

Walkill Valley Land Trust

ESOPUS, GARDINER, LLOYD, MARLBOROUGH, NEW PALTZ, PLATTEKILL, ROSENDALE, & SHAWANGUNK

Spring 2011 Newsletter

PROFILE: KELLAR EASEMENT

In this issue, the WVLT initiates a series of features focusing on our individual easements — the history of the land and the spirit behind the donations. Norman Kellar and his son Paul helped to provide the following account of one of our earliest: The Bontecou Farm in Esopus.



View of Bontecou Farm (the Kellar easement) from Route 32

In 1990, Norman and Tullia Kellar donated a conservation easement to the Walkill Valley Land Trust on Bontecou Farm, 88 acres with a half mile of frontage on the Walkill River. The easement ensures that the pastoral landscape, with views of fields, the Shawangunks and the Catskill Mountains in the distance, will be preserved in perpetuity.

Purchased by the Kellar family in 1944, the land was used by Norman and Tullia to raise purebred Holsteins, poultry, and crops to feed the animals. The original barn, built in 1912, was an extraordinary structure that was often referred to as a “palace for cows.” It was 250 ft. long, 40 ft. wide and 4 stories high and featured more than 2300 panes of glass, quarter round molding in the dairy barn and “modern” features for feeding the cows and chickens and for storing hay and grain. In 1952, the herd of 86 Holsteins was sold and in 1955, the family parted ways with their 4,000 chickens. Although Norman had returned to the practice of law in 1952, farming remained in his blood and he soon began to raise purebred Black Angus cattle. In 1958, he gave each of his three children a Black Angus calf. By 1968, when the youngest Kellar child departed for college, the herd had grown to 90 head of cattle.

When Norman and Tullia purchased Bontecou Farm, there were virtually no trees, no lawns, and the premises were overgrown with weeds. However, the Kellars were ardent horticulturalists and had a vision of what the farm could become with hard work and imagination. Over the ensuing 66 years, they transformed areas once dominated by thistle and burdock into large lawns, created an arboretum of rare as well as native trees and planted thousands of bulbs. Among the most prized trees that Norman has grown are a Copper Beech, Dawn Redwoods, Stewartias, Swiss Stone Pines and American Hollies. This horticultural interest took a quantum leap forward in 1968 when the Angus cattle were sold and a glass greenhouse was built. Orchids from around the world were gathered and grown in the greenhouse. The farm also has an orchard with a variety of apples, pears, peaches, plums, nectarines, cherries and apricots. A large vegetable garden that looks like the cover illustration of a seed catalogue is maintained on the farm. An array of small fruits -- from strawberries, blackberries and blueberries to gooseberries, currants and grapes are also raised. When the old barn burned in 1994, it was replaced by a smaller one.



The original 1799 house on Bontecou Farm

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“The real and proper question is: why is it beautiful?”

— Annie Dillard
(Pilgrim at Tinker Creek)

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Mission Statement:

The mission of the Wallkill Valley Land Trust is to promote the voluntary preservation of farmland, significant habitat, water quality and scenic views in Southern Ulster County for the benefit of present and future generations. The Land Trust's goal is to fully serve the land conservation needs of the eight towns in its service area: New Paltz, Gardiner, Shawangunk, Lloyd, Plattekill, Marlboro, Rosendale, and Esopus. WVLT works to strengthen public sensitivity to environmental issues, to conserve our community's environmental heritage, to encourage environmentally sensitive growth and to support the local agricultural economy.

Letter from Executive Director

As I sit on my porch listening to the dried leaves blow in the breeze, today is the first day to break the 70 degree mark in New Paltz. I cannot believe Spring is already here, although we are certainly ready for it. Being a third generation Floridian, the ever-changing seasonal landscape never ceases to inspire me. Don't be surprised if you see me around town snapping photographs of the beautiful local landscape we work so hard to preserve!

