

The Meadow View



Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc.
Glastonbury, Rocky Hill, Wethersfield, Connecticut

Vol. XXV

Winter 2009

New Trust President is Outdoor enthusiast and defender

by Doug Maine

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Rick Doran has always enjoyed the great outdoors.

Now, as president of the Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc. (GMCT), he's among those responsible for protecting one of the region's great natural resources, the Great Meadows of the Connecticut River.

The Great Meadows is the flood plain and wetland area that borders the Connecticut River in Rocky Hill, Wethersfield and Glastonbury.

Though Mr. Doran lives on the west side of town, he's often been drawn to the river, Rocky Hill's eastern border. The Rocky Hill-Glastonbury Ferry is a regular destination on his bicycle trips; it's five miles downhill to the river and five miles back uphill going home.

GMCT, which has about 250 members, came into being in 1968 to oppose a race track that was proposed in the Wethersfield portion of the meadows. The group was successful in acquiring a strategic parcel, enabling it to thwart the plan.

Currently, "the trust owns and manages through conservation easements properties totaling about 200 acres strategically located in each of the member towns," Mr. Doran said.

"We keep an eye on activity in the Great Meadows and applications for possible development," he said. "It's under constant threat of potential development, all subject to town and state and federal regulation."

Hands-on preservation

GMCT is also a hands-on organization. Volunteers from the group periodically do site cleanups, remove debris and monitor and eradicate invasive plants that could eliminate plants indigenous to the area.

In addition, the trust invites members of the public on site walks, parcel inspections and day hikes of its land holdings,

"That provides a dual purpose. It allows us to get out to perform site inspections of each parcel and it fulfills our non-profit requirement to allow the public to use our land with our supervision," Mr. Doran said.

Cross-country skiing and bird watching also take place on trust properties. Such activities increase the public's appreciation of the meadows as a natural resource, he added.

Ecologically, the importance of the meadows includes its "tremendous impact on flood storage capacity, as well as water quality and cleansing, storm water management," he said.

"We're not going to drink the water directly out of the Connecticut River, but open land serves the purpose of being a filter as (water) runs to the river," he said.

Over the past 60 years, he noted the river has gotten clean enough so that people can fish and swim in it.

The meadows area also serves as a wildlife habitat for a number of species of birds and mammals, some of which are protected. In the past few years, he noted that eagles have come to nest in the trees in the Great Meadows.

As GMCT's president, Mr. Doran said his objectives

See President, p. 6



Photo by Phil Lohman

Building Bridges and Trails

Boy Scouts and dads of Troop 243 pause during the recent walk in the Wood Parcel where they'll be constructing a bridge under the leadership of Eagle Scout candidate Josh Ballestas, on the right, standing behind a couple of his young Scout helpers. The Scouts, armed with temporary bridge and clippers, helped Larry Lunden and Christopher Shephard of the Nature Center lead 25 walkers over the brook, through the tangled wooded areas and out into the Anderson Farm fields beyond.

Brisk Winter Walks 2009 meet the return of Old Man Winter...

Don't Miss GMCT's "mini-Eagle Festival" walks in February!

The ambitious schedule of winter walks put together by Larry Lunden and Jim Woodworth, assisted by Christopher Shephard of the EBWolf Nature Center met up with an old fashioned winter. No balmy 50 degree strolls in the sunshine and mud this year.

Hardy walkers, 60 or so total, so far, many recruited from the Hartford Area Hiking Group (Meetup.com), braved a little ice, a little windchill, a little crust to hike into the meadows from the Ferry Landing (Rocky Hill), the Wood and the Wolf Parcels (Wethersfield), while scheduled hikes into Point Meadow (Glastonbury), and Hockenum Meadows (East Hartford), were canceled due to high water and snow storm conditions.

