



Creating a Legacy

How to Document Your Land Story

John Weting at his computer. *Photo Courtesy of The Nature Conservancy/Alisa Hummell*

In the 1920s, conservation wasn't a word many people knew. Howard Weting may not have known it either, when he bought 80 acres of land near Claire, MI for \$1,100 and planted pine trees annually, but his care of the land proved that he was a conservationist.

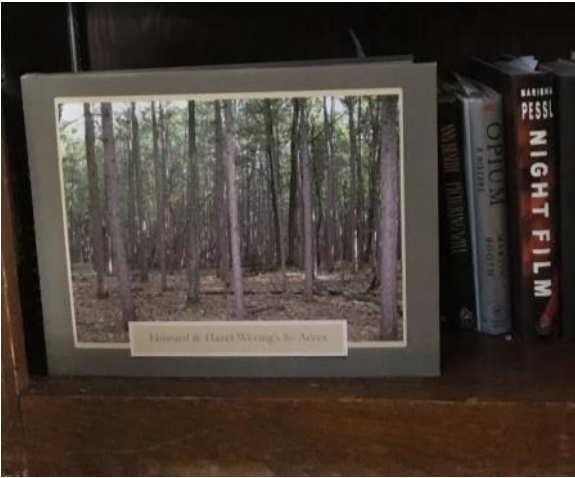
Howard Weting wanted to plant 1,000 trees a year, but soon realized that may have been too ambitious, and he eventually cut back to 500. Planting the trees was a family event, involving both his sons, Lawrence and Ralph, his daughter, Beth, and his wife, Hazel. He took care of the land until he was in his 80s, climbing ladders and trimming trees with his wife acting as spotter.

Conservancy as Family History

The land was passed down to his son, Lawrence, who passed it down to his son, John Weting. Under the protection of Mr. John Weting, the land continues to thrive, though he is fast to point out that, for him, he is the land's steward, not its owner.

He aims to protect the land, today, 20 years from now, and even 100 years into the future. As such, he wanted to document the land's story, both for his parents who previously cared for the land, as well as for his children, who will eventually be the land's stewards. To do this, he created a book, with both images and text, to tell the tale of his family's legacy on the land. Acting as both a land story and a family history, the book he created is an amazing gift to his family and an informative document for the future.

“I don't consider myself an owner of the land. I'm its steward. I hope to protect today, 20 years from today, and a hundred years into the future.” John Weting



John Weting's Land Document. *Photo Courtesy of The Nature Conservancy/Alisa Hummell*

Using his computer, he uploaded images he took of the land using a traditional camera. Interspersed with these images is the story John wrote, explaining the land's history, how his family cared for it, and the memorial he built there. According to Weting, the computer did most of the work, guiding him throughout the creation of the book. The result is an amazing hard-bound book, complete with a beautifully created dust-jacket – worthy as a permanent record for remembrance.

The application he used on his Macintosh laptop created a high-quality book – as beautiful as any traditionally published hard-bound book. From the photograph software that comes as part of his computer, he used pre-designed templates with certain pages designated for text. He sorted the images, wrote the story, and hit a button to make the book. At the end, he was given the option to “Buy the Book.”

Ways to Document Your Land Story

Though perhaps the highest quality of book would be from using a graphic-oriented computer like a Mac, there are many other ways to document your land story. Snapfish, Shutterfly and Chatbooks all are great ways to create a book of images to document your land, along with boxes for text to explain the photographs.

Other ways exist to write your own land story, even without the help of a computer. Some have even found success with applications on their smartphones – images are loaded and books are easy to put together, though the text may need to be added through a traditional computer.

What may take a few hours of your time will be a lasting document of your land's history. Because of its importance as a legacy and a way to tell your family's story, creating a land document is another step in conserving your land, now and into the future.