

A Regional Town Forest Timeline

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New England's history of community owned forests stretches across four centuries, and the story of these town woodlands provides a regional context in which the tradition of stewardship that accompanies these forests can be carried into the future with renewed energy. The history of Vermont's town forests is part of that context, most easily understood as part of a larger tradition that extends into other northeastern states and eventually engages the United States Forest Service. Events important in Vermont are highlighted in green for convenience.

1630. New England town proprietors establish nucleated villages and hold extensive tracts of surrounding uplands, meadows, swamps and marshes in common, sharing land and its resources for cultivation, grazing, and the felling of timber and wood for building materials, fencing, fuel, and other uses. In 1636, for example, the proprietors of Salem, Massachusetts set aside a tract of land "along the shore on Darby's fort side . . . to run along toward Marble Head 1120 pole" to supply wood and timber for town commoners. Such common woodlands mark the beginning of New England's unbroken tradition of communal forests. By 1700, however, most of these extensive common lands had been transferred to private ownership.

1630. Town proprietors also set aside specific tracts of land as public lots to sustain community institutions such as schools and churches, or to pay the salaries of ministers and schoolmasters. These public lots are distinguishable from common lands because the community at large, as distinguished from landed proprietors, eventually asserted ownership of these lands. In many towns, these public lots provided timber to build meetinghouses, or wood fuel to heat schools and ministers' homes. In 1657, for example, selectmen of Marshfield, Massachusetts, acquired meadows and uplands for the town's minister and confirmed that the town would own the land for future ministers. As town settlements expanded into more remote parts of New England, town charters specifically required the setting aside of public lots, and unlike common lands, many of these church lots, school lots, glebe lots, and minister's lots have survived over the centuries as community resources.

1710. The town of Newington (then part of Dover), New Hampshire, sets aside the first of three parcels of public land (the Church Lot) to support their church and minister. The second tract, the Parsonage Lot, is acquired in 1765, and the third parcel, the Downing Lot, soon follows. Together, the three tracts of public land surrounded the village center and totaled more than a hundred acres. The town periodically culled forest resources during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, using wood to heat the school and poor farm, and selling timber to defray the cost of building a library in 1894. During the early twentieth century, New Hampshire's state foresters cited Newington's public lots as a model town forest, an American example to rival Europe's ancient community forests. Although a large section of the forest was acquired by the federal government for the construction of Pease Air Force Base, the town continues to own and manage the remaining portions of its forest.

1761. The town of Danville, New Hampshire (formerly the parish of Hawke in the town of Kingston), sets aside two parcels of land (fifty-five acres and twenty-acres) as parsonage lots and that year began construction of a meetinghouse with timber cut from those lots. In 1790, Danville's parsonage committee began managing the woodland and continued to do so for the next two hundred years, preparing careful timber sale agreements and occasionally renting the lots for grazing. New Hampshire's state foresters also designated Danville's parsonage lots as models of forestry management, and the town eventually acquired adjoining land that today comprises a three-hundred acre town forest.

1787. Town proprietors of Keene, New Hampshire (formerly called Upper Ashuelot), designate a fifty-acre tract of land as a woodlot for the gospel minister, specifying that the land be managed by town selectmen. The woodland became the site of logging bees where parishioners gathered to cut and haul their minister's winter wood. In 1895, the city's surveyor, Samuel Wadsworth, mapped the parcel, and today the city still owns the land, aided by a forestry management plan.

1850. By the middle of the nineteenth century, poor farms had become a widely practiced method of local welfare throughout New England, and many of these farms relied on woodlots to generate revenue from fuel wood and timber. A large number eventually became town forests.

1859. Henry David Thoreau wanders the slopes of Poplar Hill in Concord and records that day's autumnal musings in his journal: "Each town should have a park, or rather a primitive forest, of five hundred or a thousand acres, where a stick should never be cut for fuel, a common possession forever, for instruction and recreation. We hear of cow-commons and ministerial lots, but we want men-commons and lay lots, inalienable forever. Let us keep the New World *new*, preserve all the advantages of living in the country. There is meadow and pasture and wood-lot for the town's poor. Why not a forest and huckleberry-field for the town's rich?"

1869. Frederick Billings acquires the former home of George Perkins Marsh in Woodstock, Vermont, and begins planting an experimental forest of white pine, Norway spruce, white ash, European larch, and several other species. He gradually reforested a large area of Mt. Tom, and Governor Franklin S. Billings later donated a portion of that land to Woodstock as a town forest.

