

# River Byway News

LATE WINTER 2008

Byway Signs Coming Soon...2

Marketing Plan Unveiled.....2

Book Offers

Tourism Lessons .....3

New Byway Brochure.....3

Around the Byway ..... 4 - 5

Community Handbook.....6

Economic Assessment Tool..7

Landmark Preservation Opportunity.....8



CONNECTICUT  
RIVER  
BYWAY



## Byway Poised for Big Projects

**T**HE Connecticut River Byway Council is ready to move ahead on a series of projects aimed at increasing the visibility of the byway as a destination, drawing in more visitors and residents, creating a sense of continuity among the waypoint communities, and making the rich experiences along the byway easier to find and enjoy than ever before.

Projects include developing criteria for prioritizing conservation and preservation opportunities along the byway, reprinting the byway map, updating the large byway informational panels in the waypoint centers, and installing video terminals in the waypoint centers that can show “Welcome to the Heart of New England” and other local videos. A cultural



Photo courtesy of Edith Tucker, Coos County Democrat

Vermont Commissioner of Tourism and Marketing Bruce Hyde, New Hampshire Office of Travel and Tourism Development Director Alice DeSouza, and CRJC Executive Director Sharon Francis announce the designation of the Byway as a National Scenic Byway at the Cornish-Windsor Covered Bridge..

heritage brochure is in the works for the Upper Valley region. A strategic planning retreat is set for this spring and a byway marketing plan has been developed (see story on page 2).

*Continued page 2*

## April Byway Retreat at Lake Morey

**M**ARSHALLING existing resources and looking ahead to the future will be the focus of a byway retreat this spring. Byway Council members, waypoint center staff, chamber of commerce members, downtown/Main Street organization representatives, preservation groups, and others will meet at the Lake Morey Inn April 17 to map out a strategic plan for the byway.

Among the day’s focus areas will be sustainability, including developing ways the Byway Council can support its work in the years ahead, and understanding what waypoint centers need to be most effective. The structure and purposes of the Byway Council will be examined to ensure that the right mix of interests and organizations are represented. Determining what should be

included in hospitality training will be another subject of the session. Effective communications among the waypoint centers will be examined, and ways the Byway Council can foster preservation of the heritage and natural resources that attract visitors to the region.

“The retreat will be built around what we want the byway to look like and function in five to 10 years, and what we have to do to make that happen,” said Sharon Francis, executive director of CRJC, which oversees the byway. “The strategic plan will set forth a vision, as well as realistic, attainable goals.”

Space at the retreat is limited, so if you would like to participate please call Barb Harris at 603-826-4800 or e-mail [contact@crjc.org](mailto:contact@crjc.org). Lodging is available for byway members who are traveling long distances, on a first come, first served basis.

## Byway Projects, continued

Second year projects include upgrading the byway Web site, creating a database of byway-related businesses, creating a handbook for waypoint communities, hospitality training in waypoint communities, and creating a baseline survey to establish the effectiveness and impact of the byway.

The Connecticut River Byway got a tremendous boost in the fall of 2005 when it received designation as a national scenic byway from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The Byway Council applied for and was authorized \$178,000 in federal support. Between slowdowns in federal release of funds, and some reorganization at the state level, the council has only recently received the funding.

All of the projects over the next two years will be achieved through work by Byway Council members and staff, and others with a stake in the byway. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact the Byway Council at [contact@crjc.org](mailto:contact@crjc.org). 

# Signs Will Soon Mark Byway



*The long-awaited Byway signs are on their way. The Byway Council, Two River Ottauquechee Regional Planning Commission, the departments of transportation for New Hampshire and Vermont, the consulting firm LandWorks, and officials in waypoint communities are collaborating on the project.*

*Sign locations are set, fabrication is underway, and signs should be available for installation by local public works departments this travel season. Shown here are examples of trailblazer and wayfinding signs designed by LandWorks. The Byway Council received federal funding and matching funds from the two states for the project.*

## Byway Marketing Plan Reaches Residents, Visitors

**T**HE Byway Council has adopted a marketing plan that spells out goals and actions for promoting the byway to residents and visitors, and recognizes the importance of preserving the cultural and natural amenities that make the byway a special place. The plan was drafted by the council's marketing subcommittee as an outgrowth of the partnership between the Byway Council and the tourism departments of New Hampshire and Vermont. The plan will become part of the byway's strategic plan.

