

Maine Heritage

THE NEWSLETTER OF MAINE COAST HERITAGE TRUST

FALL 2007

Conserving Family Lands on GREAT CRANBERRY ISLAND

The Donald family donated an easement preventing future development on nearly 10 acres of open fields that afford a spectacular view the public can enjoy from a town road—looking out over the Pool on Great Cranberry Island toward Mount Desert Island.

A family with roots on Great Cranberry Island dating back to 1886 recently protected nearly 30 acres of land—in their words—“as a tribute to the people who handed it down to us.” The property stretches a half-mile from the large, shallow harbor known as “The Pool” to bold oceanfront on the island’s southern side. In between the wildlife-rich mudflats to the north and the cobble shore at the south are a beautiful array of spruce-fir woodlands and fields. The southern half of the property adjoins 28 acres of private conservation land on which



MCHT's new preserve features dramatic shorefront overlooking the Gulf of Maine.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust already holds an easement.

The four siblings who own the property—Malcolm Donald, Peter Donald, Deborah LaMontagne, and Susan Michalski—all shared a strong desire to keep much of their family’s land wild. “Coming from other places and seeing where relentless development can lead, we wanted to make sure that wouldn’t happen here,” says Malcolm Donald. “With the growing cost of maintaining the property and rising taxes, we knew it was time to act. We didn’t want to have to subdivide and develop the land or create a financial burden for our children.” After some discussion with MCHT and a conservation consultant, the family decided to donate an easement to MCHT on 10 acres bordering “The Pool,” and to offer MCHT their 19-acre oceanfront parcel at a small fraction of its appraised value. Proceeds from the sale will go toward

maintenance costs and taxes to help keep the property affordable for the next generation.

“Many extended families with shared properties face questions and concerns similar to those of the Donalds—as families grow, buildings age, and maintenance costs and taxes rise,” observes project manager Bob DeForrest. “By taking a creative approach to these challenges, the Donalds were able to set aside some funds to maintain their family place, while preserving the land’s wild beauty, and helping to create a public preserve where others can enjoy a spectacular, oceanfront setting.” From the family’s vantage point, Malcolm Donald says, “this was the best thing for everybody.”

While maintaining the wild character of the property, MCHT plans to extend an existing foot trail through woodlands so that walkers can enjoy the cobble shores and expansive vista along the Island’s southern shore.



President's Column by Jay Espy

Bidding Farewell

When I joined the staff of Maine Coast Heritage Trust in 1985, MCHT was a small organization facing a big challenge. The Trust's four staff members and its visionary board were contending with an unprecedented real estate boom and rampant land speculation along Maine's coast. This trend threatened the character of Maine and motivated MCHT to accelerate its land protection efforts. Shortly thereafter, the Trust launched its first capital campaign—securing two wild headlands downeast that were slated to become 35-lot subdivisions.

That real estate boom was followed by even greater waves of development, and today land values

have soared to heights that were once unimaginable. Fortunately, so have the forces of conservation! In 1985, MCHT had protected 21,000 acres. Now, thanks to the incredible support of countless donors and partners, we've secured 125,000 acres (including 270 entire coastal islands). In 1985, Maine had 14 land trusts: today, that number stands at more than 100. MCHT's leadership and support of local trusts have made it a model for conservationists around the U.S.

It has been a great privilege and joy for me to participate in the growth of MCHT and Maine's land trust community over the past two decades. At the end of November, I will be leaving

the Trust to pursue a different means of supporting Maine land conservation—as the first executive director of the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation. Its mission is to support conservation of the natural environment and the well-being of animals and human beings, primarily in Maine.

I know that Maine Coast Heritage Trust will successfully meet the challenges ahead—pioneering new approaches to conservation, establishing and managing accessible natural preserves, and completing ever more ambitious land protection projects. Thanks to each and every one of you for your support over the years and your continuing dedication to the Trust.



Rich Knox

A Message from Tom Ireland MCHT's Board Chairman

All of us will miss Jay's steady hand at the helm, his willingness to tackle the impossible (and succeed—time after time!), and his ready sense of humor. His name has become synonymous with Maine Coast Heritage Trust and he leaves the organization a great legacy that will endure for a long, long time.

Jay's remarkable dedication and leadership over the past two decades has placed MCHT in a strong position to undertake new initiatives, increase its commitment to

land stewardship (thanks to the successful Campaign for the Coast), and strengthen its partnerships with Maine's local land trusts. MCHT's board, council and staff look forward to these and other opportunities that lie ahead.

The Board has formed a search committee and we are confident—given MCHT's stellar reputation around the country—that we will be getting many highly qualified applicants. I will report back on our progress in the next issue of Maine Heritage.

KATHRYN W. DAVIS

Celebrating 100 Years of Passion, Wonder and Generosity



Michael York

Dr. Kathryn W. Davis, a well-known peace advocate, educator and philanthropist, celebrated her 100th birthday this year. To mark the occasion, she joined MCHT's Richard Rockefeller for a flight—relishing the chance to see more of MCHT's conservation work in the Mount Desert region from a bird's-eye view. An aerial tour in a small plane might not appeal to many centenarians, but Dr. Davis's hallmark is her irrepressible enthusiasm for learning and for the world around her.

