

Bartlett Park has 20th anniversary

April 24, 1986

CMFD-Bartlett Park and the Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust celebrate their 25th anniversary this year.

It was 25 years ago in January that a group of dedicated Chelmsford residents had the foresight and desire to preserve some of Chelmsford's rural heritage by preserving some of her land areas. Thus, they formed the Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust.

In march, Harriett Bartlett generously donated to the newly formed Trust the piece of her family's land right in the center of town asking that it be preserved in its natural state and that it be known as Bartlett Park. This would be a memorial to her family who loved the land and preserved it as an open space while the town grew up around it for over one hundred years.

The property came to the Bartlett family through the Adams family. In 1832 Miss Bartlett's great grandfather, Dr. John C. Bartlett, came from Charlestown to practice in Chelmsford. He married Maria Adams, daughter of Joel Adams and they resided on the land which subsequently came down through the Bartlett line. Charles A.E. Bartlett, Miss Bartlett's grandfather, and her two uncles, Charles E. and Clay C. Bartlett also resided there. Her father, Henry Bartlett, who died in 1960, owned the property for over fourteen years. The citizens of Chelmsford can be ever grateful this prominent piece of land is being preserved for them.

In 1961 and 1962 under the direction of Martin Bovey, one of the Trust's founders, plantings of some 230 trees,

shrubs and wildflowers were made in the Park. Many of the items were donated by members in memory of loved ones. Fifteen different lilac varieties were given by the Arnold Arboretum which also provided consultation for the Park plantings. Thus, three and one half acres of Bartlett Park were transformed into a small arboretum with many of the trees and shrubs marked with identifying labels made for the trust by the Arnold Arboretum. Over the years some of the plantings have succumbed to the elements but a great many are still living and tagged. As Miss Bartlett wished, Bartlett Park has added beauty and dignity to the Town and offers pleasure to its citizens.

New members welcome

Maintenance of Bartlett Park and other Trust properties is possible solely by membership dues and donations. Membership is open to any resident of Chelmsford. Dues are only \$10 for an individual, \$15 for a family or \$150 for an individual life membership. The main purpose of the Trust is to promote the preservation of the rural character of the Town and to this end, acquire by gift, purchase, or otherwise, real and personal property. The properties are owned privately but they are held for the benefit and enjoyment of all the residents of the town. If Bartlett Park and the purpose of the Trust have meaning to you, you can contribute your support by becoming a member of the Trust. Inquiries or membership dues may be sent to president, Mrs. Gardner D. Cook, 22 Bentley Lane. □



BARTLETT PARK

THIS PASTURE,
A GIFT OF
HARRIETT M. BARTLETT
TO THE
CHELMSFORD CONSERVATION LAND TRUST,
SERVES AS A REMINDER OF
CHELMSFORD'S RURAL HERITAGE.

Harriett M. Bartlett (center) in May 1984 at dedication of new sign made by Bruce Gullion



Harriett M. Bartlett
1897 - 1987

Founder of the
Harriett M. Bartlett Fund in

The New York Community Trust
909 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022



Alice Bartlett holds her infant daughter, Harriett

In 1908 aboard a steamer headed for England, a Boston doctor walked the deck. To pass the time he played a game in his head, asking himself which of his fellow passengers he most wanted to meet. Stopping in front of a couple and their 11-year-old daughter, he said: "You are the people I would most like to know on this boat."

So it was that Dr. Richard C. Cabot, noted physician, professor at the Harvard Medical School and member of one of Boston's famous first families, met Henry and Alice Bartlett and their daughter, Harriett. The friendship was to last a lifetime, as Harriett told her oral biographer in a 1978 interview for the National Association of Social Workers, and would in a few years place Harriett center-stage in the new field of medical social work introduced by Dr. Cabot at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

Harriett Moulton Bartlett was born July 18, 1897 in Lowell, Massachusetts. Among her ancestors were a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Josiah Bartlett; a signer of the Constitution and President of the Continental Congress, Nathaniel Gorham; and a noted 19th-century teacher and physician, Dr. Elisha Bartlett.

Harriett's mother, Alice, was the daughter of Oliver Moulton, a mill superintendent in a

town famous for its textile mills. Her father, Henry, was the son of Charles Edward Adams Bartlett, president of the Boston & Lowell Railroad. After graduating from Harvard with a degree in mechanical engineering, Henry followed his father into railroading and eventually became head of rolling stock at this small well-run road known for its superior locomotives. During World War I, Henry sat on a committee to standardize locomotives throughout the U.S.

