



PECONIC LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

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JULY 1990



Quail Hill Preserved

The piece of land known as Quail Hill has been a popular sledding spot for generations of Amagansett residents. Due to an agreement worked out recently after three years of planning between the property's owner, Deborah Ann Light, and the Peconic Land Trust, it will remain a winter recreation spot and be enjoyed by nature lovers in other seasons too for many more generations.

"The agreement is the most creative piece of work I've ever seen," said Ms. Light. "What we've

done here is a great example of an opportunity available to other property owners who want their lands preserved and protected."

"We have created the best of both worlds at Quail Hill," said John Halsey, president of the Trust. "We have provided the owner with a benign means of realizing her equity in the land while preserving the essence of the site."

The disposition of Quail Hill serves as perhaps the most striking example of what the combined efforts of the Trust and a property owner can accomplish. Ms. Light

purchased the 30-acre parcel in 1967, when it was called Hilly Close. She changed the name back to Quail Hill after seeing that designation on a map dating back to 1690, and because "there are still quails around. You can hear them at night and there's a covey across the road." Ms. Light was concerned about the property remaining in a natural state indefinitely. If she kept it as private property, eventually her heirs would be hit with a large inheritance tax bill, and if she sold it, another scenic piece of East End property would become history.

continued on page 3



Organic Growing in Gansett

On Side Hill Lane in Amagansett a new adventure in agriculture has begun on five acres -- Promised Land Farm managed by Bob Willett of the Peconic Land Trust. Planting began in late March and already lettuce and other greens have been harvested.

This is not the typical farm. All the 36 varieties of vegetables are being grown using biodynamic techniques with no pesticides and only organic fertilizers. In this age of daily revelations about lack of food quality, consumers have the "promise" that this farm's produce is free of contaminants and is high in nutrition.

Who are the consumers? For the most part they are people who have purchased shares in the farm, 75 shares at a cost of \$500 each (\$100 of which is a one-time membership fee). Over the course of a seven-month growing season, shareholders (comprising two adults

and two children each) are entitled to harvest weekly allotments of vegetables on Tuesdays or Saturdays. Shareholders do not have to tend the field, but volunteer efforts are welcome. Also, during the season shareholders can participate in a variety of celebratory events -- dances, potluck meals, concerts, etc.

In addition to growing high-quality organic food, the Trust hopes people will visit the farm to learn about biodynamics. For example, one morning a week there will be a gardening program for children. During these sessions youngsters will cultivate their own section of the field, and with each harvest, they will experience the satisfaction of eating the fruits and vegetables of their labor! In the future the farm intends to have livestock, chickens, and honey bees present.

There are no longer shares available for this year, but next

The President's Column

Almost two years ago, the Peconic Land Trust issued its first newsletter. Having been swamped with work in the interim, we have finally come up with a new method and format to keep you abreast of our work. Rather than try to tell you everything, we have decided to focus on one project, one area at a time. Thus, this newsletter's setting is East Hampton Town where Trust activities are expanding. For example, the Trust has been asked to assist in the implementation of the Town's Open Space Program. Randy Parsons, who serves as a consultant to the Trust, has been most helpful in this regard.

Not to worry, we are active in other towns, too. With the able help of Tom and Nancy Clavin, we expect to bring you news of our varied projects throughout Long Island on a regular basis.

Spring is the time of the Trust's Peconinic. This year, Mrs. Charles G. Halsey graciously offered her home in Water Mill for what was indeed a pleasurable afternoon. Caroline Doctorow and her band provided the day's entertainment and the food, as always, was as varied as the Trust's supporters. Our next newsletter will include coverage of this event.

Summer is fundraising time . . . the Trust will once again have a Challenge Grant. This year, several of our supporters have pledged \$100,000 to the Trust if we can match that amount by September 30. With your help, I am certain we can meet this challenge and continue to underwrite our conservation work. Not that the Challenge is the only way to help the Trust. We welcome volunteers as well.

Finally, I want to thank Ngaere Zohn for the inspiration for the Trust's new and improved newsletter! And Pingree Louchheim for the beautiful photos! Until next time . . .

February there will most likely be shares available for the 1991 season. If you would like to be part of something special, call the Trust at (516) 267-8492 or (516) 283-3195.

