

From the Executive Director:



Photo by Douglas A. Pitt



While the coronavirus pandemic is impacting all of us, we are quickly learning how to ensure that our land conservation work continues now and in the future. This issue of Chatter highlights the many properties recently protected and features the opportunity for Ausbon Sargent to acquire the undeveloped 144-acre Messer Farm.

Early March was the kick-off for the \$1.6M Messer Farm fundraising effort and two weeks later we put a temporary halt to those one-on-one visits with donors. Ausbon Sargent went back to the seller and negotiated an extension on the closing from May 26th to October 30th. Fundraising resumed May 1st and will continue throughout the summer.

When I was hired in 1988, one of my first projects was working with landowner Bob Messer, Sr. to purchase the development rights (conservation easement) on 31 acres of the Messer Farm. We had a signed agreement with Bob which permitted Ausbon Sargent to secure grants from the Land Conservation Investment Program (LCIP) and the NH Department of Agriculture. There was also overwhelming support at New London's Town Meeting. But two years later, Ausbon Sargent notified all funding partners that efforts to permanently protect the Messer Farm were unsuccessful as Bob had decided to not sell the development rights.



Messer's Dairy Milk Bottle
Courtesy of Sally Morrill
Photo by Lee Morrill

ABOUT THE COVER >

An aerial view of a portion of the Messer Farm property that is leased to Spring Ledge Farm each year for the growing of produce.

Photo by Peter Bloch, EarthAerial Productions

In June 1990, Ausbon Sargent approached neighboring Spring Ledge Farm landowners John and Sue Clough about protecting their 53 acres with a conservation easement. After all due diligence steps were completed and funding was secured from the Town and the LCIP, Spring Ledge Farm was permanently protected from future development in December 1991. The terms of the easement allow for commercial agricultural activity and trail access.

If you shop at Spring Ledge Farm, there is a good chance that some of the fresh produce you purchase is grown on the Messer Farm fields. It is the land trust's intention to keep the Messer Farm fields in crop production and available for lease to adjacent Spring Ledge Farm. There is also a network of trails on the Messer Farm property that could be linked to the New London Conservation Commission's very accessible trail system in the center of town.

Excitement and support for the Messer Farm project is growing.

We are enormously grateful to those who have generously given. Please join us in protecting this incredibly important property so that we can close on October 30th, Thank you.

Rebekah Stanley

