



Canton Land Trust Conservation Trust, Inc.

MEMBER NEWSLETTER SPRING 1997

A SPECIAL GIFT FROM A SPECIAL PERSON

As recently reported in the local press, your Land Trust has received a most important addition. This is a bequest by Mary B. Conklin of her home and property of some 107 acres. While we regret not being the first to "break the news" to members through the Newsletter, our enthusiasm is, of course, undiminished; indeed, it grows as we learn more about the property.

Mary Conklin lived in Canton from 1938 until last summer when she died at the age of eighty-nine. Mary was a graduate of Vassar College and an active and generous member of our community. During World War II she worked for the Red Cross as a driving force in the Canton Chapter.

While articulate and a person who "spoke her mind," Mary also quietly performed kindnesses to many individuals in an inconspicuous manner. She never sought acknowledgment for these deeds. An avid reader, she donated many books to the Cherry Brook Library, and friends were remembered with humorous and unusual cards, as well as gifts of plants from her active greenhouse. She had frequent luncheons for her

friends and played bridge with many on a regular basis.

Her love of animals was all-encompassing, from her dogs to all wild creatures. Sacks of bird seed were consumed monthly by the wide variety of visitors to her extensive network of feeders. Racoons were fed everything from commercial feed to marshmallows, jam sandwiches, and Oreos--this, of course, before the incursion of rabies.

Her property is most interesting, containing a wide variety of trees: red oaks, white pines, hemlocks, birches, and beeches to name a few; and an excellent variety of habitats: forests, fields, wetlands, and ledges. To ensure that the property will be a lasting and useful tribute to Mary, your Land Trust is in the process of interviewing foresters to determine a plan of management. It is our intent to maintain the land so that plants and animals may thrive, and trails be restored for passive recreation.

Your Land Trust and the Town of Canton are truly fortunate to have been left this beautiful property by a very special person, Mary Conklin.

RAY SMITH, A GOOD FRIEND, A FINE MAN

On January 18, 1997, Ramon T. Smith, immediate past president of the Canton Land Trust, died. During his tenure as president, Ray led the organization in a most amiable - and highly effective - manner. Problems were met calmly, with a smile, and effectively handled. Triumphs were greeted modestly with a smile, and with praise for everyone else. His love of the outdoors and his dedication to the Land Trust's goal of the preservation of natural settings for the enjoyment of the public were contagious. His leadership was instrumental in making the Canton Land Trust one of the largest and most active trusts in the state.

Shortly before his death, Ray learned that his neighbor and friend, Mary Conklin, had bequeathed her home and property to the Land Trust. This gift gave him great joy because Ray had enjoyed Mary's friendship and with her, their adjoining properties. It is fitting that the Land Trust plans to restore a trail through the property which was originally created by Mary. This will be named the "The Ray Smith Trail" and will be a lasting reminder of Ray, his love of the land, and his dedication to the

Land Trust. Ray was a good friend and a fine man.

The following, submitted by Charlotte Craig, says volumes about Ray, his approach to life, and, if one may be permitted the phrase, his "management style."

"About a year ago, Ray suggested to me that we have a gathering to note the 25th anniversary of the beginning of land giving to the Land Trust. We agreed to work on this together, setting up a first luncheon meeting for the following week. During that luncheon in Simsbury, we forgot to talk about the reunion and consequently set another date. As everyone knows, Ray was famous for his luncheon gatherings, and this program went on for ten consecutive occasions, some of which were business and others about matters of the larger and smaller worlds.

The anniversary was indeed held in Canton Center according to plan, but by then Ray was too uncomfortable and too ill to join us. But what a break for me to have had those ten memorable lunches."

Land Trust Hand Book

The Directors of the Canton Land Conservation Trust are again promoting their handbook, published in 1996. Included in the handbook are descriptions of many of the Land Trust holdings and hiking trails as well as a history of the Land Trust and an overview of Canton's landscape.

If you, as a current member of the CLCT would like a copy of the handbook, and have not already received one, please fill in the tear off sheet and send it to P.O. Box 10, Canton, CT 06020.

Please send a CLCT Handbook to:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

Additional handbooks are available at \$2 each.

