



# The Landmark

Volume 2 Number 1

News from the Four Town Land Trust

Spring 1989

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's been almost a year now since we sent out our first newsletter, and that year has seen a lot of progress on the part of the Land Trust. The greatest progress, of course, is the donation of land in Somers reported in the last letter, but other progress has been made as well. Perhaps the most important is an improvement in our own self-awareness and confidence. We are now taking the trust a bit more seriously and realizing what can be accomplished if we apply ourselves. The tangible results of this are better attendance at meetings and more work going forward between meetings, but the intangible results are at least as important. We are dedicating ourselves to our mission more steadfastly, and developing better ideas about how we should be accomplishing that.

One of the conclusions I have come to recently is that the members of the 4TLT deserve more frequent communication than they have been getting. In the nineteen months since the trust was formed, there have been only two newsletters and one very late annual report, and the Land Trust has probably slipped from a lot of minds in the meantime. Well, we're meeting regularly and doing a lot, and you deserve to know about it. You may have noticed that this newsletter follows the previous one a lot more closely than that one did the one before. One reason is that I delayed sending out the second newsletter until we owned our Somers property so I could report on that. The other, more important reason is that I have decided to go to a more frequent publication. You may have noticed that in the first newsletter I said I expected it to be published biennially. I *meant* to say semiannually, but even that isn't often enough. From now on it will be quadrennially... oops!... I mean quarterly.

Of course, with a doubled publication schedule, I'm going to have to double the amount of written material going into it. There are things that happen which I can report on that I wouldn't have otherwise, but I'm still going to have to work at filling some space. I'd be interested in input as to what this newsletter should contain. Should I try to find some conservation oriented articles to reprint that don't relate directly to this trust? Should I report land preservation news from other areas? Should I report on the decisions that are made at the monthly directors' meetings? Updates about conservation/land preservation oriented legislation? Or should I just do more of what I've been doing but in greater depth? While I'm asking, what format would you prefer? The first newsletter was rather casual and folksy, whereas the second one was purely news. What do you like? Please tell me your preferences by writing to me care of the Land Trust or calling me at 627-8062.

Finally, you may have noticed the change in the name of this publication. I tend to prefer the no frills way of doing things so I didn't bother with a special name when I started writing this. I later realized, though, that an attractive name tends to attract more notice, and notice is one of the things we need. So, I considered a number of catchy names which would have a double meaning as applied to a land trust newsletter. I considered the names Landside, A Horizon, Landscape, and Landward before settling on Landmark. What is the second meaning behind the word landmark? you ask. Well, if you'll look at the twenty-first definition of mark in the dictionary you'll find, "In medieval England and Germany, a tract of land held in common by a community." If that isn't fitting, I don't know what is.

## WHY PRESERVE THIS AREA?

A person might wonder why we want to preserve the land in the Connecticut Valley. A lot of people like hills but don't care much about the valley. I can appreciate the tendency, because there is a certain beauty in the hills.

On the other hand, the valley has its own beauty. More importantly:

- Food is important to all of us. Food production requires productive farm land. Some of the most productive farmland in the world is in the Connecticut Valley. The greatest concentration of prime farmland in the State of Connecticut is the area of East Windsor, Enfield, western Somers, western Ellington, and South Windsor. It is very important to all people that we preserve our farmland.
- Water is important to all of us. Water availability requires clean, productive aquifers. The single largest concentration of highly productive aquifers is in the eastern two thirds of East Windsor, the southeastern third of Enfield, and a little bit of the bordering edges of Somers, Ellington, and South Windsor

Need I say more?

## NONPROFIT STATUS ACHIEVED

One of the most critical elements of an organization such as ours is the IRS recognition of exempt status. Without it, donors could not deduct donations for income tax purposes, and we would have to pay taxes on all of our income. Until the IRS has recognized a charitable group as exempt, they are always under the threat that they may not make it, and potential donors may decide not to donate because of that.

Fortunately, we have received an advance ruling from the IRS recognizing us as exempt. What that means is that until July 31, 1992, they will give us the benefit of the doubt. At that time, they will review what we've done and decide whether we really are nonprofit. Meanwhile, we have as good a status as any organization this young can.

## SCANTIC RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL MERGES WITH 4TLT

I mentioned in the Annual Report that the Somers Land Trust had chosen to merge with the Four Town Land Trust, and that as a result we had received their mailing list and what funds were still in their treasury. I also mentioned that the Scantic River Watershed Council was considering a similar action.

That action has now come to pass. The SRWC, which was a group concerned with preserving the Scantic River and the land near it, had come to the point where it was in a situation similar to that of the Somers Land Trust: they had not met in several years, and the chances were slim that it could ever be reactivated. The officers decided that the best alternative was to get an opinion from the directors on merging with us. The decision was to go ahead and do it.

With the SRWC drawing members from, and covering an area including, South Windsor, East Windsor, Enfield, and Somers, Connecticut, and Hampden, Massachusetts, and concentrating exclusively on the Scantic River, the SRWC and the 4TLT aren't a perfect match, but it's pretty good. Hereafter, the Land Trust will be placing a little more emphasis on the Scantic River as an area in which it has a strong interest in preservation.

## ON THE LAND

In February, we had a work day at our land in Somers. Present were Don Smith, George Grant, and Albert and Donna Grant and their children Nyssa and Phoebe. Also there were Bill Reynolds and Arend Knuttel, but it seems that we hadn't agreed on a meeting place, so while most of us met at the trail head, Bill and Arend parked at Mrs. Bovarnick's house. When nobody else showed up, they entered the woods to search for us. They walked all the trails, shouting our names, and eventually came out at the road, walking back to their cars and passing ours on the way. Despite the fact they were searching for us and we were there, they were unable to connect and ended up going home in frustration. It's too bad when a sincere effort turns out that way, but it was amusing in retrospect.

Now we've scheduled another day for trailblazing and we hope that nobody gets lost this time. It's this Saturday, April 8th at 1:30, with a rain date of the 15th. Everybody is welcome; many hands make light work. If you can carpool, please do, and if you're among the first there, pull in as far as you can; it's a very small space.

Also on the agenda is a dedication ceremony on June 10th with a rain date of the 17th. There are no specific plans for the ceremony yet. Anybody who would like to help plan it is encouraged to call Don Smith at 749-9550.

**THE LANDMARK is published by the**

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All comments contained herein are those of the editor and are not necessarily those of the Land Trust.



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