



# Freedom's Way Heritage Association

Winter 2007-2008

## SHIRLEY SHAKER VILLAGE

### History in the Making as History is Preserved

Everything about the Shirley Shaker Village in Shirley, MA is unique, including the current project. The site was originally owned by the Shakers and given by them to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to be operated by the Department of Corrections (DOC) to retrain youthful offenders. Times change and the idea of using the buildings as the Shakers envisioned fell out of favor. The correctional facility now includes minimum, medium and maximum-security prisons.

Despite the expansion of the prison buildings around the village, it remains much as it was when the Shakers gave it up. But the buildings have deteriorated badly and historic preservation is not high on the DOC's list of priorities. Because the Shaker Village is listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places, its condition is of importance to the Commonwealth, State and local legislators, Mass Historical Commission, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the DOC, the Town of Shirley, Shaker enthusiasts, educators, historians, and museum professionals.

All of these people came together at Fruitlands Museum in Harvard at the request of Freedom's Way to discuss the best way to preserve the buildings. Acknowledging that it was almost unprecedented for such a diverse group to come together to discuss the future of the Shaker Village, MA Senator Pamela Resor and MA Rep. James Eldridge were able to secure a major appropriation of \$500,000 to begin rehabilitation work.

Everyone is mindful that although this appropriation is a significant amount, restoring the Shirley Shaker Village is a huge undertaking that will take time and require the cooperation of all the partners. The best interim use for the buildings is as office space for the DOC. Although the DOC is not in the business of historic preservation, this administration understands that acquiring additional funding for continued restoration will necessitate looking at other options for their use. Most major funding organizations looking to support heritage buildings want to see the benefit to the community at large. That will mean exploring ideas for developing a workable museum-quality program of interpretive experiences. A tall order, but with the continued cooperation of all the partners — it can be done.



*(Top) An historic Shirley Shaker building against a backdrop of razor wire. (Left) Members of the committee formed to stabilize the Shaker buildings survey a structure. (Below) Another Shaker building in need of repair.*

## FROM THE NEWS...

Associated Press—Nov. 24, 2007; Ben Evans, AP Writer

### Communities seek national heritage designation for their slice of America; critics rap costs

Every region of the country has its own piece of Americana that locals brag about to visitors.

Increasingly, they are asking Congress to help spread the word through a little-known federal program that designates National Heritage Areas. After approving just two dozen such areas since the early 1980s, Congress adopted 10 last year. The House signed off on six more last month and the wait list is growing.

Illinois wants recognition for Abraham Lincoln's early stomping grounds; New York is bidding for the area around Niagara Falls. Alabama is pushing a region along the Tennessee River where the Tennessee Valley Authority was born and where "Father of the Blues" W.C. Handy first picked a guitar.

Yet for the first time, the program is facing resistance on Capitol Hill from budget hawks and property-rights advocates. The National Park Service has called for a freeze on new designations until lawmakers approve more formal guidelines for the program.

*(Continued on page 2)*

(Continued from page 1)

"This is a relatively new model for conservation," said John Cosgrove, executive director of the Alliance of National Heritage Areas. "More and more community leaders want to apply it to their own regional stories"

Modeled after European practices, heritage areas are billed as a cost-effective, locally driven alternative to government-managed historic sites. The government does not buy property, impose land restrictions or provide staff. In fact the heritage program is expanding in part because little money is available for new publicly owned park facilities.

Instead, grass-roots groups are encouraged to preserve geography and history within livable communities. A heritage designation comes with a federal grant of up to \$1 million a year, to be matched with local money.

The local groups have flexibility in managing the areas, and the 37 existing sites have taken various approaches since the first was named in 1984, designating a historic canal linking the Great Lakes and the Illinois River.

While tourism is not necessarily the goal, drawing visitors is a major incentive, and the heritage tag has helped turn around many local economies. A 2004 Michigan State University study found that visitors to a heritage area celebrating southeast Michigan's auto industry spent \$123 million and helped create some 2,100 jobs.

The reason for the increased demand is that they are successful," said **Marge Darby**, who has helped lead a bid for a "Freedom's Way" heritage area highlighting early American History in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. "They're not just good at helping communities develop their heritage. They also happen to be economically beneficial."