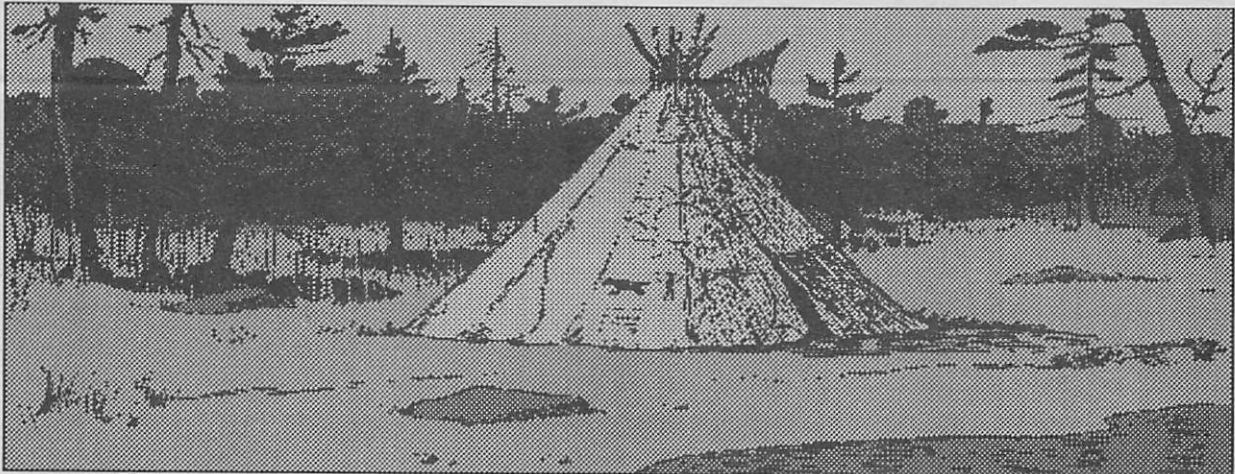
HISTORY OF INDIAN HILL

BY CYNTHIA GRIGGS

The earliest known habitation site on Indian Hill is on a glacial terrace on the southwest end of the hill, near a spring which still flows abundantly. Steatite or soapstone bowls, pipes and other vessels are among artifacts found at the site, some dating to between 4000 and 1500 BC. Steatite quarries were nearby in outcroppings at Satan's Kingdom and Slashers' Ledges, formations contiguous with the Breezy Hill and Ratlum Mountain uplands of which Indian Hill is a

border lands of the so-called Western Wilderness, known as Indian hunting grounds and not safe for colonial settlement. It wasn't until the late 1730's and early 1740's that colonists felt no longer threatened by Indian attacks.

Here on the West Mountain, now Indian Hill, about half a mile southeasterly from Satan's Kingdom, on the west side of the present Route 44, was an Indian village of 18 to 20 wigwams. The



part. These ancient people were always on the move, setting up seasonal camps for hunting, fishing, plant gathering, and bowl and tool manufacturing.

When English settlers first moved into the Farmington Valley towns, the western hills were

meadows below the village, all the way to Satan's Kingdom Gorge, were planted with corn and other crops. The glacial terraces above the river were planted with tobacco, a sacred crop. These Indians were related to the Tunxis

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(History of Indian Hill Continued)

and had moved over from the great bend of the river at Farmington.

The chief of the Indian Hill Indians, Cornelius, was friendly with the Mills family who lived in Canton Center at that time. He held claim to land on both sides of the river, including the present Indian Hill area, and was a neighbor and contemporary of the best known Canton Indian, Cherry, for whom Cherry Brook is named.

At the time of Cornelius, Indian Hill was a part of New Hartford. In 1762, a new boundary was surveyed called the Kimberly Line, adding a mile-wide tier of land on the east side of New Hartford to Simsbury. In 1806, Indian Hill became part of the newly incorporated town of Canton.

During the 1700's, English colonial life replaced Indian culture on Indian Hill. Indians blended into colonial families or left the area. Increased hunting and cutting of forests caused populations of deer, fox, bear, and other wildlife to decline. Moose and wolves became extinct in the area. Fences were built to contain domestic animals. The hills were stripped of trees for farming, firewood, saw mills, buildings, and a thriving charcoal industry.

