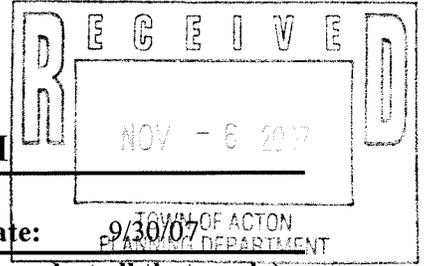


PROJECT APPLICATION FORM



Applicant: Linda McElroy/Doug Halley

Submission Date: 9/30/07

Applicant's Address, Phone Number and Email

Purpose (Please select all that apply)

472 Main Street, Acton, MA 01720
(978) 264-9634
dhalley@town.acton.ma.us

- Open Space
- Community Housing
- Historic Preservation
- Recreation

Town Committee (if applicable): Board of Selectmen

Project Name: Trail Through Time

Project Location/ Address: 472 Main Street, Acton, MA 01720

Amount Requested: Not to Exceed \$30,000

Project Summary: In the space below, provide a brief summary of the project.

A Trail Through Time is an innovative historic preservation project intended to create a heritage trail through town-owned conservation land in North Acton. It will be a unique project that will allow public access to sites and stone structures representative of two distinct cultures that existed both serially and concurrently within a relatively small geographic area.

The Trail will access the recently restored Nashoba Brook Stone Chamber and its contiguous 'blacksmith shop' foundation; the Wheeler Farm complex; the Robbins Mill and Dam complex; the Pencil Factory site and sluiceways; several Native American sites still to be determined; and possibly other yet to be identified historic sites located in the area. At the completion of each site restoration, the site will be re-landscaped as appropriate, and an informational panel or kiosk will be erected to describe that site's significance.

This funding request is for the restoration of the stone remains of the Wheeler Farm, located at the end of Wheeler Lane, together with improvements to the surrounding landscape. This 19th century farm complex was used for raising dry (beef) cattle and is comprised of a house foundation, rock-lined well, partial barn foundation, animal droving corridor, and corrals. In conjunction with this restoration, a non-intrusive (no digging) archaeological Field School is recommended in collaboration with the Discovery Museum.*

Estimated Date for Completion of Project: June 30, 2009

Narrative

A Trail Through Time

A unique heritage trail

Concept

The concept underlying the project designated as 'Trail Through Time' (TTT) is the creation of a heritage trail in the town-owned conservation lands of North Acton. What will be unique about this particular Trail is that it will access sites and stone structures representative of two distinct cultures that existed both serially and concurrently within a relatively small geographical area.

The nascent vision, conceived during the 2006 Nashoba Brook Stone Chamber restoration field work, developed gradually during the following year as it was successively presented to individuals, both within and without the town, who have expertise in a discipline or technique vital to the successful realization of such a concept.

Design

The proposed project has three interrelated components: 1) the Trail itself, 2) the sites it will access, and 3) collaborative educational programs. The full project's time frame for completion is open-ended, but the first site restoration is intended to be completed in one year. Each single-site restoration will be undertaken only as funding and site complexity allow. Phase I of the TTT will be implemented primarily within the North Acton cluster of conservation lands, tying in to one contiguous Carlisle property. A later Phase II could be considered when an operational Bruce Freeman Rail Trail provides a link to East Acton Village and the Morrison Farm complex.

The Trail. The current design proposes a loop trail following existing Land Stewards' trails in the target area that will access a cluster of sites, with stone structures or remains, from Native American, pre-Colonial, Colonial, and Industrial time periods. Besides the sites in the North Acton conservation lands, the Trail will access one contiguous Carlisle conservation property bordering Acton where numerous Native American sites exist. However, any future funding requests will be submitted only for the sites in Acton.

Each included site will require some degree of restoration or enhancement, and all will be conceptually connected through the installation of informational panels that present both general and specific historical, archaeological, and other pertinent data.

When the Robbins Mill Development's expected land transfer to the town is completed, a new trail (to be included in the designated TTT loop) will be designed to connect that parcel--which contains Native American sites as well as the probable Stone Chamber roof-slab quarry--to the existing conservation parcels. The Acton Land Stewardship Committee (LSCom) has agreed to build this portion of new trail to the TTT team's requirements.

