

The York Land Trust Newsletter

# LANDMARKS

## Historic Agreement Conserves 175 Acres Along York River



In a historic moment for the Town of York, the York Country Club has sold its 186-acre property and all of its holdings to the York Golf and Tennis Club, giving this community organization a permanent home. As an essential part of this transaction, the Country Club shareholders chose — and the York Golf and Tennis Club readily agreed — to permanently conserve 174 acres of the newly acquired land to ensure that it remains undeveloped and accessible to the community for golf, tennis, and other recreational activities like sledding. York Land Trust's conservation partner Maine Coast Heritage Trust will hold a conservation easement on this land.

The property's large size and extensive frontage along the York River, which spans more than a mile, make it one of the most significant conservation projects in York's history. It protects rich habitat along the York River utilized by shoreland and wading birds, river otter, and other wildlife. It is also one of the largest remaining undeveloped tracts of land touching saltwater in York, and thus represents one of the most significant projects possible within the focus area of the Mt. Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative.

Charley Steedman, longtime Board Member of York Land Trust, was pivotal in orchestrating this transaction over the course of more than a decade. We extend our sincere gratitude to Charley and to everyone involved in this important project that will benefit our community for generations to come.



The York Land Trust is a member-supported, nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving and protecting lands of ecological, historic, scenic, agricultural and cultural significance in the greater York, Maine area, for the benefit of all.

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**The Mount Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative (MtA2C)** is an effort led by a coalition of ten national, regional and local partners to protect a network of connected conservation lands and natural resources within a 48,000-acre focus area in Southern Maine for the benefit of people and wildlife.

The MtA2C Partners include: the US Fish and Wildlife Service/Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, the Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, Great Works Regional Land Trust, Kittery Land Trust, York Land Trust and York Rivers Association.

For more information, please visit [www.mta2c.org](http://www.mta2c.org).

## APPRECIATION DURING CHALLENGING TIMES

Well, it has been quite a year! Covid-19 has certainly changed our lives, and it has also changed our work at the York Land Trust. In mid-March, at the start of the pandemic, we closed our headquarters to the public but we never stopped working. Patty O'Connor, our Development Assistant, remained at the office while the other staff worked daily either from home or out on the land. Committees and the Board met virtually via Zoom.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Recently, the staff has scheduled more time at the headquarters, practicing social distancing and wearing masks. This protocol is also in place for small meetings and events, walks, trail work, interviewing and office visits. Large, in-person gatherings have not been scheduled or have been held virtually.

Despite these changes and challenges, we have learned to adapt and continue our efforts to protect more land, engage the community in meaningful ways and keep our preserves and trails open to the public.

For months, our lands were the only places in town where people could go to walk,

enjoy nature and exercise. Children and adults of all ages visited our preserves in record numbers, resulting in overflowing parking lots and additional maintenance for our staff and volunteers who happily met the demands. This increased interest in our trails has garnered new members and increased support. We continue to receive words of thanks from many people who

appreciate our trails and preserves now more than ever.

Our organization is blessed to have such a talented and dedicated staff to carry on the mission of YLT during this challenging time. We appreciate how they continue to adapt and think creatively in order to get the job done and advance our work. Our devoted board and volunteers have also stepped up to help in so many ways.

And finally, our members have provided loyal support which has helped us continue to save, share and maintain YLT's treasured lands. Thank you for your generosity and for all that you make possible!

Sincerely,  
Cliff O'Connor

## Honoring Three Outstanding Volunteers

We wish to recognize and thank three outstanding Board Members who stepped off the Board this fall at the end of their terms.

**Charley Steedman** recently completed a three-year term on our Board but also served for nine years from 2004-2013. As a member of the Development Committee, Charley has been an extraordinary fundraiser who has helped us succeed in some of our most important conservation projects including Highland Farm, Plaisted Field, and YLT's Headquarters.

**Bob Brisebois** served on the Board over the past nine years. As President of the Board in 2016 and 2017 at a time when YLT was acquiring and moving to our new headquarters, Bob's steady leadership helped us to successfully make that transition and to implement the renovations, parking area, trail and other projects we've carried out since then.

**Ala Reid** just completed her second nine year stint on our Board of Directors. During her long tenure, she has been on virtually every committee and is a past Board President. Her deep institutional knowledge of YLT and also of our community, combined with her profound interest and passion for conserving nature made her incredibly effective in securing grant funding for virtually every major land purchase we have made since 2001.

Charley, Bob, and Ala are three of the most dedicated, courageous, intelligent and hard-working volunteers that York Land Trust has ever had. Join us in honoring them for their incredible contributions to our organization!



There are new discoveries each day for kids in Little Earth Explorers Program.

## YLT Partners with White Pine Programs to Offer Safe, In-Person Outdoor Programs

Demand for outdoor education opportunities has surged during the Covid-19 pandemic as parents, students, and educators seek out safe ways to gather and learn together in person. We're so glad to be able to meet some of this demand in our community by partnering with White Pine Programs (WPP) to offer safe spaces for in-person learning.

