

Canton Land Conservation Trust, Inc. NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 1991

Newest Acquisition

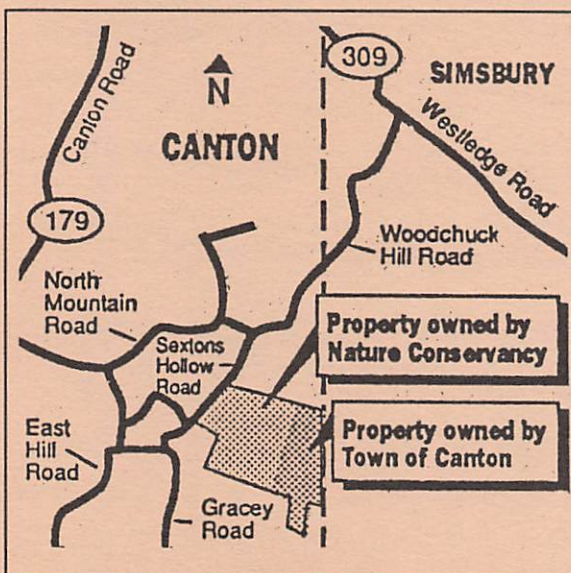
In 1988, the Town of Canton received a 30 acre parcel of land along the east flank of Onion Mountain, adjacent to the Simsbury town line. The land was given to the Town by a local developer, Peter Stich, who had developed homes on the Simsbury side of the town line. The Canton section of the parcel was largely undevelopable and, rather than pay taxes on this piece, Mr. Stich decided to cede the property to the Town.

The parcel is bordered, on the west side, by the 100 acre Onion Mountain Preserve, owned by The Nature Conservancy. The Nature Conservancy acquired the ridge top of Onion Mountain in 1982. This traprock ridge is considered a critical habitat and is home to several rare plant species. The Conservancy proposed that the Town of Canton sell them the Stich parcel as a buffer for their preserve. The Board of Selectmen was reluctant to pursue a sale of town land to an outside group for a minimal sum of the back taxes owed and The Conservancy later withdrew the offer.

After a site walk of the property convinced Town leaders that the parcel was, indeed, not suitable for purposes other than passive recreation, it was recommended that the Town donate the property to the Canton Land Conservation Trust

so that it could be enjoyed by all residents of Canton. After a lengthy procedure involving additional site walks and an appraisal, the donation was completed at a Town Meeting held November 13th, when residents voted unanimously to donate the property to the

continued on page 2



MEMBERSHIP

The Directors of the Land Trust are very excited about the future of our organization. Renovation of the house and barn at the Tree Farm are well underway, as is expansion of the growing field. Plans are being generated for a system of trails throughout our property for use by the public. The Directors are putting substantial thought and energy into the growth of the CLCT as well as into the management of the properties we presently own. Please continue your participation in this effort or join us anew by returning the enclosed membership envelope.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

The Directors of the Land Trust are very appreciative of the efforts of all those who give their time to the organization. Of particular note is the assistance given us by Ruth Ann Baird of Burlington who voluntarily conducted the deed search enabling us to acquire the Canton Ski Hill property. Thanks also go to John Pech and Doug Bok who have worked many hours in the fields at the Tree Farm.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Sara Campbell, Treasurer
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Skip Alford
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Jay Kaplan
Peter Lamb
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Gary Tomolonius
Steven Bristol
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Canton Ski Club Passes Property to Land Trust

In June, 1991, the Canton Ski Club passed its property, known locally as the Canton Ski Hill, to the Land Trust. The property is 22.5 acres located on the eastern slope of Sweetheart Mountain at the rear of Dunn Avenue in Collinsville, and extends along the Canton/Burlington border.

