



## News



Fall/Winter 2001

### *INSIDE:*

- Hertz Easement In Accord
- Millstones
- Outreach Efforts
- Planned Giving
- Grist Mill Fundraiser

## Hertz Easement In Accord

RELC's newest easement, off Stony Road in Accord, came as the result of the owner, Eric Hertz placing easements on a 120 acre and a 125 acre parcel before they were sold. Eric, an adventure guide and Accord resident bought the property with two relatives ten years ago in order to protect it from becoming a housing development. While on a trip to Patagonia, Chile, he sold one of the properties to a client by its description alone. The two parcels, side by side, protect a diversified landscape that increases in elevation thru mountain laurel up to heath (lowbush blueberries) and chestnut oak and finally to a pitch-pine oak heath with exposed slabrock. The northern Shawangunk range, in which this easement lies, is a sandstone/quartzite/conglomerate district. There is evidence of millstone quarrying, an industry that took place in the Shawangunks, that utilized this special type of stone. "A lot of places have views of the Catskills; but not through the variety of pitch pines you have here," says Hertz. The unusual rock formations tell the story of glaciers that once passed over the site. "The rock is so hard the erosion hasn't even disturbed the marks," he notes. Dan Davis, a local geologist, has been researching the glacial geology of the Northern Shawangunk Mountains for the past three years. Part of his study examines the evidence of the passage of ice across the extensive "slablands" found on the Shawangunk Ridge. The easement includes prime examples of the glacially polished and striated bedrock slabs that Dan investigates to determine ice flow directions as well as examining the interaction of ice sheets with the landscape. The last ice sheet that scoured the ridge flowed generally to the southwest and melted back approximately 15,000 years ago leaving the scratches in the bedrock that ice-encased rock fragments made as they were dragged across the surface.

Continues on page 2



People need places to live and work. Recognizing this, land trusts try to manage development rather than prevent it outright. There is an assumption that land trusts seek to block growth and development through conservation easements, and because of that, many people are wary of us. This is not the case. We want to work with landowners, developers, municipalities and planners to find ways to protect open space, viewsheds and the environment and have housing and economic growth too.

Photo, left to right: Michelle Hertz, Renee Hertz, Eric Hertz, Troy Harrison, Cade Harrison-Hertz, Teal Harrison-Hertz and Rock.

The Nature Conservancy has designated the Shawangunk Ridge one of the "last great places in America" in need of protection because of the fragility, beauty and age of the pitch-pine forests there. Pitch pines are a medium-sized pine distinguished by their high resin content. The gnarled and stunted trees have been whipped by the wind into shapes resembling large bonsai. Some of the trees are believed to be 500 years old. The property slopes down through a hemlock-northern hardwood forest to the Sanderskill Creek, a pristine forest brook. A remarkable feature of the tract is that no exotic, i.e. non-native plants have been observed on the easement except at the roadside. Looking north, wonderful views of the Catskills can be seen, which means that someone looking south from as far away as High Point Mountain in Olive will see this unspoiled landscape forever. (High Point Mountain on page 1, center)

The easement provides for building on a small percentage of the properties in a "building envelope" at the lower elevations. Protecting the property with a building envelope is a winning combination all around for the seller who wanted to sell the property and yet keep it protected, for the new owners who wanted the option to build and for the Conservancy who wanted to protect sensitive areas of the property and hold an easement to a very special and historic open place.

A conservation easement, a voluntary agreement to preserve land in perpetuity, is filed with the deed. It spells out a landowner's commitment to protect the existing character of a property. A flexible document, it is written to protect land in accordance with the landowner's wishes. The easement accompanies the deed and remains in effect despite repeated sales of the parcel. Conservation easements do not require an owner to grant public access to the property. Property owners can donate conservation easement on their land and still develop it if the integrity of the easement is not compromised. If you are considering selling open space and would like to leave a legacy of protecting it, please call us at (845) 687-7553 or Laura Travers at (845) 657-8303.





## *Easements Often Protect Special Historical Features—Millstones*

All our easements protect open space values and the riches of flora and fauna. This easement is also rich in a past historical industry and bares witness to a time, not so long ago, when horsepower literally meant horse power. Millstone quarrying was an industry that was specific to the Shawangunk Ridge. Flour milling was necessary to the development of a "civilized society" so the Colonists brought with them buhr stones that were cut and pieced together like a puzzle and held by a metal band to form a complete millstone. The best buhr stones came from France and millstones were made by this process until the Revolutionary War. When the British blockaded our ports and ships were prevented from delivering buhr stone, an expedition ventured up the Hudson to look for a replacement. The exposed rock of the Shawangunk Ridge was discovered. Shawangunk Conglomerate, a sedimentary rock, is comprised of 99% quartz and was found to be strong, durable and workable. Soon local farmers were working in teams of three. There was a driller who held the drill to make a hole 4-6 inches deep every 6 inches for the black powder and set a feather (wedge). Another person wielded the sledge hammer to drive the drill and a blacksmith sharpened the drill. The stone was then finished and grooves were chiseled to allow the milled flour to flow. Two stones were set 1/16 of an inch apart to complete this part of the apparatus.