Meanwhile, Audubon's Annual Eagle Festival was cancelled due to stormy financial times. GMCT's last two walks offer good eagle sighting opportunities. The first, Sat. Feb. 7, 10am, enters the Rocky Hill meadows from Goff Brook Lane to view our new Hayes Parcels. The second enters the Glastonbury meadows to view our Austin and Matava parcels, from Hollister Way North. Immature eagles were observed floating on the ice, fighting over a fish during the Christmas Bird count postponed to Jan. 3. By February our resident eagles are well into home improvements and territorial protection, in preparation for egg laying in mid-March.

Check out www.gmct.org or www.meetup.com/Hartford-Area-Hiking/ for details on these and other hiking opportunities.



Photo by Phil Lohman

The hardy group of Boy Scouts from Troop 243 and Meetup.com learn about farming and stewardship in the late winter's morning shadows reflected in the ice on the edge of the Anderson Farm field.

Saturday, Feb 7, 10 am, Rocky Hill. Meet at the end of Goff Brook La. off of Old Main St. Join Larry Lunden on a long hike to several of our new Hayes parcels in the Rocky Hill Meadows.

Sunday, Feb 15, 1:30 pm, Glastonbury. Meet Larry Lunden at the end of Hollister Way North, off of Main St north of the end of the Route 17 exit ramp. Park at the end near the barn or next to the tennis courts. A short hike to our Austin and Matava parcels in Glastonbury Meadows.

Walks will last 1 to 2 hours. Dress for the weather and ground conditions. Many places will be muddy. Weather and water conditions may revise or cancel. Call the CT Audubon Society for the latest information, 633-8402. Free. Donations will be accepted.

Focus on Stewardship and Education

Volunteers remove invasives, plant natives

Volunteers devoted many hours of work on behalf of the Trust. Along the Cove in the Wolf parcel and De-Mille easement, meadows restoration proceeded with removal of invasive species brush, cut by B&B Landscaping, and chain-sawing and piling of red maples in addition to the ongoing flotsam removal. Discovery of the banded goose was an educational plus, along with the lessons in stewardship and community service.



WHS volunteers check out a goose, banded in Berlin, eaten on the cove.

In the Wood parcel, we planted a garden, under the guidance of volunteer landscape gardener, Kerry Milne, to set off our new signpost, turn-around, and parking area: panicum, echinacea, winterberry holly, beebalm!



Focus on Research

PhD Candidate Jamie Grant has a Thesis

Jamie Grant's program at UConn straddles the disciplines of geography and archeology. By examining cores of sediments buried beneath the flood plain, she can discern the meandering of the river over centuries.

She hopes to show that knowledge of the "geomorphology" of a river will help lead archeologists to likely spots to dig for Native American artifacts.

Under the tutelage of State Archeologist and UConn Professor Nick Bellantoni, she focused her research on the Great Meadows because of the artifacts already found in the largest archeological dig in the state, and the dearth of core data in the flood plain area.





Volunteers working to restore the meadow on the DeMille easement, March 2008. Supported by WHIP grant, GMCT is working to restore the wet meadow habitats and the sweeping view of the 1968 photo of the founders of the Trust on the next page.



Flood Plain Forest Research: 1962 — 2008
Christian O. Marks, Nature Conservancy Forester, and Larry Lunden explore Folly Brook Natural area. Marks is studying flood plain forest in the entire CT River watershed. In 1962, William Neiring, CT College botanist, completed a study of the F. B. N. area.

Folly Brook Update

Written and Illustrated by Eleanor Buck Wolf for the Feb. '92 *Meadowview*

The Great Meadows Conservation Trust owns 13 acres of the Folly Brook Natural Area in Wethersfield. This land was acquired from The Nature Conservancy in 1982. It lies behind the houses along the north end of Hartford Avenue and is bounded by Wethersfield Cove and Folly Brook. Eleanor Wolf reports on a sunny winter's day visit to this fine wooded wetland.

