

## NOW AVAILABLE!

In a welcome example of two town organizations working together, the Egremont Historical Commission invited the Friends of Egremont History to a reception at the Weathervane Inn on the afternoon of February 26 in recognition of the publication of the Town of Egremont 2010 map.

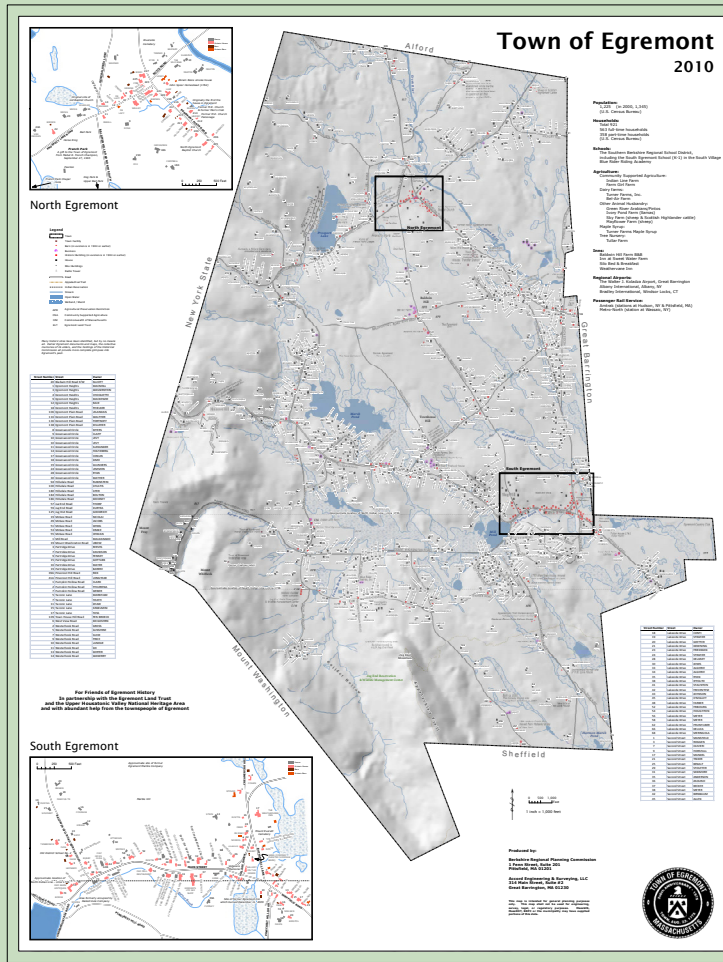
Inspired by historical maps of Berkshire towns (last created in 1904!), and now prepared by Friends of Egremont History in partnership with the Egremont Land Trust under a Housatonic Valley Heritage Area Grant, the map that more than 50 townspeople worked on shows Egremont as it was in 2010: its roads, all house numbers and names, village insets, and many historical details.

Copies of the Town of Egremont 2010 Map, in the size of 24" x 30" and of archival quality, are offered at the cost of printing. (However, a voluntary donation of any amount to ELT will be greatly appreciated.)

To place an order for the 2010 Map, send a check in the amount of \$13.75, made payable to WJ Blueprint, to Friends of Egremont History, in care of Lynn H. Wood, P.O. Box 448, South Egremont, MA 01258, before March 9.

Also, there is now a set of 14 historical full-color maps of Egremont, dated from 1787 to 2011, assembled as part of our grant work and available (choose 11" x 17" or 20" x 24" or both), or on a DVD. Finally, there is a set of 9 maps of just the Villages, dating from 1858 through 1904, in the 11" x 17" size. All of these sets can be special-ordered at the cost of printing.

For any questions or to order copies of the special-order sets, please call Lynn (528-3919) or Marj (528-3726) for prices, again before March 9.



NEWSLETTER  
WINTER 2011-2012

## What's Happening on Baldwin Hill?

Terrific news comes from Baldwin Hill, where the Burdsall and Proctor families and the Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program (APR) have agreed in principle to conserve a total of 445 acres in two separate transactions.

The projects have been facilitated by Berkshire Natural Resources Council, with help from the Egremont Land Trust.

Though we are not free to divulge all the specifics, the state's APR Program has committed to investing over \$6 million to protect these productive and picturesque farms. A gap of nearly \$900,000 between the state's commitment and the fair market value of the APRs – the so-called "local share" – remains to be filled at the community level. Thanks to the families' commitment to conservation, we are already well on our way to reaching this lofty goal.

