Roots of the Community Land Trust

John Emmeus Davis
Burlington Associates in Community Development

Tony Pickett
Urban Land Conservancy, Denver CO

Community Land Cooperative of Cincinnati (1981)

New Communities Inc. Leesburg, Georgia (1969)

Community Land Trusts in the United States

England
Roots of the Community Land Trust

- What ideas and precedents formed the seedbed for the modern-day CLT?
- Who pioneered and promoted the CLT?
- How has the CLT evolved over the years?
**Community Land Trust**

- **Ownership**
- **Organization**
- **Operation**

**CLT as an Innovative Model of OWNERSHIP**

- Community ownership of the land
- Individual ownership of the structural improvements
- Long-term ground lease, balancing the interests of both parties

**Religious & Cultural Traditions in Community Landholding**

- **India**  Vedic prohibition on deeding of land
- **Africa**  Tanzania: *Ujamaa Vijijini* (*familyhood in villages*)
- **Israel**  Torah: just distribution of land and re-distribution in the *Year of Jubilee*
- **England**  Agricultural commons
- **England**  Almshouse trusts
- **Scotland**  Croft lands
- **Mexico**  *ejido* (*“village lands”*)

**Chief Seattle**

“The President in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. But how can you buy or sell the sky? the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?”

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*Image captions and specific details regarding figures or images are not transcribed.*
Man did not make the earth and, though he had a natural right to occupy it, he had no right to locate his property in perpetuity in any part of it . . . It is the value of the improvement only, and not the earth itself, that is individual property.

—Tom Paine

“The land, the earth God gave man for his home, sustenance, and support, should never be the possession of any man, corporation, society, or unfriendly government, any more than the air or water.”

—Abraham Lincoln

“What is more preposterous than the treatment of land as individual property? In every essential, land differs from those things which being the product of human labor are rightfully property . . .”

—Henry George

1839-1897
The tax upon land values is, therefore, the most just and equal of all taxes. It falls only upon those who receive from society a peculiar and valuable benefit, and upon them in proportion to the benefit they receive. It is the taking by the community, for the use of the community, of that value which is the creation of the community.

Rethinking Land Values: The Single Tax

The estate is legally vested in the names of four gentlemen of responsible position and of undoubted probity and honour, who hold it in trust for the people of Garden City.

Rethinking Cities: Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928)

1881-82 Ireland, England, France
1883 Speaking tour of UK
1884 England
1889 England and France
1890 Australia, New Zealand, Asia

Travels of Henry George

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Rethinking Cities: Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928)

Garden Cities

Letchworth (1903) Welwyn (1920)
Arthur E. Morgan (1878-1975)

- Author of books extolling the virtues of small communities
- President of Antioch College, 1920-1936
- Chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority, 1933-1938
- President of Community Services, Inc. 1940-1970

Garden Cities

Rethinking Community

Planned Communities on Leased Land
Norris TN, 1933  Celo Community NC, 1937

Rethinking Property
Ralph Borsodi (1886-1977)
“Trusterty”

“No man or government has a moral title to the earth’s ownership. If it is to be used, and we have to use it in order to live, then it has to be treated as a trust. **We have to hold the earth in trust.**”

Ralph Borsodi, *Mother Earth News, Plowboy Interview, 1974*

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**Leasehold Communities: Bryn Gweled**

“A contemporary visionary was Ralph Borsodi, whose School of Living near Suffern NY attracted the attention of the group. Several people made an expedition to the School of Living and brought back enthusiasm and useful ideas. . .”

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**CLT Precursors**

*Large-scale Leasehold Systems in Israel (1901) and Australia (1910)*

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**CLT Precursors:**

*Land Leasing in Planned Communities*

**Alternative Communities in the United States**

- Fairhope, Alabama (1894)
- Arden, Delaware (1900)
- Free Acres, NJ (1910)
- School of Living (1936)
- Catol, NC (1937)
- Bryn Gweled, PA (1940)

**Garden Cities in England**

- Letchworth Garden City (1903)
- Welwyn Garden City (1920)

**Regional Leasehold System in Australia**

- Canberra, Australian Capital Territory (1910)

**National Leasehold System in Israel**

- Jewish National Fund (1901)

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**Community Land Trust**

- Nonprofit corporation holding the land
- Membership open to anyone residing within a geographically defined community
- Balance of interests on the governing board

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**CLT as an Innovative Model of ORGANIZATION**

Board of Directors, Community Land Cooperative of Cincinnati, 1981
The Civil Rights Movement in Albany, Georgia

- Founded in 1961, the Albany Movement demands an end to all segregation. One of its leaders is Slater King, cousin of Martin Luther King.
- By 1962, 1000 protesters have been jailed, including Martin Luther King Jr. and Ralph Abernathy, invited to town by the Albany Movement.