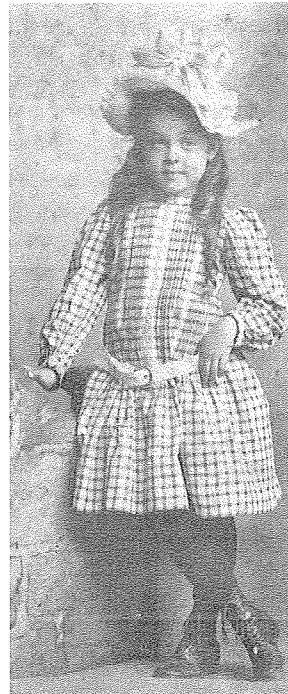
Early Years

Harriett Bartlett spent her first ten years in the third story of her grandfather's comfortable house with her parents and brother, Moulton.

This pleasant decade came to an abrupt end in 1907 with a tragedy that affected Harriett for the rest of her life. Her brother Moulton, who was then 13 years old, died of pneumonia while at camp in Maine.

This untimely death, Harriett was to recall later, "brought my parents and me closer together." In fact, except for short periods, Harriett who never married lived with her parents until their death.

A month after young Moulton's death, Grandfather Moulton died and the Bartletts left Lowell for Cambridge. To take their mind from recent sadness, Alice Bartlett decided that they should all go to Europe with her sister's family. Harriett recalled, "It was



Harriett Bartlett, age 7.

my first grand tour — very Victorian — in one of those slow steamers.”

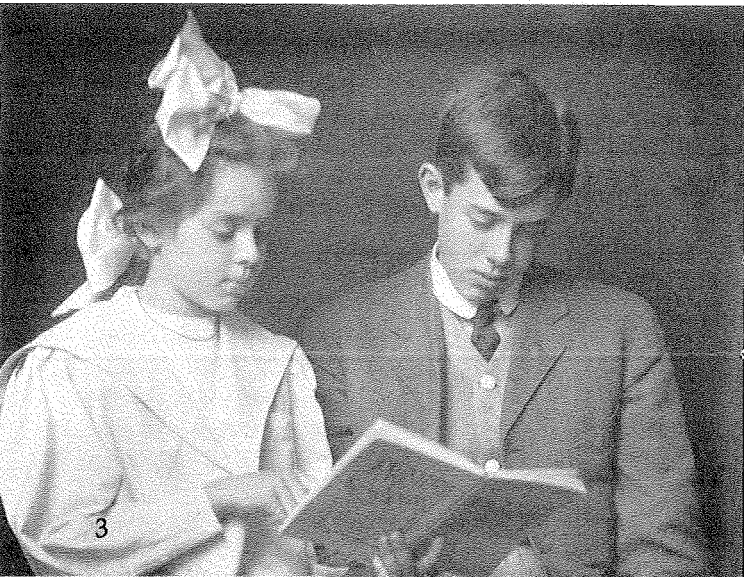
It was on this trip that the Bartletts met Dr. Cabot — or rather Dr. Cabot met Alice Bartlett. After the voyage, Harriet remembers, “Mother who was a sparkling person took to corresponding with Dr. Cabot. They both wrote charming letters. Mother couldn’t spell and he was a perfectionist and they always had great fun over that.”

On returning to Cambridge, Harriett, who was growing rapidly and would soon reach six feet one inch, entered the fifth grade at the Buckingham School, now Buckingham, Brown and Nichols School. Here she discovered she was an intellectual.

“This was quite a change and an exciting experience for me. I suddenly found myself in class with the daughters of Harvard professors. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s granddaughter was in my class. Another girl, Grace Richards was the daughter of a Nobel prize winner in Chemistry. Grace married a leading chemist, James Bryant Conant, who was president of Harvard from 1933 to 1953.

“Coming from a mill city, I was somewhat overawed at first. I wondered if I could keep up

Harriett Bartlett with her brother Moulton, 1907.



with such an illustrious group. But I was accepted readily by my classmates.” Buckingham ended at the ninth grade, but the members of Harriett’s class remained close. For many years, eight of these bright young women calling themselves a “Club” would meet every two weeks throughout the winter months. A member who had been away would immediately announce that she was back in Cambridge, and a special meeting would be called.

After Buckingham, Harriett prepared for college at The May School in Boston. She entered Vassar in 1914 and graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1918.

