



NEWS  
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SPRING  
1995

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photo by Rudy Klais

*Unimproved section of the Heritage Rail Trail a mile west of Cottekill RR station. Foreground: several piers which supported iron work of former trestle over Cottekill Creek. Background: abutment which supported one end of trestle. Onlooker: Ed Pastusak of High Falls.*

## The Heritage Corridor Rail Trail A Challenging Work in Progress

Our members, we know, are prone to hiking, biking, birdwatching and just generally rambling about the natural beauties of Ulster County. Herewith, for their edification, a status report on one of the area's most unusual — and certainly its skinniest — natural resources.

The formal name for the whole project is the Delaware & Hudson Canal Heritage Corridor Alliance, but "rail trail" serves informally because this 38-mile artery running from the Holiday Inn outside Kingston to Spring Glen at the Sullivan County line is based chiefly on unused trackbed of the defunct Ontario & Western Railroad.

The corridor also includes miles of paths running along the old canal, and the nonprofit alliance that is running the project has ambitious plans for subsidiary bike paths, canoe ramps on the Rondout Creek, parking facilities at access points and walking tours that would take in local historic sites.

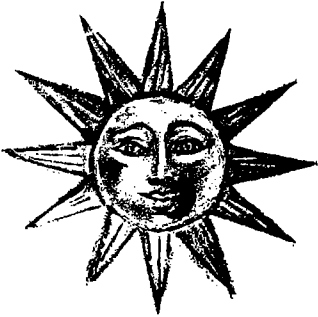
Much has been accomplished, but Sheldon Quimby, who has been acting as chairman of the alliance, says work might go on for another 10 years. The 3-mile section from Hurley to Marcott Road, he says, is "pretty well finished; it's finished and it's usable — but proceed at your own caution." South of Marcott Road, it's a "little sketchy," but some sections are accessible.

The corridor is designed for hiking, biking, horse-back riding, cross-country

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## New Directors and Advisors

The Conservancy has been busy building its Board of Directors and Advisory Board in recent months. The Directors are responsible for the operation of the organization on a day-to-day basis while the Advisors are called upon when necessary to add special assistance or contacts on an as-needed basis.



### Shurter & Steuding Join the Board

**Raecine Shurter**, a lifelong Samsonville resident, joined the Board of Directors in January. Raecine has served in the Town of Olive as Councilperson and, most recently, as a member of the Town Planning Board. Raecine's commitment to the intelligent use of the rural land in Olive is steadfast. She has already been involved with RELC for a number of years as chair of the monitoring committee which keeps an annual watch on the conservation easements we hold.

This spring we are pleased to gain representation on the RELC Board from the Town of Hurley with the addition of **Fred Steuding**. Just completing his Master's degree in Landscape Architecture at the University of Massachusetts, Fred has always had a deep interest in the natural world and our local area. He has taught a popular stone wall building course for UCCC at Opus 40. We look forward to working with him.

### Moving On

**Hilton Purvis**, a Board member for 3 years, has stepped back from serving on the Board to meet the demands of her young family. Hilton will remain active in RELC's fundraising.

**Roy Carlin** will be shifting to the Board of Advisors after being a Director. His Manhattan law practice kept him from attending as many meetings as he would like.

### While Stern Steps Off

**Ira Stern**, one of the founders of RELC and its Executive Director for a time, is stepping off the Board after serving for eight years. In his new job, as Director of

Watershed Planning and Community Affairs for the City of New York, he will work with the people and municipalities of the Catskill region to implement the city's watershed protection program. Ira will be establishing a new regional DEP office, consolidating the existing watershed protection programs into a coordinated regional effort. Besides the time demands of the new position, Ira feels that he should be independent of specific organizations relating to land use and conservation, but promises to remain ready to advise RELC whenever necessary.

### Advisors Added

**Bert Darrow** - Mr Darrow, whose family have long resided in the Kingston area, has served as regional Vice President of Trout Unlimited and is active in many civic organizations, among them, March of Dimes and Hospice of Ulster County.

**Jim Dunbar** walks his woods with pride and is quick to point out forest management at work. A Board member of the Catskill Forest Association, Jim lives on the Esopus Gorge, a unique geologic formation downstream from the Ashokan Reservoir.

