



The Landmark



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News from the Four Town Land Trust

Spring 1990

INDIAN ROCK

The Land Trust is working on several possible land acquisitions at this time, several of which we expect to be successful with eventually. Possibly the most exciting of those being actively pursued is the Indian rock on Stafford Road in Somers. Located just a half mile from our land, the rock was virtually unknown until a short while ago. Now we are working to preserve it, and excitement is building.

The rock is a large boulder, perhaps eight feet high, with three flues carved into it at equal intervals around its perimeter. They run from its base to above a man's head, and apparently were used to conduct smoke up along the rock rather than letting it drift.

The skeptic may say that it only looks like there were flues carved into the rock and they're really just natural formations, but one good look at them dispels that idea. There is no question that human handiwork was involved in their fashioning. When first told about the rock, Nick Bellantoni, Connecticut's state archaeologist, was skeptical, for he had seen too many Indian rock carvings that turned out to be natural. But when he saw it, he was convinced.

Not only that, but Whit Davis, the man responsible for bringing the rock to the attention of the land trust and doing most of the work to bring about its acquisition, has known it to be an Indian site since his youth. In addition, until recently there was an elderly lady who could remember that in her youth an Indian woman made a regular pilgrimage to visit the graves of her ancestors in the area, and the rock was one of her stops along the way.

There has been speculation on whether the rock's purpose was ceremonial, practical, or perhaps something else, and we hope to answer that and other questions about it as time goes by. In the meanwhile, though, our main concern is protecting it. The owners are willing to sell it and 3.8 acres of land to us, and negotiations are under way. Possible funding sources are being investigated, and things look quite hopeful. More help is always welcome, though, so if you are aware of any potential funding sources or have any information which might add to our knowledge about the rock, please let us know. You can call Whit at 749-4753 if you have any input for us.

LANDWARD

At Don Smith's suggestion, I have decided to start the first regular column in this newsletter. In it we will discuss various aspects of the ecology and natural history of our area. We live in an area with a fairly high level of diversity, from the rocky peaks in the east to the Connecticut River floodplain in the west, so there should be plenty to talk about. If you have any suggestions, or would like to write something yourself, please don't hesitate.

We'll begin with a broad overview of the geological history of the area.

The earliest geological influences in the region are, of course, tectonic and volcanic. The Connecticut Valley is essentially an old rift valley. At some point while Europe and North America were separating from each other, the Atlantic Ocean tried to form here instead of where it did. While the tear eventually healed itself, for millions of years there was a fault through the area from which lava periodically flowed and covered the floor of the Connecticut Valley. At the same time, the mountains in eastern and western Connecticut were eroding and the material being deposited in the Connecticut Valley. The result of these forces was the creation of a large level valley flanked by hills.

Then the glaciers came and rearranged the landscape. They tended to scrape material off of the high ground and deposit material in the low areas, though not consistently. As they melted, they left random-seeming piles of sand, gravel, silt, and rocks, some of it just dumped in place and some of it washed and sorted by the water pouring from the melting glacier. Sometimes a large chunk of ice would be left behind mixed in with the earth materials. When it melted, it would leave a large hole in the ground.

The last ice age left a large dam of ice and earth materials at Middletown, blocking the water flowing from the Connecticut Valley. The water backed up and created what is known today as Lake Hitchcock, a lake which flooded all of the Connecticut Valley. Over time, a layer of lake sediment was laid down. In some places thick and others thin, this sediment did much to smooth out the rough terrain left by the glaciers. It also made material changes in the landscape in some areas, especially near where streams entered the lake since the streams were the source of most of the sediment - they were still eroding the hills, as they are to this day.

Eventually the dam broke and the water poured out of Lake Hitchcock, leaving behind a barren but very fertile

landscape. Some of the soils were perched in positions which had been stable enough under a lake but which couldn't stand up to the erosive forces of running water. Thus we have some of our eroded landscapes, especially along the Scantic River in East Windsor and Enfield (these were later worsened by poor farming practices, but they started when Lake Hitchcock drained). The erosion was minor in some places, while in others it cut deeply into the lake sediments. Where those sediments were thick we see deep erosion-caused landscapes, while where they were thin erosion exposed the glacially deposited materials again and, since they are generally less erodible, the effects are not as noticeable today. The soil was also exposed to wind erosion, which picked up soil in some places and deposited it in others, resulting in some land forms which are essentially stabilized sand dunes.

The cumulative effect of the various forces is that the soils in the Connecticut Valley are generally quite deep - sometimes hundreds of feet - while those in the hills rarely are and, in fact, there is quite often exposed bedrock on the hills. Those soils are also the base on which are built our ecological regimes, but that subject must wait until another time.

MEMBERSHIP LIST


Here is the list of members I promised in the previous newsletter, that is, all of the members who joined in the first two years of the Land Trust's existence:

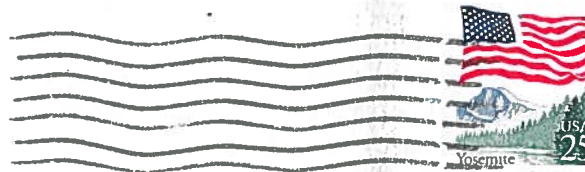
<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>
Gary & Linda Allegro	Enfield	Arend-Jan Knuttel	East Windsor
Stephen & Ruth Andrusko	East Windsor	Art & Gloria Larson	Ellington
Mark Barbieri	East Windsor	Selma Larson	Alexandria, VA
Ernie Boothroyd	Ellington	Robert & Stephanie Moore	Ellington
Marianna Bovernick	Somers	Steven & Estelle Mulak	Simsbury
Jack & Mavis Collins	Enfield	Tex Mulnite	East Windsor
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Jeanne Debell	Enfield	Mary O'Donnell	East Windsor
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Elizabeth Grant	East Windsor	Bill Reynolds	Somers
George Grant	East Windsor	Elarry Shlitz	Enfield
Philip & Selma Grant	East Windsor	Donald & Nancy Smith	Somers
Stuart & Beth Grant	East Windsor	Thomas & Joyce Soule	Enfield
Mark & Ellen Humphries	East Windsor	Jerry Stage	Stafford
Larry Johnson	East Windsor		

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 THE FOUR TOWN
LAND TRUST, INC.
MELROSE, CT 06049



MR & MRS PHILIP & SELMA GRANT
120 BROAD BROOK RD.
MELROSE, CT 06049