Friends of Upton State Forest Inc.
Newsletter
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GONE, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

CCC Camp Buildings at Upton State Forest built in 1935
South Barn (left), North Barn (right)
Photo, circa 1985, courtesy of DCR CCC Archives at Mt. Greylock

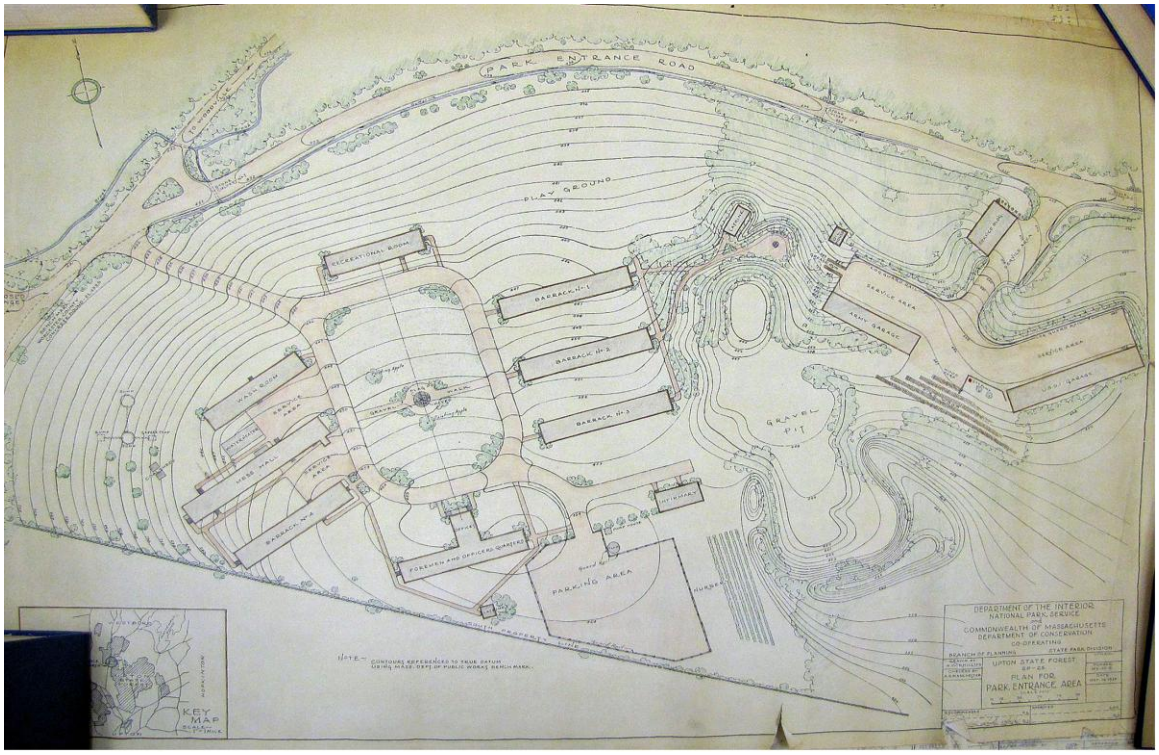
President's Message

By Joan Shanahan

Sometime between the afternoon of February 16 and the early morning hours of the next day, the historic north Barn at the Upton State Forest CCC Camp collapsed due to a snow load of at least two feet. Staff discovered the collapse when they arrived on the 17th to meet contractors hired to clear the roofs of all three buildings at the site.

In 2003, the South Barn went down for the same reason, and in 2005, Preservation Mass recognized all of the remaining buildings on their annual list of "The Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources in Massachusetts." Many people have contacted us to express their sadness at the loss and to encourage us to continue to advocate for the remaining buildings of the Camp.

The Board of Directors plan to continue working with DCR staff to prioritize projects with the goal of preserving the remaining buildings. Last year we established the "Founders Capitol Projects Fund". Donations in memory of the barn will go that fund, used to apply for matching grants and other funding. *Joan*



1935, Plan for layout of Camp SP25, CCC at Upton State Forest
Immediately to the right of the entrance drive are what we know today as the North and South Barns at Upton State Forest. (Photo courtesy of the DCR archives at Danvers, MA)

In the spring of 1935, a cadre of men from Myles Standish State Forest came to Upton to build a camp for the 200 Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees that would follow in August. Interviews with men who served at the camp help tell the story of daily life here.

Joseph Donnelly, of Hopedale, served at the camp from 1935 to 1937 as supply steward. Joe described the building we know today as the North Barn as the Supply Building for the camp. He painted the floors of the building in checkerboard squares of red and grey. Storage cabinets were painted grey and the ceiling was white washed. The office in Supply managed everything needed to operate the camp from food and clothing to furniture and equipment parts.

