



THE MEADOW VIEW

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

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November 1992

The Great Meadows Conservation Trust
Members and Friends
Are Invited To

A WALK IN THE HOCKANUM MEADOWS
In Glastonbury and East Hartford

*Sunday November 8, From 1 to 4 P.M.
(Rain date November 15)*

Meet on west side of Hockanum School, Main Street, East Hartford or in the school yard. The school is about 9/10ths mile north of the Glastonbury-East Hartford town line.

The walk, in an area in which the Trust owns several parcels, is in the Connecticut River flood plain. The ground is fairly level, but there are brooks, gullies and dikes to be negotiated. Hiking shoes or mud boots are recommended.

The walk leaders will be Trust members Ruth and Carl Bergengren. For additional information call the Bergengrens (633-7075) or Jolly Steffens (633-9379).

WE WELCOME YOUR VIEWS AND NEWS

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We hope that our readers will send letters, views and news to THE MEADOW VIEW for us to publish. Comments on our articles will be appreciated. Historical items, nature observations and agricultural items are subjects of great interest to all concerned with the Great Meadows. Please pick up the pen and write to The Meadow View, Great Meadows Conservation Trust, P.O. Box 171, Glastonbury, CT 06033.

A CRUISE INTO HISTORY

By Jolly Steffens

As the Dutch explorer Captain Adrian Block sailed up the Connecticut River aboard the "Onrust", plumes of smoke were rising in the air along the shore and glimpses of settlements could be seen through the trees. The scene was set for a present day visit to the past aboard the "Lady Fenwick" on Saturday, September 26, 1992. The weather lived up to the Great Meadows Conservation Trust's reputation offering rain, mist and wind as on the well-remembered 1988 hayride.

Members of the Trust and others were welcomed aboard by Captain Steve Lee and his crew. After casting off, the ship's public address system was turned over to Trust member and host, Thayer Chase of Wethersfield. Passengers were to hear about changes in and along the river, about industries of yesteryear in Pyquag, Glassenbury and Stepney Parish or, as known today, Wethersfield, Glastonbury and Rocky Hill. Chase spoke of the ongoing role of the Trust to protect the river and the flood plain in the three towns. In 1993 the Trust would be celebrating 25 years since its incorporation.

As the Lady Fenwick entered Wethersfield Cove, Eleanor Wolf described how the course of the river had changed. At one time the channel had carved the cove. A descendent of settlers in Wethersfield, her ancestors evidently salted and crated excess alewives to be shipped to the West Indies. A smelly business, she surmised.

Leaving the cove, Frank Child referred to the colored charts of the river provided by Thayer Chase. Crow Point marked a narrow inlet to a large man-made pond, the result of excavation of gravel for construction of the approaches to the Putnam Bridge. The owners of this area of the Wethersfield meadows have visions of a marina with a hotel and restaurant on the site. He went on to say that because the river for the next five miles is largely undeveloped and meets a number of other criteria, the National Park Service has listed this stretch from Cove Point to the Ferry in the National Rivers Inventory. By a special act of Congress designating it "Wild and Scenic", this stretch of the river could remain much as it is today, its wildlife, its historic vistas and its archeological sites protected.

Drawing attention across the river, Henry Kinne told of the Connery Brothers fishing business in Glastonbury in which owners would hitch a horse on the bank to help pull in their fishnets. Kinne recalled a blind neighbor in South Glastonbury, Walter Killam, who never failed to climb the steep river bank at Red

Hill to light the range lights for the ships. Shipping and ship building thrived here until the coming of the railroad. Coal and oil barges plied the river to Hartford then as they still do today. As a youngster, Kinne watched the passenger boats that stopped in Glastonbury and in South Glastonbury before going on down the river.

Anita Watson's great uncle was commodore of the "Middletown", one of the river boats that took passengers from Hartford to New York. Rocky Hill was another ship building town in years gone by. The Glastonbury - Rocky Hill Ferry is the oldest continuously operating ferry in the U.S. She also pointed out the new state park in Rocky Hill, the remains of an old quarry which overlooks the meadows.

Bill Robbins shared information about Native American communities in each town and spoke about some of the prehistoric findings in the glacial till at a number of sites that were being examined today. He passed around a display of artifacts collected from these sites.

All the speakers remarked on the richness of the agricultural resource in the floodplain along the river. The river today continues to provide sustenance, transport, power, a place for recreation and also a way to carry off our wastes. At one period in our lifetime, the river became so fouled with our wastes that fish and birds found it untenable as did people. With the environmental movement of the 70's, recovery of the river began. The salmon are returning, eagles have fledged again. People are returning to the river. There remains a risk for misuse or abuse our great river and vigilance is required for its protection. Steffens spoke of many organizations, such as the Trust, working together locally, regionally and nationally to achieve that protection.

In 1990, Congress created the Silvio Conte Fish and Wildlife Refuge encompassing the entire Connecticut River Valley. Specific areas are to be selected for habitat protection. Greenways, an old idea that has gained momentum nationally, has been formally adopted here in Connecticut.

