

QUARRY HISTORY PROJECT UPDATE 2002

By Dorothy Napp Schindel and Eve Cholmar

The Historic Committee of the Becket Land Trust's Historic Quarry and Forest continues to discover pieces of Becket's past through study of the site and its relation to the surrounding community. Focus has been placed on setting goals to realize the creation of an open space museum complete with self-guided walks and accompanying interpretive programs. With the help of Matt Kierstead, from the Society for Industrial Archaeology, and Allen Williams of the Chester Granite Company, we have begun locating, identifying and documenting objects that were part of our quarry, formerly known as the Hudson-Chester Granite Quarry. Sharon Hughes has worked diligently on the daunting task of creating technical drawings of the objects, as we find them. Her work has enabled us to begin substantiating our findings so that we can create a bonafide collection. And importantly, Allen has aided us in creating a plan for stabilizing, repairing and preserving the derrick.

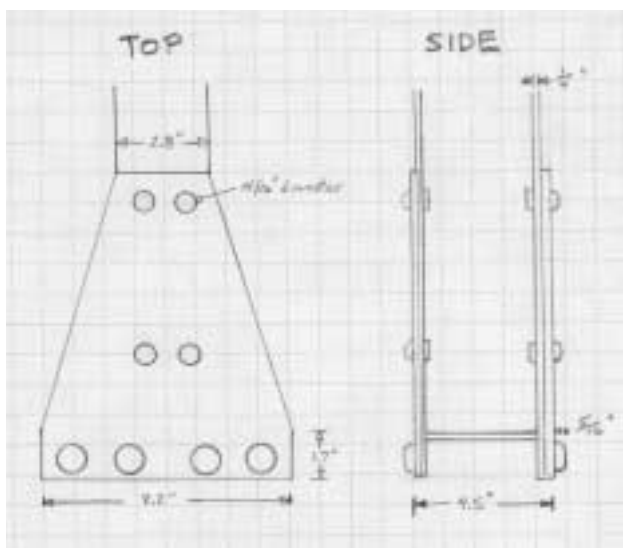
We are becoming involved in networking with other outdoor interpretive sites. To this end, we joined both the New England Museum Association (NEMA) and the Society for Industrial Archaeology. Eve Cholmar, Dorothy Schindel and Sharon Hughes will be attending a NEMA workshop at the American Textile History Museum in Lowell Mass, entitled: Exhibit Techniques for Small Museums. This workshop will help us prepare for the Earth Art exhibit that we are mounting in collaboration with the Becket Arts Center this coming August. The Earth Art exhibit will focus on creations made with materials from the earth beneath our feet. Our component of the exhibit, entitled, Preserving the Historic Quarry: A Work in Progress, will feature maps, artifacts, photographs, historic narratives, and videotapes of the oral history interviews we



have been conducting. A storyteller will weave tales of the quarry and we hope to have an interactive component designed by Jon Golden who specializes in 3-D images of industrial sites. In addition, Allen Williams will be exhibiting his sculpture and will demonstrate stone cutting techniques.

We have been working on other projects as well, such as the compilation of a small library of reference books on museum practices. These materials provide us with opportunities for studying trends in preservation, cataloguing, programming, funding, and historic interpretation. In addition, we have located a small slate quarry museum in Granville, New York. This museum has a similar developmental history to ours. We look forward to visiting the site and speaking with the volunteers, Board, and staff members. Many aspects of their operation will serve us well as a role model.

One of our most interesting focal points, thus far, has been the launching of an Oral History Project. Eve, Dorothy, and Sharon kicked off this effort by attending a seminar at Clio Associates: Center for Recording Life's Stories, in Florence, Massachusetts. Recommended to us by Roberta Goldman, this



Drawing and photo showing a detail of the derrick's bull-wheel which we have documented in technical drawing format as part of our historic research. This work precedes the reparative efforts taking place this summer.

expert team of specialists gave us a wealth of advice about oral history methodology, from questioning techniques to strategies for shaping personal narratives, to camera and lighting guidelines. A very special thank you to Dan Woiski, whose expertise has proved indispensable. A Becket resident and professional video producer, Dan has been invaluable in documenting our interviews and in teaching us viable methods. Dan has garnered many, many hours of raw video footage and will be creating tapes of the interviews for all to see.

