The organizational meeting of the Somerset Woods Trustees (SWT) was held at the home of George Otis Smith on August 1, 1927. Present were: Louise H. Coburn, George Otis Smith, William Philbrick, Gertrude S. Weston, Francis H. Friend, Joseph Coburn Smith and Ernest C. Butler. All were elected Directors, and Louise H. Coburn was elected as president; Joseph Coburn Smith as vice president; Ernest C. Butler as secretary; and William Philbrick as treasurer. SWT was established by the Maine Legislature in 1927, and the directors voted to accept Chapter 109 of the Private Laws of 1927 entitled “Act to Incorporate Somerset Woods Trustees” and adopted bylaws for the organization. The Charter lists the purposes of this land trust as:

“acquiring, holding, managing, arranging, maintaining and where practicable, opening to the public under suitable regulations to be established by said corporation, such tract or tracts of land as said corporation may be able to acquire within the county of Somerset, with the right and power to hold such personal property as may be necessary or convenient in the managing of said tract or tracts of land acquired and held as aforesaid...”.

Louise Helen Coburn, in her book “Skowhegan on the Kennebec” published in 1941, further describes this land trust as follows:

Somewhat related in purpose to Coburn Park, which preserves so choice a bit of Kennebec river-bank, is the unique land trust initiated by Miss Coburn with the purpose of conserving some of the sylvan beauty of the town for other generations to enjoy... Some of the tracts administered by the trustees with this public purpose are: the woodlands bordering U. S. and Maine Highway No. 2 where it skirts the Kennebec below the Eddy; the fringe of birch and beech trees along the Back Road... the public playground already established on Jewett St., as well as another planned on the corner of Factory and Hathaway Sts., and the bank of Wesserunsett Stream below Malbon’s Mills, long used as the Swimming Hole, for all of which recreation tracts the Town is given a free lease; and the pine grove on the south bank of the Kennebec opposite Coburn Park.

(continued on back page)
A Walk in the Woods

Jack Gibson, SWT President

This year marks a very important milestone for Somerset Woods Trustees. This is the 90th year since our founding in 1927. Louise H. Coburn, George Otis Smith, William Philbrick, Gertrude S. Weston, Francis H. Friend, Joseph Coburn Smith and Ernest C. Butler were all elected as the original directors. These names may resonate with some of you that have been around Skowhegan much or all of your lives. I was fortunate to be elected the Board of Trustees in 1994 (yes, we don’t have term limits!) and at that time William Philbrick, Sr. was still a Trustee and thus I got to know him. His son, William Philbrick, Jr. was president at that time and a friend. He passed away soon after his father and it is a great regret that those of us on the board at that time did not interview them for more of the history of Somerset Woods Trustees.

I would ask that any of you that may be able to provide some insight into the lives of the other original Trustees contact us. History is important and time will pass and more of it will be lost if not written down.

Also, take a look at our current Trustees and thank them when you see them. They, along with our Executive Director Nancy Williams, are a dynamic, talented and dedicated group. SWT is fortunate to still be, 90 years down the road, in good hands.

Lastly, I want to welcome the initial members of our Advisory Board. You will find them listed in this newsletter.

Thank you for your continued support and I hope to see you at one of our upcoming events.

Birthday Celebration Events!

Annual Conservation and Awards Celebration

Our annual celebration will be held in the evening of September 10, 2017 at Lakewood Inn. Skowhegan. Come enjoy good friends, kindred spirits and a big birthday cake at this beautiful inn on Lake Wasserrunsett. Watch for emails, postcards and our Facebook page for more details.

Please join us to thank this year’s award winners!

We are so honored to announce that this year’s winner of our annual Friend of Conservation Award is Alfred Jackson of Madison for the trust he has placed in SWT to protect his land into perpetuity. Alfred’s love of his land is reflected in the beauty of his forests and fields that he has stewarded for over six decades.

Our Stewardship Award goes to Jeff Lloyd for his donation of gravel for the new trail access into Coburn Woods. The access is now vastly improved as the gravel raised the trail above seeps and ticks!

Our speaker will be Andrew Barton, University of Maine at Farmington professor of biology, researcher and Maine author. He was the recipient of the 2013 Maine Literary Award by the Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance.

Barton will speak on the subject of his book, “The Changing Nature of the Maine Woods”, discussing the ecological forces that shaped our forests.

Annual North Country Challenge

Don’t miss this challenge! Come hike, run, bike, canoe or kayak the Kennebec between Bingham and Solon on September 30th (rain date October 1st). We’ll be celebrating the beauty of the North Country and introducing the Maine Long Trail.

We’ll start at North Country Rivers in Bingham with an optional hearty breakfast. There will be t-shirts to identify the participants. Race categories will be given different start times so that we’ll all end up (theoretically) in Solon at the same time for awards and a box lunch together.

Watch for notifications for registration on our website, Facebook and emails. If you are not a member of SWT, just sign up for our emails by sending an email to somersetwoodstrustees@gmail.com.

POLLINATORS AND PARSONS FAMILY PRESERVE

Welcome to our newest Trustee: Patty Hager

The Trustees of SWT are so pleased to announce that Patty Hager has joined our board! Patty Hager is a retired school teacher and administrator who spent her career in California and Massachusetts, most recently as Academic Dean at Concord Academy. Since her parents retired in Skowhegan in 1981, Patty and her family have oriented their lives in rural Maine. She and her husband Brad enjoy a cabin on the Kennebec River in Norridgewock and a home on the Sandy River in Mercer. Until she can convince Brad to retire, they commute between Somerville, Massachusetts and Canada, and also enjoys fishing, hiking and cross-country skiing. She has served on various school boards and is currently vice president of the board of the Natural Resources Council of Maine.