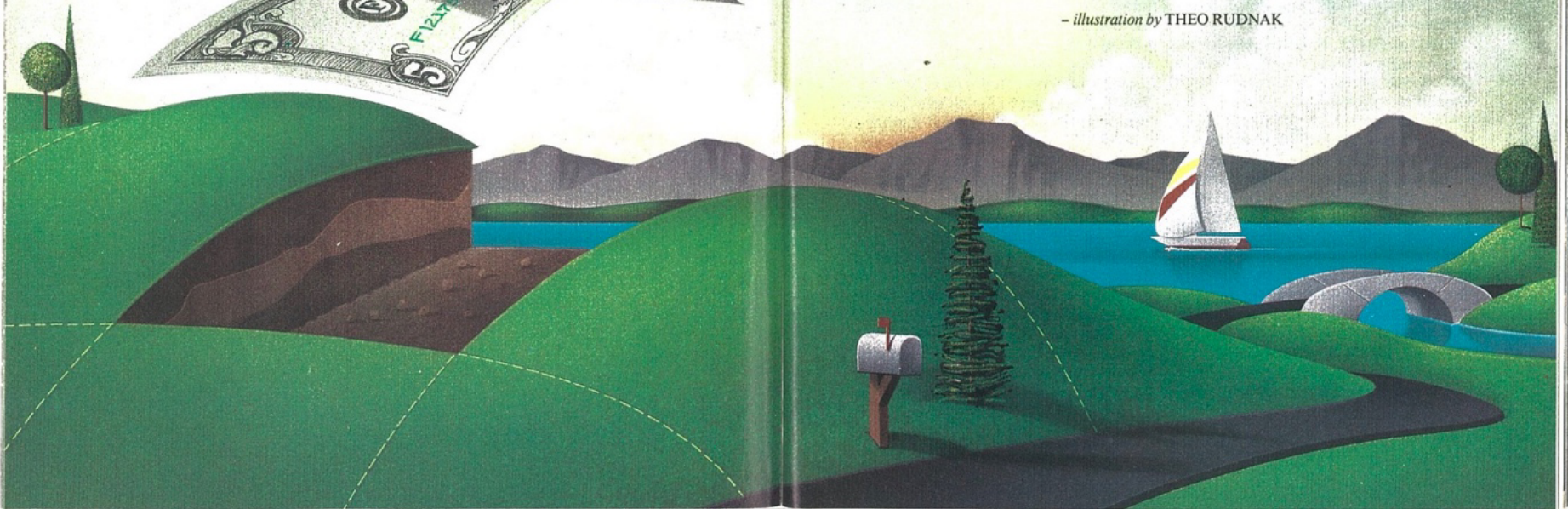
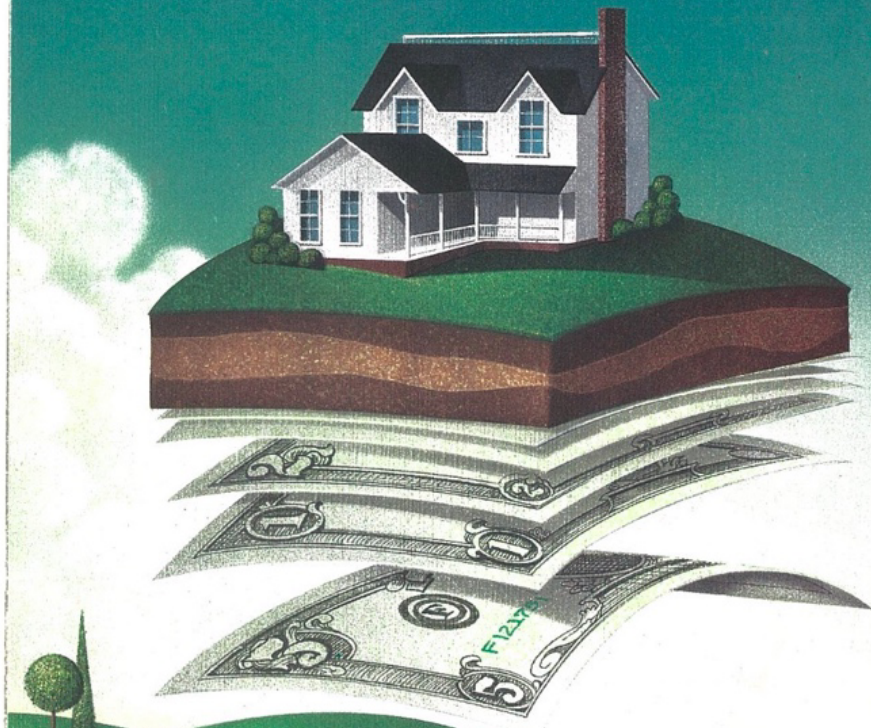


