



CANTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST, INC.

**Fall 2006
Newsletter**

A message from the President . . .

The last eight months have been very busy ones for the Land Trust. We had our first members' dinner, built a float for Canton's Bicentennial Parade, were awarded a State Open Space Grant to help with the purchase of the Sweeton Pasture Lot on Bunker Hill Road, received forty plus acres on the east slope of Sweetheart Mountain from Paul Meehan and his Associates as a result of a judicial ruling, and in September we purchased the seventy four acres of the Uplands Preserve. This was sold to us at a public auction, held over three days on the internet! We had been endeavoring to obtain this property for the last seven years. In fact, we had reached an agreement to purchase it at a bargain price and had been awarded a State Open Space Grant to assist with the purchase. However, before the transaction could be completed, the property was seized by the US Marshals to pay debts incurred by the former owner. Hence, the need to purchase at auction.

As a result of all this we have added more than one hundred sixty acres to our holdings. This is not only exhilarating but also daunting when you realize the challenges ahead. For instance, with regards to the Uplands purchase, despite the generosity of many: the Town of Canton, members of the Land Trust, residents who live near or adjacent to the property, and the State, who will honor the Open Space Grant of several years ago, we still have incurred debt in connection with the purchase of the Uplands Preserve. This must be retired as expeditiously as possible. In addition, funds are necessary for maintenance issues at Mary Conklin, a new parking lot on West Road for the Goedecke Property and the Humphrey Easement, and at the portion of Sweetheart Mountain that was the former Ski Hill. All the new properties must have their boundaries marked as well as new trails flagged and constructed. And there is always the next opportunity around the corner.

I know that we can successfully handle these challenges with the support and help of our members. To be succinct, we need your financial support as well as help with our various properties. Please be as generous as possible. And your volunteer help will also be most welcome. Remember that you are not only helping yourself but also all the people of Canton by being involved with obtaining and maintaining open space - open space that is vital to maintain the character of the Canton that we all love.

May I thank you in advance for your help and support.

Betty Stanley
President

HISTORY OF THE CANTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

The Canton Land Conservation Trust is a non-profit conservation organization, which was chartered in 1972 by members of the Canton Conservation Commission to preserve the natural resources of the Town of Canton.

Starting with a \$1500 grant from the Ford Foundation, the Land Trust's earliest activities were designed to inform Canton residents of the Land Trust's mission, to build support and membership, and to solicit donations of money and/or land. These activities included production of a sound-synchronized slide show, a logo contest conducted with cooperation of the Canton Public Schools, and a Newsletter.

The Land Trust's first gift of land came to us through the generosity of Charlotte Craig. The Craig property is a lovely one-acre meadow located at the corner of Cherry Brook and East Mountain roads in Canton Center. Other early gifts included the Knode and Potter properties in Canton Center, which help preserve the aesthetic beauty of the Cherry Brook Valley. In the mid 1970s the Land Trust received the first of its large parcels. The Smith and Capen properties provide sanctuary for wildlife as well as places to hike and to observe and enjoy nature. Eunice Bouchard gave land adjacent to the Capen property in 1980 along with property further down the road now used as pasture for cows. In 1985 the Land Trust received a gift of 108 acres on Ratlum Mountain from Thomas M. Perry. Over the next decade, several additional gifts from the Thomas M. Perry Charitable Trust provided protection for almost 500 acres of mature and secondary forest. These generous gifts form a sanctuary in the Breezy Hill/Ratlum Mountain area, where much of Canton's songbird population and other wildlife species are able to raise their young in relative safety from species such as raccoons, crows, and house cats that flourish as forests become fragmented.

In 1996 the Land Trust received the Mary Conklin property, a beautiful 107-acre tract of woodland and meadow on Indian Hill Road. This property, which includes the building that was the home of Mary Conklin, has been enrolled in the Connecticut Forest Stewardship Incentive Program, and is being managed according to a plan based on a detailed inventory of the forest. The Conklin property is also home of the Ramon Smith Trail, created in honor and memory of former CLCT president, Ray Smith. The Land Trust has published a walk book describing this trail.

