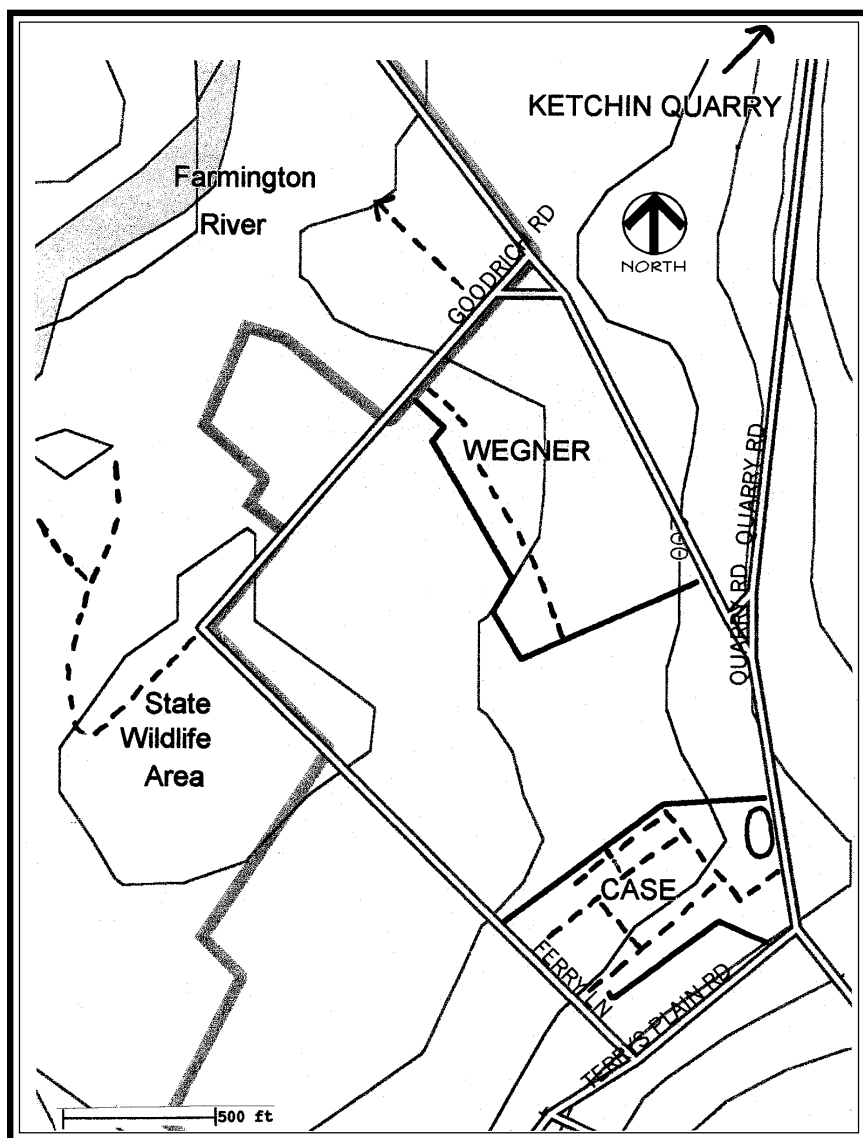


THE TERRY'S PLAIN AREA



THE TERRY'S PLAIN AREA

The northeast quadrant of town, east of the river, consists of varied terrain and a pattern of narrow, winding roads, historic buildings, and agricultural uses that create a pleasing texture of scenic vistas. Resting on an ancient and fertile glacial terrace, Terry's Plain is tucked between the basaltic ridge that forms the town's eastern boundary and the Farmington River, the latter having spent the past ten thousand years cutting the present-day flood-plain out of the terrace.

For most of this period, Native Americans lived in permanent villages along the river and created agricultural fields. From his nearby flower farm, the late Leslie Dewey assembled an extensive collection of pre-Colombian artifacts, some of which are on permanent display at the Simsbury Public Library.

