

# Littleton Conservation Trust



Newsletter

Fall 2015

## Another Hidden Treasure

by Frederick Findlay



This Spring the Conservation Trust and the Historical Society celebrated Sarah Doublet and the LCT forest that bears her name. The highly successful event was a part of Hidden Treasures sponsored by Freedom's Way and the National Park Service. A stone's throw away is another treasure, hidden by invasive aliens and the complex workings of the Concord Water Department.

In 1999 the Town of Littleton purchased the Morrison Orchard, land with a history of cultivation going back to 1672. Most of the land is preserved forever thanks to grants that aided the purchase. The exception is a twenty acre parcel bordering Nagog Pond that was reserved for municipal use. It was ultimately included in the lease to the orchardist and provides some barn storage and most importantly, access to Nagog Pond for irrigation. In exchange for the water, the Concord Water Department appears to have required no public access and a return to nature on lands bordering the pond. A sign on the gate opposite the Ed Bell parking area reads: NO PUBLIC ACCESS PLEASE TURN AROUND.

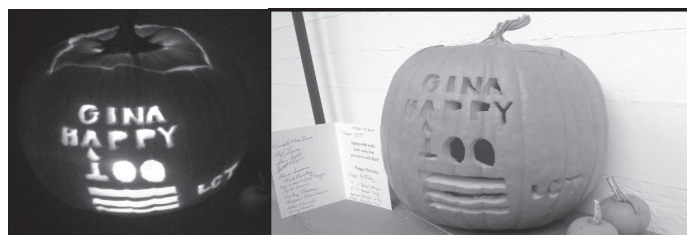
The land that graced the cover of our 2003 Open Space Plan (illustrated above) has changed dramatically. The iconic views of the Pond that provided backdrop to wedding pictures are now restricted by Multiflora Rose, Bittersweet vines and an assortment of non-native plants. One of the few areas of the orchard purchase that could have accommodated public access was made off-limits and our scenic views slowly taken away. Something is wrong here. There is a highway bisecting the Pond and a restaurant deck overhanging the water. Nashoba Road comes tight to the bank and trails in Acton approach the water. Why are we in any way restricted (I

See *Another Hidden Treasure* continued on page 5

## LCT Trustee Emeritus Virginia Sprong Turns 100!

Emeritus LCT trustee Virginia 'Gina' Sprong celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday this month amongst friends at her home on Tahattawan Road. This remarkable woman and her late husband Harry, who came to Littleton in the 1960s for its rural character, soon after donated some 33 acres of land around their home to the Conservation Trust to preserve

that very aspect of the community that drew them here. Today we have Holly Park, named after her prized Irish Setter, and access to New Town Hill Conservation Land thanks to their generosity. During Gina's tenure as LCT trustee she demonstrated strong interest in conservation land protection and bird watching. The Sprongs have been strong supporters of the Littleton Conservation Trust and Mass Audubon. Congratulations Gina for reaching this milestone and for all the pleasure you have brought us. ■



## Sarah Doublet's Nashoba Village (SDNV) Hidden Treasure, Littleton and FWHA Success



The LCT and the Littleton Historical Society, in collaboration with Nipmuc Tribe Council Leader Dave 'Tall Pine' White (shown in photo), produced a highly successful "Hidden Treasure" day long educational event at the Sarah Doublet Forest and Nature Reserve on May 16th. Littleton, along with 44 other

See *SDNV*

continued on page 5



Guided Hikes by LCT and COA  
See page 3





**LCT  
Board of Trustees  
December 2015**

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8 Uplands Road 486-9761

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Don MacIver *Newsletter Editor*

[www.littletonconservationtrust.org](http://www.littletonconservationtrust.org)  
[www.facebook.com/littletonconservationtrust](http://www.facebook.com/littletonconservationtrust)

*Littletonconservationtrust*

*Clipart via FCIT educational license*

The Littleton Conservation Trust (LCT), distinct from the Town's Conservation Commission, is a private land trust formed in 1962 to promote Littleton's rural character; to preserve its water, plant, and wildlife resources, and its unique views; and to provide environmental education. The LCT is caretaker of over 300 acres of property (gifted from far-sighted residents) on which we manage a public trails system.

