In the late 1980’s, a large-scale commercial development was planned for Brister’s Hill in Concord at the intersection of Route 2 and Walden Street. The proposal was to develop a 147,000 square-foot office building with parking for over 500 cars in the heart of Walden Woods, a mere half-mile from the shores of Walden Pond. Aided by a report on CNN about the development threat, Don Henley felt compelled to help save the landscape around Walden Pond that had such a profound influence on Henry David Thoreau nearly 150 years before. Shortly thereafter, the Walden Woods Project was founded for the purpose of preserving the land that was under such an intense and immediate assault. One of the Project’s first goals was to save Brister’s Hill.

In May 2006, the Walden Woods Project celebrated the permanent protection of Brister’s Hill by dedicating a new, innovative interpretive trail (see pages 4-5 for a full account of the dedication). Thoreau's Path on Brister’s Hill was funded by a generous gift from Time Warner Inc. The Path was designed to create an environment of discovery and exploration. Interpretation is limited to quotations by Thoreau and other important figures in the environmental and social reform movements, that present the many facets of Thoreau and his influence.

Brister’s Hill is significant not only for its role in the founding of the Walden Woods Project, but also in the development of Thoreau’s philosophies on social reform and conscience, and his scientific theories on the succession of forest trees and regeneration of plant communities. The area was long ago named for Brister Freeman, a freed slave who lived with his family nearby. Little is known of Brister Freeman beyond a short passage in "Walden" and a few brief anecdotes and records. The memory of Brister Freeman and the lives of other “marginalized” people was always a part of Thoreau’s philosophies on social conscience and reform. Once degraded by sand and gravel mining in the mid-twentieth century, this land is slowly regenerating, offering an excellent opportunity to observe forest succession first hand at the very place where Thoreau formulated his theories of succession and seed dispersion.

Thoreau’s Path on Brister’s Hill is free and open to the public year round during daylight hours. Parking is available at the Walden Pond State Reservation. You can download the brochure for Thoreau’s Path on Brister’s Hill and get more information about the Path at www.walden.org.
This past year, the Walden Woods Project reached an important milestone—the completion of Thoreau’s Path, a unique interpretive trail on Brister’s Hill. An impressive assembly of speakers and special guests joined nearly 100 elementary and middle school children and over 150 invited guests in a celebration of Thoreau’s life and philosophy with the opening of Thoreau’s Path.

The Path honors the many contributions of Henry David Thoreau, and is located on an 18-acre site that had faced large-scale commercial development in the late 1980s. It was the impending threat to Brister’s Hill, coupled with another proposed development nearby, that led to the founding of the Walden Woods Project, and launched our organization’s long-term efforts to preserve the land that inspired Thoreau.

This issue of our annual newsletter features the dedication ceremony and information about Thoreau’s Path. We are very proud of this project and the enduring hopes of hopefulness that it conveys. We thank all of you who helped make it possible. We encourage you to visit Brister’s Hill and experience for yourself this fitting testament to the legacy of Henry David Thoreau.

While the formal dedication of Thoreau’s Path is a momentous achievement, the Walden Woods Project has been hard at work on a number of other important initiatives. Of particular note is the tenth anniversary of the Approaching Walden seminars for high school teachers held at the Walden Woods Project’s Thoreau Institute near Walden Pond. Each summer since 1996, teachers from Massachusetts and from other states have participated in our 2-week program on Thoreau’s literature/landscape and its relevance to contemporary issues and challenges. This has been an extremely valuable experience for teachers. While enrolling and increasing the depth and breadth of their understanding of Thoreau’s contributions to literature and science, the seminars provide teachers with the tools they need to develop their own place-based curriculum. In the coming year, our education department will offer one-day workshops for high school and middle school teachers, bringing a condensed Approaching Walden to a significantly larger audience of teachers in the region.

The education department is also progressing on the development of World Wide Waldens (see page 6). This Internet-based, pilot program will launch in January 2007. Student groups from around the world will engage in place-based learning that will culminate in the design and implementation of local environmental stewardship projects. They will share their experiences with other students in participant groups from different countries and cultures.