Wethersfield's Town Naturalist Rick Duffy, Peter Revill and I walked the Trust owned section of the Natural Area on December 11, 1991. The southern end was under 5 or 6 feet of water from the Cove. Silver maples, white ash, slippery elm, and black willows are growing vigorously throughout this flood plain. even though it is almost completely inundated when the Connecticut River is above the 10-foot stage.

"The Trust's property is bisected by a line of large trees dividing Hale's Pond' from the slightly higher land to the south which used to be mown once a year for rowen (second growth) hay for bedding down the farm animals. Mowing stopped when tractors replaced horse-drawn mowers and could no longer negotiate the swampy land. Edward Buck, the former owner, used to keep a large board attached to the most westerly of the line of trees. Marked off in elevations, like a thermometer, it kept us informed on the river height's during floods, and could be read even as far away as Hartford Avenue.

Before the days of indoor rinks, and until the Cove froze thick enough to make skating safe, Hale's Pond, only a few feet deep, provided an early place for this popular sport.. Surrounded by woods which protected us from

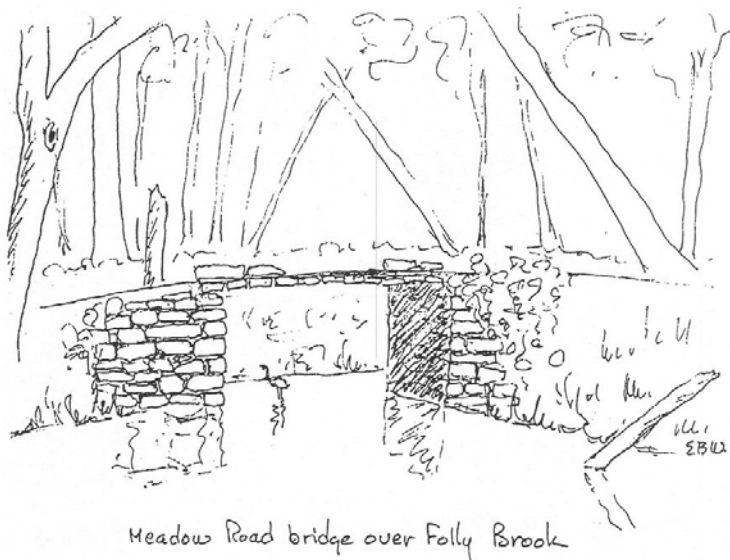
the sharp north winds and large enough for Snap-the-Whip or Informal hockey, it provided many hours of fun. With plenty of dead branches collected from the nearby woods, bonfires helped to keep us warm. Today, scrub and swamp grasses are beginning to fill in Hale's Pond. and muskrats build their houses there.

In the north end of the tract the old meadow road giving access to Hartford's South Meadows, before the dike was built is still visible between the giant maples. However, the little wooden bridge which crossed Folly Brook is long gone, though a few of the field stones which once supported it still cling to the banks.

In the late 1800's, farm owners rechannelled Folly Brook from its old course to the east, to run in a straight line south to the Cove, over the years, the brook has worn itself into a series of curves, undermining trees on its bank—trees which fall across the brook, impeding access to boats, but allowing

mallards, mergansers and occasional black and wood ducks to raise their families in an unpeopled environment. On this morning, a great blue heron flew up ahead of us. We looked for barn owls which have been here and find plenty of nesting holes in the ancient trees. Squirrels, woodchucks, muskrats, grey foxes, deer and coyotes, as well as many small animals, use this habitat undeterred by the virulent ground cover of poison ivy.

"Our walk reinforced our conviction that except for scientific studies such as are now being conducted by The Nature Conservancy the entire 70-acre Folly Brook Natural Area should be reserved for its native inhabitants.



