

## Trust's Reach Now Extends to West Woodstock

**J**oshua's Trust can now add Woodstock to the list of places where its stewardship is protecting open space in Connecticut.

Through the generosity of the descendants of Marshall Smith Frost, a farmer and local selectman, all but two acres of an 89-acre farm off Route 171 are now protected by a conservation easement.

"None of the family wants to see a housing development along the property's road frontage or down its shaded lanes," wrote Mary Ellen Ellsworth, one of the current property owners. She is married to Frost's great-grandson, Mike Ellsworth, who acquired the property from his parents, Heidi and Stan Ellsworth.

Frost first settled in West Woodstock in 1892. Most of the land he claimed is now forested – some with growth 100 years old – but about seven acres remain open as meadow and pasture.

The colonial homestead, built about 1740, is exempt from the easement, as are an ice house, tool house and barn, all surrounded by old stone walls and occupying about two acres.

The house "looks today much as it must have looked originally," said Mary Ellen. The clapboard residence, with its central chimney and clapboard siding, has six rooms on the ground floor and nine on the second. It was updated with telephone service in 1946, modern plumbing in 1947 and central heating in 1958.

The ice house – a relatively rare structure built around 1800 – has recently been restored, and the barn retains its dairy stanchions and hayloft.

When Frost first settled, he decided to specialize in sheep, keeping a flock of 50 to 75 animals, Mary Ellen said. Frost also raised pigs and cattle, and kept a yoke of oxen for his heavy farm work. "His daughter, Mary Ross, noted that he also



Mary Ellen and Mike Ellsworth sign their easement.

always kept six horses, including two nice black ones used for Sunday afternoon drives and for an occasional trip to Putnam," Mary Ellen wrote. Frost was active in the local government and was elected a selectman for a number of years.

The family stopped farming the property around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but Frost's grand-daughter Anna Adelaide – "Heidi" – and her husband, Stan, leased the fields to J. Lennen Sumner, a neighbor who used the land for hay, pasture and lumber. Heidi and Stan Ellsworth were married in 1932 and took ownership of the farm in the 1940s.

But now the town of Woodstock is facing what Mary Ellen describes as "intense pressure from developers," and "the family wishes this place, special to them and generations before them, to remain a nature sanctuary," she said.

Protecting the land with a conservation

*Continued on Page 2*



## More Protection for Scenic Mansfield Road

Quentin and Margaret Kessel have placed a conservation easement on an additional 35 acres of their property along Codfish Falls Road, helping insure the road's scenic beauty.

Two earlier easements on contiguous property were given to Joshua's Trust in 1998.

The new easement adds 320 feet of frontage on the Fenton River to the 1,568 feet previously protected. It also adds 1,845 feet of frontage on Codfish Falls Road to the 1,480 feet covered by a previous easement.

Codfish Falls Road has been designated a scenic road by the Town of Mansfield, and the Kessel's easements ensure that a significant stretch of the road will remain scenic forever.

Although the land can be sold or willed to heirs, the terms of the easement prohibit subdivision, commercial and industrial use, and any activ-

ity that would cause soil or water degradation. The easement spells out the ways in which the land can continue to be used for farming, forestry, and recreation.

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*New easements extend protected frontage along the Fenton River and Codfish Falls Road.*

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A former member of Mansfield Conservation Commission, Quentin Kessel has long been an advocate for protecting water resources and open spaces.

Quentin and Margaret have served as guides at the Gurveyville Gristmill for many years.

Their classic New England home on Codfish Falls Road once belonged to Wilbur Cross's grandparents. It still fits the description of it that Cross gave in his autobiography, a homestead surrounded by "open fields and meadows."

Looking at this lovely property, one is able to look back in time and imagine a world that is largely lost.