The marketing subcommittee drew on a variety of studies and background information to define fruitful target audiences for byway communications. For instance, research indicates that a quarter of leisure travelers in Vermont come from within the state, and are often visiting friends and family. Therefore, the residents of

byway communities in particular, as well as general audiences within both states, are potential visitors.

Recently, the appeal of local food (along with the term "locavores" to describe such consumers) has received national attention. This audience, which includes both residents and visitors, may be reached through byway information highlighting farmers markets, pick-your-own opportunities, or restaurants featuring local food.

Another target audience is families, who may seek a mix of outdoor recreation and educational enrichment opportunities. And of course, there are the seekers of local arts and crafts, who want to know where to find open studios, galleries, and craft shops. Evidence shows that many in this category are higher income women. Understanding the byway's appeal to particular audiences will help shape

marketing messages and find potential media placements.

Eight action steps will carry the marketing plan forward. These are:

- Build initial infrastructure for distributing Byway publications, and provide training for the 800-number inquiry fulfillment center in Vermont.
- E-marketing, including upgrading the byway Website, and establishing e-communications among the waypoint centers.
- Hospitality training for waypoint center and chamber of commerce staff, and staff from local visitor-related businesses.
- Public and community relations, focused on creating a byway handbook as an easy reference to things to do and see around the byway, and as a reference for tools to make a better byway, such as through historic pres-

*Continued page 3*

# The View From Vermont

**T**OURISM is not a passive industry. While visitors return home at the end of their stay, their effect lingers. In *The View From Vermont: Tourism and the Making of an American Rural Landscape* (University Press of New England, 2006), Blake Harrison examines the consequences tourism on culture and identity. He considers the consequences of America's love affair with Vermont – or the image of Vermont that has been promulgated for well over a century of a bucolic rural landscape. Lessons from Vermont may be applied to rural New Hampshire and the Byway.

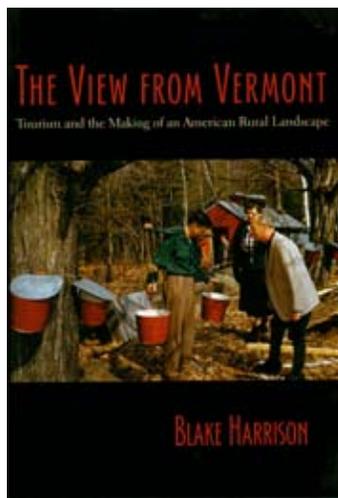
A cultural and historical geographer, Harrison seeks to understand the ways in which people make meaning of and transform the landscapes they inhabit. For whom, he asks, does the conception of “rural Vermont” ring true? Whose stories does it tell, and whose does it leave out?

The book begins by tracing the rise of tourism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Americans left cities each summer, already nostalgic for an earlier, simpler time. They found in Vermont pastoral landscapes, quaint villages, and honest industry. As suburbs grew and transportation systems improved in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mass consumerism spawned tourism-directed advertising, and images and slogans began shaping the context in which visitors and residents saw the Vermont landscape. “Gen-

erations of rural residents have tried to capitalize on tourism's economic potential according to the demands of visitors, only to find themselves struggling to retain control over that landscape as their power to define its future eroded,” Harrison writes.

He refers to what has been called the “devil's bargain” of tourism: that communities so succeed at attracting visitors that the very nature of what drew people in the first place – authentic cultural and natural features – is lost.

The challenge for the Byway, Harrison's argument would imply, is to balance visitor attraction with preservation and conservation of the region's intrinsic qualities – work the Byway Council will address at its April retreat (see page 1). 



