

A photograph of a woman and two children in a grassy field. The woman, wearing glasses and a light blue shirt, is pointing towards a large evergreen tree. One child is using binoculars, and the other is crouching down. The background features a large tree and a blue sky with clouds.

Simsbury Land Trust
2015 Annual Report

*Sustaining
Our Future*

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Map of SLT Properties



Letter from the President

As I look forward to our next 12 months I see a unique opportunity for the Simsbury Land Trust to celebrate our accomplishments, learn from the past and enthusiastically stride into the future. The year 2016 will be our 40th anniversary, and thanks to the enthusiastic and unwavering support from our members and the community, we certainly have much to celebrate.

Over the last 39 years we have been fortunate to preserve over 1,100 acres as open space in Simsbury. These acres not only represent a tangible asset but allude to a process by which the community has been educated about and concerned with the conservation of threatened land. As we move forward we take the lessons learned and hope to shape our efforts toward even more success.

An educated and motivated membership has been the backbone of the Simsbury Land Trust's success. Education programs will be key for us as we work to grow our membership, donor base and get more people out on the trails. Currently we are using a professional environmental consultant to help put a comprehensive plan together for our newly acquired Tanager Hill property. We have also hired an



engineer to help in planning a low impact parking area which will serve Tanager Hill as well as our Owen-Mortimer trail.

As we increase the quality and depth of our conservation management we will be in need of significant and consistent funding. For that reason we will also be unveiling our Endowment Initiative later this year. We will be able to manage this endowment through the fund we have established with the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. This fall we also initiate the second of our ambitious long-term strategic plans.

As we go forward I would again like to ask everyone to make an effort to get a friend out on a trail or bring them to an event during the upcoming year. As always your continued support is noted and greatly appreciated.

See you soon,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Fred Feibel".

Fred Feibel
President



When we think of an organization, it is most often within the context of what it does and what comes most immediately to mind when we think of the Simsbury Land Trust is the acquisition of land. And no wonder. Throughout most of our nearly 40 years and particularly over the past 15, our public focus has been either a plea for help for our latest acquisition or the celebration of a recent purchase.

However, the more important question is often not what an organization does but why it does it. In the case of the SLT, we have carefully chosen individual properties that represent the rich diversity of the Town's natural setting — farm fields and natural meadows, woods in the sandy river bottom and along the high hillsides, ponds and streams, swamps, bogs, wet meadows and vernal pools, trap rock ridges, sand hills and glacial moraines. In doing so, we have tried to enlarge tracts of land that are already protected and to connect them into natural corridors.

The mix of the natural habitats and the size of the protected areas are both important. Each plant and animal has its own requirements without which it will not survive. Some forms of life will eat almost any plant or animal and remain healthy. Others can remain healthy with a narrower mix of food. Still others need one specific plant or animal to eat. All need some form of protection from the elements and from each other — a tree top, a burrow, a thicket, a pool. Some spend part of their life cycle in the water, part on land or part in the air. Others move with the seasons, a few dozen feet or halfway across the world. Animals also need space to breed and to raise their young. Each has a different level of tolerance for others and, like us, they need space for relief from the stress of overcrowding. Some require only a few inches, some a hundred feet, others a mile or more. Some thrive in our backyards but many need privacy from people.

The more varied the habitat mix, the larger the natural areas, and the more connected by corridors, the greater the biodiversity an area can support. And the more vibrant the biodiversity, the greater are the chances for a healthy environment for the earth and for us. By owning and managing land and conservation easements the SLT helps protect the Town's biodiversity and the environment we need for our own physical and mental health. This variety in our natural surroundings provides beauty, interest and tranquility that enrich our lives.

Most of us understand the value of SLT ownership in helping protect these natural areas. But what is the value of our attempting to manage them? After all, nature has taken

care of itself quite well for millions of years before we came along. However, we now exert a disproportionately harmful force on our environment. Air and water pollution, monoculture agriculture, development that does not consider its context in the land, the introduction of invasive species and the steady increase in extinctions due to habitat loss come immediately to mind. Without some selective intervention on our part, the natural world as we know it and upon which we depend may not survive us.