In 1781, William Merrell built the existing brick and wood house where the Conklin and Inglis families later lived. The Merrell family occupied this house for about 100 years, before selling it to the town in the late 1800's, when it became the town poor farm. The downtrodden and destitute were supported here while they worked on the farm raising tobacco, turnips, cabbages, hay, straw, apples, and livestock.

A memorable event occurred on Indian Hill in 1911, and it is well documented in photographs. The top of the hill was blasted away with steam drills and explosives, removing the steep grade that hampered travelers on Albany Turnpike. The road bed was graded by hand to allow a smoother and safer passage.

In 1938, John and Mary Burnham Hart of West Hartford bought the house and about 100 acres, including the present Mary Conklin Land Trust property. They also bought the Walnut Hill Farm, located between West Mountain Road and Indian Hill Road.



Indian Hill Road has been known by a number of names. For a while it was known as Mary Hart Road, probably named for Mary Burnham Hart. That name still appears on the USGS topographic map for the area. Mary Hart later married Allan Conklin and donated the land to the Canton Land Trust in 1996. Walnut Hill Road was a name used when the Walnut Hill Farm dominated the lands of the hill, and walnut trees were plentiful. That name appears on survey maps from the 1950's. The present name of Indian Hill credits those who lived on these lands the earliest and the longest.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR TRAIL AND TREE FARM MAINTENANCE

TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Members and volunteers are invited to join forces on two days in May to help maintain the trails. No skill is required for jobs such as light brushing using clippers and loppers, and removal of tree limbs. At two locations skilled tree removal with chainsaws will open up vistas. A "trail boss" will be assigned to each location and coordinate the workers. All work days will begin at the Canton Center Church where volunteers and bosses will receive assignments. Heavy rain or unusual weather will cancel the work days. If in doubt, call Shirley Sutton up to ½ hour before the meeting time at 693-4067. Dates scheduled are:

Saturday, May 3 – 8:45 a.m. light trail work
Sunday, May 11 –12:45 p.m. light trail work

(Assignments and directions will be left at the church for late arrivals.)

Choose one or all days to join us. These work days are a great way to meet other members and volunteers, learn more about the trails, and have an outing with your family. To volunteer to be a trail boss for the day or more information, call Shirley at the number above. Please bring your own tools and gloves.

SMITH TREE FARM WORK PARTIES

SATURDAY, MAY 3 – 9:00 a.m. SMITH FARM
SATURDAY, MAY 17– 9:00 a.m. SMITH FARM

Meet at Smith Farm on Doyle Road. In the event of inclement weather rain dates are Sunday, May 4 and Sunday, May 18.

On May 4 workers are needed for clearing fallen trees, limbs, and branches from fields and for cutting trees to open planting areas. Tools to bring: chain saws, wheelbarrows or sturdy garden carts for hauling wood and branches, and rakes for cleanup.

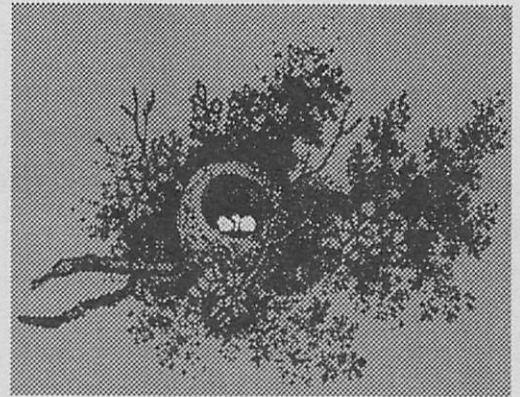
On May 17 workers are needed for completing tree removal and for transplanting trees from nursery areas to permanent growing areas. The farm has shovels for transplanting, but additional digging tools might be useful.

Call John Pech, 693-2880, or Ted Cowles, 693-6340, for additional information.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

- May 3 8:45 a.m. Light trail work. *
- May 3 9:00 a.m. Smith Farm.
- May 11 12:45 p.m. Light trail work. *
- May 17 9:00 a.m. Smith Farm.

*Meet at Canton Congregational Church parking lot.
Bring clippers and gloves.



- June 8 4:00 p.m. Hikes, cookout, and Annual Meeting--Mary Conklin Property.



P.O. Box 41
Canton Center, CT 06020

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