Career Beginnings

Her college years spanned the First World War and like many young ladies in those days she wished to help the war effort. With this in mind in the last year of college she took a Red Cross Home Service Course which she told her oral historian later would turn out to “point to choice of career”: social work.

To receive a certificate from the Association of Charities she was required to do fieldwork. She arranged to do so in Cambridge the summer she graduated.

“I remember very vividly those first home visits. And particularly one with an Italian family. I was trying earnestly to follow the instructions for an interview when the lady and her neighbors were all talking loudly in the Italian manner. And I felt I wasn’t getting very far. But I did carry with me the impression of a different cultural group that stayed right by me. It was as if the experience said ‘Volunteer.’”

And volunteer Harriett did, but not before she spent a year in England with her parents, her father working in the office of one of the railroad men he had known back home. Harriett studied at the London School of Economics and received a Social Science Certificate in 1920.

When the family returned to Cambridge,

Harriett learned from her mother — who still corresponded with Dr. Cabot — that “Dr. Cabot was doing interesting things at Mass General.” As director of the outpatient clinic, Cabot noted that certain patients returned again and again for treatment. He began to wonder how much their environment was responsible for their continued ill health. He invited Ida Cannon, a public health nurse, to head up the Social Work Department to see if together they could come up with a better program to help the patients.

As early as 1903 concerned citizens were aware that social problems often stood in the way of a patient’s recovery, but Dr. Cabot and Ida Cannon were among the first to attack the problem, using a team approach with doctors, nurses and social workers each playing a part.

Work at Mass General

Harriett was interested and went to see Dr. Cabot who sent her to Ida Cannon. As Harriett reports it, Ida Cannon “did just what Dr. Cabot had done with her. She said, ‘Why don’t you come and volunteer with us?’ And that’s how I came to the famous corner with the white curtains in Mass General where Dr. Cabot placed his first social workers.

“I began work with two of my friends, Theodate Soule and Ruth Lewis, who had been there ahead of me. We used to lift up the curtains when our supervisor was busy and say to the nearest one, ‘Hey, what would you do about this?’ if we needed a little advice.

“I remember sitting there while a patient would be weeping and disturbed and gradually as I listened I would see some confidence coming back. I learned that there was something about being with a person and listening that was supportive . . . and I began to feel what social work even with its limited training then could offer.”

Although Mass General’s wasn’t the first medical social work department, it steadily and clearly became a model for the world. The bril-

liant, somewhat dominating Dr. Cabot insisted that all work be evaluated. What worked? What didn’t? Ida Cannon was patient and steady. They were friends and had a wide group of family connections. They knew people and doctors in different major hospitals around the world. Ms. Cannon knew the social workers in London. Dr. Cabot knew the doctors in Paris. Both met with U.S. social service departments as they developed around the country. Dr. Cabot often supported the work with personal funds, something that Harriett herself would do later.

Harriett was employed in the social service department of Mass General as caseworker, supervisor and educational consultant for over 20 years (1921-42).

Contributions to Medical Social Work

In the whirlwind of activity at Mass General, Harriett noted that social workers learned mostly by doing, as there were almost no books to teach this new profession. This fact concerned the intellectual Harriett, who already was showing a well-organized mind that delighted in conceptualizing.

She herself continued to want and seek more training and knowledge as a professional person. In 1927 she received an M.A. in Sociology from the University of Chicago.

