



## **NEWS FLASH: Essex Land Trust moves into the 21st Century, learns about invention called “electricity”**

**By Leif Owens**

**Y**es, believe it or not, for over 50 years, land trust stewards have been working in the dark, literally. Well that finally ended a few weeks ago with a long overdue addition to our operations.

Three years ago, we expanded the stewardship barn at our Cross Lots Preserve to accommodate a new tractor and mowing accessories. This addition, along with the original homestead barn serve as our main depository for stewardship equipment, supplies, manuals, and documents. The land trust has also provided space in one of the barns for the Essex Garden Club, which it uses to store supplies and donations for May Market, its primary fundraising event. As important and heavily used as this



space is for our stewardship work, it is completely without lighting and power. Whenever a steward must go up into the loft area, we wish them well and hope to see them again someday. Rumor has it, a couple of stewards from the 70's are still lost in the pitch-black loft.

Last September, we decided enough is enough! We applied for a grant to finally fix this dark issue. And while we were contemplating the project, we realized we could also help our aging muscles by converting to lighter, quieter, battery-operated equipment. It was a “light bulb” moment.

After receiving a grant from the Community Foundation

of Middlesex County (CFMC) as well as individual donor support from the Joanne Masin Foundation, we were able to finally move forward with our dream of bringing electrical power to the barn. Additional thanks for support to The Clark Group, Jeff Stevens (Stevens Excavating) and Bret Haskins of Haskins Electric, who donated his labor cost to the project.

The dream nearly became a nightmare as we faced the dilemma of where to get the electricity. New power pole off West Ave and cutting down trees? Bad idea. Tear up entrance drive to Cross Lots but still need a new pole? No thanks. Dig a 300-yard trench across the preserve lawn area and use very large aluminum conductors? Crazy expensive. Ask a nice and generous neighbor if we can tie into their electrical service and run a short trench behind the barn? It was our second “light bulb” moment! And with that solution in hand, work proceeded quickly.

Our electrician mapped the trench route, the excavator dug the trench, cable was laid, panel and outlets installed, and city inspection passed. All in less than 1 week!

After hanging new, energy efficient LED lights and using auto-off timers we could finally see how wonderful our barn space really is! Unfortunately, no luck finding the lost stewards in the loft, but we did find a lot of nice fencing material and a box of brochure holders. Over the next few months, we will acquire battery powered hand tools for bridge, kiosk, and fence building. We will also purchase light weight battery powered chainsaws, pole saws, weed trimmers and blowers.



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As the battery technology continues to evolve, we will continue to benefit greatly from the use of environmentally friendly equipment for the maintenance of our preserves.

Preserve visitors who see our work can easily replicate the use of these machines at home.  
Gee it's nice to be back in the 21st Century.

## The 1982 Ivoryton Flood - The Morning After

By Steve Knauth

*Editor's Note: This article is Part 3 in a series about the 1982 Ivoryton Flood. The first two parts appeared in the 2022 Winter and Summer editions of Woods & Waters, which can be accessed on the land trust's website: <https://essexlandtrust.org/woods-waters/>*

It was the morning after, and the Flood of '82 had left Ivoryton a ruin. Up on the hill above the village, the Bushy Hill reservoir, where it all started, was empty, described as a 30-foot deep, mile-long mudhole. Down below, Clark's Pond and its dam were gone, Ivory Lake had vanished, along with its dam. Mill Pond was a 70-acre mud flat extending into Centerbrook.

Main Street, phone poles askew, was a torn, twisted stretch of pavement, lined with damaged buildings, Ivory Street choked with lumber piled against trees, with automobiles scattered every which way, one left in a tree. Side roads were either damaged or just plain swept away. There was no electricity, no phone service, no water.

Scores of homes and businesses extending all the way into Centerbrook had been lost, swamped with mud and debris, or knocked off their foundations. At least 100 people had been evacuated.



Photo Courtesy Ivoryton Library

The Pratt-Read factory complex, home to the piano parts maker and Sounder Sports, the golf equipment producer, was a mud-filled morass, their employees – more than 150

of them – facing an uncertain future.

### First Things First

For First Selectman Richard Riggio and the town's first responders, the top priorities were search-and-rescue and security. From an emergency communications center set up on the scene at the Ivoryton baseball field, Riggio declared a curfew, restricting travel between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. "until roads can be stabilized, and residents property protected



Photo Courtesy Ivoryton Library

from looters," he said in a statement. Resident State Trooper Bob Nattrass III along with Bill Morgan and other members of the Essex Constabulary set up and manned checkpoints.

