



est. 1976
Wallingford Land Trust, Inc.
 Box 611 Wallingford, Conn., 06492

July 2008

Newsletter

Winstanley Enterprises Donates 10 Acre Wooded Tract

We are pleased to announce that the Wallingford Land Trust has received a donation of ten wooded acres from Winstanley Enterprises, LLC. The property is located off Thorpe Avenue. The Land Trust held a work party in June to pick up trash from the property.

This is a win-win with Winstanley signature event. It's a win for the Wallingford Land Trust and local citizens as it is an excellent addition to open space. It's a win for

Winstanley Enterprises which, while it could have sold the tract for a sizeable sum for development, will reap substantial federal and local tax savings. And, Winstanley Enterprises will receive well-deserved recognition as an outstanding corporate citizen by donating this beautiful wooded tract and protecting it from encroaching development. See the link below for a map to the property location.

<http://tinyurl.com/6ydkk8>

The mission of the Wallingford Land Trust is to preserve areas of natural habitat and scenic beauty in Wallingford; maintain them as open space; and provide opportunities for passive recreation for use by the public.



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Lisa Toman Scholarship Awarded to Lyman Hall H. S. Graduate



The Wallingford Land Trust awarded the Lisa Toman Scholarship for Environmental Studies to Justin Wolf, a 2008 graduate of Lyman Hall High School. The \$1,000 scholarship is awarded to a student planning to pursue higher education in environmental studies. Justin plans to attend Paul Smith College in New York to study forestry. The scholarship is in honor of the late Lisa Toman, a former local educator who served on the Conservation Commission and was a member of the Wallingford Land Trust.

Visit our website at: www.wallingfordlandtrust.org

A Message from Our President

Dear Friends of the Wallingford Land Trust,

I believe that an overwhelming majority of Wallingford residents will agree that overall, we enjoy a high quality of life. We have a good educational system, a low crime rate, and easy access to a wide range of recreational and educational opportunities. The citizens of Wallingford genuinely care about their community, and it shows. Wallingford has successfully managed the transition from being a small town to a small city and still retains its small town charm.

The Wallingford Land Trust, founded in 1976, a centennial year, has made a significant contribution to making Wallingford what it is. Presently, we have 16 different tracts of land totaling 242 acres, which are open to the public for passive recreational activities such as hiking, birding, or just plain enjoying and communing with nature. The Wallingford Land Trust is comprised of members who I would characterize as "low profile activists". If we have a shortcoming it is that we have not always communicated the full scope of our programs and activities. To that end, this newsletter is dedicated.

If you are already a member, we much appreciate your ongoing support. If not, we enthusiastically ask you to join us in perpetuating our mission which is to maintain and enhance the quality of life in a community we can be proud of. Please refer to our application form which is enclosed. We hope you will join us.

David Ellis



Good News: A Countervailing Trend

The following was taken from the Nature Conservancy's Summer 2007 publication and reprinted with their permission:

Across the country it's easy to spot new houses and shopping centers, but what may be less apparent is a countervailing trend: a surge in the protection of land. According to recent reports by the Land Trust Alliance, a group that includes the Nature Conservancy and most U.S. land conservation organizations, the amount of private land protected from development in the United States reached 37 million acres in 2005, up from 24 million acres in 2000.

Today there are 1,667 land trusts in the United States, nearly a third more than existed in 2000. "This expansion of the land trust community could not have happened at a more critical time," stated Mike Dennis, the Conservancy's director of conservation, real estate, and private lands, and a board member of the Land Trust Alliance. "Between all of us, we've managed to triple the pace of conservation even as the challenges have escalated. We have an ever-accelerating rate of species extinction, combined with unparalleled levels of development. Fortunately, we are also developing vigilant land trust communities to try to confront those challenges."

Sarah Pellegrino of the Nature Conservancy's Middletown office advises that there are 118 land trusts in Connecticut, protecting 55,552 acres; plus an additional 24,000 acres under easement, such as the Zerah H. Beach Preserve off Cheshire Road.

THE CASE OF THE VANISHING BOVINES Another Wallingford West Side Mystery

by Guy P. Beach

Without doubt, the most bizarre occurrence in Wallingford's proud 338 year history is that of the "Shoebox Murder." On Sunday, August 8, 1886, three young men collecting huckleberries along a deserted logging road north of Gaylord near the Cheshire town line were attracted by an unpleasant odor beneath the thickets. They found a large shoebox, really a crate, and, unable to contain their curiosity, pried it open. To their horror, they found the torso of a man – arms, legs, and head skillfully amputated so that the remains could be stuffed inside the box.