Meadow Road bridge over Folly Brook

GMCT: 40 Years Plus of Dedicating rural landscape, water resources, marshland, swamps, and animal life therein, and unique historic and

Rescuing Connecticut

Russ Brenneman wrote *The Story of Land Saving in CT*

At our Annual Meeting last March, precisely 40 years to the day after the group pictured at right met around Eleanor Wolf's kitchen table to sign the GMCT Certificate of Incorporation, Attorney Russel Brenneman spoke to the assembled members about the history of the environmental movement in our state. Atty. Brenneman's talk, "Rescuing Connecticut--a Story of Land Saving Actions" was based on the chapter he has authored in a book just published by Harvard University Press, *Twentieth Century Land Conservation in New England*.*

Atty. Brenneman traces the beginnings of the environmental movement to a similar group of citizens gathered around a kitchen table in Simsbury in 1875 where the CT Forest and Park Association was first conceived. The landscape of the state had been denuded by agriculture in decline and logging for charcoal.

He writes that were those citizens able look into the future they would conclude that "land conservation over the last century and into this one has been characterized by... collaboration, individual initiative, personal volunteerism, generosity, creative synergy between the role of government and the role of citizens and their organizations." He might have added a synergy between environmental lawyers



Atty. Russell Brenneman spoke to a rapt audience at Audubon Society Glastonbury, March 26, 2008, amid the call of birds in their cages and the beautiful images of the creatures that inhabit the land that he has done so much to save. Attorney Brenneman was "present at the creation" of the Trust 40 years ago, and over his distinguished career, has profoundly influenced

environmental law, institutions and policy in CT and the nation.

like himself and scientists like Dr. Richard Goodwin of CT College, who played an essential role in the formation of The Nature Conservancy, as early president and donator of the first parcel of 56 acres of land to TNC (1956). From this beginning, TNC now protects 117 million acres around the world.

Dr. Goodwin, along with Atty. Brenneman, pioneered the concept of the conservation easement. Thanks to their efforts, local land trusts on the town level began in Connecticut, the GMCT's tri-town scope being unusual. Today there are 128 land trusts protecting 51,000 acres in "fee" and 21,000 through easements in CT and 1500 trusts nation wide.

The parcel we now call the Eleanor Buck Wolf parcel and its neighboring DeMille easement exemplify this development. In 1962, Mrs. Francis Goodwin, then owner of the Buck homestead, donated the parcel to The Nature Conservancy. That same year, CT College botanist William Neiring completed a scientific study of the flood plain forest and marsh of the parcel. In 1981 the DeMille family, new owners of the Buck homestead, donated an easement along the cove to the Trust, and the next year TNC passed stewardship of the parcel on to the GMCT.

**Twentieth Century New England Land Conservation, A Heritage of Civic Engagement*, Edited by Charles Foster, under the Harvard Forest imprint, 2009, \$25.00, available from the CT Forest and Park Association, 16 Meridan Road, Rockfall, CT 06481. www.ctwoodlands.org



The signers of the GMCT Articles of Incorporation standing in Eleanor Wolf's back yard overlooking the Wolf homestead in Glastonbury, CT. From left to right: Eleanor Wolf, Marion Flaherty, Weth., Joe Hickey, Rocky H., Russell Brenneman, Glast., Eleanor

ication— “to the preservation of the swamps, woodland, open spaces, the plant and scenic sites.” – Certificate of Incorporation, March 29, 1968



...ation pose with the newly signed articles in Wethersfield Cove. (left to right) Betty Brown, Eleanor Wolf, Henry Beers, Glast., Felix Montano, Charles Crosier, Rocky H.

Echoes from the Past

Joe Hickey remembers: The Founding & the Race Track

As a rare surviving GMCT founder, I have been dragooned into reminiscing about the now almost legendary roots of our organization some 40 years ago. Though then a young newcomer to Wethersfield, I foresaw development threats to the Great Meadows, the largest floodplain

in Connecticut along the Connecticut River, but located so close to Hartford itself. In the pre-Earth Day period, there was no effective floodplain regulation beyond floodproofing requirements, if any. Thus eventual development proposals seemed inevitable.

