



## PECONIC LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

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DECEMBER 1991



*Photo by Pingree Louchheim*

### Stony Hill Woods Preserved

During the last few years, the destiny of Amagansett has dramatically changed, yet in a subtle way. Main Street still looks much the same. Development in residential sections has been minimal, in part due to the sluggish real-estate market. Most significant of all, however, is the fact that North Amagansett has hardly changed and is not likely to do so in the years to come.

This is because in recent years nearly a dozen tracts, encompassing nearly 500 acres, have been preserved through various means, and they have been forever protected from development. The most recent example is the most striking one: the preservation of over 200 acres in the Stony Hill Woods area of Amagansett.

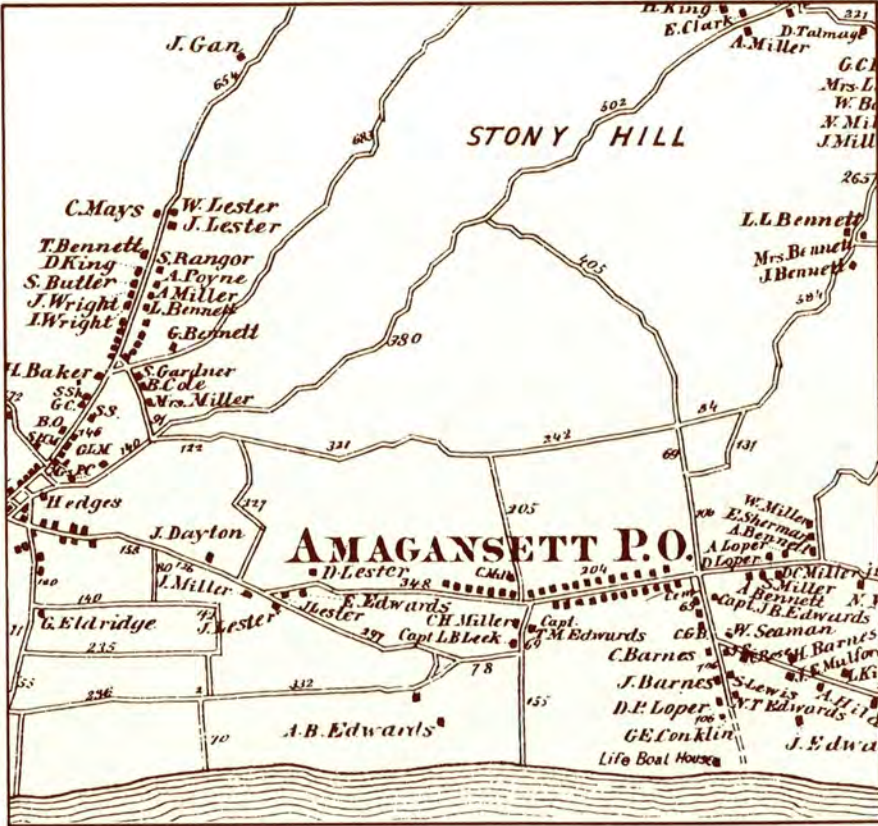
A unique aspect of this preservation effort, arranged by the Peconic Land Trust, is that it resulted from the combination of public and private conservation efforts, and it illustrates how government, a private conservation organization, and landowners can work together harmoniously toward a common goal.

During a news conference at the offices of the Peconic Land Trust in October, Suffolk County Executive Patrick Halpin announced the purchase of 44 acres of woodland in Stony Hill Woods. The land was bought using funds from the County's Watershed Protection Program. This program derives its funds through the quarter-cent sales tax approved by the County Legislature and in

a public referendum in 1987 and again in 1988.

Along with the County Executive's announcement, the Peconic Land Trust announced that Margaret de Cuevas and Deborah Carmichael had pledged to preserve 164 acres by donating conservation easements to the Trust on land adjacent to the County acquisition. A conservation easement is a perpetual restriction on the use of land. The donor continues to own the land, but gives up the right to develop it. The donor is entitled to a charitable gift equal to the difference in the value of the land before and after the conservation easement is granted. In addition, conservation easements often reduce property taxes and the value of land for estate tax

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Stony Hill as seen in an 1873 map.

## Stony Hill Woods *continued from cover*

purposes.