Water and sanitation were also immediate concerns, with lines ruptured and potable water declared un-drinkable by Health Officer Dr. Christopher Goff. Portable toilets had to be set up in all three villages. Volunteers at the Essex Ambulance Association thought to make emergency water deliveries to the local rest homes.

Evacuees had been brought to safety during the harrowing night by town constables and the volunteer fire department. Immediate shelter was found at the Essex Ambulance barn in Centerbrook, the elementary school, the Ivoryton Fire Department and the Episcopal Camp and Conference Center (today's Incarnation Center) up on Bushy Hill.

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## The 1982 Ivoryton Flood, Part 3 ... continued from page 2

### Teamwork

At the town hall, Secretary JoAnn Schlauder took calls from bewildered citizens about drinking water, clothing and housing and just plain news. Civil preparedness chief Charlie O'Donnell monitored the emerging situation from the ambulance barn while his wife, Sam, made sandwiches and coffee to help fuel those already on the scene.



Photo Courtesy Cotty Barlow

Natgrass and the town constables stayed on duty, enforcing the curfew, providing security and soon turning away the increasing number of out-of-town sightseers clogging the devastated roads.

The fire department helped look for survivors, and missing persons were soon accounted for. Fourteen submerged cars had been searched; no lives had been lost.

Things were beginning to stabilize.

The National Guard arrived, 200-strong, with drab-green "buffalo" tanks from which they dispensed water, five gallons at a time, at various locations. At the civil preparedness headquarters, Secretary Jean Hanor began organizing a growing list of volunteers, from individuals and groups to local businesses. The Essex Community Fund's flood relief fund provided \$4,000 in emergency money by week's end.

Survivors needed basic advice, now, and the New London Day printed a what-to-do list; how to contact the Federal Disaster Assistance Center (FEMA), what to do about lost check books and pass books, missed mortgage payments, lost telephone service and power interruptions. Missing person queries were to go through the State Police barracks, it said, while those concerning lost vehicles went through the Essex Town Hall. WLIS, Old Saybrook's AM radio station, also provided emergency reports and information.

People seemed to have taken a deep breath after a night of disaster. "Slowly but surely," wrote Marge Ward in the Middletown Press, "the people of Essex are beginning to pull things together and look to cleaning up and starting anew."

### Hard Work To Come

Months of toil lay ahead, even as Selectman James Kennish and Town Engineers Fred Radcliffe and Bob Doane began assessing the damage and listing priorities. As if the lumber and cars weren't enough to clean up, there was mud everywhere. Crews had to be organized to begin, beginning what seemed to be the impossible task of clearing it all up. Chief Paul Phoenix and the fire department began pumping out cellars, more than 150 of them in the end. The junior firefighters helped wherever they were needed.

It took a while, and it wasn't always easy, but the roads were repaired, the houses renewed, and the villages were once again up and running. Ivoryton's now-vibrant downtown, upgraded recently with new sidewalks and other infrastructure, is the legacy of those groups, individuals and volunteers who helped put Ivoryton back together after the infamous Flood of '82.



Photo Courtesy Cotty Barlow

"The hard and brave work of the Ambulance Association, the Fire Department, the Constables and the town crew will never be forgotten," wrote Natgrass, the resident state trooper, in a retrospective. "But the most remarkable thing was the way the people of Essex rose up to help each other."

But there'd be no more swimming and fishing at Clark's Pond, no more walks along Ivory Lake and, within a few years, Ivoryton's last link with its origins - the factory - would lie empty.

The village would never be quite the same.

To tell the full tale of the Flood of '82 would take nothing short of a book. For those who'd like to delve more deeply into the subject, they will find the files belonging to the Ivoryton Library and the Essex Historical Association to be of immense value.

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## Unnamed Heroes

Reporter Dan Mac Alpine of The Gazette recorded this story of an un-named couple whose quick reaction saved the lives of five people.

It was late on Saturday night, not long before the Bushy Hill reservoir dam burst, and the Falls River was already a torrent, its rushing waters sweeping over the Main Steet bridge.

Five people trying to wade across the bridge were swept off their feet and only managed to save themselves by clinging to the bridge abutment. "We were walking arm-in-arm and the current took us right away," one of the five, Mike Collins, told Mac Alpine.

He and his companions, Glenn Woodcock, Patty Hughes and Roger and Kimmarie Abernathy were trapped, with no way forward or back; all they could do in their desperation was call for help.