DEVELOPING NEW ENGLAND: THE WAR OF THE '80s

DREAMS FOR SALE

When Hartford, Maine, became the object of a large land speculator's interest last summer, residents had very mixed opinions. Now, with a million-dollar lawsuit pending against the town the battle lines were drawn. by Edie Clark

— illustration by THEO RUDNAK



"I was appalled at the way Patten was conducting this... this is a classic example of the rape of Maine."

PART TWO OF A FOUR-PART SERIES

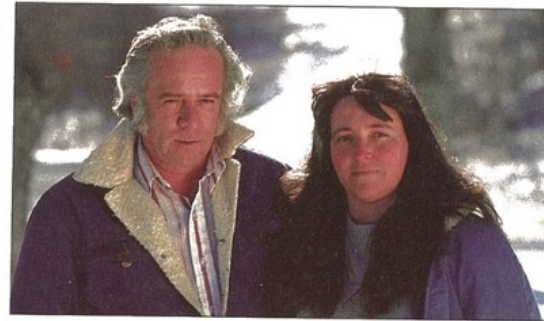


NEW ENGLAND IS A place of dreams. It is a metaphysical landscape where the dreams—dreams of simplicity, dreams of clarity, dreams of purity—are so tangled up with the land that even those who trade off the dreams have a hard time separating them, each for its own value. Certain towns have long since been drawn into that arena of confused values, towns like Litchfield, Connecticut, and Woodstock, Vermont, and Kennebunkport, Maine. Princesses of the realm, they know all about the dreams and they know how to use them. But New England is a big place, and there are lots of towns that have just gone about their business all these years and never thought about the dreams.

Hartford, Maine, is one of these towns. It is 35 square miles, 22,464 acres, and nobody had ever tried to make it into something it wasn't. From the top of Bear Mountain, when it's clear, you can see an ocean of hills topped by Mt. Washington. But the hills and the steep gorges and the occasional meadows never seemed like a lot to brag about. Not even the lakes—Canton Lake and Bear Pond are the two good-sized ones—ever seemed particularly special, not to the people who lived there. But then, this was not something they had bought like something out of a catalog; it was simply where they lived, and much the same way that they felt about their family, love it or hate it, it was theirs. A little town of 510 people, Hartford is not very near anything—it's three-

quarters of an hour northwest of Auburn and 40 minutes south of Rumford. Hartford doesn't have any stores, unless you count Betty Hutchins' antique shop, and it doesn't have a post office or any police or a fire department or a rescue squad. It doesn't even have its own road crew. It doesn't have a lot of money (to make the town work, \$278,000 has to be raised from taxes), and the other thing it doesn't have is planning or zoning.

This made the town interesting to Patten Corporation. Patten is the largest marketer of undeveloped land in the Northeast, a company that's made a good living trading on those dreams—mass-marketing a little piece of Maine, a little piece of Vermont, the country life, fantasies that well-heeled city dwellers are known to indulge. And dreams that are worth having aren't supposed to be messed up by a lot of regulations. In fact, it is that rural naiveté, the blushing-bride reception small towns so often give companies that promise big money, that Harry Patten, 50-year-old former vacuum-cleaner salesman and now owner of this \$80-million company, has used to build his empire and to make his company the biggest gainer on the New York Stock Exchange in 1986. By buying large tracts of rural land, quickly subdividing and selling the land, unimproved, often within less than eight weeks, Patten will frequently double and triple its money. Early in 1987 *Fortune* magazine named Harry Patten one of the year's most fascinating business people, and at the time he told them, "This is the most exciting time of my life. Everything I ever dreamed of is happening. My company is doing everything I always knew it could do." By the end of that year Harry Patten had awakened from his dreams. Patten Corporation was being investigated by the state's attorney generals' offices in New York, Vermont, and Maine, the stock had tumbled to a quarter of its 1986 earnings, and in what appeared to be a fit of petulant rage, the company filed a million-dollar



Armand Rowe and his wife Linda moved to Hartford from Cape Cod to escape unbridled development, but found there was no refuge from growth even in the woods of rural Maine.

lawsuit against the tiny town of Hartford, a bit of news that pulsed across the state of Maine like air-raid sirens.