**Barbara Lawrence** - Barbara's family are long-time residents of Lawrence Hill Valley in the Town of Rochester in the shadow of the Shawangunk Ridge. Mrs Lawrence is active in regional land use planning in New Jersey.

**Vivian Wadlin** - Mrs Wadlin has been active in civic affairs in the city of Kingston, most notably in her fundraising efforts for Benedictine Hospital.

I.S.

## A Landowner's Right to Choose Conservation

I remember the day well. I was sitting in my office, back when I was running the Jackson Hole Land Trust, thinking about how we should respond to an editorial in one of our local weekly newspapers suggesting that it was not quite right for our young land trust to be "tying up land," making decisions for future generations.

Then I made the mistake of looking out the window.

It was a stunning morning. The cloudless sky was that improbable deep blue that only thin mountain air produces. A slight breeze was stirring the leaves of a nearby willow. I knew the chill morning air would soon give way to the sage-scented warmth of high summer.

Yet here was I, indoors, when just minutes away were magnificent natural areas and scenic lands protected by our land trust. I said, "There must be an easement I can go monitor today!"

An hour later - phone call made, maps, records, and camera in hand - I headed out to the Fish Creek Ranch. After visiting with the owner, I began to walk the land, checking to see if all was in conformity with the easement restrictions.

I did not expect to find any problems - the owner was a dedicated conservationist - and I didn't. But as I crisscrossed the property, through meadows and along the creek banks, taking notes and photos, I thought a lot about the business of protecting land.

I especially thought about that editorial. The writer didn't actually mind open space; he even rather liked it. He just didn't think we should be protecting it in any permanent way. That took away choices. That tied up the resources. Future generations should have a chance to decide for themselves.

What should I tell him? How should I respond?

Then I thought about another hay meadow, where I had watched one magical evening at dusk as a thunderstorm rolled across the open land and lightning brought haystacks and mountains beyond into periodic strobe-like brilliance. That hay meadow was covered with houses now. Never again would I have the

choice of gazing across that unbroken sweep of land. Nor would my children, or anyone else's. That choice had been taken away - permanently.

And I thought about the subdivision proposed along the river, where bald eagles nested and great blue herons had their rookery. Would their choices be forever snatched away too?

I knew, then, what I would tell the editor. I would talk about the alternatives that development forecloses. I would remind him that development locks up land far more irretrievably than does protection - that land, once committed to development, will never again produce the natural and scenic values of open places. For who has ever seen a housing development torn down to restore open space?

And I would talk about landowners' rights, too - the right of a landowner to commit property to open space, just as important as the right to commit it to house lots or shopping centers or condominiums.

My thoughts returned to the land where I stood which, thanks to a committed landowner and the stewardship of the land trust, would look to my great-grandchildren as it looked to me that day. I had not the smallest doubt that they would thank us for making that choice on their behalf.

A couple of years later, when I was offered the chance to head the Land Trust Alliance, my decision was not difficult. I could see the efforts of our small land trust being multiplied over and over across the country, beginning to grow in to a vibrant grassroots conservation movement, unprecedented in its potential. Helping to build that movement was, to me, the most rewarding work I could imagine.

Today the journalists I encounter may be from anywhere in the country. Some ask, as one did last week, whether it is right to "permanently tie up the land, to take away choices from future generations."

The answer seems to be obvious. If they had stood where I have stood - or where land trust volunteers and staff have stood in a thousand communities across the continent - they would already know.

Preserving choices for future generations is precisely what land conservation is about.

Jean Hocker, President,  
Land Trust Alliance



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*Reprinted with permission from the Land Trust Alliance, an organization helping local land trusts save land and promoting private land conservation nationwide.*

*...Some 610 rail trails using more than 7,000 miles recently have sprung up in 45 states.*

skiing and other peregrinations that don't involve internal combustion engines.

There's nothing unique about the local rail trails. Nationwide, more than half of the 300,000 miles of track that existed early in the century fell into disuse as the railroads declined, and some 610 rail trails using more than 7,000 miles recently have sprung up in 45 states.

