

LAND TRUST ADDS 'WOOD LOT'

PETER MARTEKA
COURANT STAFF WRITER

Growing up in Stratford, Andrew Knapp didn't know much about the forest until he visited property his family owned in the woods of Vernon.

AREAWIDE

The property was known as "the wood lot," and Knapp spent countless days exploring "every foot of this land."

Now others can spend time exploring the wood lot because the Knapp family has sold the parcel to the Northern Connecticut Land Trust.

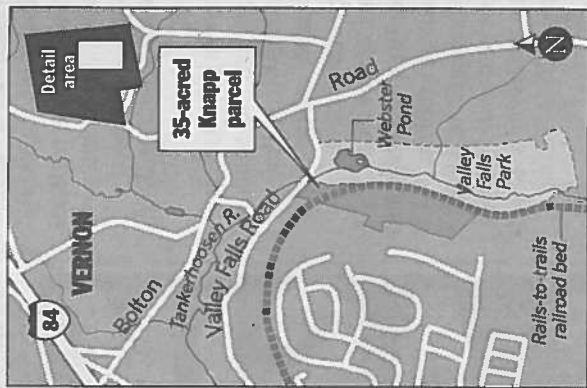
"It was never an issue whether or not we would develop it," Knapp said. "We always believed it would remain unspoiled forever. The only issue was

whether to donate it or sell it."

When Anne W. Knapp, Andrew Knapp's mother, had to be placed in a nursing home, the Knapps decided to sell the land to the trust at the assessed value of \$94,000. It was a small price to pay for the last privately owned parcel on Valley Falls Road, officials said.

The Northern Connecticut Land Trust received \$42,700 in matching funds from the state Department of Environmental Protection to help pay for the parcel. The balance was donated by a foundation and by anonymous donors who also helped the trust buy 11 acres surrounding a rock formation known as Echo Ridge.

The acquisition brings the total land owned by the trust to more than 400 acres. The Northern Connecticut Land Trust operates primarily in East Windsor, Ellington, Enfield, Somers, Stafford and Vernon to preserve and protect open space and other natural resources.



THE HARTFORD COURANT

Echo Ridge is directly west of the Knapp property. To the north is the DEP's 270-acre Belding Wildlife Management Area. Valley Falls Park, a popular 183-acre recreation area owned by the town, is to the east of the property. And the Hop River Linear Rail Trail bisects the property on its