These parcels join others in Amagansett protected by the Trust through a variety of methods including testamentary gifts (Deborah Ann Light), donations of conservation easements (John de Cuevas), purchases (Bistrian family), and donations of land (Deborah Ann Light). The cumulative impact is that a large portion of North Amagansett's remaining open space will be preserved for the future.

"Through these methods, we have protected a tremendous amount of land at very little cost to the public," said John Halsey, President of the Trust. "Now consider the fact that 200 acres of Stony Hill Woods are being preserved privately in a wonderful blend with the County's Watershed Protection Program. The County purchase has been leveraged in a very significant way."

The recession has taken its toll on the Watershed Protection Program because the County's sales tax revenues have been much less than anticipated at the program's inception. By blending public acquisitions with private conservation techniques when feasible, it's possible to stretch the limited public funds.

"In order to make the most of the Watershed Protection Program in 1992, we must look for opportunities to

leverage the County's funds," Halsey said. "By carefully prioritizing acquisitions and working with landowners of key parcels, it is possible to preserve land without purchasing it in its entirety."

The Stony Hill Woods project has clearly demonstrated the ability of the Peconic Land Trust to help achieve the goals of Suffolk County's Watershed Protection Program. Today's successes will influence tomorrow's preservation efforts.

"I firmly believe that what happened at Stony Hill Woods will be a prototype of land preservation efforts in the future," said County Legislator Fred Thiele. "Sales tax revenues are dwindling, but the urgency to protect open space isn't. The county has seen that by working with the Peconic Land Trust, public funds are going to go much farther and will have a ripple effect on private land owners."

"The Trust's involvement in the Stony Hill Woods area has been extremely effective," said Arthur Kunz, Director of the Suffolk Planning Department. "With this acquisition, we've tapped into a vital water supply that will benefit the entire area. The relatively few dollars that were invested have been stretched much further to protect a large expanse of open space that people will enjoy forever."

## President's Column

Another year, another acre. It is only fitting that our final 1991 newsletter focus on Amagansett, the hamlet in East Hampton Town in which the Trust will protect nearly two hundred acres as a result of three conservation easements by year-end. From the Atlantic Ocean to Stony Hill Woods, three families will assure the protection of land we all cherish. On behalf of the Trust, I want to thank the following individuals without whom these gifts would not have been possible: Margaret de Cuevas, John de Cuevas, Deborah Carmichael, Christophe de Menil, Taya Allison, Manon Potter, Job Potter, and Gayle Potter Basso. May your examples inspire others!

The Trust has also received conservation easements elsewhere on Long Island in 1991. Evelyn Lawrence of the Village of Head of the Harbor in Smithtown has donated an easement on a 45-acre parcel overlooking Stony Brook Harbor. Bingham Morris has donated an easement on 8 acres of watershed land in Southampton.

In addition, the Trust is working on a number of limited development projects in the Towns of East Hampton, Southampton and Southold which will result in the conservation of significant natural features and farmland. You will hear more about these projects in 1992.

Thanks to all of you who support the work of the Trust. While we have accomplished so much in a short time, there is much more to do. On behalf of the staff and Board of the Trust, I wish you all the best of Holidays and a Happy New Year!

John v.H. Halsey, President



## Santa's Corner

Even the Peconic Land Trust believes in Santa Claus!

As proof, here is the list prepared by the Trust for Santa himself:

40 - 50 hp John Deere tractor  
a manure spreader  
a 7' brush hog

If any of you Trust supporters feel "Santa-like," a donation of the above or funds towards the above would be most welcome.

Ho, Ho, Ho!



Above: Trust President John v. H. Halsey (left) and guest speaker Robert L. Bendick, Jr. at the Trust's annual dinner. At right: Board of Directors members (L-R front row) E. Blair McCaslin, President John v.H. Halsey, Elizabeth A. Smith, Lee Foster; (L-R rear row) Thomas B. Williams, Joseph L. Townsend, Jr., Paul Stoutenburgh, Lucy Bradley, Edwin Fishel Tuccio, Roger A. Smith. Not shown: Thomas Wickham, Deborah Ann Light. *Photos by Roger Smith*

## Annual Meeting Held In October

Robert L. Bendick, Jr., Deputy Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, addressed 80 people at the Peconic Land Trust's Annual Dinner on Friday, October 18 at the Indian Cove Restaurant in Hampton Bays.

As Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Bendick oversees the Natural Resources programs of the Department of Environmental Conservation. As such, he is responsible for the management of public lands, land conservation, rivers, forestry, fish and wildlife, and programs related to both marine and mineral resources. Before taking his current position in New York State, Mr. Bendick was director of Rhode Island's comprehensive environmental agency for eight years. He has advised several federal agencies on environmental and natural resources issues. He has also served on numerous boards and commissions including the chairmanship of the Committee on the Environment of the New England Governor's Conference.

"Throughout my career, I have



always looked for opportunities to work cooperatively with private conservation organizations such as the Peconic Land Trust," said Mr. Bendick during his talk. "With the failure of the state bond act at the polls last year, it is clear that we must use creative partnerships to acquire and protect significant natural areas as well our working landscapes." Mr. Bendick went on to describe successful conservation efforts on Block Island. He noted that a number of private conservation organizations worked in concert with the state of Rhode Island to preserve its unique character.

Prior to Mr. Bendick's talk, Mr. Kevin Law, Director of Suffolk County's Division of Real Estate, presented the Peconic Land Trust with a Proclamation of Appreciation on behalf of County Executive Patrick G. Halpin. The proclamation noted the Trust's role in the protection of 200 acres of woodland in the Stony Hill area of Amagansett through a creative blend of public and private conservation techniques —the purchase of 40 acres of land by the County through

its Watershed Protection Program and the donation of a conservation easement on 160 acres to the Peconic Land Trust. Through such partnerships, limited public funds can be stretched to protect more acreage at less cost to the taxpayer.

During the course of the dinner, John v.H. Halsey, President of the Trust, announced the election of new officers of the Trust, as follows: Lee Foster, Chairman; Lucy Bradley, Vice President; Roger A. Smith, Secretary; Joseph L. Townsend, Jr., Treasurer; Elizabeth A. Smith, Assistant Treasurer.

"The East End, in order to remain picturesque and productive, needs the overview of those convinced that there is something worthy of maintaining," said Lee Foster, reflecting on her new role within the Peconic Land Trust. "This point of view demands clear and lucid foresight. Providing the best we have for the future of this region means being informed and involved on as many levels as possible, economic and environmental. Both the Trust and I are committed to the challenge."

## East Hampton Open Space Program Update

While there are no new purchases of development rights on farmland to report since the last Trust newsletter, the East Hampton Town Open Space Program is busy consolidating its recent successes and is poised for new accomplishments.

According to Lisa Liquori, the Director of the Town's Planning Department, town residents recently indicated their full support of the Town's Open Space Program. By a 3 to 1 margin in November's balloting, town residents supported a resolution that would require

a mandatory public referendum and a 4 to 1 majority of the Town Board to alter the use of lands protected by the program.

"That was a very significant outcome," said Liquori. "It means in the future the town cannot balance the budget by selling off open space. We've already set aside 25 percent of the town as open space, and it's very unlikely there will be any reduction down the road."

The lack of recent acquisitions does not mean East Hampton has lost any momentum in its effort to preserve land. Instead, the Town is taking a necessary

breather to arrange for the management of lands it has already placed in the program, and will learn from these efforts how to better manage preserved properties in the future.

"We're very much involved now in preparing and carrying out management plans," Liquori said. "It's a responsibility that has to be addressed and one that we take very seriously. With land management in mind as well as parcels targeted for the future acquisition, East Hampton is entering a whole new phase of land preservation."



Above: Stephen Pharoah, 1819-1879, also known as Stephen Talkhouse. At left: Parsons Mill, built in 1815 and moved to Amagansett in 1829. Below: Main St., Amagansett before 1900, looking east. At right: Arnold Eichorn, Clement Eichorn, David Talmage, Jim Bartlet and Abner King working on an Amagansett farm in Sept. 1939. Below right: Fishermen's shanties at the foot of Atlantic Ave, about 1912.

## Historic Lore

For a brief period after East Hampton was settled in 1648, the land to the east was known as the "Eastern Plain." Then, over the next few decades, this area became known as "Ammogonset," "Ammigansit" and "Amigansit Woods." Thus, the name Amagansett is derived from the Montauk Indian language meaning "drinking place," referring to wells that provided water.

The Indians used Amagansett as hunting grounds, not as a settlement area. Occasionally, a whale washed up on shore, but for the most part game were killed and cut up there, and then the Indians returned to their home in Montauk.