* * *

ARMAND AND LINDA ROWE HAD LIVED IN Hartford only a year when they first heard the name Patten. Armand had worked in the post office in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and he had lived in Wareham, a busy and fast-growing community near Cape Cod. It is where he grew up and it is where Linda grew up and it is where they were raising their four children. More than anything, they wanted to own their own home; but as fast as they saved, the prices went up. Other things rankled—the town was growing so fast that it wasn't pleasant to live there anymore, what with traffic and newcomers and new houses everywhere. One day Armand came home from work and he said, "Want to move to Maine?" and Linda said, "I'm packed."

They had never been to Maine, but they knew it had affordable houses and lots of open space. Armand contacted all the post offices in the larger communities—and he ended up with a job as postal clerk in Auburn. They read through the real estate ads in the local paper, and Linda saw one with a picture of a house with a big front porch. The house, which was in Hartford, came with 41 acres and was listed for \$47,500. They looked no further. The place needed a lot of work—it hadn't

been lived in for 40 years—but having that house, having all that land, made Armand feel like a millionaire. For months he walked with his feet two feet off the ground.

For Armand and Linda, Hartford was just right—simple, down-to-earth, no airs. They became close with their neighbors, Phyllis and Wiley DeCoster, and they shared a garden. They bought a flock of chickens and took Wiley's advice on how to raise them. They joined the church, and Linda worked on the church suppers. Hartford was just like one big family, and pretty soon the Rowses didn't feel like newcomers anymore. It was like they had always lived there.

At the town meeting in March, there was an item on the warrant to re-establish the planning board, which had only one member and had not met in years. The town said yes, and Armand was appointed to the board. He was anxious to serve. It wasn't like Wareham here—this was a town that still had hope. The fact that developers had priced him out of his hometown in Massachusetts was a wound that would heal only because of the goodness he'd found in Hartford.

After that, events spun by like a moving train. The five new members of the planning board—Armand had been appointed chairman—were complete novices. They bought four copies of *Handbook for*

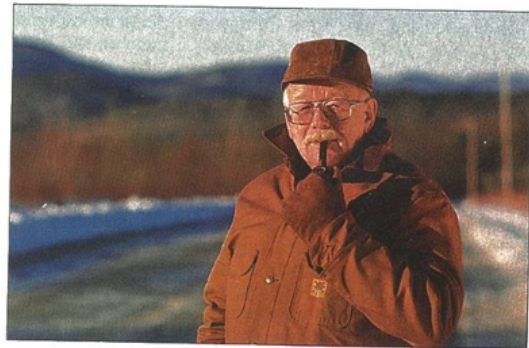
By buying large tracts, quickly subdividing, and selling, Patten will frequently double or triple its money.

Local Planning Boards put out by the Maine Municipal Association, and they made weekly trips to Auburn for classes in town planning. As fast as they studied, new subdivisions were proposed. By August they were aware that 70 new house lots were in the works for the town. In a single year? In the 60 years previous, only 153 lots had been subdivided.

Not only that, but since early summer there had been rumors about what was going to happen to Pine Grove Beach and the woodland around it. The 150-acre plot that fronts on Canton Lake was owned by Timberlands, Inc., a lumber company based in Dixfield. Pine Grove was a popular swimming spot. Townspeople paid 75¢ to swim and picnic there. On hot summer days there could be as many as 250 crowding the white sand beach that curves along the edge of the deep blue lake. Around the lake there are 48 summer cottages set into the pinewoods. Though motorboats are allowed, the lake doubles as a source of drinking water for the town of Canton, which shares the shorefront with Hartford. There was word that there would be a sizable subdivision there.

On August 19 Bruce Verrill, a representative for the Patten Corporation, attended a selectmen's meeting and unfurled the surveyor's map that showed a 62-lot subdivision on the 150-acre Pine Grove lot,

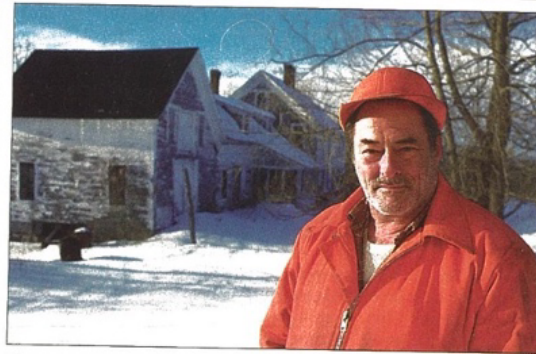
First Selectman Lee Pettingill read a newspaper story about the effect of Patten's activities in other small towns in Maine and was so scared he bought another half dozen copies.



