

In grateful memory of Sydney L. Crook (1918-2010)

from the Ausbon Sargent community and the citizens of New London for his generous donation of the 4.47 acres of Clark Lookout.



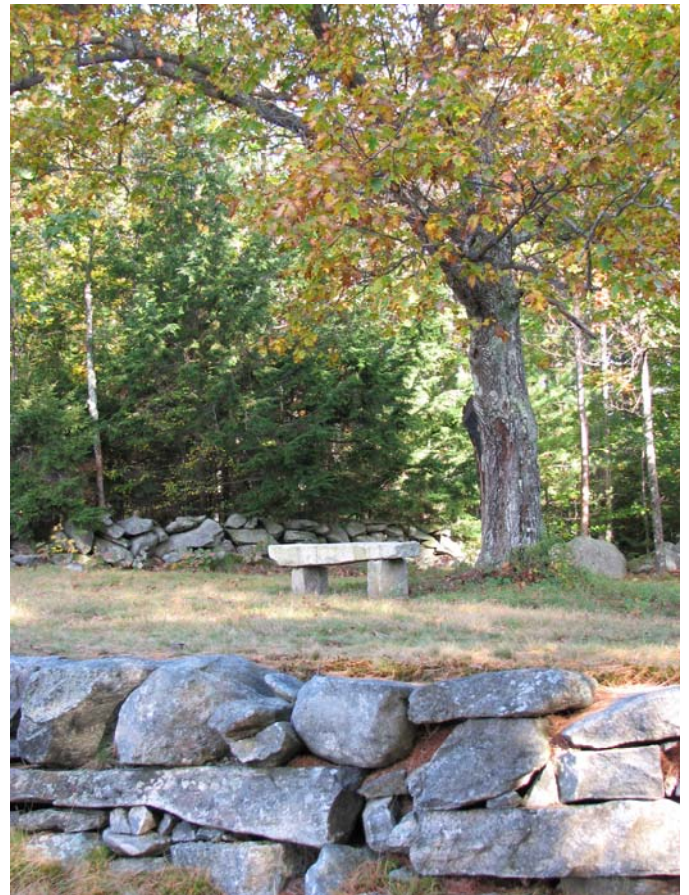
Clark Lookout

Syd Crook Balances His Past With A Gift To His Town's Future

By Nancy Lyon

This gift of land and a conservation easement turns a family legacy into a town's legacy. It is about a father's gift to his daughter, the daughter's gift to her son, and now her son's gift to all of us. It transforms 100 year's of family legacy into a town's living legacy. Clark Lookout is a unique property identified nearly 30 years ago in the town's first master plan as one of its "special places" – worthy of protection. Now that special place has become the opportunity for Syd Crook to honor his family's history, his happy childhood, his years as a citizen of New London, his 20 year's service as a member of the town's planning board, and finally as a steward – now and forever - of a very "special place".

Clark Lookout emerges as a stunning surprise at the end of a grassy woods road lined by stonewalls and large, older hardwoods and giant white pines. As Syd himself describes the hike into the lookout, "You go up and up and then turn that last corner and –wow! There's the view." Syd has named the viewpoint for his grandfather, James E. Clark, who discovered this special place when clearing and creating over 4.5 miles of carriage roads on his 110-acre estate between Herrick Cove, Route 11 and Route 103A as a hobby. (Syd jokingly suggests that may be why he turned out



Syd Crook's grandfather built 4.5 miles of carriage roads lined with handsome stone walls. These carriage roads lead to the height of land now known as Clark Lookout, where you can sit on a granite bench surrounded by these stone walls to be delighted by the glorious view across Lake



Syd and his wife Betty in the winter of 2006.

to be a highway designer.) From this height of land standing in the grassy clearing surrounded by stonewalls and natural granite ledge there is a panoramic view south and east and west across Lake Sunapee. The lake, its islands and miles of shoreline are bounded by the Mt. Sunapee Ski trails to the south and the foothills and mountains to the west into Vermont.

Syd Crook was born just down the hill from Clark Lookout on Lake Sunapee in Sunset Lodge - the house his grandfather bought for his mother. Though they lived in the Cambridge and Newton MA area during the year, Syd spent all his summers at Sunset Lodge except for four years while at MIT and five years in the army. He retired to live in New London full time in 1982 after a career as an electrical, mechanical, then civil engineer—a genuine “jack of all trades”!

