



# Freedom's Way Heritage Association

Fall, 2005

Vol. 9, No. 2

## New Partnership Underway for Heritage Landscapes

by Jessica Rowcroft

Freedom's Way Heritage Association recently entered into a partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) to bring DCR's Heritage Landscape Inventory program to FWHA communities. Heritage landscapes are places created by human interaction with the natural environment that help define the character of a community and reflect its past.

A series of three public information meetings were held in October in the towns of Lexington, Hudson and Winchendon. Nearly half of the MA towns and cities in Freedom's Way sent representatives to learn more about the process. Several towns had already

formed a working group and have started to identify heritage landscapes in their communities.

### Hollis, NH is a Model

The Town of Hollis, NH completed an extensive survey, with the help of many volunteers and property owners as well as the Nashua Planning Commission. Funded by the National Park Service through the New Hampshire Div. of Historic Resources, this project is an award-winning model for other Freedom's Way towns.

The Heritage Landscape Inventory program began in 2001 with a pilot project in Southeastern Massachusetts. Working with 15 communities, the consulting team hired by DCR worked with local residents to identify and document on Massachusetts Historical Commission inventory forms over 75 significant landscapes.

DCR followed up the pilot project with a partnership with the Essex National Heritage Commission to bring the program to 24 communities in the Essex National Heritage Area. This partnership resulted in

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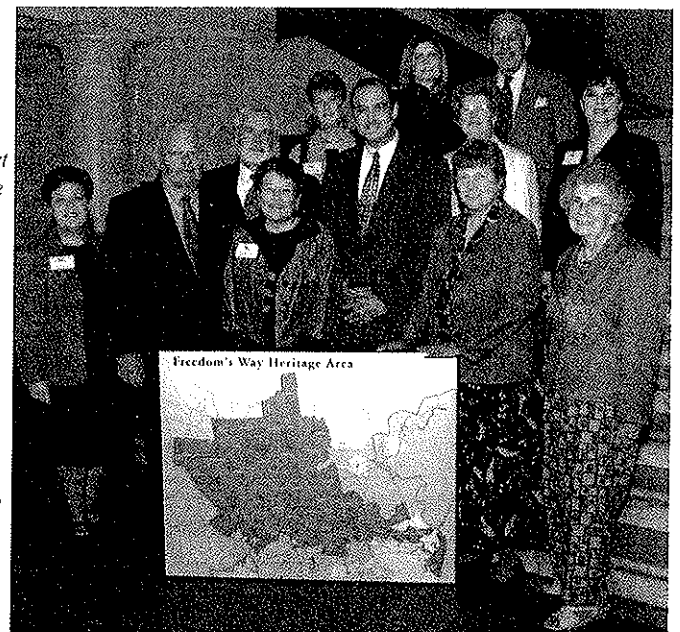
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## Freedom's Way Goes to the MA State House

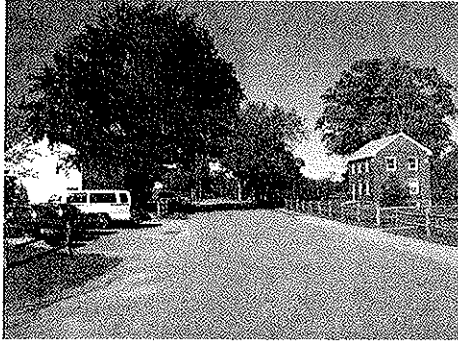
The Massachusetts Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development heard testimony in late September from supporters of the state bill S1852 to create the state Freedom's Way Heritage Area and Commission.

*Pictured here, (from left to right, starting in the front row) Meg Bagdonas, former FWHA executive director and now a FWHA board member, Rep. Robert S. Hargraves (R-First Middlesex), Marge Darby, chair of the FWHA's Advisory Committee, Sen. Pamela P. Resor (D-Middlesex and Worcester), and Milly Chandler of FWHA's Advisory Committee. Second row (l to r) John Ott, FWHA Board Member and Rep. James B. Eldridge (D-37th Middlesex). In the third row (l to r) is Lucy Wallace, FWHA Secretary Pro Tem, Mary Whitney, FWHA President and Bonnie Biocchi, Executive Director of the Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce. Back row (l to r) Patricia Pistone, Aide to US Cong. John Olver and Steven Darby.*



