



Pippin Tree Forest Legacy Tract, Massachusetts

May 1996

A favorite haunt of Henry David Thoreau and one of four he recommended for preservation as a town forest, had been preserved as a working forest on May 30, 1996. The tract known as the Pippin Tree tract is 73 acres of high-quality managed forest land near the Minuteman National Park. The USDA Forest Service purchased a permanent conservation easement on the parcel for \$1.5 million from its owners, the Robb Family of Concord, principals of a family real estate trust known as Pippin Tree Land Trust. Recorded at the Registry of Deeds in Concord, the conservation restriction valued at \$4.3 million, ensures that the land will never be developed. It also provides pedestrian and horseback rider access. The Robb family donated the difference in value, and will continue to own and manage the land as a tree farm.

Comprised primarily of oak, white pine, and birch on gently rolling hills, the Pippin Tree tract lies at the southern end of the area in Concord and southern Carlisle known since the mid-17th century as Estabrook Woods. It forms the southern boundary of a 672-acre tract held by Harvard University. The Robb family has owned the parcel since the turn of the century.

The Trustees of Reservations, a statewide conservation group founded in 1871 by landscape architect Charles Eliot, and the Concord Land conservation Trust founded in 1959, have accepted joint responsibility for monitoring the conservation restriction. According to Marian Thornton, Chair of the Concord Land Conservation

Trust, which was the prime mover in the process, “The federal investment serves as the keystone to the permanent protection of at least 1,200 acres within Estabrook Woods, including the Harvard property.”

The Pippin Tract is one of four forests recommended for preservation by Henry David Thoreau

The Trustees of Reservations played a key role in bringing the Forest Service and the Robb family together. In 1994, The Trustees negotiated an option with Pippin Tree for purchase of the restriction and a corresponding option with the Forest Service for the sale of the restrictions. “By taking on a bit of legal risk, we were able to cut through some red tape and get this project moving while funds were available,” said Wesley Ward, Conservation Director for The Trustees. “Our involvement is an example of the useful role that non-profit land trusts frequently play in facilitating transactions between private landowners and municipal, state, or federal conservation agencies. But the Pippin Tree Project could not have been done without the extraordinarily generous bargain sale offered by the Robb family.”

Authorized by Congress in 1990, The Forest Legacy



Program protects important forests from development. Under the program, the Forest Service purchases development restrictions from willing landowners. The landowner keeps all other customary rights of ownership.

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