Having recently joined the American Asso-



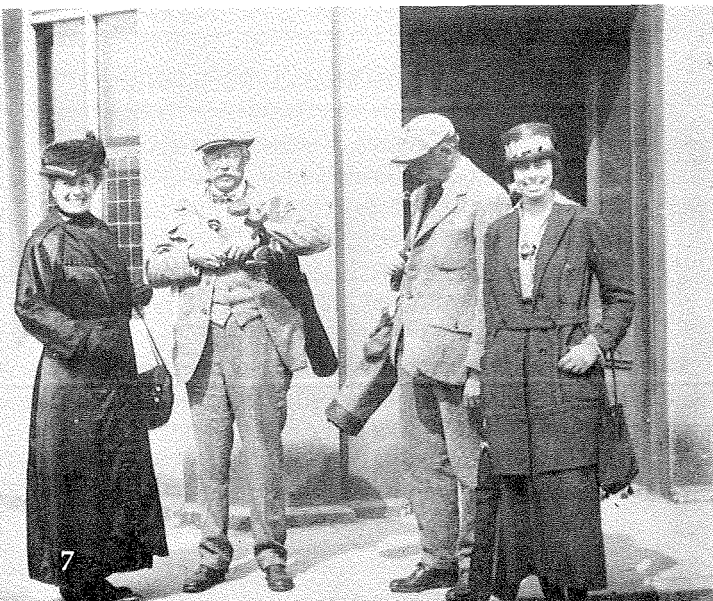
*Harriett Bartlett,
winter 1918.*

ciation of Medical Social Workers, she began writing to satisfy committee work requirements, but she soon sought more writing opportunities. She found that she wanted to give scholarly attention and order to the scattered field of social work practice. "We need our own body of knowledge to stand on to be more effective," Harriett preached. Her goal was to change the *art* of social work into the *science* of social work.

Thus Miss Bartlett was instrumental in transforming social work into a profession primarily through her interest in developing knowledge and theory about what social workers do. Ultimately, Harriett Bartlett wrote 6 books, 40 articles and 1 monograph on the practice of medical social work. Her most important contribution was her book, *The Common Base of Social Work Practice*. This classic text furthers the working definition of social work and identifies the distinctive elements of social work practice. It has been translated into many languages, including Japanese.

In 1947, because her parents were aging, Harriett took an apartment near theirs in a building overlooking the Charles River in Cambridge.

Harriett (right) visited Scotland with her aunt and uncle in 1920.



Almost as soon as she arrived, the dean of Simmons College in Boston called her in and asked her to recommend someone to teach at the School of Social Work.

"I started to recommend names and then the dean said would I come myself. I had been wondering what to do because by this time my parents had become quite elderly and I thought it would be better if I were nearby. And I thought maybe I might take on this teaching."

Harriett started at Simmons as an associate professor. She later became director of medical social work. She retired in 1957 to more actively pursue a program of writing, study and research. In 1981, in keeping with her lifelong commitment to practice and research, she funded the Harriett M. Bartlett Practice Effectiveness Project under the auspices of the National Association of Social Workers. A basic objective of the project was to establish a national clearinghouse for practice studies on social work practice.

Harriett Bartlett's work earned her many professional awards, including two honorary degrees: Doctor of Humane Letters from Boston University in 1969 and Doctor of Social Science from Simmons College in 1976. The NASW Board of Directors presented her with an award "in recognition of her many years of devotion and service in helping to shape the destiny of the social work profession, her dedication to the National Association of Social Workers, and especially for her extraordinary efforts in the clarification of social work practice."

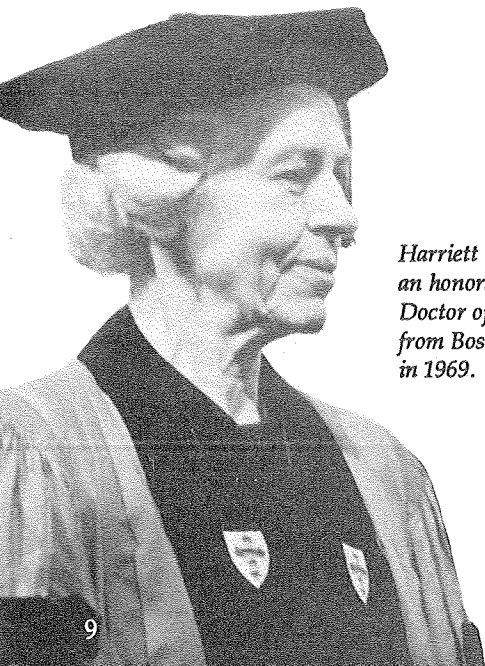
An Avid Naturalist and Reader

Although medical social work was Harriett's driving passion, she did manage to retreat each year for a month to her summer home at Mirror Lake in New Hampshire. She had summered in the area almost every year since college, and in the 1940s bought a place of her own. A naturalist, she loved the woods, the water, the birds — and books.