*Freedom's Way Heritage Association Serves 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, Woburn in Massachusetts. Amherst, Brookline, Greenville, Hollis, Mason, Milford, Nashua, and New Ipswich in NH*

# Interest Grows in Preserving the Shirley Shaker Village



*Today's Shirley Shaker Village*

When the remaining Shirley Shaker residents relocated elsewhere, their land was given to the state for use as a rehabilitation center for youthful offenders. Back then, the prison residents were taught skills to reenter society with jobs as farm workers or wood craftsmen. As the need for those skills declined, money for prisons was funneled into other uses. The historical facilities in Shirley fell into disrepair.

This spring, FWHA agreed to act as a facilitator to address issues of mounting concern about the Shirley Shaker Village. We chaired some meetings, thanks to the hospitality of Fruitlands Museum, to review local concerns and discuss options for mitigating these concerns. The two main issues are the problem of night lighting at the Department of Corrections (DOC) Souza-Baranowski Maximum Security facility and the degradation of historic buildings, in the former Shirley Shaker Village.

The Souza-Baranowski, and the Medium and Minimum Security Prisons are all on land that was once the Shaker Village.

Our ad hoc group consists of representatives of Massachusetts Historical Commission, Massachusetts Department of Corrections, the offices of Senator Pamela Resor and Rep. James Eldridge, the Shirley and Harvard Historical Commissions, the Shirley Historical Society, Fruitlands Museum, Freedom's Way, the Executive Director of the National Heritage Museum and another former Hancock Shaker Village executive, and two historic preservation architects among others. We all agree that:

1. Technical advice is needed to determine the current actual condition of all the Shirley Shaker buildings and to suggest alternatives to further stabilize and preserve them, preferably before winter.
2. The Department of Corrections is ill prepared to be stewards of a historic site and develop an interpretive program that would be needed in order to receive funding from federal or national sources for historic preservation.
3. We discussed the idea of an alternative to DOC ownership that would better suit the need for protection of a historic resource.
4. We also agree technical advice for alternatives to lighting is needed - and funding would be necessary for that as well.

Prison officials have given their assurances that they will work to help address these problems. They acknowledge that the buildings are their responsibility, and in turn, we recognize that funding to repair and maintain them has not been available. The prison officials, and all the participants, are interested in innovative ways to be part of a creative regional approach that has the potential of becoming a model program. We are seeking solutions to this with the Senator and Representative Eldridge. Senator Resor is looking into the possibility of establishing a Shirley Shaker Village Commission to address issues relating to the protection and future of the village.

## --- News Flash From the Office of Senator Pamela Resor ---

The MA Senate passed an economic stimulus bill that includes \$500,000 for the Shirley Shaker Village preservation efforts. The bill will invest a total of \$473 million in promoting areas of economic development.

Sen. Resor says, "We hope this provision [for the Shirley Shaker Village] will be accepted by the Conference Committee."

## Freedom's Way Heritage Association

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Mary Shasta, Vice President

Sandra Lefkovits, Treasurer

Lucy Wallace, Secretary Pro Tem

Marge Darby,  
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Advisory Council  
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# President's Message

It is my personal pleasure to thank every single person who worked so hard to secure letters of support for Freedom's Way. We are all busy people, and there is nothing more difficult than asking someone for something - but the legislation will never pass unless we each do our share. Our goal was 100% support from the Freedom's Way towns, and we achieved that in Massachusetts.

Some communities came through with many letters from the Mayors or Select Boards, Planning Boards, Historical Commissions, Redevelopment Authorities, Historical Societies and Colleges.

Sen. Pamela P. Resor filed legislation in the state house, and we are grateful for her strong support as well as Rep. James Eldridge, who led the effort in the House.

This fall, FWHA Board Member Will Ludt has begun work to garner letters of support in New Hampshire. So, get ready for that effort as well!

The state efforts will give the federal designation the extra push it needs for passage. And the letters of support are key to that success. If your organization would like to submit a letter of support, we can add it to the letters that will go to the US Congress.

We are grateful for your past support and your membership. Remember, we are a totally volunteer organization and we cannot function without your financial and volunteer help.