The Walden Woods Project’s popular Stewardship Lecture Series presented an interesting group of speakers/topics in 2006 (see Noteworthy...). We will offer the Stewardship Lecture Series again in 2007 along with several educational excursions in Walden Woods. Next year, we will begin publishing the lectures and will make audio and video segments available on our web site at www.walden.org. In 2006, the Walden Woods Project’s research collections, housed at the Thoreau Institute, continued to grow with two generous gifts from environmental author Richard Fleck and Thoreau scholar/ecologist Edmund A. Schofield. The coming year promises to be full of challenges and opportunities. The Walden Woods Project hopes to acquire two key sites in Walden Woods that face development threats. At the same time, we are implementing management strategies to preserve the ecological integrity and educational value of the nearly 150 acres currently under our stewardship. Meanwhile, the important task of historic restoration of the Higginson House – a National Register property and the headquarters of the Walden Woods Project – has begun. This project is expected to take several years and will require a significant amount of financial support. We are confident that these critically important objectives will be achieved through your continued generosity.

Wishing you all the best during the holiday season and peace in the New Year,
**Creative Collaboration**

By Kathi Anderson, Executive Director

The Walden Woods Project and American Forests (our nation’s oldest, non-profit citizens’ conservation organization) have partnered with two of the world’s most prestigious companies – Steinway and Sons, and Faber-Castell – on the creation of the Steinway Walden Woods Art-Case Piano and the Graf-von-Faber-Castell Limited Edition Walden Woods Pen. A portion of the sales proceeds from the one-of-a-kind piano and the pen will be donated to the Walden Woods Project and American Forests. Much of the wood used in these unique creations came from descendents of trees that shaded the trails where Thoreau once walked. No trees were cut down or otherwise damaged to obtain the wood, which was salvaged from naturally fallen trees and from prunings.

### Steinway Walden Woods Art-Case Piano

The Walden Woods art-case, concert grand piano is a one-of-a-kind collector’s item, a museum quality work of art and, most importantly, a superior musical instrument. Created by Steinway and Sons, the piano features the work of Silas Kopf, one of the world’s finest marquetry artists. Marquetry is the traditional craft of putting together different species of wood to form pictures or graphic designs. The marquetry on the Walden Woods piano showcases the natural beauty and the rich flora and fauna found in the Massachusetts woods and ponds that inspired the writings of Henry David Thoreau.

The design of the piano honors Thoreau’s legacy as the father of the American conservation movement. A significant portion of the proceeds from the public auction of the piano will support the conservation of historic Walden Woods.

The Steinway Walden Woods Art-Case Piano is an exceptional work of art, museums, and collectors will want to own. The Steinway Walden Woods Art-Case Piano is a one-of-a-kind collector’s item, a museum quality work of art and, most importantly, a superior musical instrument. Created by Steinway and Sons, the piano features the work of Silas Kopf, one of the world’s finest marquetry artists. Marquetry is the traditional craft of putting together different species of wood to form pictures or graphic designs. The marquetry on the Walden Woods piano showcases the natural beauty and the rich flora and fauna found in the Massachusetts woods and ponds that inspired the writings of Henry David Thoreau.

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### Graf-von-Faber-Castell Limited Edition Walden Woods Pen

The Graf-von-Faber-Castell Limited Edition Walden Woods Pen is a highly successful pencil business in the world's most prestigious companies – Steinway and Sons, and Faber-Castell – on the creation of the Steinway Walden Woods Art-Case Piano and the Graf-von-Faber-Castell Limited Edition Walden Woods Pen. A portion of the sales proceeds from the one-of-a-kind piano and the pen will be donated to the Walden Woods Project and American Forests. Much of the wood used in these unique creations came from descendents of trees that shaded the trails where Thoreau once walked. No trees were cut down or otherwise damaged to obtain the wood, which was salvaged from naturally fallen trees and from prunings.

The Graf-von-Faber-Castell Walden Woods Pen is limited to a quantity of 2006 worldwide and the barrel is made from historic ashwood that was salvaged from naturally fallen trees. The pen features the little ‘defects’ in the wood, such as pin knots and sapwood, as a way of drawing attention to these special timbers. The primary wood used for the piano is American black walnut, which grows throughout the Appalachian region and into Massachusetts. There are nineteen different species used in the design (six of them from Walden Woods). All the wood is either native to New England or can grow in the region.

As this newsletter goes to press, the auction date/loca- tion has not been set. If you are interested in receiving an advance notification of the auction, please e-mail us at: 781-259-4700 or wwpinfo@walden.org

A photograph of the Walden Woods piano is available on our website at www.walden.org. Further information on Steinway art-case pianos can be found at www.steinway.com/steinwayartcase/collecion/d.html.

