
THE BALANCE SHEET

CHESHIRE LAND TRUST cheshirelandtrust.org VOL. 43, NO. 2 SEPTEMBER 2015
Preserving Land as a Living Resource Since 1969



A Day at Ives Farm...Family fun all day long

3RD ANNUAL “DAY AT THE FARM”

The public loves Ives Farm and so do we. This year we are having another family friendly event that will feature lots of exciting things to do for kids and adults all day long. CLT is hosting the third annual “*A Day at the Farm*”, **Saturday September 19th 10 AM – 4 PM** (Rain date Sunday Sept. 20th). The day will celebrate the whole farm...its fields and forests.

Take a self-guided tour of the barn and surrounding fields or join one of guided walks led by Mark Kasinkas and Rick Marinaro. Once again we will have animals from Cheshire Hollow Farm, a bounce house, horses and ponies showcased by the Cheshire Horse Council, live musical entertainment by the Down Home Frolic Fiddlers, face painting and of course food and beverage. **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**, call Janice Bryden at (203) 250-8817 or Tim Slocum at (203) 464-1830.

See page 4 for a schedule of events.

THE FARMINGTON CANAL

From Canal Line to Greenway
By Tim Slocum

The vision of the Farmington Canal may have never lived up to the expectations of its builders; an economic engine for commerce and trade the region needed to compete with the great ports of New York and Boston. Investors also hoped to rival the spectacular growth brought about by the Erie Canal. It thrives today but in a different form.

Chartered in 1822 the canal was built at great expense and folded as an enterprise within twenty years of its completion. All was not lost for commerce as new railroads sprouted all over Connecticut including the well-known New Haven Railroad. Track was eventually laid on the towpaths of the Farmington Canal and on January 11, 1848, the year trains began running from New Haven to Plainville, all canal operations ceased and the short lived commercial waterway faded into history.

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From Canal Line to Greenway

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The ownership of the railroads changed a few times and ultimately it was the B&M that ceased to operate after a devastating flood in June 1989 washed out much of the canal line through south Cheshire. Only a hand full of local businesses were using the line by that time and eventually all service to Cheshire was discontinued. In 1992 Cheshire seized the opportunity for a very new and creative use of this defunct commercial corridor and the Linear Trail was born.



Today the canal line is a revitalized greenway for legions of stragglers, runners, bikers and nature lovers using the towpath that has become one the region's best used parks. The linear trail will someday extend from its port landing at New Haven Harbor to its terminus, some 84 miles north in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Cheshire was the first town to embrace the new land use for the canal line along a near 3 mile path from Mt. Sanford Rd. to Cornwall Ave. In this segment we are fortunate to have the best preserved lock and lock keepers house as a part of the **Lock 12 Historical Park**. Up and down this greenway are beautiful watercourses that weave under the trail's many bridged crossings.

The concept of a minimally invasive corridor that affords spectacular interaction with nature is probably one of the most unexpected outcomes of a busy transportation corridor but that is exactly what the trail has presented. It took very little time for other towns to grasp the idea of establishing rail trails. Hamden was first to follow with a lengthy extension from Mt Sanford Rd. to Shepard Ave. In time all of

Hamden was completed along with some disconnected sections in New Haven.

Several years ago Southington was able to complete a 4 mile section in the Plantsville section of town. Somehow Cheshire's initial strides at trail development, despite broad public support, stalled. The ¾ mile long section from Cornwall to West Main St. became mired in a legal dispute in the 1990s with little light at the end of the tunnel.

By 2010, in one of the state's rare moments of clarity, came an offer to complete the trail in Cheshire. Over a period of years the trail would be done in phases that would begin with the soon to be opened 1 ½ mile section (Fall 2015) from West Main St. to Jarvis St. followed by a 2 ½ mile section from Jarvis St. to the Southington line and finally finishing it where it all stopped in the first place, the "industrial" section from Cornwall Ave. to West Main St.



The Great Embankment

In all some 7.6 miles of linear park will extend from Hamden to Southington. The trail will have secure parking areas at Jarvis St. and public bathroom facilities at West Main St. While some commercial development is hoped for this is by far something more for members of the community who seek a safe place to walk, play and partake in healthy amounts of physical fitness and of course all the nature and history they care to take in.

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Along the way the Land Trust has been able to preserve some wetland habitat that buffers the trail. The three properties, Towpath Acres, Bert Cran Memorial and Brooksvale Preserve comprise sixteen acres all located along the original linear trail section. CLT has a conservation easement on Jean Mckee's 48 acre farm estate along South Brooksvale Rd. which also borders the canal trail.

The Great Embankment

In northern Cheshire, on the site of what might have been, The Outlets at Cheshire, is a wonder of Farmington Canal construction. A great embankment of sand and stone was erected to elevate and keep the canal on grade in its southward advance to New Haven harbor. Built by Irish immigrant labor the earthen span lay over a stone arched bridge that allowed the Tenmile River to pass under the canal. In 2010 heavy rains brought flooding and the embankment was breached. The stone span survived but much the embankment was washed away and the area was regraded for flood control.