## Marketing Plan, continued

ervation and scenic view or wildlife habitat protection.

- Interest feature writers in unique stories about the byway.

- Seek opportunities to collaborate with other organizations with an interest in the byway.

- Update and reprint the Byway Explorations map, develop a cultural heritage brochure for the Upper Valley, update the byway panels for the way-point centers.

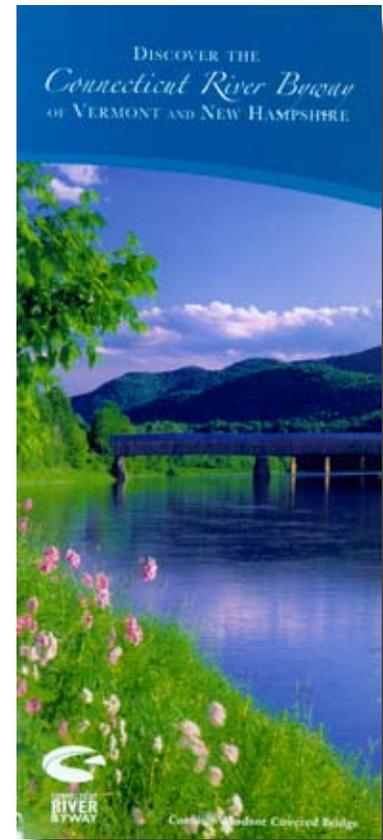
- Develop baseline information about byway visitors to assess marketing efforts and make improvements in the future. 

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## Four Season Brochure Touts Byway



A lavishly illustrated, four-color brochure touting the Connecticut River Byway is available. The Byway Council and the tourism departments of Vermont and New Hampshire produced it.

The 16-page brochure highlights four-season recreation, heritage, agriculture, and culture. It publicizes a new 800-number for inquiries which was established by the Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing. Callers to 1-877-CTBYWAY may receive information about the byway from the call center and may request an information packet in the mail.

The brochure is being distributed at state welcome areas, to media and travel industry professionals, and at trade shows. To request copies call CRJC at 603-826-4800 or e-mail [contact@crjc.org](mailto:contact@crjc.org). 

# AROUND THE BYWAY

## New Life for Historic Stratford Train Station

The Golden Age of railroads is being brought back to life in northern New Hampshire. The riverside town of Stratford is renovating its historic train station, built in 1889 for the Grand Trunk Railroad. The station will house the town's library, have a transportation and local history exhibit, and be a welcome center.

Project organizers also hope the station may become a passenger stop on the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad, putting the town back on the map as a connecting point to Colebrook and The Balsams Grand Resort in Dixville Notch.

According to preservationists, the building's Italianate style was popular in late 19th century New England. The station had been damaged by fire, and Stratford has been working for almost a decade to raise the funds to restore it. Work started last summer, and structural renovation was completed in the winter. Students from Stratford High School helped with window restoration and other chores, and created signs for the building.

The town won federal transportation funding for the restoration, much of which is complete. The town is seeking other funding for library and welcome center furnishings. ❏



*This mechanism in the ticket room of the Stratford railroad station is part of a signaling apparatus, called a semaphore, just outside the window. The semaphore and the controls are original and are being restored along with the rest of the station.*

Photo courtesy of Jill Brooks, Colebrook News and Sentinel.



**TOWN HISTORY** – The towns of Haverhill and Bath are collaborating to restore the 1829 Haverhill-Bath Covered Bridge over the Ammonoosuc River. The bridge, made in the Town lattice truss style, is reputedly the oldest of its kind left in the U.S. Wright Construction of Mount Holly, Vt. is the contractor on the \$1.5 million project. The bridge will be rededicated this summer.