The departing railroads left long, level corridors with huge potential for recreational "linear" parks. But the local coalition found it had a mess to deal with. Old trackbeds were strewn with rotting ties and fallen trees. Underbrush had infiltrated. Some landowners along the way had appropriated space. Fifteen bridges, some of which had spanned impressive crevasses, were no more.

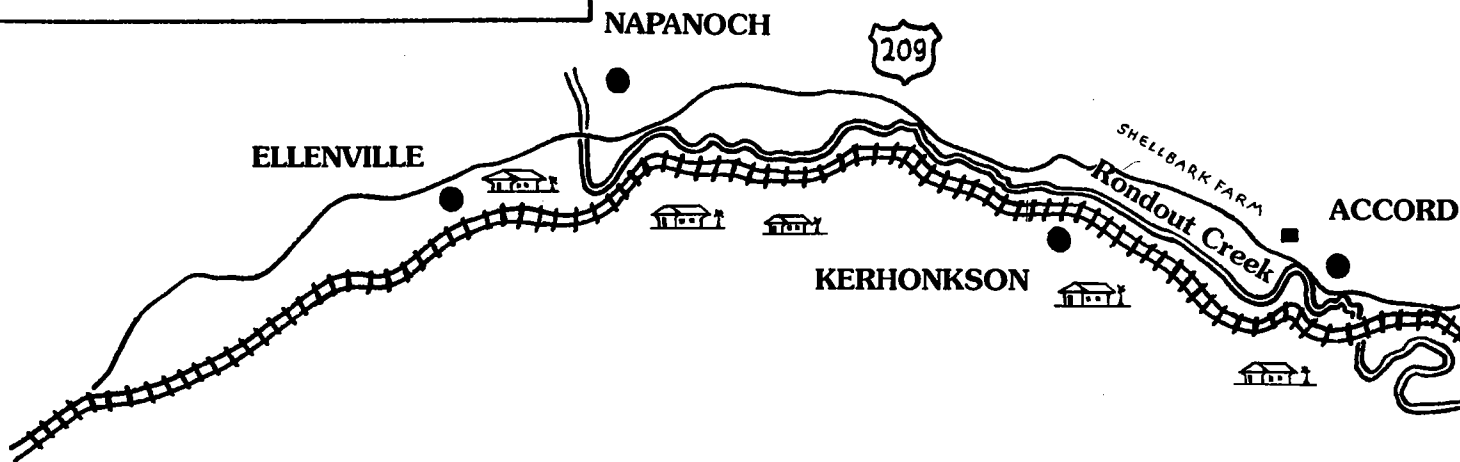
The project has put Sheldon Quimby through enough bureaucratic activity to fill several lifetimes. It has meant painstaking negotiations, mile by mile, to thread a southwest path through Ulster County. Just south of Kingston was a three-quarter-mile stretch on which an easement had to be obtained from Ulster Savings Bank. Then a piece owned by Central Hudson Gas & Electric. Then a mile and a half owned by the state Department of Transportation.

And so it went and goes. There were and are easements or permanent deeds to be obtained, recalcitrant residents to be persuaded that a nearby trail wouldn't sabotage their peace of mind.

On the other hand, the Alliance has had lots of help. Corporations and state bodies have been cooperative. Marbletown and Hurley got a \$69,000 grant made possible by the

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**The Heritage Corridor Rail Trail**



state's Environmental Quality Bond Act, and Marbletown is eligible for another \$50,000. The Kerhonkson region is expecting \$268,000 from the same source for a variety of projects.

Olive Clearwater, a Hurley resident and an Alliance board member, is donating a 10-acre parcel that will become an adjacent park. Local highway departments have provided men and equipment for grading, brush removal and other chores. An Eagle Scout has done yeoman voluntary work on one stretch.

Involuntary labor has been contributed too. Prisoners from Napanoch helped develop a bike path in that region. Elsewhere, miscreants, working off alternative sentences, have provided brute labor.