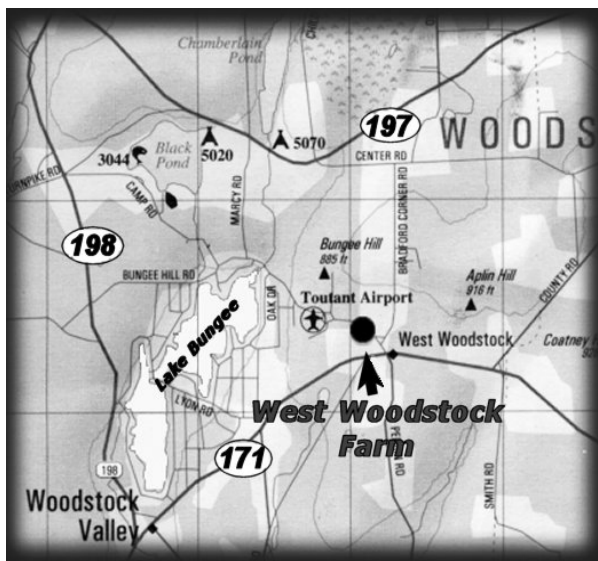
## Signing Easement Fulfills Ellsworth Family Dream

*Continued from Page One*

easement fulfills the dream of Heidi and Stan Ellsworth, and the decision to sign is fully supported by Mike and Mary Ellen's four children. "They hope their initiative may be followed by similar choices by others," Mary Ellen said. "In fact, they hope that eventually their farm may link with other open spaces forming a greenway stretching to include both the Yale Forest and State of Connecticut forest lands."

The conservation easement signed in November allows the landowners to maintain ownership while protecting the land in perpetuity. The

land may be willed to heirs or sold, but the easement remains in effect.



The newly acquired easement makes Woodstock the 14<sup>th</sup> municipality where Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historic Trust, Inc., currently protects land through ownership or conservation easements.

"It's a little out of our territory," said Hill Bullard, Trust president, but the Ellsworths are interested in seeing whether the Trust can also help protect about 300 acres of land they own in

Eastford, closer to the Trust's center of influence. "They wanted to see if they could put it all under one umbrella," he said.



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# One Good Spring Walk Deserves Another

## May 7: Potter Meadow, Columbia

Celebrate spring at a floodplain preserve that abounds with wildlife — especially during this weekend, the height of bird migration.

Walk leaders will introduce you to the history of the area, starting with the geological, then the human: Native American presence, colonial times when Rochambeau marched his troops by this site, and on to more recent times.

We will also be looking for the abundant signs of wildlife, such as beaver, muskrat and otter, wood turtle, and more.

Equipment will be available for making plaster casts of animal tracks for those who are interested. Young folks enjoy making these casts, so be sure to bring along the kids.

The walk will cover about one mile at a leisurely pace. Except for a steep slope to the trailhead, the walk will be on level ground.

Mud is a problem; boots are recommended. Heavy rains before the walk date may make the floodplain impassable. Please call 228-2849 if you have concerns about the weather or conditions of the trail.

**Directions:** Go west from Willimantic on Rt. 66.

After crossing the Willimantic River, take the first left onto Card's Mill Road and almost immediately another left onto Commerce Drive. Follow .3 mile and park in the cul-de-sac.

## June 4: Tobiassen Memorial Forest, Tolland

On Saturday, June 4, Joshua's Trust members Art Runnels and Bob Schoff will lead a leisurely 2-mile walk at the Doris and Al Tobiassen Memorial Forest in Tolland. Join them at 10 a.m. for the event, which is part of Connecticut's participation in National Trails Day.

Friendly pets okay. No pre-registration needed. Hike will go rain or shine.

For additional information call Bob at 860-429-1043 or e-mail at: [schoffrobert@sbcglobal.net](mailto:schoffrobert@sbcglobal.net). Or see the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association Trail's Day information at [www.ctwoodlands.org](http://www.ctwoodlands.org).

**Directions:** From the intersection of Rte. 31 and 44 in Coventry go North on Grant Hill Road 2.8 miles to Noah Lane on the Right. (opposite New Road on the left). Turn right on to Noah Lane and go .9 miles to its end in a cul-de-sac. Park on the right side of the cul-de-sac where the trail begins.

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