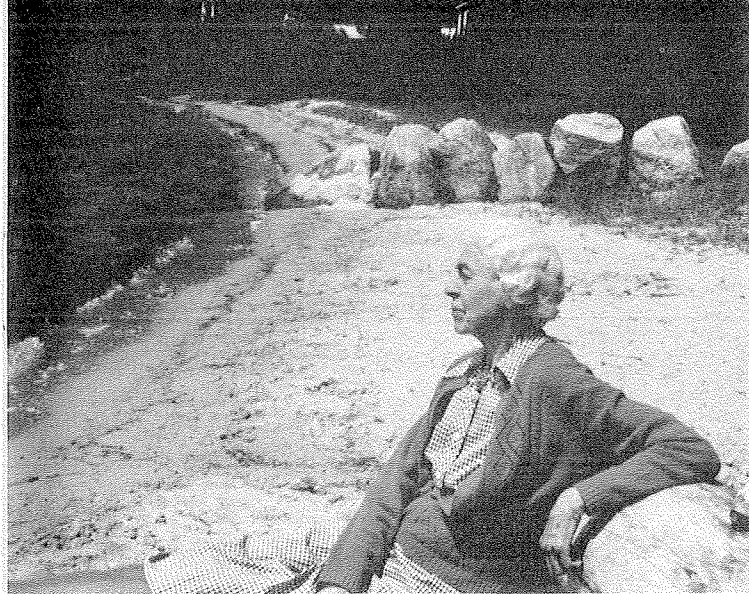
Throughout the year she would read the *New York Times* Book Review section, clipping out reviews of books which interested her. She'd order 30 or more and have them sent to her summer cottage. Some books were technical, some were about nature and the rest were about English country houses and the people who lived in them in the last century, a period Harriett loved. Her habit was to read several books at once, and she had places outdoors where she'd read at particular times of the day. She even designated what type of book she'd read at various spots.

She was also an avid walker. Until she was 80 her tall majestic carriage was eye-catching as she strode the streets of Cambridge. When she was younger and her parents were still alive, the three of them would often go for moonlight walks around Cambridge. Once they even walked from Cambridge to a wedding in Brookline, an occurrence that surprised the wedding guests, according to Harriett.

The older she grew the more Harriett resembled Eleanor Roosevelt, a case of mistaken identity that secretly pleased her.



Harriett Bartlett received an honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters, from Boston University in 1969.



Harriett Bartlett at her summer home, Mirror Lake, New Hampshire, 1978.

How Harriett felt about her life can best be summed up in a note she wrote to her cousins in 1947 to be delivered by her lawyer in the event of her death:

If anything should happen on any of my travels to snatch me suddenly out of this life I want to say that I feel that I have had a good life. I've been blessed with interesting experiences in work and in play and the warm affection of family and friends. I believe that I've been able to contribute a little something worthwhile to social effort in my time and it has been worthwhile for me too. I am not afraid to go and I hope that those who love me will rejoice over all the happiness that we have had together and not grieve over the lost.

With all my love,
Harriett

Harriett M. Bartlett died in 1987 at the age of

89, but her contribution to social work continues. She left a fund and a plan. "It is my dream that the profession of social work sometime will reach a point of maturity when it will be interested and able to establish a center for advanced study at some university to develop social work knowledge and theory to improve social work education and practice."

In her Will, Harriett Bartlett established the Harriett M. Bartlett Fund in The New York Community Trust. It is a Field-of-Interest Fund dedicated to "strengthening the contribution which social workers and the social work profession can make to people and to society."



*The New York Community Trust
is a publicly supported community foundation
which provides centralized management
for charitable funds.*

*New York's major banks serve as trustees.
Trustee for the Harriett M. Bartlett Fund
is the Bank of New York.*

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TO THE
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Bartlett Park a place of beauty

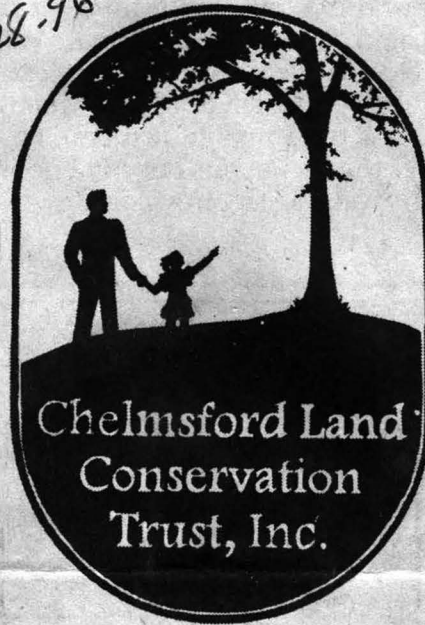
BY JUNE COOK
INDEPENDENT COLUMNIST

The ink had barely dried on the Agreement and Declaration of Trust establishing the Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust Feb. 16, 1961, when the trustees received a letter from Harriett M. Bartlett wishing to donate a parcel of land to the new Trust.