## Colebrook Welcome Center Open Year-Round

By Charlie Jordan

This season the N.H. State Welcome Center in Colebrook, where the Great North Woods Interpretive Center is housed, is open for the first time through the winter. It previously closed each Columbus Day weekend and didn't reopen full-time until Memorial Day weekend. This is a big step for the center, as it can now host year-round exhibits.

Consequently, the interpretive center has been a busy place. Last year an energetic new group, the Friends of the Great North Woods Interpretive Center, met monthly to plan and put up new exhibits. The Friends oversee different aspects of the room: arts, history, nature/outdoors, business, organizations, and display cabinet.

We have been able to get up updated sustained displays, as well as mount monthly exhibits. At Christmas we had a display of area businesses which cater to the holiday season, and

hosted our first Christmas open house. In January we had a display of presidential primary campaign memorabilia spanning back over 30 years, with an emphasis on the Dixville Notch First-in-the-Nation vote. February's display spotlights winter activities in the Great North Woods, including skiing, snowmobiling, sled dogs, snowshoeing, and skating. In March we'll focus on the local maple syrup business. In addition, the Connecticut River Arts Group (CRAG) has been mounting art displays in the center.

The center just received a Tillotson Foundation grant for about \$3,000 that will help with upgrading storage areas and purchasing more display and mounting materials.

In downtown Colebrook, the former Colebrook Grange/Balsam Stage Stables site is being transformed into a community arts and heritage center. Tucked just behind Colebrook's

*Continued page 5*

### *Colebrook, continued*

Main Street, the ambitious project is supported by the efforts of numerous groups which have donated time and resources, including the Colebrook Downtown Development Association, the Great North Woods Center for the Arts committee, the Upper Connecticut Valley Community Coalition, town of Colebrook and the Tillotson family. When complete, the center will feature a complete performing arts stage on the second floor, and will host local and guest performers.

Arts in the Colebrook area has

been enjoying a renaissance largely through the efforts of the Great North Woods Center for the Arts group, which was conceived at a community summit in 2003. This organization, which will be one of many expected to make use of the new center, has been successful bringing local and regional talent to the spotlight through the yearly Winter Warmers Concert Series. Many of the concerts in the series have sold out, enhancing the public's awareness that there is a solid support base for the arts in the Upper Coös region. ❏

## St. Johnsbury Welcome Center Plans Reopening

The historic St. Johnsbury railroad station is in the final stages of restoration. The 1883 Queen Anne building has served as a Byway waypoint and town welcome center since 2003, but was closed over a year ago for much needed renovation and system upgrades. The Northeast Kingdom Chamber of Commerce, which runs the waypoint/welcome center, will reopen its offices there.

The building was donated to the town by Tony Pomerleau, a developer and area native, who had bought it decades ago from the Canadian Pacific Railroad. The town attracted federal scenic byway and transportation grants for the renovation, as well as state and local funds for the nearly \$1 million project. The Caledonia Community Work Camp provided much of the labor on the project. The station will also serve as a bus center operated by Rural Community Transportation, and host occasional excursion trains.

"When it was constructed in 1883,



*The St. Johnsbury Welcome Center serves multiple uses as a waypoint center on the Connecticut River Byway, headquarters of the Northeast Kingdom Chamber of Commerce, and a hub for Rural Community Transportation.*

the railroad station served as the hub for a vibrant and energized downtown," according to Darcie McCann, director of the Northeast Kingdom Chamber of Commerce. "This new welcome center hopes to evoke these same feelings."

The building is on track to open this summer. Since its opening, over 20,000 people come through the welcome center annually, using it for the restrooms, wireless Internet, to seek advice from the friendly volunteers, and take home some of the dozens of brochures and other information available. The Connecticut River Byway panels are also prominently displayed. ❏

## Relive the French and Indian War at Fort No. 4

Commemoration of the French and Indian War 250 years ago is ongoing at the Fort at No. 4 in Charlestown, N.H. This year, the interpretive theme is "Sources of Change, Contributions of Many, Diversity on the Frontier." Programs will focus on the influence of French and other nationalities on 18th century New England culture.