The quarrying was not particularly organized with some farmers working alone and some farmers working collectively. It took several weeks to craft a millstone. Unfortunately, one false hit or blast ruined a stone and they would have to start over leaving great amounts of debris. Upon completion, the millstone was taken by mule and cart down to the D & H Canal which ran from High Falls to Ellenville to be sold or bartered, then shipped on the Canal to distant destinations along the East Coast. Consequently, communities sprang up along the Canal partially due to this industry. An 18 inch stone would sell for \$3 and a 4 foot stone would sell for \$50. Millstones were made in several sizes with a particular size and shape center hole depending on the intended use. Stones were used to mill products for ladies cosmetics, limestone for cement, linseed oil, grains and corn. Guilden's Mustard specifically ordered stones from the Ridge to mill their mustard seeds. Millstone production peaked between 1870 and 1890 and by the early 1900's the stones were being replaced by metal rollers. If you would like to know more about millstones, log on to "The Society for the Preservation of Old Mills". (A special thank you to Steve Hirsch for his dedication to local history and his willingness to impart this interesting information) L.T.

## Red Pine at Mohonk

A root reaching for least purchase  
snakes across stone as it searches  
for sustenance among the scree. A cliff  
at left lifts eyes from tree

root to sky along lines as sharp  
as the escarpment ahead. dark  
shadows trace a crevice breaking the line  
of light. Below, the lake

flashes through branches of hemlock  
and pine. And here, here on the rock  
a root mocks all reason. thick as an arm,  
it arches through air, picks

a sinewed path across cold stone  
to an anchorage in some lone  
pocket of soil yards from the tree it keeps.  
Deep in this root may be

more than man can ever imagine. What  
wild whim drew the once thin,  
frail rootlet on such a crazed course  
as this? How did it know the source

of its need? Rich brown, polished by footfalls,  
finding impoverished  
soil its home, this root reaches out  
with its muscled mass through rain, drought,

sear-heat and cold to carry sustenance  
back so far, to marry  
cliff and stone to a lone red pine  
that towers above where sun shines.

Matthew J. Spireng  
Published in *The Devil's Millbopper*,  
University of South Carolina at Aiken



## Introducing Our New Board Members

**John Adams** first learned of the Rondout Esopus Land Conservancy when he stopped to visit a stand personed by Ira Stern at a fair in High Falls in the late 1980s. John was looking for a site for his greenhouse and organic garden which he had been cultivating since 1984. He found and purchased twenty acres in Port Ben on the D&H Canal towpath where he continues to grow mesclun salad, greenhouse tomatoes and now "microgreen" salad, all organically. He and his wife, Christy, live in an old house they have completely renovated.

In recent years, John has organized neighboring farmers and landowners into a 200+acre farmland cluster and they have applied to the NYS Ag and Markets Farmland Preservation Program, which if awarded, funds 75% of the purchase price of development rights of working farms. Only a few farms have received funding out of the score that have applied through Ulster County. John supports the efforts to "join the mountains" by preserving lands in the Catskill Shawangunk Corridor. He and his neighbors have adopted Port Ben Road and plan to have their first litter cleanup soon.

John was instrumental in starting the Ellenville Farmers' Market and sells his produce there on Saturdays in the summer. He is also an organizer of the Annual Wild Wawarsing Blueberry and Huckleberry Festival in August. The Conservancy joins John in all his protection and farming efforts. We hope you will too. If you have questions, or support for John's efforts, call him at (845) 647-5626.

**Jan Leas** was born in Montana and grew up in Puerto Rico. She has also lived in Chile and Japan. Ulster County has been her home since 1966. She has three children, two of whom live nearby, and six wonderful grandchildren. In addition to RELC, her activities include a garden club, and educational philanthropic organization, teaching English through the Ulster Literacy Association, and translating, too. She enjoys tennis, bicycling, concert music, horses and dogs, travel and an addiction to FreeCell. "We live in a singularly beautiful area. We need not and should not always wait on the government processes to protect open space or control unthinking development. Granting conservation easements is a perfectly viable solution for private individuals to provide for the land they care for, while keeping the lands in private hands and on the tax rolls. I am pleased to join the RELC in this important work."