- Dean Abramson

giving substance to the summer of rumors. That brought the total of proposed house lots to 132. The town had no minimum lot size or any regulations whatsoever. It was clear they needed more time; it was clear the classes in Auburn weren't enough for the five of them to know all they needed to know to deal with a company like Patten or First Atlantic Land Company, another land speculator sniffing around Hartford. Two days after Bruce Verrill made his presentation to the selectmen, the *Maine Times* published a scathing investigative report focused on the Patten Corporation. "Land Grab," it headlined. "A sophisticated speculator moves in and Maine towns are unprepared." It detailed the havoc Patten had brought to other small towns in Maine — how they cut the land up into long thin spaghetti strips, how roads were made of buried tree stumps, and how house lots had been stuck in remote sections of towns, making fire protection and schoolbus transportation a nightmare — and highlighted the fact that Patten zeroes in on towns unprotected by planning or zoning, maiden towns like Hartford, that up until recently have had few suitors. Lee Pettingill, Hartford's First Selectman, read the story and then went out and bought another half dozen copies. Even though Hartford wasn't in the story, reading the stories about the little towns —

- Dean Abramson



Moose Berry had been trying to sell his family farm for six years. Just as he got an offer of \$140,000 from a developer, pending subdivision, the moratorium put a hole in his plans.

Fayette, Cherryfield, Chesterville, Naples — was like reading about Hartford. They were not ready for any of this. "We were terrified," he said.

Feelings were high all over town. Property owners on Canton Lake were especially concerned. This proposal would more than double the number of cottages and do so in a congested manner. Tim Kerwin owns a cottage on the lake, and he is also a prominent Boston developer. And as a developer, he felt a kind of shudder of fraternal shame as he watched and listened to Patten. "I was appalled at the way Patten was conducting this. They were going into meetings and screaming at people and threatening them. It was clearly intimidation. I'm not against development, but Patten is in the develop-and-run business, and I'm concerned that the lake be developed carefully. This is a classic example of the rape of Maine."

There was talk of imposing a moratorium, that is, a kind of a time out, a truce in the war, a technique being used more and more by the small towns who have not felt the need to do a lot of planning until a developer moves in and makes plans for them. Armand and the planning board had learned about them at the AVCOG classes, and they had also learned that towns that impose moratoriums carelessly can be successfully sued. (By law, if an

application is submitted to town officials, it must be acted on. If a moratorium is called while there are applications pending, this is grounds for suit.) On October 2 Armand Rowe received a letter from Patten's attorney warning that if they went any further in their plans for a moratorium, Patten would sue.

On October 5, by vote (64 to 22) at a special town meeting, a six-month moratorium was approved. In those six months, no subdivision applications could be considered. Though the lawsuit, which ticked off 41 ways that Patten was wronged by Hartford, claimed that Patten's application was pending, according to Hartford, Patten had not yet applied.

But neither had Moose Berry. Moose had been trying to sell his family's farm for the past six years, ever since his mother died. He lives in a trailer down at the bottom of the hill from the farm, which sits up there, the windows of the big farmhouse looking out across the hills. His grandfather built it and it's where he grew up, but that didn't matter to him so much as the fact that for the first time in his life, he would be able to make some real money from the farm, more than he'd ever dreamed of. Moose is a papermaker at the mill in Rumford, and there had been a strike there recently. He'd also been injured, out of work a good deal of the time.

The ads usually read "for sale by owner," creating the illusion that they were placed by a private party.

He couldn't afford the taxes on the 150-acre farm anymore — they were running close to \$1,000 a year now — and he'd finally had an offer on the place that came close to what he thought it was worth. First

Atlantic Land Co. had offered him \$140,000, pending subdivision. A month after Moose accepted the offer, the town imposed the moratorium. Moose hit the roof. He wrote up a petition and began to

go door to door around Hartford, looking for support. He found it — 47 signatures — enough to call another town meeting for a vote to rescind the moratorium.

Moose, of course, was not alone in his

unhappiness over the moratorium. Bruce Verrill had vented his feeling repeatedly at selectmen's meetings, planning board meetings, anywhere he could get a word in.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 122)

LAND SPECULATORS AT WORK



HARRY PATTEN IS not the only land speculator in the New England landscape, but others, such as Anthony Cersimo and Philip Grande, were once partners with Patten and still others once worked for him. Patten Corporation was founded in 1968 by Harry Patten in Stamford, Vermont, where it is still headquartered.