Two significant areas of management illustrate the challenges facing the SLT. One is the management of invasive species. As long as man has traveled across the landscape he has taken with him seeds, plants and animals, sometimes purposefully, often by accident. Birds, animals and the wind also carry seeds but usually over shorter distances and at a slower pace. Today seeds, plants and animals can travel with the speed of a jet plane, into every nook and cranny of the world, and in much larger quantity than ever before. In prior times, when foreign species traveled much more slowly and in smaller quantities, the native species often had the time and space to adapt to the new species. The problem today is not with every migrating species but with those occasionals that thrive in the climate of their new home and that find no meaningful enemies to keep their population in check. As a result the "invasive" species crowds out the natives, and in extreme cases becomes a monoculture significantly reducing the number of species in the mix and creating a much more vulnerable habitat. We cannot eliminate an invasive once it gets established. Even if we could eradicate every individual on a given site, individuals from neighboring sites would



quickly repopulate it. The best we can do is “weed” the site on a regular basis in order to enable native species to continue to survive and perhaps eventually evolve into a meaningful competitor for the invasive. We can also repair disturbed areas that are particularly inviting to invasives and watch for newcomers and remove them before they get established. Controlling invasives is a worthwhile effort because whenever we lose one native, we risk losing other wildlife that depends on that species for its food, shelter or breeding.

Another key challenge is managing conflicting uses. The SLT encourages public access because we believe it is important that more people become aware of and appreciate these habitats. As a rule, we generally appreciate things only after we understand them and generally, we do not understand them until we have seen and spent some time getting to know them. Because our efforts to protect the land for ourselves and the next generation depends heavily on public understanding and appreciation, we spend a lot of time and effort maintaining trails and promoting them through regular guided walks. We want people to get out on the trails, to experience the physical challenge, get to know the wildlife and learn more about it, and to relax and enjoy the tranquil beauty. This is an activity that interests a wide range of people and can be enjoyed by people of all ages, either alone or in groups. For this reason and because of the character of the land, we encourage passive recreation such as walking, picnicking, photography, birdwatching, and so forth. We discourage activity that interferes with passive recreation, damages the trail or endangers or causes stress to the wildlife, particularly less common plants and animals. As with all things, there is always the question of degree. One person doing almost anything is unlikely to do any lasting damage. However, a hundred people doing the same can cause significant damage. We are continually reassessing this balance.



These are but two of the management challenges we face. As difficult as it is to steward the land, it is vitally important we do this, both for the environment in which we spend our lives and for the enjoyment and excitement of all who venture out onto the trails. Hopefully, this leads the way to a healthier physical and emotional environment for ourselves. In addition, how we care for and how we relate to the land sets an example

for our children, the community and beyond.

We have accomplished a great deal over the past 39 years, and this success is due to a number of factors. However, the one critical factor has been and continues to be you, our members. Your annual membership donations provide virtually all of the funding for our operating budget. Besides our stewardship efforts, this includes our office, staff, insurance, publications and programs. In addition, you provide virtually

all of our volunteers. And you are our ambassadors to the community, the face of the SLT and our best means of getting feedback from your neighborhood. So please, renew your membership or join today, introduce a friend or neighbor to the SLT and help us to continue our work for years to come. Thank you to all of you!

By owning and managing land and conservation easements the SLT helps protect the Town's biodiversity and the environment we need for our own physical and mental health. This variety in our natural surroundings provides beauty, interest and tranquility that enrich our lives.

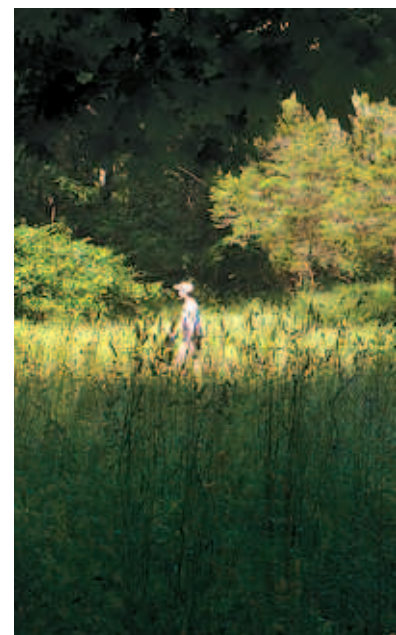
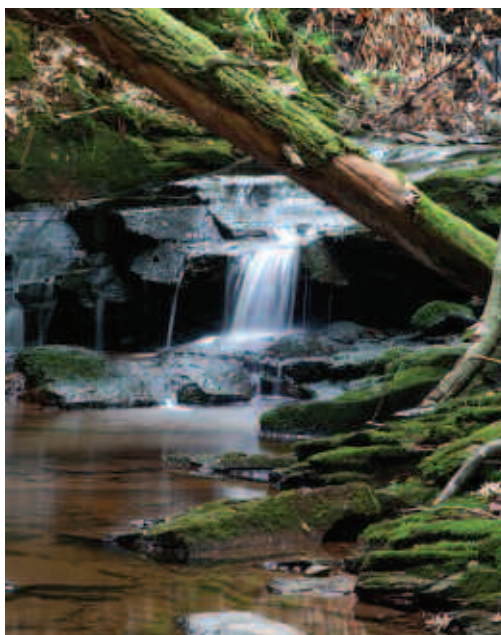
Tanager Hill Acquisition Complete