Slater King (1927-1969)
- Registering to vote. Slater King on the right. His wife, Marion, is second from left.
- A meeting convened by the Albany Movement. Chief Pritchett is at left, next to Slater King.
- Slater King with Bernice Johnson, who later formed the musical group Sweet Honey in the Rock.

C.B. King (1923-1988)
- Civil rights attorney, C.B. King, after being assaulted by sheriff’s deputies.

The Land Question

"Having spent so much time in the South made me aware not only of the pervasive racial inequalities but also of the economic realities that blacks continued to face even after legal segregation ended. I was determined to work for a more equitable solution to land ownership and economic security."

Bob Swann (1918-2003)

Education of a Community Activist

"Prison was his monastery and his university. He was introduced to this extraordinary group of people and had plenty of time to think about the root causes of war."

Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi Fellowship of Reconciliation Bayard Rustin

1942 Ashland Kentucky Federal Penitentiary
Fifteen of us studied a book called The Small Community by Arthur Morgan. . . . Arthur Morgan was something of a folk hero to me because of his varied experience, his social conscience, and his ideas on community cooperation.

Bob Swann
President, Antioch College Yellow Springs, Ohio
Co-Chair Tennessee Valley Authority Norris, Tennessee
– a planned community

Bob Swann, a supporter of the civil rights movement from the north comes to rebuild southern churches. Many African American Churches are destroyed by those opposing the idea of equal rights and treatment for all African Americans.

Rebuilding Firebombed Churches in the South
Bob Swann meets Slater & C.B. King
Albany (1962)

What Comes Next in the South?
How does a “protest movement” become a “constructive movement”

Community Service, Inc.
Yellow Springs, Ohio

Founded by Arthur Morgan to promote his ideas:
• Economic development
• Social improvement
• Centered on small towns
• and family life

Koinonia Farm
Americus, Georgia

Rev.Clarence Jordan (1926-1969)

Earlier Intersection of the Swann & King Families

Bob Swann’s wife, Marjorie Swann, had long been active in the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE).

While living in Yellow Springs, Ohio, Marjorie Swann had become close friends with a young Antioch College student, who was also active in CORE – Coretta Scott who later marries Martin Luther King

Coretta Scott King & Martin Luther King

Coretta Scott
Marjorie Swann

The Swann & King Families

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Two months after arriving in Albany, Georgia in the Fall of 1961 at age 23, Sherrod and SNCC field workers led a large series of demonstrations that would last for over three difficult years, during which hundreds were arrested. By printing up leaflets, registering voters, and holding seminars on non-violent resistance, they galvanized Albany’s black students to rise up and challenge unjust laws of segregation.

"You young people are talking a good talk – this is a good thing you’re doing – but I live on this man’s land, and what am I going to do if they take my job, take my house?"

What Comes Next?

How do tenant farmers and sharecroppers feed and house their families if they are forced off the land?

Fay Bennett
National Sharecroppers Fund

“The Joan of Ark of Agricultural Workers”

Planning a Land Trust for the American South

June 1968: National Sharecroppers Fund provides a grant for eight people to go to Israel to learn about land leasing.

The delegation is most impressed by the *moshav ovdim*, agricultural communities on leased land, combining individual homesteads with cooperatively produced & cooperatively marketed goods.

What Comes Next?

April 1968 > MLK Funeral procession.
Drafting the Blueprint for a New Model of Land Tenure

New Communities, Inc., 1969
“A nonprofit organization to hold land in perpetual trust for the permanent use of rural communities.”