Much of its early activity was in Vermont, but in 1982 Patten opened his first regional office in Portland, Maine, and there are now offices in 15 states. Second largest to Patten is Properties of

America, Inc. (POA) of Williamstown, Massachusetts, which was founded 14 years ago by Philip Grande after his partnership with Harry Patten dissolved. First Atlantic Land Co., the company that sent letters to Hartford residents like Dot Berry and Wiley DeCoster and Moose Berry, is one of POA's 11 subsidiaries, and it is most active in Maine.

There are at least half a dozen others of size, and most of them work on the same relatively simple formula. They buy large tracts of raw land (which customarily cost much less per acre than smaller parcels), subdivide (often into lots sizable enough to bypass state environmental review), and then market the lots aggressively by advertising in newspapers in metropolitan areas, where people are capable of paying much more per acre. Papers are rarely passed on the initial large parcels until all necessary permits for subdivision have been obtained.

These companies are not real estate agencies — that is, they do not act as agents in sales for clients — so their representatives need not have real estate licenses. The ads that they place in newspapers customarily read "for sale by owner," which is true. Presumably to reduce the impression that the land is being mass-marketed, these ads are placed using an assortment of telephone numbers (we counted 12 different phone numbers for Patten in Maine alone), and at least in the case of Patten, the corporation is rarely identified in the ad, again creating the illusion that the ad has been placed by a private party. Since large tracts are broken up into 60, 100, 300 lots, a single ad can be written to market all those lots, and (this is according to their own reports) the land is resold within a matter of weeks.

Land speculators actively solicit land by visiting town halls and researching tax maps. Large property holders are sent form letters that express interest in

buying the land and promise profit.

Though Patten (and the activities of other land speculators) is under investigation and there are lawsuits pending against them, most of what they do is legal, though painstakingly so. They are often able to sidestep state and local environmental regulations by slipping through loopholes. They dream up ways to describe their activities to make them seem benign, using euphemisms like "a specialty retailer, not a real estate company" (Patten), "a smokeless industry" (Patten), "the L.L. Bean of land development" (Patten), "not a land developer so much as a land enhancer" (POA). But all this is costing and will continue to cost New England dearly. Aside from the visual impact on the landscape, these sales stimulate large increases in the value of rural and shorefront acreage, which drives up the valuation on similar properties, making it hard for local people to afford their taxes and hard for their children to afford the land. — E.C.

A single speculator's ad can sell many similar parcels.

MAINE LAKES AREA

Forty lush, wooded acres with lovely views, access to 1,050-acre pristine lake. Boating, fishing, and swimming. Surveyed, soils tested, warranty deed. Low down payment, owner financing. \$9,800.

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THE WAR OF THE '80S: DREAMS FOR SALE

(continued from page 77)

At a planning board meeting on October 13 he appeared once again, this time bringing with him his attorney and a stenographer and recording devices. And he wanted to be heard. He shouted. He yelled. He interrupted. Armand asked him to be seated. By vote of the board he was forbidden to speak, but he kept popping up. Some people were appalled — he didn't even own any land in town, what right did he have to even speak out at these meetings? But others, Moose Berry most especially, welcomed him and cheered him on, for he spoke much more eloquently than Moose ever could. And more eloquently than Armand, whose work as a postal clerk has not brought him much experience in public speaking.

It is a similar scenario wherever Bruce Verrill goes, to small towns where officials are not professional planners but simply townspeople who want to serve their town. As Bruce (whose job demands that he have passion on tap like any good actor) would rise to interrupt, Armand would sputter, "but — but — but" in the face of Bruce's booming oration. Bruce Verrill is a big man with sharp dark eyes that flare out at the slightest provocation and long arms that fly out in angry gestures. "Every person here knows what you've done to the Patten Corporation!" He jabbed his finger at Armand, who sat on the small wooden dais with his fellow planning board members. "When this whole thing comes out, you're going to have to be accountable! You've got to do things according to law. If you pay attention to the law, you'll never be in trouble. Now you're in trouble!"

On November 4 Patten filed suit against the town of Hartford, claiming \$1 million worth of damages. This would, as all parties knew, bankrupt the town. When Jim Tierney, Maine's attorney general, read about the suit in the *Lewiston Sun*, he called David Whittier, the lawyer for the town of Hartford, who was also at home on that Saturday morning. He was outside

cutting wood. Patten was already under investigation by Tierney's office, and so he was familiar with their tactics. Tierney asked Whittier if Hartford would like some help. He saw this as an intimidation suit designed to bully Hartford and to send a message to other towns that may be considering moratoriums. Don't mess with the big guys, the action seemed to say. They've got the money and the power. They'll get their way. Whittier said yes.