Through mid-December, WPP is holding a weekly Little Earth Explorers class at our headquarters for children aged 4 to 5 years old. Nine participants gather each Monday and spend the morning exploring the fields and forest behind our offices. Some highlights so far include an encounter with a praying mantis and an impromptu lesson on the difference between red and white oak leaves. The instructors also plan to teach the students how to use a compass and, if early snow falls, how to identify animal tracks.

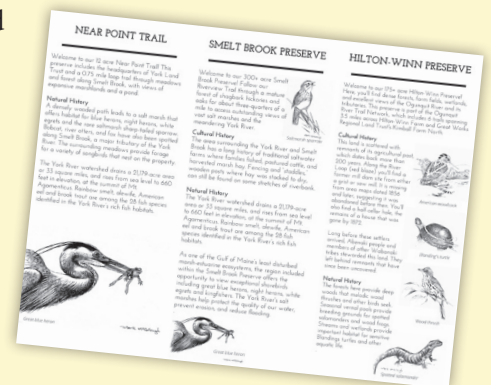
In addition to Little Earth Explorers, YLT is partnering with WPP to offer a monthly bird walk for people of all ages on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at Highland Farm Preserve (9am - 10:30am), along with additional nature walks and evening programs. See the back of this newsletter for more details!

## Preserve Guides and Nature Exploration Activities Now Available!

Looking to learn a little while out on the trails this fall and winter? Check out our brand new Preserve Guides and Nature Exploration Activities, now available at [www.yorklandtrust.org/explore](http://www.yorklandtrust.org/explore) and soon to be available at many of our preserves kiosks!

We've designed this collection of materials to enhance your experience on our preserves, and to help visitors of all ages engage with the land in new ways. The Preserve Guides are for our most highly visited preserves: Smelt Brook Preserve, Highland Farm Preserve, YLT Headquarters (Near Point Trail), and Hilton Winn Preserve. In each of these guides you'll find a handy trail map, some information about the natural and cultural history of the preserve, and a regional map showing the locations of our other preserves.

We know that this is a challenging time for our community, and we hope these new materials brighten the time you spend on our properties. If you have thoughts or suggestions of other ways we can enhance your time on the land with educational materials or activities, we'd love to hear from you! Contact Laura Poppick, YLT Outreach and Programs Coordinator, at [lpoppick@yorklandtrust.org](mailto:lpoppick@yorklandtrust.org).



## Working Together to Encourage Dog Owners to Explore Preserves Safely

Last month, we partnered with other local conservation groups to engage community members in a conversation about the importance of leashing and picking up after pets on publicly accessible land preserves. Volunteer “pet ambassadors” greeted hikers at trailheads to share how these rules keep pets, wildlife and other people safe.

Some of the information the ambassadors shared included that unleashed dogs are more susceptible to dangerous encounters with porcupines and rabid wildlife, and are at a greater risk of injury during hunting and trapping season. Unleashed dogs can also aggravate other dogs and other hikers, particularly now during the COVID-19 pandemic. They are also more likely to trample sensitive plants and disrupt bird nests and other dwellings of rare or endangered animals.

“We are extremely fortunate to live in an area that has a great deal of biological diversity,” says Nan Graves, an organizer of the effort and a Board Member of York Land Trust. “Dog owners don’t always realize the potential hazards unleashed dogs pose to these ecologically sensitive areas.”

Pet waste left on the land can also contain parasites that threaten local wildlife and contaminate local drinking water supplies. Adhering to local rules helps protect water supplies and helps ensure that public preserves remain safe and accessible for all community members and their pets.

We’re so glad to be able to offer the community a place to bring their dogs and enjoy the outdoors. By complying with these rules, hikers ensure that our preserves remain accessible and safe for everyone who visits.



## Welcome New Members of the YLT Team

This fall, we are so pleased to welcome two new members to our team: Paul Gagnon, our new Stewardship Director, and Shaun Dillon, a new Board Member. Please join us in welcoming Paul and Shaun!

**Paul Gagnon, YLT Stewardship Director**



Paul has been working in the field of nonprofit land conservation for over 12 years. Most recently he was employed at Kestrel Land Trust in Massachusetts in both land acquisition and conservation easement stewardship,

and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests in conservation easement stewardship and defense. He has experience in sustainable trail design, conservation easement drafting, and grant writing. Paul holds an MRP (Master of Regional Planning) from the University of Massachusetts where he focused on conservation and real estate law and trail greenway planning. Paul is a lifelong naturalist and hiker. In his spare time he leads four-season hiking trips across the mountains of New England.

**Shaun Dillon, YLT Board Member**



Shaun Dillon moved to Kittery five years ago and has been a member of the YLT Stewardship Committee for four years. He knew from an early age that he wanted to become a biologist and work in nature conservation.

