



# Ripples

A Publication for Members and Friends  
Killbuck Watershed Land Trust

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## Land donors now have a better incentive

Despite the fact that recent sessions of the U.S. Congress have been known for a lack of legislation, the 114th Congress managed to pass a bill that brings good news for land trusts like Killbuck Watershed Land Trust and those landowners wishing to donate conservation easements.

With the latest budget bill, which was signed into law by President Barack Obama on Dec. 18, 2015, the enhanced tax incentive for donations of conservation easements was made permanent for all donations made on or after Jan. 1, 2015.

The incentive raises the deduction a donor can take for donating a conservation easement from 30 percent of his or her income in any year to 50 percent, allows qualifying farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100 percent of

their income, and extends the carry-forward period for a donor to take tax deductions for a voluntary conservation agreement from five to 15 years.

Now that the incentive is permanent, conservation easements should appear much more financially appealing to landowners. If you are a landowner wishing to protect your land for the future, potentially being able to completely offset all your federal income tax for up to 15 years certainly sweetens the deal.

For more information, including how the incentive may apply specifically to a donation you have already made or would like to make, contact a KWLTL board member or your personal accountant.

*Robb Stutzman, KWLTL Trustee*

## Donated farm enables new research

Among the 50 easements held by Killbuck Watershed Land Trust, the protection afforded to the Quinby/Mellinger Farm west of Wooster probably boasts the largest complement of groups working together.

Owned for five generations by the Mellinger family, the farm was donated to the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in 2009 by Patricia Miller Quinby. Her dream was that the land remain a farm forever.

She hoped that with the permanent protection of an agricultural easement and the expertise of the OARDC, future generations could use



the farm for research and education.

Progress toward that goal will continue soon as staff and students from The Ohio State University Agricultural Technical Institute and The College of Wooster begin using the farm as a living laboratory.

At 334 acres, the farm is bigger than the average Wayne County farm of about

90 acres. It is suited well for research in sustainable agriculture through a three-year project led by Dr. Casey Hoy, OARDC professor and Kellogg Endowed Chair in Agricultural Ecosystems Management.

Years ago a typical small farm included not just field crops like corn and hay but also poultry, sheep, dairy cows, a large vegetable garden, an apple orchard and perhaps other cash-producing features like a maple sugar stand. Farmers were able to support their families through such diversity.

“Pasture poultry” and  
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*Promoting, protecting and preserving our natural heritage*

## Looking up? So did Englishman Luke Howard

Dear Friends,

Once upon a time, in 1802 as a matter of fact, thirty-year-old Englishman Luke Howard named the clouds. He was a pharmacist by profession with a great interest in the natural world.

Howard was a member of a group of amateur and professional scientists, known then as “natural philosophers,” who called themselves the Askesians (searchers of knowledge). Each member was charged with reading a scientific paper to the others and to anyone else who happened to enjoy the “theatre of discussion.” People from all walks of life came to the appointed meeting site hoping to be entertained or

amazed by the subject of discussion.

The study of clouds is called nephology and had caught the imagination and serious study of Luke Howard. When his turn came to address his colleagues with an hour-long paper titled “On the Modification of Clouds,” Howard certainly amazed his audience. His work became the topic of conversation around the town and eventually around the world. Before 1800, observers spoke of clouds only as “essences” floating in the sky. Clouds had no names and were little understood but they appeared in paintings and poetry as dreamlike substances.

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## Sustainability is focus for Mellinger farm project

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vegetables are among the hands-on experiments ATI students will undertake while College of Wooster students will survey diversified farmers to gather information that will improve economic decision-making. Faculty and OARDC graduate students will use the research to develop a decision-making framework for the transition from

specialized commodity production systems like corn to diversified crop and livestock production.

College of Wooster students will be led by KWLTL Board member Matt Mariola, who is assistant professor of the Environmental Studies Program. The Mellinger Research Farm project will contribute to enhancing access to markets, increasing supply into local

and regional food systems, and incorporating changes in input costs, capital needs and markets for diversifying small and medium-sized farms.

Hoy describes the three-year project as “the kind that gets people excited: integrated ... in a very diverse form.”

No doubt Pat Quinby would be excited to see her farm’s new use.