Constable Austin, Wallingford's chief law officer organized a posse but the search failed to locate any of the missing body parts. Results of an autopsy performed by Dr. M. C. White pronounced that the victim was between 35 and 45 years old and had been dead for between five and ten days. In addition to discovering arsenic in the victim's stomach, indicating that the murder had been premeditated, Dr. White announced that the dismembering had been the work of a skilled butcher or surgeon. This cast suspicion on slaughterhouse employees, medical students, and farmers skilled in butchering techniques.

The daughter of Walter Case, a leading Yalesville citizen, reported that she had opened her door in response to a knock and was horrified to see a ragged man covered with blood and mud. He asked for directions to Daley's Pond. She replied that no such pond existed in the area and directed him to the Quinnipiac River. She noticed that he was carrying a large bloody bundle under his arm. Apparently Miss Case's testimony was true for after discovery of the murder, fisherman found a heap of bloody clothing on one of the riverbanks. A party was organized to drag the river but nothing was found and no more seen of the stranger.

Rumors and theories abounded. The murderer had either remained in Wallingford's midst or left quietly on an outbound train. As for the victim, the secret of his identity lies in an obscure plot in the Center Street Cemetery where his remains were laid to rest by baffled Wallingford officials. Conclusion: Stephen King, you have nothing on Wallingford.

* * *

Before we initiate the main thrust of this piece, let me relate an experience which befell me in 2001. Several of my Wallingford Land Trust director colleagues walked the Fresh Meadows II property, part of the Rosick Road development south of the 49-acre Galko property which was wisely acquired by the town in 2000. It was January, a few days after a minor snowstorm. Suddenly, I plunged more than four feet into a small stream heart high. I could feel water running over my hiking boots. I was in a small feeder stream at the beginning headwaters of the Mill River. I am convinced that I could not have extricated myself on my own. Fortunately, WLT directors Tom Flynn and Gary Baker were there to pull me out of what could have been a disastrous experience. Minutes later, Tom Flynn's companion fell into another stream but only 2.5 – 3 feet into a crevice. I strongly feel that anyone hiking this area in winter be accompanied by strong friends and preferably a rope.

The Mill River, which flows through Sleeping Giant State Park, has been a popular destination for fisherman for many years. Recently, the Mill River in Hamden was designated a Trout Management Area by the State which means that anglers now have the opportunity to fish the year round.

* * *

Now to the main thrust of our story. In 2000, I visited the late Stacia Bernat who lived on Schoolhouse Road. Her late husband Tony farmed their land, was active in local politics and a member of the Democratic Town Committee, and had a passion for racing pigeons. Tony had a customer route selling vegetables, fruit, and other agricultural products such as eggs which he bought from my father.

Stacia was a very energetic and industrious lady who was well known for, among other things, her jellies and jams. For several years she managed the thrift shop at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Both Tony and Stacia had a capacity for extended periods of expression and since both of my parents were good listeners, they enjoyed a very cordial relationship. (All the world loves a good listener.) *cont. next page*

The Case of the Vanishing Bovines, cont.

About two months before her passing in 2000, Stacia told me of events which I found memorable. She told me how one day while working in her back yard she heard a voice crying "Help!" After she heard the voice a second time she summoned her husband. They found a teenager immersed in, if not quicksand, a marshy mire south of their house and north of Schultz's Pond on the east side of Schoolhouse Road. Tony in turn called a member of the Schultz family and rescued the frightened teen who had experienced a close call. I can recall skating on Schultz Pond when I was in my teens. Earlier, it had been called Cat Pond because it was said that families who had more cats than they wanted in a litter would place them in a bag which they threw into the pond. This was long before the ASPCA became a force.

Stacia recounted how on several occasions the neighboring Schultz family who kept cows would find themselves minus one cow when herding them home at the end of the day. They would call the police who were likewise baffled: they could find no evidence that any of their cows had been stolen. She said that there was a strong suspicion that each vanishing cow had been swallowed up in the marshy mire which one could easily

call quicksand. The bovines grazed on the west side of Schoolhouse Road which later became the WLT's Fresh Meadows property.

So guess what? More than half a century later, Wallingford Land Trust President Dave Ellis hiked this property and ran across what definitely appears to be the leg bone of a cow. A photo is shown of him holding the bone, standing with Eagle Scout and WLT member Joe McLaughlin.



Is this conclusive evidence that the vanishing Schultz cows were being swallowed up into the marshy mire which is now our Fresh Meadows property? No, but it's a stronger piece of evidence than what authorities were able to come up with in the Shoebox murder case. The truth is that the mystery remains: nobody knows for sure.