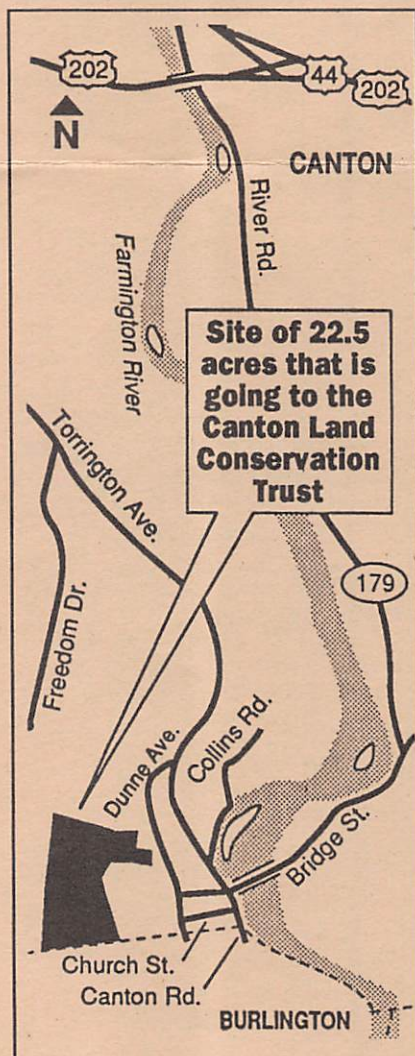
Run for many years by the Canton Ski Club as a downhill ski slope, the ski area offered skiing in Collinsville via rope tows. The entire ski area was run by volunteers who staffed the tows, maintained the trails, and provided safety ski patrols.

The ski hill closed about 15 years ago, and the land has been vacant since then but remained in the hands of the Ski Club's Board of Directors. After discussions with the Land Trust, the owners of the Ski Club chose to deed the land to the Land Trust for payment of back taxes and legal fees.

The Land Trust is excited at the addition of the parcel. This is the first parcel of land held by the Trust in the Collinsville area, as well as being the first parcel for

which the Trust has ever paid money (all other lands held by the Land Trust have been donated by their former owners). The Land Trust would like to extend a special thank-you to the Ski Club for their stewardship over the parcel for so many years and their generosity in giving the parcel to the residents of Canton for recreational use in perpetuity.

The parcel itself is very beautiful—steep and heavily wooded, it offers spectacular views over the village of Collinsville and the Farmington River. Some of the old ski slopes will be maintained as hiking trails, and the Land Trust has plans to clear and blaze additional trails for hiking and cross-country skiing. Now that the leaves have fallen, work parties are planned for this fall, winter, and early spring. If you would like to volunteer to help develop trails on the property, please call Sarah Leff at 693-4875.



Acquisition

continued from page one



Canton Land Conservation Trust.

The acquisition of the Stich property means that an entire section of Onion Mountain from West Mountain Road in Simsbury to Sexton Hollow Road in Canton is now protected. The Stich property, in particular, is an exciting acquisition, reminiscent of areas to our north. The property is difficult to reach and is home to such species as the Northern Goshawk, a large, secretive woodland hawk, the porcupine and other uncommon species. There are several steep ridges along Onion Mountain's east flank and the property also includes wetland areas, including the headwaters of what eventually becomes Nod Brook.

Those wishing additional information on this property may contact Jay Kaplan at 693-0263.

Canton Land Conservation Trust, Inc.

Questionnaire

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

1. Would you be available to volunteer your time for various Trust work parties? YES ___ NO ___

2. If you responded "yes" to the above, please check the appropriate spaces below:

For which of the following activities would you volunteer your time?

_____ Annual tree planting in May

_____ Christmas tree pruning

_____ Weeding

_____ Mowing

_____ Land clearing (cutting trees, removing brush)

_____ Trail blazing

_____ Carpentry and other building activities requiring construction skills

_____ Annual Christmas tree sale

_____ Newsletter

_____ Other (please specify) _____

Please return this questionnaire in the enclosed envelope.

We urgently need volunteers.

Please consider it. Thanks.

Membership 1991

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Hank, Barb & Nicole Bennett
Marshal & Karen Berger
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Gerald & Dianne Biondi
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Robert & Sharon Brainard
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Kate & Jay Kaplan
Walter Kendra
Pat & Ed Komer
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Peter & Hilda Lamb
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Karen & Christopher Lisischeff
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Robert & Nancie McCard
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Ray & Dru McNeil
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Darlington
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Richard & Virginia West
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Howard & Susan Winterson
Robert Witkewicz
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Mildred Bush
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Elizabeth Evans
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Fred & Mary Fletcher
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Mr. & Mrs. A. Yakemore

The Smith Christmas Tree Farm

Now that we are into our second decade of operating the Christmas Tree Farm on the Smith parcel in North Canton, we thought that it would be appropriate to relate a little history of this land to our members and friends.