**Melody L. Snure, Ripples Editor**

In 1816 Benedict Mellinger, son of German immigrant Melchor Mellinger, obtained a wooded tract of land in Plain Township, Wayne County, from the government. The family gradually cleared the timber to establish a flax and wool farm like one they had operated in Columbiana County before moving west. Son Christian, born in 1818, would live on the Plain Township farm all his life. Benedict gave parts of the land grant property to Christian’s three older brothers to farm.

Christian’s son William remained to farm the land as did William’s son Harvey, who married Grace Miller of nearby Reedsburg. Harvey bought back parts of the original farm that had been passed to family members and, with Grace, worked the land until his death in 1941. Grace died five years later, leaving the farm to her nieces Patricia Miller Quinby and Virginia Miller Reed, daughters of Grace’s brother Emerson Miller of Wooster.

The nieces, “city girls” who had grown up in Wooster, had fond memories of visiting their aunt and uncle on the farm several miles west of town. When Patricia and Virginia inherited the farm as young women, neither had an interest in living there though they shared a deep appreciation for

the generations of their family who had worked the land.

During the nieces’ lifetimes the land remained in active production by tenants living in four houses on the property and by neighboring farmers. Both women married, with Patricia and her husband Richard Quinby living with their

two sons near Columbus and Virginia, whose husband was Parker Reed, enjoying a successful government career in Washington, D.C. Over time the Plain Township family farm evolved from sheep and flax to a dairy and field crop operation.

The sisters had agreed before Virginia’s death in 2001 that the property should be passed on to a non-profit organization for continued use as a farm. In 2002 Patricia entered into active discussion with Steve Slack, then director of the OARDC, and key staff including Dr. Casey Hoy and Dr. Ken Scaife. The farm, protected by a permanent easement monitored by KWLTL, became part of the OARDC in 2009 through the Ohio Agricultural Easement Donation Program.

Quinby enjoyed visiting the farm. This photo (courtesy of Dr. Ken Scaife, OARDC assistant to the director for Field Operations) was taken during her last visit in the fall of 2014, two months before her death that December.



# Friends didn't keep the faith

Recently I came across a book published in 1950 by Russell and Kate Lord titled "Forever The Land." The Lords were the editors of *The Land*, the quarterly magazine of the organization Friends of the Land.

The book is a collection of articles, essays, and poetry published in *The Land*. I discovered many pleasant surprises and viewpoints in this literature of the mid-twentieth century that closely parallels the thinking of many of us today.

Although the organizational meeting to create Friends of the Land was held in Washington, D.C., with 60 men and women present, including artists, its central office was moved to Columbus, Ohio in 1941. Many of the founders, including government workers, recognized that *The Land*, the society's quarterly publication, "... should be written from the ground up and not from Washington down."

I think another reason for the move to the heartland was to be closer to Malabar Farm because early on Louis Bromfield was a driving force in the organization and a frequent contributor to *The Land*.

Author and editor Russell Lord and his wife Kate, an illustrator, published *The Land*. Its purpose was devoted "to the conservation of soil, rain, and man."

From its beginning the magazine included essays not only from farmers and people close to the land, but by America's best-known writers; Aldo Leopold, Paul Sears, Rachel Carson, Wallace Stegner, Liberty Hyde Bailey, Gifford Pinchot, E. B. White, and of course Louis Bromfield.

One of Bromfield's essays in the collection, *More About Grass*, is a gem. It was written in 1948 and praises



*clover on poor land and one-half pound on good land ..."*

Bromfield continued: "On our own farm beginning next year (1949) we shall grow no more corn. Principally for this reason: Although our corn yields are twice the average yield of Illinois and Iowa, the great corn states - we make more money off an acre of good grass than we make off an acre of corn ..."

With Bromfield's and the heartland's enthusiasm for

the virtues of grass farming:

*"We started systematic grass farming on our farm, Malabar, nine years ago - and the idea was so new and strange then in this part of the country that we were more or less pioneers. Now grass farming is spreading like wildfire both West and South and, even more remarkably, in the great Midland of our country, at the very heart of the Corn Belt ..."*

*"... An acre of brome grass will have 600,000 miles of roots. When you have all this growing in the soil, feeding it with air, aerating it, living, decaying, building new soil, and then when you have it mixed with the legumes, drawing nitrogen into the soil from above, and helping pump up from the deeper levels the fertility of the soil which already exists - then you have something!"*

*[Grass] "The Great Healer - at Malabar, we operate with a standard seed mixture - ten pounds of alfalfa, five pounds of brome grass or orchard grass, one pound of Ladino*

grass farming, what went awry in the next few decades? Why were grazing and grass farming abandoned in favor of confinement feeding?