One day I met with Eleanor Wolf, a respected community leader, and expressed my concern and the need to fill the existing vacuum. Eleanor agreed and the then rare idea of a multi-town land trust was proposed. Fortunately Eleanor had the regional reputation and personal connections, perhaps through the League of Women Voters, which I lacked. Thus a group of interested people coalesced, meeting at Eleanor's house, enjoying her gracious hospitality as we then did for many years.

Several Glastonbury names which come to mind include Betty Brown, {Glastonbury} Conservation Commission Chair and Activist in establishing Williams Park, and Henry Beers, retired President of Aetna Insurance, notable for running a tight, efficient meeting and obviously unaccustomed to suffering fools gladly. Rocky Hill provided Charles Crosier, former owner of the old Duke of Cumberland Inn and Felix Montano, CB&T Banker

and skilled gardiner. Other early members included Duffy Schade, Marion Flaharty, and Peter and Ellie Revill. We were also able to obtain the legal assistance of Russ Brenneman, recognized conservation attorney and Glastonbury resident.

With the Trust established, regular meetings began. At one, a local farmer questioned our purpose since the land was already “in good hands.” Politely, I said why although privately I thought that someday someone will offer you a million dollars and you'll have “round heels” like so many others who talk a good line (Subsequently, that happened with the failed horsetrack scheme discussed below, which he actively supported.)

Several years later, a major horsetrack-marina-hotel proposal emerged that would require diking the entire Wethersfield Meadows East of I-91 and north of Elm Street. Yours Truly was able to get guest editorials in both the Wethersfield/Rocky Hill and the Glastonbury weeklies, decrying the environmental impact as well as civic impact (“Our town would end up like Revere, Mass., in the hands of Mafia.”).

The resulting furor caused a citizen backlash but also a personal occupational backlash at DEP (my employer).

A citizens' committee, ably led by Paul Marianella, then decided to keep me sub rosa and proposed to collect over 10,000 names in opposition and mount a strong anti-track campaign, highlighted by Eleanor Wolf obtaining GMCT title to the Standish tract, the only possible entry point into the proposed development area! Seeing her testimony on this point at the Planning and Zoning Hearing and the resulting scurrying about of assorted hired gun attorneys and consultants resembled nothing less than a disturbed anthill! In the end, the proposal was denied and GMCT was well-launched as a significant Meadows entity and a player in its future.

Seeing [Eleanor Buck Wolf's] testimony ... and the resulting scurrying about of assorted hired gun attorneys and consultants resembled nothing less than a disturbed anthill!

New owners intent on re-opening “former” Rocky Hill dump

By Ed Chiucarello & Jim Woodworth

Proposals by Meadows Properties LLC, to reopen the former Rocky Hill dump have raised alarms about unwanted development in the meadows. GMCT has joined with the Town of Rocky, The Rocky Hill Historical Society (RHHS), and the Riverfront Preservation Society (RFPS), a neighborhood group, to oppose a series of dump proposals.

The “former dump,” is located just northwest of Ferry Park and the homes on Meadow Road. Goff Brook and the CT River, in flood stage, flow back and forth along its northern edge. It comprises 13 acres of land that is down the hill and across the RR tracks from Quarry Park, and south of GMCT’s DePaola property. This 40 foot high plateau, formed by dump material, lying atop fields farmers still remember cutting, has been reclaimed by nature after its closing two decades ago, with grass giving way to forest.

LLC principals Robert Greco and Greg Lichatz, through their counsel Attorney George, first proposed a plan to “fill and grade the dump with 417,465 cubic yards of material” to “repair the cap.” Vociferous opposition at the public hearing in July, recalled the catastrophic fire that caused the closing in 1981, pointed out the disruption so many truckloads of fill would cause to roads, and questioned the rationale for the need to “repair the cap” with 20 feet of

President, from p. 1

include maintaining its mission of preserving the meadows for agriculture, passive non-motorized recreation, hunting, fishing, wildlife habitat, flood storage, history and archaeological study.

