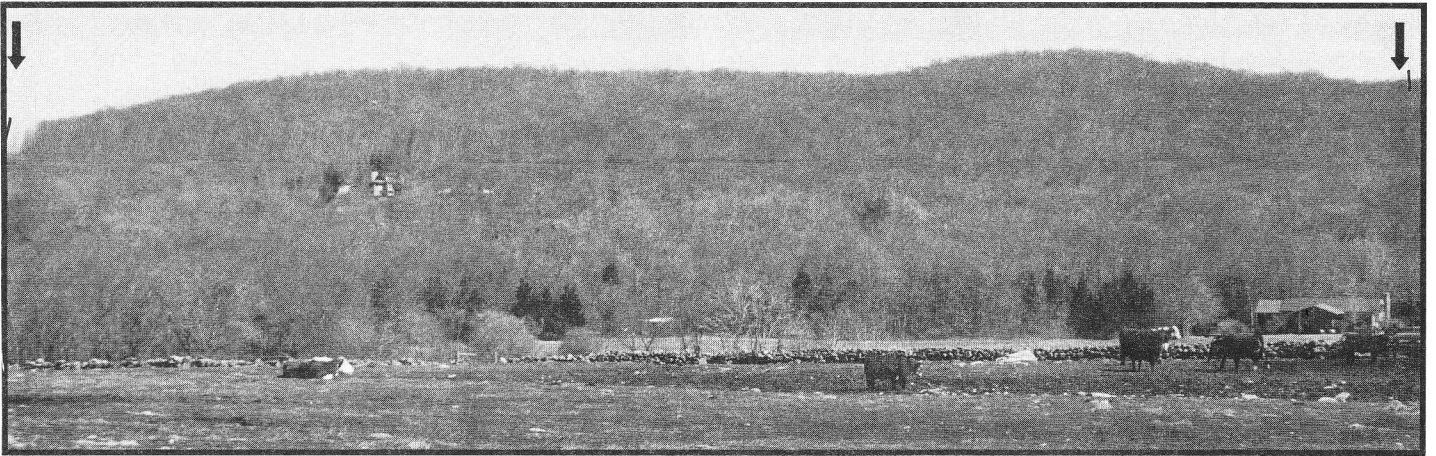


# LYME LAND TRUST BULLETIN

The Lyme Land Conservation Trust

Special Edition, 2001



*View of the Hamburg ridgeline from above Tiffany Farm. The arrows indicate the east and west boundaries of the property; the house in the center is entirely surrounded by the Plimpton land.*

## EXTRA - EXTRA - READ ALL ABOUT IT!

### LAND TRUST NEEDS HELP!

The Lyme Land Conservation Trust is seeking to raise \$75,000 in order to preserve as open space a very central parcel in the town. The Trust has taken an option to buy 80 acres of hillside overlooking Hamburg. The owner, Kenneth Plimpton, has also agreed to donate a conservation easement on an additional 25 acres if the sale is completed, bringing the total acreage to 105. The sale price is \$488,000.

There is a very strong probability that the state will grant the Land Trust's request for half this amount, from the Connecticut Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program, which requires matching funds. This match will come from several sources. The Land Trust has pledged \$50,000 from its Acquisition Fund. The Connecticut Chapter of The Nature Conservancy has likewise pledged \$50,000, as part of its program to preserve the natural resources of the Lower Connecticut River Tidelands.

A final pledge from an anonymous donor of \$75,000 requires its own match of new donations, and this the Land Trust is seeking to raise from town residents. We need Lyme to react generously to reach this \$75,000 goal.

#### A Crucial Parcel

One can hardly imagine a more crucial parcel for preserving the rural character of Lyme. Rising some 300 feet above Sterling

City Road, the roughly triangular parcel encompasses two highly visible ridgelines. These form a large part of the breathtaking view of the Falls River valley one receives from Lord's Hill and other locations as one comes over the rise by Tiffany Farm on Hamburg Road. It is, indeed, a gateway parcel.

From the top of these ridges, there is an equally stunning vista back, across the valley and up Hamburg Cove, almost to the river. There is also a glimpse of Long Island Sound from one location on the hill. It would be nice to preserve these views for town residents in perpetuity.

Mr. Plimpton reluctantly needed to sell his property for estate planning reasons. At one time he had an offer to buy, which he was ready to accept, with a stipulation there be only two houses, as town regulations allow. This offer fell through but an alternative was possible. With 300 feet of road frontage, town ordinances would permit the building of six houses. Before going this route, however, Mr. Plimpton opened discussion with the Land Trust.

The parcel is crucially located to join other protected open spaces which would further preservation of the unfragmented landscape. On the north, it abuts the 200 acre easement Timothy Mellon recently donated

to the Department of Environmental Protection. This in turn links with the enormous acreage of the Nehantic State Forest. The Land Trust, in addition, protects open space as does The Nature Conservancy on several other parcels in the valley. (See map).

The hillside, with forested wetlands and rock outcrops, forms part of the watershed for the Eightmile and Connecticut Rivers. These rivers and their watersheds have received many protective designations for their natural resources, and a recent citation of the Eightmile River as a State of Connecticut Greenway adds to the list.

