



CANTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST, INC.

Spring 2006
Newsletter

A Word from the President . . .

As Canton celebrates its bicentennial year, it is a good time to reflect upon some of the Land Trust's accomplishments and what, with your support, we might accomplish in the future. Since the Land Trust was formed in 1972, 1,413 acres have been preserved as open space; 10 trails have been built, and more are planned; the Trailblazers, a student adventure group, has been formed; a web site(cantonlandtrust.org) has been created; and a looseleaf Trail Guide has been published. None of this could have been done without extremely generous donations of land from a few farsighted people; the financial help from state open space grants; and most importantly, the support, financially and otherwise, of our members. However, we cannot be complacent. Much more needs to be done: land needs to be preserved, trails to be made. And it cannot be done without your continuing support. Financial support is always vital to any non-profit organization, but so also is verbal support-between you and your children or grandchildren, your and your neighbors, or you and town officials or your state representatives. Talk up the Land Trust and the pleasures you've had from hiking its trails. Or knowing that some of Canton's rural charm has been protected for the benefit of future generations. Or the great importance of open space to put balance into our lives. Support also comes in the form of volunteering: working on trails; helping with property maintenance; offering to be a property steward, adopting one parcel of property and checking it regularly; taking photographs for display or adding to those on our web site and contributing articles to our newsletter-and more.

Thank you for all that you have done to support the Canton Land Trust financially, but please keep in mind all the other volunteer possibilities when you become a member. And the importance of promoting the Land Trust throughout the Town.

Betty Stanley

Dinner Reminder!

You should all be in receipt of our invitation to the first Annual Members' Dinner on Tuesday, April 18 at La Trattoria. A cash bar and dinner will be followed by a much-anticipated talk by Dr. Robert Thorson, Professor of Geology at the University of Connecticut. Music will be provided by Sweetheart Mountain (Arlene DeMaris and Sean MacDonald).

The Land Trust owes its thanks to **Collinsville Savings Society** for underwriting the expenses for our invitations, and to **Hinman's Flower Shop on the Green** for the contribution of the lovely flowers for our centerpieces.

For those interested in attending, please call either Joanne Pierce(693-1509) or Betty Stanley(693-2074) for reservations.

A Financial Overview

Because of the continuous support of its members, the Land Trust has been able to acquire and preserve beautiful open space properties. It is the goal of the land trust to make all of its properties available, through the creation and maintenance of trails, for the enjoyment of all, both young and old.

Memberships received in 2005 of \$17,985 were down slightly from the \$18,102 received in 2004. Other contributions received in 2005, excluding land and grants for land acquisition, of \$38,659 were down significantly from the \$60,822 received in 2004. Included in other contributions were United Way designated funds which increased from \$1,225 in 2004 to \$3,085 in 2005. Matching grants by foundations also increased from \$863 in 2004 to \$1,385 in 2005.

The Land Trust has had the opportunity to purchase beautiful pieces of property but has not been able to do so because of limited funds. In addition, even though we are an organization run entirely by volunteers, our expenses continue to increase each year. The majority of our expenses are related to insurance, property maintenance and fees associated with property acquisition.

Please consider donating to the Land Trust if you have not already done so. If you have made a membership contribution this membership year (10/01/05 - 9/30/06), please consider making a donation to our Land Acquisition Fund. Your contribution will be restricted and used only for the purpose of acquiring open space property. Also, please remember the Land Trust when you complete your annual United Way contribution forms. The Land Trust United Way ID Code is 9517. Our address is on this newsletter masthead.

Our Statement of Financial Position at December 31, 2005 is as follows:

Miller C. Feibel Endowment Fund (restricted for educational purposes and stewardship)	\$	162,758
Land Acquisition Fund (restricted for the purchase of land acquisition - these funds are currently committed to acquisitions under negotiation at 12/31/05)	\$	149,748
Other Restricted Funds	\$	5,080
Unrestricted Funds	\$	95,172
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Total Cash and Investments	\$	412,758
Land (valued at donor's appraised value or town assessed value if donor value not available or at purchase price)	\$	3,960,856
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Total Land Trust Assets	\$	4,373,614

Membership Update

As residents of Canton, we are fortunate to live in one of Connecticut's most beautiful settings. Our community is a mosaic of colorful landscapes, historic homesteads and canopy covered ridge lines. Whether it's the soothing solitude of the Cherry Brook, the beautiful Farmington River as it winds through Collinsville or a faded red barn in an open field along Route 179, we all have a favorite site that recalls a time when our world was much less complicated. It is likely what attracts us most to Canton. How many times has your drive to one of life's many obligations turned to reflection and joy by virtue of a momentary glance at the beauty that surrounds us all? It gives us peace.