He currently works as Conservation Coordinator with Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire and enjoys photography, skiing, hiking, and kayaking.

Photos on left: Chris and Alan Kelly enjoying a walk with their leashed dogs at Highland Farm Preserve. YLT volunteer pet ambassador greets a hiker and his dog.

## McIntire Highlands Preserve Is Rich in Historic Resources

York Land Trust properties encompass numerous historic sites significant to local and state history. In honor of Maine's bicentennial this year, we want to share a bit of history about our McIntire Highlands Preserve.



The hearth stones and cellar hole of the Junkins family 19th Century homestead.

Our 416-acre McIntire Highlands Preserve contains many visible historic resources. Passing through the gate at the end of Kingsbury Lane, follow an early road that weaves by a hillside quarry, across a fabulous stone culvert and alongside miles of fieldstone walls. You are walking in the footsteps of Daniel and David Junkins and their families, as they sited their new homesteads at the turn of the 19th century. As descendants of long-time York residents, these families moved into the “York Woods”, the forested landscape between the York River and Mount Agamenticus.

Today, you can stand on their home site and imagine their busy lives as farmers, to their final resting place just a few yards away. Daniel and Hannah Junkins lived on the homestead with nine other people, working an 85-acre farm. The cellar holes, wells, stone walls, and cemetery that remain today provide visual evidence of that life.

After the Civil War, Jacob and Betsey Day took over the 85-acre homestead, 50 acres of which they farmed for Indian corn and barley, and also had a few cows, swine and sheep. The property would then become known as the “Day Place”, a name still used in York today.

Like our fragile natural resources, historic sites require care to ensure they remain intact and visible for future generations. Please respect these remnants and do not enter the cellar holes, climb on stone walls, or touch headstones. But do take lots of pictures — and enjoy hiking into York's early history! - Bryce Waldrop

## GIVE THE GIFT OF LAND CONSERVATION

Longtime YLT supporters Ed and Gail Lanouette recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. To commemorate this major milestone, their children decided to make a significant donation to YLT in their honor. This gift donation included a bench and a tree at YLT's headquarters that were both dedicated to Ed and Gail, with a plaque commemorating their anniversary. As the tree behind the bench grows at the end of our Near Point Trail, it will provide shade and a place for visitors to rest and look out over the fields.

This is an example of a lesser known but especially gratifying way to support YLT and a loved one at the same time. We spoke with Libby Emge, one of Ed and Gail's children involved in this generous gift, about her experience giving to YLT in this way.

“It was a big anniversary and my parents didn't want a big celebration,” Libby said. “We wanted to give to YLT to benefit the work and we knew that is something that they care about.” Her parents were surprised and very happy to receive the gift, she added, and she found the process of giving in this way to be smooth and enjoyable. “You made it easy and it was wonderful. My mom said all her friends were very impressed with the gift and she hoped it would inspire gifts to YLT from other people.”

There are lots of ways you can celebrate loved ones by honoring their commitment to land conservation. If you are interested in learning about opportunities to dedicate benches or other visitor amenities on our preserves in honor of a loved one's birthday, anniversary or in memory of someone, please contact Doreen MacGillis ([dmacgillis@yorklandtrust.org](mailto:dmacgillis@yorklandtrust.org)) for more information.



Ed and Gail Lanouette on a YLT trail bench dedicated to them by their children to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary.



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### **Your End-of-Year Gift Makes A Difference**

Check the mail soon for your  
2020 Annual Appeal or visit  
[www.yorklandtrust.org](http://www.yorklandtrust.org) to make  
your gift, anytime. Thank you!

Invite your friends to connect  
online: [yorklandtrust.org](http://yorklandtrust.org)



[facebook.com/YLT.York.ME](https://facebook.com/YLT.York.ME)

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## Upcoming Events

### **Bird Walk Wednesdays**

November 18 & December 16 | Highland Farm Preserve | 9am - 10:30am

In partnership with White Pine Programs, we're offering a monthly bird walk on the 3rd Wednesday of each month! Join us as we meander through Highland Farm Preserve to learn how to ID birds, recognize birdsong, and explore the habitats birds love most. Family friendly and beginner birders welcome. We will follow health and safety guidelines during these programs, including by requiring masks and by maintaining a 6+ foot distance. This event is free and open to the public, but registration is required. Register at [www.yorklandtrust.org](http://www.yorklandtrust.org).



### **Leafless Tree ID**

December 8 | Highland Farm Preserve | 6pm - 8:30pm

Join White Pine Programs for special evening access to Highland Farm Preserve. Learn how to use signs like branching structure, bark, buds and twigs to determine what kind of tree you're looking at. You'll be a leafless tree identifier in no time! Register at [www.whitepineprograms.org](http://www.whitepineprograms.org).

