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Article published Dec 17, 2007

## Land rich in history tapped for conservation in Gilmanton

In recent weeks the town has received some donations of conservation easements from local land owners who have decided they want their town to continue to look the way it does right now.

By year's end, Gilmanton is expected to have three new easements on lands entered into conservation, protecting from future development.

One of these easements will ensure that one of Gilmanton's oldest and most historic monuments.

Back in 1775, during the battle of Bunker Hill, Mary Butler was a new mother and lived in Gilmanton. At that time, her husband, Lt. Ebenezer Eastman, was away fighting the British in the Revolutionary War at Bunker Hill in Massachusetts.

Hearing the boom from cannon fire off in the distance, word soon reached the young Mrs. Butler that her husband had fallen on the battlefield.

Not knowing if the report of her husband's fate was rumor or fact, she was determined to find out. With no other method of transportation, she rode to her father's house, which was said to be 40 miles away with her newborn baby.

Leaving her child, Butler rode to the Bunker Hill battlefield. She eventually found her husband alive and well on the battlefield. The story goes that the two rode home to their child and house in Gilmanton.

Poet B.F. Taylor, who wrote about her journey to find her husband, made the tale of Mary Butler's ride famous.

Today there exists a monument in Gilmanton, placed on a bolder, marking the place where Lt. Eastman and his wife, Mary Butler, lived.

Thanks to an easement given by Virginia Stanley and her son, William III, the Mary Butler monument will forever be protected and remain a part of Gilmanton's history.

"We have to keep it nice because it's the only thing historical this side of Gilmanton," said Stanley.

To protect the monument, Stanley placed an easement on 50 feet of land all around the bolder. The idea is that no one will ever be able to impact the monument and it's place in Gilmanton, regardless of future development.

Getting the monument protected was really a communitywide effort. Stanley was originally approached about the project by local Candy Daigle, who she said deserves most of the credit.

Daigle asked if Stanley would be interested in donating an easement.

First checking with her son, the Stanley's were more than happy to do their part to protect the little piece of history they could.

From there the land to have the easement was plotted out, free of charge, by local Paul Darbyshire and the monument was protected after being accepted by the town.

On top of the Mary Butler Monument, more than nine acres along Brown Pond off Route 129 in Gilmanton has also had a conservation easement placed on it.

Conservation Committee Chair Nancy Mitchell explained this easement donation is particularly significant because the lot 1,800 feet of shorefront along the pond. She noted that to have a significant portion of shorefront protected from development along any water body is pretty rare, and crucial as it protects environment of the pond and water quality.

"I think it has just been an inspiration," said Mitchell.

One Conservation Committee member in particular spearheaded the project of getting a resident Dan Webster to donate the easement. It was important to the member as they had a long history spent in the part of Gilmanton.

The land will be protect with another plot, named the William Webster Memorial Forest in honor of Webster's late father.

And this Monday, 35 acres of woodland will be outright gifted to the town by Paul Stroud. Stroud will be donating the land, having it placed into conservation, in memory of his late wife Ella.

Before the land can be donated the selectmen will have to accept the land, which is expected to happen at Monday night's meeting.

"We are very grateful for all three properties," said Mitchell.

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