Distinctive and consistent signage will be applied throughout the Trail using a logo already designed and used to mark one cluster of enigmatic stone piles located within the Spring Hill parcel.

Funding required for the Trail itself will likely be minimal. Short spur trails to some sites may be needed, but generally only signage and possibly short boardwalk spans will be added to the existing infrastructure. Materials only will be purchased, as LSCom will provide volunteer labor.

Three major access points, with already existing adequate parking space, will be utilized: Wheeler Lane, Davis Road, and Camp Acton. Improvements to these parking areas may eventually be sought outside this revenue source. Kiosks are already in place at each of these entrances. They will be furnished with maps and pamphlets describing the TTT and the sites it accesses.

The Sites. As presently planned, the TTT will access the recently restored Nashoba Brook Stone Chamber and its contiguous 'blacksmith shop' foundation; the Wheeler Farm complex; the Robbins Mill and Dam complex; the Pencil Factory site and sluiceways; the Chamber roof-slab quarry; one already-designated cluster of enigmatic stone piles in the Spring Hill parcel; and several other Native American sites located in both Acton and Carlisle.

The target area lies within a swath of a thousands-year-old Native American sacred landscape that ranges through eight contiguous towns in the region, including Acton and Carlisle. Littleton, once the center of the Nashoba Praying Village that extended into North Acton, is also part of this Native American sacred landscape. There are numerous stone structures, reliably believed to be Native American, that lie within the target area. Those to be included, in addition to the Spring Hill stone piles, are still to be specified.

At the completion of each site restoration, some landscaping will be done consistent with the natural appearance of the site surround, similar to what has been done around the chamber. The intent of the landscaping is to draw attention to the site without destroying its essential appearance as an integral part of the natural landscape. An informational panel or kiosk will also be installed to describe the significance of each particular site, both as a stand-alone structure or complex, and as part of the broader scope of the TTT. Panel and landscaping expenses will be included in each funding request.

Educational Programs. The project's planners hope to establish a relationship with the Acton School Curriculum Department or other educational entities within the town in order to conduct a non-intrusive archaeological Field School as an adjunct to each site restoration. ABRHS students who participate in such field schools could receive credit toward some portion of their extra 900-hours requirement. Additionally, collaborations with other educational programs will be sought; for example, the Bridgewater State University's program for young Native American students. It is anticipated that at the completion of the TTT, the restored sites will be valuable as destinations for school program field trips.

Specific Site Proposal

The site selected for this funding request is the Wheeler Farm, located at the end of Wheeler Lane. This 19th century farm complex was used for raising dry cattle and is comprised of a farmhouse foundation, rock-lined well, partial barn foundation, animal droving corridor, and corrals. The stonework is beautifully laid up and plentiful. Compared with the previously-funded Stone Chamber restoration, little masonry reconstruction will be required. The masonry funding request applies to restoration of the farmhouse foundation. Because of logistical concerns, cleaning out and repairing the rock-lined well was deemed too dangerous to be undertaken at this time.

The remainder of the site is comprised of walls only, some of which may have supported a part of the barn. These walls are on the whole in good condition, with only a few fallen stones. It is felt that when the land is brushed out and the saplings removed, the remaining stonework will speak for itself: the site will be a stunning stand-alone destination for tourists, hikers, and possibly scholars. It should help to garner additional support and funding for future site restorations, possibly from resources outside of town.

Landscaping

The concept we have for the Wheeler Farm site and the contiguous Robbins Mill Dam complex is to create an open, airy, lighter park-like atmosphere that would greatly enhance the visual impact and appreciation of the extent and quality of the stonework taken as a whole. This park would include the grounds surrounding all the stonework on the two sites. By increasing the vistas visible to a visitor from any location within the complex, an appreciation for the effort involved in constructing the stonework, as well as the pleasure of the viewing, would be greatly enhanced.

The landscaping envisioned for the Wheeler Farm complex in order to promote the park-like atmosphere would entail brushing out the land surrounding all the stonework associated with the farm, cutting the saplings and minor trees to enhance the vistas, leveling slightly and seeding the area immediately around the farmhouse foundation and well, and providing handicapped accessibility to the farmhouse foundation and the droving corridor. As part of this effort, some fallen wall stones would be replaced.