Founded in 1972, the Canton Land Conservation Trust has worked tirelessly to preserve valuable open space, promote good forest management, protect our precious wildlife and expand recreational opportunities to be enjoyed by all who live and work in our community. Today, the CLCT is responsible for the stewardship of over 1400 acres. We owe a significant debt of gratitude to those who have deeded land, and many others who have donated time, hard work and financial resources to preserve our forests, wetlands, watercourses and hillsides.

Canton's residents have a long standing tradition of community spirit, Yankee ingenuity and intelligent management of our natural resources. As development and growth encroach on our small community, it is more important than ever that we work proactively to execute a thoughtful and measured approach to protect the natural beauty and wildlife in our midst. It is a duty we owe to all who have come before us and a gift to those who will follow.

As Membership Chairperson for the Land Trust, I am pleased to report that we now have over 550 individuals, families and businesses who are members of the Trust. Our members represent ten different states in the Union and come from over 20 separate towns across Connecticut. Our Fall Membership Drive has yielded 25 new members, and we have already had over 150 prior year members respond with a monetary contribution to keep their memberships in active status for the 2006 season.

On behalf of the Canton Land Conservation Trust, I wish to thank both our new members and active members for their continued generosity. Your decision to initiate/continue your membership with us is validation of your commitment to conservation, and a testament to your belief that the protection of our town's scenic beauty, and unique geological, ecological and historic sites, benefits us all.

There are many different options for giving to the Land Trust. One of the more interesting developments we have seen in the past few years is the opportunity for those who contribute annually to The United Way to designate a portion of their UW gift to the Land Trust. This can be a very convenient way for you to cover your annual membership. Should your employer not have a specific UW code established for the Land Trust in your United Way package, they usually can create one in their system very easily.

In addition, many corporations have created Matching Gift Programs to encourage employee giving to local charities and non-profit service organizations. We currently have a number of CLCT members who have supplemented their annual membership contribution through a Matching Gift from their employers. Again, this becomes a very effective way for you to enroll your employer in the valuable work of the Land Trust.

On behalf of the CLCT, I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all those, past and present, who have supported the Land Trust. It is only through your generosity that we have been able to build one of the stronger conservation programs in the state.

For those who have yet to renew your membership for the 2006 season, I am hopeful that whatever prompted you to give in the past will persuade you to do so again in the future. Donations can be sent to Canton Land Conservation Trust, PO Box 41, Canton Center, Ct. 06020-0041.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Scott McAlindin, *Membership Chairperson*

David Leff, among others, spoke at the Bicentennial Annual Meeting held at the Canton Center Congregational Church January 25, 2006. For those of you unable to attend the meeting, the text of his eloquent and pertinent talk is reprinted here for your benefit.

How appropriate at this Bicentennial town meeting that we gather to talk about Canton's landscape and open spaces, the very thing that drew early settlers and led to the town's incorporation 200 years ago. How those hardy folks would marvel at the changes in our town today.

It only takes a few years for change to be apparent. When I first moved to Canton over 20 years ago, Route 44 was a two-lane blacktop. On a foggy night you could envision the legendary headless French paymaster galloping on his horse out of mist that collected on the Canton Golf Course. During snowstorms, I could ski from my home in Collinsville, through the village cemetery and range over hundreds of acres of open woods on Huckleberry Hill.

All of this is merely a memory today.

As difficult as it may be for some of us to accept, including myself, change and development in our landscape is inevitable. But the form of that change, the nature of development, is within our power to influence. And with the pace change accelerating we haven't a moment to lose. We are just in the nick of time.

Canton residents today have a last, great chance to determine the kind of community our children and grandchildren will inherit.

What is at stake is not just the pretty picture in the picture window, but the town's very sense of itself and edge of quality as a place to live.

From the rapids of the Farmington River to the fields of Cherry Brook Valley and the rugged woods of Ratlum Mountain, Canton is blessed with an inspiring landscape. The hills and valleys of this town, it is said, reminded early settlers of the timeless beauty of a Swiss Canton, hence our name.