The commemoration is part of an international effort from 2004 – 2010. The Fort at No. 4 is working with the museums at Fort Ticonderoga and Crown Point in New York, which were all joined by the Crown Point Road built in 1759. The three forts were the northern front in the war.

June 7 and 8 will see the reenactment of the Siege of 1747, during King George's War, when French and Native forces tried to force English colonists out of the Connecticut River valley. Battles at the fort are scheduled for noon and 2 p.m. each day. On Aug. 2 and 3, French and British soldiers and Native warriors will gather at the fort to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the French and Indian War. Battles are scheduled for 2 p.m. on Saturday and 1 p.m. on Sunday. ❏



## Tax Incentives for Barn Preservation

**O**WNERS of historic barns in New Hampshire may qualify for property tax relief if they agree to maintain them. According to the state, at least 295 structures in 68 communities are enrolled in the barn preservation program.

The barn tax incentive allows municipalities to grant property tax relief to barn owners who can show the public benefit of preserving their barns or other old farm buildings while agreeing to maintain their structures through a 10-year renewable easement. In return, the town provides tax relief of 25 to 75 percent of the full assessed value of the property. In addition, the assessment will not increase as a result of maintenance or repair work that is performed while the easement is in effect.



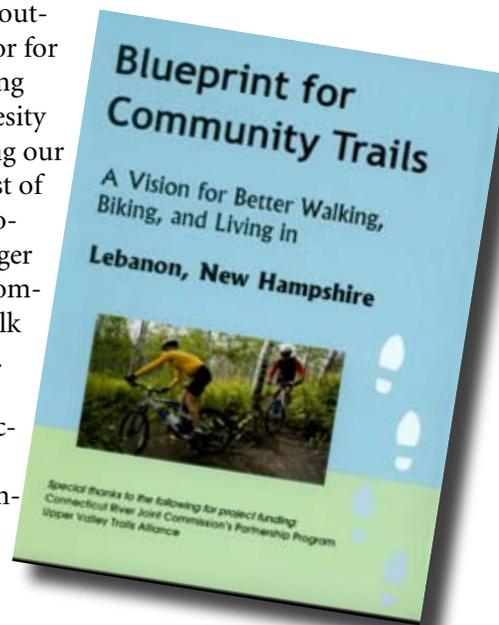
Barn owners interested in applying for the incentive to become effective in the coming tax year need to apply before April 15, 2008. They should contact their town office or appropriate city department to obtain an RSA 79-D application, or the N.H. Preservation Alliance for more information. 

## Trails Blueprint for Walking, Riding

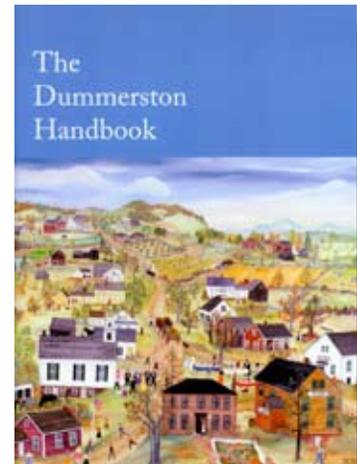
**E**NCOURAGING people to get outside and walk or bike to work or for recreation is an active strategy among public health advocates, who see obesity as a leading cause of illness. Reducing our reliance on automobiles is an interest of climate change and green energy proponents. Trouble is, many of our larger communities have grown without comfortable, safe places for people to walk or ride, especially when commuting.

The Blueprint for Community Trails sponsored by the Lebanon Recreation and Parks Department seeks to change that. Its Blueprint for Community Trails depicts existing and proposed bike routes, walking trails, and transit lines linking neighborhoods, major employers, schools, and conservation land in and around Lebanon. It also lists a range of actions and recommendations for implementing the plan.

The blueprint grew out of a planning process that included a public workshop where participants drew their visions of a livable and walkable community. The blueprint is published as a fold-out map on one side and explanations and recommendations on the other. It is available at the Lebanon City Hall. The project was supported with a \$3,500 CRJC Partnership Program grant. 



