



From left, Dana Southworth looks on as brothers Luke and Seth Colby install the gable-end structural rafter assemblies. These are attached to both sides of the diagonal corner “dragon beams,” and carry the curvilinear roof overhang that runs around the perimeter of the pavilion.

Timber, Craft, and Community: Building the Pavilion at The Rocks

By Dana Southworth

A 5-year collaborative effort involving Garland Mill Timberframes and The Forest Society was concluded this winter in the form of a unique and stately red oak pavilion at The Rocks in Bethlehem. The project was truly a team effort comprising a diverse collection of talented folks, some nineteenth century sawmilling technology, and a good dose of traditional timber frame joinery.

In 2020, the project kicked off in just the right idiom with Garland Mill co-owner Ben Southworth suggesting that

there might be a more suitable (local) material than the douglas fir timbers initially pondered for the Forest Society's structure. Managing Forester Wendy Weisiger rose to the occasion immediately, and in the affirmative, shipping multiple truckloads of top-quality red oak logs from the Forest Society's Heald Tract in Troy, N.H., to Garland Mill in Lancaster. Garland Mill Timberframes owner Dana Southworth and a stout crew sawed out the posts, beams, rafters, etc. for the pavilion on the water-powered mill, which is listed

in the National Register of Historic Places and has been in continuous commercial operation since it was built in 1856.

From there, the timbers were carefully stacked and air-dried at the mill and then planed to dimension on the 17,000-pound timber sizer used to prep stock for the shopwork phase of the project. Layout and hand-chiseling of each component of the timber frame then commenced and took approximately six months to complete. Dana's son, David, did quite a bit of the initial sawing of oak timbers



Carefully and methodically, crews load the 36-foot-wide king-post trusses onto a flatbed trailer for the journey from The Garland Mill in Lancaster to The Rocks in Bethlehem.

while son Robert notched a significant portion of the structure with his dad. Long-time collaborators and seasoned timber-wrights, Seth and Luke Colby, masterminded the cutting and assembly of four 36-foot-wide king-post trusses that carry the free-span roof system of the pavilion. And woodworking colleague and furniture-maker Jamie Savage worked on the curvilinear pieces that define the pagoda-style radial roof overhangs.

Delivery, assembly, and raising of the timber frame was a delightful challenge in and of itself. Landing already notched 10x10 posts and all their interconnecting joinery on heavy duty precast concrete piers went very smoothly, thanks in no small measure to the accurate excavation and site prep work done by Presby Construction. The *pièce de résistance* of the pavilion construction was the aforementioned roof trusses. Exacting to layout, notch, and fit together; and quite a feat to transport 25 miles from the mill to The Rocks, all four swung neatly into place on a sunny late-October day just in

time for Facilities Manager Carl Murphy, President Jack Savage, and Vice President of Finance Tony Cheek to inspect. After driving in the final pegs of the frame, which were made from Heald Tract oak and milled at Northcott Woodturning in Walpole, N.H., Murphy stood atop the structure while the traditional frame blessing was read and whetting bush attached (see sidebar).

Closely involved from project inception were engineer Janet Kane and timber frame architect Andrea Warchaizer. Each of these remarkable women have been long-time collaborators with Garland Mill Timberframes. Their structural and aesthetic contributions at every stage of project development and design truly defined the pavilion, and made it a handsome and enduring addition to The Rocks.

Vision, commitment, and hard work by the Forest Society team ultimately made the pavilion possible. Former Vice President of Land Management and Policy Will Abbott got, and kept, the ball rolling. Carl Murphy tirelessly sorted out



Many Hands, One Pavilion

Building a pavilion from timber grown on Forest Society land sounds simple in concept, but it required an exemplary oak stand and a team of skilled forestry professionals to bring the idea to life.

When staff foresters were first approached with the idea of sourcing the pavilion timbers from our woodlands, we knew the challenge would be finding enough high-quality oak while staying true to the forest's long-term management goals. Working with consulting forester Jeremy Turner of Meadowsend Consulting Company, we reviewed the harvest area to ensure the project could be completed without compromising the silvicultural prescription. Jeremy carefully identified and marked enough clear, high-value oak trees to meet the mill's specifications.

Equally important was the expertise of D.H. Hardwick and Sons Logging. Joey Hardwick meticulously felled the marked trees, while Donnie Hardwick Jr., operating the slasher processor at the landing, sorted through the logs and set aside those that met the strict requirements for the pavilion. Each qualifying log was marked, measured, and tallied until the order was complete.

The process demanded extra time, attention to detail, and close coordination among foresters, loggers, and the sawmill. What made the project remarkable was that everyone involved understood they were contributing to something unique. The Rocks pavilion stands not only as a beautiful structure but also as a testament to thoughtful forest management, skilled craftsmanship, and the many hands that helped transform trees from the forest into a lasting community landmark.

—Wendy Weisiger, Managing Forester



Blessing the Frame

As has been the custom for centuries, Garland Mill Timberframes attached an evergreen bough to the ridge of the newly raised pavilion frame (pictured above).

First:

to honor and pay homage to the forest for providing the timbers used in the frame.

Second:

to bring good fortune to the structure and its owners.

Third:

to celebrate the community of family and friends who worked together to cut and raise this new building.



From start to finish, a team effort was required to build what now stands as a testament to thoughtful planning, skilled craftsmanship, and a renewed vision for visitor use at The Rocks.

logistics and managed the project seamlessly. Savage, Cheek, and Vice President of Development Anne Truslow continuously breathed life and encouragement into the undertaking. And Rocks staff members Kristine Arey and Lauren Thomas enthusiastically welcomed the construction crew at the facility and kept them going with hot coffee and good cheer. Senior Outreach

Manager Nigel Manley, Communications Manager Ryan Smith, and others not here mentioned also contributed to the success of this meaningful project. It has indeed taken a village to raise this pavilion and we couldn't be prouder. ♪

Dana Southworth is the owner of Garland Mill Timberframes in Lancaster, N.H.