Limekiln Natural Area
The Marcus Gift
& Todd's Wood
Gallows Hill
Natural Area

[Diagram of Gallows Hill Natural Area with labels for Hilltop, Marsh, Trail, Stream, and Stone Wall.]
How the Great Ledge Was Saved

The acquisition of the Redding Great Ledge in 1988 by the Redding Land Trust came about quite differently from that of any other property in the Trust’s register of open space lands. Previously, every one of its 600-odd acres had either been donated to the Trust or transferred to it as a result of the Town’s subdivision setback policy. But the Great Ledge was purchased with hard cash—and with virtually the whole town pitching in to raise the needed funds. Here’s how it happened.

For years, the Land Trust had its eye on this magnificent piece of property—nine acres privately owned but lying at the crown, if you will, of the 1,600-acre Devil’s Den Preserve, which extends into Redding from Weston.

What made this property so desirable, besides its location, were its scenery and topography. High, dry and wooded, the terrain sweeps up to the lip of a sheer, 200-foot granite cliff—the choicest portion of the entire Great Ledge area.

This cliff on the Weston town line, overlooking the Saugatuck Reservoir and hundreds of acres of wooded hills and valleys, commands one of the finest views in all Connecticut. Across the full sweep of the horizon not a house can be seen. A lone, distant church steeple points up the absence of any other sign of human handiwork. The reservoir, dotted with green islands, stretches below.

This long-coveted property had an interesting history. It was owned by Deborah Dayton Scoblick, the daughter of Theodore and Anna Lee Dayton, longtime Redding residents who, 18 years earlier, had offered the town, at a personal sacrifice, 45 acres of forest adjoining the Devil’s Den and including a portion of the Great Ledge. Their offer did not include these nine most spectacular acres, which they left to their daughter.

In the fall of 1987 this gem went on the market. To lose the property to development would have been devastating to the ecological integrity of the region’s largest pristine preserve, for a wide swath, winding through the untouched wilderness, would surely have been cut to provide access to building lots.

Mrs. Scoblick, like her parents, was willing to sacrifice to have her property saved from development. When officials of the Conservation Commission and the Land Trust learned the land was for sale, they resolved to buy it if at all possible. They contacted The Nature Conservancy in Weston, owners of Devil’s Den. The Conservancy in turn approached Mrs. Scoblick, and an arrangement was made whereby the Land Trust would acquire the property if it could raise $225,000—far below the land’s market value—within a year.

With confidence in the people of Redding and with an acquisition fund sufficient for a down payment, the Trust under then President Phyllis Kroll plunged into a fund-raising drive of unprecedented scope. Spearheaded by Eugene Connolly and the late Constance Perr Breton, the campaign soon enlisted the efforts of scores of enthusiastic volunteers. And with private contributions large and small, a substantial matching grant from Redding Open Lands, Inc., and some corporate help, the money was raised and the deadline met.

This achievement was recognized the Connecticut Land Trust Service Bureau, a statewide coalition, which awarded the Redding Land Trust its annual “Productivity” citation.

Joan Enson

The Great Ledge

Ownership: Redding Land Trust
Acreage: 8.9
Access: Off Dayton road at Fox Lane (via Pinchbeck Trail)
Parking: Across from Fox Lane/Pinchbeck trailhead; 5-car limit
Trail: Approximately 0.5 mile (white blazes)

Key Features: The breathtaking views from the Great Ledge are described on the facing page. Suffice it to say that they rival the very best to be enjoyed from any promontory in southern New England. To relish the most dramatic effects, first-time visitors are encouraged to follow the Great Ledge loop in a clockwise direction.

A word about trail blazes: Both the Pinchbeck and the Great Ledge Trails are blazed in white. However, where the Pinchbeck enters Devil’s Den, it may also carry the yellow blaze of The Nature Conservancy’s marking system.

A world about nomenclature: Redding’s Great Ledge is part of an escarpment that extends into Weston and the precincts of Devil’s Den. Alas, folks down that way have historically called their part of the scarp “The Great Ledge” too. An impartial observer, however, would have to concede that, based on the quality of the view, Redding’s half of the ledge is by far the greater. Therefore, with apologies to our neighbors South of the Border, we have arranged our signs and maps to celebrate this territorial superiority. Ours is The Great Ledge. Theirs is the Ledge. Go in peace. »
The Rock Lot & Scott Preserve

- JOAN'S TRAIL
- BLUE TRAIL
- MUNRO TRAIL
- SCOTT PRESERVE
- WHALEBACK TRAIL
- GREAT OAK
- HILLTOP
- LEDGE
- TRAIL
- STREAM

Scale: 0 200' 500' 1000'