



NEWS
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**SPRING &
SUMMER
2000**

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Three of the five grantors: from left: James R. Dunbar, Eva Dunbar Bailey, and Violet Dunbar Donaldson, brother and sisters of the late Alice W. Dunbar, on the front porch of the main house.

ALICE DUNBAR EASEMENT PROTECTS ESOPUS CLIFFS AND WATERFALL

A remote and pristine stretch of Ulster County's renowned Esopus Gorge has been set aside in perpetuity as the result of a generous decision on the part of the late Alice Dunbar of Lomontville and her five brothers and sisters. The forty acre parcel in the township of Marbletown, four miles north of the hamlet of Stone Ridge, includes high cliffs and a thirty foot waterfall.

The acreage adds significantly to the Conservancy's Esopus Gorge Project, which already protects four other parcels along the Gorge: the adjoining James and Marjorie Dunbar easement; the Eddy family easement, and the Cathy & Keith Abell easement two and a half miles upstream, also in Marbletown; and the Cathedral Gorge easement in the Town of Olive, donated to the Conservancy by the State University of New York at New Paltz.

The Alice Dunbar property has a distinguished and interesting history. Its stone house dates from 1832, replacing an earlier structure (destroyed by fire) said to have been built in 1716. The place was acquired in 1947 by the late Henry F. Dunbar, a botanist, who with Mary Domville of Woodstock co-authored *The Flora of Ulster County*, published in 1970. Alice, daughter of Henry Dunbar, had intended to draw up an easement contract but had not completed the work before her sudden death in 1996. The easement is a gift to the future — in her memory — from her sisters and brothers: Eva Dunbar Bailey, Violet Dunbar Donaldson, Susanne Dunbar Barrymore, Edward Dunbar, and James Dunbar.

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CONTENTO EASEMENT SHAWANGUNK LEDGES AND CATSKILL VIEWS

A forty-acre conservation easement near the hamlet of Accord in the Town of Rochester has been donated to the RELC by Isobel Contento of New York City. The property lies on the lower, north-facing slope of the Shawangunk Ridge and includes several acres of open fields, affording a skyline view of the eastern Catskills.

The distinctive Shawangunk environment — a mixture of oak and pitch pine woodland, exposed ledges, and shrubby heath — is well represented on the Contento easement. Recognized by The Nature Conservancy as one of the “last great places” in North America, the Shawangunk range is largely protected along the ridgetop, but important sections of the lower and middle slopes remain vulnerable to real estate development. With its significant habitat and rare plant species, the Contento property will help to preserve the integrity of the Shawangunks.

The property also includes a quarter-mile stretch of the Mill Kill, a typical Shawangunk stream, flowing over broad sandstone ledges under a closed canopy of old-growth hemlocks and hardwoods.

Formerly a working farm, the cleared acreage — which amounts to about a third of the entire tract — is being maintained as a haying field. The picturesque farmhouse, with its cluster of old-style outbuildings, serves as a summer and weekend residence.

Thank you, Isobel, for your decision to protect a special open place.

JB

FOR SALE

Property owned by the Rondout-Esopus Land Conservancy. Nicely wooded 2.3 acres with house site overlooking Mill Kill Creek in Raycliff Estates. Rondout Valley School District, Marletown Elementary School. Listed price: \$32,500 negotiable. Please call Barbara Hallam at Flemming Realty (914) 687-4451



A WOMAN WITH A MISSION

To the Conservancy, Margaret Warren's name is another word for "support". Ever since, some 10 years ago, she discovered the Conservancy's presence in the Rondout Esopus Valleys, she has been there for us. And we for her.

Her intention, her focus, her support never ends.

Nothing stops Margaret. When fellow Board member Helen Chase and I first visited her in the early 90's, she invited us to climb her mountainside with her and Alvin. (Alvin is her greyhound companion, She rescued him after his days at the track were over).