Named after one of the town's early farmers, John Terry, Terry's Plain was the early gateway to Simsbury. In 1648 the first colonials, John Griffen and Michael Humphry, followed pine trees for their tar and pitch business up the river from Bloomfield. From then until well into the 20th century, Terry's Plain remained farmland, producing food crops and tobacco. As with many early communities, residents built their farm buildings on the terrace, grew crops there and along the flood-plain, and gathered wood and pastured livestock on the hillsides. At the base of the hill, one farm also quarried stone on its land.

As with most areas in town, there have been changes in Terry's Plain in recent years. Residential development and new roads have nearly tripled the population over the past thirty years. Virtually all of the hillside and portions of the terrace and flood-plain have been allowed to grow back into brush and woods. Nonetheless, several sizable parcels remain as open fields, invaluable as rich farmland and providing, along with the woods and wetlands, delightfully diverse wildlife habitats.

Over the years the natural and historic features of Terry's Plain have been recognized in several ways. In 1991, East Weatogue and Terry's Plain roads were designated Simsbury's first official Scenic Road. In 1993, the National Register of Historic Places recognized the area encompassing the glacial terrace and the early structures



making up the agricultural area (from Pharos Farm on the north to Hall's farm on the south) as an historic working farmscape. Over the past fifteen years a portion of the town's bike trail has wound through this area (from route 315 bridge on the north to the Drake Hill Bridge to the south).

The Land Trust's Wegner and Case properties provide a good introduction to Terry's Plain and are described in more detail in the following pages.

Colonial Traineband Field—Wegner

In 1993 Patricia Wegner donated a 15-acre hayfield at the corner of Terry's Plain and Goodrich Roads. Beginning in 1685, the field had been a training ground for the town militia. The field has been continuously farmed at least since Thomas Ford settled here in the 1650s and probably earlier by Native Americans.

Park along the west side of Goodrich Road where the soil is firm. Make sure to read the inscription on the marker at the corner explaining the use of the field for militia training. Gaze from the hills on the west to the flood-plain and picture the scene as it was over three hundred years ago. From this location the geological boundaries where the ridge meets the glacial terrace and the terrace drops to the current flood-plain can be readily seen. The terrace/flood-plain boundary drops 20 to 30 feet along the western edge of the long, narrow hayfield that runs along the western side of Goodrich Road. The handful of trees, brush and tall weeds here and on the other side of the road provide shelter and nesting sites for birds and small mammals that use the field for food. Although walking in the field during the summer growing season is discouraged, there is a dead-end path that runs from Goodrich along the tree line on the southern edge of the field. Along this path the field borders a row of pine trees and an alder swamp, an ideal place to watch birds and small mammals.

To see the steep drop to the flood-plain up close, cross Goodrich and the long, narrow field to the west. From this vantage you will see a brush swamp that leads directly to the river. This land is a state wildlife management area and is stocked with pheasants for hunting from October to mid-winter. We do not advise people to walk in this area during those months.



Case Property/Wet Meadow

Continuing down Goodrich to Ferry Lane you will find two markers, one describing the Pent Road Ferry. In the 1600s this road continued to the center of town and connected the town's two militia fields. There was no bridge at the time and the river was crossed by ferry. Also state wildlife land, this is a great place to observe hawks and a myriad of other wildlife.

Further down Ferry Lane towards Terry's Plain Road the visitor will find the Land Trust's Case Property, eleven acres donated by Preston Case in 1994. Part of the Land Trust's management plan for this property is to restore approximately six acres at the center of the site to a natural wet meadow habitat. Mr. Case has maintained a network of walking paths throughout the site, and these provide great views of the meadow and the tremendous variety of plant life, insects, birds, and small mammals that abound there. Hikers will pass through a section with a cattail swamp, alder thickets, and saplings of evergreen and hardwood, a sharp contrast to the more open stretches.

Penwood Brook, which runs through the property along the north boundary on its way to the river, adds another wildlife corridor to the site. The "duck pond" at the northeast corner is actually a manmade fire pond leased and maintained by the volunteer fire department. As with the Wegner property, we ask that hikers respect the signs that indicate those locations where the paths enter neighboring private property.