With the popularity of the program growing, critics have emerged.

"This is backdoor federal land-use planning," said Ann Corcoran, who is fighting a "Hallowed Ground" Civil War heritage designation around her western Maryland farm. "Once this is in place, there will be pressure on the local government to plan their land use around the theme of heritage preservation."

More than 120 lawmakers voted against the recent House bill approving the "Hallowed Ground" and "Freedom's Way" areas, as well as others in Illinois, New York, Alabama and Arizona. The designations, which await Senate approval, drew opposi-

tion from groups such as the American Conservation Union and the Property Rights Alliance.

*[Ed. Note: Despite what seems to be formidable opposition, the bill passed the House by a 2/3 majority and received full support of the Senate Committee with one dissenting vote. The bill is expected to pass with ease]*

Along with concerns about land restrictions, critics say the federal government has no business funding local conservation.

**"Modeled after European practices, heritage areas are billed as a cost-effective, locally driven alternative to government-managed historic sites."**

"I believe in preservation. I just believe in doing it privately," said Corcoran, who once erected plastic pink flamingos on her farm to make the point that landowners are entitled to bad taste. "Why should some poor schmuck who's never

going to visit an area pay taxes so that some elitist can go on a historic tour?"

But with a budget of about \$13 million, heritage areas cost a fraction of what publicly owned facilities cost.

Although many heritage area campaigns have cited threats from development, supporters argue that the program does not lead to land-use restrictions. A 2004 report from independent auditors at what is now the Government Accountability Office backed their claim, saying researchers found no evidence that heritage designations had directly affected private property.

Darby likened the program to drawing an imaginary line around an area and marking it as important.

"The community is the classroom," she said. "You say to children: 'Here is where it happened, right here. Here's a bullet hole in this house, and it was a British bullet, and the man who lived in this house was shot right here.'"

The Park Service so far has failed to persuade Congress to establish formal criteria for heritage areas. As a result, the agency has withheld its support for new designations. But officials say the service strongly supports the overall program, particularly with strained budgets for public facilities.

"Getting a park unit is pretty difficult," said Alma Ripps, a legislative affairs specialist for the agency. "Heritage areas are less expensive and are maybe a little easier, although it's still a very high standard....There has to be very strong local interest."

## Freedom's Way Heritage Association

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Freedom's Way Heritage Association Serves the Communities of Acton, Arlington, Ashburnham, Ashby, Ayer, Bedford, Bolton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Clinton, Concord, Dunstable, Fitchburg, Gardner, Groton, Harvard, Hudson, Lancaster, Leominster, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, Lunenburg, Malden, Maynard, Medford, Pepperell, Princeton, Shirley, Sterling, Stow, Sudbury, Townsend, Westford, Westminster, Winchendon and Woburn in Massachusetts. Amherst, Brookline, Greenville, Hollis, Mason, Milford, Nashua and New Ipswich in New Hampshire.



## President's Message



John Ott  
President, FWHA

Throughout the Freedom's Way Heritage Area, there are numerous projects that affect the New England landscape. These projects are being led by preservation organizations, area historical societies, local and state governments and developers who often share similar goals related to growth and economic development, public access and accommodation, and even the shared concept of the value of historic preservation and heritage renewal. How these individuals and organizations get to consensus on these generally local matters however, often places them at odds with one another. Each party has specific issues or ideas that fail to understand the point of view of the other and the long term impact and/or future needs of those same

communities or their constituencies. New England's middle name should be "complexity" for that is the nature of our region and one of the things that gives us our individuality, uniqueness and character.

The good news in thinking about this subject is that the Freedom's Way Heritage Association has now received official state designation in both Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Our state heritage area is now recognized and the governors of both state are in the process of appointing official commissions to work with our association to empower our efforts to help preserve, protect and promote the shared history of the nationally significant resources of this region.