The forest is mostly mixed hardwoods - oaks, beech, hickories, birches and maples, with a few old white oaks. Remnant red cedars, indicate earlier use as pastureland. Mountain laurel is found in the understory, with spicebush and highbush blueberry in the upland wetlands.

The rock outcrops create variable ridges and sculptural shapes. A stretch of bare rock on one hillside offers a view of the Tiffany Farm and the hills beyond in one direction, and the cove in another. The Land Trust will develop a trail system that will make access to the hillside open to the public in perpetuity.

## SAVING HISTORY TOO

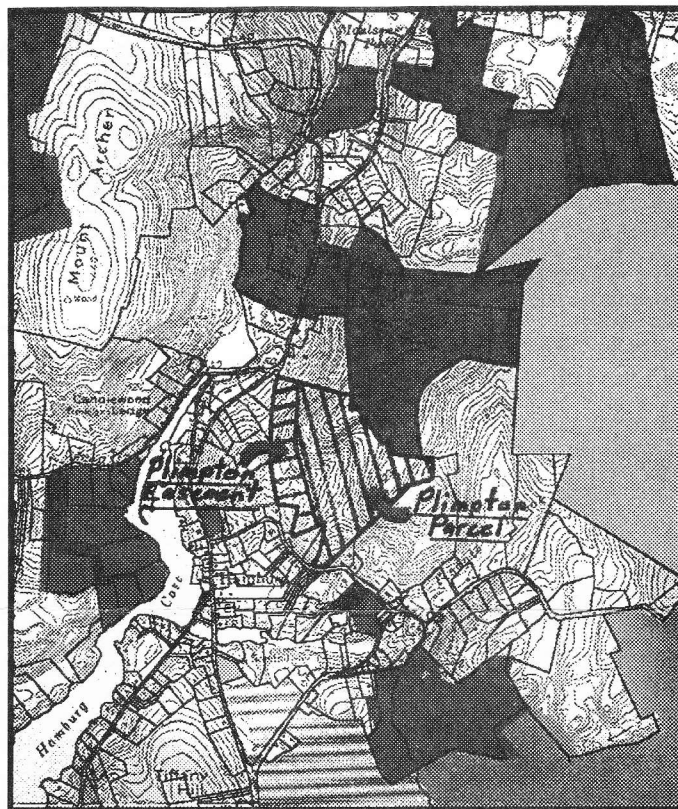
Conservation of the Kenneth Plimpton property will protect not only natural resources and fabulous views in both directions, but also some interesting remnants of the town's history.

The original settlement of the town centered on Sterling City Road because there was no bridge across the Falls River at the point where Route 156 now crosses, but it was possible to bridge the river above the falls. Then just beyond Stone Post Road, Meeting House Hill Road swung to the north through a small valley, and continued on to Joshuatown Road and the settlement on the upper cove known as Old Hamburg or Reed's Landing.

The route of Meeting House Hill Road is clearly visible as it winds through Mr. Plimpton's property. The road opened in 1724 and was not discontinued by the town until 1849. Sections of the original chestnut split-rail fence remain. This is the section he will retain but protect from development by donating an easement to the Lyme Land Trust.

Both Ken Plimpton and his wife Elizabeth grew up in Sterling City, and both were related to long resident Lyme families. Elizabeth was town historian until her death six years ago. She drew on her and Kenneth's knowledge of the area and her extensive genealogical study of some 50 families of the town. Some of this research appears in her charming article in the book *Hamburg Cove*, edited by Stanley Schuler (published by the Lyme Historical Society/Florence Griswold Museum).

On the hill above the road, there are two springs which supplied water through lead pipes to the farmhouse at the entry to the road where Kenneth once lived, and to other houses and barns in the area. The springs still provide good water but the houses now draw from wells. Somewhere on this hill also stood the first meeting house. "Nothing remains of this building," Elizabeth wrote, "but it was thought to have been a simple frame structure measuring about twenty by thirty feet, without porch, chimney or steeple. It was probably not completed until 1728."



Plimpton property: striped areas. Dark Areas: protected parcels under various programs.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

When I first heard about the availability of this property, I wasn't so sure as to why a couple of house lots on 80 acres was such a bad thing. If we could ensure that housing density in Lyme would be limited to one house per 40 acres wouldn't this protect the rural and aesthetic character of the town as well as the land's biological integrity? In most cases yes, but this is a unique exception. These would be highly visible homes that would require extra clearing of the land to take advantage of the views. This would further fragment the landscape impacting those species such as bobcat and coyote that require large blocks of open space. I, as well as the entire board, saw this property as one we must protect. I hope you agree and will participate in this fundraising effort.

Anthony Irving

We hope you will contribute to the special Plimpton Fund. Donations to the Land Trust are tax deductible as charitable donations. The Land Trust accepts checks or securities and also welcomes matching gifts. To discuss donation of securities or matching gifts, call our Treasurer, Robert W. Barney at (860) 434-2082.

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