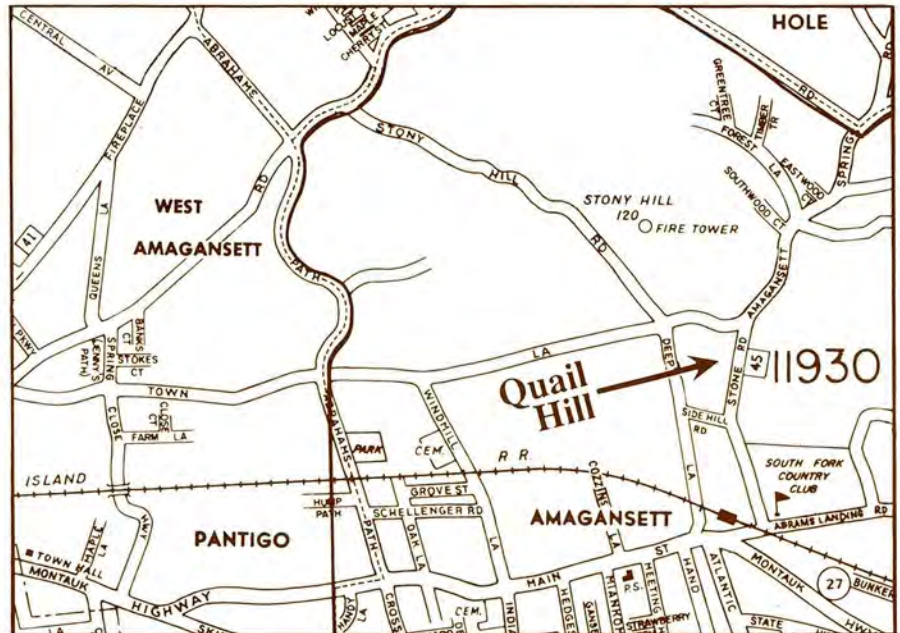
Quail Hill

continued from page 1

The Peconic Land Trust had a number of alternatives to offer. After the planning and negotiating stages were completed, the property was subdivided. Ms. Light sold 10 acres encompassing the two existing residences and donated the other 20 to the Trust. The purchasers (who as children spent the summers in Springs) have said they plan to keep their portion of the property as is. Of the 20 donated acres, the Trust has given a conservation easement to East Hampton Town on five acres of pristine forest which will never be developed.

The remaining 15 acres contain an old shop building, an apple orchard, an uncultivated field, and the popular sledding hill. "There is a visual sweep to this property that I wanted future generations to enjoy," Ms. Light said. "The way the East End has been developed, I was concerned there might come a time when children here didn't know what an expanse like an open field looks like. This is the kind of situation the Trust specializes in."

Other than an esthetic one, what is the value of such a transaction to a property owner? The Quail Hill agreement serves as an example: Ms. Light derived income from the sale of the 10 acres. Offsetting the



capital gains tax on her profit is the tax relief from donating 20 acres to a nonprofit organization like the Trust which, in addition, will manage the property. Thus the community is enhanced by open space for its enjoyment in perpetuity and the owner has the satisfaction of knowing the land will be preserved without her having to bear a financial loss.

"This arrangement removes the burden you have when you're responsible for land yet want to do other things with your life," Ms. Light said. "I know now that Quail Hill will go on and be safe from development."

Cat Donates \$1,000 To Trust

Thanks to Steve the cat, the Trust's coffers are \$1,000 richer.

Steve was one of the many strays at Iacono's chicken farm on Long Lane in East Hampton. Steve was rescued from this precarious existence by television producer Lorne Michaels, who adopted him.

Under Michael's care, Steve blossomed into a handsome cat. His owner found out about a contest conducted by the Ralston-Purina Company, which was looking for photographs of cats for a calendar. Steve's photo was sent to the company, and it was one of a dozen selected. Steve's award was \$3,000, to be divided among three charities. One of those selected was the Trust.

Thanks to Steve and Lorne Michaels for thinking of us.

IT'S A CHALLENGE... TO RAISE \$200,000 BY SEPTEMBER 30, 1990!

Several of our supporters have pledged a total of \$100,000 if the Trust can match that amount by September 30, 1990. Please support our conservation work by responding as generously and as quickly as possible! Thank you very much!

\$5000 ___ \$2500 ___ \$1000 ___ \$500 ___ \$250 ___ \$100 ___ \$50 ___ \$25 ___ Other ___

Name _____

Address _____

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A copy of the last financial report filed with the Department of State may be obtained by writing to: 1) New York State, Department of State, Office of Charities Registration, Albany, N.Y. 12231, or 2) Peconic Land Trust, P.O. Box 2088, Southampton, N.Y. 11968.



Historic Lore

It might seem to some that the conflict between development and preservation is a recent issue. But the origins began over a century ago when the area first became popular as a "summer colony."

Take East Hampton, for example. Well into the 1800s it was still a rural area whose economy was based on agriculture. In 1810 there were only 80 houses (and two schoolhouses) in the village. Lyman Beecher (a preacher for whom the Beecher House on Main Street is named, and father of Harriet Beecher Stowe of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" fame) described East Hampton as having "the plainest farm houses, standing directly on the street, with the wood pile by the front door, and the barn close by . . . the road consisted of two ruts worn through the green turf for the wheels and two narrow paths for the horses ."

However, this rusticity began to change in the 1850s when New Yorkers discovered the village as a vacation spot, paying seven dollars a week for boarding-house rooms. In the 1870s the area was then discovered by artists, and the paintings they did during their summer visits attracted more attention to the scenic beauty of this area. And instead of paying rent, some visitors decided to build second homes.

The first summer home built in East Hampton is generally considered to be "Sommariva," constructed by C.P.B. Jeffery in 1873. Fifteen years later a summer home was built on the dunes of Georgica Pond. By the 1890s real estate had become an industry, with brokers advertising farmland as suitable for development. Thirty acres went for \$3,000. A Queen Anne house on 10 acres went for \$24,000.

What propelled the boom was the arrival of the Long Island Rail Road in East Hampton in 1895. Now people could get to the village rather quickly and more farmland was turned into estates. Before the turn of the century over 90% of the village was cultivated. Today, less than 5% of the land grow crops.

In June, the first white, star-shaped potato blossoms appeared, other crops have flourished, and summer residents have opened their homes. There is room for all of them if the kind of careful planning is done now that a century ago wasn't given enough thought.

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*"Shall I not have intelligence
with the earth? Am I not
partly leaves and vegetable
mould myself?"*

— Henry David Thoreau


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