

Jacob's Ladder Trail – Centennial Book Introduction
By Steve Hamlin
Copyright 2010

One hundred years - nearly the entire history of modern roads and of the automobiles that travel them. Jacob's Ladder Trail has seen many changes: cleared hillsides reverted to mature forests; whole industries developed to thriving enterprises, only to wither and die, or move to some other part of the country; farms and forests turned to subdivisions.

The road, too has changed drastically. A century ago, the entire road was barely wider than one of its modern travel lanes. Its course has been straightened and reshaped, and of course, widened, as greater capacity for reshaping the terrain through which it passes have made it possible to push back or cut through steep hillsides.

The challenges remain the same though. A century ago, engineers were just beginning to understand the vulnerability of macadam to heat, frost, traffic and a harsh, sometimes ledgy, sometimes marshy environment. The surface of the road that opened in 1910 began to crumble almost immediately, hastening improvements to paving compounds and methods. Experimentation and refinement continues today.

An anniversary invites reflection. This anniversary has me thinking about all the people who have contributed to the effort to preserve the treasures of the Jacob's Ladder Trail region. Ours is a special place – steeped in history and brimming with its own unique culture. There is barely an acre that hasn't seen human habitation or cultivation, yet its one of the wildest areas in southern New England with thousands of acres of forests and open spaces.

This book is dedicated to the stewards of this special place, past, present and future. Change is unstoppable, but it's also malleable. May we be creative, resourceful and tenacious in our efforts to shape the future of our region, so that in another 100 years, that generation will still be celebrating its special qualities.

In memory of our friends: Natalie Bozarth, Newman Marsh, Howard Mason and Robert Oppenheimer.

Special thanks to our own "Bard of the Berkshires," Vincent Dowling, master of ceremonies for our celebration at the summit, September 25, 2010.

Thanks also to the Chester Granite Company for generously donating our centennial monument stone.