



ACTON CONSERVATION TRUST

LAND TRUST NEWS

Volume 17, No. 1 March 2015

In This Issue

ACT Annual Meeting

7:00 PM March 22, 2015

Acton Town Hall
Room 204

Guest Speaker:

Rick Roth

*Live Animals Representing
the Nature of My Backyard*

Dunn Land Purchase

Connecting Acton & Stow

Wright Hill Land Purchase

Neighborhood Action Success

Gabel Land Conservation Restriction Completed.

ACT Sponsored Land Walks

**Be Sure to Visit ACT's
Website:**

www.actonconservationtrust.org

ACTON
CONSERVATION
TRUST

Who We Are Join Us Calendar Get Involved

**Did you remember
to renew your
membership for
2015?**

To the many who have
already done so, thanks for
renewing your support. For
those who have yet to
renew, please use the form
on page seven of this
newsletter to keep your
membership active

Acton Conservation Trust

A Non-Profit Land Trust

Board of Trustees

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Acton Conservation Trust
P.O. Box 658
Acton, MA 01720

March 2015

Dear Friends and Acton Conservation Trust Members:

2014 was an especially good year for land preservation in Acton. Two key parcels that have been on ACT's radar for more than a decade were purchased and permanently preserved.

At April Town Meeting 2014 the Town voted overwhelmingly to purchase the 14-acre Wright Hill land in West Acton preserving the land, view, and access. We have the Wright Hill Association to thank for re-inventing ACT's Neighborhood Advocacy Program. They had just the right combination of ingredients:

- Friends and neighbors who have worked together successfully in the past and developed trust.
- Incomes sufficient to take a risk and to purchase the land in an effort to preserve it forever or as a fall back to re-sell to a responsible developer.
- A willing conservation-minded landowner.
- A parcel of land of unique beauty and high conservation/passive recreation value linked to other conservation land in a densely populated part of Acton.
- Community Preservation Act funds available for this purpose.
- And most of all a strong CAN-DO attitude.

You can read more about how this was accomplished inside the newsletter. It was great to see a re-awakening of neighborhood action as a means of land preservation.

At the Special Town Meeting of November 12, the purchase of the Dunn Land at the Acton-Stow border was approved. This parcel provides a long-sought connection between conservation lands in Acton and Stow, and provides a vital connection to the ACT-owned Whitcomb Land. At the 9th Annual Whitcomb Land walk (delayed by the snow and planned for early Spring) we will celebrate this as we make this wonderful walk of the Heath Hen Meadow Brook area..

There are still more important projects in the pipeline, and we need your support and continued attention. Your membership and tax deductible donations will help ACT do just that!

Sincerely,

Susan Mitchell-Hardt

The Acton Conservation Trust is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that can hold permanent conservation easements, accept gifts of land, accept tax-deductible gifts to be used for open space preservation and purchase land for conservation purposes. We also provide education to landowners about various options for preservation. ACT is one of more than 140 such organizations in Massachusetts, and is a member of the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition and the national Land Trust Alliance.

More information is available at ActonConservationTrust.org or by emailing info@actonconservationtrust.org

Making Connections: The Dunn Land Purchase

In 1998 the Sudbury Valley Trustees noted that "The corridor of Heath Hen Meadow Brook is the most important natural environment remaining unprotected in our 36-town watershed". As part of the effort to gain this protection, in 2005 ACT purchased the 16-acre Whitcomb Land parcel near the Stow Border, which borders the Heath Hen Meadow Brook. Since that time we have been working to acquire the remaining parcels to provide complete protection for this area and to provide connection with adjoining open land in Acton and Stow.