The Board of Directors want to help facilitate the work of the commissions by providing on an ongoing guidance, appropriate support and program ideas through forums that will bring the interested parties, supporting organizations and various stakeholders together to discuss the issues surrounding these projects. When one

thinks of the many buildings in need of new purposes, of community landscapes and view sheds that need to be protected, of the economic needs of small communities that need some focused leadership, innovative ideas and introduction of new methods on how they might solve some of these matters, this is where I see Freedom's Way taking the lead in the years ahead.

There is a very good chance in the coming year Freedom's Way will receive its federal designation as a National Heritage Area, and then the work of the last ten years and the programs and efforts of helping create the Historic Landscape Inventories will all bear fruit. So if you have projects that need the FWHA's attention, or ideas that need to be shared, or organizations you want to see involved with our association, please contact us or go to our website for more information on how you can get involved. Inclusion, like access, is critical if we are to be successful and preserve the gifts New England and its landscape have to offer.



***"New England's  
middle name  
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that is the  
nature of our  
region"***

### **"Gratitude is the Memory of the Heart"**

Because FWHA is a grassroots, all volunteer organization, we rely on the help of many people and organizations. So much is given to further our goals and we rarely feel we've recognized everyone enough for their efforts. Here, then, are a few gratitudes we would like to pass along — knowing, of course, that inevitably, there may be some who we unintentionally overlook.

**Hugh Field and the entire Field family** for the use of their Valley Farm for the site of the annual FWHA Rollin' and Strollin' in Shirley. Hugh also has tirelessly helped edit the town pages for the FWHA web site.

**Peggy Kempton** for donating computer programs.

**Jared Wollaston** for contributing to our distribution of our map brochures. Thanks too, for the able help of the distributors: **Betsi Tennessee, Ruth Rhonemus, Hugh Field and our local chambers of commerce.**

**Betsi Tennessee** also for organizing our liaison outreach and the liaison from our 45 towns who contribute background material for our town web pages.

**Maud Ayson**, Executive Director of Fruitlands Museum for continued support and generous use of meeting space.

Our guardian angel, **Pam Smith**, without whose financial assistance this year we would have surely faltered.

**MassDevelopment** for their continued support of our organization in providing space and utilities.

**The Devens DPW** for their watchful eye in keeping us dug out in snow, cool in summer, and warm in winter.

**Our neighbors Lynne Teague, Roman Ferguson and Jane Witherow** with the Devens Recreation Department for sharing their space with us.

**The Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce**, with whom we share office supplies and equipment in emergencies and from whom we have received a couple of emergency tutorials.

## Make This Year Count—Join Freedom's Way

There is no other organization in this region that brings such diverse interests as museums, cultural institutions, government officials, businesses, educators, to talk about the importance of our regional landscape. Our primary focus is to show the benefits of cultural heritage development and to enhance opportunities for combining the need for preservation with the needs of growth communities.

We offer a unified regional ap-

proach that will exponentially expand economic opportunities for our partners. Diverse stakeholders can pool resources; but unless they can become aware of how that might be accomplished, they are not ready to effectively coordinate their activities. That is our job. To accomplish this, we need your support.

The region's cultural heritage resources are plentiful, but the larger community may not have grasped its potential. With your help, we can do

this together.

Look through this newsletter and see what we are doing, then consider what you think we are worth. Your donations and dues will help us finish projects like the Paths of the Patriots (see page 5 for a sample).

You are the visionaries and experimenters of Freedom's Way.

*PS - please sign up with your email address and get our full color electronic version of this newsletter.*

### *So, are you a member? Join today.*

Renewal     New Membership

#### **Annual Membership Categories**

- Individual                      \$35  
 Family/Nonprofits/Community \$50  
 Business Roundtable            \$100