1882. Massachusetts legislation enables towns to acquire land and place it in the public domain to preserve, reproduce, or promote the culture of forest trees for wood and timber or to protect water supplies. Title to those lands vested in the state as trustee for towns. Secondly, the law also recognized the recreational value of such reserves, and the law later became known as the "Public Park Law." Chapter 255, *Laws of Massachusetts* (1892), Sections 1-8.

1882. At the meeting of the American Forestry Congress at Montreal, Professor Matthew C. Read from Western Reserve University presents a paper titled “The Coppice for the Village and the Farm.” Read encouraged the cultivation of miniature forests – ten to forty square rods – in the middle of village blocks to improve sanitation and protect wildlife, and his proposal joins that by Thoreau as one of the country’s earliest plans for village forestry.

1887. George Swain, an engineering professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, authors a paper for the *Journal of the New England Water Works Association*, founded in 1882, focusing on the influences of forests in retarding run-off and in equalizing the flow of streams. Swain’s analysis marks the very early stages of the important relationship between forestry management and watershed protection.

1888. In Massachusetts, the Trustees of Free Public Forest of Lynn, which formed in 1881 with Cyrus Tracy as its first president, establishes Lynn Woods as one of the region’s first community-owned forest parks, thus heeding Thoreau’s advice of 1859. The park’s rugged topography, dominated by rock outcrops, ravines, glacial debris, and swamps, had discouraged development, and during the 1850s Tracy had organized a hiking and nature club called the Exploring Circle, the members of which began documenting botanical specimens and unusual geological formations.

1889. In Keene, New Hampshire, lands surrounding a city reservoir are donated to the town as the Children’s Wood by George A. Wheelock, the city’s first park commissioner. Wheelock donated a second adjoining parcel, Robin Hood Forest, in 1897, and surveyor Samuel Wadsworth prepared a plan for the entire forest park in 1908.

1890. Bernhard Fernow, head of the Forestry Division in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, proposes a movement to establish community forests in America, writing in an editorial column for *Garden and Forest*: “In Germany I know of communities where not only all taxes are paid by the revenue from the communal forests, but every citizen receives a dividend in addition. Fernow pointed to Zurich’s ancient city forest, the Sihlwald, as a model for American communities.

1891. George F. Talbot, a judge and historian from Portland, Maine, authors a legislative proposal requiring tax-forfeited lands to vest permanently in towns, which would then manage the land for the cultivation of timber. Talbot’s bill gave control of the land to town selectboards, requiring them to prepare biennial reports to the state forest commissioner, but also prohibiting any expenditures for care or planting in excess of revenue generated. Talbot also foresaw an awards program for the best managed forest, and although his legislation was not enacted, it represents the first specific plan for a town forest program in New England.

1896. The Pennichuck Water Works in Nashua, New Hampshire, transplants white pine seedlings on its watershed lands, and ten years later the company enlisted support from U.S. Forest Service forester Benton MacKaye to develop a management plan. The company later began operating a sawmill as part of its forestry operation.

1897. In Andover, Massachusetts, the Village Improvement Society acquires Indian Ridge, a twenty-three acre tract of glacial moraine, white pine, and oak, to thwart a pending timber sale. U.S. forester Henry Graves assisted with preparation of a management plan. The land remains a forest park and is located near the village center.

1900. With assistance from the U.S. Division of Forestry and foresters Austin Cary and James Toumey, the Village Improvement Society of Brunswick, Maine establishes a white pine plantation on Brunswick Commons, originally a thousand-acre tract of land set aside in 1719 by the Pejepscot Company proprietors for general and perpetual commonage for the town. The 1900 forestry project became one of New England's first planted town forests unrelated to watershed protection.

1900. Charles Gill, pastor of the Congregational Church in Westmore, Vermont, persuades his friend, Chief U.S. Forester Gifford Pinchot, to donate funds toward acquisition of almost four hundred acres of woodland, to be managed by the church according to U.S. Forestry Division regulations. When combined with the town's Minister's Settlement Lot, Gill and Pinchot established a church forest of nearly seven-hundred acres.

1901. Philip Ayres is appointed forester for the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests and begins efforts to assist towns in the acquisition of forests. Ayres, who had studied under Bernhard Fernow at the New York State College of Forestry at Cornell University, encouraged a plan for state aid to town forests, and in 1910 he reported that eighteen towns had acquired woodlands, most of them related to watersheds.

1901. Yale School of Forestry prepares a management plan for a three-hundred acre watershed forest around Maltby Lakes, which became part of the twenty-thousand acre Eli Whitney Forest owned by the New Haven Water Company.

1901. In Montpelier, Vermont, city benefactor John E. Hubbard donates land to be used as a park, and landscape architect Dana Dow is later hired to develop a plan for roads, trails, and reforestation. Plantations of red, white, and scotch pine and Norway spruce were initiated in 1906, and construction of a rubble stone observation tower, a popular feature in many of New England's forest parks, was begun in 1916.