Both families have agreed to generous "bargain sales," which greatly reduce the amount of funds we will need to raise. Further, BNRC has been working with a foundation that may provide a major lead grant. If all goes well, the balance will be within reach. Egremont Land Trust and BNRC are cooperating to complete fundraising by June 30. This campaign has been quiet to date, but will soon take on a higher profile.

To this end, Egremont Land Trust has started the "Fund for Baldwin Hill." Monies donated to this fund will be earmarked for the local share of the transactions, as well as for further conservation investments on the hill. (ELT has already achieved two conservation projects on

the hill: our Baldwin Hill fen and a CR of 51 acres, given jointly to ELT and BNRC by three ELT members.)

Baldwin Hill conservation has been a longstanding priority for the Egremont Land Trust and BNRC. The eastern half of the hill was conserved by BNRC and the APR Program in 1998 and conveyed to Turner Farms. Conserving the entirety of this notable farm district has been our collective goal ever since, and if all the pieces fall together, we may achieve this objective within the next six months!

The biggest break has come from the state's willingness to make substantial investments on Baldwin Hill. Our local campaign will leverage millions of dollars – every dollar the community puts in will leverage over \$20 in value.

Opportunities to shape a community's future come rarely. Our great success in meeting the Sheffield-Egremont Corridor challenge gives us confidence that we can make the most of the sterling opportunity on Baldwin Hill. The Proctor and Burdsall families are doing their part. Now it is up to us to match their commitment by raising the rest of the local share.

The Baldwin Hill projects will assure a productive agricultural base for the town, and they will conserve the most wonderful views in the Southern Berkshires. Please think about what you can do, and prepare to give generously in response.

Three views from Baldwin Hill, now preserved forever



Maureen Steiner  
Susan Shapiro  
Peggy Muskrat  
Wendy McCain  
Wendy Linscott  
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## Annual Wildflower Walk

The Egremont Land Trusts' Wildflower Walk took place this year on May 7th. In 2010 our walk was in midsummer (July) so this year, in spring, we were able to view a whole different variety of flowers. As always, the walk was led by Stephanie Bergman and we again benefited from her vast knowledge of the flora in our woods. The site of our walk on land protected by the ELT along the Green River is home to a great variety of plants—both common and rare. (This land is open to the public: there is a small parking area and a walk straight across the farm field to the walk along the river. And there is a little wooden bridge to cross the oxbow, although during a storm it tends to break loose and drift downriver.)

Spring is such a great time for a walk like this. After a long, long winter is it such a renewal to see these beautiful



Wood anemone (white); Trillium (red); and Jack-in-the-pulpit (green).

flowering plants. We saw trillium, trout lily, and wild strawberry, which were all used by the Native Americans to treat various ailments. Wood violets, bluets, jack in the pulpit, and, of course, dandelions (which are rich in Vitamin A and C) were all growing in great abundance. We learned which of these plants were native to our area and which had been brought over by early settlers. Garlic Mustard is one of the most invasive ones we encountered. Barberry, colt's foot, and ground ivy were other non native plants we encountered.

We look forward to the 2012 Wildflower Walk, again led by Stephanie. It's a wonderful way to spend a few hours on a beautiful May morning and to learn more about the beautiful variety of plants growing in our area.

## ANNUAL MEETING 2011

The 2011 Annual Meeting of the Egremont Land Trust was held on September 10th at the French Park pavilion. The weather was cooperative and attendance was good.

President Ursula Cliff opened the business meeting by asking for a moment of silence for the victims of the 9/11/2001 terrorist attacks and their families. She then recounted the events of this season which are featured elsewhere in this newsletter.

Ursula then introduced Kathy Orlando from the Sheffield Land Trust who gave an update of the Sheffield/Egremont Corridor Project. She stated that Phase One is complete and Phase Two is well under way with Maple Shade Farm and the Curtiss property. Of the \$2 million needed for this phase, only \$150k is left to be raised locally. Kathy presented some excellent aerial photos of the Corridor Project land and also introduced Jonathan and Susan Curtiss, who will farm the Curtiss property under the APR program. (They were accompanied by their infant granddaughter Sydney, the youngest of the clan and the instant star of the meeting.) Jonathan recounted some of the history of the property, which has been farmed by Curtisses for 240 years and now will remain farmland forever.