Nature stimulates my senses and invigorates my mind; it always has. I grew up playing in avocado groves, and now I meander among the rolling hills of the historic apple orchards. Knowing that I am working for an organization which strives to protect and preserve these working farmlands and open spaces, and that I am living in a community that supports and desires land conservation, is extremely fulfilling.

In the past year, WVLT has undergone unprecedented changes and growth. The approaching warm weather will herald the implementation of our new strategic action plan, an effort to ensure our future viability. This endeavor would not succeed without the passion and dedication of our tireless WVLT Board.

Even with all our efforts and changes, it is the continued support we receive from each and every one of *you* that guarantees our survival and the preservation of these amazing Southern Ulster County landscapes which inspire us all.

Sincerely,

Christine DeBoer

Christine DeBoer

Volunteers Needed

There are a wide variety of projects and jobs available for volunteers at WVLT. We can fit almost any interest and we can adjust to your schedule. Please consider volunteering to help us with general office work, training to represent WVLT at local events, or on an as-needed basis for special mailings and projects. For more information, please email us at: info@WallkillValleyLT.org or call our office: (845) 255-2761



View of Rosendale from the Trestle

(continued from Page 1)

Norman is now 96 years old and still resides in the 1799 stone house on the farm. He believes passionately in protecting rural lands against the tide of development that so often destroys farmland and erodes the beauty of the visual landscape. He hopes that his donation of a conservation easement to the WVLT will inspire others to do so as well. Indeed as a lawyer, he has helped draft many conservation easements including several that were given to the WVLT.

On the mantle above Norman's hearth is a block of wood engraved with the following words attributed to Abraham Lincoln: "I want it said of me, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower, where I thought a flower would grow." Both metaphorically and in actuality, that is precisely what Norman has done. May others follow his example!

Wallkill Valley Land Trust's 2011 WALKS AND TALKS

Our Walks and Talks allow you to explore mostly private lands with experts and specialists knowledgeable in everything from forestry to mycology. WVLT Walks and Talks are free and open to adults, teenagers, children, and families. Directions and details sent after registration! Please RSVP for our Walks and Talks.



Walk and Talk on the Phyllis Noreen Conservation Easement in the Town of Rosendale. Saturday, April 16 (Rain date: Sunday, April 17). Leader: Naturalist, Lynn Bowdery along with a NYS DEC Forester. Learn about the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation forestry programs and this very special 95 acre conservation easement.

Walk and Talk at Phyllis Bridge Farm with the John Burroughs Natural History Society. Saturday, May 7. Leader: Naturalist, Lynn Bowdery. Amble this incredible 65 acre conservation easement and active Community Supported Agriculture Farm (CSA) and see the ramps and the wild leek, among other things.

Walk and Talk on the Smith Property: Box Turtle Day in the Town of Gardiner. Saturday, May 14 at 10 am. It's almost that time again! For the past two years WVLT has sponsored a one morning Eastern Box Turtle survey at the home of Anne and Ray Smith. The Smiths, with the aid of biologist Joe Bridges, have been monitoring the turtles on their 65 acres since 2005 in an effort to ascertain their range and understand their behavior. Forty-three individual turtles have been found. Last year, three of the turtles were outfitted with transmitters (by DEC permit) and followed until hibernation in late fall. You can learn more about this project at www.boxturtlesny.com and/or sign up with the Land Trust, 255-2761 (RSVP Please). If you see a box turtle and photo it, the Smiths will be happy to add it to their website!



Walk and Talk on the Rosetter Conservation Easement in the Town of Gardiner. Saturday, June 18. Leader: Environmental Biologist, Casey Tompkins. Learn about Wood Turtles, a species of special conservation concern in NYS. This 51 acre conservation easement is prime habitat for these beautiful turtles, and the property is also an active Community Supported Agriculture Farm (CSA) called Old Ford Farm.