James Clark, Syd’s grandfather, began building his estate in 1904. He had two children – Syd’s mother Mildred and her brother Lomax (Virginia Clarkson’s father). During many summers, his grandfather hired 12 men to build 4.5 miles of carriage roads and stonewalls on the land westerly of his lake home. Indeed, the survey map of this family land includes notes added by Syd, which include details about historical events such as the 1938 hurricane. Because there was so much stump and tree damage during the ’38 hurricane, Syd’s mother Mildred hired men to remove the stumps and clear the

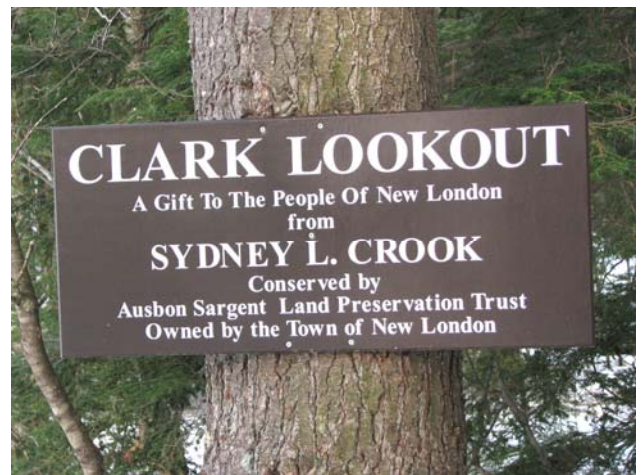
downed trees, which yielded over one million board feet of lumber. The

location of the temporary saw mill and lumber storage areas are noted by Syd on the survey map.

Protecting Clark Lookout has been a family dream. His mother Mildred often mentioned giving the lookout to the town and Syd says it has been on his mind for a long time. Indeed ASLPT Executive Director Debbie Stanley began discussing how such a gift might happen with Syd in 1997-98. And even earlier the 1987 New London Master Plan identified this land as one of the important “special places” in the town. Two other properties (the Carroll /Tatum properties on Burpee Hill and the Esther Currier Wildlife Management Area at Low Plain off NH Route 11) were also identified in that the first New London Master Plan. The ASLPT and the New London Conservation Commission now protect both these properties. In the 1998 New London Master Plan, the land of Clark Lookout was included again. And Syd wanted to find the best way to share this legacy of land, passed from his grandfather through his mother to him, with his children and his community. So this spring, as he said, “Finally, I got off the stick and did something about it with the help of my wife. I did what she told me – stop putting it off” At age 87 Syd is glad he has finally gotten going and done this. The easement allows for foot traffic access with parking at the I-89 exit 12 “park and ride” lot. But anyone with a handicap license plate will be able to arrange with the town offices to have the gate off Davis Hill Road unlocked and may then drive to the overlook.

After working all summer and fall of 2005 with the ASLPT and the Town of New London’s Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Adjustment, Syd Crook granted a conservation easement on the 4.47 acres of Clark Lookout plus 1.5 acres of the stonewall lined access roads to the property. Ausbon Sargent holds the conservation easement making it responsible for monitoring the terms of the easement forever and Syd went further, and has deeded the land to the Town of New London so that each citizen may enjoy the land and view as Syd and his family have done.

[This article is reprinted from *Chatter Winter 2006*—the bi-annual newsletter of the Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust. Be sure to visit www.ausbonsargent.org to learn more about the land trust and the many wonderful land donors like Syd Crook.]



The Facts of Clark Lookout

Total of acres: 4.7 acres

located off Davis Hill Road, New London.

Partners involved:

Ausbon Sargent holds the easement.

The Town of New London Conservation Commission received the gift of the property.

Public Use: There is a footpath trail via Clark Drive & Lookout Drive (ROW easement) to Clark Lookout. Access will be by foot; however, arrangements can be made with the NLCC for handicapped individuals to drive to the Lookout.

- The property has twice been cited in the New London Master Plan as a top priority.
- There is a magnificent view looking southerly down the length of Lake Sunapee as well as east and west beyond the shoreline into the surrounding hills and mountains. In the 1998 Master Plan under the Conservation Chapter it states “Clark Lookout affords a magnificent view of the Lake from Herrick Cove to Great Island, with Mt. Sunapee in the background.”