1902. Connecticut State Forester Walter Mulford inspects a young forest plantation on watershed lands owned by the Middletown Water Works near Mt. Higby. The year before, the board of water commissioners had begun experimental seeding of walnut, hickory, and oak trees in nursery beds for later transplanting. Mulford formalized an agreement with commissioners and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station to prepare a management plan for planting bare fields.

1903. In New Hampshire, Robert Fletcher, director of Dartmouth's School of Civil Engineering and president of the Hanover Water Works Company, conducts a survey of

the company's thousand-acre watershed reserve and prepares an extraordinarily detailed map and plan for the property. Fletcher revised the plan in 1906 and again in 1923, adding notes in the margins that explain the landscape history of individual compartments.

1908. President Theodore Roosevelt establishes the National Conservation Commission, chaired by Gifford Pinchot, and the commission prepared a report calling for the preservation of public forests through practical forestry methods. Two foresters, Raphael Zon and Samuel T. Dana, studied communal forests in France, Switzerland, Germany and Austria, concluding that a similar program in America could be successful.

1909. Pennsylvania's legislature enables townships to purchase lands for municipal forests, to be managed under the direction of the commissioner of forestry according to principles of scientific forestry. The law's preamble states: "Whereas, It has been demonstrated by time and experience in the countries of continental Europe that properly managed municipal forests have proved to be important sources of municipal revenue, tending greatly to reduce the burden of municipal taxation." The law provides that municipal forests may be used by the people for general outing or recreation grounds, but "the major idea shall be the sale of forest products for producing a continuing municipal revenue." Chapter 124, *Laws of Pennsylvania* (1909), sec. 1-6.

1911. Harris Reynolds, a graduate of Harvard University's graduate program in landscape architecture, is appointed executive secretary of the Massachusetts Forestry Association (MFA) and launches the state's campaign to establish town forests. Reynolds became the country's father of town forests, authored numerous articles, bulletins, and other publications for the MFA, and his life's mission became one of introducing forestry for the people.

1911. Edward Bryant, a consulting forester from Boston, authors a paper for the *Journal of the New England Water Works Association* titled "Practical Forestry for Water Works."

1912. New York's legislature authorizes the governing boards of counties, towns, and villages to acquire land for the purpose of cultivating trees according to the principles of scientific forestry, the principle object being to conserve and maintain such lands for the sale of forest products to aid public revenue and protect water supplies. Chapter 74, *Laws of New York* (1912), sec. 1-2.

1913. New Hampshire's legislature enables towns to purchase, manage, and improve lands for forestry purposes and places responsibility for management under the direction of the state forester. Chapter 27, *Laws of New Hampshire* (1913), Sections 1-4.

1913. Massachusetts's legislature enables towns to own lands directly for forestry purposes and to administer them without supervision by a state agency. Communities are allowed to appoint a city forester or to assign that task to the state forester. Chapter 564, *Laws of Massachusetts* (1913), Sections 1-7.

1914. The MFA announces a town forest contest, requiring participating towns to acquire one hundred acres and plant at least fifty acres with white pine seedlings spaced at six-foot intervals. Points were awarded according to land area, quality of planting, lumbering advantages, water and soil protection, recreation, aesthetics, potential for enlargement, fire prevention, and general improvements such as roads. Highest points were assigned to the categories of fire protection, recreation, and logging (in that order), and the winner would receive fifty acres of free planting – 1,200 white pine seedlings to the acre. However, that year’s contest and a second contest the following year were nullified because an insufficient number of towns entered the contest.

1914. Fitchburg, Massachusetts, designates four parcels of unused, city-owned land as a municipal forest, including the poor farm woodlot, becoming one of the first New England towns to establish a legislatively-authorized town forest. City forester Page Bunker prepared a working plan and supervised planting with white and scotch pine

1915. Vermont’s legislature enables towns to purchase lands for growing wood and timber and designates them as school endowment forests. Parcels could not be less than forty acres and were examined by the state forester to determine whether the land was suitable. The state forester managed the forests and was authorized to sell 150,000 tree seedlings from the state nursery for each forest annually. The task of protecting the forest was given to the town fire warden, who was compensated for his services by the town at the same rate paid for fighting forest fires. Chapter 24, *Laws of Vermont* (1915).

1916. In Claremont, New Hampshire, William H. Moody donates land for a forest park, and landscape architect Arthur Shurtleff and state forester Alfred B. Hastings collaborate in the preparation of a plan, completed in 1917. Hastings recommended planting with white and red pine, and Shurtleff designed panoramic views to distant Mt. Ascutney. Moody Park became one of the region’s best examples of a merger between landscape architecture and forestry, and the park also revealed the emerging influence of town forests on park planning.