Over many decades, Dr. Davis and her late husband, Dr. Shelby Cullom Davis, contributed generously to educational institutions, humanitarian causes and peace initiatives. "I just feel that I've been lucky," Dr. Davis reflected in a recent interview, "and I should give back because I've been so lucky." She and her husband first came to Maine more than six decades ago, after spending time in Europe getting their doctoral degrees. "As a young couple, Shelby and I summered on the Cape with my parents and family," she recalls. "All very fond memories, but the Cape didn't have any mountains! Shelby and I agreed that Maine had it all and with far less congestion."

In the midst of many professional demands, Maine offered the couple a wonderful setting for rest and renewal. "I love Maine's mountains and its coast, the hiking, the horseback riding, the saltwater swimming, the views and the fabulous sunsets!" Dr. Davis says. "I even enjoy the different kinds of fog, as long as it comes and then goes out again 'on little cat's feet.' And did I mention the lobster picnics?"

In her honor, the Shelby Cullom Davis Foundation has pledged \$5 million to Maine Coast Heritage Trust for land conservation in the Mount Desert Island area. This gift in her name is a way for Kathryn Davis to acknowledge her gratitude for the place Maine has played in her family's life. "Mount Desert Island has been my family center every summer for over 60 years," she says. "I get to see both of my children, all of my grands and all of my great-grands sometime throughout the summer. I simply love that. It's great that they ALL love Maine, many of them as much as I do. It keeps them all coming back for more of this wonderful oasis of humanity... my true vacation land."

Always eager for new creative challenges and fresh perspectives, Kathryn W. Davis took up landscape painting for the first time in her late 90s. Shown here are two of the many images she has painted recording cherished views on Mount Desert Island.



painted by Kathryn W. Davis



painted by Kathryn W. Davis

STEWARDSHIP: Community Trails

While remote and expansive tracts of conserved land hold a value all their own, some of the best-loved coastal treasures are community trails that local residents use routinely for walking, shore access and wildlife-watching. Maine Coast Heritage Trust works on a variety of projects that protect traditional trails and the lands over which they cross.

“Some of our biggest trail projects have involved properties where the public use goes back generations,” explains Jane Arbuckle, MCHT’s Director of Stewardship. “These established trails cross private land that nearly everyone assumed already was conserved. In settings like Long Pond and Hunter’s Beach (in Seal Harbor) and at Schoolhouse Ledge (in Northeast Harbor), we worked with the landowners so that long-standing tradition of public use would continue.”

The future of community trails often hinges on the vision and generosity of private landowners. Fortunately, many of them recognize how important these trails are to local residents and they are willing to sanction continued public use (with a land trust overseeing trail stewardship). For example, two Matinicus island landowners recently donated easements to MCHT that provide for trail access to a beautiful stretch of shoreline where island residents like to walk.

Frenchboro Long Island, where MCHT owns nearly 1,000 acres, has an extensive trail network enjoyed by both island residents and visitors. “There’s 10 miles of hiking trails, some of which extend from Trust land onto adjoining properties,” notes MCHT Regional Steward Terry



© Sara Gray

Residents along the length of Maine’s coast are increasingly interested in gaining access to local trails.

Towne. “Those landowners graciously permit people to enjoy the trails, helping to maintain an important community tradition.”

Landowners who wish to support traditional trail use can provide that access informally, or can ensure the future of the trail through a trail easement or conservation easement transferred to a land trust. “Often landowners start off with a ‘handshake agreement,’” Arbuckle says, “and later include a provision for trail access if they place a conservation easement on their land.”

In some instances, a land conservation project will open the way to reestablishing a trail that had become closed off or overgrown. On Swan’s Island, a family generously donated

to MCHT 25 acres on High Head that allowed the Trust to reopen and extend an old trail. MCHT transferred both properties to the Town, and helped clear the original trail (following blowdowns) so that island residents could enjoy a beautiful ocean vista.

“We always like hearing from people interested in protecting community trails on their land,” Arbuckle says. “And sometimes we approach landowners to discuss trail opportunities.” Even in cases where people aren’t ready to pursue a conservation easement, they still may sign a simple trail license agreement that allows MCHT (or another land trust) to create and maintain a foot trail for public use. “We’ve got several exciting projects underway,” Arbuckle adds, “that will be great community assets when they’re completed.”



MCHT

Maintaining and restoring community trails are an important part of MCHT’s stewardship work.

Summer Trips Engage MCHT Members

Members and friends of MCHT enjoyed exploring twelve conserved settings along the Maine coast this summer—ranging from the York River to Straight Bay downeast. The diverse array of tours included boat trips (in Merchant Row and downeast), hiking (in Castine’s Witherle Woods and at MCHT’s Frenchboro Preserve), a tour of MCHT’s Aldermere Farm, and an archaeological presentation at Malaga Island.