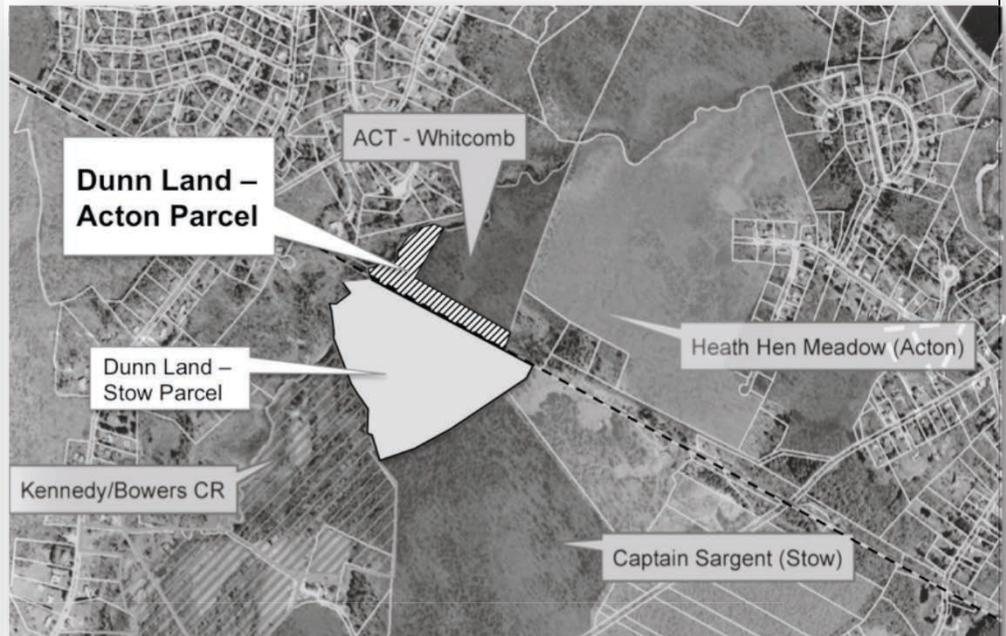
We are delighted to report that in a cooperative effort among the Stow Conservation Trust (SCT), ACT, the Town of Stow and the Town of Acton, the key remaining parcel was purchased from the Dunn family and will now be preserved.

As shown on the map, this land comprises 6.5 acres in Acton and 24 acres in Stow. The entire Dunn parcel will link Acton's 100 acre Heath Hen Meadow Conservation land in South Acton, with Stow's Dunn land which abuts the 154-acre Captain Sargent Conservation land. This will significantly expand the hiking and cross country skiing opportunities for residents of both towns, and it will provide a large protected corridor for wildlife.

The Town of Acton Land Stewardship Committee, the Acton Conservation Trust, the Sudbury Valley Trustees, and the Stow Conservation Trust have been working together since 2003 to make the inter-town connection a reality. We are grateful to the landowner for selling the entire parcel for conservation purposes so we can have an inter-town trail connection, and we are grateful to the Town of Acton Open Space Committee for bringing this warrant article to Town Meeting for approval. The 6.5 acres in Acton will be paid for with free cash in the amount of \$28,800. (The Stow portion of the land comprises 24 acres and has already been approved for purchase by SCT.)

For those who have joined any of ACT's Annual Winter Walks of the Whitcomb Land, you know that this is a strikingly beautiful area, especially after a winter storm. It provides a diverse habitat for several species of owls, more than 7 species of hawk, as well as fisher, otter, white tailed deer and, of course, beaver.

We hope you will all take part in our annual walks of this extraordinary area.



