

Grand Opening was a Wet One

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by Lynne Ober

Mother Nature did her best to dampen spirits at the grand opening of the Merriam Conservation Area in Pelham, but did not succeed. Although heavy rains pelted the surrounding area, the grand opening was a bright success.

With about 25 sturdy and wet attendees, Master of Ceremonies Paul Gagnon opened the ceremony with a few brief remarks. "The parcel was appraised at over \$1.4 million and they sold it to the town for \$1 million," explained Gagnon, who thanked the Merriams for their extraordinary generosity.

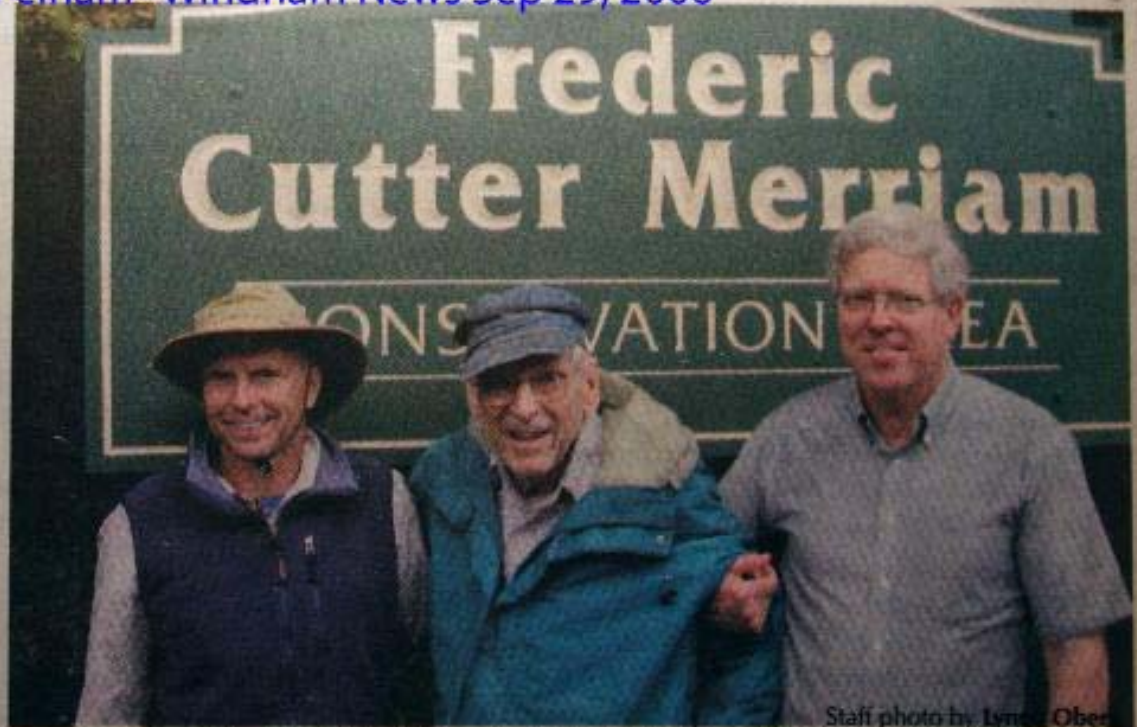
Board of Selectmen Chairman Victor Danevich spoke to the assembled audience. He recalled the work done by the Conservation Committee in putting a warrant article on the ballot for land acquisition and then working to have it passed. "With 70 percent voter support, it gave us the monies to purchase and place land in conservation." Without that warrant article, the town would not have had the money to purchase this beautiful piece of property.

Danevich also thanked the Merriam family, who actively worked with the town to preserve the land rather than see it developed. "We accept the responsibility of protecting the land as a conservation area as custodians ourselves," said Danevich, who closed his remarks by once again thanking the Merriam family, who were in attendance.

Judge Michael Jones, who spoke on behalf of the family, commented that the Merriams always considered themselves custodians of the property and treated it with great respect. They wanted it to remain undeveloped for future generations to enjoy.

Deb Waters, who is very active in conservation efforts, spoke, "In March of this year, Pelham citizens voted to designate this property as a town forest. In doing so, the voters added the Forestry Committee, along with the Conservation Commission, as a group responsible for the care of this property."

Waters explained that the town of Pelham is a member of the New Hampshire Tree Farm System. "Consistent with the goals of this program, the Forestry Committee will oversee forest management plans on this property. The goal of the plan will be to manage the area for wildlife enhancement,



From left, Judge Michael Jones, Frederick C. Merriam and Frederick S. Merriam.

long-term sustainability, and passive recreational use. Using environmentally sound, selective harvesting techniques, the health of the forest is improved, and revenues are generated for stewardship needs."

Pelham has hired forester Dan Cyr to work with the town in managing all town forests. Waters told the audience that "under the guidance of our town forester, Dan Cyr, the Forestry Committee is in the process of drafting a management plan for this property. In the months to come, we will be overseeing a selective timber harvest, creating a parking area, laying out new trails, and monitoring the property to ensure safe use for passive recreational activities."

Then it was time for the official ribbon cutting and unveiling of the sign. Both Frederic C. Merriam and Frederic S. Merriam participated in this happy occasion.

Both a barbecue and an exploration of the property had been planned for the grand opening. With a large tarp set up, chef extraordinaire – Bob Lamoureux – cooked for everyone.

A few hardy souls did take an abbreviated tour of the property, but most decided to chat under the tarp and wait for a sunny day to explore.

"It was very wet, but we all had fun – lots of good conversation and a very gratifying kickoff to a great conservation area," grinned Waters.

The conservation area is located on Sherburne Road and consists of 110 acres of protected land. The Conservation Commission purchased the land in 2005. Approximately two miles of walking trails traverse the property.