In response to Moose Berry's petition, yet another meeting was called so that the town could vote on whether or not to rescind the moratorium. By this time the suit, which was eliciting comparisons with the fable of David and Goliath, had drawn national attention.

* * *

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE VOTE, THE NEWS on my car radio was full of Hartford, and one report relayed that a Patten spokesman had said that the company would drop the suit if the town would rescind the moratorium. Armand Rowe had heard it, too. I stopped at his house. It is at the end of the dirt road that used to lead up Bear Mountain to the fire tower. He was just coming home from work in his jeans and cowboy boots and vest. His gray hair is long, to his collar, and thick as fur. He considered that bit of news a kind of oral bribery from Patten, another form of intimidation to turn people's minds and make decisions out of fear. He said that the lawsuit doesn't bother him. "I know that we are right. Anyone who's going to sue a little town like this is wrong. I mean, they come here and tell us how much they love Hartford, how beautiful it is, and then they turn around and sue us when we won't agree to give it to them. I'm on the planning board to do a job, and if we knuckle under to Patten now, we're not doing that job."

Dot Berry lives on the other side of the mountain, and as far as she is concerned, this is worse than the floods that swept through town last spring and worse than the big freeze-up in the 1920s that ruined their apple farm and far worse than the fight three years ago over who was going to plow the town roads. Dot Berry is in her



— Dean Abramson

Dot Berry doesn't go to town for coffee any more, for fear of getting into an argument.

eighties, a spritely lady with bright blue eyes, a cap of white hair, and a wealth of memories of her town. I went to call on her the next morning. "My Lord, what a mess the town of Hartford's gotten into now!" she said. It was the day of the vote, and the town was alive with energy like a power line cut in two. "This, since September, this is the worst. Ever."

Like many in Hartford, Dot owns a lot of land, a lot of pretty land, much nicer than the stretch that Patten wants, over on Canton Lake. The farm, which her husband Raymond kept when he was alive, is 140 acres — broad fields and twisted, thick-waisted apple trees (Black Oxford and Blushing Brides and Spys) that slope right down to Little Bear Pond. From the bay windows of the farmhouse, Dot can watch the morning light up the pond and the evening ignite it with pinks and oranges, and she can watch the darkness steal it. It has been like that for the 65 years

THE WAR OF THE '80S: DREAMS FOR SALE

(continued)

she has looked out those same big-paned windows. Just the other day she got a letter like the ones that have been coming around from Patten. This one was from First Atlantic Land Co., asking if she'd like to sell, especially the land along the pond in front of her windows. She used the letter to start the fire in the morning. "Sell? What for? What would I have then?" she asked me, her voice reaching above its range, her eyes lit. "This is home."

It is what Wiley DeCoster had said the night before, over a boiled dinner at Armand Rowe's house. The same letter had come to him. Like Dot, he'd put it in the stove. He owns a lot of land, but true to his name, he won't say how much. "If I sold, I'd get the money and then I'd spend the money and then I'd have nothing." He said it clear and straight like the self-evident truth he believed it to be and which Dot Berry believes it to be as well.

It is clear and self-evident to some, but neighbors have been yelling at each other across their fences, and friendships have been torn. Dot used to like to go down to the store in Canton in the morning, buy the paper, and sit at the counter and have coffee and cranberry muffins. But Joan and Dan Jasper, who run the store, have been pretty outspoken about all this, speaking up in favor of Patten and accusing the townspeople of being shortsighted. And so she's stopped going, though she misses those muffins. "I don't mind progress, but I hate when it gets like this — so emotional."

Even though she doesn't go out at night, even though she walks with the help of two canes, and even though it's her nephew Moose who mustered the petition, Dot Berry was going down to the meeting that night, and she intended to mark her ballot in favor of keeping the moratorium.

Moose Berry was out beside his trailer, splitting wood when I stopped to see him. He stopped and stretched out a friendly

hand, dabbed at his brow with his kerchief. "Most of what I've got to say isn't printable," he said. "I get so worked up over this I've got to split a little wood." But he welcomed me inside his trailer, happy to talk just the same. He has a flourishing gray beard and hands that have seen work. He is 62, and he can sell his family land none too soon. He'd been out all day campaigning, knocking on doors, urging people to come to the meeting and vote out the moratorium. "I've talked till I'm blue in the face. I come home, have a couple of beers, rest up, and go out again." What is planned for his land, as far as he knows, is an 18-lot subdivision. "I hate to see subdivision," he said, "but I don't see how we can stop it. Nothing much has happened from any that we've had so far, so what's one more?" I asked him why he couldn't just wait until after the moratorium, and he laughed and said, "Who knows what they'll come up with?"