Tanager Hill is a 75-acre preserve that connects the Farmington River flood plain to the crest of the Metacomet Ridge — a 500-foot elevation change — and provides protection for a wide variety of natural habitat types and hiker access to Penwood State Park and the New England National Scenic Trail. This acquisition would never have occurred if it had not been for the strong desire of the Ellsworth family to see this hillside, their family home for 75 years, permanently protected in its natural state. The Simsbury Land Trust wishes to express its deep appreciation for all of the many people and organizations that helped make the protection of Tanager Hill a reality.

We would like to thank the key funders for this \$1,200,000 project. Without their support this would not have been possible. Contributors include: CT-DEEP Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program, the Ellsworth Family, the John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation, the Community Foundation of Northwest Connecticut, the Richard P. Garmany Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Hartford Audubon Society and the many individual members and friends of the SLT who donated nearly \$300,000 in private contributions. We also appreciate the support and encouragement of the Connecticut Forest and Park Association. Without the commitment, patience and generosity of each of these supporters the protection of Tanager Hill would not have occurred.

Thank you!



A Little Bit of Tanager Hill History

By Ann-Toy Ellsworth Broughton

As a boy growing up in Simsbury in the early 1900s, John Ellsworth used to ride his horse from Roskear, the family farm on East Weatogue Street, up onto the mountain behind the farmhouse and barns, as his father, Harry, had done before him. The land was open then, with spectacular views to the west, and historic cart trails crisscrossing the meadows that had been deep forest before the charcoal burners arrived. So it was a long-term dream of his to someday own a piece of the mountain, bring his bride there, and raise a family in the home he would build.

On a day in May, 1939, John took Grace, his wife of mere weeks, and parked by an apple tree in full bloom on East Weatogue Street. He told her that he had just received word that the owners of the land there had agreed to sell to them.

At that moment, a scarlet tanager flew into the apple tree, and perched above them. They both decided on the spot to call their new property Tanager Hill.

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As they planned and built their home, the full scope of their mutual love of all things wild and natural was revealed. The driveway was laid out to minimally scar the hillside, and young trees were left standing too close to foundation work, to the bane of the builders. Huge windows gave the impression that there were no boundaries between outside and in. This made sense to John and Grace, as they came to know every inch of their hillside, as they wandered the land, taking note of geological features, rare plants like trailing arbutus and pink lady's slipper, the stunning red sandstone gorge where Lucy's Brook came down off the bench, the small ponds and sandy esker left over from the glaciers, and the charcoal rings where they told their children the fairies danced.

Visit our website for more Tanager Hill history and a full-sized trail map. www.simsburylandtrust.org



One of the major donors — and unsung heroes — of the Simsbury Land Trust was Preston Case. Preston lived much of his life in a home he built in 1934, a short walk from the corner of Ferry Lane and Goodrich Road where he was born. Those who lived on the east side of town may recall Preston and his wife, Estelle. You would see them everywhere in town on their daily walks, but particularly on Terry's Plain Road, with Preston ten yards ahead of Estelle, each with a plastic bag for collecting litter. They had a deep attachment for this place and the land that surrounded it.

Preston and Estelle donated 11 acres in back of their home to the Simsbury Land Trust in 1994. This consisted of wet meadow that had been used historically for various crops, flowers and nursery stock, but in recent years had grown a thick cover of alder. After this gift, Preston continued to care for the site as though it were his own, contributing hours to cutting the brush and helping the SLT restore a six-acre portion of the meadow to wildflowers and scattered oak and pine. When Estelle passed away in 2004, Preston decided to donate his home of 70 years to the SLT. He donated the house and the two acres it sat on, but withheld a life



Preston and Estelle Case

As Preston discovered, you can even donate your home and continue to live there as long as you wish to. This can be a very significant contribution to the land trust.

estate, which enabled him to live there undisturbed for the remainder of his life.

"In speaking with Preston about the possibility of his donating the house, and later in the transfer documents, we made it clear that the SLT would probably sell the house but that the proceeds from any such sale would be used to help acquire additional conservation land," reports Chuck Howard, who was a board member at the time.

