

---

---

# The Balance Sheet

---

Cheshire Land Trust cheshirelandtrust.org Vol. 40, No. 1 March 2012  
*Preserving Land as a Living Resource Since 1969*

---

---

## Annual Meeting

The 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Cheshire Land Trust will be held **Thursday, March 29<sup>th</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 2012 governing board. This year's program will be a forum on **Cheshire's Orchard Growers**. (Story page 5) For information on the event please contact Janice Yusza 272-9491 or Tim Slocum 272-3529.

## A Tale of Two Winters Historic Barn Resurrected

by Jean McKee

What seemed a disaster a year ago in February is now becoming a dream come true. Most of you saw the sad picture (*Balance Sheet March 2011*) of the collapse of the rear of one of our historic barns. We were very discouraged as our plan had been to have that barn reinforced by the fall of 2010. That did not happen as the structural engineer never gave the restorer a plan until December. Furthermore, none of those involved with the analysis suggested or implemented some temporary supports. When our insurance adjuster from Chubb Insurance sent their preservation specialist, Paul Spurling, he immediately instructed our part-time caretaker how to support the remainder and then suggested how we could preserve most of what was standing.

His suggestion seemed like a remarkable solution: find another old barn still standing in good condition of similar size; buy it, disassemble it, transport it to our farm and then insert it into our barn. He assured my two nieces and me that there were such barns, and, fortunately, his search found one just over the border in Massachusetts.



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

In fact that town was once part of Connecticut. An old tobacco barn was left standing by a developer who developed the remainder of the property. A tobacco barn is preferable as the wood is chestnut and it is not invaded by insects and such.

While the other two barns were newly roofed to preserve them, the barn in Massachusetts was dismantled. We witnessed that the dismantling had worked as we watched the huge truck make it down our driveway to deliver our new/old barn.

*Continued page 2*

---

---

## Inside This Issue

---

- 1 Annual Meeting & Farmers' Forum
  - 2 New Leadership Slate
  - 3 President's Letter
  - 4 2011 Financial Statement
-

# Historic Barn Resurrected

*Continued from page 1*

This barn was larger than our old one, providing an extension to the rear and to the east side, which now will allow our truck to fit in along with the other equipment.

With the approved plans in hand, the major work began. First the cement trucks arrived to pour the floor and trenches, the support beams were put together, and next was to be the crane hoisting the support members into place. We watched in awe as those beams were gently lifted over the remaining barn and lowered into place with instructions: to the right, to the left, lower, slower, and finally a shout of OK. That work completed, the roof could be put in place to protect the whole followed by the sides. Then the two barns were wedded to each other and restoration of the original interior began.

We can't wait to have a barn christening, or some appropriate ceremony, when the task is completed. In the last years I have read my great great Uncle Micah Brooks' and my grandfather's diaries recounting their work on preserving the barns. I saw how my uncle and parents watched to keep the barns in shape, my Mother walking around with her cane pointing out what needed to be done. We now are pleased to recount what our two generations have done to continue the tradition.



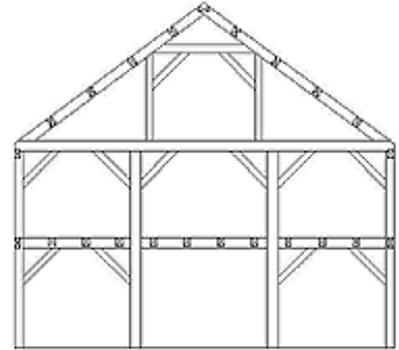
The South Brooksvale Rd. farm was established in 1732. It is the oldest farm in Connecticut owned and operated continuously by the same family. Jean McKee, Betty Lewis and Gordon Thayer granted CLT a conservation restriction on 48 acres of their historic farm property in phases from 1992-2002. Those restrictions preserve the open space and will help sustain agriculture there in perpetuity.

# CLT AWARDED STATE GRANT

## New Working Barn for Ives

*by Tim Slocum*

A new chapter is unfolding in CLT's determination to build a new barn at Ives Farm.



Plans for rehabilitating the 1825 hay barn were abandoned last summer. The expense of rehabbing the old barn when compared to the projected cost and reliability of a new timber frame barn was deemed too high. Last November CLT applied for a Farm Viability Grant with the Connecticut Dept. of Agriculture and we were recently awarded a grant in the amount of \$40,000 to build a new 30' X 40' post and beam barn on a concrete foundation. We intend to purchase a barn kit made by **American Country Barns** of Bethlehem, CT. The bulk of the construction work will be done by American Country Barns and local subcontractors along with with CLT and farm volunteers.