Beatrice Cuneo's Conservation Legacy

Beatrice Cuneo grew up on a working farm on Cheshire Road situated on 17 bucolic acres. It borders the 49 acre Galko property acquired by the town in 2000 and the 44 acre Wallingford Land Trust tract. A \$409,500 grant from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection in November 2005 covered 46% of the \$890,000 purchase price for the 17 acre tract. Credit the Mayor and the members of the Town Council for their prescience, and grant writer par excellence Don Roe.

"This was her home and her family's property," said her attorney Kevin Persons. "She lived there and loved to walk around on it. She was not about to let developers take it over." Resisting numerous offers from builders over the years, Cuneo instead opted to sell the property to the town in 2005, with assurances that it would be preserved as open space for public use, and placed the bulk of the proceeds into a charitable remainder trust.

Half the trust money, about \$350,000 went to the Trust

for Public Land to benefit statewide preservation projects: the balance went to other charities when Cuneo died last September. "She made a conscious decision to leave her assets to charity and recognized that helping a land preservation organization like Trust for Public Land was important" noted Persons who researched organizations and ultimately recommended TPL to his client. This preservation is part of her legacy. TPL, in its Spring 2008 publication, stated that it is "grateful for Cuneo's spirit and generosity which will help continue to save natural landscapes in a state grappling with immense, ongoing pressures from development." So Bea, if you are looking down from above, Wallingford citizens deeply appreciate your caring and your generosity as will future generations. Your legacy is secure.

Note: The Trust for Public Land is a major national conservation organization headquartered in San Francisco. It maintains a field office in New Haven.



Congress Perpetuates Tax Advantages of Granting Easements

Congress recently approved a bill cosponsored by Third District Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro and CT Congressmen Larsen and Murphy which extends greatly increased tax benefits for landowners who donate conservation agreements through December 31, 2009. This means that conservation donors can deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross income in any year (up from 30%). If most of their income is from farming, ranching, or forestry, they can deduct all of their income. And, donors can continue to use the deduction up to sixteen years (up from six) after the initial year.

Land Trust Sponsors CT Trails Day Hike

The Wallingford Land Trust participated in Connecticut Trails Day on Saturday, June 7, 2008, by conducting a hike at its Orchard Glen and Spruce Glen property. Members of the land trust and residents from Wallingford and surrounding towns, as well as a visitor from California, joined in the two-hour hike. This property, which can be accessed from the cul de sac at the end of Barnes Industrial Road North, consists of 68 acres featuring three miles of hiking trails, two ravines, woodlands, shallow stream crossings, and a thirteen foot high waterfall.



Support Your Local Land Trust

Land management and member activities are funded solely through tax deductible memberships, which are open to the public. Annual membership entitles one to voting privileges, newsletters, and invitations to the annual meeting and other activities sponsored by the Wallingford Land Trust. Membership demonstrates a commitment to Wallingford's natural heritage and establishes an interest in preserving habitats within our community.

Please enter my membership in the Wallingford Land Trust.

- | | | | |
|--|----------|--|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life (needs no further renewal) | \$250.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$20.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate | \$100.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$15.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing | \$ 50.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit Organization | \$15.00 |

Name _____

Address _____

Send to: Wallingford Land Trust, Inc., P. O. Box 611, Wallingford, CT 06492



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The Wallingford Land Trust, Inc.

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Scout Layne Manginelli Makes Major Mark on Three Meadows



Three Meadows is an eleven acre parcel the Land Trust acquired in 1990 as a result of open space development which allows developers to build more houses on smaller lots than would otherwise be permitted, provided that a certain percentage of the property is set aside as open space. The plan also benefits the environment because it allows potential wildlife corridors, undisturbed natural and scenic vistas, and requires less land clearing and disturbance to any wetlands. The Three Meadows parcel, aka Bridle Lane, parallels Woodhouse Avenue and abuts the homes of quiet neighbors who appear to appreciate nature. The property contains meadows, wetlands, a brook running through the central corridor, a cedar stand, scrub growth, and an early succession forest which provides cover, shelter and food to amphibians, mammals, butterflies, and birds. Unfortunately, much of Three Meadows was blocked by brambly, invasive multi-flora rose.

Eagle Scout candidate Layne Manginelli approached WLT President David Ellis with a plan to improve the Three Meadows property. He formulated a siting plan which was reviewed by land trust board members and approved. The project, which took 225 man hours to complete, created a loop trail that starts and ends from a sitting area. The trail meanders through the meadow and into a cedar forest. The final result of Layne's labor and that of his fellow scouts is a lovely nature trail with a sitting and picnic area. Two benches were installed, one a donation by Lowe's of Wallingford. Thanks to Layne Manginelli and his colleagues, this property will now be enjoyed for years to come.