That's when the couple came out of their house to look at the storm; they heard yelling and discovered the imperiled group, hanging on against the rushing tor-

rent. They went inside and called the 911 number, "but we knew an emergency vehicle wasn't going to make it to them and a boat would have been swept away," the husband told Mac Alpine. "I made up my mind I wasn't going to do anything crazy, but that I would make an honest effort to help them."

He took length of rope, tied one end to a tree and put a boat cushion on the other end, and, wading into the 30-mph, waist-deep current, threw it to them.

They caught it; some in the party thought the rescue attempt too dangerous, but there was no choice; the bridge support was slowly crumbling "It seemed like an eternity, it was so cold, and the water was pounding us against the bridge," said Collins. "We really thought that this was it."

Roger Abernathy went first, and almost didn't make it. "The current was so strong, he was almost swept away along with 'Mr. X'," Collins said. "But, with Roger's help, they were able to pull us all in."

The rescuers told Mac Alpine that they wished to remain anonymous. "He saved our lives," said Collins.

## Volunteer Spotlight: Stuart Warner, The Nonagenarian Steward

In 2015, as soon as the ink dried on the transfer of title to the Essex Land Trust of The Preserve property, Stuart Warner was in the woods mapping out several trails adjacent to Essex Meadows. During the same time period, a parking lot, for visitors hiking in The Preserve, was being cleared of trees and rocks. One trail, "Caleb's Trail," in recognition of a significant benefactor, became a popular and widely used hiking trail.

Where did Stuart come from, and where did he develop the necessary skills to undertake such an enormous project? Originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Stuart obtained a doctoral degree in science, and started his career in New York where he taught at Columbia University. It was in New York that he met and married his lifelong partner, Mimi. Soon, however, the corporate world beckoned, and he pursued a long career working with International Nickel in Canada.



Stuart first became involved with the land trust in 1999 and began his stewardship experience at the Elizabeth "Diz" Callender Osage Trails preserve. As an abutter to the property and neighbor of Diz's, Stuart helped establish Osage Trails as the park-like preserve that we know today, located on Foxboro Point.

When Stuart and Mimi moved to Essex Meadows, he continued with his stewardship passion overseeing clearing the Essex Meadows trails that lead to a stream of steppingstones referred to as the "Cascades." After The Preserve was acquired, with Essex Meadows abutting the 968-acre property, it was a natural fit to have

Stuart continue his stewardship activities.

One of the first tasks needing attention after the acquisition was the removal of over 1,000 perc test pipes which had been deployed throughout as part of the originally planned development. Stuart was the clear champion having re-

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moved many hundred. With his experience, desire, dedication, and tireless work ethic, Stuart developed trails in the East Preserve. Mapping and cutting the trails was relatively easy for Stuart. The terrain, however, was difficult! There is a rocky ridge running through the middle of the East Preserve where Caleb's Trail was to be cut. That rocky ridge needed to be conquered!

Hiking up and down the ridge required three series of steps to be cut into the ridge. The initial two series of steps were difficult but completed. The third series was, by all accounts, "almost impossible." Stuart did not give up! No! He took a chisel and sledgehammer and carved them out of the rock! He then installed posts for a railing, creating the first Essex Land Trust "rope railing" for hikers. To share this project with others, Stuart made a DVD titled: A Walk on Caleb's Trail. In the West Preserve, Stuart created another rope railing used to cross a streambed of steppingstones without a bridge.

Stuart realized that invasive plants needed to be removed.

This reality was undertaken long before the rest of our stewards had any idea about removing Japanese Barberry, Asian Bittersweet, or Multiflora Rose. We talked about removing the invasives, however, it was Stuart who forged ahead and started cutting and eliminating them from The Preserve. Now many of the Stewards are doing the same thing.

---And all of this has been done by a nonagenarian as Stuart will be celebrating his 90th birthday in November. While one would think that Stuart already had enough on his plate, over the years, he had time enough to be an active member of Capella Cantorum and was also actively involved with FISH, the organization that drives those unable to do so themselves to their medical appointments. Stuart is a man for all seasons. He is truly self-motivated. He does not need guidance, and he asks for very little assistance. Stuart is the Essex Land Trust's UNSUNG HERO! Thank you, Stuart, for all that you have tirelessly given of yourself over many years.