Because the Robbins Mill complex will be substantially more expensive to restore, and because we believe that the successful enhancement of the Wheeler Farm site will increase our ability to garner additional funding, possibly from sources beyond CPC funds in future, we decided not to apply for funding for restoration of both sites initially.

However, though not included in this formal request, were additional funds to be allocated to the landscaping element of the project, the benefits to both sites would be substantial. Certain areas around the Mill site that would not require further disturbance in the future when the Mill complex's masonry might be restored could be treated in the same way as described above for the Wheeler Farm site.

At the discretion of the Committee, additional funding would increase the areas that could be enhanced to promote the park-like ambiance.

A natural location exists overlooking the ruined sluiceways below the original mill foundation that could be transformed into an earthen viewing platform. From that location, stonework in both sites would be visible as well as views down toward the Brook. The Brook itself would likely not be clearly visible owing to the nature of the vegetation in the flood plain, but the enhancements to be created under this additional landscaping effort would be significant.

The viewing area, outfitted with a couple of benches, could easily be made handicapped accessible. It would allow visitors not only to view a larger vista of the complex, but also, until the mill masonry is restored, to appreciate the extent of the mill foundation and extensive sluiceways. Either restored or un-restored, the site is very attractive, but not easily comprehended as a whole in its present state, overgrown as it is with vegetation.

Removal of the vegetation growing into the sluiceways stonework would retard further degradation of that stonework, and the shack could be taken down to expose the stonework below. Application of restorative landscaping to a larger area might be cost effective.

Estimated Date for Commencement of Project: July 1, 2008

Team

A team of interested people has been formed. These include both professionals who participated in the Chamber restoration as well as others with expertise in disciplines vital to the success of the overall TTT project, but who were not needed in the Chamber restoration. Notable in the latter category is Doug Harris, the Narragansett Tribal Historic Preservation Officer.

Native American Collaboration

The United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) issued a manifesto in 2003 stating its intent to explore partnering relationships with any of the eight contiguous towns, referred to above, through which a thousands-year-old landscape sacred to the Native Americans extends. Doug Harris has proposed to act as the intermediary, together with Linda McElroy, the project's overall director, between USET and Acton Town officials in exploring what form such a partnering relationship might take. Mr. Harris is enthusiastic about the TTT project and the opportunity it presents to explore such a partnering effort.

Mr. Harris also brings to the TTT project resources that no one currently on the team has. His work has taken him to many sites in the East, and he has excellent contacts within the National Park Service and other organizations that might be sources for grants for our project in the future. Access to the NPS communication system alone would be a great asset in publicizing Acton's project.

Publicity

As part of the publicity effort a website modeled on the one created and maintained by the Acton Land Stewards on a volunteer basis, has already been established. It presents the overall Trail concept and will display the historical and archaeological data pertaining to each restored site as this information is researched by the site surveys. Additional documentation with photos showing the project areas as they are worked on will add appeal. Eventually, it is hoped that this website may also link to such additional resources as Google Earth and Wikipedia. These links will provide directions to, and pictures of, the sites, as well as additional resources for study.

Local newspapers will carry articles as the work progresses, as was done with the Stone Chamber restoration.

**Itemized Project Scope
Wheeler Farm Restoration**

Construction Materials and Work

Restoration of Farmhouse: Masons	\$5,000.00
Field School (2 week program)	\$5,000.00
Historical Background Research	\$3,000.00
Informational Panel and Installation	\$5,000.00
Landscaping and Stone Walls	<u>\$12,000.00</u>
Total	\$30,000.00

*Please note that an earlier design for this project had proposed the Field School as a curriculum program for the Acton/Boxboro School system, or possibly the Community Ed program. While there is interest in such a program in the School Department, without assurance of continuity for such a program, that department has declined to support the Field School concept for the summer of 2008. Discovery Museum, however, has made a commitment to collaborate with the Field School if funding becomes available. The possibility of an ongoing Field School program connected to the School Dept. will have to await further negotiations and an alternate, ongoing funding source.