“I want to continue to network with other preservation organizations: the rod and gun club, recreation groups and educational institutions, to enjoy and protect the Connecticut River through recreation and stewardship,” he said.

Mr. Doran said he would like to expand GMCT’s outreach efforts by building coalitions, encouraging collaboration and educating the public about the meadows.

Such groups include the CT River Heritage Trail, CT Water Trails Assoc., American Kestrel Nest Box Program, Rivers Alliance of CT, CT River Assembly, CT Land Conservation Council, National Parks Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance, and National Fish & Wildlife Refuge. “Hunting and game clubs in each town share space with us and we permit them to hunt on our trust properties,” Mr. Doran said. “In return, they perform a monitoring or stewardship activity to be sure nothing untoward is being done on the property.”

He added “we try to be good neighbors as well as mutual stewards of the Great Meadows and that is done in conjunction with recognizing the value of the farming land owners and their needs and use of the Great Meadows.”

As for the existing Motocross track in the Rocky Hill meadows, Mr. Doran said he would not like to see it expand beyond its current footprint “because it’s a bone of contention among landowners and neighbors of the Great Meadows.”



Dredging to keep the Oldest Ferry from running aground for Wethersfield’s 375th Celebration.

material. The proposal was withdrawn.

Meadows Properties LLC’s second proposal, to reopen the dump for the temporary storage of 5,000 cubic yards of dredged material from the Ferry Landings, was also withdrawn.

The substantial investment by Meadows Properties, LLC, makes it highly likely they will continue to seek ways to utilize their property for profitable industrial uses even though it is located in a flood plain zone, a historic district, an important wildlife area, and accessible only by residential or dirt roads. The GMCT, the RFPS, RHHS and RH town leaders will continue to be vigilante. Please join us to protect the meadows from unwanted development. Those who are interested in learning more should contact Ed Chiucarello (Lexarded@cox.net) or 563-7833.

A town resident for more than 30 years, Mr. Doran grew up in southwestern Connecticut and worked in the insurance industry for 25 years before exploring other options, ending up in prescription pharmaceutical sales.

For the past 10 years, he’s served on the town’s open space and conservation commission. He is also a member of the zoning board of appeals, insurance committee and the town council’s land acquisition and farmland preservation subcommittee.

Mr. Doran said the subcommittee is “trying to instill public concern, public awareness and public action for the preservation of farmland throughout Rocky Hill.”

Funding for that purpose is needed. “The citizens of our town are at the point where we need to take action so that funds are available if, or when, a critical or strategic parcel comes up for sale,” he said.

“In Wethersfield and Glastonbury, (GMCT’s) two other member towns, they set aside funds through bond referendums for future land purchases,” he added.

He joined the land trust, a private non-profit organization, about four years ago. His appreciation of the outdoors “goes back to boyhood, hiking, biking, camping and more recently kayaking on the Connecticut River,” he said.

“There always was a great human use of these resources,” Mr. Doran said, noting that archaeological digs in the meadows have found evidence of human activity going back to the 1200s. But if humans build on them, he said such resources will be gone forever.

Anderson Farms –

Food from flood plain to farm stand and market for five generations

by Jim Woodworth

When I was a kid in the '50's cutting through the Anderson Farm on my way to Welles School, David Anderson was already working on the family farm he's managed since the spring of 1960.

David's great grandfather James R. Anderson, born in Scotland, married Hannah Welles in New Orleans, and their son James found his way back to the Welles homestead on Broad Street in Wethersfield. The farm prospered under Anderson's management, and he replaced the 18th Century farm house with the magnificent Victorian home that forms the backdrop to the Anderson Farm stand.

...summer supper isn't complete without steaming ears of butter 'n sugar, silver queen, bodacious.

