandtrust.org
Reclaim the true meaning of "the giving season" by
joining people worldwide donating online the local
charities like the WLT on the Tuesday after Black
Friday and Cyber Monday. Give through our website:
walthamlandtrust.org.

## **Middlesex County Hospital Lands Walk**

Friday, December 3, 10:00 – 11:30 AM
Park/meet at Falzone Field, 901 Trapelo Road
Walk on the Western Greenway trail with WLT
Director Barbara Jacobs in the Middlesex County
Hospital property north of Trapelo Road towards
Beaver Brook North Reservation and back.

## **BISTRO 781 Give Back Event**

Tuesday, December 14, 4:00 рм – 10:00 рм Bistro 781, 336 Moody Street

Thank Bistro 781 for being the restaurant sponsor of our Western Greenway 5K by eating dinner on-site or ordering take out. The WLT gets 10% of all food sales with included certificate, available at walthamlandtrust.org.



Waltham Land Trust PO Box 541120 Waltham MA 02454-1120 www.walthamlandtrust.org Protecting Waltham's land... forever.

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## **Waltham Land Trust's Mission**

To create a legacy of land conservation in Waltham by promoting, protecting, restoring, and acquiring open space.

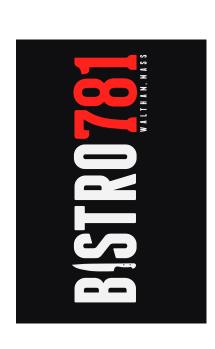
We envision growth in public appreciation of natural resources, preservation and restoration of native habitat, and increased biodiversity to foster a healthier environment.

## SPECIAL GIFT MEMBERSHIP

Have a friend, neighbor, or relative you think would enjoy being part of the Waltham Land Trust? Why not give them a gift membership? We are offering a special promotion for a limited time: 6 months for only \$10! (The normal price of an individual membership is 12 months for \$25). Support open space for a birthday or special occasion!

Please send any comments to the return address, or email to <i info@walthamlandtrust.org>.

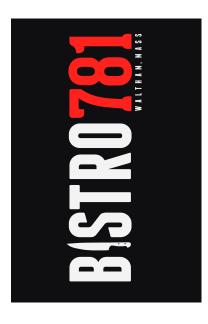
If you're not already a WLT member and have received this complimentary copy, please consider joining today!



When you present this flyer for dine in or take out, 10% of your food bill will be donated to the **Waltham Land Trust**.

Tuesday, December 14, 2021, 4 p.m. - 10 p.m.

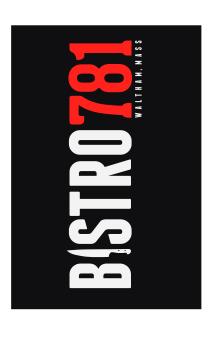
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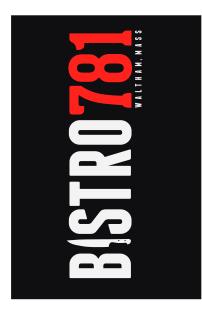
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