The Smith parcel consists of about 50 acres on both sides of Doyle Road in Canton and roughly 30 acres north of Doyle Road in Barkhamsted. Land records document the history of a portion of this land (in Canton) back to January, 1866. Sherman and Clarissa Messenger acquired the land at that time. It appears that the land was used for both agricultural and dairy farming. The construction dates for the barn and farmhouse are uncertain, but the deed of 1866 indicates the presence of buildings, personal property, and stock. Canton assessment records date the farmhouse at 1870.

Our benefactors, Wilson and Hannah Smith, purchased the land from the Anderson estate in 1957, and spent their summers on the farm. Dr. Smith was an avid believer in forest management, and over the years planted a variety of trees, mostly evergreens, in an effort to create a diverse softwood forest. He also planted a number of Chinese chestnut trees, black walnut, and other hardwood varieties. At least six chestnut trees continue to grow and to produce rich harvests of nuts which benefit local wildlife. The black walnuts seem to have not survived over the years.

Somewhere along the way, Dr. Smith got sidetracked and began a Christmas tree business on roughly 4 acres scattered throughout the 50 acres on either side of Doyle Road. It was obvious that these trees were nurtured with loving care, for they

were indeed beautiful trees.

In December, 1975, the Smiths deeded most of the 80 acres to the Canton Land Conservation Trust. They retained ownership of the buildings and the adjacent two acres. Upon Dr. Smith's death in 1980, Mrs. Smith approached the CLCT and asked if we would like to assume the management of the Christmas tree operation. Even though no one on the Board of Directors knew anything of Christmas tree cultivation, it was felt that the CLCT should undertake this endeavor, to keep Dr. Smith's legacy alive and to gain experience in the growing of Christmas trees. It also became a means of generating much needed revenue for our meager treasury.

The tree farm has proven to be a boon for the Land Trust, and all involved have learned a great deal in the course of growing the trees. This is a labor intensive project where volunteers are needed and welcomed with open arms, along with shears, trimmers, and mowers.

We continue to plant a variety of spruces and firs, and experiment to determine which varieties grow the best. Our philosophy has been one of passive management with the exception of pruning and mowing. We are adverse to the use of pesticides, except under the most severe conditions, and chemical fertilizers are rarely used.

In December of 1989 Hannah Smith generously donated the buildings and surrounding two acres to the CLCT. It became our commitment to preserve the buildings, and in the spring of 1991 repairs and improvements were made to the barn which resulted in a sound structure and a stone



continued on page 4

ramp up to the front doors. Interior work still needs to be done, including new flooring in parts of the second level. The farmhouse is in need of extensive renovation, and as this newsletter goes to press, repairs are underway.

Improvements are also being made on the land. About an acre of land has been cleared to the east of the barn, where at least 300 seedlings will be planted next spring. Much labor was needed to clear this land, and special thanks are in order for those who donated their time and muscle to this project, especially John Pech, a one man working party with boundless energy, and to board member Steve Bristol, whose donation of time and equipment has made this work a lot easier for those of us involved.

We are hopeful that within five years all of our improvements to the buildings and to the growing areas will be completed. In order to accomplish our goals on schedule we urgently need volun-

teers. Every pair of hands helps, and you can feel proud in knowing that your efforts will have helped to make this parcel truly the centerpiece of the Canton Land Conservation Trust. Please let us know that you are able to volunteer your time by calling Peter Lamb at 693-4891.

And remember, the annual tree sale is Saturday, December 14, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. during which you may select any tree in the growing areas for just \$25.00 Help will be available for those who desire it, and there will also be bundles of greens available at no charge. The availability of trees becomes greater every year, but please come early to ensure the best selection. Please plan on joining us on this festive occasion.

Please renew your membership or join the Canton Land Conservation Trust. We are a public, town-wide organization and we need your *help!*

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