A community endowed with an emerald necklace like our very own Trail Around Middlebury (TAM) holds a rare green treasure. Such an asset does not come by chance but by a unique combination of generosity, hard work and community support, which makes it all that more valuable.

In previous articles of this series you read of the gems Chipman Hill and Wright Park; this week we continue our trek around the TAM by visiting the sparkling Otter Creek Gorge. All three sections were made accessible to the public forever by the vision and gifts of individuals including the Otter Creek Gorge contribution by Will Jackson, Allen Johnson and Linda Johnson as well as Steve James, Bob Collins, and Stephen Rockefeller.

The Gorge(ous) trail offers many delights and surprises, from woods to water, ledgey hills to cow-cropped fields. Walking through mature woods on the well-worn trail, at moments you swear you’re in the Green Mountains. Birdsong and wind dance high up in the trees, and when you look down, you note small creatures and tracks left by larger inhabitants. Along one stretch, if you look in the right direction and the sun slants through the trees in a certain way, its dappled light reveals old gravestones of the Belding family. There, just past a screen of trees, leans a fort of sorts made by the kids in TAM’s summer camp, and you are glad that they have a chance to know these woods, too. As you approach the suspension bridge across the dam connecting Wright Park and the Gorge, the water roars through the rock face suggesting the deep, rounded scars in the high ledges of Wright Park. Further along the path hugging creek’s edge, you visualize the turbulent underwater dynamics in the gorge downstream. From the trailhead on Horse Farm Road you continue west on the Johnson trail, enjoying younger woods and then sweeping southerly views and a large beaver pond. What a place to learn about the natural world and the forces that shaped it! Take an hour or three here and you’ve been gifted by the TAM.

Now we need to do our part. Give our gift. Each of us. Charting, building and improving the stunning jewel of the TAM requires hard work and community support. If our children and our children’s children are to know these woods and water, these fields and rocky hills as we do, then we all need to pitch in by giving what we can to protect and steward our emerald necklace. To celebrate these 25 years and plan for the next 25, MALT has created the John Derrick Endowment Fund for the TAM. Together let’s build a $125k endowment to ensure the TAM’s long-term viability. Please make a special contribution. After all, the trail gives you its special gifts every time you’re out there.

Contributed by Bill Roper
MALT Board Chair 2001-2004

Help us reach our goal of raising $125K for the TAM.

$125K Goal

$41,835 –

start