*P.S. Jan recently placed a conservation easement on her "special open place" in Marbletown.*

Jody Hoyt and Laura Travers at the Rondout Shad Fest with the Conservancy's new traveling display.



## RELC's Outreach Efforts

The Conservancy believes reaching out and educating the public on the benefits of conservation easements is a very important part of our mission. We hope that eventually everyone in Ulster County will have heard or seen our name and ideally appreciate what we are trying to accomplish. Toward this goal, we have developed a portable tabletop display with complementary written handout materials. To date we have attended the Rondout Shad Fest, the Rondout Valley Middle School Career Fair, the Wawarsing Blueberry Festival and our recent fundraiser. If you would like the Conservancy to present our display or speak to your group, please call us. RELC thanks Rick Umble at the Ulster County Information Services for our easement map, and Chris Howard at Rayne Design in West Hurley for his help in designing and completing such a beautiful presentation.

## PLANNED GIVING—From Here To Perpetuity

It's a promise that almost no other charitable organization makes: "If you will make this contribution (of a conservation easement), we promise to perform this service (protect your land) in perpetuity. Not 50 years, not 200 years, but forever." Definitions of "in perpetuity" may vary. In Vermont, it's until the next glacier rumbles through and deposits the land and development rights in Long Island Sound. In Florida, it may be when the polar ice caps melt. Either way, in the context of human existence, perpetuity is a very long time.

If we are going to keep this promise, we must ensure that the Conservancy will last in perpetuity. To do this, we must continue to build our endowment and monitoring funds. We can do this by planned giving. We may not be able to match the sophistication of development offices for major universities and other large charitable organizations; but we do have one significant

advantage: If a planned gift is funded with real estate that has conservation value, the Conservancy can not only give the donor all of the financial benefits promised by any other charity, but it can also assure the donor that the land will be protected in perpetuity. Donors should not expect (although they sometimes do) that the land will be protected if it is given to a university, church or hospital. Land protection is not their business. It is our business.

***• How can I give a gift to the Conservancy and how will it benefit me?***

Donations to the Conservancy now may benefit you through a Federal and State Tax deduction on your income tax, a local property tax reduction, and later through reduced estate taxes for your heirs.

Continues on page 6



*Your will can provide a variety of options in protecting your land or donating funds to help us fulfill our mission. Often helping the Conservancy can help you now, and later by providing cash or tax benefits.*

Below are the suggested texts for making different kinds of donations to the Conservancy through your will.

*For gifts of real estate write:*

"To the Rondout Esopus Land Conservancy, Incorporated, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, incorporated under the laws of the State of New York in 1987, having its principal address P.O. Box 345, High Falls, New York 12440, I hereby give and devise my real property at (street address) to Rondout Esopus Land Conservancy, Incorporated, of High Falls, New York." (Contact the Conservancy to make sure that donating this gift will benefit us.)

*(The Conservancy's policy is, if appropriate, to place a conservation easement on the property and sell the property.)*

*For cash gifts:*

"I give and bequeath \$\_\_\_\_\_ to Rondout Esopus Land Conservancy, Inc. of High Falls, New York."

*For gifts of securities:*

"I give and bequeath \_\_\_\_\_ (number of shares) of (name) common stock to Rondout Esopus Land Conservancy, Inc. of High Falls, New York."

*(The Conservancy's policy would be to liquidate the mutual funds, stocks or bonds.)*

*For asset property such as paintings, other artwork, antiques, etc.:*

"I give and bequeath (description or name of item/s) to Rondout Esopus Land Conservancy, Inc. of High Falls, New York."

*(The Conservancy's policy would be to sell the piece/s at the highest price possible.)*

*Donating a remainder interest in land:*

You can donate the property during your lifetime, but reserve the right for yourself or any other named persons to continue to live on and use the property (called a "reserved life estate"). When you or those you've specified die or release their life interests, the Conservancy will have full title and control over the property. An easement, if appropriate, would be placed on the property and then sold.

*Bargain sale:*

If you need to realize some immediate income from your land, yet would like the property to go to the Conservancy, a bargain sale might be the answer. In a bargain sale, you sell the land to the Conservancy for less than its fair market value. This not only makes it more affordable for the Conservancy, but offers several benefits to you: it provides cash, avoids some capital gains tax and entitles you to a charitable income tax deduction based on the difference between the land's fair market value and its sale price.

\* As with any donation, please seek professional legal and accounting advice before making your decision.