Thanks for this informative cruise are due to Betsy Katz and Eleanor Wolf for the concept, to Betsy Katz for arrangements with Henry Thorpe at the Deep River Navigation Company and for recruiting host Thayer Chase and other speakers, and to the captain for adapting the trip to meet the intent of the cruise. The event was videotaped by professional photographer John Oldham, thanks to Glastonbury Tercentennial Committee, and audiotaped by Charlie Steffens.

QUARRY PARK

Rocky Hill's Quarry Park, formed with the support of the Trust, is well worth exploring these colorful fall days. Autumn hues have deepened and views over the Great Meadows are always spectacular. The terrain is a bit rough, trails have yet to be redefined and a good deal of rubbish sits in piles ready for removal when the town can manage it. Much effort was put into the volunteer cleanup over a year ago, and while some of the debris is sinking into the landscape, it is still an eyesore. But come, walk the park anyway.

The great white oak just off Old Main Street opposite Marshall Road was trimmed, despite the mosquitoes, by the Bartlett Tree Experts early in September, paid for by the Rocky Hill Neighborhood Association. The 350-year old tree looks more craggy than ever, shorn of its dead and weakened branches, some of them as massive as the trunk of a large tree. Much of the lower vegetation has been cut and left on the ground as a nourishing mulch. We hope that this tree work will inspire the Town of Rocky Hill to plan and execute a program of park improvements to enhance the natural beauty of the area.

BOOM TIME IN THE MEADOWS

The Hartford Courant in its September 28, 1992 "Our Towns" editorial footnote helped to explain the reason for the regular explosions breaking the peace of the harvest fields. Raccoons as well as farmers are seeking crops, and the raccoons have to be scared away from a free lunch.

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If one lives near the great Meadows, the frequent "boom" can be heard, reminding us that the flood plain is still a valuable source of crops. Although the noise is a little worrying, the Trust heartily supports agriculture even if it occasionally sounds a little warlike.

TURN IN POACHERS

TIP (Turn in Poachers) is now an established non-profit Connecticut Corporation. Since its beginning in 1987 TIP has been managed by the Connecticut Wildlife Federation.

TIP was formed by the Department of Environmental Protection's Citizens Advisory Council and the DEP Law Enforcement Division. Its purpose is to stop the illegal taking of Connecticut's wildlife resources. Callers do not have to reveal their names or testify in court. If the information leads to an arrest the informer may be eligible for a TIP cash award.

During the four years of TIP's operation it has achieved impressive results. Over \$6,000 have been given in awards. In the last two years 1572 complaints have led to 231 arrests.

To turn in a poacher, call 1-800-842-HELP, any time.

POLICE ACTIVE IN MEADOWS

Picking your own corn can be costly, particularly when it is not your corn to begin with. On August 23 three New Britain residents found this out when Wethersfield

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

This application is for those who wish to join the Great Meadows Conservation Trust and help to keep the flood plain of the Connecticut River as open space for agriculture and natural enjoyment.

Membership Chair
Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc.
P.O.Box 171, Glastonbury, CT 06033

Please enrol _____

(Name, address, telephone no.)

as _____ Member(s). Enclosed is \$ _____ annual membership

dues. Date _____

Membership categories: Individual Member \$10. Family Member (parents and children under 16) \$15.
Life Member \$200.

Police charged them with third degree criminal larceny after allegedly stealing corn in the meadows.

WHO ARE THE HUNTERS?

As the beginning of the hunting season gets underway (October 17-December 31) you might be surprised to find out who is hunting. Results from a National Shooting Sports Foundation survey present a new profile of today's hunter. While most hunters are male, the number of women pursuing the sport has nearly doubled since 1986, rising from 4 to 7 percent. The average age of hunters is older than before, now being in the early 40's instead of the late 30's. The proportion of managers and professional people has risen from 23 to 34 percent while those in service, trade or labor has declined from 38 to 31 percent in the past five years.

VOLUNTEER!

The trust is always looking for volunteers to help support its mission of preserving and understanding the Great Meadows. There is much work to be done in checking the Trust's 31 parcels and easements, in delving into the history of the land and understanding the ecological forces at work. There are mysteries to be solved - for instance what happens to ground-dwelling creatures when the flood waters come? Do they drown or move up to the hills?

If you wish to volunteer for a meadow project, please call President John Lepper (529-2290) or Vice President Peter Revill (529-9254)



P.O. Box 171, Glastonbury, CT 06033

WEATHER LORE

The long range predicted weather for the boat trip, as we remember, called for a fine day. Looking in a 1950 English book on world wide weather lore we find one way of eliminating cheerful forecasters. This from India -

"Husbandry depended on the periodical rains; and forecasts of the weather, with a view to make adequate provision against a coming deficiency, formed a special duty of the Brahmins. The philosopher who erred in his predictions observed silence for the rest of his life."

The compiler of the book adds a comment:

"Such a form of penance is no longer exacted from erring forecasters in civilized communities, though quite recently the punishment of ducking has been advocated for them by British national newspapers."

CREDITS

Material for this issue has been provided by John Lepper, Julianne Steffens and Editor Peter Revill

The Great Meadows Conservation Trust was incorporated in 1968 as a non-profit tax exempt land trust to protect and preserve the flood plain lands of the Connecticut River in Glastonbury, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield. The Trust has acquired land, holds conservation easements and leases land for farming.



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