In her letter, Miss Bartlett stated she was giving this land to be used as a public park. "I hope that it can be preserved in its natural state with appropriate plantings of flowers, shrubs and trees but without addition of artificial playgrounds or any conspicuous buildings." She continued, "...it will add beauty and dignity to the town and will offer rest and pleasure to its citizens. I would like to have it known as Bartlett Park, as a memorial to my family, who loved this land and preserved it as an open space while the town grew up around it, for over 100 years."

It was in 1832 that Dr. John C. Bartlett came to Chelmsford from Charlestown to set up his practice. Dr. John was Harriett's great-grandfather. He married Maria Adams, daughter of Joel Adams. It was from Maria that Harriett received her middle name, and it was from the Adams family that the park property came to the Bartlett family. The Bartlett home was at 15 Bartlett Street, the first house on the right at the edge of the Park. Harriett's grandfather, Captain C.E.A. Bartlett also became a resident of 15 Bartlett Street, and it was there his sons, Charles E., Clay C. and Henry grew up. Henry, Harriett's father, who died in 1960, had owned the property for more than 14 years during which time it was a pasture.

Harriett Maria Bartlett was born



in Lowell, and, as a child, moved with her family to Cambridge where she lived the rest of her life. Miss Bartlett, a social worker, was a director of medical social work at Simmons College. She later became a caseworker, supervisor and educational consultant in the social service department at Mass. General Hospital. She also worked in Washington for the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Dept. of Labor as coordinator of a program for emergency training courses on the handling of child delinquency by police officers. In 1947 she was appointed an associate professor of social economy at Simmons School of Social Work and later became director of medical social work at Simmons. She published many articles and papers and wrote six books seeking to improve social work practice. Her work earned her several awards as she became known as a leading authority on medical social work. Although she never lived in Chelmsford, she spent many years as a summer resident with her family and without, living in a

small dwelling maintained atop the hill in the Bartlett Woodlot which is located on Acton Road across from Bartlett Park. Although she was in failing health, she still returned once more to Chelmsford in May 1984 for the 25th celebration of the CLT, at which time a new sign, made for Bartlett Park by Bruce Gullion, was dedicated. Miss Bartlett died Feb. 2, 1987 at the age of 89.

Bartlett Park is a well-known piece of land prominently positioned in the center of town. It is bounded by Bartlett Street and Acton Road and contains approximately three and one quarter acres. In addition to the two field or pasture areas visible from the edge of the park, there is also a small stream, a spring wetlands area and a steep slope at the rear of the Park. Some of the things to be found growing in the park are trees such as sugar maple, red maple, white pine, hemlock, larch and shadblow, several kinds of crab trees and dogwood plus laurel, azaleas, lilac and wildflowers. It's an area to walk through and enjoy as a break from a fast-paced day. From the park you could continue your interlude by crossing Acton Road at the upper end of the park and continue your walk into Bartlett Woodlot and follow the trail. Information about the woodlot will appear in this column in the future.

In the Feb. 8 article we lost 27 acres of our holdings through a transposition of numbers. The correct total acreage is 74 rather than 47. Anyone wishing more information about the trust may call 256-7301 or 256-0531.

June Cook is a member of the Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust.

In-Town Report



Bartlett Park
original photo by
Lucy Schultz

JUNE 22 2011

Souter helps Chelmsford mark milestone

Ex-Supreme Court Justice at open-space event: 'This was my house'

By Rita Savard, rsavard@lowellsun.com

6/13/11

www.lowellsun.com

CHELMSFORD -- In 1961, John F. Kennedy was elected president, Alan Shepard became the first American to venture into space, and Barbie got a boyfriend named Ken.

In Chelmsford, Harriett Bartlett was working on another beginning -- setting aside land for permanent open space.

Nearly 50 years later, members of the Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust wanted to learn more about how their story began and about the woman who helped the town's preservation efforts by donating her own backyard.

They dug through old meeting minutes, legal papers and letters, where they found correspondence between Bartlett and a young lawyer, who called her "aunt" and signed his missives: "Love, David."

The trust tracked down the lawyer, only to find out he was working in the country's highest court.

Helping the trust celebrate its 50th birthday, retired Supreme Court Justice David Souter -- known for being an intensely private person -- talked openly with residents and town officials yesterday about his childhood memories of Bartlett Park and the importance of preserving open space.

