

**Town of Tolland, Connecticut
Conservation Commission
Stopplesworth Conservation Area Management Plan
Hunter Road, Tolland, CT**



A Passive Recreation Conservation Area

Adopted by Commission: February 28, 2008, February 14, 2013, March 13, 2018, and September 13, 2018

Adopted by Council: April 22, 2008

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Town of Tolland

Conservation Commission Property Management Plan

Stopplesworth Conservation Area, Hunter Road

Background – The Tolland Conservation Commission is responsible for overseeing properties purchased by the Town of Tolland for conservation purposes and to prepare a management plan for each location. The management plans are based upon the environmental characteristics and outline the opportunities for public use. Each plan includes a property description, an analysis of the unique characteristics and acceptable uses of the site, and a management program. The management program outlines the property management and improvement needs; the individuals and organizations to manage the property; and resource capabilities and protection needs related to the site. Each management plan is developed under the Commission’s management planning process.

I. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION, RESOURCES, POTENTIAL, AND PROBLEMS

Property Description - The Stopplesworth property consists of 55 acres of woodland in the northwesterly section of Tolland. It is located on Hunter Road just northerly of and adjacent to the Campbell Peaceful Valley Conservation Area. In combination with the Campbell Peaceful Valley Conservation Area, there are a total of 6,000 feet of undeveloped, scenic land along the western side of Hunter Road and 125 acres of continuous open space available to the residents and wildlife alike. This parcel is within an “Important Wildlife Areas and Corridors with Significant Natural Habitats” (Town of Tolland Open Space and Conservation Plan, 2009, map 12) and is in a chain of several conservation parcels: the Campbell Peaceful Valley Conservation Area, the Knofla Conservation Areas the Schindler/Schmidt Conservation Area and the Palmer Kendall Mountain Conservation Area.

The property was purchased by the Town of Tolland in 2004 from the Stopplesworth family with Open Space Bond funds. The site is primarily a woodland site. It is suitable for passive recreation including hiking and viewing unique geological features.



Abandoned Cellar Hole – Aborn Homestead



Rock Crossing of one stream

The property is a diverse wildlife habitat with wetlands, uplands and exposed ledges. Species found include, but are not limited to, salamanders, amphibians, blue herons, song birds, turkey, woodcocks, foxes, deer, bobcats, and bears. An owl and her chicks have also been spotted on the property along with a pair of pileated woodpeckers.

The property is within the Shenipsit Lake Watershed, part of the Connecticut Water Company public drinking water supply system. Two brooks crossing the property drain to Shenipsit Lake.

Potential Uses – Like the adjacent Campbell Peaceful Valley Conservation Area, use of the property is restricted to passive recreation which includes hiking, maintaining habitats for animals, and studying existing habitats and wildlife. The hiking trail system connects to the hiking trails of the town owned Campbell Peaceful Valley Conservation Area to the south which in turn connect to the hiking trails of the town owned Knofla Conservation Area on Bakos Road. Accepted uses include:

- Hiking
- Snowshoeing and cross-country skiing
- Habitat and wildlife studies
- Nature study
- Mountain biking is a permitted use on trails except on boardwalk bog area.

Use Restrictions – With the transfer of this property to the Town there are inherent restrictions which derive from use of conservation bond funds. This funding source requires that the property must be used as a passive open space conservation area in perpetuity.

Use Restrictions and Visitor Responsibilities – Visitors are reminded to use the property in a manner consistent with land use guidelines and protecting open space resources. Visitors should recognize that conservation areas are natural spaces that contain settings and features that pose risks including serious injury. Visitors must exercise care. The following guidelines are the standards for use and are supported by signage on the property:

- Town Ordinance requires dogs to be on a leash. Leashes must be held by a person responsible for the dog's behavior
- Leave no trace.
- No littering. Carry out what you carry in.
- No motorized vehicles or other means of motorized transport.
- No horseback riding.
- No mountain biking in the board-walked bog area.
- Do not disturb vegetation or wildlife.
- Stay on marked trail and roads.
- No hunting or firearms allowed.
- No setting of fires.
- Respect the rights of other visitors.
- Area closes at sunset. Night use is by permit only.
- Notify the Conservation Commission of organized group activities.

II. OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Management Objectives – The principal objectives are to conserve the property and protect wildlife habitat while providing access and passive recreational opportunities for the general public. While the Conservation Commission acting as an agent of the Tolland Town Council is ultimately responsible for property management, implementation of a management program is a shared responsibility with the Tolland Conservation Corps, property steward(s), and a variety of Town agencies and resources in accordance with the *Open Space Management Guideline and Process*.

Specific objectives for this parcel include:

- Follow best property management processes.
- Maintain the trail system.
- Provide parking access.

- Conduct natural resource inventory.
- Pursue educational, documentation, and protection opportunities for habitat, wildlife, and unique features.
- Maintain woodlands by managing it using forest management practices in consultation with a professional forester.
- Preserve the historic foundation and develop educational information regarding it.
- Investigate future access to scenic ridge view.

It is not the intention of the Conservation Commission to manage this property for timber production. However it may be necessary to carry out certain silviculture practices to maintain the health of the forest or to maintain the property in a particular stage of succession in order to encourage a particular habitat. The Commission will consult with professional forest managers to insure that the appropriate practices are implemented.

Management Plan and Program – Tasks required to assure that management objectives are achieved shall be overseen by the Conservation Commission and implemented by the head steward and property steward(s).

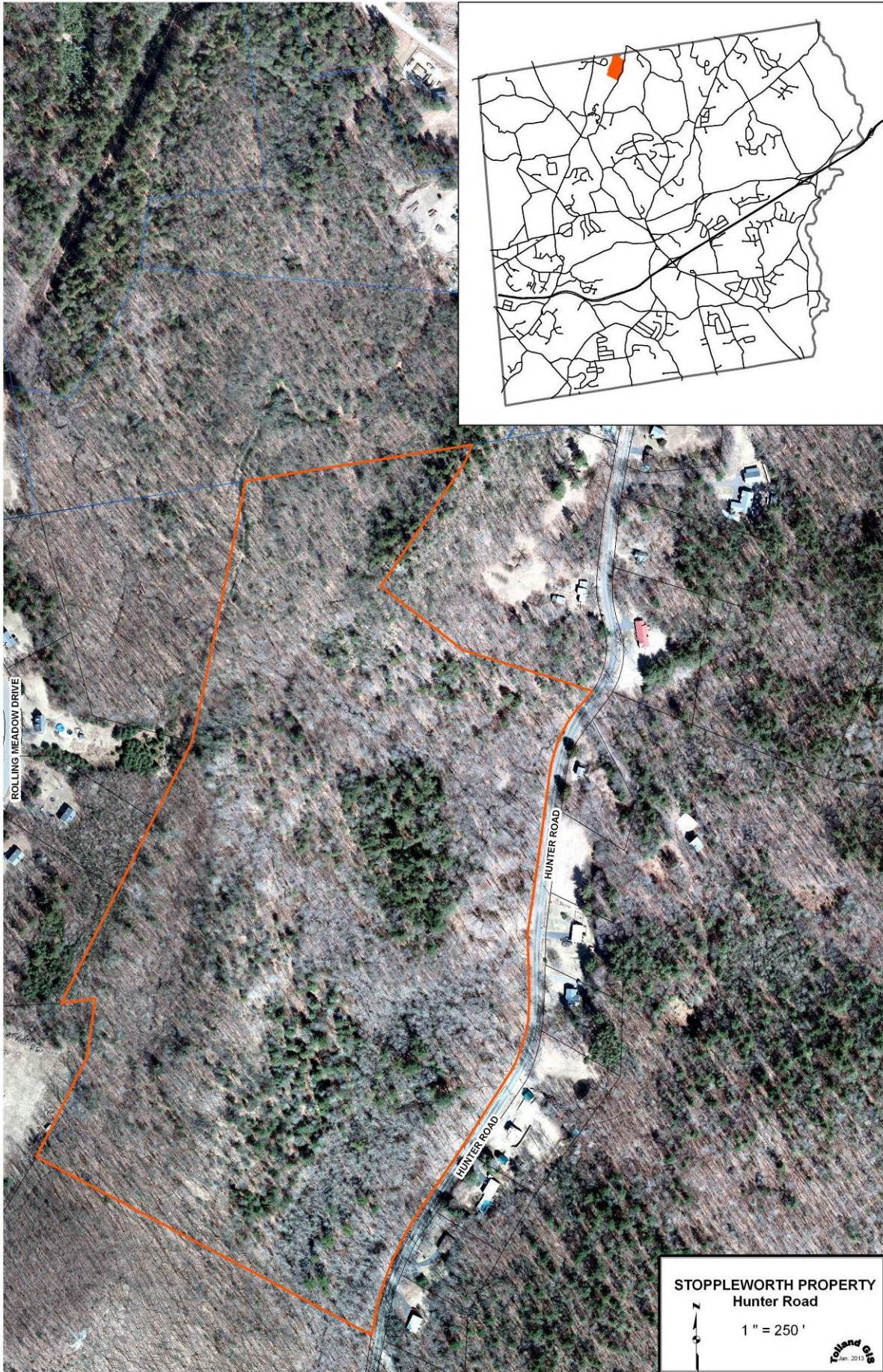
Tasks include:

