

The Creation of Penny's Nature Preserve: Where a Dog Can Be a Dog

by Richard Storck



Penny, the namesake of Penny's Nature Preserve

During the summer, I am at Acadia National Park almost every week, either climbing Cadillac or biking the Park Loop Road. I have always been inspired by Dorr's and Rockefeller's gifts to the nation...

In 1998, Blue Hill Heritage Trust was raising funds to acquire land in Blue Hill. At that time, I had the opportunity to meet with Peter Clapp and Lorenzo Mitchell, two founding members of BHHT. I was impressed with the Trust's vision, hard work, and what they had accomplished to date. Also, with the fact that they were a local organization with a vested interest specifically on the Blue Hill Peninsula.

But the story of Penny's Nature Preserve starts a few years earlier when I first came to Blue Hill in 1996. I would walk up to the falls on Peter's Brook, the trail local residence used at the time was overgrown. I started cutting/clearing a trail further along the brook, all the while discovering the beauty of the woods. Years later, 103 acres came up for sale and included the brook. I was not in Blue Hill but decided to buy it sight unseen, not knowing what the rest of the acreage consisted of.

The following summer I started bushwhacking the property. To my surprise, it included the quarry, half of Albion Meadow, incredible lichen/moss areas, glacial erratics, and beauty everywhere. Over a period of 15 summers, I cut in 3 miles of trails, connecting the most scenic places. It first involved roughing out a trail with a machete. Then carrying a chainsaw back and forth to clear the trail, and finally painting blazes. All the time with my yellow lab, Penny, at my side...she loved the woods.



Albion Meadow with Blue Hill Mountain and the fair grounds in the background. Aerial survey 2019



Bog-bridging on the Albion Meadow Connector Trail.

My wife, Aletha, helped with spring clean-up every year, and after completing the trail system, we decided it was time to share Penny's Nature Preserve with everyone. We wanted it to be a place where dogs could be off leash...Or, as we like to say, "where a dog can be a dog".

We donated Penny's Nature Preserve to BHHT in 2018. In the years since, we have continued to support BHHT and have been pleased with what they have been able to accomplish.

Given that BHHT has so many ongoing responsibilities, we have been delighted with how they have continued to improve Penny's Nature Preserve and the adjacent Peter's Brook Trails, making it more user friendly and enjoyable for all. They have built a parking lot, installed trail signage, and taken care of spring clean-up every year. They also built a bridge over the brook on the west side of the property and have recently finished another bridge on the east side of the property and re-routed the trail to a dryer location.



Peter's Brook.



"Glamor Shot" of Peter's Brook,
William Geisler 2023