

---

---

# The Balance Sheet

---

**Cheshire Land Trust** cheshirelandtrust.org **Vol. 39, No. 1** **March 2011**  
*Preserving Land as a Living Resource Since 1969*

---

---

## Annual Meeting

The 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Cheshire Land Trust will be held **Thursday, March 31<sup>st</sup> at the Cheshire Town Hall** in Council chambers. Join us for coffee, tea and desserts at 7:00 PM followed the business meeting and the election of the 2011 governing board. This years program will be a forum on **Cheshire Farming**, with emphasis on the Trust's 245 acres of productive farmland. **(Story page 5)** For more information on the event please contact Janice Yusza 272-9491 or Tim Slocum 272-3529.

## Winter's Wallop

### Local barns casualties of heavy snow

by *Tim Slocum*

Under the weight of unprecedented snowfall beginning December 27 and consuming most of January the region was buffeted by heavy snow that piled up to depths of 30 inches in many yards. Local streets became narrow allies walled in by six foot snow banks. On rooftops all over town the snow piled up causing great concern and near panic buying for snow rakes. Who ever heard of a snow rake? I now have one.

The town's first casualty was the pool bubble, which collapsed on January 12. Later wood and steel framed structures fell victim to snow and ice. Unnoticed at first was the destruction of several local barns and greenhouses including an historic beauty at Jean McKee's South Brooksvale Rd. farm. The top photo shows the front of her barn. The other side lay in a heap of snow laden timbers.

*Continued page 2*



Barn Collapse at Jean McKee's South Brooksvale Rd. Farm



---

---

## Inside This Issue

- 
- 1** Annual Meeting & Farmers' Forum

---

  - 2** New Leadership Slate

---

  - 3** President's Letter

---

  - 4** 2010 Financial Statement

---

# Winter's Wallop

*Continued from page 1*

Jean McKee's barn collapse occurred February 10<sup>th</sup>. That same week the Harvest House at Bishop Farms caved in and a number of barns along Wallingford Rd. and West Main St. were seriously damaged. The greenhouses at Ives Farm were braced but two were seriously damaged.



Mountain Rd. Barn Splits and Rests on a Tree



A Greenhouse under a Crush of Snow at Ives

Remarkably the barns and outbuildings at Ives, despite their age and level of deterioration, survived.

I talked to Jean McKee about her barns and she told me she was in the beginning stages of a restoration process after getting a grant to make necessary repairs. Design work had been done and reconstruction was scheduled for the spring. Some

of that work has come to a standstill now but she was confident that repairs would be made and the future of the 5 barn complex, while a little challenged, would get back on track in the months ahead. Meanwhile a snow cover persists over parts of Cheshire but it is rapidly relenting with warmer temperatures of spring. Before you know it this winter's wallop will be a distant memory.

## Ives Barn Rehab

*by Jeanné Chesanow*

The Ives hay barn still stands after this devastating winter! Before winter set in, a hardworking volunteer braced the building inside and out with boards salvaged from the demolished Lassen Barn. The Land Trust's goal is to rehabilitate this 1825 barn so that it can keep on being a working hay barn. The road to accomplishing this goal has been a bumpy one.

- 2008 – CLT applied to state for Historic Restoration Funds for barn rehabilitation, funding denied
- 2009 – we applied again for barn rehab funds, Spring 2010 funded! \$47,450 to be matched by CLT
- Summer 2010 -- meeting at barn for interested builders, 30 people attended, seven bidders. All bids came in too high. (If bids are over the estimated cost of the project by more than 20% no negotiation can take place, and the bidding process must begin again.)

The costs of the planned concrete work (a poured foundation and floor) were a large part of the high bids. Architect Roy Gilley and structural engineer Oscar Santo Domingo came up with a revised plan: concrete piers and a processed stone floor. The revised drawings are now in the hands of the state. We are waiting for approval so a new bidding process can start. A notice to bid must be placed in a daily newspaper with a large circulation; another notice must be placed at a

*Continued page 4*

# President's Letter

The sun rose on 2011 to starkly beautiful snow-covered scenes at the Land Trust's properties. Like the blizzard of wild flowers on the Giddings' property in late Spring, the bales of fresh mown hay on the Brooksvale Farm Preserve in mid-summer and the bounty of produce being harvested at Ives Farm in early Fall, these vistas clearly illustrate the precious resource we have been asked to protect.



It is easy to lapse into a state of reflection and reminiscence at all the work the Land Trust has accomplished in its 41 years: to sit back, satisfied that we've accomplished much. However, when you walk down the Linear Trail and marvel at the constantly singing red-wing blackbirds astride their cattail perches on the Land Trust holdings or stop and pick up a fallen maple leaf ablaze with color on the Brooke Preserve Trail, you quickly realize that the Land Trust's job has really only begun. Each and every property has some attribute that begs for a photograph or at least some silent contemplation of the wonders at hand.