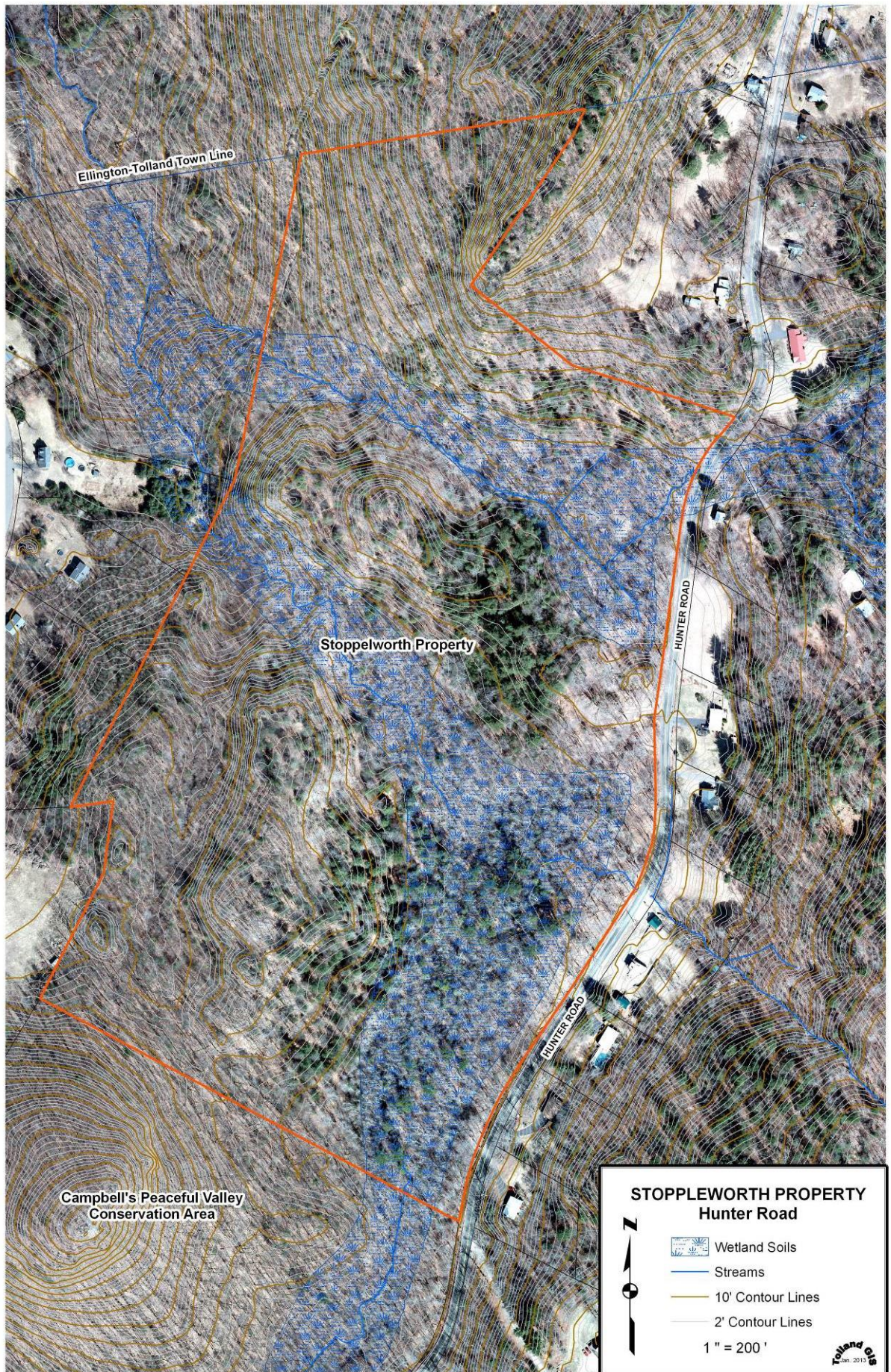
- Conduct ongoing resource inventory.
- Protect historic site of the Aborn Homestead.
- Maintain the parking lot and access gate.
- Maintain the trail system.
- Maintain trail markings and signs.
- Maintain map containers and keep supplied with property brochures.
- Perform litter patrol as needed.
- Install and maintain property boundary markings.
- Maintain the plaque and bench in memory of Leland Stoppleworth. Report damage or problems to the Conservation Commission.
- Maintain stream and bog crossings.