\* \* \* \* \*

As we realize the losses New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, we ask ourselves, "How can we continue to look for grants, donations and membership dues to support

FWHA in these terrible times?"

The answer leads back to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. With all of the rebuilding underway, we hear the residents there are concerned about their familiar landmarks and their community's history.

Beyond their own homes and possessions, they want to preserve their historic landmarks wherever possible.

The heritage area movement began in England after World War II. The thought then was, "Although we have lost much, we are still home. We will rebuild. And as we rebuild, what are the most important places to protect in order to have our sense of place?" They did not ask, "Should we be spending money on preservation?"

Freedom's Way is not in the business of rebuilding. But we are looking for ways to use our heritage to benefit our communities, and to give the region an economic boost through heritage development.

Rep. Ellen Story (D-Hampshire) said at the FWHA hearing that corporate tax breaks and incentives rarely accomplish much when companies leave the state a few years later. She sees heritage development as good for business because it helps keep communities whole. And, as she said, "you're not going anywhere because your work is here."

The best to you all, and thank you again for your hard work and support.



*Mary H. Whitney*  
Mary H. Whitney  
President

## Heritage Landscapes

*Continued from page 1*

the production of high quality reconnaissance reports that are loaded with technical planning recommendations that are specific to the heritage landscapes that were prioritized by the residents in each community. Please feel free to contact Jessica Rowcroft at the DCR with any questions you might have at 617-626-1380.

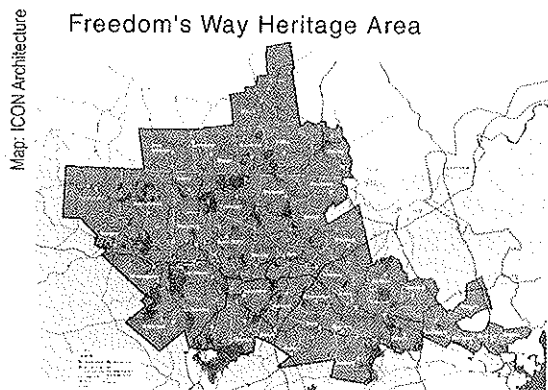
## Paths of the Patriots

The Middlesex County Soldiers who traveled to Fort Ticonderoga in 1776 passed through Groton, Pepperell, Townsend, Ashby, Ashburnham in MA and New Ipswich in NH.

Do you have a story to share about a patriot from one of those towns? Let us know!

# Town Visits

Several Freedom's Way cities and towns hosted us in tours and meetings in 2005 and we are grateful to all of our tour guides, sponsors and supporter's we met along the way.



*Proposed Freedom's Way Heritage Area*

We visited Leominster and met **Mayor Dean Mazzarella** with FWHA board member **David Wilson** at the **Leominster Historical Society Museum** to see their Civil War exhibit. As always, it is the surprising connections that make local museums so much fun. Who would have thought that the Leominster Museum would have an item in their collection that connects Leominster to famed Civil War nurse Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross?

We also went to the **Westford Historical Society's** *Rediscovering a Moment in Time* to learn about the discovery of a cannon in the silted bottom of Lake Champlain and the important Battle of Valcour Island -- all from **Marilyn Day and Bob Oliphant**. One of the casualties in this battle was Westford's Lt. Thomas Rogers who was killed when a cannon exploded. The event left Roger's young wife Molly a "sorrowfull" widow. In 1783, Molly married the owner of an establishment in Lexington that is also now an historic site.

At the invitation of **Mike Ellis**, Executive Director of the **Gardner Chamber of Commerce** and **Ellen DiGeronimo**, (then acting Executive Director during Mike's leave of absence), we attended a presentation to the Gardner Chamber of Commerce by **Peter Aucella** from the **Lowell National Historic Park** about "Preservation as Economic Development."

From there, **Tom Malloy**, President of the **Gardner Museum**, showed us central Gardner, including Gardner Common and the Gardner Cemetery.