Treasurer Walter Cliff reported that our annual expenses of \$23,000 go to pay for rent, electricity, phone, as well as printing and mailing our annual newsletter, invitations, fund raising letters, thank you notes and the like.



Top: Aerial view of the Sheffield/Egremont Corridor. Below: Part of the Curtiss farmland. Bottom: Jonathan, Susan, and Sydney Curtiss.

Membership chairman Susan Shapiro reported that we receive monies that range from \$15 to \$5,000. Since the 2010 annual meeting we have 153 paid memberships; the prior year's total was 135.

Land Protection coordinator Walter Cliff reported that Mass DFW has been a good partner with us, and is about to acquire a 5 acre parcel bordering the Green River in North Egremont.

Peg Muskrat, our nominating Chairperson, nominated Ursula Cliff, Maureen Steiner and Lois Ginsberg to remain on the Board and also nominated Robin Goldberg to join the board. The nominees were approved by unanimous voice vote.

After the business meeting concluded, the Egremont Land Trust provided lunch for all in attendance.

### PLEASE JOIN US!

If you're already a member, pass this envelope to a friend who's not yet a member.

If you haven't yet joined ELT and love Egremont, use the envelope to become part of the good work.

## Spying on the Birds



On April 16, 2011, a hardy band of early risers gathered at the Jug End State Reservation for ELT's tenth annual Bird Walk, led by Professor Brian Kane of the University of Massachusetts. Brian is extremely knowledgeable about birds and bird life, as is his wife Noel, who accompanied him again this year.

Birds observed at Jug End included the following: mallard, red-tailed hawk, turkey vulture, mourning dove, pileated woodpecker, Northern flicker, yellow-bellied sapsucker, Eastern phoebe, American crow, blue jay, tree swallow, black-capped chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, Eastern bluebird, American robin, song sparrow, red-winged blackbird, brown-headed cowbird, and the American goldfinch.

This year's bird watchers added a new word to their vocabularies: gallinaceous, which means nesting on the ground (turkeys, grouse, chickens, pheasants, etc.) Unfortunately, we did not see any examples of gallinaceous birds or their nests.

While in the neighborhood, Brian spotted, in addition to the birds listed above: wood duck, red-bellied woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, downy woodpecker, common raven, tufted titmouse, red-breasted nuthatch, brown creeper, chipping sparrow, dark-eyed junco, common grackle, house finch, and pine siskin.

The bird walk was earlier in the spring than the usual May date due to scheduling conflicts, and the early date resulted in fewer bird sightings. ELT will aim for a May date in 2012, and bird watchers, both experts and complete beginners, should watch for posters as well as a notice in the Shopper's Guide. We look forward to seeing you in the Jug End fields and woods this spring.



**BerkShares,** the local currency program created to help build community, celebrated its 5th birthday with a Bike-a-Thon and BBQ at the Route 7 Grill on September 25, 2011.

The bike ride was a 10-mile loop through roads in Great Barrington, Sheffield, and Egremont, featuring the stunningly beautiful Sheffield-Egremont Corridor. The Egremont Land Trust is partnering with its sister land trust, the Sheffield Land Trust, in preserving this corridor. The Egremont Land Trust joined 12 other local, non-profit educational partners in supporting the Bike-a-Thon, and our board members took turns sitting at our ELT information booth and cheering on the bikers.

## ELT Aids the School

The Egremont Land Trust enjoys working with the students at the South Egremont Schoolhouse, so the Board was pleased to grant a request from Julie Milani, the long-time kindergarten and first grade teacher, to help fund a nature program for the students there. A modest donation from ELT will partially underwrite a stipend paid to Stephanie Bergman to develop a curriculum that will teach the children about various bodies of water and wetlands in South Egremont.

Ms. Bergman holds a Master's degree in Environmental Education from the Audubon Expedition Institute at Leslie University and a Bachelor's degree in Biology from the University of Michigan. She has 15 years of experience in the general field of environmental education. The curriculum that she is developing with the aid of Ms. Milani will teach the Egremont students about the local ecosystem as they study bodies of water including Karner Brook, Mill Pond, and ELT's Baldwin Hill Fen. The program, when complete, will encompass two years of study in fall and spring.

Grownups, too, benefit from Ms. Bergman's teaching: see the article in this issue on our Wildflower Walk.