In recent years, we have received gifts of land from Arthur Sweeton, Joan Kenney, Fred Swan, Jane Goedecke, Noel Baker, Florence Bredahl, Walter Korder, the Maglaty Family, and Towpath Associates. In addition to these properties, the Land Trust has obtained easements on properties once owned by Sun, Wind and Woodland, and Jean and Hale Anderson, as well as land owned by the Humphrey family along Cherry Brook.

The Land Trust has been assisted by the State of Connecticut via State Open Space Grants. We received our first open space grant for the Sun, Wind and Woodland parcel. We have since purchased the Arnold property and the Sweeton Pasture Lot with the aid of State Open Space Grants. Our most recent purchase, the Uplands Preserve, is also being funded in part by a State Open Space Grant.

Land Trust volunteers, with the help of local Eagle Scouts, began extensive development of hiking trails in the early 1990s, to make Land Trust properties more accessible to Canton residents. The Charlotte Craig Trail, blazed on the Smith Farm in 1982, was the Land Trust's first named trail. The Sweetheart Mountain Preserve trails were dedicated in 1992, and the following year the Ted Wright trail was opened, connecting the Ratlum Mountain preserve

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History of the Canton Land Conservation Trust (continued)

with the Smith Tree Farm. The Land Trust also established the well-received Trailblazer program for children aged five to eleven to encourage them to experience the wonder of their natural surroundings. The Land Trust has published a loose-leaf trail guide for those interested in exploring our walking trails.

Through the years, the Land Trust has enjoyed the support of Canton's town government. The Board of Selectmen, the Board of Finance, the Town Planner's Office, and the Conservation, Inland Wetlands, Planning and Zoning committees have all been steadfast supporters of the CLCT and its goals. The commitment of these bodies has been and continues to be crucial to the Land Trust's success.

Today, the Canton Land Conservation Trust owns approximately 1,600 acres of undeveloped property and conservation easements. These holdings make it one of the largest land trusts in Connecticut in terms of property held. Stewardship of these properties is a great responsibility, which the Board of Directors takes very seriously. In 1998 The Board voted to conduct its affairs in compliance with the *Standards and Practices for Land Trusts* manual published by the Land Trust Alliance, a national organization in support of local land trusts, to assure land donors and the people of Canton that the CLCT is and will continue to be a carefully managed, healthy organization, capable of carrying out its important mission.

We are pleased with our achievements over the past 3 decades, and hope that our ongoing efforts will benefit Canton and our neighboring communities for generations to come.

REDESIGNED WEBSITE

The CLCT website (www.cantonlandtrust.org) has a whole new look! Locating our lands and trails is now easier than ever. Just click on the shaded parcels or sectors on interactive town maps and you will be presented with detailed information, often accompanied by trails maps and pictures. Recent and upcoming events are highlighted on the very first page. The modernized menu system leads visitors clearly and directly to the information they seek--no more scrolling through long pages to find the answers. The site also features an organized gallery of photos of our properties, volunteers and activities.

The site was redesigned for us by Bill Duncan, a recent addition to our Board of Directors, who has spent the past year collecting and organizing files about our properties. "It seemed to me that too few people knew where our 1600-plus acres of woodlands and meadows are," Bill says. "I wanted to make the Land Trust more visible and open to everyone, and to make it really easy for folks in Canton and the surrounding towns to find and enjoy our trails and properties. I'm delighted to have the chance to create a website that may do this."

We expect our website to be updated and supplemented often as we acquire more properties (Bill is working on adding the properties we acquired this year) and undertake more and new activities. We encourage our members and friends to visit the website frequently.

UPLANDS PRESERVE

The Canton Land Conservation Trust was the successful bidder when a 74 acre parcel in Canton was sold at public auction in August. The Land Trust refers to this property as the Uplands Preserve. Access to the property is possible from Uplands Drive, from Woodchuck Hill Road and from Westwoods Road.

In addition to the Land Trust, many different constituencies have come together in partnership to help fund the purchase. In addition to the Land Trust itself, significant financial contributions to this effort have been made by the Town of Canton, the State of Connecticut (through its Open Space Acquisition grant program), Canton residents who live adjacent to or near the property, and the individual members of the Board of Directors of the Land Trust.

