



ROBERT T. LEVERETT

Icy Glen Award

presented to

Jenny Hansell

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*We want to give a name to something —
and then give that name to someone.*

We’re calling this the Icy Glen Award. And to tell you why, we have to take you back to Herman Melville, who wrote *Moby-Dick* just over the hill from here, at Arrowhead in Pittsfield — and who knew our own Ice Glen in Stockbridge firsthand, from his walks there with Nathaniel Hawthorne.

There’s a moment in *Moby-Dick* where Melville sends his narrator, Ishmael, far from home: onto a remote island in the South Seas, into a green cathedral of a forest lush with a temple of palms. And when Melville reaches for words to capture how impossibly, vividly alive that forest is — the vines, the ferns, the flowers weaving through everything — he doesn’t reach for the tropics. He reaches all the way back home, to the Berkshires. He writes:

“It was a wondrous sight. The wood was green as mosses of the Icy Glen; the trees stood high and haughty, feeling their living sap; the industrious earth beneath was as a weaver’s loom, with a gorgeous carpet on it, whereof the ground-vine tendrils formed the warp and woof, and the living flowers the figures.”

Green as the mosses of the Icy Glen. Of all the images in all the world, that is the one Melville chose to stand for life itself — teeming, growing, unbroken. He chose ours.

Which brings us to the person we honor today, because keeping that green alive and unbroken has been her life’s work.

For nearly a decade, Jenny Hansell has led the Berkshire Natural Resources Council — one of the oldest and most vital land conservation organizations in the Commonwealth. Under her leadership, BNRC stewards more than twenty thousand acres of Berkshire land and dozens of miles of public trails, and she has championed the High Road: a bold vision of a connected, county-wide network of paths to link our communities to the conserved land all around them.

What sets Jenny apart is her conviction that protecting land and welcoming people onto it are one and the same work — that a forest saved should also be a forest shared. Before she came to the Berkshires, she spent nearly two decades building a rural community center that fed, moved, and lifted up an entire region.

She has brought that same gift here: the belief that conservation, at its best, is an act of community — and that the surest way to protect a landscape is to help people fall in love with it.

So today the wood is still green as the mosses of the Icy Glen — because of people like Jenny. It is only fitting that the very first Icy Glen Award goes to the woman who has done so much to keep it that way.

