



Westford Conservation Trust Newsletter, Fall 2016

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President's Message

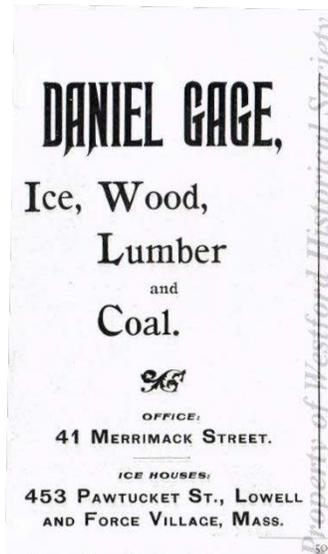


Join us for the Trust's Annual Meeting Thursday, November 3rd at 7:00pm Parish Center for the Arts (PCA) Westford Common

Guest Speaker - Our guest speaker this year will be Western MA based Beaver Solutions founder Mike Callahan. Mike will talk about beaver behavior and biology and the latest in beaver management techniques. Questions from the audience will be encouraged! Come join us to learn more about these amazing creatures and some ideas about working

Who Is Martina Gage And Why Is The Westford Town Forest Named After Her?

by Ellen Harde



An advertisement for Mr. Gage's business - courtesy of Westford Historical Society

In 1869, Daniel Gage of Lowell started his ice business that "became so successful Gage eventually earned the title of Lowell's ice king." On Gage's death in 1901, his 38 year old daughter, Martina, became the owner of her father's business. The August 1912 edition of *Ice and Refrigeration*

described Martina's company as "one of the most

prosperous ice dealing concerns in New England..." employing "100 men and has several ice houses in the vicinity of Lowell." One of those ice houses was on Forge Pond in Forge Village. The foundation of the ice house can still be seen as you drive into the Town Beach at Forge Pond.

Martina Gage ran the company for twenty-eight

together in resolving beaver/ human conflicts.

Business meeting - a short trust annual business meeting will be held from 7-7:30pm. Our guest speaker will follow this brief business meeting. Refreshments will be served. Hope to see you there!

Thank you,
Ron Gemma

Quick Links...

[Our Website](#)

[Westford Trails](#)

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Timberlake Conservation Land by Bill Harman



Fall is a great time of year to enjoy the Timberlake Conservation Land, recently acquired by the Town (trail map, below). It

years (1901-29) and then "passed day-to-day operations to a board of directors." On her death in 1935, the ice company owned ponds and land in several towns in the Merrimack Valley. In her will, Martina bequeathed all the Gage property to the town in which it was located.

For Westford, this amounted to 13 separate lots comprising 341 acres which the 1936 Annual Town Report describes as a "munificent gift." The largest tract was "the Sweetser lot on the north side of Baptist [also called Heart] Pond" which became the Martina Gage Town Forest on Old Lowell Road. The Town sold a contiguous eight acre Gage lot to the Middlesex County 4 H in the 1950s to become the 4 H Fairground.

Sources:

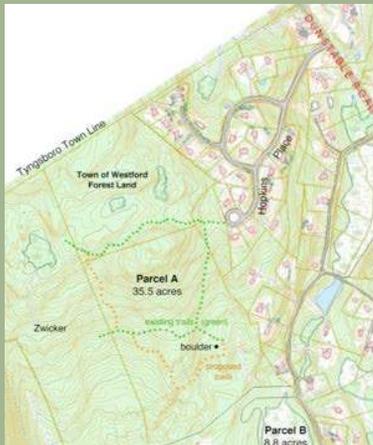
- *The Daniel Gage Ice Company of Lowell, MA, Ryan W. Owen*
- *Ice and Refrigeration, Volume 43 pg 63,, Aug. 1912*
- *Annual Town Report for the Year Ending Dec. 31, 1936*
- *Annual Town Report for the Year Ending Dec. 31, 1940*

Boston Road Farmland

by Bill Harman

A nine acre parcel of farmland on Boston Road, which was protected in perpetuity by the Town in 1996, is currently being threatened. A developer is proposing to eliminate the protection on this land and build a large restaurant on the farmland. This proposal would violate major community open space, zoning, and conservation priorities which have been established in Westford's Comprehensive Master Plan. The most obvious violation would be the farmland protection, which is in the form of an Agricultural Protection Restriction (APR). This APR was developed by the Town over a period of years, and was supported by the Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, and the Board of Selectmen. In 1996, it was voted to protect this farmland by a super-majority of the

is in the north part of Westford, near the Tyngsboro town line. The land includes a number of excellent trails, which can be accessed by parking at the end of Hopkins Place. One notable landmark to see is "Dinosaur Egg Rock" (pictured above), a huge boulder which was probably deposited there at the time of the last glacier melting. Click [here](#) to view a larger version of the map.