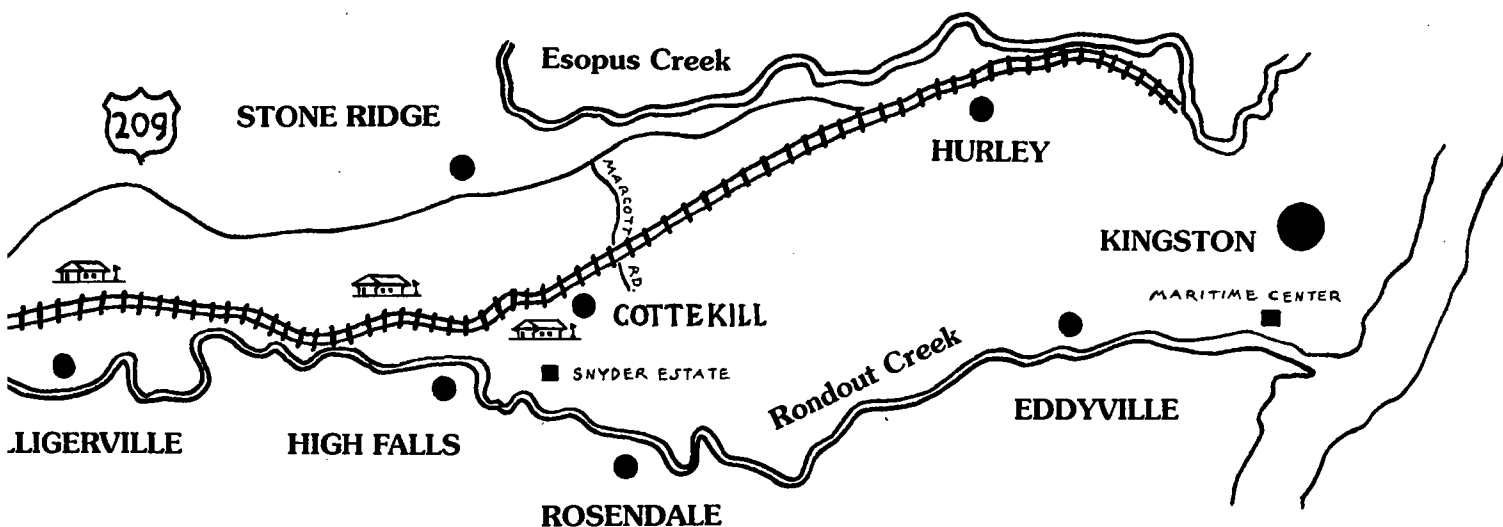
As the map shows, the corridor is much more than a single artery. There are plans to make it even more expansive — for instance, to link it to Ulster County Community College, perhaps with a bike path. The Alliance hopes to forge links with such local attractions as the Maritime Center in Rondout, Shellbark Farm in Accord and the Snyder Museum in Rosendale.

The Heritage Corridor isn't Ulster County's only rail trail. Largely finished, and in heavy use, is the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail, a 12.2-mile artery between Rosendale and Gardiner. It follows the bed of the old Wallkill Valley Railroad.

"It's really been well used; there are nice views of rivers and mountains," says Ann Guenther, a volunteer on the project (who proudly notes that 100 volunteers showed one day and totally redecked a bridge across the Wallkill River.) Tourists from afar show up with the trail on their itinerary, she says.

B. N.

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*Director Bowen Northrup (left) and former Director Ira Stern putting the finishing touches on the addition to the Conservancy's HQ in Alligerville.*

*photo by Rudy Klais*

## HQ Update

Work is proceeding at the Conservancy's Alligerville Headquarters - with a break during the freezing months. In November, Virginia Schoonmaker arranged for the building of a masonry chimney. The following month, Heritage Energy gifted the Conservancy with the installation of a propane heating system. In response to our Autumn newsletter, Bob Freeston of Canal Press granted our wish for a new front door, and Paul & Ellianne Odom gave us two interior doors. We thank them all.

E.B.

## Food For Thought

The Hudson River Valley, long known for its dairy products, fruits & vegetables, has been designated by the American Farmland Trust the 12th most threatened agricultural region in the US. It lost 229,000 acres to development from 1978 to 1987 - the last reporting period. Overall, the US loses 34 acres of farmland per hour to its expanding population.



## Harbingers of Spring

Our wildflower maven, Marge Hasbrouck, offers a guided tour of her blooming woods Sunday, May 14, at 1 pm. Call Marge at 687 9476 for directions and details.