#### **Supporting Membership Categories**

- Minuteman                        \$250-\$499  
 Thoreau Associate                \$500-\$999  
 Patriot's Circle                    \$1,000-\$4,999  
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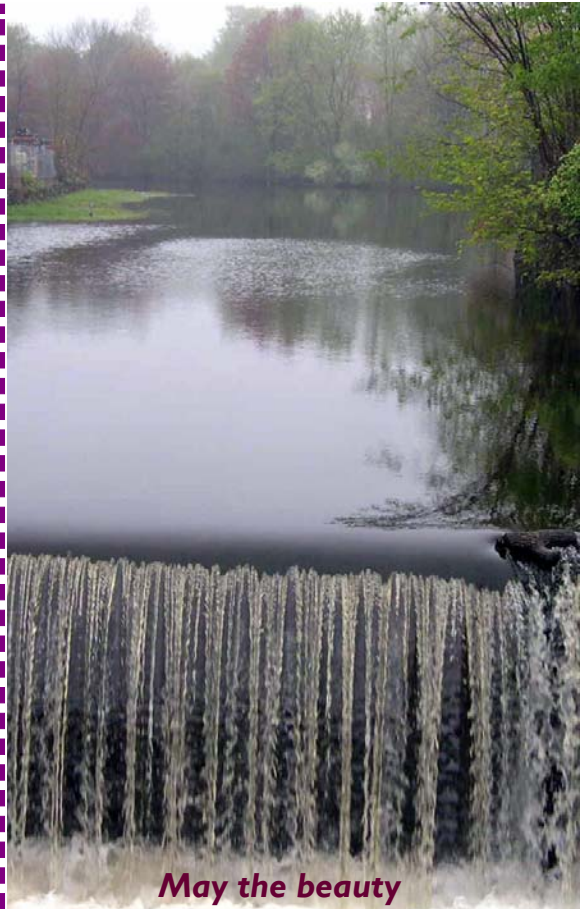
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*Important for email newsletter and other FWHA information*

***Thank You!*** We operate entirely with volunteers giving their time and resources. Your contribution will help to create and foster our National Heritage. Freedom's Way is a 501(C) 3 non-profit organization and, as such, your contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Mail with your check made out to FWHA:  
 To FWHA, 100 Sherman Avenue, Suite 2; Devens, MA 01434



***May the beauty  
 of our heritage landscapes  
 continue to inspire you.***

***Always remember that your efforts  
 help us maintain our vision.***

***Thank You For Your Membership!***

Photo: Assabet River Dam in Hudson, MA  
 Courtesy, MA DCR

## Meet the FWHA Commissioners

With the passage of law creating a Freedom's Way Heritage Area in both Massachusetts and New Hampshire, each state will have a panel of appointed commissioners to oversee their respective area.

New Hampshire's Governor John Lynch is believed to have recently appointed the following members of the NH Freedom's Way Commission: Robert Carr, Jim Coffey, David Gottesman, Jennifer Horn, Connie Kreider, Peggy Kempton, William Ludt, Alan Manoian, Charles Moser, Elizabeth Muzzey, Fredricka Olson, Henry Parkhurst, Debra Spratt, Torene Tango-Lowey, Peter Webb, and Steve Williams.

In Massachusetts, the following nominations have been made to Governor Duval Patrick for appointment:

William Ashe, Bonnie Biocchi, Michelle Ciccolo, Marge Darby, Rep. James Eldridge, Rep. Jay Kaufman, Jeanne Krieger, Laila Michaud, John Ott, Michael Volmar, Mary Whitney and Jared Wollaston. In addition, four African American/Native American candidates were nominated and it is unknown which individual will be appointed by Gov. Patrick.

Brona Simons, Executive Director of the Mass. Historical Commission and, Rick Sullivan, Commissioner of the Mass Dept. of Conservation and Recreation will serve as ex-officio members.

## Shriver Job Corps Receives FWHA Award

The Shriver Job Corps was given the 2007 Freedom's Way Heritage Association Award at the annual meeting in November, 2007. "The Job Corps youngsters have been a great help to us," said FWHA President John Ott. "As an all-volunteer organization, we look to the communities we serve for support. Working with the Shriver Job Corps is a two-way street—we benefit from their help and the students benefit from their work experience."

The Job Corps is a no-cost education and vocational training program at Devens, MA that is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor. The program is designed to help young people learn a trade, earn a high school diploma or GED and get help finding a job.