Guided Walk Schedule for November 2016 - January 2017

Town Meeting. The Town paid the then-owner \$525,000 to buy the development rights, and thus keep the land permanently protected.

The other community priority that would be violated by this commercial venture is the zoning bylaw of the Town of Westford. The commercial zone is on the other side of Route 495, where there currently are a number of restaurants. The Boston Road farmland is in the residential zone, where restaurants are not permitted.

It has been claimed by some that the land is so neglected that nothing short of a large commercial development can reclaim it. But, the Town has the authority right now to require the landowner to clean up the property. The APR document requires the landowner to actively engage in farming.

This nine acres of farmland is one of just a few farms that have been permanently protected in Westford. Others include Hill Orchard on Chamberlain Road, the Bonhe orchard on Tadmuck Road, and Meadow Brook Farm on Gould Road. The Westford Open Space Plan states that since 1957, Westford has lost 90% of its farmland.

The building of a restaurant on APR farmland has never been allowed anywhere in Massachusetts. According to the American Farmland Trust, it has never been allowed anywhere in the United States. If it happened here, Westford would be known as the town that ruined the APR program. This would be dangerous to the cause of open space protection, because other holders of APR and conservation lands could cite Westford as case-law precedent.

Fortunately, a substantial group of people is working to keep this farmland protected, and the Westford Conservation Trust is supporting



**Saturday, November 5,
2016, Kissacook Hill**

9:00 am - 10:30 am

Join Westford Conservation Trust Director Lenny Palmer for a hike on the third highest point in Westford (416 ft). Enjoy a fun hike along the almost mile long trail behind the Day School. Parts of the trail are steep, but footing is good. There are benches along the way. See if you can spot the fading red numbers that mark native flora. Sociable dogs on a leash are welcome.

Parking: Norman E. Day School, 75E Prescott St. Walk is free of charge; no sign-up is required. For more information, call Lenny at 978-392-9876.

**Saturday, December 3,
2016, Stepinski Land**

9:00 am - 10:30 am

Join a Westford Conservation Trust member for a walk on the wild side of the Stony Brook Conservation Land, across the brook from East

those efforts. We urge you to attend Town Meeting on October 17, ask questions, and hear the discussion on this important warrant article. [Since this article was written, the warrant article has been withdrawn by the Selectmen. However, an article for a liquor license for the proposed restaurant is still on the agenda (Article 1) and the owner has stated that he intends to resubmit his restaurant proposal at the Spring 2017 Town Meeting. Ed]

The Kloppenburg Trail

by Rich Strazdas

The Kloppenburg Trail off Flagg Road is less than two years old, and the trail map is not yet on the Trust's website. Be the first on your block to learn about it! Find a quiet spot and post a picture on our facebook page! Here are the preliminary trail descriptions and map. Enjoy!

This trail, constructed in late 2014, connects two properties owned by the Conservation Commission. The town acquired the property at the trailhead in 2000, while the larger landlocked parcel was donated by George and Virginia Kloppenburg in 1998. In the 1980s and 1990s, Tom Paul, who lived nearby, became very interested in some remarkable trees in that woodland. He discussed the value of those notable trees with Mr. Kloppenburg, and later Tom was very pleased when the Kloppenburgs donated that land to the Town of Westford. Even though it was landlocked at that time, Tom believed that the land was valuable as Conservation Land because of benefits to wildlife and water protection. When the land became accessible years later, the land became even more valuable to the townspeople. An easement in the intervening area was granted by Brenda and Perry Gould in 2014,

Boston Camps. Visit this 110 acre property acquired by Westford in 2008, with 1.6 miles of shoreline, mixed forest, a town well, and an undeveloped riparian ecosystem. Wave to the hikers on the Stony Brook Trail across the brook. Sociable dogs on a leash are welcome.

Parking: American Legion Fields off River Street Walk is free of charge; no sign up is required.

**Saturday, January 7, 2017,
Emmet Land from Trailside
Way**

9:00 am - 10:30 am

Enjoy the beauty of the Emmet Conservation Land in the Silent Season with Trust member Kate Hollister. Be prepared for any kind of weather, including snow or ice.

Sociable dogs on a leash are welcome as this is often a walk with several dogs. Walk is free of charge; no sign-up is required. For more information, call Kate at 978-392-6802.

Parking: The end of Trailside Way, off Powers Rd.

adding an unpaved trail to this interesting area of mixed forest and streams.

Parking is problematic on Flagg Road, so your best option is to use Alcorn Crossing nearby. The trail is in a shape called a lollipop. You go up the stem, around the pop in either direction, and back down the stem to your start. There are five stream crossings, but all are easy. The far end is about 80 feet lower than the trailhead, but the trail is never steep. The "steepest" section is to the right at the loop junction. If you prefer to go uphill, go clockwise; if you prefer to go downhill, go counter-clockwise; if you don't care, hike your own hike! Click [here](#) to view a larger version of the map.



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