



Derby Farm Woods (Wire Village) Protected



35 acres of beautiful mixed woodlands running along the north side of Turkey Hill Brook in Spencer's Wire Village is now permanently protected through the generosity of the Baker Family Trust, which has donated the Derby Farm Woods property to CGLT, along with a deeded trail easement that runs from Cooney Road.

Derby Farm Woods abuts the permanently protected Small's Farm and connects to the Small Family Memorial Trail on the western side, allowing the formation of the second segment of a Wire Village Historical Trail recommended in Spencer's Open Space Plan....read more on page 6.



Message from our President: Jan Parke

Dear Members,

Happy 15th birthday to Common Ground Land Trust, and welcome to our Founders' Edition of the 2021 Newsletter! We reached out to the original founders of CGLT and asked them to write some words to our membership for our birthday newsletter. Enjoy these words from our founders in the next few pages!

Japanese Knotweed Invasive Plant Eradication Project



The Japanese Knotweed invasive plant removal project on our 2 properties in Leicester has begun, with the first herbicide spraying and cut-and-chop mulching happening this fall. This process will continue in 2022 and into 2023, it is a 3-year process to eradicate this horrible invasive plant! Our fundraiser for this project has raised \$7,100 so far, thank you to all who have donated already! **The link to our GoFundMe campaign is below. Please share!**

Donate to Knotweed Removal Project at:

<https://gofund.me/1280a0ad>

Leicester Harvest Fair 2021

We enjoyed talking to many of you at Leicester's Harvest Fair on October 16th. CGLT's booth displayed a large vase of blooming Japanese Knotweed, the invasive plant that CGLT is eradicating



from its properties on Greenville Pond and Kettle Brook. Thanks to Gwen Pratt, Ellen Sousa and Mary Baker-Wood for hosting the booth during the day, and to Bethany Parke for the **You Can Help Knock Out Knotweed** sign. We are planning some educational events on the ID and removal of invasive plants in 2022, watch our Facebook page!



Jan Parke



Letter from our Founder: Ruth Kaminski

A walk in the woods was always therapeutic for me. As a child I lived where woods surrounded me. A peaceful pine grove, a vast blueberry field, a white birch whispering arena surrounding a multiple bird filled swamp.

I was never a city dweller. I would miss the solitude of the forest even when visiting the city.

Trees are my friends. Tall ones, short ones, fat ones, skinny ones. They give me shade, beautiful colors, wind whispering music. They experience colorful interesting fungus growth, and endless animal and insect dwellings.

When our land area was in one of its development surges I pained to find a way to express my love of the woods and glorious surrounding open spaces to others. The creation of a land trust that could express to others the need for common ground was perfectly fitting this need. So it began.



Ancient sugar maple at Sibley Farm. Nathan Goshgarian photo.

Our open space and forest has no bounds. To include Spencer and Leicester continues the peaceful beauty beyond boundaries. I was pleased to be part of this passionate group of friends of our pleasurable open and forest spaces from the beginning.

I still wholeheartedly support Common Ground Land Trust's efforts. Due to illness I am in a wheelchair now. I sit at the edge of an open space and dream of the days where the woods engulfed my being.

CGLT assures this dream for others forever more. May it forever endure.

Ruth Kaminski



Letter from our Founder: Robert D. McNeil III

"The earth is common ground and...gradually the idea is taking form that the land must be held in safekeeping, that one generation is to some extent responsible to the next..."

- E.B. White

Growing up in the woods of Spencer, Massachusetts forever shaped me into the person that I am today. Countless hours spent wandering through the forests, fields, and swamps in the days of my youth provided me with a great respect for nature and its delicate balance. Discovering the wonders of nature alone or with friends and neighbors was a passion. The outdoors became for me an unparalleled classroom and I the insatiable student. As I got older, I realized that despite my continuous exploration and discoveries I could never possibly understand all that nature has to offer; regardless, we are forever tied to her in all that we do.

It was important to me that I share these experiences with my own children as so many people had done with me. Each time I saw their smile of a new discovery or heard their laughter echoing through the trees or fields or saw their anticipation of what was around the next turn, I was reminded how important these experiences were for them to develop a respect for our environment. I enjoyed teaching my children what I'd learned about nature. And I hoped that through these experiences they would not only learn about the environment but also about their father and my passion for the outdoors.

When I imagined starting a land trust back in 2004, E.B.White's inspiring words motivated me and ultimately helped shape the collective mission of conserving open space in Leicester and Spencer for everyone's use and enjoyment. Common Ground Land Trust, Inc. (CGLT) was formed in 2006 and continues strongly today as a dedicated group of hikers, hunters, skiers, horseback riders, snowmobilers, farmers, residents, and businesses who enjoy and value the rural nature of our landscape.

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*Looking south from Sibley/
Warner Farms. It was the
proposed development of a
strip mall on Route 9 and 300
housing units on this beautiful
old farmland that led Rob
McNeil to form Common
Ground Land Trust to protect
remaining open space in his
hometowns of Spencer and
Leicester.*





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Together we have accomplished much in just fifteen years! Through lots of hard work and partnerships, Common Ground has conserved over 400 acres of land, and has some very exciting new projects coming soon in 2022!

