The Rock Lot and the Mary Evelyn Scott Nature Preserve

OWNERSHIP: Town of Redding (Rock Lot) and Redding Land Trust (Scott Preserve)

ACREAGE: 213.2 (Rock Lot, 99.5; Scott, 113.7)

ENTRANCES: Seventy Acre Road, opposite Mine Hill Road
Peacable Street, north side, west of power station
Mountain Road, north of north end of Pine Mountain Road

PARKING: Off road at entrances, limited

TRAILS: Duncan Munro, 1.89 mile, blazed white; Joan's, 1.75, white; Lincoln Selleck, 0.55, blue; Cross, 0.15, blue; Blue, 0.08, blue; Connector, 0.05, blue; Overlook, 0.01, white
Total all trails: 4.48 miles

BACKGROUND: The Rock Lot, once the property of pioneering feminist Elsie Hill, was threatened with development in the late 1960's. Private citizens contributed $8,500 toward the Town's one-quarter share of the price of the wooded acres, and federal and state funds made up the remaining three-quarters. So, in 1968, the Rock Lot became the Town's second largest open space purchase, following closely the acquisition of Saugatuck Falls Natural Area.

Almost ten years later, the Conservation Commission took a gamble and won: it decided that an adjoining 106-acre tract of precipitous, rocky land was not a major risk for development, and declined to ask the Town to buy the property when it went on the market. In 1977, this beautiful, rugged territory was generously donated to the Land Trust by Katharine Whitaker Dyer and Elisha Dyer, in memory of his cousin, Mary Evelyn Scott.

The tract was augmented in 1978 by the gift of eight acres to the Land Trust from Cornelia Hochstrasser, and later by the Town's acquisition of 15 acres on the west side of the Rock Lot, a set-aside from the Elmer Chamberlin division.

KEY FEATURES: From the Seventy Acre Road entrance, Joan's Trail—named after Joan Ensor in honor of her 90th birthday—winds through light woods and passes one of the largest white oaks in town. The trail runs along the top of a rock outcropping known as The Whaleback, then meanders through varied hardwood stands and, after crossing into the Land Trust area, leads to a high spot that overlooks a wetland. The trail soon emerges under the power lines, where a rocky high point (680 feet) commands a view, in suitable weather, of Long Island and the Sound. Crossing the power line clearing, the trail descends fairly steeply through pine woods. A short blue-blazed trail bypasses a rocky section of the main trail. At this point, the main trail requires a little scrambling past a beautiful cliff. It then picks up a wood road

leading to the Peaceable Street entrance.

A second trail of great beauty and variety was created in 1984 in memory of Duncan Munro, one-time treasurer of the Land Trust (and brother-in-law of Mrs. Hochstrasser). This trail takes off from Joan's Trail 500 feet from Seventy Acre Road. For about three-quarters of a mile, it winds over level ground, crossing and accompanying old stone walls through light, deciduous woods, and passing an oak with a nine-foot girth. Then it descends gradually through a laurel grove, past handsome rock formations. From here on the trail becomes spectacular with cliffs, laurel, rock outcroppings, and seasonal brooks. There are some short, steep descents.

Especially noteworthy is Warrups Rock (Indian Lookout), a sheer cliff some 75 feet high, from the top of which Indians may once have kept watch. Beyond this lookout, the trail leads to the base of an overhanging moss-and-fern-covered outcrop with a very small pool rippling beneath it. After crossing the power lines (for the second time) the walker enters a large laurel and hemlock grove. To the right is a ravine, created by a geological fault. Eventually the trail rejoins Joan's Trail and emerges at Peaceable Street.

The two main trails (white) are joined at two other points by short cross trails (blue), making it possible to enjoy loop walks of varying lengths without retracing one's steps. There is also an access trail (blue) from Mountain Road.

Meadow Ridge

A recent addition to Redding's trail system is a loop trail running through a conservation easement given by Meadow Ridge, the life-care facility which opened near Georgetown in 2000 on 130 acres of the former Perkin-Elmer property. A mix of forest and meadows surrounding a pond, the sixty-acre easement offers sweeping views across the Norwalk River valley and connects to an eleven-acre Land Trust tract on the west. Parking for the trail is about halfway up the hill on the access road to Meadow Ridge.