1917. Vermont’s legislature amends its 1915 law and authorizes towns to purchase lands for growing wood and timber and designates them as municipal forests. After inspection by the state forester, tracts not less than forty acres received official designation and were managed under the direction of the state forester. Chapter 254, *Laws of Vermont* (1917).

1917. By bequest, Littleton, New Hampshire receives approximately twenty acres of wild, rocky land atop a ridge separating the Connecticut and Ammonoosuc River valleys. Named Kilburn Crags, the overlook served as a memorial to Benjamin Kilburn, founder of the Kilburn Stereoscopic View Company.

1919. In his book titled *Employment and Natural Resources*, planner and conservationist Benton MacKaye offers a plan for new agricultural communities in America, based on concepts developed by English planner Sir Ebenezer Howard but adapted to America’s

grid of the public land survey. MacKaye designated leftover triangular plots of land as community forests.

1920. Prior to World War I, most town-owned forests were related to watershed protection. Following the War, however, more towns began acquiring and planting lands unrelated to water supplies, and the movement's plantation phase gained ground. Fluctuating emphasis on commercial and recreational benefits characterized the campaign during this period.

1921. Petersham, Massachusetts, designates part of their poor farm as a town forest and begins a reforestation plan. Faculty members of Harvard Forest were appointed to the town forest committee, and the forest became one of the state's best-managed examples.

1921. At the annual convention of the American Institute of Park Executives in Detroit, Filibert Roth, dean of forestry at the University of Michigan, presents a speech titled "Woods as Parks," and observes that interest in recreational use of forests had been increasing because people had learned that "the forest does more and does it better than the park" and for the same or less money. Roth offered practical advice to park planners:

Let the people decide, and wherever the mass of visitors go, there fit the woods to the people, while in the rest, let the woods grow timber and serve as haunt of the few, the real lovers of the woods. By all means preserve the old, the large, the remarkable, the instructive; old oaks, rare hickories, fine clumps of hawthorn and even blue beach, ironwood and flowering dogwood all should be allowed a little space. Where school children are taken in classes, leave rotten logs, dead stubs, and let them see the wild wood, truly wild. This requires a few acres of land sacrificed to the visitor – it pays big, more than any special growth of timber.

1922. Groton, Massachusetts, converts a portion of its poor farm to a town forest, acting on the advice of William Wharton, who is active with the Massachusetts Forestry Association. Groton's forest established an admirable record of profitable timber-stand management.

1923. The incorporated village of Essex Junction, Vermont, implements a reforestation plan on approximately 750 acres of watershed land protecting two small springs near the small village of Essex Center. By 1930, workers had planted more than 400,000 seedlings, and the woodland became one of the state's most important municipal forests.

1923. In southwestern Massachusetts, the town of Russell begins forestry management on watershed lands and gradually increases the land area to about three-thousand acres. Old pastures and cut-over lots were planted with thirty thousand trees annually for ten years, and the town eventually hired a full-time forester, Elmer Foster.

1924. At the National Conference on Outdoor Recreation in Washington, D.C., Harris Reynolds recommends that a special congressional committee be formed to devote full-time educational work on the subject of town forests.

1924. Robert Ross, Vermont's Commissioner of Forestry, authors a short booklet, *Town Village and City Forests in Vermont*.

1925. Harris Reynolds and the MFA publish a widely-circulated book, *Town Forests: Their Recreational and Economic Value and How to Establish and Maintain Them*, with a foreword by Charles Lathrop Pack, president of the American Tree Association. Reynolds focused on the potential economic benefits of municipal forestry, but acknowledged that recreational values were one of the chief reasons to establish town forests.

1925. Phillip L. Buttrick and the Connecticut Forestry Association publish a short book titled *Town Forests and Parks for Connecticut*, emphasizing that only governments could support the long term investment necessary to grow commercially viable timber on land too poor for any other use. Buttrick pointed to America's early community woodlots sequestered from common land, and he also responded to concerns by town officials that town forests were unprofitable because they removed land from tax rolls. In response, he argued that cut-over wastelands produced little revenue from any sources, taxes included, and the loss in taxes was balanced by overall increase in community welfare.

1925. The Vermont Forest Service begins publishing the *Green Mountain State Forest News*, a journal that chronicles the growth of state and municipal forests in Vermont.

1926. E. A. Lamphere, the town forester of Calais, Vermont, reports sale of timber to the National Clothes Pin Company in Montpelier. Calais converted the woodlot from its poor farm to a town forest and began reforestation in 1925.

