

RATTLESNAKE GUTTER TRUST

NEWSLETTER

***EAST LEVERETT MEADOW PRESERVED
IMPORTANT CORNER OF LEVERETT TO BE KEPT OPEN***

If you look at the topographical map of Leverett, you might note that there are few areas that are not dense with contour lines. Rattlesnake Gutter, for example, is a crease between closely-drawn elevations representing the northwestern flank of Brushy Mountain and the southeastern side of Jackson Hill. There the number of feet above sea level increases from 450 to almost 900 in a short distance, most dramatically at the cliffs on both ends. Long Hill rises over 200 feet above Leverett Pond, most sharply on its southern face. Most of town is hilly and forested.

On the map, flat areas are free of contour lines and stand out as blank spots, usually crossed by streams. The largest of these areas are the fields along Long Plain Road, the wooded marshes on the east side of Montague Road

along Doolittle Brook, and, there in the southeastern corner of town, the area now called East Leverett Meadow. Thirty acres of land, primarily grassy meadow, stretch west from the intersection of Cushman, Shutesbury and Still Corner Roads. This land is bordered by pine forest to the north, Roaring Brook to the south, and Doolittle Brook to the west. At 350 feet above sea level, it is one of the lowest spots in town, a drainage basin for streams running off Brushy Mountain and the hills through which Shutesbury Road climbs.

The meadow was owned by William Sawin of Fair Haven, Vermont. In the early spring of this year, residents in East Leverett learned that Sawin was planning to sell the land and that several developers were interested in buying it. Perc



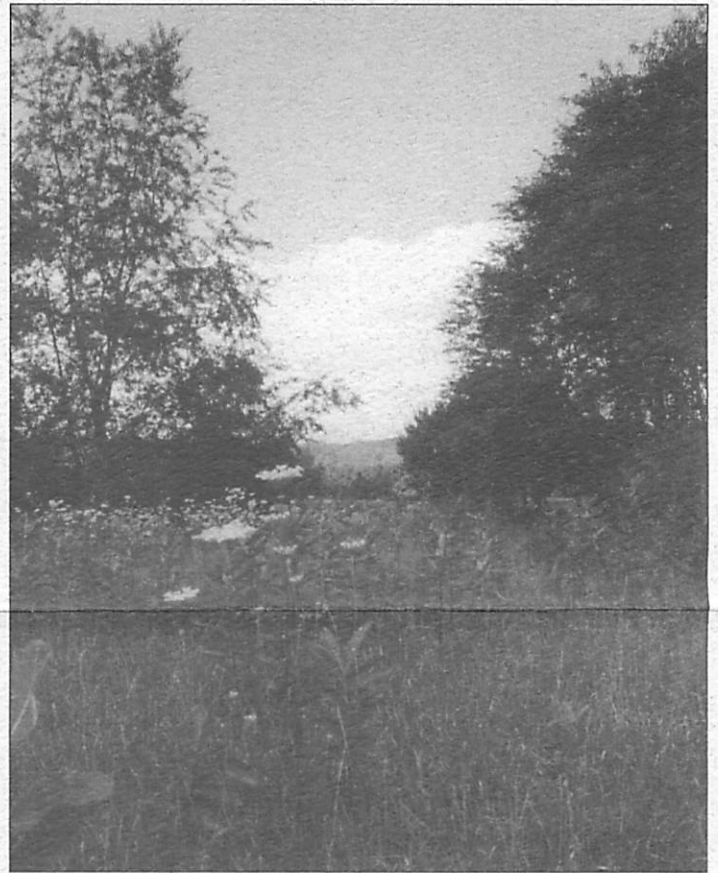
tests were run in the meadow and the report was that they were successful. Despite the possible difficulties of access (a bridge over Roaring Brook would be needed), the land was clearly an attractive site. Those whose Cushman Road and Teawaddle Hill Road properties lay on the edge of the meadow grew increasingly concerned at the idea of several homes sprouting up in this pristine field. The conversion of farm land to house lots in many Valley communities has proceeded rapidly in the last decade, a result, frequently, of estate taxes necessitating sale for the best price, most often to developers. The folks in East Leverett didn't want their meadow to grow houses.