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## Memorial Gifts Have a Lasting Impact

**F**unding for the land trust's annual expenses is derived from various sources: family and corporate membership dues, matching gifts, donations from Conservators for Life, unrestricted and restricted donations, grants, sponsorships, and spontaneous donations received via the PayPal link on our website. All these diverse fund sources play an important role in financing our approximately \$100,000 annual operating budget.

### Memorial and "In Honor of" Gifts

Worth highlighting are memorial and "in honor of" gifts, those made to pay respect to an individual who has passed away or, for example, to honor the work of land trust volunteers. The land trust especially values these gifts as they reflect appreciation for the dedication of many to the land trust's mission. Notably, since January 2021, the land trust has received 95 gifts corresponding to 17 individuals and amounting to over \$22,000. Certainly, an important contribution to our funding needs.

### The Falls River Society

This past year the land trust rolled out its Falls River Society legacy program. The Falls River Society was established to honor those who have chosen to support the Essex Land Trust's efforts with a planned gift. Including the Essex Land Trust in an estate plan is a meaningful way to invest in the future of our community. Many legacy gifts offer valuable tax benefits. Each represents a flexible giving



opportunity to match a gift to an individual's goals and values. Legacy gifts can take diverse forms. Some options are: a bequest from a will or trust, an IRA or insurance beneficiary, life income arrangement such as a charitable gift annuity or trust, and real estate.

Over the years, legacy gifts have been a mainstay of support for our mission. Harriet Downing gave us the Cross Lots Preserve. Jean Hanor's gift was used towards the purchase of the Pond Meadow Preserve. A gift from Phil Putnam provided the seed funding for our stewardship fund. And Diz Callender's bequest supports the maintenance of the Osage Trails Preserve, the land which she had previously donated.

To make any legacy gift, it is important that you get the advice of your financial advisor and attorney. If you or your advisors have any questions, please contact us: [info@essexlandtrust.org](mailto:info@essexlandtrust.org).

## Bill Grover - Celebration of Life

*Editor's Note: Bill Grover passed away on October 1st, 2021. The Essex Land Trust participated in his Celebration of Life held at Centerbrook Architects on August 13th. Following is an edited version of the comments delivered by land trust Board Member Jim Denham.*

According to Essex Land Trust records, Bill Grover began his involvement with the land trust in October 1998 (nearly 25 years ago) when he made a generous donation toward the initial purchase of land along the Falls River. Providing further support for additional campaigns, today's Falls River Preserve on the northern shore of the Mill Pond is a reality due in part to Bill and Dee Grover's commitment to the community which they called home.

Bill further demonstrated his commitment to the land trust when he joined the Board of Directors in 2004, later becoming president for 3 years starting in 2009. He remained on the Board until 2015.

Bill played a key role in numerous land trust initiatives during his time on the Board. He had a long involvement in the eventual acquisition of the 49-acre Johnson Farm in 2015. Named for Murwin Johnson, the preserve's actual transaction took seven years to reach fruition. Initially, the land trust acquired the development rights in 2008 using land trust funds, fundraising, and a substantial contribution from the Town of Essex Open Space Fund. Two years after Murwin passed away in November 2012, his widow, Polly Johnson, decided to sell the farm to the Essex Land Trust. Bill Grover was the linchpin throughout all these years and, no doubt the excellent relationship established with Murwin and Polly, was instrumental in this successful acquisition. Today's Johnson Farm is a testament to Murwin Johnson wanting "to do this for the next genera-

tion of kids."

Another lasting contribution was Bill's leading effort in negotiating a major funding project involving the Department of Agriculture's NRCS (Natural Resources Con-

servation Service). As a result of Bill's initiative (which took around three years to materialize), the Essex Land Trust received \$319,000 from the NRCS in exchange for granting the government easements on wetland properties owned by the land trust. We called Bill's initiative the "Too Good to be True Project" because it ensured the perpetual protection of these wetlands and provided funding to help the land trust acquire additional wetland acreage, especially on the Essex Great Meadow and resources to control invasive phragmites. This project would not have happened without Bill's perseverance and patience to navigate the many regulatory procedures and legal requirements. The beauty and condition of today's Great Meadow is in no small part due to Bill Grover.



Photo Courtesy Jody Dole

It would be remiss not to mention Bill's interest in the industrial history of the Falls River. Working and residing on the banks of the Falls River, Bill especially appreciated the history of our community from the early days of waterpower, used to mill wood and grain, to its use as a power generator for many industries including the Valley Manufacturing Company which is where Centerbrook Architects facilities are located.