1926. Jaffrey, New Hampshire, is the recipient of a bequest of land from historian Albert Annett, a longtime member of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. Annett named the tract "The Children's Woods" and requested that the land be maintained forever as a forest park or arboretum for the cultivation and study of trees, shrubs and flowers, and as an adjunct to the town's schools.

1927. In Winchester, New Hampshire, Lucy Jennings Dickinson, the wife of the president of the New England Box Company, donates sixty-six acres of woodland on Meetinghouse Hill as a town forest. The site became the Willard H. Jennings Forest, in memory of Mrs. Dickinson's father, and her cousin, surveyor Dwight Jennings, mapped the parcel. Mrs. Dickinson later became president of the General Federation of Women's Clubs in Washington, D.C., and with Chief U.S. Forester Lyle Watts prepared a series of radio broadcasts during World War II, urging women's groups to sponsor community forests as memorials to soldiers.

1927. Maine's legislature enables towns to acquire land for the cultivation of trees and protection of water supplies, and requires the state forest commissioner to furnish seedlings at cost. Management of forests was left to towns, which were encouraged to

appoint trained foresters, and for a brief period Maine's forest service printed a newsletter, *Town Forest News*. Chapter 33, *Public Laws of Maine* (1927).

1928. The first conference of town forest committees is organized by the Massachusetts Forestry Association and convenes in Boston. Albert Cline, Assistant Director of Harvard Forest, stressed that weeding and releasing were the most important silvicultural treatments for improving the quality of timber stands, and Claude Tillotson, a forest inspector for the U.S. Forest Service stationed in Amherst, Massachusetts, placed special emphasis on the ability of town forest committees to demonstrate the practical value of forestry management. The state's town forest committees convened annually between 1928 and 1961

1928. Lumber harvested from the town forest in Fryeburg, Maine, pays for an addition to the community's school.

1929. In Dunbarton, New Hampshire, descendants of the Revolutionary War figure, General John Stark, convey 225 acres of ancestral timber land to the town, stipulating that tract be managed as a town forest in perpetuity, with cutting to be supervised by New Hampshire's state forester and income to be placed in a town forest fund used only for forest improvement or acquisition of additional land. When the town selectboard expressed doubts about town voters' willingness to accept the gift, thus removing the land from tax rolls, and requested that the town be allowed to use revenue from the forest, Arthur Winslow, president of the family trust, reminded the selectboard that the primary object was to preserve a forest area undisturbed, indefinitely, and that the reservation would steadily yield value to the town in a variety of different ways.

1929. Rhode Island's legislature authorizes towns to acquire land for forestry purposes but provides no mechanism for management until 1954, when town councils are authorized to establish local forest and park commissions. Nevertheless, state foresters offered assistance on the few town forests established in that state. Chapter 1389, *Public Laws of Rhode Island* (1929).

1930. Annual or biennial reports from state foresters in New England typically note the number of town forests, and emphasis has already begun to shift from land acquisition and planting to management and silviculture. That year, Massachusetts reported ninety forests on more than 25,500 acres; New Hampshire: seventy-nine on more than 16,000 acres, with plantations exceeding two million trees; Vermont: forty-two on almost 9,000 acres; Maine: eight forests, including the Theodore Roosevelt City Forest in Old Town, converted from the poor farm; and Connecticut: thirty examples, including the Barrack Matiff (Great Mountain) Town Forest in Salisbury, located on a summit over which the Appalachian Trail passes.

1931. In Vermont, state forester Wilbur Bradder prepares a management plan for the Rutland Municipal Forest on watershed lands the city had begun acquiring as early as 1881, spreading across the drainage basin of Mendon Brook below the slopes of Mt. Killington. As he had on other plans for town forests, Bradder recommended retention of

flowering shrubs and fruit or nut-bearing trees to improve the land's appearance and provide food for wildlife.

1933. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration establishes a turning point for the federal government's role in community forestry. Roosevelt had experimented with timber stand management on his family's estate in Hyde Park, and as governor of New York, he had been a strong advocate of municipal forestry.

1933. The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture furnishes Congress with a document titled *A National Plan for American Forestry*, known as the Copeland Report, and recommends increased public ownership of woodlands as a key for long-term planning and continuity of timber-crop cultivation. Claude Tillotson authored the report's segment on municipal forests, and although doubtful about the long-term commercial prospects for local woodlands, Tillotson recognized their educational and recreational value and argued that such forests would be well worth their cost. The Copeland Report marked the U.S. Forest Service's first tentative venture into community forestry.