Concerned residents, led by Sheila Seaman and Mike Williams, contacted RGT and the Leverett Conservation Commission in late April to explore ways to preserve the meadow as open space. Representatives from both organizations viewed the meadow in May. RGT suggested that the neighbors in the area might initiate a fund-raising campaign similar to the campaign to preserve Long Hill in 1993. With that in mind, the meadow's abutting property owners met with Ken Kahn, who was very involved in the Long Hill effort.

Stephen Weiss, who serves as both a Conservation Commissioner and a Rattlesnake Gutter trustee, had contacted William Sawin to determine if the landowner was interested in selling the property before it was put on the open market and, if so, for what price. After meeting with Kahn, the group of abutters made Sawin an offer. Sawin agreed to a price of \$85,000 for the thirty acre piece if the group could raise the funds by August.

Sheila Seaman set to work. For several weeks she spent time at the Transfer Station armed with a card table, a poster, printed handouts and lots of energy. Between late June and early August, over \$61,000 was raised in individual contributions.

RGT sought contributions from other land preservation organizations while Sheila worked friends and neighbors. In early June, several RG trustees viewed the land and voted to commit as much as \$15,000 to the effort. Stephen Schmidt,



Leverett's representative on the Kestrel Trust as well as an RG trustee, made a presentation to Kestrel and that Trust voted \$7,500 to the meadow campaign. Steady solicitation by Steve Weiss landed \$3,000 from Valley Land Fund and another \$3,000 from the Funding Exchange.

By mid-August, the goal had been reached. Williams and Seaman had a lemonade celebration on their edge of the meadow, attended by many of the people who had contributed, interested parties who subsequently gave gifts to the effort, and many members of the Trust's Board. The Queen Anne's lace was blooming. Butterflies floated from tall stems of goldenrod to long grasses. Swallows swooped remarkably close to the groups of guests and, as they had in May and June, perched in great numbers on the powerline that bisects the field.

On September 11, RGT completed purchase of the meadow and was assigned the deed.

Trustee Bill Healy, who will handle the meadow's management, walked the parcel early in September to assess the land's immediate needs and to discover its more detailed attributes. His report to the Trust included this significant

EAST LEVERETT MEADOW

These individuals generously contributed to the preservation of East Leverett Meadow: Fred G. Bixby III • Kathleen M. Kelly • M. Christine Nelson • Carol F. Shadoian • Sally T. Goldin & Kurt T. Rudahl • Robin E. Levine & Gregory M. Kline • Fredric L. Cheyette • Andrew J. W. Scheffey • Edith and Carlyle Field • Mary Catherine Phinney • Portia Weiskel • Sigfrid and Barbara Yngvesson • George Drake • Ruth West • Barbara Burn • Lisa C. Plantefaber & Steven V. Fischel • Donald and Patricia Stockwell • Dee Ann Civello & Thomas E. Maczka • Betty J. Thurston • Barbara D'Arthenay • Brooke and Shirley Thomas • James E. Humphreys • Vivian Asche • Kathryn and Richard Addelson • James and Betsy Douglas • Edward and Elizabeth Klekowski • Rhonda and Ronald Juels • David W. Henion • Nina M. Rose-Racine and Dennis S. Racine • Sara DeTurk • Diane Norman-Lentz • Brayton and Mary Alice Wilson • Joy Friedman • Donna L. Mellen • Vincent C. Brann • Mark and TJ Stowell • Llan Starkweather • John R. van Steenberg • Mike Williams & Sheila Seaman • John and Georgana Foster • June Gaeke • Connie Peterson • Stephen Freedman & Laurie Millman • Gerald and Dorothy McFarland • Charles and Sarah Roys • Kate and John Moruzzi • Elana and Norman D. Aitken • Richard H. Connelly • Joe Sincuk & Laura Lee Jones • Thomas Arney • Kathleen Winkworth & James Shamey • Elizabeth Brainerd & Timothy Hiebert • Daniel Anderson & Leah Larkey • Cynthia Thomas & Roy Kimmel • Ziporah Hildebrandt & Mark Antsel • Barbara and Dean Alfange • Nathaniel B. Smith • Marcia Ann and Hugh Davis • Theodore and Katherine Sargent • Lee Ann and Stuart Warner • Frederick and Priscilla Greeley • Ann Ferguson • Annette and George Gibavic • Irene Stapleton & Gabrielle Stapleton-Roach • Thomas and Juanita Plimpton • Robert and Evelyn Schuyler • Freda and Evan Eisenberg • Donovan and Andrea Morris • Mary Wilson & Philip Khoury • Waino Tuominen • Jude M. Peterston • Randall and Janice Stone • John and Alison Steadman • Wilva Connelly

