

THE

Oak Leaf

A PUBLICATION OF THE WHITE OAK LAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

WINTER 2014

Protecting Fort Tory Heights

by
NANCY WILSON

White Oak has just acquired another property. This 59-acre parcel runs west from Salisbury Street to

Kinneywood, the 110 acres of conserved open space owned by the Greater Worcester Land Trust, with a Conservation Restriction owned by White Oak, in the Tatnuck section of Worcester. Our new property, to be called Holbrook Forest, is a four-fold win for local hikers, for wildlife, for carbon storage, and for the Holbrook family who has owned the land for many years.

For hikers, starting at Dawson Road in Worcester, the Holbrook Forest will provide miles of planned-for trails through Kinneywood, east to Salisbury Street in Holden. There a trail would join with another link of White Oak trail extending along Poor Farm Brook to Winter Hill Road in Holden. Colin Novick, director of the Greater Worcester Land Trust, calls this proposed trail a “golden spike” in a hiking system leading from West Tatnuck to Route 122A in Holden.

For deer, fox, coyotes and bears in the North Worcester area, the acquisition creates a safe, many-mile corridor for wildlife, with only one major road crossing at Salisbury Street.

For carbon storage, the thousands of trees on the largely-wooded property will continue to trap the air-borne carbon dioxide which would otherwise add to global warming.



Map courtesy of Anthony Costello

For the Holbrook family, the preservation fulfills a wish of Walter Holbrook that his backlands be protected in their wild state. On the remainder of Mr. Holbrook's property, four building lots on the Holbrook property which front Salisbury Street are currently for sale.

In a century-old chapter of Holden real estate history, a previous owner had ambitious ideas for a portion of the land which White Oak has now bought. A 1902 plan for a development to be called Tory Fort Heights is

on file. Fifty small house lots were planned, though no homes were ever built. White Oak has yet to determine the site of the actual Tory Fort where local loyalists took refuge in 1775, though we will protect any cultural resources found on the property.

We are pleased to be able to continue the Holbrooks' legacy of conservation by preserving Holbrook Forest for future generations. 🌿



In the depth of winter I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer.” —Albert Camus

Another WILD Saturday!

Generations of Holden school children have learned the value and beauty of the outdoors through White Oak's nature education programs. On Saturday, March 15 at 1:30 p.m., join White Oak at the Holden Senior Center as we welcome Annawon Weeden to speak on Native American culture and attitudes toward wildlife.

From Annawon's profile on the Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness (<http://www.mcnaa.org/annawon-weeden.html>):

Annawon was born and raised in the tribal community of Charlestown, Rhode Island among his father's Narragansett/Pequot relatives, but he now resides in his mother's Wampanoag community located in Mashpee, Massachusetts.

Following in his father's footsteps, Annawon began sharing the culture of his tribes with his family during public programs and performances at a young age. As an adult, Annawon's passion for preserving the culture has been clear throughout decades spent working at Plimoth Plantation (Museum Interpreter/Outreach Educator) & Boston Children's Museum (Native Program Specialist).

Currently self-employed, visiting schools, colleges, museums, libraries, birthdays and more, Annawon has many ways to educate any audience. On stage or in the classroom, his ability to share his tribal culture has been sought after by many institutions such as Smithsonian, National Geographic, Scholastic, PBS, History/Discovery Channel, Harvard & many more educational/environmental organizations.

White Oak education programs are free and open to the public. 🌿



Top: Members of the famous Grass Dancers at the 2007 National Pow Wow.
Photo: Wikipedia

Above: Annawon Weeden in traditional regalia.
Photo: Carol Itoh, Itoh Press



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White Oak is a member of the Land Trust Alliance and the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition.

“Certain things catch your eye, but pursue only those that capture your heart.” —Native American Saying

IN PROFILE:

White Oak's New President

Ralph Peck, a member of White Oak's board for four years, is now our new president, replacing Scott Morrison, who is now our Vice President.

Growing up in the 1940s and '50s in Western Massachusetts, Ralph was able to experience a more pristine Berkshires than exists today. His family spent time outside, year-round. "In those days one's experience with nature in the winter was a raw engagement," Ralph has said. But it was a two-month camping trip along the Continental Divide at age 14 that was the most memorable outdoor experience for Ralph. "We experienced nature firsthand—its beauty, its solitude, its ability to feed the soul, its dangers and its dark side."

Following his graduation from Williams College, Ralph was twice deployed by the navy to serve in Vietnam. In 1972, he and his wife, Jane, relocated to the Worcester area from Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he had earned his law degree from the University of Michigan. In 1974 they bought their current home in Holden, central to Jane's job at the

Worcester Public Library and Ralph's at the old State Mutual Life Insurance Company.

Subsequently, Ralph left SMLIC to practice law on his own, which freed up some time for extracurricular activities such as the Boy Scouts, where he shared his love of nature.

For 14 years Ralph was involved with Boy Scout Troop 180, with many of those years spent as Committee Chairman. Troop 180 used to have a campout at Trout Brook each year on the weekend White Oak held its annual Winter Carnival. Often the Scouts would demonstrate winter survival skills, and Ralph and Jane continued their support of White Oak over the years.

"Anyone who knows me knows that I am a nut about the preservation of trees," Ralph has said. "And I have long been an advocate for the preservation of open space, wildlife habitat, migration paths, et cetera."

Since joining the White Oak board in 2010, Ralph has led fundraising efforts for multiple new properties, including Potter Sanctuary, Poor Farm Brook, and our most recent acquisition, Holbrook Forest. We are lucky to have such a stalwart advocate on our board! 🌿

Make A Difference

Do you have a vision for the preservation of open space in our community, or do you just want to help out with a worthy cause? White Oak Land Conservation Society is seeking



new members for our Board of Directors. We meet monthly throughout the year to work on land acquisition, educational programming, membership drives, and fundraising, and eat lots of cookies. If you have an interest, we likely have a niche for you. For more information, email info@whiteoaktrust.org.

Goodbye, White Oak

We're sorry to announce the demise of the huge white oak that inspired George Dresser and Huck Truesdell to found White Oak Land Conservation Society back in 1978.

George recently discovered it had fallen while he was on a cross-country ski outing. White Oak's board is considering having a "coring" done to determine this grand tree's actual age. Anyone interested in seeing this downed giant can visit the White Oak trail, located on our North Street properties. 🌿





WHITE OAK

LAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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Printed on recycled paper



Carol Itoh, Itoh Press

ANNAWON WEEDEN:

*Native American
Culture and
Attitudes Toward
Wildlife*

March 15 – 1:30 p.m.

Holden Senior Center
Free and open to all!