Joe said the South Barn was the washroom during the CCC occupation.

The military was in charge of the administration, buildings, equipment and supply at the camp while the forestry was in charge of the work. Joe drove to Fort Adams in RI for supplies, because the commander of the camp was from there. He also ordered supplies locally. Sometimes a double order would be received, and he bartered the extra with other camps for needed items.

Usually when CCC camps closed, buildings would be torn down with the materials being used elsewhere. In 1938, Ernest Dean, Commissioner of Conservation, asked to have that happen, but the Dept of Interior informed him that custody had already been given to the Works Progress Administration (WPA) for the National Youth Administration (NYA) to occupy the camp as a base for civil projects in the local area.

Camp Stover

With World War 11 on the horizon, the Upton buildings became home to Camp Stover where the MA State Guard trained officers who would later lead men into battle in the European and Pacific Theatres. During maneuvers, soldiers traveling through Upton from Camp Edwards on the Cape to Fort Devens in Ayer bivouacked here. Once again, the buildings were serving the Commonwealth.

Photos courtesy of Upton Historical Society

Department of Fish and Game

Phillips Wildlife Lab
Circa 1950

Photo courtesy of DCR CCC Archives
Families lived in the buildings. Note the window curtains and a wreath on the door.

In 1946, after the war, MA Fish and Game used the camp as their MA Field Headquarters and called it Phillips Wildlife Lab after John S. Phillips, the noted conservationist. The department hired their first wildlife biologist here. The lab became the base for programs that would grow our knowledge of wildlife, leading to many of the laws in place today governing the taking and management of wildlife.

According to interviews, the Fisheries office was located in the South Barn, while the North Barn had small apartments rented to personnel and their families. Local residents remember visiting to play cards in the evenings or playing with children that lived at the camp. The site was once again alive with activity.

Annual reports at the MA Wildlife Bureau Library in Westborough list programs managed from the Upton camp. These included the wood duck restoration project, beaver and furbearers management, white tailed deer study, ruffed grouse study, a Wildlife Shrub Nursery, small mammal census, and many more. The cottontail habitat study done here first suggested that the New England cottontail and the Eastern cottontail are distinct species. There was a dark room to process photos from research studies. The bureau library was established and a two-page bulletin, first published here, became the well-respected Mass Wildlife magazine.

One former employee told me this was the most interesting place he ever worked. He would be making wood duck boxes one day and flying over western MA the next, counting beaver huts. In 1956, the department moved to their current location in Westborough.

The Department of Environmental Management (DEM) began using the buildings. The Regional Forestry office and a Sign shop were located in the Administration Building while the North Barn was home to the Mounted Unit.

Department of Environmental Management (DEM)

Forestry

After 1956, the DEM occupied the buildings. Management Forester, Paul Hannon lived in the cottage with his family. At first, he used an office in the North Barn, which had a metal roof at that point. Eventually his office moved to the Administration building. According to Paul's children, they remember fire trucks and other apparatus being stored in the barn for a time. Paul Hannon is shown at his desk in the Administration Building in this family photo.

DEM Park Police Mounted Unit

The DEM Mounted Unit stabled horses in the North Barn, trailering them throughout Massachusetts to patrol parks. Local residents have fond memories of visiting the barn and seeing the rangers riding on the trails. The unit was an effective enforcement and public relations tool.

Right: Ranger, in the Upton barn.

Left: Eileen Cate shown here in 1998 with Mocha Chip when Upton Historical Society celebrated the 100th anniversary of the MA park system, with a picnic at the camp. The horses were a big hit that day. Around 2002, due to budget cuts, the unit left Upton and disbanded shortly after.

In 2003, under Governor Romney, the DEM (state parks), and the Metropolitan District Commission (urban parks) combined into the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the current steward.

North Barn

February 15, 2011

February 17, 2011

Bay State Trail Riders Association, 1996
Note South Barn in Foreground

South Barn 2003

Mocha Chip

FUSF Crew Standing on Site of South Barn 2006

Quote of the Month

The Congress finds and declares that
(a) the spirit and direction of the Nation are founded upon and reflected in its historic heritage;
(b) the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people; ....
Preamble to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

Membership Report

Welcome to new members, Robert Such of Whitinsville and Hubert and Tony D'Ambrosio of Feeding Hills. "Hubie" is a CCC alumnus who served at the camp in Westfield.

If you have not renewed for 2011 please remember to send your dues to PO Box 258, Upton, MA 01568-0258. A form was in the winter newsletter.