I was able to get a rare look at this area on a tour of the flood damage as the town and landowners were developing a repair plan. (see photo page 2)

Tim Slocum

New Feature on CLT's Facebook Page **PHOTO CONTEST**

Brought to you by CLT's Facebook Maven - Joy Vanderlek

The CLT Photo Contest began on a whim in February—partly to get us out of our doldrums, and more importantly, to wake us up to the beauty of winter in the landscape. After a little kick to jumpstart the thing, the response was seriously overwhelming. Wow! And talk about talent. The first annual “Winter Photo Contest” brought in spectacular work. At the end of February 2015, we announced our first-ever photo contest winner, **Chris Daddi** of Cheshire. For his efforts, Chris received a handmade

birdhouse from CLT, the prized cover photo spot, and major kudos.

The contest was so much fun; we had to do it again! As summer kicked in, we unveiled the “Summer Photo Contest.” Among the wonderful photos being posted, were backyard rainbows, wonderful water scenes, cute-as-a-button birds, and beautiful flower buds. **Tracey Harrington** took the honors this time around, and received our thanks, along with a handmade CLT birdhouse and a gift certificate to a local ice cream shop! Visit our FB page to see all the great photos and other interesting matters of conservation interest Thanks to everyone, and look for our next photo contest soon!

LETTERBOXING

By Joy Vanderlek

Part treasure hunt and part outdoor exercise, a recreational pastime called letterboxing has caught on in a big way for many residents.

Letterboxing, an English creation, started as a sleuthing adventure of the moors of Dartmoor National Park in the 1800s. Here in the states, letterboxing is generally believed to have taken root in New England in the late 1990s. At one time, it was thought that Connecticut had the most letterboxes in the country. According to AtlasQuest.com, one of the major American letterboxing online sites, there are more than 6,000 letterboxes in Connecticut.

The game is all about following clues to find hidden boxes. The boxes are waterproof and contain a stamp, a logbook and sometimes a prize or trinket. Boxes are creatively tucked away in various locales, generally out-of-doors. To start, one needs clues (directions) to boxes. These can be found at one of the many online letterboxing sites. Once a letterbox is located, the finder stamps the log that's in the box with his or her own personal stamp (handmade stamps are highly prized). Then, use the stamp from the box to stamp into one's personal log. Make sure to return all items from the box back where they belong and then return the box where you found it for the next person to find. The only variation on the

LETTERBOXING

instructions would include taking the “prize” or trinket if the box contains one.

In Cheshire, there are a large number of letterboxes which can be found throughout town. Mixville Recreational Area, Cheshire and Bartlem parks, along the Farmington Canal linear trail and even cemeteries are among the locations letterboxes have been hidden.

The letterboxing code includes the general “do no harm” rule. Do not disturb or damage any letterbox you find, nor do damage or disturb any of the locations you may go into. Letterbox with a buddy, especially with letterboxes off the beaten path. To keep letterbox locations secret and safe from harm, make sure not to be observed finding or putting back the box. CLT will try its hand at letterboxing this year at “A Day at the Farm”. Who knows where this may lead.

This story was excerpted from a feature written by Joy Vanderlek that appeared in the Cheshire Citizen August 2013

CLT Projects at Ives

Farm committee chairman Jim Mertz reports there has been progress made towards bringing electricity to the barn. As CLT members know the trust has expended lots of time and treasure to build the new barn at Ives. Like many homeowners we must pay as we go as we have the funds to do so. After careful planning the project is underway and by the time you are reading this a new line will bring power to the barn. It has been a vision of the governing board to use the barn for CLT functions and other public functions that may bring rental income in the years to come.

Ives Farm is among the jewels in the CLT crown but it bears some thorny costs. Many of the pole barns have fallen into disrepair and will need to be replaced. The historic Ives home was built in 1790. As anyone who owns an old house knows there is often more wrong than right with it.

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES?

It’s time to renew your membership if you haven’t done so already. The membership year is from 4/1/15 to 3/31/16. Donations are tax deductible. CLT actively manages 27 properties and 6 conservation easements totaling 578 acres. Your membership dues and contributions provide for management of these properties.

RENEW OR JOIN ON LINE

Visit cheshirelandtrust.org

WE RECEIVE NO LOCAL TAXPAYER FUNDS

DAY AT THE FARM

Schedule of Activities

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| Exhibitors & Participants | American Country Barns |
| | Artsplace |
| | Audubon Society - Riverbound Farm |
| | Cheshire Fire Dept. |
| | Cheshire Historical Society |
| | Cheshire Horse Council |
| Food & Beverage for Purchase | Cheshire Hollow Farm – Animals 12:45 – 2:15 |
| | Hot Dogs, Hamburgers & Pizza |
| Activities | Artsplace - Plein Air Painting |
| | Birdhouses for sale |
| | Bounce House inflatable |
| | CFD Brush fire fighting apparatus |
| | Down Home Frolic Fiddlers |
| | Face painting - craft table |
| | Farmstead Walk – Noon 11 AM – 2 PM |
| | Guided Bird Walk led by Audubon Society 10:30 A.M. |
| | Hayrides courtesy of T&D Growers |
| | Letterboxing |
| | MYO Birdfeeders or other craft |
| | Self-guided Farm hikes |
| | T&D farm stand open all day. Buy mums, cornstalks, pumpkins, vegetables and fruit |
| | Tractor Collection Exhibit |
| | Washing Station Demo |

See our website and Facebook page for updates on Fall Hikes and Land Stewardship Day