Attachments:

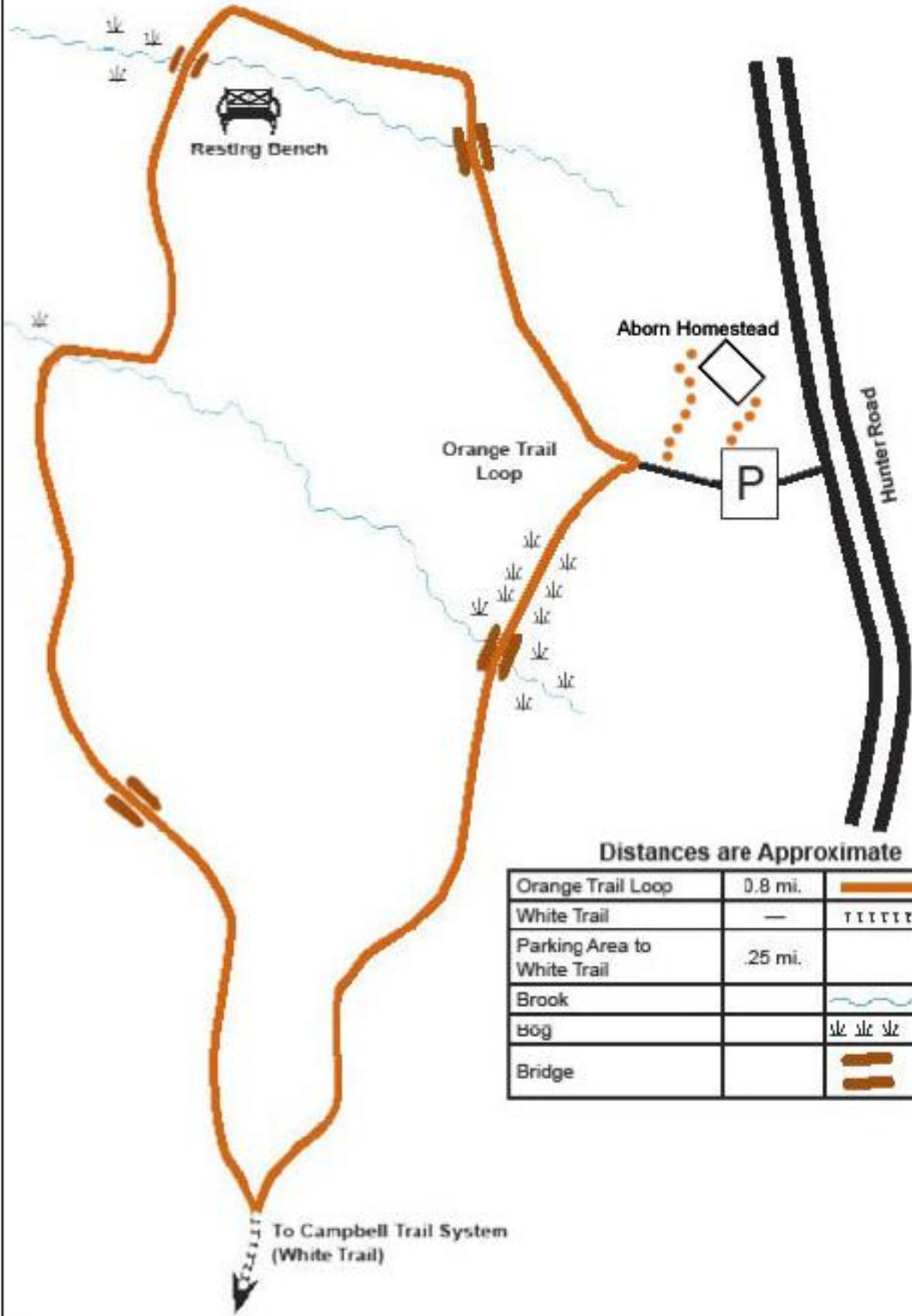
- Parcel map with location map insert
- Topographical map
- Trail map
- Stoppleworth Farm (Aborn Homestead) history