MCHT offered its first-ever canoe paddle (along

on our island,” one MCHT member observed.

Participants on a Pleasant Bay boat trip downeast enjoyed seeing the marked contrast among the region’s islands—from the low, flat and grassy Nash Island (where

Field School. With Professors Nate Hamilton and Rob Sanford, these students had spent several weeks uncovering artifacts from a community that was forcibly removed by the State almost 100 years ago. The students walked small groups

Patty Renaud



Patty Renaud

Families on MCHT’s canoe expedition along Northeast Creek enjoyed counting turtles, watching fish jump, and seeing a diverse array of wildlife.



Jonathan Labaree

While enthusiastic birders surveyed the nesting guillemots on Jordan’s Delight from the boat, gulls chased off four bald eagles that circled near their nests. This expedition downeast, co-hosted with Maine Audubon, gave participants a first-hand look at the rich bird life in and around Pleasant Bay.

Northeast Creek on Mount Desert Island), and quickly added a second trip to accommodate the overwhelming response. Visitors were surprised and delighted to find such a pristine and tranquil setting in the heart of Mount Desert Island. “We had no idea that we had such a gem of an unspoiled estuary here

participants observed the annual sheep-shearing amid hundreds of seabirds) to the stark and stunning cliffs of Jordan’s Delight. This excursion (co-hosted with Maine Audubon) offered great opportunities to observe seabirds and explore a magnificent area dotted with islands that MCHT and others are working to conserve.

On Malaga Island (off Phippsburg), nearly 30 people were treated to fascinating presentations by students of the University of Southern Maine Archaeology

Malaga Island visitors got a tour of active archaeological sites being excavated by students and professors from the University of Southern Maine.

of visitors around several digs, setting the scene, enthusiastically explaining the displays, and answering questions. “The students really transformed a few holes in the ground into a rich story, not just about Malaga, but of their own discovery,” one participant reported.

MCHT extends special thanks to longtime member and naturalist Peter Blanchard who helped guide several of this year’s trips.



Land for Maine's Future Bond Vote November 6

On November 6, Maine residents will vote on five ballot questions. Question 4 is a \$35.5 million bond request that includes funds for land conservation, Maine's state parks and historic sites, riverfront community development, and working waterfront preservation. The question reads:

Do you favor a \$35,500,000 bond issue to invest in land conservation, water access, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation opportunities, including hunting and fishing, farmland and working waterfront and to invest in state parks, historic sites and riverfront, community and farm infrastructure to be matched by at least \$21,875,000 in private and public contributions?

If passed, Question 4 would direct \$17 million to the Land for Maine's Future (LMF) Program which, over the last 20 years, has protected more than 440,000 acres of Maine's special places, including numerous MCHT preserves along the coast. In addition to supporting the LMF Program, Question 4 will direct \$7.5 million toward critically needed maintenance and improvements at Maine's state parks and historic sites. The bond also allocates \$3 million to permanently protect coastal parcels that are important to Maine's commercial fishing industry. Lastly, Question 4 proposes targeted investments in Maine's riverfronts, communities and farmland. For more information, contact MCHT public policy coordinator Jeff Romano at jromano@mcht.org or 729-7366.

Staff News



Deb Chapman and Andy Walsh



Katherine Birnie

Deb Chapman is the new, part-time Land Trust Circuit Rider with Maine Land Trust Network (MLTN). She is former president of the Georges River Land Trust and has been involved with MLTN for years, serving most recently as vice-chair of the Steering Committee. Deb also worked as a consultant conducting organizational assessments for local land trusts through the Maine Coast Protection Initiative.

Andy Walsh has joined MCHT as a Regional Steward (based in

Topsham). Andy spent the past twelve years with the Trustees of Reservations serving as their Regional Ecologist and Wetlands Specialist in southeastern Massachusetts.

Katherine Birnie, MCHT's Conservation Innovation Program Manager, is a recent graduate of Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business. Prior to pursuing an MBA, Katherine worked as a project manager for Peninsula Open Space Trust in the San Francisco Bay area.



MAINE COAST HERITAGE TRUST

is dedicated to protecting land that is essential to the character of Maine, its coastline and islands in particular. Since 1970, more than 125,000 acres have been permanently protected, including 270 entire coastal islands. MCHT provides conservation advisory services to landowners, local land trusts and state and community officials free of charge. A membership organization, MCHT welcomes your support and inquiries.

Maine Office

1 Bowdoin Mill Island, Suite 201, Topsham, Maine 04086
207-729-7366

P.O. Box 669, Mt. Desert, ME 04660
207-244-5100

P.O. Box 141, Columbia Falls, ME 04623
207-483-6586

Aldermere Farm, 70 Russell Ave., Rockport, ME 04856
207-236-2739

Visit us at www.mcht.org

Maine Coast Heritage Trust
1 Bowdoin Mill Island, Suite 201
Topsham, Maine 04086

Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT # 6
PORTLAND, MAINE

Printed on recycled paper
Design & Prepress: Ethos
Writing: Marina Schaffler