## Littleton Conservation News compiled by Don MacIver

- ➡ The **Littleton Sustainability Committee**, under the coordination of Sarah Rambacher and Jo-Ann Dery, launched Littleton's Solar Initiative and joined Boxborough's efforts to create LittleBoxSolar, a community solar program offering a tiered pricing system for local residents and businesses to install solar panels to generate clean electricity. They have successfully recruited client agreements for some 40 systems, equally split between both towns, to generate an excess of 247 kW of power, at tier five, the least expensive pricing. See [LittleBoxSolar.com](http://LittleBoxSolar.com).
- ➡ The **Littleton Sustainability Committee** with group effort and long-term advocacy of committee member and former LCT trustee Jack Apfelbaum served as a catalyst to spur on the town to engage in requisite studies and efforts to find clean energy solutions that reduce long-term energy costs and strengthen local economies, and to become a state recognized "Green Community". The submitted application is the result of full town collaborative efforts by a variety of departments and boards working under the coordination of Town Administrator Keith Bergman. Attaining this designation will entitle Littleton to an initial grant of \$140,000 to reduce energy usage and an opportunity to apply for many other grants that finance additional energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives.
- ➡ The **Conservation Commission** unanimously authorized \$4,500 from conservation funds for a town appraisal of the Couper Farm, long sought after for the protection of its "prime agricultural soils" and significant conservation lands.
- ➡ In preparation for full community involvement in updating a new **Master Plan**, Littleton sponsored a training session with Ralph Wilmer, the MAPC planning council's principal planner. This recorded one hour 40 minute session can be viewed at [littletoncommunitytv.pegcentral.com](http://littletoncommunitytv.pegcentral.com) and by searching within the "Master Plan Update Steering Committee" folder for the date it was given, "10/28/2015".
- ➡ The **Conservation Commission, Conservation Trust, and Water Department** applied for a Wildlife Management Grant to improve the habitat and remove invasives at the Hartwell Family Reserve Property.

## Littleton Conservation Trust Seeks Volunteers

### Newsletter Editor

The LCT newsletter currently uses MS Publisher 2010, a popular and simple to use desktop publishing package. Duties include text editing of submitted articles, gathering appropriate public domain illustrations and images, designing layout, and preparing final document for transfer to a professional printer for final production. Some hands on training, guidance, and assistance available.

### Trail Workers

A trail worker email distribution list is maintained by Jim O'Neil. When work projects are planned, notifications and updates are distributed to its member list. Jim can be reached at [JFOneil63@verizon.net](mailto:JFOneil63@verizon.net).

For donations under \$1,000 we also accept credit card payments online <http://littletonconservationtrust.org/donate>

## Littleton Conservation Trust Membership Form – 2015 - 2016

☐ New ☐ Renewal

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
(Date determines year of tax deduction)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

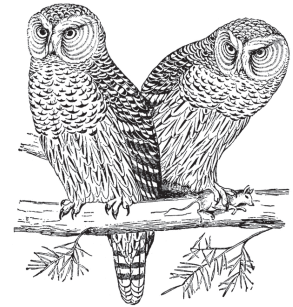
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please provide an email address to receive notification of upcoming walks and conservation-related events.  
Checks should be made out to the "Littleton Conservation Trust" or just "LCT".*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual: \$25  | <input type="checkbox"/> Family: \$40        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend: \$100   | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter: \$250    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron: \$500   | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor: \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: \$ _____   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gift to Permanent Fund: \$ _____                              |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Please send me information about how to preserve my own land. |  |

Please send form to:

Kathy Stevens, Treasurer  
Littleton Conservation Trust  
PO Box 594  
Littleton, MA 01460



### Help to Promote Good Conservation in Littleton through Membership and Donation Gift by Scott Lewis



Littleton Conservation Trust memberships are tax deductible donations. Whether renewing your membership or simply making a donation, this is a good time of year to donate in order to claim the donation as a deduction for this tax year. Our reason for reminding

you at this time extends beyond the tax status of your donation though.