The following organizations made significant contributions: Valley Land Fund • Kestrel Trust • Funding Exchange • Rattlesnake Gutter Trust

description:

The hay land is bordered by some unusual and high-quality old-field habitat. There are abundant fruiting shrubs and vines and a few old apple trees. A small pond-wetland complex lies beneath the power line on the western edge of the property. The edge land in conjunction with the hay land provides an attractive habitat for many species of wildlife and a habitat that is quite uncommon in Leverett.

Included in Bill's report were many suggestions for the development of a long-term management plan, including an inventory of the edge habitat and an accurate mapping of the boundaries. The report recommends continuation of the haying which has been done for many years. To that specific end, the Trustees voted on September 23 to sign a contract with Tom

Beauschene of Little Creek Farm in Montague to hay the meadow twice a year, plowing, re-seeding and fertilizing as necessary. Beauschene will also clear the edges of the meadow each Fall.

The meadow is saved. Due to the extraordinary efforts of so many of its East Leverett neighbors—notably Seaman and Williams, Joe Sincuk and Laura Lee Jones, Mary Wilson and Philip Khoury, Mary Catherine Phinney, James Humphreys, Vivian Asche, Edward and Elizabeth Klekowski, Vincent Brann, Jude Peterston, James and Betsy Douglas, and John and Georgana Foster—this land will remain open, undeveloped, a haven for bobolinks, swallows, deer and many other species, a classroom for its many stewards, a unique place to learn from and to enjoy.

Your Trustees: Evelyn Schuyler



When Evelyn Schuyler was growing up in Rochester, New York, Mrs. Eastman, of the Eastman-Kodak Eastmans, zipped around the city in an electric car. Now, years hence, this makes an even bigger impression on Evie than it did when she was a girl.

"We should have common sense about energy, fossil fuels, the depletion of resources...about cars! Couldn't gas stations stock batteries? Couldn't they recharge and re-rent batteries? Couldn't we save oil reserves by using electricity and solar energy?"

Evie does drive a gas-powered car, but not necessarily by choice. She and her husband Bob heat their water with solar energy and designed their home, built 13 years ago, to take best advantage of passive solar heat.

The Schuylers moved to Leverett 24 years ago. What attracted them was the town's naturalness, the unspoiled woodlands. Because she felt strongly about keeping Leverett that way, Evelyn attended an early RGT annual meeting. In short order, she had become a Trustee, serving as co-chair from 1990 to 1993.

Her concerns are quite global. Recently, Evie wrote to President Clinton about environmental issues and the contrary attitude of Congress vis á vis overpopulation, the

destruction of resources, and solar energy. She is concerned that initiatives to control the use of public lands for cattle-grazing and mining have been shot down by Congress. She sent copies of her Clinton letter to John Olver, Ted Kennedy, John Kerry, and Newt Gingrich. The first three responded.

"People used to shrink away from the word 'environmental'. Now they are beginning to see what **MUST** concern them. Global warming, depletion of resources, overpopulation. They all go hand-in-hand. We cannot preserve resources without controlling population. The Congress has stripped funding from family-planning organizations in third-world countries who advocate abortion as a birth control measure. Don't they realize that education is a better answer? The more educated a population becomes, the less need for abortion as a method of birth control."

Evelyn supports at least fifteen organizations, those carefully chosen after years of countless solicitations from scores of environmental causes. Her choices are based on how much clout the organizations have in Washington. Among them are Greenpeace, the Natural Resource Defense Council, the Union of Concerned Scientists, the Environmental Defense Fund, and the Wilderness Society, the last especially because of its material for children since education about the world around them is of paramount importance.

*A frequent
visitor at
the Schuyler
residence
this summer.*



Rattlesnake Gutter Trust
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