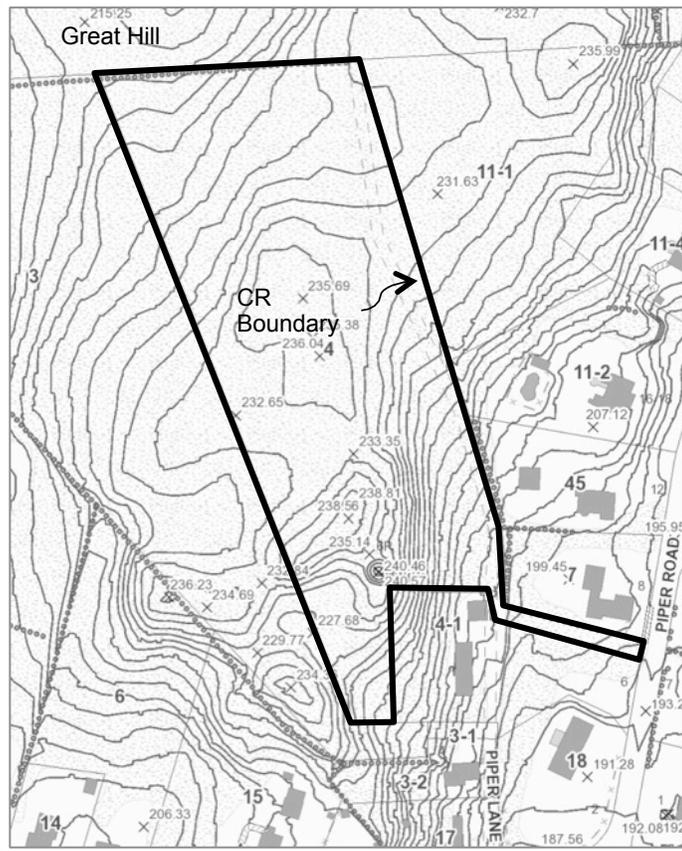
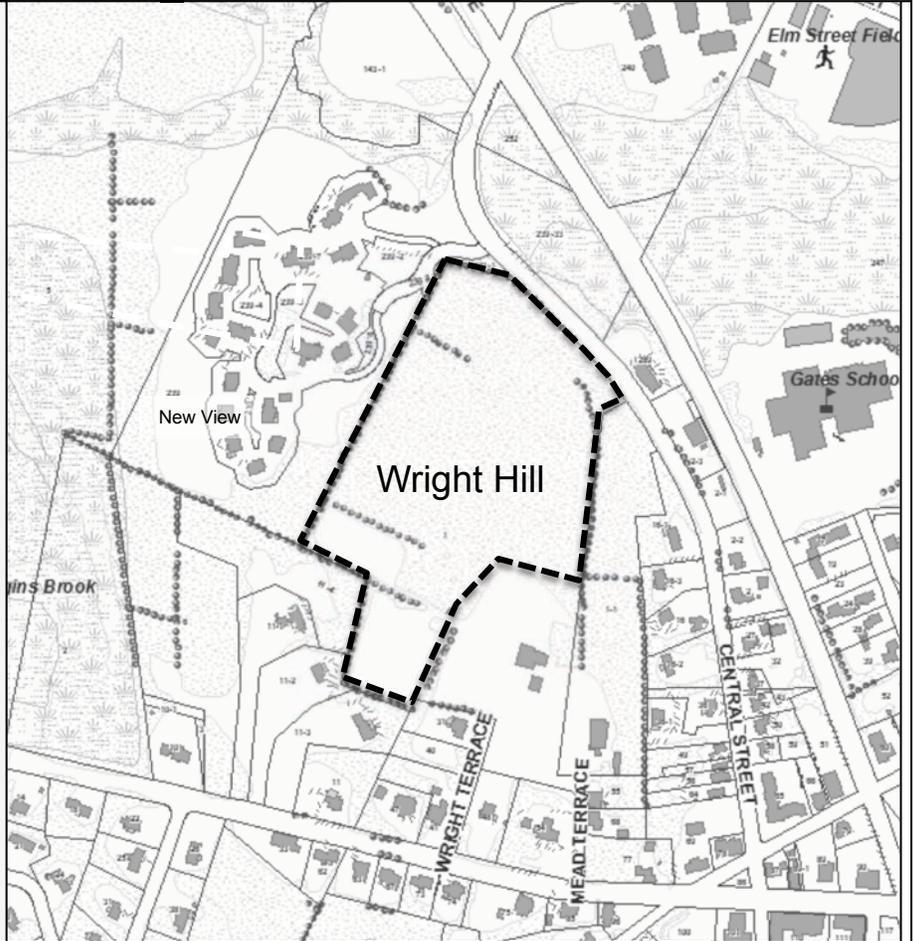
Land Preservation 2014

Wright Hill Purchase Approved

In last year's *Land Trust News* we told you about the chance to purchase an exquisite property in West Acton known as Wright Hill. Comprising 14 acres just west of West Acton Village, it is one of the highest points in Acton and commands views as far as Mt. Wachusett.

We are delighted to report that purchase of the land was overwhelmingly approved at April Town Meeting and the property will now be permanently protected. ACT will eventually hold a conservation restriction on the land, giving it the highest possible protection in perpetuity.