Many LCT members join when our fall / winter newsletter is published as the membership form in the newsletter was the only reminder to join or renew in the past. With this newsletter arriving in mailboxes, it is time for those who joined or renewed last fall / winter to renew. It's also a great time of year to gift membership for the holidays.

Please help us take care of the many protected lands in Littleton so that we, and future generations, can continue to enjoy the outdoors. You can join or renew either online or by mailing a check:

⇒ To join or renew online by credit card or through PayPal, go to: [littletonconservationtrust.org/donate/](http://littletonconservationtrust.org/donate/).

⇒ To join or renew by check, use the form on the top of this page and mail.

Thank you for your continued support of conservation in Littleton and the all volunteer Littleton Conservation Trust. ■

### Outdoor Walks / Adventures Guided by LCT

If you enjoy being outdoors, are interested in trails, wildlife, and history in and near Littleton, want to meet people with similar interests, or just need to get out and stretch your legs, consider joining a guided walk. Usually held on the last Saturday of the month from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m., these walks are open to all, free of charge, and fun! Our next set of walks is in the planning stages and will begin on January 30th.

Walks will be announced on the Littleton Conservation Trust website, listed in the Littleton Conservation Trust events calendar and promoted to the Littleton Conservation Trust email list. If you're not on our list, sign up at [littletonconservationtrust.org/contact-us/subscribe/](http://littletonconservationtrust.org/contact-us/subscribe/). ■

### Outdoor Walks Guided by Council of Aging (COA)

The COA sponsored senior kayaking group, Prime Time Paddlers (PTP), has put their kayaks away in winter storage and taken to hiking local conservation lands. Operating as Prime Time Trekkers (PTT), the new COA sponsored group hikes occur weekly on Thursday at 1:00pm. To join and receive schedule updates contact volunteer coordinator Nancy Levine at [pnlgmr@aol.com](mailto:pnlgmr@aol.com) or 978-486-3347. LCT trustee Fran Meyers and other trustees, from time to time, will assist PTT in exploring local conservation lands. ■

### LCT Welcomes Dave Allen as Assistant Treasurer

Recently Dave retired from his previously owned small manufacturing business in Ayer, established in 1962. A 31 year Littleton resident, Dave has served as Treasurer for Littleton's Neighborhood Supper and the Ayer Business Association. Currently Dave volunteers with AARP, in assisting others with their tax preparations. ■



## In Remembrance: Edith Boyd Smith

by Don MacIver

With sadness, we report LCT trustee emeritus and long term trust secretary Edith Smith passed away peacefully in her sleep shortly after Thanksgiving, having shared the holiday with close friends. Edith and her late husband Paul, a long term Planning Board member, were strong conservation supporters and imparted those values and interests to their three devoted children-Stephen, Kathy, and Suni. Residing close to Black Pond, Edith and Paul were smitten by the scenic landscape in their own backyard. Paul once quipped why travel to Maine when the same scenic features lay just outside their home here in Littleton. Over the years, they gifted the LCT with various parcels, including fields, ridges, forests, rivers, vernal pool, pond, and impressive stone foundations and walls. These are now protected in perpetuity and serve as a lasting legacy for the Littleton community for generations to come. In all the LCT has received 21 acres bordering Beaver Brook and additional Conservation Restrictions on 45 more acres in Littleton, extending to another contiguous 13 acres in Harvard. Edith's personal passions were her family, birding, gardening for both flowers and vegetables, cooking and preserving produce from her garden, and quilting. Edith was a master quilter with a magic eye for color and design. ■