The early prosperity was based on red onions and tobacco. David remembers cows being herded from a pasture across Broad Street to the barn, and delivering truck loads of vegetables to the State Prison cannery, but today the farm's bountiful produce is eagerly eaten fresh.

A 21st Century summer supper isn't complete without steaming ears of butter 'n sugar, silver queen, or odacious, a fresh salad of butter crunch lettuce, radishes, scallions, tomatoes, peppers, and a side dish of beets, string beans, or broccoli, grown on the fertile flood plain soils of Wethersfield.

In addition to the field along side the house, and the hot houses for bedding plants and early tomatoes, fields of Anderson crops stretch along the fertile "plains" above the spring freshet level between Elm Street and the Beaver Brook marsh, and far into the meadows along the river, including over 80 acres of sweet corn.

Six acres of this sweet corn is grown on our Wood parcel, leased from GMCT, contributing to our stewardship funds. David has generously agreed to plant a strip of grass along the marsh side of his Elm Street fields that will serve as a walking path.

David and his nephews Craig and Chris Anderson combine generations of farming experience with the latest scientific agricultural practices. They use IPM or "Integrated Pest Management" so they can achieve the highest quality and best yield with the least amount of fertilizer and disease and pest control chemicals.

Wonder how the Andersons keep a continuous supply of corn from July to October? Read Chris Anderson's paper "Scheduling Sweet Corn Plantings

the Anderson Farm Way," on the UConn website. Take the soil temperature in the field, calculate "Growing Degree Days." The result? "The roadside stand was continually full with premium sweet corn. We did not have to shop any extra crops out of state (to fill a gap) or take a lower price for them (when two plantings ripen at once)."

This past growing season Mother Nature's blessing of record rainfall produced over 16,000 burlap bags of sweet corn, along with acres of beets, beans, strawberries, tomatoes, lettuce, and more, enjoyed not only by satisfied customers at the stand, but trucked twice a week to Rogers Orchards, five days a week at booth #13 at the farmers market in Hartford, or from 10 different farm stands that pick up at the farm from as far away as Charlestown, RI.

Generations of teenagers have worked the Anderson

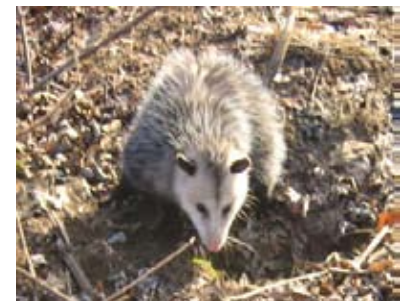


Spinach, planted in October, "hibernates" over the winter to be the first fresh green of the summer... don't miss the May crop of Anderson spinach.

The 'possum doesn't hibernate so he catches some December afternoon rays outside his winter den on the edge of the field in the bank above the marsh.

stand, helped out in the fields, along with several American field hands, but, like most farms in the U.S., the Andersons depend on seasonal workers.

Five men spend their summers in Wethersfield tending and harvesting vegetables for our tables under the U.S. Department of Labor's H2A program, and their winters back home in Jamaica. The paper work, especially after 911, is daunting, but David takes good care of his workers, and they return the favor. Some years ago, David traveled to Jamaica to stand up as best man for Michael Walker, one of his long time Jamaican employees.





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Meadowview under new management—
The Meadowview was launched in February 1989 with this message from President Frank Child:

“This is the first of our newsletters of which we expect to send you two or three a year. We hope that these opportunities to communicate with our friends and with our members will keep you better informed about the details of the operation of the Trust. We’d like your opinion... and hope you will contribute news and views.”

Beginning with this issue, I hope to continue this tradition, so ably carried on by Duffy Schade and her predecessors, to promote the goals of the Trust through this publication and our website.

Thanks go to Phil Lohman for the forward-looking scroll, and several photos. —Jim Woodworth
email: info@gmct.org – www.gmct.org

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