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Historic Hawk Valley Farm Protected

February 25, 2009 – **The Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust partners with the Trustees of Reservations to Protect Historic Hawk Valley Farm off Varnum Avenue in Lowell.** Hawk Valley Farm was one of Lowell’s original farm settlements in the 1600’s. Nearly five acres in size, this little known historic land behind Regatta Field (aka Anne Welcome Field) provides a protected corridor between the Lowell State Heritage Park along the Merrimack River and the Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest to the north. The land has also been returned to its original family after negotiations between the Pawtucketville neighborhood and City of Lowell allowed a conservation restriction to be placed on the property. Louisa Varnum, representing the sixth generation of Varnums to live on the original land, abutting 520 Varnum, purchased the property through an RFP process, bringing former family land once sold to a developer, back into the Varnum family for generations to come.

While Louisa Varnum will own the land and pass it down to future generations, the Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust and The Trustees of Reservations will co-hold a conservation restriction on the property, which will protect it in perpetuity from being developed. The conservation restriction also provides for public access in perpetuity via trails to be developed on the property. The property contains prime agricultural soil, historic barn foundations and a scenic vista out to the Merrimack River. The property is also important for flood mitigation as Clay Pit Brook flows through its southeastern corner. This is the first conservation restriction for the Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust, one of the country’s oldest urban land trusts, and the 287th for The Trustees of Reservations, one of the nation’s first land conservation groups. “LP&CT has been monitoring this property since the late 1990’s for long-term protection. We’re pleased to finally be a part of protecting this farmland for future generations. The neighborhood of Pawtucketville should receive accolades for rallying around the protection of this property through several neighborhood planning processes,” said Jane Calvin, LP&CT Executive Director.

The Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust, which owns eight other properties throughout Lowell, invited TTOR to partner on this project because of their depth of experience in holding conservation restrictions. David Outman, Land Protection Associate at The Trustees of Reservations, said “We are pleased to be working with the City, Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust, and Ms. Varnum on this exciting project. The Trustees was founded in 1891 to conserve natural areas for use and enjoyment by people living in urban areas. It is great to work on project so closely aligned with the founder’s original vision. The completion of the Hawk Valley Farm conservation restriction will not only secure floodwater storage capacity, but will provide new outdoor recreation opportunities and restore a piece of Lowell’s historic agricultural heritage. We look forward to assisting LP&CT and Ms. Varnum in the long term stewardship of what is sure to become a valued community resource.”

"The preservation of this land has been a lifelong dream of mine. To reacquire land that was first farmed by my family in the 1600s is very special. When the fields are restored to active use, it will be a beautiful spot. I'm very grateful to all those people who shared my vision and worked to make it a reality. The city will now always have at least one farm within its borders. Hawk Valley Farm is back!" said Ms. Varnum.