Edith at home gardening

## Tree Lore: The Black Birch (Betula lenta)

by Art Lazarus

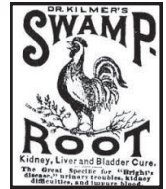


Many years ago, I enjoyed introducing my daughters to some of the interesting features of our forest trees. Of special interest was the delightful wintergreen aroma and taste of a broken twig or the inner bark of the Black Birch. To this day when walking in the woods with friends, I will look for a black birch tree and introduce them to its pleasant odor and taste, and talk about the historic uses. I made sweet syrup from the sap in the spring, but it required many gallons to make little syrup. The soft drink, birch beer, available in grocery stores, was originally made from its sap, but now is made with artificial flavoring. birch oil, or oil of wintergreen, has been, and still may be used to flavor medicine and candy.

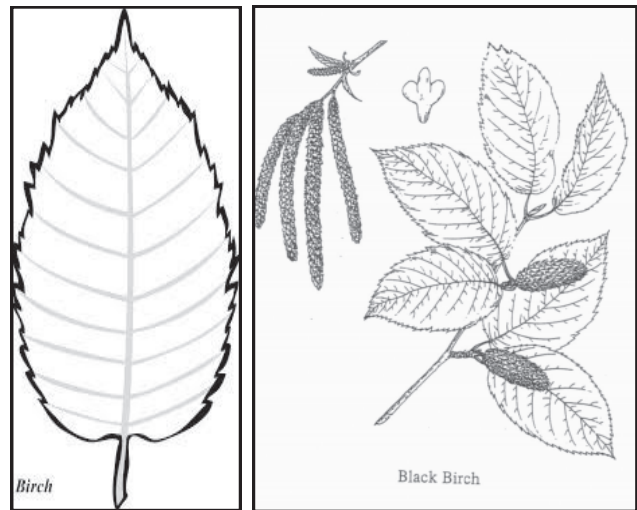


A 17<sup>th</sup> century recipe for making the original alcoholic variety of birch beer is as follows - "To every gallon of birch water put a quart of honey, well stirred together, then boil it almost an hour with a few cloves and a little limon-peel, keeping it well scummed. When it is sufficiently boiled, and become cold, add

to it three or more spoonfuls of good ale to make it work...and when the test [yeast] begins to settle, bottle it up...it is gentle and very harmless in operation in the body, and exceedingly sharpens the appetite being drunk ante pastum [before a meal]"



The three most common birches in our region are **Yellow Birch** (*Betula alleghaniensis*), **Black Birch** (*Betula lenta*), and **White Birch** (*Betula papyrifera*). These birches are sometimes known by other common names. For example, White Birch is also known as "Canoe" or "Paper Birch" due to how its bark has sometimes been used in the past. Black Birch is also known as "Sweet Birch" due to its wintergreen-smelling twigs and sometimes "Cherry Birch" due to the bark's prominent black horizontal air pores (lenticels) similar to that of cherry trees.



Black Birch is also variously called *Cherry Birch* for its black horizontal pores and dark mature bark like that of a cherry tree, and *Sweet Birch* for its wintergreen-smelling twigs. Illustration on left from US Forest Service. Illustration on right from Native and Naturalized Trees of Massachusetts, 1966, compiled by Gordon P. DeWolf, Jr., UMass Extension Publication AG-1220.