Hartford has a town office, a small concrete-block building not too far down the main road from Moose Berry's place. Selectman Lee Pettingill was there. He had his lunch in a basket, and he was spending the day cutting up paper to be used for ballots when he had the chance between answering the phone, which jangled on and off all day long, and talking into the mike for TV newspeople, who brought their cameras and lights into town one day after another.

Though Lee and his wife Marge retired to Hartford from Maryland in 1978, he had been coming here every summer since 1928, to the family place on Bear Pond. On four unpainted pine shelves along the wall beside him are the records of the town, which dates back to 1798. Also on the shelf is the town history, which has been typed up like a manuscript, bound in an orange plastic ring binder, and is kept there for anyone who is interested. Lee wants people to read that book. Its pages, with the pasted-in pictures of the old glass-windowed town hearse and the town's horse-drawn mail-carrier's sleigh, are replete with long lists of all the teachers who

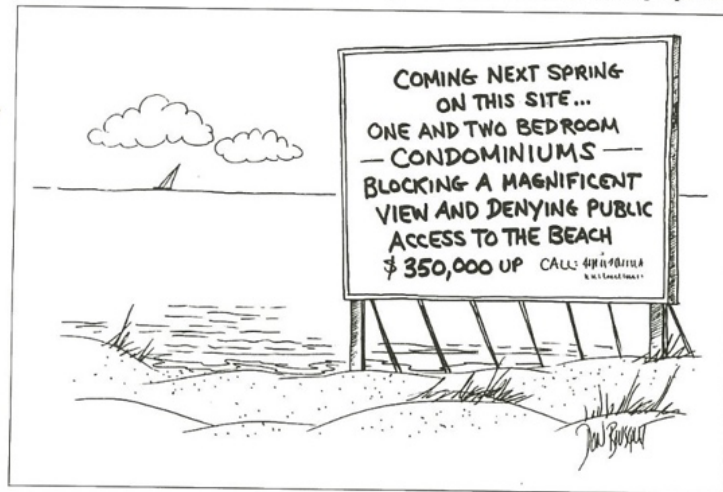
ever taught in the district school and even longer lists of who is buried in which cemetery. To Lee, that is Hartford. "This is not Hartford," he said, pointing up at the map thumbtacked to the wall over the meeting table. The heart-shaped piece of land snipped into 62 small pieces, blue-edged on the blueprint, is the Patten plan. Lee spent his life doing administrative work for the phone company, and he can't understand why Patten would sue — it's such terrible publicity, and by Patten's standards, this is a relatively small project. He gave a nervous chuckle. "I would hate to think that they're going to live or die by this one project."

That would seem unlikely. Though Patten will not say how many similar projects they are working on right now in Maine, there is no shortage. A recent informal count by the Maine attorney general's office found at least 34 Patten subdivisions underway in Maine, some of which involved tracts as big as 4,500 acres. According to their annual report, last year the company sold 49,784 acres nationwide in 3,242 separate transactions. In the past five years, sales have risen from \$3 million to \$81.6 million. Certainly Patten's fate

did not hinge on this 150-acre project.

Arthur Harvey, the secretary of the planning board, lives across the street from the town hall. He moved to Hartford three years ago, and like Armand Rowe, he wanted to join the planning board because he had lived in southeastern New Hampshire for 25 years and watched it grow until he couldn't stand it any longer. He came then, with his family, to Hartford, which he described to me as a very poor town. "But that was an attraction for me. I didn't want an upscale town." The house, which cost him \$8,000, has never been modernized. It has no electricity, is heated with numerous small wood and kerosene stoves, and has no bathroom, only an outdoor privy. It was nightfall when I stopped to see him. He lit a lamp on the wooden table and his gold-rimmed glasses shone in the yellow light as we talked.

Though I had visited many in Hartford, I found no one who would say they opposed development. Not even Arthur, who characterized the town as rural, "if there is such a thing as rural anymore." Arthur, like so many others, simply wanted the time to think things over, time to make plans. "I don't blame the local people who



THE WAR OF THE '80S: DREAMS FOR SALE

(continued)

sell their land for money. They have their needs. And I don't blame the people in Boston who buy these lots that must seem attractive to them. What we are looking for [in the moratorium] is an orderly response to these pressures. And that certainly is our right." He turned up the wick as the darkness grew deeper. The time for the meeting was drawing close.