FWHA President **Mary Whitney** toured us through **Fitchburg**. Through breaks in the clouds, we saw the views from Laurel Hill Cemetery and vowed to return to climb among slate headstones in the oldest section there and at the even older Revolutionary Cemetery on South Street. A surprising treat hides behind the large Main Street buildings on Central Street where a mews or winding way of historic homes conjures up visions of an earlier time. A businessman might walk to his Main Street office and back again for lunch - two worlds side by side: the emerging city and the remnants of Fitchburg long, long ago.

## And a Quiz!

Questions relate to stories on these pages.

**Quiz Question 1:** What is in the Leominster Museum's collection about Clara Barton?

**Quiz Question 2:** What is the name of Molly's second husband, and the name his of establishment?

**Quiz Question 3:** What is unusual about the design of the facade of the Gardner Historical Museum?

**Quiz Question 4:** Why is the tower that sits above the parking lot adjacent to the Gardner Heritage Museum and Veteran's Center so popular with duffers?

**Quiz Question 5:** Who built the stonewalls along the roadway in Coggs Hall Park in Fitchburg?

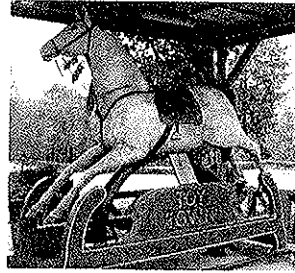
**Quiz Question 6:** Who was Morton Converse?  
(See next page)

*(Answers to this quiz can be found on page 8)*

# Welcome Winchendon

Early this spring, the town of Winchendon became the most recent addition to FWHA. We were pleased to visit there and take a tour guided by **Town Manager Jim Kreidler and Ruth DeAmicis of the Winchendon**

**Courier.** In another newsletter, we'll let Winchendon's liaisons tell you about the places in their community that connect to the Freedom's Way themes. In this issue, we want to tell you about two new Winchendon projects: The Heritage Mills and the Converse Gardens.



*Winchendon's Clyde, the Toy Town Horse*

Courtesy: Winchendon Historical Society

## Winchendon's Heritage Mills Project

Heritage Mills seeks to set a new standard as a fully integrated educational resource and regional economic engine. Many popular reconstructed museum villages demonstrate early life, agriculture and use former technologies and methods to producing goods for educational purposes. But none have as many local resources and technologies, nor as many on-site components, to provide such an environmentally and economically sustainable project.

The Heritage Mills project begins with a different focus: To celebrate the inventiveness and productive power of early mechanical technologies and to demonstrate how these early mechanical methods can supply a unique niche market. This non-profit educational enterprise will preserve historic mill buildings, heritage technologies, revive a regional economy, create jobs, demonstrate sustainable industries and energy systems, and make and sell products to sustain it financially.

Is this a tall order? You bet! But this is what Winchendon has to contribute: water power, steam, and electricity; old mills with antique equipment to grind grain, spin wool and produce specialty products. Initial conversations with existing businesses indicate a strong interest in the creation of joint ventures and partnerships including a national milling company, wood products companies, organic grain farmers, feed stores, a creamery and other historic sites. The project has received initial

funding to begin a feasibility study and additional funding is expected. We will certainly keep you updated about this exciting venture.

## The Converse Gardens Restoration

A good portion of Winchendon is defined by the Miller's River. Across the road from the Town Hall and the Historical Society, down a steep embankment is a portion of the river that is part of a millpond system. Between the pond and Front Street, Morton E. Converse built a mansion that was the scene of many Winchendon galas. Removed in the 1920s, what remains of the mansion and its landscaping are the remnants of terraced Italianate gardens that once led down to a water garden and an arched bridge or walkway over the water. Although the walkway and the water garden are also gone, a committee has been formed to bring the hillside gardens back and open up the view of the river from the roadway. This will be a daunting project, requiring the removal of many years of neglect and growth - but with old photographs and determination, the gardens will once again be a reminder of a glorious quieter past.

## Coming Soon

**Profiles of the new FWHA Towns in New Hampshire -- Amherst and Milford.** We're pleased to welcome the towns of Amherst and Milford to the Freedom's Way, and hope to feature these historic and picturesque communities in the next issue.

**Your email address is important to us.** We are considering sending our newsletter to our members and supporters by email and through our web site instead of incurring increasing postal costs. Don't miss out! Call 978-772-3654 or send us an email message to [mail@freedomsway.org](mailto:mail@freedomsway.org) and give us your current email address.

