

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Annual CLC Potluck Scheduled for Friday, May 2

Save the date! Enjoy a delicious potluck dinner with members and friends at 6 p.m, and then learn about the Wolves of Yellowstone from Colebrook's own volunteer researcher, Jerry Rathbun.  
Location: Colebrook Senior & Community Center.

The Colebrook Land Conservancy  
P.O. Box 90 Colebrook, CT 06021

The Colebrook Land Conservancy Newsletter is produced in the public's interest. Comments and suggestions for articles are welcome.



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### If you'd like to Join Us or Contribute...

Yes, I support the purposes of the Colebrook Land Conservancy.

Annual Dues: \$25 family, \$20 individual, \$10 senior.  
To join or contribute, please send this coupon along with your tax deductible annual dues and/or other contribution to:

The Colebrook Land Conservancy  
P.O. Box 90 Colebrook, CT 06021

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PayPal is also available on the Conservancy's web site,  
www.colebrooklandconservancy.org

We lack email addresses for many of you, and if there is an alert we wish to send out, information about upcoming events or other announcements, we have no way of contacting you but snail mail. Please send us your email address:

info@colebrooklandconservancy.org

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# THE NEWSLETTER

The Colebrook Land Conservancy



"In Land We Trust"

Volume 23 Number 1, SPRING 2014

## NEW LAND DONATION

# In Memory of Walter Peterson



A sizeable wetland lies at the heart of the Davis property.

**P**ETE LOVED THE COUNTRYSIDE. His daughter Beverly remembers one of his favorite drives was along Sandy Brook where they would stop to appreciate the natural beauty of the place. Once when Pete was out driving north of Winsted, he saw a buck standing on a rise by Colebrook River Road and took a picture of it. From that moment he yearned to settle right at that spot near Deer Hill Road. The owner at the time, Luther L. Chase, was not in mind to sell, but Pete worked on him, per-

suaded, negotiated, and in the end Pete and his wife bought 16 acres of that land in October of 1950. Bob Grigg reports that the land had not been used for any kind of commercial endeavor since the 19th century, when it was used to temporarily store hemlock bark for Colebrook's tanneries. "Hemlock bark was piled in cords, the same as fire wood, and I understand

that it used to be stacked on both sides of what is now Ct Route 8, as well as in the area of the swale, or low spot, north of the intersection of Deer Hill Road and the old turnpike." Hence the names - Hemlock Cemetery and Hemlock Baptist Church. Walter "Pete" K. Peterson and his wife, Anne, had moved from New Britain in the mid 1930s. He owned and worked at Pete's Service Station, next to the Winsted Post Office, until he retired in the late 60s. When he purchased the land on Colebrook River Road, his daughter Beverly

was about ten years old and remembers the excitement when they started building the house themselves on that knoll, even pouring their own foundation. Many friends pitched in to help, but Beverly said they moved into the house within a year although it was not yet finished. Beverly remembers a lovely meadow - what is now forested land. For her it was sanctuary, a special, quiet, place to go by herself and read. (Beverly was at Colebrook Consolidated School, which she remembers as having two grades in every room.)

Pete treasured every square foot. Beverly remembers happy walks around the boundary of the property where her father would point out animal tracks or plants. He used the property in many ways; he loved exotic pheasants and once owned a golden pheasant with a tail 6 feet long. He and other rare-pheasant fans traded birds back and forth for the joy of them. He also raised ring-necked pheasants for the state to release for hunting. He planted trees and his wife gardened.

A fisherman and a hunter, Pete was at one time head of a northwestern Connecticut fish and game association. Beverly recalls him once being deeply concerned and perplexed about a fish kill in the Farmington River. For general sport fishing he tied his own flies that he may have employed in Sandy Brook or the Farmington River. But at his own pond, which he had stocked with fish, he used a barbless hook. His pond had started as a precautionary measure in case there was a fire but the beavers damned it up and created an ever-growing little lake. Although Pete had the state try to relocate the animals, they or some other beavers would find their way back and continue the enlarging process.

Pete was an environmentalist at heart. The wild animals on his property were more like pets: as an older man he would gather up a bushel of apples then sit away from the house under the trees waiting for deer to come savor them. One severe winter he drilled a hole in the ice and pushed canned corn down through it, fearing that the fish were without enough food to survive. Anne and Pete lived a contented life on their quiet and precious land.

Beverly left home in 1957 to go to college. As things often do work out, her life took her in different directions and she never came back to the house on the River

Road. Through the years she had always dreamed of building a summer home for her family there, and on her father's death she inherited the property. For nearly 20 years she kept the land and this house which her parents had built with their own hands, but in 1998 she saw that for its own protection the house should be sold. Still, she kept 9 acres for her own use with her dream intact. By 2013 she came to understand that a summer house would never be. What should she do with the land her mother and father had so loved? The idea of it going to a stranger and being

transformed did not seem right. Beverly decided that the best way to honor her father's love for that place was to donate it to the Colebrook Land Conservancy where it will stay in safe hands forever. This act will help preserve the scenic nature of that route, and we who live here will have the privilege of appreciating open green space whenever we travel up by the Colebrook River. Compounding this effect is a Land Conservancy easement on a property directly across Colebrook River Road. Thank you Beverly, and thank you, Pete. ■