*With thanks to the photographers for this issue:*

*Walter Cliff  
Bryan Hamlin  
Rob Lancaster  
Chuck Ogden  
Kathy Orlando*



## Aunt Rose's Column

*Aunt Rose is threatening to go to night law school and her conversation is beginning to lose its sparkle.*

Well, another year has gone by and the tax laws have become even more complicated. In the New Testament, the tax collectors were called Publicans (no reflection on either political party) and were not held in high esteem. Still true today,

This year, they have done some good and some bad. Let's get the bad news over first. It is the repeal of an amendment which permitted federal income tax payers to deduct any charitable gift of a conservation restriction on land up to 50% of the taxpayer's adjusted gross income rather than 30% as heretofore, and to carry forward any unused portion of the deduction for 15 years rather than five years, again as heretofore. It also provided for further enhanced deductions for farmers and ranchers (how many llamas make a ranch?).

The good tax news is the Massachusetts elaboration that permits Commonwealth taxpayers to claim a credit for a charitable contribution of a conservation easement that could result in tax savings of up to \$50,000 per year. And there's actually cash in this state program: there's an allocation of \$2,000,000 for 2012. Yippee!

The kind folks at the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition have spelled out the process for us, so make yourself a strong cup of coffee and read on:

### NEW STATE TAX CREDIT FOR LAND CONSERVATION

Starting in 2011, for the first time ever, landowners who engage in conservation transactions with the Egremont Land Trust or other land trusts or agencies may be eligible for a powerful new tax advantage—a State income tax credit worth up to \$50,000. This is exciting news for the land trust and the landowners we are working with. While there have always been income tax deductions available for land gifts on donor's federal returns, we have never been able to offer any incentives on the State tax side. Now we can, and it's a credit rather than a deduction.

The Commonwealth's has provided guidelines on how the program will work. The type of transaction (land gift, conservation restriction, bargain sale, reserved life estate) is less important than the characteristics of the land itself,

so long as the land is permanently protected. The Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs must certify that the land preserved is significant to protect drinking water supplies, rare species and other wildlife habitats, agriculture or forestry, recreational opportunities and scenic or cultural values of state or regional importance. While those themes are fairly broad, you can see how a gift of a vacant lot in a subdivision might not qualify. Still, Egremont is still blessed with many resource protection parcels that have been neither yet developed nor preserved that could qualify.

The landowner must have the land pre-certified by the State (we can help do the paperwork) before the gift or bargain sale is completed. An appraisal is needed to justify that the land's market value and establish the credit amount. The State will refund any unused credit in the first year of the gift. That means that not only would your State income tax be wiped out for that year, but the State will issue you a check for the difference between that year's tax and \$50,000 or the appraised value, whichever is less. For example, if you donated a parcel worth \$30,000 and your Mass. income tax is \$5,000, you would pay no state tax and get a tax refund for the remaining \$25,000. If you donate a conservation restriction appraised at \$120,000 and your Mass. income tax is \$10,000, you would pay no state tax and get a check for the \$40,000 difference. (The total of tax credit and refund check cannot exceed \$50,000.) You do not need to reside in Massachusetts or even pay taxes here; so long as you own the land, and the land qualifies, you qualify. The State approved the first 21 applications in December, returning \$800,000 in credits to landowners, including those in The Berkshires. A full \$2 million is available statewide in 2012.

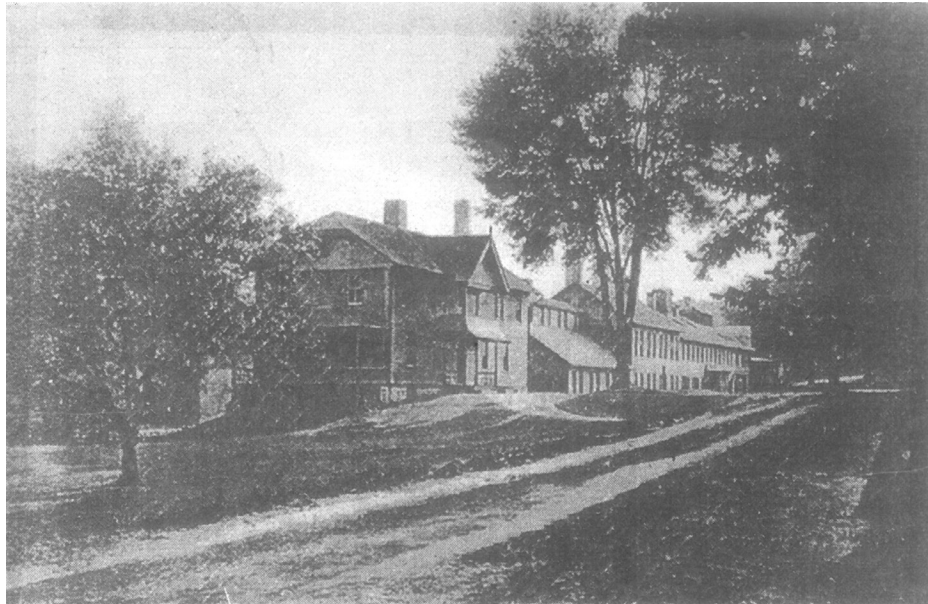
Remember that this new tax credit is in addition to the regular federal income tax incentives for charitable contributions of land or interests therein.