In our area, we are located within the upper limit of the Black Birch range extending southerly to northern Alabama. Leaves are elliptical, long pointed and often notched at the base. The leaves are saw toothed. The bark is shiny and dark brown or blackish. Large diameter Black Birches are often fissured into scaly slabs. The largest and most mature stand of Black Birches on conservation land appears to be at Long Lake Park within the valley walls on both sides of Long Pond Brook near the Boy Scout Bridge. These trees are 50-80 feet high. One large tree has a 63 inch circumference. ■

For more information on the Black Birch (*Betula lenta*) consult the New England Wildflower Society's online plant identification guide "Go Botany" for detailed description and more images:

[gobotany.newenglandwild.org/species/betula/lenta/](http://gobotany.newenglandwild.org/species/betula/lenta/)

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## Eight Massachusetts Owls and “Citizen Science”

by Don MacIver



Mass Audubon provides a good online resource to learn more about native owls who breed within the state as well as the much celebrated winter visitor, the **Snowy Owl**. Seven owls typically breed in Massachusetts - **Great Horned, Barred, Barn, Long-eared, Short-eared, Eastern Screech, and Northern Saw-whet**. These eight owls overall occur in a wide variety of local habitats –

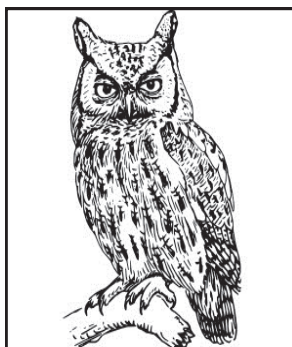
spanning marsh lands, swamps, grass lands, dense forests - including conifers and deciduous woods, wood lots, and residential neighborhoods. To help identify these owls, Mass Audubon has compiled a simple online guide, found at [www.massaudubon.org/learn/nature-wildlife/birds/owls/species](http://www.massaudubon.org/learn/nature-wildlife/birds/owls/species) which is illustrated with close up photos, a thumb-nail narrative with a link to learn more, a typical sound recording, and an opportunity to register your sighting.

Mass Audubon engages the public in “citizen science” surveys in order to learn about current species populations and their distribution throughout the state. Currently, Mass Audubon is asking the public to report owl observations through its website. When reporting a bird sighting/ observation by sight or sound, it is important to take note of the following details - where you saw or heard it (there is a Google map application to help to pinpoint location), when that happened, whether it involved any nesting behaviors such as feeding young or incubating eggs, and any other noteworthy information worth sharing.

See how many of the eight owls you can learn and identify in the field. Report online what you are sure about as a “citizen science” observer. “Citizen Science” observers serve an important function for many organizations who depend on volunteers, whether it be a study of birds, outdoor water quality, climatic conditions, or a variety of natural species.

If you enjoy this activity and appreciate the ability to recognize and report birds you have encountered in the field consider trying Mass Audubon’s eBird portal at [ebird.org/content/massaudubon/](http://ebird.org/content/massaudubon/). Mass Audubon has partnered with the Cornell Laboratory of

Ornithology, which created and shares the popular eBird application. eBird allows you to search regional bird lists to help focus your own field identification efforts, allows you to report your own observations, and allows you to see what other observers have reported in a specific area. ■



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## Another Hidden Treasure continued from page 1

know, after three years of trying... it's the geese and the fishermen)? Plans for a future Filtration Plant should remove any threat to the water posed by well placed trails on our land.

The land, as I have come to know it, has wonderful potential. Special Town meeting recently removed the infested area from future leases to allow for possible mitigation. It is hoped that we can clean it up and ultimately add a trail and a picnic table overlooking the pond. As we work on the composition of a future lease for the orchard I hope that the Town will seriously consider excluding all twenty acres while providing access to the small irrigation pond. This would maximize public use with an additional trail and a possible event space for community cookouts and even scout camping. With a little work, we could even accommodate space for another farmer, which could include the barn, the field behind, and land across the street.

It is truly a hidden treasure, no doubt enjoyed by Sarah Doublet in the past and hopefully by this community far into the future. ■

[Editor’s Note: Rick is a retired landscape designer and carries a state “applicator’s license” to remove invasive plant species. Rick has coordinated other restoration projects in the community, including Sarah Doublet Forest, Cloverdale, and currently is applying for a state grant to restore some of the Hartwell property. The Concord Water Department, which minimally draws drinking water from this surface water body has avoided implementing a long time needed filtration processing plant. Hopefully, they follow through in implementing the filtration process in 2016-17 which should remove the need for the “No Trespassing” provisions on lands surrounding Nagog Pond.]