1934. Vermont district forester Wilbur Bradder develops a forestry management plan and timber-stand map for the Proctor Town Forest, on worn-out pastures donated by Mortimer R. Proctor, governor of Vermont from 1945 to 1947. In addition to providing recommendations for silviculture, Bradder encouraged the retention of food trees such as apples, thornapples, and cherry to support game birds and animals, and his plan illustrates forestry's expanding influence in landscape conservation.

1936. Harris Reynolds and the MFPA (Massachusetts Forest and Park Association) publish *Town Forests in Massachusetts. A Twenty-Five Year Record*, and renew the association's offer to plant 5,000 trees on newly established town forests.

1937. In a radio address, Chief U.S. Forester Ferdinand A. Silcox announces a U.S. Forest Service program in community forests, opening a new phase in municipal forestry. Initially housed within the Division of State Cooperation, the program was conceived as a national clearinghouse, with the goal of accumulating and distributing information, and U.S. foresters began compiling inventories of existing forests.

1938. Franklin Roosevelt asks Nelson Brown, a faculty member of the New York State College of Forestry at Syracuse University, to review the Forest Service's program for community forestry. Brown, who had studied European community forests in 1913, returned to Europe in 1938 as a guest of the Carl Schurz Foundation, and focused on the multiple-use practices emphasized in city forests such as Zurich's Sihlwald. Following his return, Brown authored a number of articles and bulletins promoting the Forest Service's program, which he anticipated would assist state foresters working with local committees. Brown also commended the town forest in Newington, New Hampshire.

1938. Following Nelson Brown's return to Syracuse, Ernest O. Buhler begins supervising the Forest Service's program in community forestry, devoting special attention to the town forest in Danville, New Hampshire. Buhler also viewed community forests as a

way to promote the broader conservation movement. That year, the forest service published a bulletin, *Town and Community Forests*.

1939. Nelson Brown authors a short book, *Community Forests*, with a foreword by Franklin D. Roosevelt. That work joined the earlier books by Harris Reynolds and Philip Buttrick as the country's three major publications on the subject during this era.

1939. The U.S. Forest Service program establishes a definition of community forests:

A community forest consists of lands owned and operated for forestry or allied purposes by a village, city, town, school district, township, county or other political subdivision, or by other community or group enterprises such as schools, hospitals, churches, libraries, 4-H Clubs, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Camp Fire Girls. Locally, a community forest may be known as the town, city, county, school, or municipal watershed forest; village, town or memorial woods; or community forest.

1941. U.S. Forester Joseph Fitzwater succeeds Buhler in supervising the Forest Service's community forest program.

1941. The Joint Committee on Forestry (known as the Bankhead Committee), appointed by Congress in 1938 to investigate the condition, ownership, and management of American forests, recommends an increase in both the number and area of community forests. President Franklin Roosevelt, Chief Forester Earle H. Clapp, and Secretary of Agriculture Claude Wickard crafted legislation to implement the committee's numerous recommendations. However, acting on advice from Wayne Coy, director of the Bureau of the Budget, Clapp and Wickard later deleted the provision regarding community forests, conceding that such forests could not generate sufficient revenue to be self-liquidating. The decision marked the loss of a key opportunity for federal support of community forests.

1942. The Society of American Foresters (SAF) Committee on Community Forests, established in 1941 by founding members Reynolds (chairman), Brown, Fitzwater, Anton Tomasek (Illinois), Fred Pederson (Virginia), E. Fred Brouse (Pennsylvania), Fred Tenk (Wisconsin), and Paul Schoen (Texas), issues its first report. The document provided an alternative definition of community forests to that prepared by the Forest Service, and in the see-saw contest between commercial and recreational uses, leaned toward conservation rather than timber cropping:

Community forests are areas of woodland or of potential woodland, owned and operated by cities, towns, townships, villages, school districts, counties, or other political subdivisions of the state, for the benefit of all the people, through the production of forest products or the conservation of water, the protection of wildlife, the control of floods and soil erosion, and the creation of opportunities for recreation.

1942. Town forest committees in Massachusetts open their forests to citizens and groups willing to cut their own fuel supplies.

1944. The MFPA establishes the New England Forestry Foundation to provide complete forestry services at cost to woodland owners, including towns, and Harris Reynolds is appointed secretary. Many of the foundation's consulting foresters developed working plans for town forests.

1945. Following Forest Service reorganization, the Section of State and Community Forests is created and placed within the Division of Cooperative Forestry Management. Joseph Fitzwater's work plan that year outlines the forest service's objectives for community forestry: promote the campaign regionally, working with local governments, agencies, and organizations; encourage national organizations to disseminate information; assist the Forest Service's extension program and work with 4-H Clubs to establish forests; circulate articles in magazines and journals; collect data for a publication to promote more intensive management; and continue census taking.