As we climbed, we learned that Margaret's mountainside was deep within her. She knew its seasons, its paths, its birds, even its bears, its human neighbors, its watershed, those who hunted on it, those who have tried to capture its winds, those who have planted trees on it.... From its top she pointed out the view to Skytop and the Shawangunk Ridge and even to the Hudson Highlands.

During the course of that first visit Margaret explored with us the possibility of preserving all 70+ acres as open space in perpetuity. Thereafter, whenever the Conservancy sponsored a garden party, a dinner, a walk on easement properties, Margaret was there. Always cheerful, always positive and always focused on our mission, which had become her mission too.

Then a few years later at one such event she came over to me with a sly smile on her face and handed me a piece of paper. It was her will, she said, "Just so you'll have a copy". It had been drawn up by a lawyer whom the Conservancy recognizes as an expert in these matters.

Margaret's intention is to give the Conservancy her beloved mountainside. Understandably, the Conservancy will preserve it for her as well as provide access for future generations through it to the neighboring New York State Forest Preserve. With her usual thoroughness, Margaret has already had the access trail blazed.

I asked Margaret to go deep within herself and tell us why she wanted to do this. She said that she'd known of The Nature Conservancy and realized they were primarily interested in preserving huge tracts of land. She thought that if local conservancies were interested in preserving smaller properties like hers, together smaller property owners could preserve significant areas of open space.

Editor's Postscript: For this Conservancy, Margaret has done a rare thing. Though other larger non profits are often the recipients of such generosity only one other gift has ever been given to the RELC. Generally, landowners have retained all rights to their lands except the right to develop those sections which the owners chose to place under conservation easement.



E.B.





**We need
more
workers!**

Positions are open for Board Members and Advisors. Specific responsibilities include: Newsletter coordinator, Web Site development, Recording secretary for board minutes, Grant writer, Headquarters maintenance, Ground maintenance, and Membership assistance. If you are interested in becoming more involved with RELC's projects please contact Racine Shurter at 657-6423.



RONDOUT - ESOPUS LAND CONSERVANCY HAS BANNER YEAR PRESERVING LAND

This has been a very successful year for the RELC having acquired 576 acres in 1999. This is the most acres accepted in a one-year period since the Rondout-Esopus Land Conservancy was founded in 1987 to protect land throughout Ulster County. RELC protects twenty-nine properties consisting of over 2,100 acres located in Marbletown, Rosendale, Rochester, Olive and Saugerties.

Twenty-two of the Conservancy's properties border the Rondout or Esopus Creeks or one of their many feeder streams such as the Sanderskill, Mill Kill, Rochester Creek, Kripplebush Kill, Coxing Kill and Stony Creek. Three properties border the Pacama Vly/Vly Brook in Marbletown. Important farmland, uplands and view sheds are also protected throughout Ulster County.

Lands under easement come in many shapes and sizes. The largest easement of 426 acres is at Williams Lake Resort in Rosendale and the smallest is 1.2 acres on the Bushkill Creek in Olive. Statistically, 16 properties are under 50 acres, 8 of which are under 20 acres and five properties are over 100 acres.

As diversified as the land is, so are the easements. The Conservancy works with each landowner to reach a mutually satisfactory agreement for protecting the property while still respecting the owners rights to use their land. Each easement is crafted to respect the owners needs now and in the future and the Conservancy's need to protect. Reasons for protection are also varied. Landowners appreciate and value the lands esthetic and scenic worth while other properties hold historic and familial significance. Much of the land borders water and wetlands, including the streams above, and the Third and Fourth Binnewater Lakes in Rosendale. Several properties protect endangered species and their habitats. All the land we protect is special for several reasons.

No property is too small or too large to be important and worth saving. RELC can help you explore the possibility of protecting your land for the future. Please call Laura Travers at (914) 657-8303.

LT

NEW BOARD DIRECTORS

The RELC is pleased to announce two new Board Directors: Lindsay "Jody" Hoyt, Jr. and Arthur Markle.