New Communities, Inc.
5,600 acres

Community Land Trust

Ralph Borsodi

Land Reform in India: Vinoba Bhave & the Gramdan Movement

Land Reform in India

Vinoba Bhave

“The land problem is the main problem before us. Vinobaji says that private ownership of land must go. He is right. The land should belong to the community.”

Nehru, December 29, 1958

TIME Magazine
May 11, 1953

“Walking from one to another of India’s 700,000 villages, he asks those who have land to share it with those who have none.”

TIME Magazine
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Ownership
Organization
Operation

Land Reform in India

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TIME Magazine
May 11, 1953
The Community Land Trust

A Guide to a New Model of Land Tenure in America (1972)

Drawing on New Communities – and borrowing lessons and leases from Bryn Gweled and the Jewish National Fund – Bob Swann, Erick Hansch, Shimon Gottschalk, and Ted Webster create a framework for the modern-day CLT.

**OWNERSHIP**

“Land is held by the community land trust in perpetuity – probably never to be resold.”

**ORGANIZATION**

“A majority of the board... should consist of people somewhat removed from the resident community.”

**OPERATION**

- Preferential option for the poor – priority for people and activities recognized as charitable
- Perpetual affordability – preserving access to land and housing for persons of modest means
- Perpetual responsibility – promoting repairs and preventing foreclosures
"Trusterty"

"Stewardship"

Woodland CLT, 1978
Clairfield, Tennessee

The community land trust model demonstrates how residents can empower themselves through a proper relationship with the land. Our Woodland CLT fulfills the needs of the landless poor.

Marie Cirilo

Covenant CLT, 1978
Bucksport, Maine

"We’re not talking about people who are accepted; we’re talking about people who have never been accepted or had value in the larger community. And we’re prejudiced in the favor of those people—that’s the community of people that we want as our community."

Lucy Poulin

Community Land Cooperative of Cincinnati, 1981
West End
Cincinnati, Ohio

Rev. Maurice McCrackin, CLCC Board Member

Willie Watts, CLCC Executive Director
The “CLT Johnny Appleseed”
Chuck Matthei (1948-2002)

“Bob [Swann] was very good at the theoretical stuff, at putting it into words. . . But he was not good at motivating people. Chuck’s genius was in inspiring people to do it. After Chuck took over ICE, the land trusts multiplied.”

Marjorie Swann, 2008

Chuck Matthei, known to Bob and Marj Swann through Peacemakers, is invited to join ICE’s board in 1978.


Matthei moves ICE to Greenfield MA and slowly rebuilds ICE’s finances and staff, employing 22 people at its peak.


“A community land trust is an organization created to hold land for the benefit of a community and of individuals within that community. It is a democratically structured nonprofit corporation, with an open membership and board of trustees elected by the membership.”

Authors: Marie Cirillo John E. Davis Rob Eshman Charles Geisler Harvey Jacobs Andrea Lepcio Chuck Matthei Perk Perkins Kirby White

Prioritizing Cities, Housing & the Poor

Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker

Faith-based Organizations

Grassroots Organizing in Low-income Communities

Preservation and Production of Affordable Housing

Revising the Model

What’s New in the 1982 CLT Handbook?

A priority on serving the disadvantaged.

A priority on community organizing, building a broad-based membership of leaseholders and people residing within the CLT’s service area.

A focus on problems more urban than rural, like affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization.

A focus on permanent affordability enforced through a resale formula in the ground lease.

A focus on permanent responsibility for homes and homeowners on a CLT’s land.
Community Land Trust

Ownership
Organization
Operation

CLT as an Innovative Model of HOMEOWNERSHIP

Community Base/Three-Part Board

Public Interest Representatives
Community Members
Leaseholders

Community Land Trust

Home Ownership
Organization
Operation

Community Land Trust

Home Ownership
Organization
Operation

Stewardship
“Three Faces of Stewardship”

- **Preserve** affordability
- **Promote** repair & replacement
- **Prevent** foreclosures

“Three Faces of Stewardship”

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Roots & Branches

*A Gardener’s Guide to the Origins and Evolution of the Community Land Trust*

[www.cltroots.org](http://www.cltroots.org)

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Roots of the Community Land Trust

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“We are the developer that doesn’t go away”

Connie Chavez, Former Executive Director

Sawmill Community Land Trust