## Handbook About Dummerston



Newcomers to the small southeastern Vermont town of Dummerston (pop. 1,915) won't be strangers for long, thanks to a new resource, *The Dummerston Handbook*.

Taking their inspiration from a similar publication from Middlesex, Vt., Dummerston residents launched the handbook as a way to increase knowledge about and interest in their community, and to encourage and inspire efforts to protect and enhance the town's natural and human resources.

The project was embraced by the Dummerston Planning Commission, Historical Society, and a host of volunteers. The 50-page booklet provides a complete snapshot of the town, from its geology, wildlife, and farms, to its history, current demographics, and cultural activities. It is a portrait of a close and thriving community. Several pages are devoted to explaining the various services from town government, and a pullout page has current municipal officials, and a names and contact information for area organizations and businesses.

A 2006 CRJC Partnership Program grant of \$3,500 was used to print the attractive four-color, magazine-sized booklet. A private donation funded the mailing. The handbook was sent to all households and is available for new arrivals. 

# Tool for Measuring Economic Impact Being Developed

**D**O more people visit the towns along the Connecticut River because of the Byway? Do they patronize local shops or stay in local lodging? How much do they spend? What does being on the Byway mean to owners of historic commercial buildings considering restoration projects? What about to a property owner weighing the costs and benefits of conserving scenic land? Does the Byway mean more investment?

Answering these types of questions is the aim of an economic impact assessment tool being developed for the America's Byways Resource Center. The consultant on the project is Yellow Wood Associates of St. Albans, Vt., which has worked with the Connecticut River Joint Commissions. The project was described in a recent tele-

workshop on the "Basics of Economic Measurement" in which byway council staff participated.

"The project's goal is to create a byway-specific tool that will focus on the investment in the corridor in combination with visitor spending," said Henry Hanka of the America's Byways Resource Center during the workshop. The tool is expected to roll out later this year.

During the first phase of the measurement project, byway organizations were surveyed to determine specific needs regarding economic impact data and techniques for collecting it. Existing data and analysis models were reviewed, and the feasibility of creating a cost-effective and simple to use assessment tool was analyzed. Among the project's working principles for the tool are:

- ❖ It can be used by any byway organization – staffed or volunteer;
- ❖ It incorporates and relates spending, visitation, and investment;
- ❖ Reduces reliance on visitor surveys;
- ❖ Incorporates innovative and cost-effective people counting technologies;
- ❖ Provides context for reporting results that will be meaningful to local officials;
- ❖ Presents results that are easy to interpret and explain to others;
- ❖ Creates baselines for future measurement of actual impacts.

Assessing economic impact will be a two-step process, according to Yellow Wood. A baseline must first be established to show the "before" picture of economic activity. Then, data may be collected to show the effect after establishing the byway. This may be difficult for byways that didn't collect economic data before designation. These byways may measure economic significance, which provides a snapshot in time of existing economic activity that can be attributed to the byway's presence. ☒

## *Protecting and enhancing a byway's intrinsic qualities*

costs money. If you knew the economic impact of the activities you do to enhance your byway, you could use this information to justify additional investments over time and to explain to the public as well as local, state, and national officials another reason your work matters.

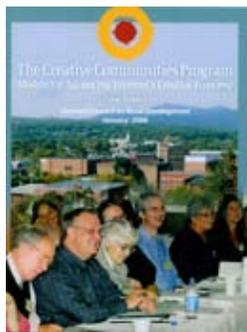
In addition, through greater understanding of how your byway generates or fails to generate economic impacts, you can adjust your activities to result in greater positive impact and fewer negative impacts.

- from *Basics of Economic Measurement*, America's Byways Resource Center, 2007.

## New DVD Offers Resources for Creative Economy

**T**HE Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) has released a multimedia DVD with resources for communities, policy leaders, educators, businesses, and nonprofits who want to learn about the creative economy in the state, and how communities may foster creative development.