But we need not lament what we have lost, rather we must recognize and fight for what we have and sometimes take for granted.

The biggest obstacle to open space conservation in this town is not the lack of sufficient land use regulations or financial wherewithal, although those are needed. It's the absence of a deep and resounding community consensus.

Sure, there are good words about open space sprinkled through the town's Plan of Conservation and Development, and dedicated citizens have been wrestling with hilltop and ridgeline protection regulations. The town has negotiated a creative agreement for preservation of Cherry Brook Farm, and the Canton Land Conservation Trust with over 1,300 acres protected is owed the gratitude of every resident. Still, there has never been a community mandate for the future of Canton's landscape.

Let's honor our predecessors, and teach our children, by using the Bicentennial town meeting to kickoff a community-wide discussion that by year's end will result in a shared vision of how we will steward our landscape for the next 200 years. I urge the Selectmen to put a process in motion.

And there are many tools that can assist in forging that needed consensus.

First, a comprehensive resource inventory that clearly and concisely illustrates our natural assets. The Farmington

Valley Biodiversity Project was a great start, but more information is needed, and it must be fully integrated into the land use process and be made easily available to the public.

Second, electronic mapping of all the town's land use and natural resource data layers. That effort should include a build-out analysis which shows the ultimate consequences of our zoning. This is critical to our understanding the choices we need to make.

Third, a rigorous financial analysis of the costs and benefits of open space. After reading theirs, New Hartford voters approved \$1.5 million in open space bonding.

If we are going to use these and other planning tools effectively, we must also look at the world a little differently and embrace some concepts that may be counter-intuitive.

From the start, we must realize that, as essential as purchasing open space may be, we will not be able to just buy our way to land conservation nirvana. We must harness the forces of development to preserve our land and realize that conservation and development are complementary aspects of the inevitable change communities undergo over time.

Density is good. We don't need more diffuse development that in turn leaves a significant share of a property as publicly accessible open space. And we cannot just have regulations that offer clustering. We need a concerted effort that provides encouragement and incentives to engage in such development, like density bonuses and expedited processes.

We need to work with developers, not ostracize them. Let's be clever and figure out how doing the right thing can save builders time and money. There are common interests such as narrower roads, which both reduce impervious surfaces and save cash. Members of the conservation community can help developers who are green gain a marketing edge just as Audobon certifies environmentally responsible golf courses. Let's get development to create opportunities for conservation.

Ultimately, if the consensus can be found, the town must put significant money where its trees, farms and wetlands are. In the long run, study after study shows, it will save tax dollars.

State grants can be of great assistance, as the Land Trust well knows. Distributing these dollars is the best part of my job. But despite a new fee on documents filed on the land records that will generate over \$6 million a year for DEP's grant program, our bond fund budget for open space is down by about a third of what it was a few years ago.

So if you believe that natural landscapes are a great investment in making our town and state a good place to live and raise a family, if you understand that open space improves the quality of life and gives us a competitive edge for business, you can't be quiet.

You need to let your legislators, local officials and the Governor know that funding for open space is important to you.

Be vigilant at budget time, talk it up to neighbors and friends, at the supermarket and on the street. By all means, take your kids and grandkids for a walk in the woods and get them excited about the outdoors, because securing the land we need will take time, and in 10, 15, and 20 years they will be among the voters whose clamor must be heard. What is at stake is more than a patch of forest or a few acres of wetlands. It is the very identity of this community.

The landscape of the future depends on us today. Let's seize our opportunities while we have them so that those who come after us can look back in admiration at the legacy this generation leaves for all generations.

SPRING/SUMMER 2006 CALENDAR

April

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| 18 | 6:30 pm | Members' Dinner and Talk by Dr. Robert Thorson
La Trattoria |
| 29 | 9:00 am | Trail Construction -
Volunteers meet at the Canton Center General Store |

May

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| 13 | 9:00 am | Christmas Tree Planting |
| 20 | 10:00 am | Bicentennial Parade-Land Trust float |
| 21 | 1:30 pm | Tom Noonan reptile and amphibian talk
Smith Tree Farm |

June

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| 4 | 4:00 pm | Annual Business Meeting-Nature Center
Hike to Arnold Property and Potluck Supper |
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