The stewards of the property are Mark and Sandy Friedman.





TOWN OF TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT
 Stoppleworth Conservation Area
 359 Hunter Road
 Trail Map



Distances are Approximate

Orange Trail Loop	0.8 mi.	
White Trail	—	
Parking Area to White Trail	.25 mi.	
Brook		
Bog		
Bridge		

Stopplesworth Farm (Aborn Homestead) History

The stone foundation seen here is of the home that was occupied by several farm families for about 200 years before it became a 55 acre town conservation area. A three to four hundred acre land grant prior to 1750, the farm was subdivided several times to provide land for the sons of the original and later owners. By the late nineteenth century, it became a 78 acre farm, the minimum needed to support one family. Because only one son inherited the farm, the remaining sons had to find other work or move west to find inexpensive farmland.

Because farm land in Tolland was among the poorest in all of Connecticut, farmers could only raise cattle to support their families. A few acres (3 to 6), on this farm and on most farms in Tolland, produced feed (corn and oats) for cattle and some corn and rye to provide food for the family. A large garden produced vegetables for immediate consumption and also root crops (potatoes and hard squashes) that could be stored for winter use. Ten additional acres produced hay to feed livestock in winter. About one third of the farm was woodland to provide fuel for heating and cooking.

Most of the remaining land was set aside for grazing 2 or 3 beef cattle, 2 oxen, a horse or two, and 2 or 3 cows to provide milk and butter for the family. In addition to the income families received from the sale of 1 or 2 beef cattle, women churned butter to be sold to the country store owner. A couple of pigs and 6 to 10 chickens produced meat and eggs for the family dinner table.

From its inception in 1715 Tolland was primarily an agricultural town. But like so many other small agricultural towns in New England, it was in decline since the 1820s because canals at first and then railroads transported food produced more economically from western New York and beyond. As a result, Tolland's population in the 1920s was about half (1000 individuals) of what it had been in the 1820s. By 1950, full time farming in Tolland all but disappeared when the automobile provided employment opportunities in nearby commercial towns. Now returned to woodland, the Stopplesworth farm represents what Tolland once was and what it has become.

Bill McDermott, author of Tolland: A Connecticut Town 1715-1815