When Preston passed away in 2006, his house and approximately one acre were sold for over \$200,000, providing much needed funds for our acquisition of the Tulmeadow Farm conservation easement. Chuck Howard states, "The SLT is not really in the business of acquiring residential properties to preserve them, but this is a much overlooked means to provide a significant gift to the land trust. The SLT is able to accept the gift of a home provided the donor understands that the land trust will likely sell the house and use

the proceeds to acquire and/or care for conservation land. As Preston discovered, you can even donate your home and continue to live there as long as you wish to. This can be a very significant contribution to the land trust."



Laird and Ann Mortimer moved to Simsbury in 1995 from West Hartford when they retired from careers in the printing business. They purchased a house and 22 acres of land at the top of Pinnacle Mountain Road from Marty and Candy Owen. With the addition of another 20 acres that they subsequently purchased from the Owens, their property extended from East Weatogue Street up to the power lines just below and west of Penwood State Park.

The Mortimers enjoyed their new home and the quiet and solitude of their property so much that in 2008, after much thoughtful consideration, they made the decision to donate 28 acres, along with an additional two-acre conservation easement, to the Simsbury Land Trust so that the property could be preserved. This property, which the SLT calls the Owen-Mortimer Property, allowed SLT to create one of its most popular hiking trails on the east side of town. It is adjacent to the new Tanager Hill Property acquired in 2015, so when combined there are now over 100 acres of land, including miles of trails, meadows and wonderful vistas that extend up the ridge and connect with Penwood State Park.

As a result of this thoughtful gift by the Mortimers, the people of Simsbury and SLT now have preserved a wonderful asset in perpetuity that will allow the Mortimer's joy in the land to be shared with others.



Laird Mortimer

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According to Laird, "As we thought about it over the years, we were unhappy at the thought of this property being developed, and we also thought that development would have made the previous owners (the Owens) unhappy as well. We have no regrets and we are happy we did it. In the end, the decision to donate the property to the land trust seemed like such a natural thing to do."

One consequence of the donation was that the Mortimers received a significant tax benefit. Another is that their donation was important to the SLT's ability subsequently to acquire Tanager Hill. As Laird puts it, "We just never dreamed that our donation would be so critical to the preservation of Tanager Hill. We also understand that the long term preservation of these properties will be expensive, so we have made arrangements in our estate planning for a bequest to help provide for the maintenance of the properties. I urge more people to do this."



Financial Highlights

Statement of Revenues and Expenses

Eighteen Months Ended June 30, 2015

	LAND ACQUISITION	OPERATIONS	TOTAL
Revenues			
Land Acquisition Contributions	\$ 290,744		\$ 290,744
Land Donations			0
Grants	825,000	\$58,793	883,793
Membership Contributions		127,388	127,388
Art Auction Net		22,923	22,923
Miscellaneous Income		7,445	7,445
Total Revenues	1,115,744	216,549	1,332,293
Expenses			
Acquisition Expenses		23,970	23,970
Administrative	6,775	52,451	59,226
Salaries and Benefits	10,922	53,401	64,323
Membership		33,339	33,339
Stewardship		19,954	19,954
Depreciation		57	57
Total Expenses	17,697	183,172	200,869
Excess of Revenues Over Expenses	\$1,098,047	\$33,377	\$1,131,424

Balance Sheet

JUNE 30, 2015

Assets

CURRENT ASSETS	
Cash – Unrestricted	\$ 217,541
– Restricted	70,246
Prepaid Expenses	994
Investments Held by Others	90,256
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	379,037
LAND	14,603,722
TOTAL ASSETS	\$14,982,759

Fund Balance

Beginning Fund Balance	13,808,335
Board Designated Stewardship Fund	43,000
Excess of Revenues over Expenses	1,131,424
ENDING FUND BALANCE	14,982,759
Fund Balance	\$14,982,759

The Board of Trustees of the Simsbury Land Trust approved a change in the organization's fiscal year end from December 31 to June 30 of each year. As a result of the change, this annual report includes an 18 month period beginning January 1, 2014 and ending June 30, 2015.

Membership Donations

We want to thank the community for its generous support this past year. None of the Simsbury Land Trust's accomplishments in 2015 would have been possible without our membership and our many remarkable volunteers and donors.