"Being back here this afternoon is the closest thing to being home again," said Souter, standing on the same grassy field he knew as his childhood playground. **"To a great extent, this was my house."**

Although Souter called Bartlett "aunt," there was no Bartlett blood in him. Members of the Bartlett family, however, were as close as blood relatives to members of Souter's mother's family.

He remembers driving down from his family's New Hampshire home just about every month to spend a Sunday with the Bartletts at their farmhouse at 4 Bartlett St.

He grew up playing on the 3 1/2-acre parcel with its grove of trees, high rolling fields and stone walls along the edge.

"When you're a small boy and you've explored the land and you know it like the palm of your hand, you love it for the rest of your life," Souter said, adding that Bartlett's devotion for the land was "part of the bones that made her up."

In January 1961, rumors reached Bartlett about a possible Town Meeting warrant to turn her family's open space into a parking lot. She sprang into action, deciding to gift the land to the newly formed Land Conservation Trust with the intention of preserving it.

In a letter to family friends, Bartlett wrote about a man who approached her aunt about buying the family's land for a town post office.

She worked with family members, former Land Trust Chair Martin Bovey and her lawyers, which included, Souter.

Souter helped draft the documents for the property, which became the town's first land acquisition protected under the trust.

By March, Bartlett Park was forever protected as open space.

In a letter to friends, Bartlett wrote, **"For a while there, I had visions of my ancestors coming down out of the frames of their portraits to say sternly, 'Did we save this land for over a century, only to have you let it go for a parking place?'"**

"So now I hope they are at rest," she said.

In 1964, Bartlett, who died in 1987 at the age of 89, donated another 10 acres across the street from the park, off Acton Road, known as Bartlett Woodlot.

The Conservation Trust continues to safeguard the town's open spaces, working jointly with the Conservation Commission. Town Manager Paul Cohen said this year alone, more than 15 parcels were transferred into permanent protection. The trust protects 80 acres of open space townwide.

Remembering the legacy of his "aunt," Souter shared what he believes to be the most important of the ancient myths for people in the 21st century -- the story of Hercules and Antaeus the Giant.

Antaeus appeared to be invincible, beating every challenger he wrestled and then slaughtering his adversaries. Hercules realized that unless he did something different, he would meet the same fate. Hercules discovered that every time Antaeus fell, he'd rise up from the ground stronger than before. Realizing Antaeus drew his strength from the Earth, Hercules lifted him off the ground, suspending him in the air until Antaeus' lost his power and Hercules could defeat him.

"In this 21st century, we are Antaeus," Souter said. **"If we lose our touch from the ground in which we come, we will lose our strength as well as our mental and physical power."**

Souter, who was born in Melrose in 1939, moved to New Hampshire at age 11. He received his degree from Harvard Law School in 1966, later serving as assistant attorney general of New Hampshire before becoming the state's attorney general in 1976.

He served in New Hampshire's Superior and Supreme courts and was later named to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. Soon after, he was tapped by President George H.W. Bush to replace Justice William J. Brennan Jr. on the Supreme Court in 1990, where he remained until 2009.

While he was on the court, Souter was known to return, whenever he was able, to his farmhouse in Weare, N.H., where he favored hiking in the nearby mountains and quiet time for reading rather than doing the public-speaking circuit.

While maintaining a low-key profile, he developed a reputation for long hours in his chambers and careful study of the issues coming before the court.

When Souter announced his intention to retire, President Barack Obama said he showed what it meant to be a "fair-minded and independent judge."

"He approached judging as he approaches life," Obama said, **"with a feverish work ethic and a good sense of humor, with integrity, equanimity, and compassion -- the hallmark of not just being a good judge, but of being a good person."**

Souter said he had good role models in life, many rooted in Chelmsford. Fifty years after helping the town secure its first open space, Souter helped end yesterday's celebration by planting an elm tree in Bartlett Park.

"I don't know whether the human race can prevent turning the world into a toxic place," he said. **"But if there's a hope, it has to rest in a place in the unspoiled world."**



Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust
50th anniversary
All Photographs by
Lucy Schultz Photography
<http://lucy.mixmox.com/>

Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust celebrates 50th anniversary

By Monica Jimenez / Wicked Local Chelmsford
GateHouse News Service
Posted Jun 16, 2011
www.wickedlocal.com/chelmsford

Chelmsford —

The Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust celebrated its 50th anniversary Sunday, June 12 in an afternoon ceremony in Bartlett Park. About a hundred people attended, gathering under a canopy to escape the light rain.