*Vermont's Creative Economy: Progress and Promise* includes video vignettes of projects underway, a complete guide to potential financial and technical resources,



detailed reports from the 12 towns in Vermont's Creative Communities Program, and creative economy studies from Vermont, New England, and beyond. The DVD includes a toolkit to help groups identify local priorities to develop the creative economy and build action plans to get them under way.

The DVD is available for free from VCRD, 802-223-6091 or [vcrd2@sover.net](mailto:vcrd2@sover.net). Much of the material is posted on the VCRD Web site, [www.vtrural.org](http://www.vtrural.org). ☒

## Resources for Byway Measurement

The economic measurement teleworkshop, along with other workshops, is available as a podcast from the America's Byways Resource Center: [www.bywaysresourcecenter.org/events/workshops/teleworkshops](http://www.bywaysresourcecenter.org/events/workshops/teleworkshops).

Basics of Economic Measurement (handout from the tele-workshop): [www.bywaysresourcecenter.org/topics/finances/economic-impact/articles/1086/](http://www.bywaysresourcecenter.org/topics/finances/economic-impact/articles/1086/)

Economic Impact Information: [www.bywaysresourcecenter.org/topics/finances/](http://www.bywaysresourcecenter.org/topics/finances/)

# Col. Ebenezer Hinsdale Farm – One of a Kind

**T**HE southwestern New Hampshire town of Hinsdale has the kind of preservation opportunity that comes along only once every few centuries. Col. Ebenezer Hinsdale's pre-Revolutionary home and farm, on the banks of the Connecticut River opposite Brattleboro, is a historic and natural resource treasure. Its owner has offered it to the Hinsdale Historical Society, which is now raising funds to purchase and protect the property.

Ebenezer Hinsdale was born in Deerfield, Mass. He served as an officer in the French and Indian Wars, and Fort Hinsdale was built on his property about 1742 to protect settlers from Indian attack. He built his home, the first frame building in the town, about 1759. It is said that the house's beams came from this early fort.

The effort to preserve the farm was awarded a grant from New Hampshire's Land and Community Heritage Investment Program, and it's easy to see why. The property offers a wealth of historical and natural features, from the wide pine wainscoting in the handsome home to waterfowl resting habitat within the surrounding riverfront land. The Fort Hill Rail Trail passes through the property, offering excellent access for birders, hikers, and cross-country skiers, with wonderful river views.

Much of the farm's 37 mainland acres and adjacent 10-acre island are growing back up into the kind of riverine floodplain forest that provides critical habitat for birds and other wildlife. Research by Smith College has shown that in this part of the river valley, spring migrants use forested areas near the Connecticut River as "stopover habitat" where they wait for spring to arrive in the uplands before dispersing to breed. Ten acres of open fields provide habitat diversity.

The Connecticut River Joint Commissions, the state Audubon societies, and other conservation organizations are moving forward to help protect the Hinsdale Farm as the first in a series of actions on behalf of important bird areas. Research by New Hampshire Audubon and Audubon Vermont, sponsored by the Connecticut River Joint Commissions' Partnership Program, identified the Connecticut River from the Massachusetts border north to Weathersfield Bow as the Middle Connecticut River Important Bird Area (IBA). The IBA recognizes the critical



importance of the river as a migratory pathway and breeding habitat for a variety of waterfowl and songbirds.

But back to Col. Hinsdale's home – the homestead's many rare architectural features include its front doorway, the only known example of the true Connecticut River style north of Greenfield, Mass. Outbuildings include a blacksmith shop, two agricultural barns, and a carriage shop. The historical society plans to use the house, with its virtually unaltered historic interior, as its headquarters. The land will be protected as open space for wildlife habitat and open to area residents and visitors for birding, walking, and other low-impact recreation.

For more information or to contribute to the project, contact Bill Dunlap, 603-494-4752 or eqdunlap@aol.com.  
– Adair Mulligan



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