Information on Silas Kopf’s woodworking/artistry can be found at www.silaskopf.com.
Dedication of Thoreau’s Path on Brister’s Hill

The Dedication of Thoreau’s Path was held on May 15, 2006, amid some of the most intense rain storms that southern New England had experienced in recent history. Thoreau’s spirit could not be dampened by the rain. However, as Don Henley said in his remarks during the dedication: “Henry David Thoreau loved the rain. On May 17, 1858 he wrote in his journal, ‘This rain is good for thought, it is especially agreeable to me as I enter the woods and hear the soothing dripping on the trees.’”

Fourteen speakers and special guests, over 150 invited guests and nearly 100 elementary school children from the Thoreau School in Concord and the Edward Everett School in Dorchester, braved the elements to attend the dedication that officially opened Thoreau’s Path to the public.

The protection of Brister’s Hill was the result of a successful grassroots effort to generate support for preserving an important part of this internationally significant literary landscape. A major contribution came from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, formerly the Department of Environmental Management. A generous grant from Time Warner, Inc., coupled with support from the National Park Service, enabled the creation of Thoreau’s Path on Brister’s Hill.

Access to Thoreau’s Path is by foot, a short walk from the Walden Pond State Reservation parking lot. To walk the 1-mile Path from the entrance gate on Walden Street in Concord, a minimum of one hour’s time is suggested. Full accommodations for all of the quotations found along the Path, and at the Reflection Circle can be found on www.walden.org.

Passing on Thoreau’s Legacy

Thoreau’s Path on Brister’s Hill honors Thoreau as a social reformer, scientist, philosopher, conservationist, and writer. Designed to invite close observation, the Path interprets the ecological and social stories of Thoreau’s landscape. As you walk Thoreau’s Path on Brister’s Hill, look for the words you will find incised in granite and cast in bronze. They are from Thoreau’s journals, notebooks, and essays. He recognized that social responsibility and environmental stewardship are just as important to us as they are to nature. At the center of the Path is a Reflection Circle where the words of other influential leaders and thinkers echo and extend Thoreau’s message, encouraging you to ponder both the nature of Brister’s Hill and your own place in nature.

Highlights of Thoreau’s Path

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1. **HISTORICAL CONTEXT** — Generation
2. **AYER’S ORCHARD** — Social Reform and Commentary
3. **DE PLAIN** — Teaching and Observing
4. **REST SUCCESION** — Science
5. **LECTION CIRCLE** — Thoreau’s Philosophy, including its spiritual dimensions, and his influence on others.

Gravel mining on the site that occurred in the mid-1950s through 1960s resulted in much of the land being stripped of vegetation and top soil and left bare. As a result, the natural process of succession is occurring here. This involves the gradual replacement of one type of vegetation by another in response to changes in its environment. As soil nutrients are built up through time, the ecological succession is occurring here. This involves the gradual replacement of one type of vegetation by another in response to changes in its environment.

Grade school students explored natural history themes in their own neighborhoods. Each class produced a poster that combines interpretive writing and illustration based upon close observation of nature in their own home place. High school students, after becoming familiar with Thoreau’s writings, explored the themes of social justice and conscience that are reflected in his work. Grade school students displayed at the dedication.

Tree planting ceremony with Senator Kennedy and Congressman Meenhan

Speakers and Special Guests at the Dedication

The Walden Woods Project was honored to have a prestigious group of speakers and special guests representing the many facets of Thoreau’s thought, influence, and legacy. Among the speakers, some of whom are descendents of individuals quoted in the Reflection Circle, were Don Henley, Founder and President of the Walden Woods Project; Senator Edward M. Kennedy; Dr. Edward O. Wilson, Pellegrino University Research Professor, Harvard, Emeritus, Congressmen Marty Meehan and John Lewis, Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi; Stephanie Harrington, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation; and Virginia McIntyre, Chair of the Concord Board of Selectmen.

Several descendents of other individuals quoted in the Reflection Circle were also present, including Calvin Standing Bear, grandson of Chief Luther Standing Bear; Margaret (May) Emerson Bancroft, great-great-granddaughter of Ralph Waldo Emerson; Roger Christie, nephew of Rachel Carson; and Michael Muir, great-grandson of John Muir.

Transcripts and video clips of the speeches delivered at the dedication ceremony will be available on www.walden.org in the coming year.