*Shriver Job Corps student Jennifer Bones, one of nearly 100 students who have worked at FWHA as part*

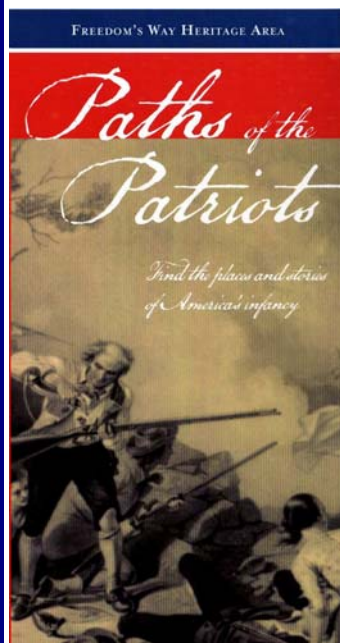


*The FWHA Award*

## [www.freedomsway.org](http://www.freedomsway.org)

### *Bedford's Role in the Battle of Concord, April 19, 1775*

The following is an excerpt of information that will begin appearing on the FWHA website in the coming months as part of the "Paths of the Patriots" project, underwritten in part by a grant from the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati. With thanks to Chuck French and the Bedford Historical Society.



*At about 2:00 AM on the morning of April 19, 1775, Capt. John Parker of the Lexington Minutemen dispatched two couriers, Benjamin Tidd and Jonathan Monroe, to warn the towns of Bedford and others beyond that the British Regulars were headed toward Concord to uncover hidden caches of arms and supplies. The couriers rode along the bridal path, now Hancock and Grove Streets in Lexington continuing as Page Road in Bedford. They woke Cornet Nathaniel Page of the Bedford Minutemen at his home (still existing at 89 Page Rd.) who, in turn, spread the alarm among the Bedford townspeople as well as the Minutemen and Militia.*

*Later that morning, toward dawn, the Minutemen, numbering 27, under the command of Capt. Jonathan Willson (whose home still exists at 261 Old Billerica Rd.) gathered at what is now Willson Park at the intersection of Concord and North Rds. They had a brief cold breakfast at the nearby Fitch Tavern (still existing at 12 The Great Rd.) and then began their march to Concord along what is now Concord Rd. in Bedford and Old Bedford Rd. in Concord towards Merriam's Corner.*

*At approximately the same time, the Bedford Militia, numbering 50, mustered at the home on their commander, Capt. John Moore on Concord Rd. (still existing at 191 Concord Rd.) and then continued the march to Concord where they met the Minutemen and joined the battle.*

*A total of 77 Bedford Minutemen and Militia then fought at Concord and comprised about 1/5 of the total of 350-400 colonial troops – the same number as sent by Lexington.*

*During an encounter with the Regulars on that same day, during their retreat back to Lexington along today's Battle Road in Lincoln, Capt. Willson of the Minutemen was killed, the only Bedford soldier killed that day.*

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**FWHA's 2007 Annual Meeting**

Dennis Fiori, President of the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS) was the keynote speaker at the 2007 FWHA Annual Meeting in November at the Harley House Inn.

MHS is the oldest repository for American history, Fiori said, having been established in 1791 in Boston. Recently, the society has focused on digitizing many of its collection on their internet website ([www.masshist.org](http://www.masshist.org)).

Chief among their holdings are the Adams Papers, a collection of 27,000 copies of papers from John and Abigail Adams through 1889. Fiori said many of the original documents are held by other institutions but the MHS is the largest central collection. Many Jefferson manuscripts are also being assembled and digitized via the society's website.

Fiori stressed that organizations that focus on history such as historical societies, must constantly assess and re-invent themselves to remain viable, relevant, and accessible.

**Coming Soon:**  
Featured Speaker William P. Veillette,  
Executive Director, New Hampshire  
Historical Society.



(Left to right) Advisory Council Chair Marge Darby, Dennis Fiori and member Gail Bloom



Dennis Fiori, President, Mass Historical Society

Milly Chandler, FWHA director emeritus (left), and MA Rep. Jamie Eldridge



Jerry Van Hook, (right) FWHA's Vice President, discusses pending federal legislation with Christin Wood, Economic Development Director, from Congressman John Olver's office



FWHA President John Ott



The Marys: Mary Whitney, assistant treasurer (left) and Mary Shasta, treasurer (right).

Photos courtesy of Dwight Sipler