Learn details and information about these and other WVLT Walks and Talks by visiting our website: www.WallkillValleyLT.org or call our office: (845)255-2761

NEW THIS SPRING

WVLT House Tour: Houses on the Land.

The WVLT initiates a series of historic (mostly) houses built on lands within our eight towns. The tours will stress the intimate connection between the natural and built environment, beginning this year with the Historic Kettleboro District. This little known corner of Gardiner, first settled in 1742, encompasses an old stop on the Wallkill Valley Railroad, three WVLT conservation easements, two CSA farms, and three buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Please visit our website or call our office for details.



Abraham LeFevre House, Kettleboro 1742

TRACK THE TRESTLE

A Campaign of the Open Space Institute and the Wallkill Valley Land Trust

The Open Space Institute (OSI) and Wallkill Valley Land Trust (WVLT) invite area residents, business owners and the outdoor enthusiasts who travel from far and wide for the unparalleled beauty of the Shawangunks to “Track the Trestle” as the two organizations officially kick off a fundraising campaign to help renovate and construct decking across the historic railroad trestle over Rondout Creek and Route 213 in Rosendale.

Together, OSI and the WVLT intend to raise support to help fund improvements that will make the 114-year-old trestle, once part of an active railroad that ferried Ulster County produce down to markets in New York City, safe again for public use. Preliminary estimates for the work are more than \$1.1 million, and together OSI and WVLT have secured \$450,000 thus far.

After it is restored, the trestle—boasting incredible views of the Shawangunk Ridge, the Binnewater Lakes region and the hamlet of Rosendale—will be a major highlight along the nearly 24-mile Wallkill Valley Rail Trail.

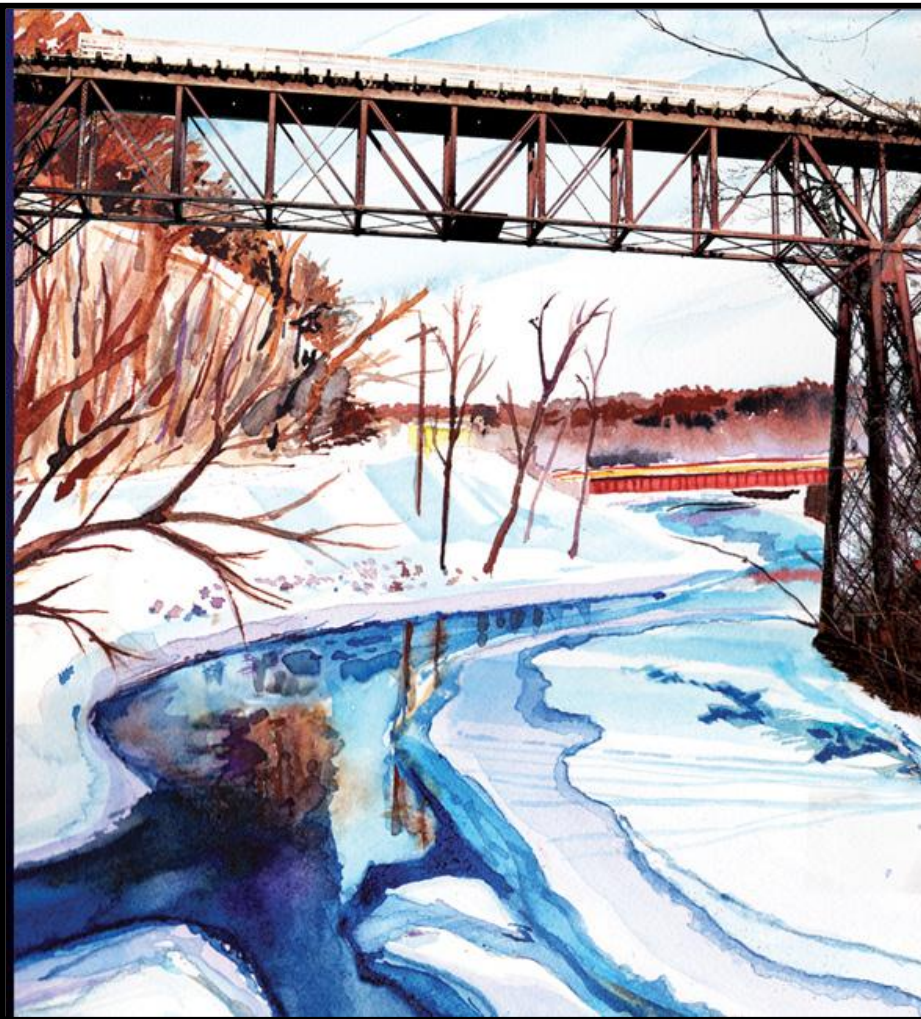
“The goal of this campaign is not just to raise money to repair the trestle,” said Kim Elliman, OSI’s CEO, “but on a deeper level, we want to give local residents, business people, hikers, bikers—anyone who appreciates the beauty of this rail trail—the opportunity to take ownership of its maintenance and upkeep.”