An important part of meeting our mission is to ask for help! We will always need volunteers like you to help our organization continue to protect and steward land.

E.B. White’s words continue to inspire me. Thoughtfully planned stewardship of protected open space in our community encourages respect for nature and fosters a long-term relationship with the environment to which we are all so closely tied. Please encourage someone you know to join this wonderful organization today...for tomorrow!

Thank you for your continued support and Happy 15th Birthday!

Rob McNeil



Words from our Founder: Anne Gobi

In this season of thanks I am so thankful for Common Ground Land Trust. The dedication of a core group and their stewardship has led to many others gaining an appreciation for the importance of conserving our open spaces for the common good. I am fortunate to live in an area where our natural resources, flowers, fauna, and landscapes are valued, and because of Common Ground Land Trust, generations of new stewards will be able to enjoy our pristine lands with their families.



Words from our Founder: Ginny Scarlet

I fondly remember the day Colin Novick (GWLT) and Charlie Wyman (MassAudubon) came to my house to persuade us as the local land trust to join in the effort to save Sibley Farm. We were few and CGLT had barely started then in 2011. With their help we bootstrapped fast, faster than was likely before that. Those were terrific guys to work with!

Another highlight was the day when the Small Family agreed to let us work with them and on their behalf to get an agricultural restriction on Small Farm. They were very generous but admitted being totally frustrated with the bureaucratic hurdles.

At right is CGLT Founder and Treasurer Ginny Scarlet fording Turkey Hill Brook while researching the CGLT trail now called the John Wesley and Eleanor Small Downey Memorial Riverside Trail. Ginny was the mastermind who untangled the complexities of the state Agricultural Preservation (APR) grant program, enabling the Miczek farm family from Breezy Nurseries to purchase Small’s Farm at a reduced price, with a deed restriction that permanently keeps the land in agricultural usage. Helping landowners navigate through grant funding applications is an important part of our work.





Derby Farm Woods, Wire Village

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Mary Baker-Wood of Spencer described her family's land donation as a way of preserving a piece of much-loved woodland for future generations of children and their families to discover. Derby Farm Woods contains an old cart path, historic stone walls, valuable riverside wildlife habitat and a near-wilderness feel to the landscape. The donation will also protect the health of Turkey Hill Brook, which is a cold water fishery and one of the cleanest rivers in the state due to its mostly still-undeveloped shoreline. As a tributary to Spencer's town wells, protecting Turkey Hill Brook directly benefits the town of Spencer's water supply.

Looking southwest over Turkey Hill Brook towards Small's Farm from Derby Farm Woods.



Currently, Derby Farm Woods can only be accessed from Small's Farm Trail (which requires crossing the Brook at the ford), or from the trail easement leading from Cooney Road (look for CGLT trail markers soon). CGLT plans to work with abutters in hopes of continuing the trail out to the bridge over Turkey Hill Brook at Hastings and Wire Village Road.

In addition to the donation of Derby Farm Woods, the Baker Family Trust sold the last remaining portion of the original Derby Farm, an 8-acre hayfield, to abutting neighbors who plan to continue to farm the land and also maintain the trail easement to Derby Farm Woods along the edge of their field.

CGLT's Mission

As an all-volunteer, non-profit organization, our mission is long-term preservation of natural resources in Leicester & Spencer for natural ecosystem services, food security, recreation and educational benefits for town residents and the region.

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Visit our website at:
COMMONGROUNDLT.ORG

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- L=Leicester, S=Spencer*

Derby Farm Woods, cont.

The abutting Derby Farm neighbors, Daniel and Christina dba "Almost A Gentleman Farm," say they are proud to continue the tradition of farming on this land that has been farmed by the Derby family for generations. (Veteran owned and operated). CGLT looks forward to working with Dan and Chris to maintain Derby Farm Woods as a local treasure for hiking, fishing and other passive woods recreation.

Below: Mary Baker-Wood of the Baker Family Trust and a Derby family descendent, is pictured with the new owners of the Derby Farm hayfields, who plan to continue hay production on the fields, helping to preserve a little bit of the rapidly disappearing agricultural landscape of Wire Village!



Welcome New Members:

Brett & Kelly Russ

Lisa Piebler

Jim & Missy Colby

Colby Fire Protection, Rochdale

CGLT Key Events 2006-2021

Year	Acreage Conserved:
2006	Incorporation
2012	Received 501c3 Non-Profit Status
2012	Sibley/Warner Farm Conservation Restriction (Spencer) 237
2015	Small's Farm Memorial Riverside Trail Easement (Spencer) <1
2015	Bixby Trail Conservation Restriction (Spencer) 7.17
2017-2019	Kisten Conservation Restrictions (Charlton) 129.15
2018	Kettle Brook Path, Cherry Valley (Leicester) 1.45
2020	Common Ground at Greenville Pond, Rochdale (Leicester) 0.42
2021	Derby Farm Woods, Wire Village (Spencer) 35
2022	Watch for BIG land conservation news (Spencer)! ??



To:

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