1945. Vermont's legislature amends the state's town forest law, authorizing the state forestry department to pay for one half of the purchase price of lands acquired for town forests, up to \$600 yearly, and permitting towns to devote to reforestation any portion of those funds not required for acquisition.

1947. As president of the Wilderness Society, Benton MacKaye issues a memorandum to society members, "a little backyard job for everyone," asking them to seek out and protect neighborhood patches of wildland, part of a continental effort by the society's council to build a wilderness area system encompassing lands of every size and type. His missive also explored political and legal methods of owning that land. MacKaye's letter introduced a new category of communal woodlands, with focus on ecology and biotic communities, and foretold legislation enabling local conservation commissions a decade later. Joining Thoreau's musings about forest parks and Harris Reynolds' letters introducing forestry to the people, MacKaye's "wildland patches" epistle completes the region's trilogy of community conservation: recreation; forestry management; and wilderness philosophy.

1948. George Duthie, who had replaced Fitzwater as head of the Forest Service's program in community forests and as a member of the SAF Committee on Community Forests, issues a national report, identifying three thousand forests representing forty-three states and encompassing four and one-half million acres.

1949. George Duthie retires, drawing the Forest Service's program for community forests to a close and leaving a void that weakened the movement.

1949. The MFPA conducts a survey of town forests throughout Massachusetts, revealing that sixty per-cent of the forests, comprising eighty per-cent of total acreage, were capably managed but still needed silvicultural treatment. Administrative shortcomings

included lax bookkeeping and the absence of management plans. The survey tallied 127 towns with forests on 39,839 acres, and a total of 8,517,978 trees planted.

1950. Vermont's Forest Service reports sixty-eight town forests on more than 16,000 acres and soon launches a program to establish a forest in every town.

1951. Vermont's legislature amends the state law regarding municipal forests, requiring a warning for annual town meetings asking whether towns or villages will authorize the selectmen or trustees to acquire land for a municipal forest, to promote reforestation, water conservation and good forestry practices. Chapter 74, *Public Laws of Vermont* (1951).

1951. In Hollis, New Hampshire, the town forest committee led by Henry Hildreth organizes a chopping bee to supply the town library with fuel.

1952. Frustrated by the Forest Service's inactivity and by inadequate funding for the SAF Committee on Community Forests, Harris Reynolds calls for the American Forestry Association (AFA) to assume leadership and to collaborate with the Forest Service and the Association of State Foresters in adopting a cooperative national program. The AFA established a committee that year, appointing George Duthie to lead the group. However, no funding was allotted and the committee dissolved a year later.

1952. New England Forestry Foundation consulting forester, H. S. Ripley, prepares a working plan for the Groton Town Forest in Massachusetts.

1953. Harris Reynolds suffers a fatal heart attack, and his death marks a symbolic end to the prospects for commercial forestry in town forests. Reynolds had remained convinced that town forests held greater potential for yield per acre than national forests, but received much less attention from foresters and no financial support from the federal government. He pointed out that when compared to arid western states, soil quality on abandoned New England farms was higher; the growing season longer; and water more plentiful. In addition transportation costs to large market centers were lower; waste could be used as wood fuel; less waste produced more intensive management; local labor contributed to community stability; and recreational benefits served more people per unit of land and were readily available throughout the year. Only administrative and political concerns required solution: anticipated loss of tax revenue; fear of control by state or federal experts; competition with private industry; and entrenched local interests.

1954. The SAF Committee on Community Forests is disbanded for lack of a concrete and specific assignment. Despite the committee's short life, its reports nevertheless identified the trend away from timber cropping and toward recreation under the umbrella of conservation.

1957. Following efforts by fellow town members to preserve an unspoiled marsh in Ipswich, Massachusetts, state representative John Dolan drafts legislation enabling towns to establish conservation commissions capable of acquiring and then protecting natural

land areas, including marshes, wetlands, swamps, and other open spaces. Dolan copied, practically word-for-word, an existing law enabling local development and industrial commissions, and Ipswich preserved its marsh.

1960. The Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources organizes a conference titled “Solving Your Town’s Natural Resource Problems,” attended by delegates from every New England state and leading to the formation of the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC) the following year. Following the conference, the Conservation Commission Movement advanced rapidly all New England states except Vermont.

1962. The MFPA and the MACC publish *A Guide for Town Forest Committees and Conservation Commissions*, and seek collaboration among members of the two movements. Lingering interest in town forests soon begins to yield to the broader emphasis on conservation.

1964. A report identifies two hundred communities in Massachusetts with conservation commissions, more such commissions created in a half decade than town forest committees established during the preceding half-century. Unlike town forests, which demanded consistent management, adequate funding, and patient vision, sanctuaries of wildland promised instant reward with comparatively little effort.