Because of the cost of the transaction and because the terms of the auction require closing within 30 days, the Land Trust has had to borrow money in order to complete the transaction. It is imperative that the Land Trust now raise the money needed to retire the debt associated with this transaction.

The Uplands Preserve is located in the northeastern portion of Canton adjacent to the Simsbury Town line. Now one of the most densely populated portions of Canton, this is the last and largest open space parcel remaining in this part of Town. The property borders a small, existing Land Trust parcel on Woodchuck Hill Road, as well as Town of Canton open space acquired as part of the High Valley Subdivision. The abandoned "Cook Highway," a former Town road runs through the property, and the adjacent stone walls indicate that the area was used during colonial times. Stone walls and stone piles within the parcel are evidence of prior agricultural use.

Although not immediately adjacent to larger open space parcels to the south (Onion Mountain) and the north (McLean Game Refuge), its close proximity to these areas allow this property to serve as a wildlife corridor for numerous species including many migratory songbirds, as well as large mammals including fisher and bobcat.

The Uplands Preserve is also important to the people of Canton because of its recreational value for hiking, cross-country skiing and nature photography and similar passive recreational pursuits. Neighbors have informally used this property for these recreational purposes for many years, and the Land Trust intends to make public access available for all area residents. After the acquisition is complete, the Land Trust will establish a marked trailhead or trailheads permitting access.



MEMBERSHIP

Canton's residents have a long standing tradition of 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 that surrounds us all. It is an obligation to those who have come before us and a gift to all who follow.

During the past year, the *Canton Land Conservation Trust* has been successful in securing several significant tracts of land, expanding our extensive system of trails and preserving sanctuaries - not only for our wildlife, but for our own separate peace.

The past June, we closed on the Sweeton Pasture Lot on Bunker Hill Road. The acquisition of this 40+ acre property was enabled by the generosity of the Sweetons, an Open Space Grant from the state of CT, and money from our Land Acquisition Fund. This parcel represents a wonderful location for the development of another system of trails with dramatic views into the Cherry Brook Valley.

Also in June, the *CLCT* was deeded an additional 40 acre tract of land as part of an agreement reached between the Town of Canton and Paul Meehan Associates. This beautiful parcel is on the eastern slope of Sweetheart Mountain and is adjacent to 23 acres of the former Canton Ski Club. This acquisition has now preserved the scenic hillside above Collinsville as open space to remain forever as a special backdrop to the village.

In August, the *Land Trust* was successful in securing the Uplands Property, a 74 acre tract of land in an area between Uplands Drive, Westwood Drive and Woodchuck Hill Road. This property abuts our Gladstone property on Woodchuck Hill and is also contiguous to 16 acres of town property. The property has the potential for an excellent trail system, provides outstanding views of Onion Mt. and the Simsbury hills and preserves yet another hill-top setting in Canton.

While we are very proud of the fact that these acquisitions have brought the number of acres under stewardship by the *CLCT* to approximately 1600, we know all too well that the preservation of these properties would never have been possible without the incredible generosity of Canton landowners, and financial support from the State and the town of Canton and, of course, donations of both time and money from our Land Trust members. Quite frankly, the conservation of open space, protection of our precious wildlife and expansion of recreational opportunities can only be accomplished when we all work together as one.

Speaking of our members, the *CLCT* was successful in increasing the number of memberships in *The Trust* by almost 10% during the past year. We are very fortunate to now have 580 official memberships in the *CLCT*. These include *Honorary* memberships, *Lifetime* memberships, *Individual & Family* memberships, *Business* memberships as well as other *Non-Profit* organizations. These memberships represent nearly one thousand individuals from almost every county in CT and 10 other states in the Union who are proud to be part of an organization that is making a difference in our community.

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Membership Update (continued)

As is the case with most non-profit organizations, the *CLCT* is highly dependent on the financial support we receive from annual membership dues to execute on our mission. As we begin our *2007 Membership Campaign*, we are committed to bringing our message of land preservation to a broader base within our community with the goal of attracting more individual, family and business members into our ranks. We fully recognize that without both continued growth in membership and consistent annual giving from our current members, the ability to preserve and protect the beautiful and sensitive ecosystem of Canton may be compromised or lost forever to future development.