Also, We have a dandy cassette tape for sale: "Wild Sounds of the North Woods." This is a 63-minute rendition of field recordings of frogs and toads, mammals and especially birds, 111 species in all, with a 32-page accompanying booklet for information about each. Price \$10, plus \$2 for shipping and handling, from RELC at PO Box 345, High Falls, NY, 12440. You will enjoy this! See tear-off on last page of this newsletter.

B.N..

## Thank You!

These generous individuals and businesses have made contributions to the Rondout-Esopus Land Conservancy since the last newsletter. Since then the Conservancy has gained 53 new members.

Scott Abrahamson  
 Larry Alpert  
 Ann Altshuler  
 Sita Anderson & Lindsay Hoyt  
 Kenneth Barricklo & Gioia Timpanelli  
 Ramona Bendell  
 Peter & Helena Bienstock  
 Elinor Boice  
 Mrs Gladys Bormann  
 Francis & Imogene Brewster  
 Stacy Brink  
 Neal Brown & Howard Schwartz  
 Christie & Kier Brunson  
 Rita & Frank Cassell  
 Helen Chase  
 Jenny Clark  
 Eppie Convel & Stan Breite  
 Alby Cook  
 Carol & Paul Cooper  
 Lila & Walter Croen  
 Mary Daron  
 Shirley & Bert Darrow  
 Mrs Kenneth Davenport  
 Jean Druffner  
 Mary Drummond  
 Junius & Louise Eddy  
 George & Helen Elias  
 Gertrude Fedde  
 Gary Finger  
 Stanley & Shirley Fischler  
 Dr & Mrs Herbert Gade  
 Gisela & David Gamper  
 Avis Gebert  
 Verna Gillis & Bradford Graves  
 Bill & Sibyl Golden  
 Jack & Caroline Graham

George Haag  
 James Hadley & Janis Wertz  
 Barbara Hallam  
 Mr & Mrs Clarence Hansen  
 Sarah & Harry Hansen  
 Marge & Dewitt Hasbrouck  
 Heritage Energy  
 Frannie Hertz  
 Genie & Renee Hertz  
 Eric Hertz & Troy Harrison  
 James Hoover  
 Bruce Hoveling  
 Donald Hughes  
 Sherell Jacobson  
 Cheryl Johnston  
 Mary Johnston & Melva Wade  
 Clark & Ann Jung  
 Jean & Rudolph Klaiss  
 Ted Klein  
 Michelle Kolb & Eric Rosenberg  
 John Korbelik  
 George Koury  
 Garry Kvistad & Diane Herrick  
 Bonnie Langston  
 Lois & Jack Langthorne  
 Robert Larsen & Barbara Rubin  
 Janis Leas  
 Dr Martha Lerner  
 Mary & Dan Maffia  
 Mohonk Preserve  
 Barbara Mullins  
 Abby Newton & David Hornung  
 David & Christina Nichols  
 Bowen Northrup  
 Frances Numrich

Paul & Ellianne Odom  
 Tamar Opler  
 Hazel Osborne  
 Dorothy & Frank Prochaska  
 Maureen Radl  
 Constance R Robinson  
 Irwin Rosenthal  
 Bentley Roton  
 Arnold Saks  
 Raymond Saroff  
 Ronald & Barbara Schade  
 Virginia Schoonmaker  
 Jack Schoonmaker Family  
 Esther F Schrank  
 Louise Schryver  
 Robert & Carol Schwabacher  
 Kevin & Linda Seekamp  
 William & Helen Seidler  
 Jeffrey & Hinako Shapiro  
 Herbert & Barbara Shultz  
 Raecine Shurter  
 Nancy Sickles  
 Zack Sklar & Sarah Plant  
 Reggie Smith & Bob Herbert  
 Joseph & Teresa Suarez  
 Gary Tinterow & James Joseph  
 Laura Travers & Gary Feldman  
 Jim & Sue Ulrich  
 Jan Van Meter & Ellen Sansalone  
 Norman & Dorothy Van Valkenburgh  
 Vidacable CATV Systems  
 Vivian Wadlin  
 Dietrich Werner  
 Margaret Warren  
 Mary & Philip Weinberg  
 Mrs Wilberforce



