



OUR STEWARDSHIP JOB

AN INTERVIEW WITH CARL QUERFURTH AND TORY MCCAGG

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“The time to plant a tree is fifty years ago.”

That’s the first piece of advice Carl Querfurth and Tory McCagg heard from their neighbor, and it’s advice that they’ve taken to heart.

Carl and Tory are from Providence, Rhode Island, but they have young family in the Peterborough area, and several years ago they decided that they wanted to relocate to southern New Hampshire to be closer to that family. They began to search for land where they could build a house, the way *they* wanted it. A schoolmate of Carl’s happened to be a realtor, and showed Carl and Tory a property that immediately struck their fancy—they walked around the 63-acre lot, and as they came up the hill and saw Mt. Monadnock through the trees off to the west, they thought it would be “really cool” to have a home with that view. However, as they soon learned, it’s not quite that simple.

Knowing they planned to own a big piece of forest, Tory and Carl’s first step was to ask the neighbors for recommendations for a forester. They got a good one, and they brought forester Dan Reed up to the property they were thinking about buying to show him the view. His response was, “Whoever owns the property on the other side of that stone wall owns your view of Monadnock.” So, they began conversations with the abutter to buy the land next to what would soon be theirs.

As they got to know the property better, Carl and Tory fell deeper in love with it. “It’s just beautiful—there’s a hemlock grove down there, there’s like a ‘stonehengeian’ rock area, everything about the property—we just fell in love with it,” says Tory. However, Tory and Carl weren’t just thinking about their own love for this land; they were thinking about generations to come. “That’s when we began thinking about conservation of the property, because it was such a beautiful piece. We thought ‘it would be nice to own this place and I wouldn’t want it ever to change,’” Carl explains. It was at this juncture that Tory and Carl started conversations with the Monadnock Conservancy about donating a conservation easement on their new land.

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Easement negotiations happened quickly, and so did the sale of the property—the neighbors were glad Carl and Tory intended to keep the property natural. The next step was to clear a space for a house and some pasture. First, Carl and Tory felt the responsible thing to do was to craft a management plan with Dan Reed. As Tory puts it, “A management plan is that long-term strategic look at what we want done with the property, as well as that short-term look of ‘oh, well I need to mow outside, or do view-maintenance, or sheep-pasturing.’” The pace picked up—the easement was signed, the houselot was cleared, and timber was harvested to pay for the installation of a driveway. Tory admits they might do it differently if they could. “We’ve gone a little faster than probably would be advisable, but we’ve been fortunate that whatever homework we didn’t do, it was fine—in no small part because we’ve had good advice...it’s all about the people you choose to help you.”

Carl and Tory talk openly about the inherent challenges of making management decisions, especially when thinking about legacy. As Tory puts it, “On the one hand we say we want to preserve this land for future generations, and on the other hand we’re putting our own footprint on it.” How do landowners balance their needs and wants from the land as a resource with the needs of generations to come? Carl believes finding that balance is what stewardship is all about. “How we utilize this property for our sustainability, as a human—we have to eat something, the only way we can do that is through keeping the land healthy—it’s part of our stewardship job.” Reaping the benefits of past management decisions, and continuing to make thoughtful and sustainable choices, yields the rich pastures and tall trees fifty years from now.