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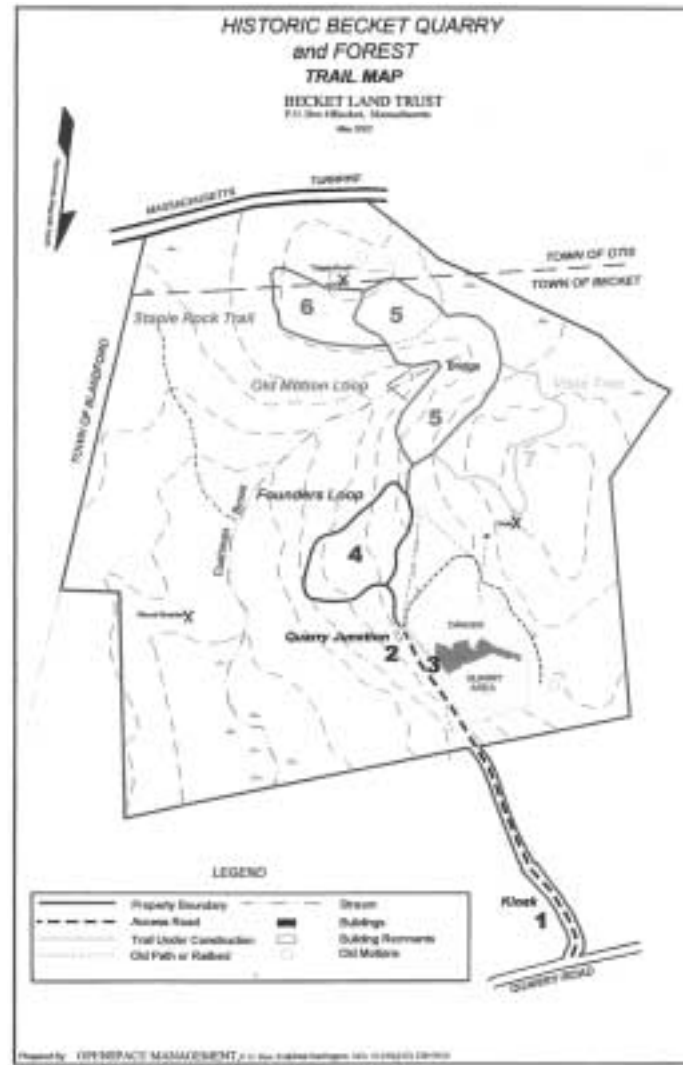
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To date, we have interviewed the following people:

- Esther Moulthrop and Iva Barstow, daughters of James Burwell Turner. He and his brother George were intimately involved in the quarry. The girls, especially Iva, spent days there during their school vacations and have vivid memories of those times as well as of life in Becket in the 20's and 30's.
- Leslie and Paul Mitchell and their sister, Melvina Frisbie, children of William Mitchell. They also gave us valuable information. Both Leslie and Paul worked in Becket quarries and have expertise in this field.
- Bob Bowen. He had three uncles who worked at the Hudson-Chester Granite Quarry and had many interesting tales to tell of Becket.

We do hope to interview others who either worked or had close relatives or friends who worked at the quarry or in Chester.

If you have information about the quarry or know someone who does, or if you would like to join us in our endeavors, please call Dorothy at (212) 260-0111 or (413) 623-5692 (weekends), e-mail: dramamuse@nyc.rr.com OR Eve at (212) 260-3281 or (413) 623-6040 (May through September), e-mail: sidandeve@hotmail.com.



Left, the informational kiosk, and above, the sign at the Quarry. Top right, a map of the Quarry property showing this year's trail work progress.

Facing page: The new ski trail bridge across Cushman Brook. The Smiths' dog Willie graciously agreed to pose so we could comprehend the scale of the bridge.

STATE OF THE TRUST

As we enter our second decade, the Becket Land Trust is excited by all that we have accomplished. Last year, we completed several more hiking trails at the Historic Quarry and Forest property. We had a group from Americorps work on the trail that our members cleared the year before and then later in the season the volunteers built our first bridge on a ski trail across Cushman Brook. We now have a more accessible parking area, a welcoming kiosk built by our own Stephen Schindel, and several miles of hiking and ski trails open to the public. There are maps and the trails are marked so that even those who are unfamiliar with the property can find their way around. We have named the completed trails and installed signage and maps at key intersections so even the uninitiated should have no trouble finding their way. Apologies to those of you who had trouble previously. Please take advantage of this unique outdoor recreational opportunity that was made possible through volunteer efforts on the part of our community.