* * *

IT WAS LONG BEFORE THAT EVENING, OF course, that the dreams had come to Hartford. I saw them in Moose Berry's eyes, and I saw them ablaze in the orange and blue surveyor's flags that flicked in the breeze off Canton Lake.

At the meeting, which drew more townspeople than any other in Hartford's long history, Amy Homans, Maine's assistant attorney general, stood before the crowd — the townspeople sat on folding chairs and huddled together on benches and stood shoulder to shoulder in the back and along the sides — and told them that the lawsuit was without merit, that it wouldn't stand a chance in court. "There is no word for it other than intimidation. This could have been any town that happened to have some nice lakefront or oceanfront property. Towns like Hartford should not be making decisions based on legal fees." (Though this was a soothing message, the town had already spent at least a thousand dollars to hire a lawyer as a result of the suit, and they ended the meeting by approving that \$2,500 be taken from town funds and placed in a new legal defense fund.)

The vote was quick and as decisive as it had been the first time: by a margin of three to one, 118-42, Hartford voted to keep its moratorium, a brave stand for a little town in the face of such a hefty lawsuit. The moratorium freezes any move toward development until March 31, 1988, and will allow the planning board to draw up a comprehensive town plan and some basic ordinances such as lot

size and standards for new roads. But even by the next night, Armand Rowe and the planning board were at work, discussing a possible compromise to offer Patten's attorneys. "We know we can't stop Patten," Armand conceded. "But we can set limits. We can offer alternatives."

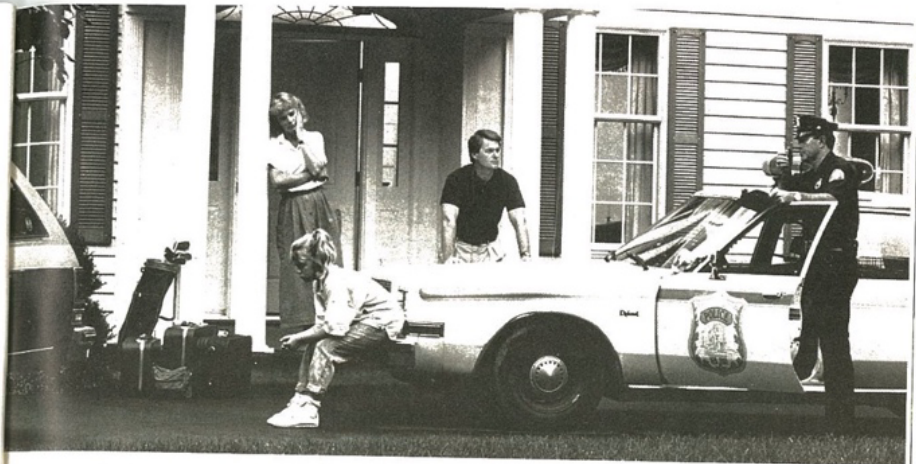
It won't be long, by next summer maybe. A young urban professional will fold the *Boston Globe* to the column headed Maine Real Estate. The ad may read: "Owner anxious to sell. Treat yourself to the gift that will last a lifetime — a spectacular Maine lake lot. Peace and seclusion await you. Owner financing." He or she will call the Maine number and find that the "owner" is the Patten Corporation and that the land is on Canton Lake. The seduction will continue. "Yes," the salesperson will explain, "that's 2.2 acres on a lake. It's a beautiful lake. Some people would think of this as a dream come true." □□

Next Month in Part Three: See how several communities around the region are working hard to save some of their open land.

EPILOGUE

Here's How It All Came Out

AS WE WERE GOING TO PRESS, WE learned that Hartford's planning board had reached an agreement with Patten officials. Patten agreed to give the town 250' of beachfront and some adjoining land for parking space. In additional agreements, the corporation agreed to build the main road into the development according to the town's specifications and then deed the road over to the town. Patten will proceed with the subdivision, subject to state environmental approval. Armand Rowe expressed satisfaction with the outcome, but the land will be cut up and sold as house lots, and fully four of the six months that the planning board had hoped to spend drawing up a comprehensive town plan were devoted to negotiations with Patten.



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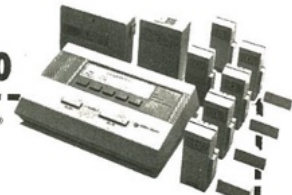
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