1965. By this year, five New England states have adopted legislation enabling local conservation commissions: Massachusetts (1957); Rhode Island (1960); Connecticut (1961); New Hampshire (1963); and Maine (1965).

1966. Vermont’s Forest Service awards certificates of *Good Forestry Practices on Municipal Forests* to the towns of Bethel and Vergennes.

1973. Vermont’s legislature amends the provision of the state’s town forest law relating to state funding, specifying that town appropriations for acquisition and maintenance of town forests, within or without the town, qualify the town for such matching state and federal funds *as may be available*, provided that the suitability of such lands is approved by the commissioner of forests and parks. The amendment also provided a definition of municipal forests:

A municipal forest means a tract of land primarily devoted to producing wood products, maintaining wildlife habitat, protecting water supplies, providing forest recreation and conservation education. A municipal forest shall not be construed to include landscaped grounds and plantings around residential, industrial, institutional, municipal buildings or municipal areas devoted to off-street recreation. Chapter 148, Public Laws of Vermont (1973).

1977. Vermont’s legislature adopts a law enabling towns to create conservation commissions. Chapter 250, *Public Laws of Vermont* (1977, adjourned session).

1979. Led by forestry professor Dr. James Barrett, the Agricultural Experiment Station at the University of New Hampshire in Durham, focuses renewed attention on the state's town forests, and a series of important studies and bulletins are published during the next decade. In 1980, Barrett, T. G. Gregoire, and others publish *A Survey of Town Forest Resources in New Hampshire* (Report No. 81); also in 1980, Hope Mauran authors *Town Forests, Overlooked Treasures: Their Definition, Designation and Management* (Report No. 86); and in 1987, Barrett and Susan Baumann publish *The Needs and Activities in Town Forests: A Survey of the New Hampshire Town Forest Commissions* (Report No. 116).

1990. With passage of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act (FACTA), which amended the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, Congress establishes the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program to allocate money to state, regional, and other units of government (including towns) for the purchase of forest lands and timber rights that otherwise might fall to non-forest uses such as development. With the creation of this program for working forests, the federal financial aid long-sought by Harris Reynolds to sustain the Town Forest Movement finally becomes available.

1990. FACTA also established the Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Program, which defines urban forests broadly to include urban parks, street trees, landscaped boulevards, public gardens, river and coastal promenades, greenways, river corridors, wetlands, nature preserves, natural areas, shelter belts of trees and working trees at industrial brownfield sites. The program provides technical, financial, research and educational services to local government, non-profit organizations community groups, educational institutions, and tribal governments, and is assisted by state forestry agencies, which are the Forest Service's legislative partners.

1993. With money collected from pot-luck suppers, and funds made available from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund and the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program, the tiny Northeast Kingdom town of Granby, Vermont, purchases forest land and timber rights on Cow Mountain from Champion International Paper Company. The town took title to a two-hundred acre buffer zone around Cow Mountain Pond, where cutting is restricted by a conservation easement, but oversight of timber rights acquired on the remaining land was given to a local conservation commission with assistance from the state forestry officials. Such collaborative projects shaped by a medley of non-profit organizations, town, state, and federal governments, and local citizenry signal the most recent trend in New England's ancient tradition of community-owned woodlands, renewing the campaign begun by the Town Forest Movement a century before.

2004. Assisted by a consortium of more than thirty public and private partners, the Northern Forest Alliance establishes the Vermont Town Forest Project to help communities maximize the community benefits derived from town forests, and to help support the creation of new town forests statewide. To advance that cause, the alliance published *The Vermont Town Forest Stewardship Guide: A Community Users' Manual for Town Forests*, and convened Town Forest Summits in West Fairlee (2006) and Hinesburg (2007).

2008. United States Forest Service creates the Community Forest Program. This new grant program was authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill (Section 8003 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-234)), which amends the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978. The full title is the "Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program," but the working title was shortened to "Community Forest Program," and it authorized the Forest Service to provide financial assistance to local governments, tribal governments, and qualified nonprofit entities to establish community forests that provide continuing and accessible community benefits

2012. Funding provided through the USFS Community Forest Program pays for the founding of the Barre Town Forest, the first town forest in Vermont to receive money from this federal program. The Barre Town Forest protects significant recreational opportunities in central Vermont for hiking, mountain biking, snow shoeing and cross country skiing.

2013. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Massachusetts Forest Alliance, and the Bay State Forestry Service celebrate the centennial of the state's town forest enabling law. With financial support from the Massachusetts Forest Stewardship Program and the USDA Forest Service, the conference convened in Fitchburg, where participants toured the first town forest established under the state's 1913 law.