Jody has lived his entire life in the Shandaken-Olive area, growing up on the Esopus Creek at Mount Pleasant. A graduate of SUNY Maritime College at Ft Schuyler, he sailed as an officer in the merchant marine for 29 years, the last ten as captain of deep sea oil tankers. Since early childhood he has always had a deep interest in the ecology of the area. Jody is 53 years old, retired, and is an active member of the Ashokan-Pepacton Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

Art comes from a long line of Dutch descendants that were the first settlers of what is today Accord. He has supported the Conservancy since 1990 when he helped with the renovation of the headquarters. Art lives in Alligerville and still watches over the headquarters, monitors properties, does general carpentry and is always ready and willing to help.



What are wetlands and why are they worth protecting?

Wetlands are lands that are flooded or saturated at or near the ground surface for a prolonged period of time during the year. Excess water can come from rainfall, snowmelt, river overflow, springs and other groundwater discharges. Over time, these wet areas develop soils and exhibit vegetation that is especially adapted to tolerate wet conditions. Freshwater wetlands in our region include headwater seeps, wet meadows, swamps, bogs and seasonally flooded riparian zones and floodplains. These unique areas are worthy of protection regardless of size.

Wetlands improve and protect water quality by filtering out nutrients, wastes and sediments from surface water before it seeps into the ground to become the groundwater that feeds your well. They act as natural sponges that absorb and slowly release flood waters. In agricultural areas, wetlands help reduce the likelihood of flood damage to crops.

Wetlands provide critical habitat for various animal and plant species. An estimated 43 percent of the nations threatened and endangered species rely directly or indirectly on wetlands for their survival. Almost all important recreational fishes, including bass, spawn in the aquatic portions of wetlands. Wetlands also provide open space for aesthetics, recreation, outdoor education, and scientific research.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation primarily regulates activities in freshwater wetlands that are 12.4 acres or larger and include a 100 foot buffer area.

Do you have a wetland that needs protecting? RELC can help you protect smaller wetlands on your property (or provide additional protection for a DEC mapped wetland) through a conservation easement while you retain the right to use the land for certain purposes like recreation, farming or forestry.

A smaller wetland must first receive a designation of Unusual Local importance to be included on an official NYSDEC Freshwater Wetlands Map.

LT



A view over the Pacama Vly from a Conservancy easement.

(Continued from page 1)



Looking north west across the Esopus, a forested waterfall normally shoots from the cliff at the center of this picture.

During the middle years of the twentieth century the property was also the summer and weekend home of Alice Dunbar's aunt, the philosopher Susanne K. Langer, author of "Philosophy in a New Key", "Introduction to Symbolic Logic, Feeling and Form", and "Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling". Langer, one of the major figures in American philosophy is memorialized by a simple gravestone beside the cottage called Chippendale, which she occupied. The cottage is just a stone's throw from the house of 1832, which was Alice Dunbar's home in her later years. Dunbar herself was a sculptor, whose works have been donated by her heirs to the Pomfret School, Pomfret, Connecticut, where she worked for thirty years.

Of outstanding scenic beauty, the Alice Dunbar property is also the site of rare plant species recognized by the New York Natural Heritage Program. Species ordinarily at home much farther north are able to survive on the high, moist cliff walls, which preserve a cold climate environment more typical of Canada than of New York State. Except for three or four acres of old fields, close to the main house, the property is covered in hemlock- northern hardwood forest and is striking at first sight for its impressive groves of old hemlocks. The waterfall shoots from the summit of a cliff on the west side of the Gorge, facing the cottage once occupied by Langer.

By the terms of the easement contract the forest, the cliffs, and the old fields, as well as the property's other natural features, will be protected. The Conservancy thanks all of the Dunbar family for their forethought towards the future.

JB

Are you considering a Conservation Easement?

If so, please know that the Conservancy can provide you with initial legal advice free.