The Essex Land Trust owes a deep debt of gratitude to Bill Grover. He was thoughtful, kind and a wonderful human being. In addition to being a significant donor, his other contributions will be a legacy that will be appreciated by future generations.

## ELT Briefs

### Osprey Platform Repairs

Land Trust board members Paul Greenberg, Bob Nussbaum, and Jim Denham recently visited the two existing Osprey platforms on Thatchbed Island. The platform located in the southern part of the island came off its pole as this year's breeding season was coming to an end. Fortunately, the single fledgling raised on this nest had become self-sufficient and, while it hung around the area, it did not require the platform to prepare itself for its annual migration south. A new platform was built and installed so that it will be ready for when Ospreys return next March.



The platform located at the northeastern point of Thatchbed island has suffered several years of nest failure. We speculate that predators, such as raccoons, may have found a way to access the platform. As a result, we decided to remove one of the boards that was used to support the camera no longer on the platform. We hope that making this change will allow this platform to produce a future generation of Ospreys once again.



We also took the opportunity to evaluate the condition of the both platform bases and were pleasantly surprised to note that the wood was in good condition and the braces were solidly connected.

### Learning about Connecticut Wildlife and the Environment

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) website has a wealth of information about Connecticut wildlife and the environment. Most of the information is freely accessible, can

be subscribed to, or purchased from its store. The following link takes you to its list of publications: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/SearchResults?SearchKeyword=publications>

We highlight three favorite publications which provide useful, timely and educational content.

**Sound Outlook** is an electronic newsletter published three times each year by the DEEP Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse. It addresses the water quality, coastal resources, and coastal uses of Long Island Sound. To sign up for Sound Outlook newsletters, go to: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Coastal-Resources/Sound-Out/Sound-Outlook>

**Wildlife Highlights** is a free electronic newsletter for anyone interested in Connecticut's wildlife and the outdoors! Content typically includes such items as various wildlife and habitat projects underway in Connecticut; latest hunting information, regulation and season updates, and hunter education opportunities; natural history about Connecticut's wildlife species and wildlife viewing tips; what to do about nuisance or distressed wildlife; special events and activities; Citizen Scientist opportunities, and so much more!



**Connecticut Wildlife Magazine** is the official bimonthly publication of the DEEP Bureau of Natural Resources.

It includes articles written by DEEP biologists who are responsible for the management of Connecticut's wildlife, fisheries, and forest resources. The magazine is your best source for fishing, hunting, wildlife, and conservation information in the state. Every issue includes great wildlife photography, in-depth features, hunting and fishing season information, and natural history articles -- plus no advertising. It is published six times a year and is available by subscription for \$8 a year (a real bargain!). You'll find each issue packed with ideas and information about natural resource-related issues in Connecticut.



# Coming Events – Mark Your Calendar!



## October 15th, 3PM:

### Meet Essex Land Trust Board Members

Osage Trails Preserve, Foxboro Point Road, Essex  
Interested in meeting Essex Land Trust Board members? All are welcome and we especially encourage attendance by anyone who is new to town. Come by and learn about the Essex Land Trust mission and our 23 preserves. Ask questions and share your thoughts about the land trust. Cider and donuts will be provided. We will meet at the seating area by the shore.

## October 29th, 9AM:

### Fall Foliage Hike at the Falls River Preserve.

Enjoy Fall's colors and crisp air in this 40-acre Essex Land Trust Preserve. Trails wind through woodlands at edge of Mill Pond on Falls River (approx. 1 mile). Park at the end of Falls River Drive, off Main Street, Ivoryton.

## December 10th, 10 AM:

### Long Hike in The Preserve

More details to be announced on website and local press.

## Land Trust Preserve Clean-ups



November marks the time of year when the stewardship team prepares our properties for winter and ensures we are ready for the following spring. We have scheduled three work events which would benefit greatly from volunteers willing to get some outdoor exercise while helping care for some of our preserves. Please mark your calendars and come join us. Bring rakes, blowers, and tarps. Families welcome. Dress warmly, wear long sleeve shirts, and bring work gloves. Refreshments will be provided.

**November 5th, 9AM:** Falls River Park, Falls River Drive, Ivoryton. Rain date: November 6th.

**November 12th, 9AM:** Osage Trails, Foxboro Point Road, Essex. Rain date: November 13th.

**November 19th, 9AM:** Cross Lots, 40 West Avenue, Essex. Rain date: November 20th.

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