

# French River Log

Volume 1 Number 3

September 1, 2006

**Welcome** to the third edition of the French River Log, the newsletter of the French River Connection. We publish this newsletter quarterly to keep our communities current on our activities. We hope you find it useful.

## Hitting the Trail

On August 8, we had the pleasure of standing on the North Main Street bridge with state Senator Richard T. Moore, Representative Paul Kujawski, and Webster Town Administrator Dana Kennan to celebrate the approval of \$250,000 in the Economic Stimulus Bill for plans for the French River Greenway, connecting the Quinebaug Rail Trail with the Midstate Trail. This is the next step in realizing a concept proposed in 1990 by citizens of Webster, Dudley, and Oxford. In an effort to involve more interested parties in the management of this project, we formed a partnership with seven other organizations to seek technical assistance from the National Park Service under their Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. Our partners are:

Oxford Open Space  
Committee

Dudley Conservation Land  
Trust

Central Massachusetts Regional  
Planning Commission

Army Corps of Engineers

Webster Recreation Committee

Quinebaug-Shetucket National  
Heritage Corridor

Dudley Rail-Trail Committee.

## What was new in '92

By Tom Ryzewski

Have you seen the map of Webster in 1892, perhaps in the town clerk's office or the library? A much more vibrantly colored restoration is now available from French River Connection co-founder Alan Dabrowski for \$60 rolled or \$75 mounted, with a portion of the proceeds donated to the French River Connection.

What was going on in the lives of those people riding in the carriages on the map? What was in the newspapers? What did people talk about?

Strikers at the Carnegie Steel plant in Pennsylvania have killed ten Pinkerton detectives and injured many others. The Pennsylvania militia eventually forcefully ends the strike.

Democrats Grover Cleveland  
and Adlai E. Stevenson are

elected president and vice  
president.

Tchiakovsky composes the  
Nutcracker Suite.

The first electric  
automobile is driven in  
Chicago.

Frank and Charles Duryea  
construct the first gasoline  
powered automobile. Henry  
Ford will build his next  
year.

The Boston marathon is run  
for the second time.

"Gentleman Jim" Corbett  
knocks out John L. Sullivan  
at New Orleans to become  
the heavyweight  
champion.

Poets Walt Whitman and  
Alfred, Lord Tennyson die.

The zipper is one year old.

A lot of water has passed  
under the French River  
bridges in those 114 years  
since the map was  
published. What will our  
communities and the  
French River look like 114  
years from now?

For more information on  
the map, call Alan  
Dabrowski at (508) 943-  
4097.

## **There's HOPE**

On August 25, the French River Connection received a donation of over \$300 from Hope Realty in Webster as part of their program to donate a portion of commissions to organizations specified by home sellers. This is a wonderful idea, and we are extremely pleased and grateful to be a recipient. Perhaps the idea will catch on among other businesses.

## **Water Quality Monitoring**

In June, we received a grant of \$2500 from the Norcross Wildlife Foundation to purchase water quality monitoring equipment and reagents. The Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor Water Quality Monitoring Coordinator is seeking other funds which can be used throughout the French River basin. In another development, our Quality Assurance Program Plan has been reviewed by DEP and EPA and is ready for signature. We've monitored seven times this summer and will probably do at least three more. Many thanks to our volunteers.

## **Another Cleanup**

On August 26, it was back in the water for more than 20 volunteers, cleaning the river from Tracy Court to above Peter Street. This cleanup was co-sponsored

by Positive Changes Fitness Center. The haul included more than 50 tires, many bicycles and grocery carts, lots and lots of metal and miscellaneous junk. Riverfront landowners kindly allowed us to access the river through their property, and clear an area to launch our boats. We are grateful to Pete's Tire for accepting our load of tires on this and other occasions, and to JV Mechanical for employing a backhoe to haul up heavy items and for disposing of everything else. Dunkin' Donuts got us off to a good start. And thanks to the hard work of our volunteers in the water and on the banks, the French River Connection was able to take another step toward making the river a prized community resource.

## **French River Day**

French River Connection members, families, and friends will gather for a picnic at Hodges Village just below the dam, on September 16 3-6pm to celebrate the conclusion of a summer of work and progress. Hot dogs, hamburgers, and soft drinks will be furnished. Please bring a dish to share, and chairs. Take a hike or a paddle in the area, or kayak for the first time on Augutteback Pond. We'll have boats and personal flotation devices. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Elaine Parker at (508) 943-2698 by September 9. All Welcome.

## **Walking Weekends**

French River Connection member Russ Cohen will lead **Foraging Along the French River** at Hodges Village on

October 6 at 3pm. An expert forager and author of Wild Plants I Have Known . . . and Eaten, Russ explains the comestible qualities of at least two dozen species of wild plants and mushrooms, amid the natural beauty of woods and fields. This 3-hr. hike for adults and children over 8 will traverse some swampy terrain. This event is one in the Heritage Corridor's Walking Weekends series. Take Howarth Road and follow the signs.

## **Join Us**

If you haven't already done so, but would like to help us in our efforts, please consider joining the 28 other households and businesses that are supporting us financially. Annual membership dues are only \$20.00 for a family, and you will receive a spectacular French River Screensaver as a token of our appreciation. We're not yet an IRS-qualified 501(c)(3) organization, and cannot offer you a tax deduction, but we're in the process of preparing the necessary filings. But whether you join as a member or not, we invite you to come to our meetings, share our vision, add your ideas, and have some fun. Our next meeting is at Dudley Town hall room 210 on September 13 at 7pm. Or call Ken at (508) 943-2698.