

# PECONIC LAND TRUST



For immediate release

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## **PECONIC LAND TRUST ACQUIRES CONSERVATION EASEMENT OF 5.7 ACRES OF WOODLAND PROPERTY IN WADING RIVER; INCLUDES HISTORIC RESIDENCE**

*Property owners Gordon and Jane Danby have secured the conservation of one of the last remaining significant, privately owned properties in Wading River*

**June 11, 2007. Southampton, New York.** John v.H. Halsey, president of the Peconic Land Trust, announces the donation of a conservation easement on one of the oldest homesteads in Wading River by Gordon and Jane Danby. "This is a generous gift that the Danbys' have given to Wading River and the East End community. The Trust, over the years, has been fortunate that there are people such as the Danbys who recognize and appreciate the conservation values of their land," said Halsey. "Now, this historic property will be conserved for future generations."

Richard Wines, Chair of the Riverhead Landmarks Preservation commission, added: "The Woodhull-Danby property is one of the last, significant properties in an area that includes many 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century homes. The pressure to squeeze more and more 'McMansions' between the area's rich collection of historic homes is great and would

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result in marooning the history and changing the character of the community. This makes the Danby conservation easement especially significant. It will allow those homes a little room to breath, keeping theirs and others from being engulfed by development.”

The Woodhull-Danby property is wooded, natural land along picturesque Sound Road in Wading River and across from a 79-acre wetland preserve owned by the Nature Conservancy. The 5.7-acre property represents two separate, but attached, parcels: a two-acre wooded lot and a 3.7-acre parcel containing a number of buildings, including the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Woodhull-Danby house, also know as “Four Chimneys,” a Town of Riverhead historic landmark.

According to Mrs. Danby, the decision to place a conservation easement on their property was motivated by their apprehension over continued development in their community and the resulting loss of the region’s historic character. “When it comes to the land and its historic character, as property owners we are really just custodians of the land and it is up to us to protect it. Over the years, this part of Long Island has become so crowded and this is really the only significant piece of property left in the neighborhood. We, along with our neighbors, are constantly being solicited to sell our property but we felt that the right thing to do was to preserve it intact for the future of the community and to provide the poor wildlife left in the area with some open land.”

The Woodhull-Danby House is a unique historic home that blends two distinct architectural eras (the original home, built in 1760 – Colonial Georgian -- and an addition in 1840 – where Greek Revival woodwork is introduced and then carried throughout the house. *(The Danby’s have recently applied for registration on the State and National Registers of Historic Places for the Woodhull-Danby House.)*

The Danby's were introduced to the Peconic Land Trust and its mission to conserve working farmland, natural lands and the community's heritage by a friend, and PLT donor, Dr. Caryl Granttham. Dr. Granttham donated 20.5 acres of woodland, with frontage on Long Island Sound in the Town of Riverhead to the Trust in 2002. The Granttham Preserve adjoins the Reeves Preserve, 20 acres that were donated to the Trust by Avis and the late Richard Reeves in 2000—Mr. Reeves and Dr. Granttham were siblings. "Through this family's generosity, significant open space and woodland in Riverhead has been forever protected from development," said Halsey.

### **Woodhull-Danby Property History**

The Danby's acquired their property between 1962 and 1965; initially purchasing the two-acre land parcel in 1962 and later purchasing the Woodhull property (3.7 acres with the buildings) in 1965. At that time, the property had only changed hands three times – the Woodhull's lived there from 1760 to 1920; in 1920, the property was acquired by the Pew family (he was the editor/publisher of one of the NYC newspapers); and in 1942 the deLagerbergs – he was an architect and she was an artist – took up residence. The deLagerbergs did the most recent renovations on the house, changing the roofline of the 1880 extension from flat to steeped and adding an exterior staircase to the second floor and balcony. Additionally, beautiful hand-stenciled paintings adorn the kitchen cabinets, doors, and walls, painted by Mrs. deLagerberg, signed and dated 1944.

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### **About the Danbys**

Dr. and Mrs. Danby were married in 1962, when both were working at the Brookhaven National Labs (BNL). Dr. Danby, a high-energy physicist at BNL, has concentrated most of his scientific exploration to the development of magnetic technology. Mr. Danby retired from BNL in 1999. In the 1990s, Dr. Danby, along with Jevan Damadian, John Linardos and Raymond V. Damadian, developed the technology that is used in today's open magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machines in the 1990s. Most recently, Dr. Danby's work has focused on development and promotion of magnetic levitation technology for transportation with his partner James Powell. Both were awarded the 2000 Benjamin Franklin Medal in Engineering by the Franklin Institute. Most recently Dr. Danby was appointed as a research professor at Polytechnic University in the Department of Civil Engineering and was appointed a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Mrs. Danby, who left BNL to raise her family in the 1960s, has a long history of involvement in community and historic preservation activities, she is an active member and one-time President of the Wading River Historical Society, a member and past officer of the Suffolk County Historical Society, and served on the board of the East End Arts and Humanities Council. For many years she performed with the Long Island Symphonic Choral Association (LISCA). In 2002, Mrs. Danby sold a successful antiques business which she opened in Wading River in 1993 – her love of antiques and beautiful object d'art is evidenced in her home, which lovingly presents a wide array of china, crystal, and collectables – including two wonderful collections of perfume bottles and timepieces.

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### **About the Peconic Land Trust**

The Peconic Land Trust was established in 1983 to conserve Long Island's working farms and natural lands. Since its inception, the nonprofit Trust has worked conscientiously with farmers, donors, municipalities, and other landowners to conserve over 8,600 acres of land on Long Island. The Trust's professional staff carries out the necessary research and planning to identify and implement alternatives to outright development. While working to conserve the productive farms, watersheds, woodlands, and beachfront of Long Island, the Trust is also protecting the unique rural heritage and natural resources of the region. The Trust has Stewardship Centers in Cutchogue and Amagansett and its Main Office is in Southampton. For more information about the Peconic Land Trust visit [www.peconiclandtrust.org](http://www.peconiclandtrust.org) or call 631.283.3195.

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