A series of events, ranging from local food tastings, presentations on the history of the railroad and the Shawangunk region, and performances for families and children, will be held throughout the year to raise awareness of and support

for the project. A new website www.trackthetrestle.org has also been launched, and will provide up-to-date information as the project progresses.

In August 2009, OSI and WVLT partnered to acquire the 11.5 miles of railroad bed that will ultimately expand the rail trail’s length to nearly 24 miles—through the towns of Gardiner, New Paltz, Rosendale and Ulster, and on to Kingston. The 940-foot-long trestle was closed in June of last year after engineers’ inspections confirmed that improved decking, railings and safety supports were needed to bring the bridge up to appropriate safety standards. While the trestle is being restored, OSI and WVLT are simultaneously working to restore sections of rail bed along the trail, with the intention of reopening the expanded and improved Wallkill Valley Rail Trail.

“This trail has the potential to be one of New York State’s finest, and if you think about some of the spectacular rail trails in this state, that’s really saying something,” said Christine DeBoer, WVLT’s Executive Director. “With the support we have already seen from the local community, the sky really is the limit.”



Visit the [Track the Trestle](http://www.trackthetrestle.org) website for updates, events, and to make a donation!

Artwork and design for Track the Trestle logo was donated by Margaret Ryon RYONDESIGN.com

Donors to the Walkkill Valley Land Trust

Our thanks to all of our donors. The list below includes donations received September 24, 2010 through March 10, 2011. We make every effort to keep our records accurate. If there are mistakes or omissions, please bring them to our attention so that we may both apologize and correct them.

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MAY 14 AND 15: HUDSON RIVER VALLEY GREENWAY'S HERITAGE WEEKEND

The Wallkill Valley Land Trust is collaborating with the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail Association to provide a self-guided walking tour of the New Paltz section of the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail. Stop by the offices of WVLT and the WVRTA at 64 Huguenot Street to pick one up. The self-guided walking tour map and guide highlights the historical significance points, including the coming of the rail road, the early days of New Paltz, the development of local industries, and much more. Stop by between 11 am and 5 pm each day.

SATURDAY, MAY 14, ULSTER COUNTY BIG DAY BIRD COUNT

A team of experienced birders will count bird species on properties protected by Wallkill Valley Land Trust conservation easements as part of this annual event. Support WVLT by pledging 25¢, 50¢ or \$1 per species found by your team on protected properties. All of the pledges will be donated to the WVLT Stewardship fund. Contact Lynn Bowdery, WVLT Land Steward and member of the John Burroughs Natural History Society at lynn@wallkillvalleylt.org with your pledge. Check the WVLT website for the list of species found and the total, multiply by your pledge, and send your donation to the WVLT, PO Box 208, New Paltz, NY 12561. Last year the best birders in Ulster County found 139 species. **Preserving land helps preserve bird diversity.**