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## Sarah Doublet’s Nashoba Village continued from page 1

communities historically focused on the American Revolution, comprise the nationally recognized Freedom’s Way Heritage Area (FWHA). The nonprofit FWH Association which manages the activities within this Heritage Area, along with technical and financial assistance from the Minute Man National Park, sponsored a number of Hidden Treasure activities throughout. Littleton’s efforts were one of the area’s most ambitious and most successful.

Attended by 200, SDNV transformed the LCT property into an interactive outdoor museum highlighting Nashoba Nipmuc cultural history and natural environment, with extensive interpretive signage, foods, crafts, games, walks, native live animal presentations, Lacrosse demonstration, and talks on the history and customs of the indigenous Nipmuc residents. The 98 acre Sarah Doublet Forest is at the core of former Nashoba Praying Indian Plantation, later designated New Town area, and possible Vision Quest site.

Photo display and more information can be viewed at: [www.littletonconservationtrust.org](http://www.littletonconservationtrust.org). ■



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for over 50 Years*



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### ***Hike/Outdoor Adventures Schedule Last Saturday of the Month***

January 30th	February 27th
March 26th	April 30th
May 28th	June 25th

*Also, COA Thursday Walks  
See related story on page 3*

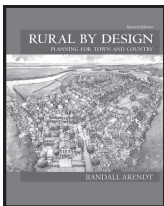


This newsletter is printed on recycled paper (20% post-consumer waste)

## The Book Corner

*This and other donated books can be found at the Reuben Hoar Public Library*

### **Rural by Design: Planning for Town and Country, 2nd edition, 2015** by Randall Arendt



**Rural by Design: Planning for Town and Country**, 2nd edition, published in 2015 by the American Planning Association (APA) Planners Press, is a paperback in easy-to-use large format, with some 552 pages, extensive bibliography, and detailed index. The broad in scope and retooled content spans some 25 chapters categorized in six major areas: The Character of Towns, Design Approaches, Implementation Techniques, Designing Man-Made Structures, Protecting the Natural Infrastructure, and finally Case Studies.

This title is completely revised, with some 80% new material, 900 color illustrations, and some 84 case studies (many from the Northeast). Some chapters of particular relevance to our community are Strengthening Town Centers, Downtown Commercial and Mixed Use Case Studies, Rural Residential Case Studies, Broadening Housing Choices, Sustainability, Protecting and Restoring the Green Infrastructure Network, Retaining Farmland and Farmers, Transfer of Development Rights in Small Communities, and Designing Subdivisions to Save Land.

Noted planners and community land use practitioners have variously described this very readable and easy to use book

as “seminal”, “foundational”, “definitive”, “comprehensive”, “a great book made even better”, and “part reference manual, part guidebook, and part inspiration”. Not to be displayed prominently on the bookshelf just for show, this book is immensely useful and is intended for hands on use by a wide audience - as cited by a prominent peer planner “... This new edition will be invaluable to educators, to practitioners, to planning advocates, commission members, public officials and private landowners and developers—anyone with identifying and discouraging poor development practices and defining and encouraging state of the art initiatives for our often beleaguered rural, hamlet, and suburban communities.” ■ *Review by Don MacIver*

About the Author: Randall Arendt is a landscape planner, site designer, author of over 20 publications, internationally sought after lecturer, and much acclaimed advocate for conservation planning. His proven approach of designing to fit within the landscape and the surrounding areas is referred to as “twice green”- providing high quality results for both the environment and the economy. He is the former director of planning and research at the Center for Rural Massachusetts at UMass at Amherst. Considered the “dean of the conservation subdivision” his 40 years of practice spans projects in 21 states and five Canadian provinces. ■

