

Column #2

CELEBRATING PLACE: 30th Anniversary Notes from Blue Hill Heritage Trust

The Mountain- A story of gifts to the community

By Jim Dow, Executive Director, Blue Hill Heritage Trust

If there is one landscape feature that all residents and visitors to our Peninsula know, it is Blue Hill Mountain. Though its summit is less than 1000 feet in elevation, its singular presence makes it a defining landscape feature, and a focus of Blue Hill Heritage Trust's conservation efforts

The Mountain is valued by people for many different reasons: as a place to exercise; as a place of beauty; as a place that provides magnificent views in all directions; as wildlife habitat; as a place to find solace in this fast-paced world or a spiritual connection with the natural world. All who enjoy our Mountain have many people to thank for a series of gifts that have made this land one of our community's most beloved shared public spaces.

The conservation of the Mountain actually began before our Trust was formed. In 1977, Ruth Hayes bequeathed a large tract of land on the eastern side of the Mountain to the Town of Blue Hill "for conservation purposes". Hayes acquired this land (once the homestead of Nicholas Holt, one of the Blue Hill's earliest settlers, and later known as the Morse Farm) with the express intention of conserving it. For many years, until the early 2000's when we worked with other community members to develop walking trails on the property and placed a sign there memorializing Hayes' gift to our community, there was little public awareness that this was a community asset. Nonetheless this gift got the conservation of the Mountain rolling.

Another gift in 1989 continued what Ruth Hayes had begun and got our Trust involved. Louise Frederick, whose great-great great-great grandfather Phineas Osgood came to Blue Hill in 1764 and became proprietor of half of the township of Blue Hill, donated a conservation easement to our Trust on a 79 acre portion of her family's land that included the Mountain's summit. Louise had a fierce commitment to the Mountain and she was pleased that the easement would ensure that the land would always be off-limits to development.

When Louise died in 1998, we learned that she had also gifted ownership of this land to our Trust. At this point, with her previous blessing, we began developing and maintaining the trails on the Mountain that so many people now enjoy, starting with the Osgood Trail, named in honor of Louise's family.

The gifts of these two ladies led the way, but others have followed. In the early 1990s, many people made gifts to a fundraising campaign that allowed our Trust to purchase a 19 acre parcel on the western shoulder of the Mountain and thereby help the town settle a legal dispute over a controversial development proposal. Since then, many others have donated the money necessary to acquire other parcels on the Mountain that are adjacent to the Hayes and Frederick gifts.

The gifts of land by people who care about our community and the Mountain have also continued. In 2010, for example, after we had acquired a large tract on the northeast side of the

Mountain, the Becton Family donated an abutting parcel with frontage on the Turkey Farm Road that allowed us to create a new walking trail that offered a whole new Mountain experience. Very recently another wonderful gift continues the story.

Kitty Clements has now joined Ruth Hayes and Louise Frederick as donors of the Mountain's high ground for the long-term enjoyment of us all. Late last year Kitty donated to our Trust her legal interest in a 66 acre parcel of family land that forms Blue Hill Mountain's scenic western shoulder, sometimes referred to locally as "Little Blue Hill". The land includes both fields and woods, is prominently visible from the harbor, the village and various public roads, and it lies between two parcels previously conserved by our Trust. It is a key piece of land in our efforts to conserve the Mountain's upper elevations.

This parcel, once part of a farm owned by the Osgood family (Louise Frederick's ancestors), was acquired by Dorothy Austin, Kitty's mother, in the 1950's. The ownership interest, but not the land itself, was subsequently divided among family members. Kitty gifted us her 80% undivided ownership interest, thrilled that we would accept her partial interest and work to ensure the long-term conservation of this land.

This summer we will be meeting with the owners of the other 20% interest to discuss our joint ownership and the future stewardship of the property. We hope eventually to be able to extend our trail network on the Mountain to this new parcel. For now, we are celebrating this generous gift, a huge step forward in what seemed but a dream 30 years ago when our Trust was founded.



Caption for Photo A: A hiker heads up the Mountain on the Osgood Trail on land donated by Louise Frederick



Caption for Photo B: Two young hikers hike the Mountain over land donated by Ruth Hayes.