The existing barn will be razed this spring and construction will begin by early summer. The barn will be used for washing, packing and shipping farm produce. In the off season it will be used for equipment storage. Ives Farm is managed by **T&D Growers** of Cheshire under a lease with the Land Trust.

The grant application requested \$49,999, the maximum amount available in this program. The total projected cost of the project was estimated to be \$108,000. Last year CLT solicited donations for the project from members of the community. That campaign raised \$8,185. We will appeal to

*continued page 4*

# President's Letter

In my 2011 letter to you, I reflected on the stark beauty of snow cover on Land Trust properties and the myriad colors of wild flowers blooming in those same fields as we progressed toward warmer weather.



We haven't had much opportunity to reflect on snowy scenes this year and those wild flowers are mere bumps in the ground as I write this. As we anticipate this cycle though, the knowledge that these vistas will continue to be available to us, year after year, reaffirms the effort expended over the past 42 years to preserve and protect the properties entrusted to our care.

As I transition into a different role within the Land Trust, I've been focusing on the idea of Stewardship and all that it implies.

Stewardship has several different meanings within the context of the Land Trust. At its core, it is monitoring the properties entrusted to our care, enabling us to ensure that they are preserved and protected for the benefit of our community. Earlier this month we held a Stewardship Day: an opportunity for Land Trust members to participate in conducting site visits to all Land Trust properties and to identify any changes to those properties, whether natural or manmade, so that appropriate protective measures (from identifying areas of yard waste disposal to assessing changes in the flora and fauna) can be taken. Our goal is to more actively involve our membership in the care of those properties and, more importantly, to give each of us a better sense of ownership of these precious resources.

There is a fiscal aspect of Stewardship that drives us as well. Our members are the foundation of the

successes we have had thus far and this newsletter contains an envelope for those who want to join the Land Trust and for those who renew their membership.

We are also expanding our outreach program to those in the Cheshire community who may have resources at their disposal which could allow the Land Trust to acquire properties, either through outright acquisition or through the facilitation of conservation easements. Keeping a family farm safe from the vagaries of probate through the timely establishment of a conservation easement not only protects the resource but could provide valuable tax benefits. (Listen to your heart but always consult your tax advisor). Our Strategic Plan has identified a goal of developing materials that would assist those who might be considering some form of conservation protection and I expect that we will be making some headway over the coming year to make those resources available as well as providing information forums on this subject.

The last, but certainly not least, aspect of Stewardship is YOU. All that the Land Trust does is empowered by you, 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. It is equally important to identify prospective members of the Board of Directors. Several members of our Board were recruited by the original founders of the Land Trust and they have been instrumental in keeping all of us aware of the history and goals of the organization. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that our successors are equally versed in our rich history. Our newest Board member, Mark Kasinskas is only the latest example of those efforts.

The Board understands 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**

## New Barn for Ives

*Continued from page 4*

the community and to our membership for additional financial support of this project. We are committed to finishing the barn so it can be of productive use this farming season.

CLT thanks the Town for its support of our grant application. In his letter of support, Gerald Sitko, Cheshire Economic Development Coordinator, wrote *"The Ives Farm is a beautiful property with enormous potential. It is currently farmed by T&D Growers, a cutting edge and forward thinking agricultural concern. Ives Farm is now a popular destination, not only for Cheshire residents but for those from surrounding towns. T&D is currently planning to expand and enhance the operation of Ives Farm. These plans will lead to additional home grown food products and employment and educational opportunities in agriculture. In addition, T&D currently does business with Bozzuto's, a large and local food distributor, and hopes to build relationships with other Cheshire companies."*

The matching Farm Viability Grants, which are capped at \$49,999, were funded by fees collected by city and town clerks for the recording of all documents into municipal land records.

### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

**Grow with us and help us grow.** It's time to renew your membership. The membership year is from 4/1/12 to 3/31/13. 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.

### SEEN AROUND TOWN OPEN SPACE

Coyotes, Beavers, Turkey Vultures, Squirrels (Black, Gray & Red), Deer, more Deer, Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-Tailed Hawk, Otter, raccoons, Muskrat, Swan, Turkeys, Wood Duck, Canada Geese, Great Blue Heron, Common Merganser, American Kestrel, Weasels.