The crowd enjoyed Chelmsford ginger ale and chicken fresh from the grill as jazz musicians played from atop a red truck. As the speaking program began, children continued to lob balls, swing softball bats and play soccer in the background. The youngsters' shouts punctuated each speaker's tribute to the CLCT.

One speaker received a standing ovation before saying a word. CLCT Director June Cook explained a series of letters addressed to "Aunt Harriet" and signed "Love, David," prompted her to track down this person, who had clearly been close to Harriet Bartlett. "David" turned out to be former U.S. Supreme Court Justice David Souter, who had visited the Bartlett property as a child. Souter, who retired in 2009, traveled from his New Hampshire home to address the residents at Wednesday's celebration. He was presented with a watercolor painting depicting Bartlett Park.

Highlights

· Selectman Pat Wojtas read a proclamation from the Board of Selectmen, honoring the CLCT's anniversary. Town Manager Paul Cohen praised the collaboration between town and resident groups that has led to the success of land conservation in Chelmsford. Town Conservation Commission Chairman Dave McLachlan spoke briefly about the efforts of the commission, which also celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

· A new sign for Bartlett Park was unveiled. It will replace the current sign shortly. The new sign, made of cedar, is expected to last a number of decades.

· A young Valley Forge American elm tree has been planted in the park. Once a familiar feature of New England towns, the species fell prey to a rampant blight and is rarely seen nowadays. The Bartlett Park tree is a resistant variety and it's hoped it will live for decades.

The CLCT Board of Directors, other group officers and former Justice Souter gathered around the elm sapling, whose slender trunk was still wrapped in white. Gripping shovels, they turned some of the earth around its roots.

All the children present were given cups of liquid fertilizer, which they poured at the base of the tree.

Letters from the past

Former CLCT director Becky Warren read a letter from Harriet Bartlett, a Chelmsford resident whose donation of Bartlett Park got started the trust on its mission. In the letter Bartlett expressed concern for her family's land, in danger of being turned into a parking lot.

Humor warmed Bartlett's words as she described hiding for most of an early CLCT meeting, then emerging to announce her gift of the land.

"Do I feel relieved this is taken care of!" Bartlett wrote. ***"I had been having visions in which my ancestors came out from their portraits, saying, 'Did we save this land for more than 100 years so it could go for a parking lot?' Now they are at rest."***

A letter from original CLCT chairman Martin Bovey expressed his hope that Harriet's gift of Bartlett Park and later Bartlett woodlot would endure for generations.

"I hope it provides enjoyment and refreshment for the citizens of Chelmsford in the future, as it has for me and my family in the past," Bovey wrote. He added, ***"Fifty years from now, they [the parcels] will be priceless."***

Lessons from great teachers

Retired justice David Souter had the crowd roaring with laughter as he described his childhood visits to Chelmsford, largely spent trapped on a couch between endlessly chattering adults, and his first lesson in conservation, delivered by tall Aunt Harriet one May:

"Never pull a lady'slipper up by the roots."

That lesson took place in what would later be Bartlett Park, Souter said, which bloomed with rare yellow lady'sslippers in the spring. Souter would often end up in that area after boyhood jaunts took him past the last line of sheds and all the way across the family's property.

"When you're a small boy exploring the land and you know it like the palm of your hand, you love it for the rest of your life," Souter said.

Souter retold the ancient tale of Hercules and Antaeus, a myth known to Harriet Bartlett and another of Souter's Chelmsford teachers: Ralph Waldo Emerson. The giant Antaeus derived his strength from his mother the Earth and became powerless as soon as Hercules lifted his feet from the ground.

"In this 21st century, we are Antaeus. If we lose our touch with the ground from which we come, we will lose our strength and our mental as well as physical health," Souter said. ***"If it has been hard for us to keep that contact today, it will be harder still for the people a generation or two generations hence."***

"Whatever hope Chelmsford has of maintaining our sanctity as human beings, that hope rests on a chance to be in touch with an unspoiled world. That's what the Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust has done its utmost to guarantee."

Souter then turned to address the CLCT leaders.

"On behalf of the people who suffer the same risk — of losing touch with a sense of the ground beneath us — thank you," Souter said. ***"Thank you not only for preserving a place that is beautiful and preserving the memory of the old agricultural town Chelmsford was, but for preserving our humanity."***

"The importance of what you do is nothing less than that."