We are continuing the planning and development of an open space museum focused on the Historic Quarry that has a number of unique archeological features. This year we will be concentrating on the Artifact Documentation Project. This entails recording the location and description of each item at the quarry and providing an overview on what we have on contour maps and GPS locations. Please join us if you are interested in doing some real field archeology work. This is the first step on our way to creating an informative and educational facility for all to enjoy. Look forward to the day when you can hike up to the old quarry and take a self-led tour and learn about that fascinating industry that was so important to the growth and vitality of our town a century ago.

We have begun our oral history research using videotaped interviews with members of the community who had a direct connection to the quarry when it was still active. Please contact us if you or anyone you know of can give us information about the quarry or has pictures we could copy or artifacts we could document for our records.



FOUNDERS' LOOP DEDICATION

The first trail that we completed will be given its official name in honor of all the people who contributed towards the acquisition of the Quarry Property. On June 22, which is one of our workdays, we had a celebration at the trail with an unveiling of the plaque listing the names of all donors.

WORKDAY ACTIVITY FOR 2002

We have scheduled four workdays this year. They are June 22, July 21, August 25 and September 22. We meet at the Quarry parking area at 10 AM. We send out reminders to members on the email list and announce the day's activities so you can decide to come based on your inclinations. This year we will be continuing with trail clearing, mostly small stump removal, working on the Artifact Documentation Project and working on stabilizing the still-standing Derrick, so there should be a bit of something for everyone.

OTHER LAND CONSERVATION IN BECKET

Beyond the quarry property, the Land Trust is active in identifying and protecting other sensitive area of town. We have been named as the beneficiaries in someone's will for a large parcel which includes a barn and old farm house. Keeping this piece of land in its undeveloped state will increase surrounding property values and contribute to the quality of life for those living nearby. Please contact us if you would like to learn about the estate and income tax advantages of placing your property into a conservation restriction.

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership continues to grow. We have logged several hundred hours of volunteer effort and accomplished a great deal. We have received several foundation grants which have covered much of the expense of work done at the Quarry; we hope to cover our operating expenses by membership donations. If you would like to find out more about the Becket Land Trust or would like to join, please contact us a PO Box 44, Becket or BecketLandTrust@AOL.com. And thank you for your continued support.

ANNUAL MEETING

This year's annual meeting will be held on Saturday 19 October. I hope you can attend and help us continue with all of the work we have accomplished to date. Thank you for your support and encouragement.

Kenneth Smith
President, The Becket Land Trust



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CONSERVATION RESTRICTIONS PROTECT LAND AND PRIVACY

Does this landowner's question strike a chord with you: "I want my land to stay undeveloped forever, but I don't want to give it away to a conservation group -- I want to keep living on it. How do I do it?"

Many landowners in Berkshire County have solved this puzzle by placing a conservation restriction on their property. A conservation restriction is a legal instrument by which a landowner enters a binding agreement that his or her land, or a portion of it, will never be developed. The landowner is free to maintain his use of the land, and can sell it at his pleasure. However, the conservation restriction remains with the land, binding succeeding owners. So long as the natural values of the property are protected, the terms of conservation restriction can be tailored to the individual landowner's needs and desires.

For instance, a landowner might reserve the right to harvest timber, or build a barn, or even build a house in a specified location. While landowners sometimes sell conservation restrictions (or conservation easements, as they're called in other states), more often a family gives a conservation restriction to a qualified charitable conservation organization, such as a land trust or a state conservation agency. In return for the gift, the recipient charity undertakes the obligation to ensure that the terms of the restriction are not violated.

Gifts of conservation restrictions sometimes provide landowners with opportunities for income tax or estate tax savings. Encumbering the land with a conservation restriction low-



ers its value, thereby reducing or eliminating inheritance taxes when the land is passed from one generation to the next.

The Berkshire Natural Resources Council holds conservation restrictions on lands all over Berkshire County. The Resources Council has assisted in the preparation of nearly 100 restrictions or similar instruments, and would be pleased to provide further information to any interested party. To contact the Resources Council, call George Wislocki or Tad Ames at 413/499-0596 or write to BNRC, 20 Bank Row, Pittsfield, MA 01201.

Directions to the Historic Quarry and Forrest: From the intersection of Route 20 and Route 8 North, take the road opposite Route 8 North. This is Bonny Rigg Hill Road. Follow Bonny Rigg Hill Road for about 2 miles to a large four corner intersection and turn left onto Quarry Road. Follow Quarry Road for about half a mile and look for the entrance to the property on your right. Park near the Kiosk and please sign in and out.