DCR Report

Members of the Student Conservation Association (SCA) will be in Upton the week of June 20 to 24. They will be building a bridge to replace the one washed out by beaver. Those interested in meeting or assisting the crew may do so. Their work day is usually from 8AM to 4 or 5 PM. If you see them working, please let them know how much we appreciate what they are doing.

In 2007, members of FUSF watched, at the State house, as CCC alumni ceremoniously passed a golden shovel to youth of the SCA. Today members of SCA honor the Civilian Conservation Corps legacy by continuing their work. More info: http://www.thesca.org/mass/group-home

Sweetwilliam Farm

By a vote of 243 to 240, Upton voters said yes to purchasing land and an agricultural restriction on Sweetwilliam Farm on North St. The Upton Land Stewardship Committee has applied for grants and is making plans to start work on trails as soon as the paperwork is complete. We will keep you posted on volunteer opportunities.

Spring Bulbs!

Watch for spring flowers planted last fall by Junior Girl Scout Troop 30164 in front of the Administration building!

What Children Say!

An interactive page on the National Park Service website asks children, "What would you give to the National Parks?" Most said "money", "me" or "volunteer." One thoughtful child said "A tree to save the world." How simple, but profound! To see more, visit: www.nps.gov/webrangers.

Keep the Wild in Wildlife

As spring approaches, Mass Wildlife sends a reminder to those who live in Central and Western MA. Bear and other animals are coming out of hibernation so it is time to take down our birdfeeders and suet. Do not leave pet food outdoors. Put trash out the day of pick up and keep meat scraps out of compost piles. More information is available at www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/wildlife/living/living with bears.htm

Please Help

In 2010, FUSF received a Matching Partnership Grant to rebuild the porch and universal access ramp on the Administration Building of the CCC Camp. Our Board of Directors has developed a list of other potential projects on the trails and at the CCC Camp. Our goal is to work with DCR to prioritize the list, develop a scope, estimate costs and fundraise to be ready for other grant opportunities to leverage our funds.

Donations to the Founders Capital Projects Fund are for such projects. There is a form on the reverse of this page if you would like to contribute. If you want to be anonymous, please tell us. We are a 501c3 non-profit organization. Donations to FUSF are deductible under section 170 of the IRS code. Please consult your tax advisor for further information.

Friends of Upton State Forest Calendar

Historical Resources Committee
March 28, 7PM, Upton Police Station

Potluck Supper May 20, 2011
United Parish Church Vestry
1 Church St, Upton

Supper at 6:00 PM, program at 7:00. Bring a main dish or dessert to share. RSVP by May 18 to Joan, 508-529-3164 or friends@friendsofuptonstateforest.org by May 18. Tell us if you are bringing a main dish or dessert. More info about the program will be on our website and sent to members. The public is welcome and children are welcome with supervision.

Spring Work Party, April 30

Meet at the Headquarters Building at 8:30 AM for registration. A liability waiver is required. Parents must sign for anyone under 18. Bring tools such as rakes, shovels and loppers. No power tools. Dress for work and the weather. Don't forget gloves, insect repellant and sunscreen. We work until 1:00 PM. Lunch provided for volunteers. More info: friends@friendsofuptonstateforest.org

All events and dates are subject to change. Always check to confirm or watch your email for cancellations.

Discovery Hike

This is a series of hikes cosponsored by Upton Open Space Committee and FUSF. A liability waiver is required for all hikes. Please do not bring dogs since some people are fearful or allergic. You will discover new places to bring your pet in the future. More hikes are being planned. Members will be notified. Others should check our website.

Discover the Stone Features of Peppercorn Hill-Sunday, April 17

Registration 12:45 PM, hike at 1:00 PM. Meet at the parking area on Taft St. This two-hour, moderate hike involves some steep, and uneven terrain. Dress for the weather and wear appropriate footgear. Don't forget insect repellant and sunscreen. For more info, send an email to uptonopenspaceevents@charter.net

Big Night

Big Night is a relatively warm and rainy night sometime in March or early April. Join others who assist frogs, salamanders and other critters, to safely travel in this ancient migration ritual. For notification of when and where this will occur, send an email to uptonopenspaceevents@charter.net. Dress for wet weather and bring a flashlight.

**********Cut here**********

Friends of Upton State Forest
Donation Form

Name: _____Contact info: _____

Address: _____

_____

Amount:_____Check #:_____Public Acknowledgement: Yes___ No___

Is this a memorial donation or honorarium? If so, please give us the information.

In memory of_____ In honor of_____