As we wrote last year, the story behind the acquisition of this property is an exceptional example of "neighborhood advocacy". In this case, a group of neighbors, working with the owner, purchased the property to remove it from the market. Over more than a year, the "Wright Hill Association" worked to sell both the majority of the land to the Town for open space and the historic house to a new owner who would cherish its unique style and rich history. Happily, both have happened, and it is a major accomplishment for all who were involved. Please visit our website to learn more about Wright Hill and to see pictures from several ACT – sponsored walks.



Gaebel Land Conservation Restriction Approved

Conservation restrictions are one of the most important tools we have for ensuring that open space remains that way in perpetuity. As a non-profit land trust, ACT can hold these restrictions, which means we are charged with enforcing the terms of a legal document referred to as a "conservation restriction" or CR. These documents outline what uses are permitted on the land as well as those that are prohibited and are registered at the North Middlesex Registry.

The Gaebel land, which was acquired in 2011 using Community Preservation Act funds, added 5 acres to the Great Hill Conservation Land and was the culmination of the successful campaign begun by ACT several years earlier. The formal conservation restriction document

was recently completed. It is typical of most CRs in that it prohibits any building, removal of material, or dumping of material on the property. The intention is for passive recreation and the CR allows for normal trail maintenance as well as actions that would improve the health of the native vegetation and improve the wildlife habitat.

To assist ACT in enforcing the CR, it is incorporated into another document referred to as a "baseline documentation report" or BDR. Simply put, the BDR documents the state of the land at the time the CR is created, and we use the BDR on an annual basis to monitor the land for changes from that baseline. This is the means by which we ensure the land is used for its intended purposes.

Acton Conservation Trust Business

2014 in Review:

It was another very active year for the Trust, and here are some of the highlights in chronological order:

- **February 2:** 8th Annual Walk of Whitcomb Land - record crowd of 21 - beaver was sighted, chili was served.
- **February:** Final draft of Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is released by the Town, and ACT provided feedback for the final version. ACT's role in protecting open space since the last plan was published was acknowledged.
- **March 23:** ACT Annual Meeting - Jim Snyder-Grant received the Holley Conservation Volunteer Award, and more than 40 people heard Russ Cohen talk about "Edible Acton".
- **April 2:** ACT co-sponsored a panel of speakers on the topic "Building a Legacy of Conservation" held at the Boxborough Library. Done in collaboration with 5 other land trusts, it was attended by over 30 landowners who heard from a land protection specialist, appraiser, estate planner, and landowner with a legacy of conservation in Boxborough.
- **April 7:** Town Meeting votes to purchase Wright Hill Land with Community Preservation Funds.
- **May 10:** ACT-Sponsored Walk of Caouette Land led by Mike Gowing and Terry Maitland.
- **June 2:** ACT House party at Wright Hill to celebrate the town's purchase of the remarkable land and to thank the Wright Hill Association for making it happen.
- **Sept. 28:** A crowd of more than 40 attend an ACT-sponsored walk of the Arboretum focusing on newly-acquired land on Wood Lane.
- **June-Nov.:** ACT volunteers monitored 5 Conservation Restrictions (Donald, Kingman, Caouette, Groener, and Gaebel lands).
- **Nov. 12:** Special Town Meeting approves purchase of Dunn Land.
- **Nov. 16:** ACT-Sponsored walk of Wright Hill draws more than 60!
- **Dec. 22:** Gaebel CR was signed by state and recorded.

Holley Conservation Volunteer of the Year

The Board of ACT voted unanimously to present the 2015 Carol Holley Conservation Volunteer of the Year award to Nan Towle Millett. Nan's contributions to conservation in Acton are too numerous to detail, but here are just a few.

- Board of Directors of the Acton Conservation Trust for 15 years: 1998-2013.
- Co-founded the Bluebird Recovery Program along with Gigi Hopkins.
- Board of Iron Work Farm for the past 7 years.
- Board of the Friends of Acton Arboretum.
- Land Stewardship Committee for at least 12 years;
- Manages the Stoneymeade Conservation Area and promotes bluebird recovery on the land.
- As a member of the Acton Garden Club, built the rain garden at ABRHS which was part of effort to become sustainable.
- Provided period landscaping at the Wheeler Farm site of the Trail through Time.
- Raised funds to publish "Guide to Acton Conservation Lands" and for the statue of the "Reader" (by Mary McLain) at the Library.