# What Will We Look Like in 100 Years?

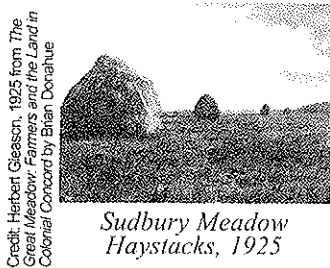
As factories fold, our cities have the task of adapting and reusing abandoned buildings, brownfields and entire neighborhoods. People have migrated to the suburbs where new residential developments have eaten up forest and farmlands.

Our farms define our heritage. The pioneers moved to Concord, MA and areas outside Boston to farm the great meadows. For generations, Concord farmers practiced subsistence farming that was surprisingly sustainable: a balance of cows, hay, corn, woodland, tillage. This practice served them well until the local farms could no longer support the practice of dividing the land for each succeeding generation. Eventually it was expected that only one or two sons would remain on the farm and others would move elsewhere. Simon Willard was sent out to Concord as the King's representative to help develop the land and subsequent generations of Willards settled in Ayer, Harvard, Lancaster and surrounding towns. One descendent tells us, with tongue in cheek, that some Willards moved much further west in search of land without rocks.

The rocks themselves are a part of the same agricultural heritage. Forefathers built the walls to clear the land, mark boundaries and keep the cows at home. With Robert Thorson (*see Stone Walls, right*), we contemplate what our towns might look like if all the stone walls were to suddenly disappear.

An even larger question looms ominously - what will the landscape look like when all the farms are gone? Sholan Farms is the last remaining Apple Orchard in Leominster. Will we soon have demonstration farms in all of our towns to teach how we once raised food?

We have plenty of land upon which to grow food - but what will food taste like when it is all shipped in from far away? Our sense of place cannot be disconnected from our agricultural heritage.



Credit: Herbert Gleason, 1925 from *The Great Meadows: Farmers and the Land in Colonial Concord* by Brian Donahue

*Sudbury Meadow Haystacks, 1925*

## Will We Have Stone Walls?

Imagine New England without stone walls. It's possible, according to UConn Professor Robert M Thorson. He calls it "mining of stone walls" - when landowners sell interior stone walls on their property. Thorson sadly tells of seeing a large earth moving truck on a highway in Connecticut with the slogan, "We Buy Stone Walls" in large letters across the back.

Stone walls are also stolen in a matter a few hours and shipped to other parts of the country at a hefty profit, Thorson said. The lichen, moss and other aging effects so common here make the stones valuable in new construction or in parts of the country that don't have stones so readily available. Property owners often don't realize the theft until it is too late.



*Prof. Robert Thorson examines a stone wall at Great Elms in Harvard, MA*

Thorson wants everyone to value our local stonewalls as much as he does and launched the Stonewall Initiative: Conserving New England's Stone Wall Heritage. He's also the author of *Stone by Stone: The Magnificent History in New England's Stone Walls* (2002) and the recently released "Exploring Stone Walls: A Field Guide to New England's Stone Walls" (2005). He has spent more than 15 years investigating stone walls, which he believes are rural New England's signature land form. He calls them the "classical ruins of New England." For more information on the Stone Wall Initiative, see <http://www.stonewall.uconn.edu>.



*Shaker Barn Walls Harvard*

Courtesy: Robert M. Thorson, Stone Wall Initiative



*Prof. Robert M. Thorson*

Courtesy: Robert M. Thorson, Stone Wall Initiative

### What Can an Agricultural Commission Do for Your Town?

Free information meeting to learn about the benefits and roles of Agricultural Commissions

**Monday, Dec. 12, 2005, 6:30-8:30 p.m.**

**Groton Grange Hall, 80 Champney Street in Groton, MA**

**For other meetings, contact Cheryl Lekstrom, 508-835-2452 or [clekstrom@mac.com](mailto:clekstrom@mac.com)**

## Three Women, Three Centuries: Spirit and Spirituality

A glimpse into the lives of three independent women who made a lasting impact on Harvard, MA.