*continued on page 6*



Post Office Building,  
Conklin Co. Store,  
Green Oak Pharmacy,  
Amagansett, L. I.



## Historic Lore

*continued from page 4*

What is now Amagansett Main Street was a path cut through the woods in 1672, and the Colonial inhabitants of East Hampton used the surrounding fields as grazing land for cattle, sheep and pigs. For over 100 years, travel to Montauk was done over the "Old Road," which later was called Bluff Road. The first settlers of Amagansett came from the Baker, Schellinger, Conklin and Barnes families.

As early as 1700, town records refer to Amagansett as a "thriving village." Over 100 years later, there were 30 houses and a schoolhouse located in the center of Main Street. Around this time, the first post office was established in a house belonging to the Talmage family. The first postmaster was Dr. D. B. Van Scoy. The postmaster was also the hamlet's first physician, beginning his practice in 1844.

The Indians had hunted whales from the shore of Amagansett, and in the 19th century the hamlet was home to many whaling captains, who built houses between voyages. Among them were Howell Babcock, Erastus Barnes, Joshua Bennett, Henry Conklin, Eli Edwards, George Hand, Vincent King, Davis Miller and John Stretton. Members of these seafaring families continue to live in Amagansett or in nearby South Shore communities.

One of the area's most well-known residents was a Montauk Indian, Stephen Talkhouse Pharoah. He lived in Hither Hills, and was known for traveling long distances by foot, and quickly too, claiming he could get where he was going faster than by riding a horse. The remaining members of the Pharoah family now live in Sag Harbor, and they also represent, along with the Coopers of Montauk, the present day descendants of the Montauk Indians.

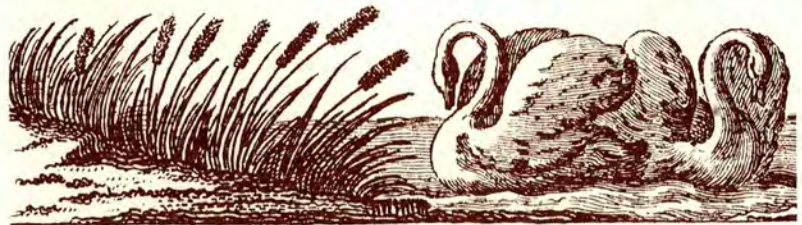
In 1895, the Long Island Rail Road was extended to Amagansett. As with other East End communities, the railroad brought an increasing number of vacationers to the hamlet from New York City. Summer homes were built throughout the 20th century, and gradually Amagansett's economy has become more dependent on its resort appeal than on fishing and farming.

Today, many of Amagansett's inhabitants are seasonal, but the descendants of the early families remain. Much of the hamlet south of Montauk Highway has been developed, yet Main Street has not undergone any dramatic changes in recent years. Happily, many of the fields



and wooded parcels of North Amagansett will remain undeveloped forever thanks to the successes of public and private

conservation efforts. While cattle no longer graze in these historic fields, it's nice to know that they can.



## More Good News in Southold

There was good news in November for conservation-minded residents in the Town of Southold. The Development Rights Bond Act was approved at the polls by Southold voters, which provides the funds necessary for the Town to purchase development rights from farmers and other landowners. The Town expects its program to protect 250 to 300 acres.

"We own the development rights on over 1,200 acres so far, yet there is much more we want to do," said Scott Harris, the Supervisor of Southold Town. "On my wish list is preserving a total of 5,000 acres in the town. With development rights and other programs, if we can reach half that in the foreseeable future we'll have come a long way."

In addition to its own programs, the Town has been identifying parcels eligible for purchase under the County's Watershed Protection Program. Harris said he is a big supporter of the program, but wants to

rectify what he thinks is an oversight. "I'm concerned that, to date, not one dime of watershed money has been spent in Southold," Harris said. "We don't want that trend to continue. We have some important parcels with development pressure on them, so there has to be action soon."

Harris said the area around Laurel lake is extremely important as a potential well site for supplying drinking water in the future to Southold residents. Appraisals of properties are now being completed by Suffolk County and Supervisor Harris is hopeful that the County will make the purchases.