Thanks and Farewell, Dave Cochrane!

Dave Cochrane, ACT Trustee for the past 6 years, 4 of those as Vice President, has stepped down from the Board. We are grateful for Dave's conscientiousness and dedication all while also serving as Vice Chair of the Land Stewardship Committee, and Vice President of the Acton Historical Society. After retiring from his faculty position at Tufts University, he's looking forward to having more time to travel and go out on evenings with his wife, Pam. His wisdom and constancy will be missed. Many, many thanks for all you have done for ACT and Acton.

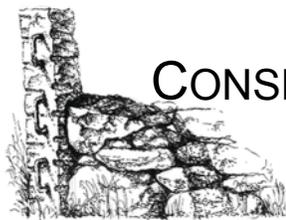


Notice of 2015 Annual Meeting of Members

Please note that the 2015 Annual Meeting of Members of the Acton Conservation Trust (ACT), a Massachusetts non-profit corporation, will be held on Sunday, March 22, at 7:00 PM at the Acton Town Hall, Room 204. We will convene the brief business portion of the meeting, where members will be asked to:

- Vote to re-elect Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Hart Millett, David Hardt, Brewster Conant, Sue Kennedy, Linda McElroy and Lana Finn as Trustees, each to serve until the 2016 Annual Meeting and as otherwise provided in ACT's Bylaws.
- Vote to re-elect David Hardt as Clerk, and re-elect Hart Millett as Treasurer of ACT, each to serve until the 2016 Annual Meeting
- Hear and comment on the Treasurer's Report and committee reports of 2014 activities, and to act upon such other business as may come before the meeting. After the business meeting, we will hear from our guest speaker, Rick Roth, The Creature Teacher.

2013-2014 Financial Statements	Jan - Dec 14	Jan - Dec 13
Statement of Income and Expenses		
INCOME		
ACT Membership Dues	\$11,957	\$16,560
Donations to ACT	\$1,045	\$2,273
Interest Income	\$0	\$0
TOTAL INCOME	\$13,002	\$18,833
EXPENSES		
Operating Expenses		
Brochure Expense	\$110	\$138
Mass Mailing	\$1,842	\$602
Newsletter Printing & Mailing	\$148	\$148
Misc. Fees	\$43	\$106
Organization Memberships	\$450	\$300
Insurance	\$1,064	\$3,118
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$198	\$1,201
Total Operating Expenses	\$3,855	\$5,613
Other Expenses		
Misc. Fees	\$353	\$2,126
Land Acquisition	\$0	\$3,472
Legal Services	\$290	\$645
Total Other Expenses	\$643	\$11,855
NET INCOME	\$8,504	\$6,978
Balance Sheet		
ASSETS		
Checking/Savings/Investment	\$135,710	\$117,615
Land	\$19,777	\$19,777
TOTAL ASSETS	\$155,487	\$137,391
LIABILITIES & EQUITY		
	\$0	\$0
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$155,487	\$137,391



ACTON CONSERVATION TRUST

2015 Membership & Renewal Application

Join the many other townspeople who support our efforts to preserve open space in Acton.

Among other uses, your donations help ACT pursue opportunities to acquire land and conservation easements, and provide stewardship of these lands. Your support also helps us stay current on Land Trust developments through key publications and workshops.

- If you are not yet a Member of ACT (or have not yet renewed your membership for 2015), please join us!
- If you are already a Member for 2015, please pass this newsletter on to a friend who might be interested!

To join please visit: actonconservationtrust.org

Or mail this form to: Acton Conservation Trust
P.O. Box 658
Acton, MA 01720
Your gift to ACT is tax-deductible

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Your email address allows ACT to keep you informed about news & local meetings related to conservation & open space preservation.

- Please contact me about how I can get more involved!
- Please send the ACT Newsletter Electronically in the future.