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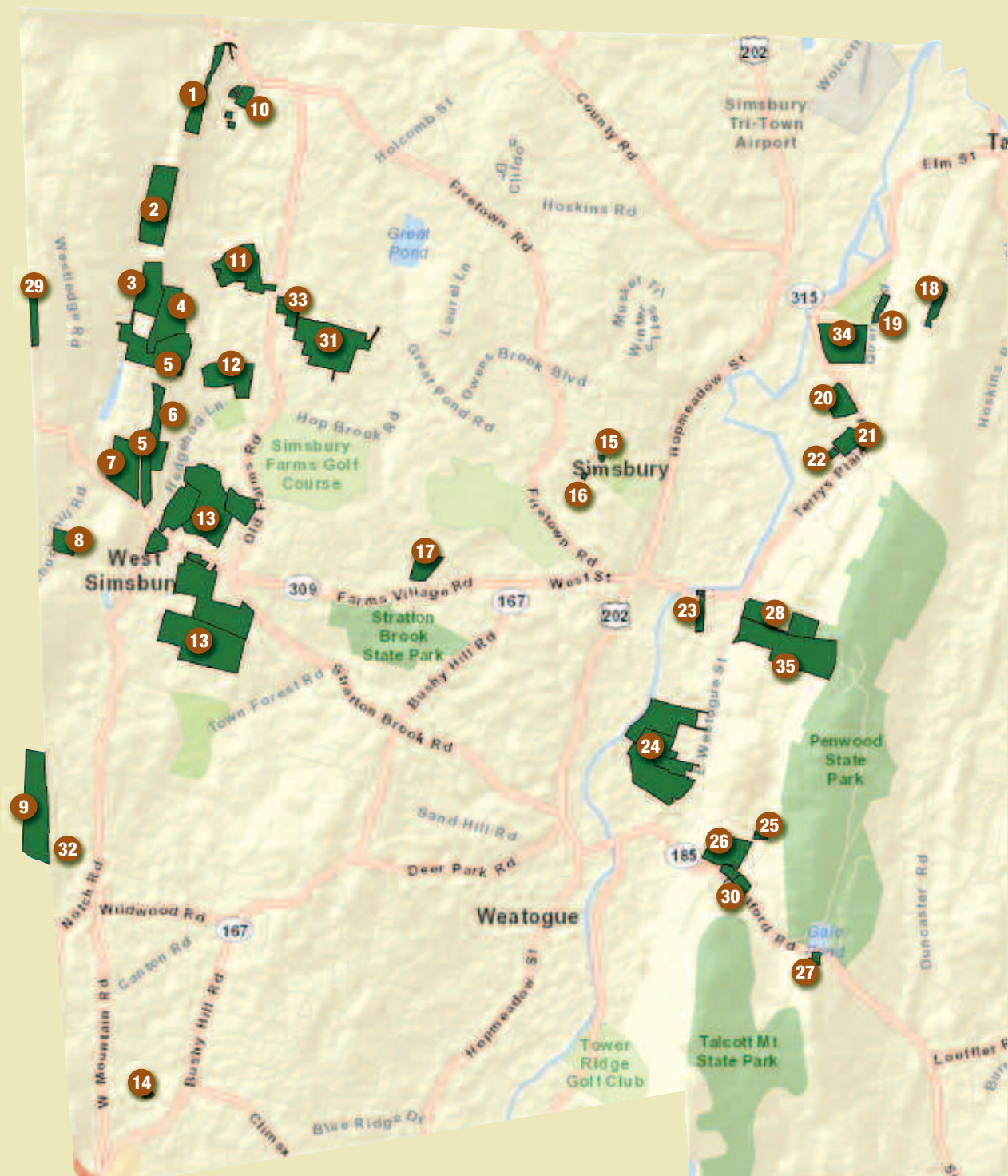
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The Simsbury Land Trust is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to protect scenic vistas, geological features and farmland that visually define Simsbury's character and provide healthy habitats for local wildlife and plants. Our goal is to consistently craft, support and implement creative land conservation solutions for the benefit of present and future generations.

The Simsbury Land Trust seeks to accomplish its mission through:

- Acquisitions:** Soliciting and accepting gifts of land and interests in land from individuals and businesses.
- Partnerships:** Partnering with individuals, organizations, and governmental entities to accomplish our goals.
- Advocacy:** Participating in public policy dialogue at the local and state levels, in public and private forums.
- Stewardship:** Managing and using acquired properties in a manner consistent with our mission.
- Legacy Building:** Soliciting donations from individuals, organizations, foundations and businesses.

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2 Cathles	9 Arnold	16 Bergman	23 Salster	30 Glover
3 Friedman	10 Leaska	17 Welden	24 Rosedale Farms	31 Wagner Woods
4 Hendrick	11 Bog	18 James	25 Fletcher	32 Macke
5 The Master's School	12 Knapp	19 Ketchin Quarry	26 Holcomb	33 George Hall Farm
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