**Mother Ann Lee**, founder of the Shakers, who made her home in the Harvard Shaker enclave from 1781 to 1783. Mother was an illiterate who came to the US from England with a small group of followers in 1774. She believed that the evils of the world were the result of depravity and lustful gratification of the flesh, and established a celibate communal society, practicing confession, self denial and rejection of the world.

**Abigail May Alcott** was an unwilling participant in her husband Bronson's failed Utopian communal experiment in Harvard in 1843. She was generally the only woman on the farm during the seven month experiment, and worked in the fields herself at harvest time when the men were away proselytizing.

**Clara Endicott Sears**, a Boston blue-blooded descendant of two colonial governors, was a wealthy Victorian spinster. She became a pioneer in historic preservation only after purchasing some property in Harvard and discovering that the

"unsightly buildings at the bottom of her hill" were the remnants of Bronson Alcott's Fruitlands commune. "I must save it," she said, Ultimately, Fruitlands Museum was born.

If you would like to learn more about these three remarkable women, send in \$13 with the form at right and check the box for this fascinating book by Cynthia Barton.

Courtesy: Fruitlands Museum



Miss Clara  
Endicott Sears

### Legislative Update

Freedom's Way now has two companion bills before the 109th Congress -- **HR 956 and S1898**. We are looking for a successful outcome since we expect 100% of the FWHA cities and towns will provide letters of support.

Contact your legislators and let them know you support FWHA.

You are cordially invited to the  
Annual Meeting of  
The Freedom's Way Heritage Association  
Thursday, December 1, 2005 at 6:30 p.m.  
Harley House  
Lunenburg, MA  
Featuring Roben Campbell  
Recognized Shaker Researcher and Speaker  
Please call 978-772-3654  
or RSVP to your invitation in the mail

### Membership Information

Renewal  New Membership

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- Business Roundtable \$100

#### Supporting Membership Categories

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Send me *Three Women, Three Centuries*.  
I am enclosing \$13 to cover cost and shipping.

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*Important for email newsletters and other FWHA info*

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We also have gift memberships!  
Call us for more information.

**Thank You!** 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.

**Freedom's Way Heritage  
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## Ask Freedom's Way!

### What is Smart Growth?

According to the Office of Commonwealth Development, smart growth or sustainable development is about growing where it makes the most sense: in and around central business districts or traditional city or town centers, near transit stations, or in areas that have been previously developed for commercial, industrial or institutional uses. It's about growing where there are existing infrastructure and utilities, greater pedestrian access to schools, civic facilities, retail or employment centers, and other destinations.

What Makes Smart Growth Smart? Smart Growth provides more choices in housing, transportation, and in community building. It diversifies options for people with a variety of needs and preferences about places to live and work, depending on their state of life, income, goals and interests.

Smart Growth supports environmental preservation and human development. By directing new growth to area that already have infrastructure and services, smart growth promotes more sustainable use of resources and allows for preservation of critical environmental resources.

What would a Smart Growth state be like? Imagine thriving cities, town centers as the heart of the community, within walking distance for residents. Imagine fewer isolated subdivisions, commercial strips and malls, clean and adequate water supplies, biodiversity and less air pollution, more travel choices for short and long distances and all kinds of households - young people, families, singles, empty-nesters, low and moderate income households, retirees, owners, renters - all with decent living spaces and reasonable prices.

Answers to the FWHHA Quiz on Page 4-- #1: The museum has a letter from Clara Barton to her cousin Elvira. And, the first soldier Clara Barton ever nursed was Alva Parker of  
Leominster. #2: Molly's second husband's name was Monroe and the establishment was the Monroe Tavern, a historical landmark in Lexington, MA, built around 1695. #3: The entrance  
porch is in the shape of a giant chair. #4: Local golfers use the tower to line up a tee shot. #5: The roadway walls in Coggeshall Park were built by the Works Progress Administration  
(W.P.A.), which was created to help provide economic relief to those who were suffering through the Great Depression. #6: Morton E. Converse was one of several successful  
Winchendon businessmen and town benefactors, who began in 1851 to improve the village by donating shade trees for planting along town roads. Converse alone donated close to  
1,000 trees between 1904-1917 including 800 elms and nearly 200 maples. In those days, his mansion with its large reception hall, ballroom, bowling alley, conservator and museum  
was the scene of many events and parties.