### Egremont Land Trust Online:

[www.egremontlandtrust.org](http://www.egremontlandtrust.org)

Look for our calendar of events and a link to local resources. Fill in your e-mail address in order to receive announcements or to print out a membership and donation form. We do not share membership information with anyone, no matter how worthy the cause.

## History Walk 2011



*This old postcard reads:  
"Dalzele Axle Works and Office, So. Egremont, Mass."*

water power, which in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, was really the only available source of power for machinery. By 1800, there were at least three mills beside the brook; among them, a grist mill and a saw mill. From 1815 to 1835, Chester Goodale, who became the local squire, operated a bark mill to prepare leather for his large boot and shoe making operation. He later went into the marble business. What is now Kenver Ltd. was first a carding shop. Arthur A. Benjamin set up a cork insole factory (shoes need insoles, don't they?), someone else invented a machine for cutting horses' hooves, and there were a paper mill and a blacksmith's shop.

Since South Egremont was well sited as a transportation hub, the market for its products spread wider and wider. The Dalzell Axle factory, especially, where ELT now maintains its office, grew until in twenty years the value of its annual production was many times that of the total of all other South Egremont products.

The village's flourishing industries declined abruptly, however, between 1906 and 1916, and, as businesses closed and farmers moved west, the village's population dropped. In 1860, South Egremont had 1200 residents, but by 1916 only 400 remained.

## A SOCIAL OCCASION

We held the annual Egremont Land Trust luncheon on May 14, 2011, and, once again, it was generously hosted by Terry Moore at the Old Mill. Forty-one people attended and enjoyed a chance to get together and enjoy first a selection of aperitifs and hors d'oeuvres and then a delicious meal. Appetizers included a crab and tomato bisque as well as risotto with local morels. The entrees were a choice of Roast Chatham Cod and Roast Spring Leg of Lamb. Desserts included a strawberry rhubarb shortcake and a lemon-lime tart with strawberries. Terry served a 2007 Vasse Felix Chardonnay from New Zealand and a 2007 Tellus Vinea Bordeaux.

Ursula Cliff recapped the Egremont Land Trust's accomplishments and events for the past year. We then heard from our speaker Paul Browne, the New York City Police

Department's Deputy Commissioner of Public Information. Paul described the complexity and responsibilities of the Department. With 36,000 officers, it is the largest municipal police force in the United States. Paul, whose name has been often in the New York papers of late, is the Department's chief spokesman, and deals with the media and the public on all issues that involve the police force, its actions, and its involvement in law enforcement. An example was the Times Square terrorist who attempted, in May of 2010, to plant bombs in one of the busiest thoroughfares in New York. This emergency kept Paul from speaking at our luncheon in 2010, and we were delighted that he was able to attend in 2011. As always, the Annual Luncheon was one of the high points of the year, giving members a chance to spend time together over a wonderful meal in a beautiful setting.

On one of the hottest mornings of last summer, our intrepid historian Nic Cooper described how the Industrial Revolution came to South Egremont. He called his talk "From Boots to Buggy Axles" and he and his listeners stood just a few yards from the banks of Karner Brook, the pretty little stream that provided the power for the revolution. (In this case: "revolution" or "turning" applies both to a change in ideas and the movement of a mill wheel.)

And it truly was a revolution in the life of the townspeople. The earliest settlers had all been farmers, although a few, who sold goods from their homes, added "shopkeeper" to a description of their occupation. But, like other New England towns, and unlike much of the rest of the country, South Egremont had

## ELT MEMBERS 2011

*Three cheers and many thanks to our loyal supporters, listed below. Without you our accomplishments would simply not exist. To renew your membership for the coming year, please use the enclosed envelope. And if you are not yet a member and like what we're doing, please join us. You'll be glad you did.*

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