Suggested levels of support :

___ Individual \$25	___ Protector \$250
___ Family \$50	___ Supporter \$500
___ Friend \$100	___ Patron \$1,000
___ Seniors \$15	___ Other \$_____
& Students	

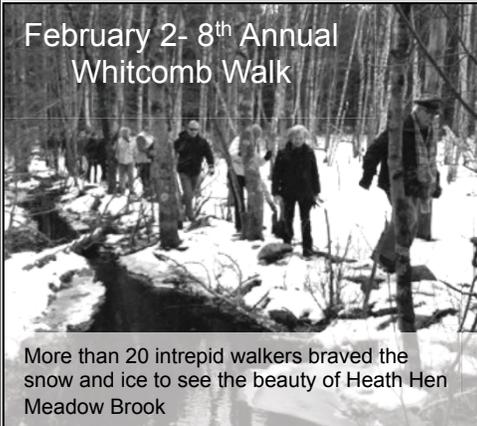
*Please make your check payable to
Acton Conservation Trust*

Your gift to ACT is tax-deductible

Walks of the Land

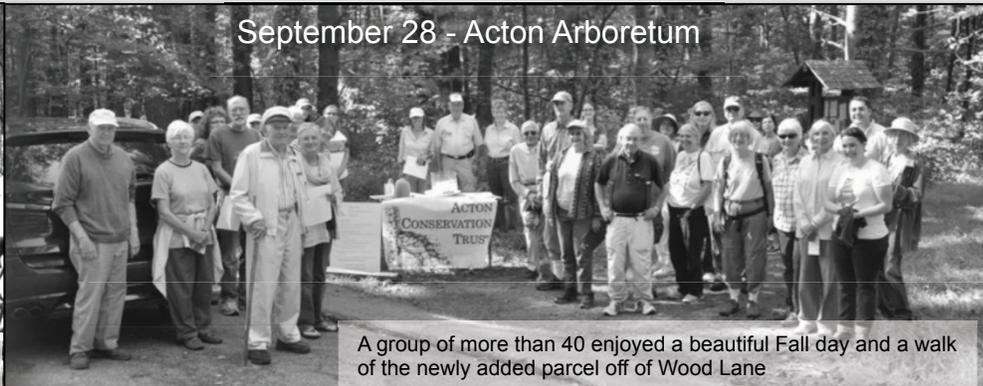
Each year ACT sponsors walks of various lands in Acton. We do it in all seasons, and use it as a celebration of our efforts to preserve our precious open spaces and to recognize those who contribute so much to each project.

February 2- 8th Annual Whitcomb Walk



More than 20 intrepid walkers braved the snow and ice to see the beauty of Heath Hen Meadow Brook

September 28 - Acton Arboretum



A group of more than 40 enjoyed a beautiful Fall day and a walk of the newly added parcel off of Wood Lane

May 10 - Caouette Land



Mike Gowing led the 4th Annual Walk of this Agricultural parcel in the heart of South Acton

November 16 - Wright Hill



The first of what we hope is an annual walk of this gorgeous parcel was attended by more than 60 people, who delighted in the views, the company, and the chili.

Acton Conservation Trust
PO Box 658
Acton, MA 01720

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ACT Annual Meeting
Guest Speaker:
Rick Roth, The Creature Teacher
Live Animals Representing the
Nature of My Backyard

Richard Roth has lived his whole life with animals. His father, Charles Roth, was Director of Education and Chief Naturalist for the Massachusetts Audubon Society for many years. Bobcats, fishers and alligators in the house seemed normal to Rick. Educated as an Aquaculturist, Rick has had a fairly diverse career with one common denominator: Animals. He has been the director for several small zoos and has a great reputation as a wildlife artist. For the past five years he has held the position locally as Curator of Marine fishes for a large corporation.

With years of educational experience under his belt, Rick has determined that outreach programs are a great way to engage people from all walks of life and has made these programs his passion. He is here to enlighten us about the elusive creatures hiding in the night in our back yards and conservation lands.



Save The Date
ACT Annual Meeting
Sunday March 22, 2015
7:00 PM
Acton Town Hall

ACTON CONSERVATION TRUST, Inc
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Susan Mitchell-Hardt	369-9264	mitchellhardt@gmail.com
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Sue Kennedy	264-9165	suekennedy@comcast.net
<i>Vice President</i>		
Hart Millett	621-8478	hart.millett@verizon.net
<i>Treasurer</i>		
David Hardt	369-9264	hardt@mit.edu
<i>Clerk</i>		
Brewster Conant	263-2090	bbconant@comcast.net
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