The governing board has adopted a Strategic Plan which, when fully implemented, will provide us with the tools and resources to strengthen the Trust, more fully engage our members and streamline the stewardship of the Land Trust properties. The key to all of these efforts is empowering our members. We need your willing hands to help out at the Fall Festival, your time to monitor the properties under our care and your input and recommendations of others in our community who may have a desire to assist in protecting their open spaces for future generations.

This newsletter contains an envelope for those who want to join CLT and for those who renew their membership at this time of year. It also has an area where you can indicate those activities in which you might want to participate. Even if it's not time to renew your membership, please take the time to tell us your interests. If we already have something from you, look and see if there's something else on the list. As part of the strategic planning effort, we are working to better organize the process by which we match your skills and talents with the needs of the organization. We will be in touch.

Like all volunteer organizations, CLT has been affected by the current period of economic uncertainty. While we have been fortunate to be able to continue addressing needs that have arisen at our properties, a downside has been a loss of some of the flexibility to react to new opportunities that we may have previously enjoyed. We have established a committee who will be developing plans to address fundraising, not only for focused projects (such as matching the grant from the CT Commission on Culture & Tourism for the Ives Farm barn rehabilitation) but also to identify donor sources to help with possible land acquisition activities. We look forward to discussing these plans in detail as soon as they are developed and ready for implementation.

In my Fall President's Letter, I noted that the five months since the 2010 annual meeting had enough activity to fill an entire year. We have not slowed down since then. We understand the expectations of all of you and we remain committed to doing our utmost to preserve and protect Cheshire's natural resources and its scenic and historic properties.

**Samuel S. Waldo, President**

## **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

**Grow with us and help us grow.** It's time to renew your membership. The membership year is from 4/1/11 to 3/31/12. Your Donations are tax deductible. The Cheshire Land Trust actively manages 25 properties and 8 conservation easements totaling 530 acres. Membership dues and contributions provide for management of these properties.

# Ives Barn Rehab

*Continued from page 2*

State of Connecticut website. We are required to choose the lowest, responsible bidder. Responsible means a good work record along with experience with historic buildings in particular farm buildings.

Many rescued barns become museums or conference rooms. Saving an old hay barn so it can be a working building on a working farm is rare in today's Connecticut – let's hope we can make it happen! Prospective bidders are contacting us now, ready to bid again, and enthusiastic about rescuing the barn where Lyman Bradley stored hay before the Civil War.

## Election of Officers & Directors

The slate of officers and directors will be placed in nomination at the annual meeting of the Cheshire Land Trust March 31<sup>st</sup>. Four officers and three directors are up for election. Officers serve one-year terms and Directors serve three-year terms. Nominees are listed in bold type.

### OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

President	<b>Sam Waldo</b>
Vice President	<b>Larry Pivirotto</b>
Treasurer	<b>David Schrumm</b>
Secretary	<b>Tim Slocum</b>

<b>Jim Mertz</b>	2011-2014
<b>Rick Marinaro</b>	2011-2014
<b>Janice Bryden</b>	2011-2014

Jeanné Chesanow	2010-2013
Matt Hall	2010-2013
Kevin Wetmore	2010-2013

<b>Art Crooker</b>	2011-2012
Eleanor DeVane	2009-2012
John Hilzinger	2009-2012

### NEW BOARD MEMBER

**Art Crooker** joins the board filling a vacancy in the 2009-2011 term. Art has lived near Ives Farm for 20 years. He is an avid outdoorsman, beekeeper and

Betty Ives aficionado. He knew Betty and credits her for saving farming along Cheshire St. with the bequest of Ives Farm to CLT.

We also appointed John Hilzinger, another Ives Farm neighbor to the board last summer to fill the unexpired term of Kristina Blackwell who resigned after moving from Cheshire. John is a local businessman. He and his wife Juliet acquired Lee Pelz's historic Cheshire Street home a few years ago and they have continued a farming tradition there.

### Ives Barn Fundraiser

This past fall CLT embarked on a fundraising campaign for the barn restoration project at Ives farm.

For the first time, we partnered in a fundraising campaign with the New Haven Foundation. With their support we gained wider exposure. We received 89 donations totaling \$8,185 which included a matching grant from the **Give Greater** program in the amount of \$2,875.

We extend our gratitude to all of our donors.