Harris said the Peconic Land Trust has been very helpful with advice, and that the organization is poised to negotiate with developers and landowners. "Negotiations can be stumbling blocks, but with the Trust's experience and expertise in these matters, I'm assured things will work out," the Supervisor said.



## 1991 Land Trust Alliance Conference, Waterville Valley, New Hampshire

While the Peconic Land Trust is unique on Long Island, it is one of 900 land trusts around the country representing over three-quarters of a million supporters. Collectively, land trusts have helped protect over 2.7 million acres of wetlands, wildlife habitats, farmland and open space of all kinds.

This past September, the Land Trust Alliance, the organization that services the nation's land trusts, held its largest land conservation conference yet in New Hampshire's White Mountains. Over 600 volunteers and professionals from across the country attended.

The Peconic Land Trust was well represented by both staff and Board members.

During the five-day conference, the Peconic Land Trust representatives had an opportunity to visit land protection projects in New Hampshire and Vermont, select from 55 workshops and training sessions to augment conservation techniques and skills, and share information with colleagues.

"Though our focus is on Long Island, it is very gratifying to realize that we are part of a national effort," said Paul Stoutenburgh, a Trust Board member. "One of the most striking and encouraging aspects of the conference was the fact



that most of the participants were young people. The conservation efforts of land trusts have a bright future."

The number of land trusts in the U.S. has doubled over the last decade. During the last two years, one new land trust has been formed every five days. The Land Trust Alliance, which provides technical support and guidance to land trusts, was founded in 1982 and is based in Washington D.C.

"Organizations like the Peconic Land Trust succeed because dedicated, knowledgeable people take direct action to protect the open spaces that make Long Island livable," said Jean Hocker, President of the Alliance. "The attendance at the conference was a reflection of land trusts' skill and commitment, which accounts for the unparalleled growth of the trust movement in this country, and beginning in Canada, too."



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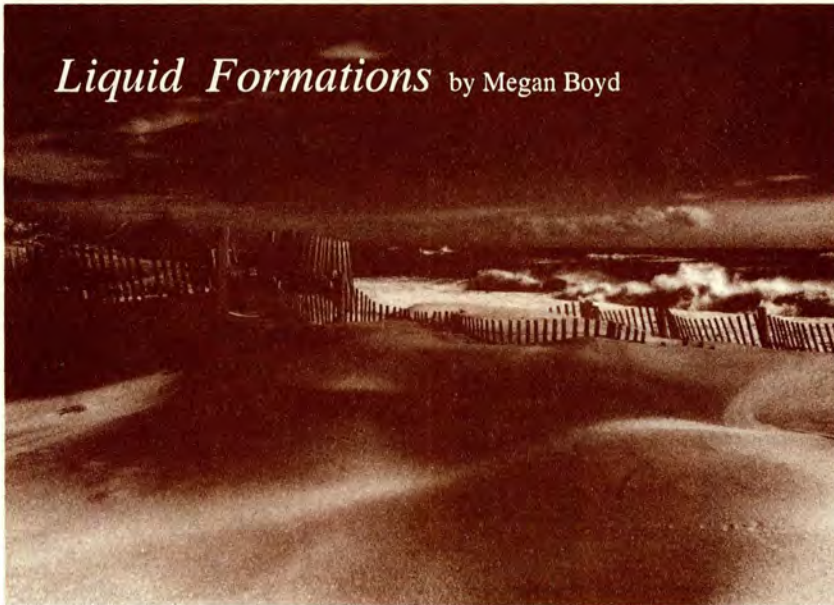


## POSTAL PATRON

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*Photo by Jay Hoops*



### *Liquid Formations* by Megan Boyd

The sure light of the sure day,  
 brass call of geese,  
 liquid formations  
 of communal  
 flight -  
 my heart sure with the one  
 at the pinpoint lead  
 of the  
 "V"  
 my heart sure with each one  
 in its place down  
 the muscle of  
 the group  
 to  
 the last one  
 moving forward  
 with the same grace,  
 as each wing, and all, propel  
 the whole  
 from  
 Canadian tundra  
 to Sagaponack Pond.

#### Mission Statement

The Peconic Land Trust is a non-profit, tax-exempt conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of farmland and open space on Long Island. To this end, the Trust acquires and manages land as well as easements for conservation purposes. In addition, the Trust assists farmers and other landowners in the identification and implementation of alternatives to outright development.

*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.*

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