



HANOVER CONSERVATION COUNCIL  
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## Conservation Council New Owner Of Barrett-Ransmeier Property

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HANOVER — With a few pen strokes, the Barrett-Ransmeier property on Brook Road passed into the hands of the Hanover Conservation Council, which will develop a management plan to protect forever the natural amenities and wildlife of the 112 acres now called the Samson Occom Nature Preserve.

The Upper Valley Land Trust signed the papers Friday morning to buy the property from the Barrett and Ransmeier families, and about an hour later, conveyed ownership to the conservation council while "keeping back a conservation easement that limits the kinds of things that can happen on the property," said Jeanie McIntyre, executive director of the land trust. The conservation easement held by the land trust essentially prohibits development and allows public access.

"The partnership (between the conservation council and the land trust) will continue forever," said Tom Elliott, conservation organizer for the conservation council, a private, nonprofit group founded in 1963. The conservation council will seek public input when drafting the permanent management plan, Elliott said.

The Barrett and Ransmeier families had owned their Brook Road property for 50 years and during that time had allowed the public pretty much unrestricted access to its brooks, ledges, open areas and forests.

Various efforts to conserve the parcel had failed over the years, and plans to build houses on the land were coming to fruition when, last November, an anonymous donor offered an \$850,000 challenge grant that made purchase by the land trust possible.

"While we regret the loss of the residential neighborhood contemplated under our abandoned project, we hope that the permanent conservation of the entire tract will indeed prove to be in the best interest of the entire Hanover community," Joseph Ransmeier said in a written statement.

The conservation council and the land trust were able to raise a total of \$1.3 million — including the \$850,000 donation and a \$100,000 donation from another anonymous donor, Elliott said. This

covered the \$1.2 million purchase price, \$50,000 for legal and other fees and \$50,000 to establish a stewardship endowment, the interest of which will be used to pay for items such as trail maintenance and consultants' salaries.

Present at the signing were Ransmeier and his wife, Margaret, and William, George and Frank J. "Jay" Barrett Jr., the sons of Frank J. Barrett Sr., who bought the land with Ransmeier in 1949. The senior Barrett was unable to be there, but a painting he had done of the property was given to McIntyre.

"Basically we all feel very good about it," said Frank J. "Jay" Barrett Jr., who lives in the Fairlee village of Ely and used to work as a planning official for Hanover. "For the rest of my life, I can walk out on the property at any time and visit the places where I camped and played as a kid."

The area will be called the Samson Occom Nature Preserve at the request of the anonymous donor of \$850,000. Occom, a Mohegan Indian, was a student and ward of Dartmouth College founder Eleazar Wheelock. Occom went on to become a preacher and teacher among the Montauk Indians on the eastern end of Long Island and helped Wheelock raise money to start Dartmouth.