The *Canton Land Conservation Trust* would like to extend its heartfelt appreciation to all of our current members for their generosity during the past year. We are confident that the many benefits of *The Trust* that encouraged you to donate in years past will prompt you to renew your membership for 2007.

To all others in our community, we invite you to become members of *CLCT* for the *2007 Membership Year*. Your membership and financial support would represent a commitment to the future of Canton and enable *The CLCT* to continue its mission to protect the natural resources of one of Connecticut's most beautiful settings.

Membership in the *CLCT* brings with it many unanticipated benefits, one of which is a sense of personal discovery about yourself and your community. An investment in *The Trust* tends to open up a world that is far more special than you might ever have imagined.

With your trusty trail map in hand, you are likely to make good on that intention to see just what the view is like from atop Sweetheart Mountain. Or you may finally venture out to experience the sheer beauty of an ice sculptured mountain stream when you join us for our annual mid-winter moonlight hike through one of the many spectacular properties now under stewardship by the *CLCT*.

Becoming a member of the *Land Trust* is very easy, affordable and, of course, tax deductible. Membership details can be found on the enclosed envelope.

For those of you who are able to participate at higher levels of giving, we established several distinctive "giving" designations in 2005 for donations that go beyond our annual membership dues in any one calendar year.

We would also like to take a moment to recognize both our *Honorary* members and our *Lifetime* members. Our *Honorary* members are a very special (and ever-expanding) group of Canton landowners who have donated land to *The Trust* since its inception in 1971. Our *Lifetime* members represent over 100 individuals and families who made very significant cash donations to the *CLCT* prior to the creation of our new "expanded giving" designations in 2005.

However you choose to give, there is satisfaction in knowing that your donation is not only a special gift to all future generations, but a gift to your neighbors, your family and yourself. Help us continue to preserve and protect the many scenic paths to serenity and solitude in our beautiful community... join the *CLCT* today.

GIVING TO THE TRUST HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER.

Did you know that membership in the CLCT can be accomplished through a gift to the **United Way**? Talk to your employer about how you can designate all or part of your 2007 United Way contribution to The Canton Land Conservation Trust. The CLCT is among many not-for-profit organizations that have a special code in the United Way system.

In addition, there are many employers in the area who have **Matching Gift Programs** where every dollar donated by an employee to The Trust can be matched by an additional gift from your employer. We encourage you to check to see if such a program exists in your workplace.

WORK PARTIES

The Land Trust is always looking for volunteers who can assist with work parties to improve our property holdings in Canton. Work parties are held on the last Saturday of every month from November 25, 2006 through May 25, 2007. Sessions run from 9:00am-12:00pm. You can join us for the entire session or just an hour or two - there is plenty of work to be done!

We meet at the Canton Center Congregational Church at 9:00 and return by 12:00. The work need not be very strenuous. We will be clearing brush and trails, so bring any equipment you think might be helpful, such as brush cutters, bow saws, clippers, etc. Children are invited and encouraged to attend as long as they are prepared to help. Contact either Baldwin Terry (693-8248) or Drew Stone (693-4350) to sign up, or if you have any questions. We look forward to seeing you at the first session on November 25.

CALLING ALL KIDS!

Do your children like to explore the great outdoors? Are they interested in nature? Do they like to hike? If so, then our Trailblazers group may be just the thing! Trailblazers is the youth offshoot of our Land Trust organization and is geared to children from kindergarten through sixth grade. Parents must accompany children to all events. Hikes and other events are scheduled approximately once a month from October through March/April. Each month a particular Land Trust property is highlighted and a theme is created. Membership is \$5.00 per child and can be sent to Mary Ellen Mullins/Canton Land Trust, 42 Case Street, Canton, CT 06019. Please include child's name, age, parent/guardian name, address, email and phone.



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FALL 2006 / WINTER 2007 CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

25 9:00-12:00 Work Party
Meet at Canton Center Congregational Church parking lot

DECEMBER

9 9:00-2:00 Christmas Tree Sale - Smith Tree Farm
30 9:00-12:00 Work Party

JANUARY

27 9:00-12:00 Work Party

FEBRUARY

24 9:00-12:00 Work Party

Look for other activities on our website: www.cantonlandtrust.org