## 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 29<sup>th</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>Janice Bryden</b>
Vice President	<b>Sam Waldo</b>
Treasurer	<b>David Schrumm</b>
Secretary	<b>Tim Slocum</b>

<b>Art Crooker</b>	2012-2015
<b>Eleanor DeVane</b>	2012-2015
<b>Amy Casavina Hall</b>	2012-2015

Jim Mertz	2011-2014
Rick Marinaro	2011-2014
Mark Kasinkas	2011-2014

John Hilzinger	2010-2013
Larry Piviroto	2010-2013
Kevin Wetmore	2010-2013

## BRYDEN TAPPED AS NEW PRESIDENT

**Janice Bryden** joined the CLT board in 2008. She has brought energy and enthusiasm to the board as we have developed programs for public outreach in the community. She welcomes her new role and sees the next year as a very exciting time for public engagement as CLT begins the new barn construction project at Ives and as we embark on seeking more public participation in the stewardship of our properties. She takes over for **Sam Waldo** who has served as president the past two years. Sam will remain on the board as vice-president.

## NEW BOARD MEMBER

**Amy Casavina Hall** is Sr. Director, Income and Health Initiatives at United Way of New Haven. We will tap into her wealth of experience focused specifically in the nonprofit sector. Amy brings to the board expertise gained from initiating and managing funding opportunities that support civic and nonprofit organizations.

## ORCHARD FARMING IN CHESHIRE

---

### Farmers' Forum

by Tim Slocum

This year the Land Trust continues its series on local farms with a focus on orchards in Cheshire. The forum will feature, Tim Perry, Norton Brothers Fruit Farm, Gordon Drazen of Drazen Orchards, and Fred and Lynn Kudish of Hickory Hill Orchards.

---

Apples have been cultivated here and across America since colonial times. Sour apples grown in orchards were necessary for hard cider and applejack, an important staple for early Americans. Cheshire was a prominent agricultural town for well over 150 years. For generations apples and peaches were foremost among the fruits grown here.

And so wrote Mark Bishop in 1935 as he gave an account of Cheshire farming then, *"In 1825, the North Hampton Canal was dug through Cheshire and proved to more of a boom to the mining in the town than to agriculture although some mention is made of transporting corn and cider. The first settlers planted a few trees about their homes; these flourished as Cheshire soil in a red sandstone hardpan is especially adapted to fruit growing, so naturally these small orchards were extended, but in the middle of the 19th century the market for fresh fruit being limited to home use, cider mills sprang up in all parts of the town."*

*Fruit growing commercially has superseded the old home orchards and according to the last census there are about twenty-two thousand apple and seven thousand peach trees in town."*

Today there remain remnants of orchards that crisscrossed our town and even a few street names that evoke the affection for fruit in streets named Cortland Circle, Applewood Drive, Bishop Lane, Orchard Hill Rd, Norton Lane, Judson Court and even Norton School.

While an exact town-wide inventory of fruit trees isn't available according to their website there are 9,000 fruit trees at **Norton Brothers Fruit Farm**.

This historic 35 acre farm has been a prominent fixture along Academy and Wiese Road since 1750. In 1959 the sprawling 130 acre farm spanned both sides of Academy Rd. The Norton family sold off a lot of the land, abandoned dairy farming and switched to apple and fruit growing.

Today the farm is owned by Judson Norton's three daughters. Sisters Judy Hall, Phyllis Perry and her husband Tom and their son Tim run the operation, which is a seven day affair for much of the year. The inventory of trees now includes 2,100 blueberry bushes. The popular farm stand is open from early June to December.

**Hickory Hill Orchards** on South Meriden Rd is part of Cheshire's "Apple Row" along Route 70 that includes Norton Brother's Fruit Farm and Bishop Farms. Since 1977 Hickory Hill Orchards' has cultivated over twenty varieties of pick your own apples, pears, nectarines and peaches on 33 acres of gently rolling hills. The orchard also grows acres of pumpkins, gourds, Indian corn, and corn stalks.

On fall weekends their Country Store is a Cheshire favorite featuring fruit, fresh baked pies and baked goods, cider donuts, fresh cider and pumpkins.

Set on 27 acres, **Drazen Orchards** on Wallingford Road is surrounded by handsome residential developments. To be sure these homeowners must love their apple growing neighbor, whose scenic orchards grace and enhance their neighborhoods. David Drazen purchased the orchard in 1951. In those days orchard trees were large and tall, and harvesting required skilled pickers. His son Gordon Drazen became early adapter of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) which helps to grow fruit with the most natural means possible.

Like many growers, Drazen Orchards has replanted the entire orchard over the past two decades in a compact style utilizing a trellis support system which allows for maximum sunshine, optimal flavor and quality. To the casual observer there are perhaps as many as 5 times the trees per acres, which have led to more productive use of the land.

**For much more on Cheshire orchards come to the Forum March 29<sup>th</sup>.**