Allen & Joyce Blem, Janice Bryden, Jeanne & Robert Chesanow, Cheshire Democratic Women's Club, Michael Heller, Eric Hyson, Edwin Kania, EJ Kurtz, James Lewis, Patricia McKinley, Nancy O'Neill, Paul Ranando, Leah Sanders, David & Sally Schrumm, Tim & Kristen Slocum, Richard Straub, Sam Waldo, Kevin Wetmore, Janice & Richard Yusza, George Adair, Anthony Arcesi, Lauren Bachman, Robert Behrer, Martin Cobern, Peter Davis, Walter Gancarz, Eugenie & Brad Gentry, Anne & Robert Giddings, Richard Henderson, Frederick Judge, Cynthia & David Manke, Cindy & Rick Marinaro, Andrew Martelli, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Marinaro, Jean McKee, Cynthia McMillian, Sylvia Nichols, Angela Rua, Anonymous, Mr. & Mrs. Patrick J. Sheehan, Nan Tussing, Ronald Urquehart, Patricia Vita, Kathleen Wilson, Glenda Kirby, Richard Miller, Carolyn Williams, Paula Crisculo, Marty Connelly, Olga Chernick, Sandra Gardinier, Robert Davis, William & Charlotte Blair, Tom & Diane Scannell, Karla Koch, Charles Dimmick, Gorden Drazen, John White, Maureen Matyszewski, Bill Shay-Bristol Insurance, Al & Dot Manke, Karen & John Crowell, Gail Collins, Ivey, James & Carle Cunningham, Don Anthony, Connie Hitt, Ellen Pliskin, Ruth Gleeton, Frank Rossi, Fazzone & Ryan, Ruth Ann Turley, Hugh & Diane Kearney, Al Mitlehner, E. Tucker Blackburn, Pivirotto Remodeling, Regina & Paul Thornton

## FARMING IN CHESHIRE TODAY & TOMORROW

---

### Farmers' Forum

*by Tim Slocum*

Meet the farmers managing and working CLT's farms and easement properties and other local growers at our Annual Meeting and Farmers' Forum Thursday 7 PM. March 31st at the Cheshire Town Hall in Council Chambers. They will be on hand to tell us what they do and give us a pulse on farming right here in our town.

---

Cheshire's founding is rooted in farming. Around 1676 the earliest farmers ventured from Wallingford and settled "Ye Fresh Meadows" in the Cook Hill Rd. area. Soon after the Cheshire St. area was settled. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century farming was the dominant economic mainstay for Cheshire with thousands of acres dedicated for crops, fruit trees, poultry and dairying.

The post WWII growth of suburbs left its mark on agriculture in Cheshire as many a family farm was gradually sold off for housing and commercial development. Despite those pressures Cheshire has a well developed agricultural community today that has diversified and risen to the challenges that have beset many farmers.

You may have noticed those bumper stickers that read, "**NO Farms NO Food**". We should add "**NO Greenhouses NO flowers**" at the table or gracing our gardens. A hand full of Cheshire growers can take credit for making Cheshire the state's Bedding Plant Capital. You have to marvel at the many acres under glass operated by Kurtz Farms, CK Greenhouses, Casertano Farms, Kurt Weiss Greenhouses and others who supply the entire region with millions of annuals every year.

The town is also home to longtime fruit growers, Bishop Farm & Winery, Drazen Orchards, Hickory Hill Orchards and Norton Brothers Fruit

Farm, whose properties become weekend destinations for many a family when fall arrives.

Cheshire is replete with popular farm markets and nursery retailers where parking can be at a premium come early spring and fall. In the south end of Cheshire there is the century old Cheshire Nursery. Along Higgins Rd. and West Main St you'll find Zentek Farms and along Highland Avenue you'll experience Tower Farm, Sunny Acres and Dietrich Gardens.

In a report released in September 2010 by UCONN's dept of Agriculture and the Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis researchers found that agriculture in the state was 3.5 billion dollar industry. Somewhat surprisingly the bulk of the industry was centered in Fairfield, New Haven and Hartford counties, the states most densely populated and developed areas. New Haven County came in 2<sup>nd</sup> place just behind Fairfield County with \$897 million in sales, which was credited largely to greenhouse and nursery growers, which is also the state's largest agricultural production sector accounting for almost half of all agricultural sales statewide.

The Land Trust has 245 acres of land supporting active farming operations. The Ives and Pelz Farm complex comprise 187 acres. John Carmody harvests corn from the Pelz property. Ives Farm, managed by Tim Casey for a few years, will now be run by Joe & Michael Arisco of T&D Growers. The production from Ives includes peppers, tomatoes, corn, strawberries, cut flowers and bedding plants, which are sold on site or to wholesalers including local giant, Bozzuto's.

Jean McKee's South Brooksvale Farm property has 48 acres with a CLT easement, which is harvested by Paul Zentek for feed hay and sweet corn. Bob & Anne Giddings have protected their 16 acres farm with an easement to CLT. Bob raises vegetables, pumpkins, chestnut and walnut trees. He also serves as President of Friends of Boulder Knoll, who farm on the neighboring town-owned Boulder Knoll farm.