—Sukey Wagner

## Lewis Easement on Smith Hill Road

Decades in the making, the Lewis easement is a testament to the dedication of the late Sally Hale and her heirs to limit development on 157 acres near the center of Colebrook. One of the first trustees of the Colebrook Land Conservancy, Mrs. Hale had lifelong ties to our town. Her mother's family summered in Colebrook, and in 1921 her parents bought land on Smith Hill Road and built the house where they raised their daughter. According to William McNeill's *Colebrook: A Historical Sketch*, her father, William Mather Lewis, was an administrator, public speaker and humorist. His career included stints as an English teacher, mayor, Director of the Savings Division of the U.S. Treasury during WWI, and president of George Washington University and then Lafayette College. Mr. Lewis also served as president of the Colebrook Associates and often spoke at the annual July 4th celebration. In 1929 he helped preside over the 150th anniversary of the founding of Colebrook, an event recorded on film and archived at the Colebrook Historical Society. There is a carved memorial to him on the wall of the Colebrook Consolidated School library. Land for the school was donated by the Lewis family.

The Lewis easement borders the Algonquin State Forest, South Cemetery, and several private properties. Great grandson Ross Delaney now owns the home built by William and Ruth Lewis. Sally's son William Betts, who lived next door with his family, loved the land and its animals. The easement was donated jointly by Sarah Delaney, Mary Seacord, Ross Delaney and the estate of Mr. Betts. The area is primarily wooded and serves as both habitat and travel corridor for a variety of wildlife. Terms of the easement provide for some agricultural use but no public access.

Sally shared her interest in land preservation with her late husband Mason Hale and his family. The Conservancy owns much of his farm at the crossroads of Routes 183 and Stillman Hill Road. To walk the loop trail there, park near the barn and follow the directions on the stone plaque. The Lewis Easement and the Hale Farm are two examples of how families can preserve the land they love. As author William Cronon explains: "By giving us a way to sustain the places we care most about, land conservation bears witness to our best memories of our own past and present, and our best hopes for our children's future as well."

## WILD LIFE

# The Hungry, Hungry Caterpillar

LAST SUMMER WHEN A HORDE of two-dozen caterpillars stripped leaves from one of my ornamental shrubs called Carolina Silverbell (*Halesia caroliniana*), I emailed photos to Jane O'Donnell in the entomology department at the University of Connecticut. She identified the culprits immediately by their distinctive features - bright red head, red hump, and yellow and white pinstripes along the body. Known as the red-humped caterpillar, they usually feed as a group and can be found on many kinds of woody plants. When disturbed, they lift up their rear ends in a collective warning display. Once I knew they were not anything special, I removed the caterpillars. Left alone, they would have matured into drab brown moths.

Most caterpillars are welcome to all they can eat in my gardens. I enjoy seeing the same species return each year, such as the Monarch butterfly, whose caterpillars feed exclusively on milkweed, and the black swallowtail butterfly, whose young prefer plants in the carrot family, such as Queen Anne's Lace, fennel, parsley, carrot and dill. Food plants are essential for the survival of caterpillars, yet we usually think only of growing flowers that produce nectar and will attract adult butterflies to our gardens.

You may have heard that Monarch butterflies are in trouble. In the fall they migrate to certain fir and pine forests in Mexico for the winter, but last year the number making the trip fell from 60 million to about 3 million. An article in *The New York Times*, "The Year the Monarch Didn't Appear," blames the dramatic decline in these butterflies on the loss of milkweed plants. Native plants and their habitat continue to decrease throughout the country -- an estimated 120 to 150 million acres of prairie and grassland in the Midwest, which is key territory for Monarchs. Big agriculture there depends



The distinctive red-humped caterpillar has a big appetite. A field guide for caterpillar identification (inset).

on RoundUp, "a herbicide that kills all plants except crops that are genetically modified to survive it." Unfortunately, it's not just Monarchs that are in trouble - bees and other insects that pollinate 80% of our food crops are also affected by the loss of native plants and habitat.

What can you do to help native plants and insects, particularly the Monarch butterfly? The American Horticultural Society recommends growing several species of milkweed, at least 10 plants of each, in a sunny place measuring 100 square feet or more. Your planting should include other flowers that will provide a successive supply of nectar throughout the migration season. Another way to increase habitat is to decrease the amount of lawn you mow and allow native wildflowers to move in. Each year, eliminate any young woody seedlings (such as maples, ash and white pine) or invasive plants (usu-

ally bittersweet, barberry, honeysuckle or garlic mustard) while they are small and easily pulled out by hand or snipped off at ground level. Unfortunately, these are small steps to address a much larger problem, that of mankind's impact on the entire globe.

**Note:** There are helpful online insect identification resources with photos, such as: <http://bugguide.net> and <http://www.icbug.org>. The best book for our area is *Caterpillars of Eastern North America - A Guide to Identification and Natural History* by David L. Wagner at the University of Connecticut. It covers close to 700 species and includes 1200 photographs. For more information on Monarch butterflies, visit [HYPERLINK "http://www.monarch-watch.org"](http://www.monarch-watch.org) [www.monarch-watch.org](http://www.monarch-watch.org) and [www.xerces.org/monarchs](http://www.xerces.org/monarchs). ■

—Joyce Hemingson