Bromfield struggled with these questions as he bravely tried to maintain his faith in the tried and proven methods he celebrated in his essays and books, and cautioned against the mechanical and chemical "improvements" promoted by what came to be called "agribusiness."

This era rushed unchecked into the 1960s when Rachel Carson finally awakened the nation to the perils of blind faith in technology with her book, "Silent Spring."

It is easy in hindsight to see where Bromfield and The Friends of the Land should have stuck to their principles and resisted the manic push for expansion in farm size and scale and the overuse of agrichemicals. But they could not understand it; they had no history to guide them like we do.

Russell and Kate Lord, too, bravely tried to have faith in the new agriculture of chemical and mechanical improvements. The last issues of *The Land*, while still hopeful, were "tinged with fatality and unreality." In 1955 the Lords gave up and *The Land* quietly died. Louis Bromfield died a year later.

**David Kline, KWLTL Trustee**

# Howard's names for the clouds remain to this day

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Howard assigned Latin names to cloud formations: heaps of separated cloud masses with flat bottoms and cauliflower tops are called cumulus (heap); layers of cloud much wider than they are thick, like a blanket or mattress, are called stratus (layer); and wispy clouds, like a child's hair, are called cirrus (curl). To clouds generating precipitation he gave the name nimbus (rain). Clouds are found in three shells, or layers, in the lower 10 miles of the atmosphere.

On that evening more than 200 years ago, Luke Howard presided over a defining event in a new kind of natural history. Meteorology was given a means to spring into a new scientific shape. Howard's insight had opened up the clouds to view and study, so now they could be seen for what they were: the visible signs of the otherwise hidden movements of the atmosphere. Howard spent the rest of his life refining his studies, frequently giving lectures and at times defending his conclusions from criticism. Luke Howard became famous from his work and the names he gave to clouds remain to this day.

I was driving with our friend and fellow KWLTL board member, David Kline, in late December last year. We looked up at a sky filled with wispy, light clouds - each little one separated and in line after line. It was unusual and beautiful. David called these "fish scale" (mackerel) clouds and he said it would rain within 48 hours. It did.

Today the science of meteorology is so fine-tuned that we can see what the weather will be anywhere in the world with the touch of a button. This is a good thing for today's farmers - being able to judge just the right conditions for planting, mowing hay, fall harvest. Most days in the life of farming operations revolve around the weather. Modern technology would have amazed Luke Howard and yet we

take it for granted. The violent storm which attacked the East Coast this year was predicted days ahead of time, giving people a chance to prepare for the onslaught coming their way. Weather radar is the most-watched television (and Googled) event.

Not long ago it was considered "boring" to talk about the weather. But in this era of climate change, the weather is a major environmental and political topic. It's important to all of us. I am not very good at technology. After looking up, my predictions for the next day's weather generally follow the old saying: "Red sky at night, sailor's delight. Red sky in the morning, sailor take warning."

Sometimes it does work out that way.

\* \* \*

An article in the Jan. 17, 2016 edition of *The Daily Record*, Wooster's newspaper, predicts a bright future for jobs in agriculture. In the article James Kinder, interim director of Ohio State's Agricultural Technical Institute, notes that enrollment at ATI has significantly increased over the past four years due to the increasing public perception of the importance of agriculture to our social well-being in the U.S.

An article by Jeffrey Dorfman in the December 2015 issue of *Forbes* magazine was titled, "Want a Job? Study Food And Agriculture!" Dorfman cited a U.S. Department of Agriculture forecast projecting 57,900 jobs per year over the next five years for college graduates in agriculture and food industries. Jobs available encompass not only farming, but agriculturally related roles in business and management; education, communication and government; international finance and policy; and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields.

Kinder emphasized the opportunities in food and agriculture, identifying food as what most of agriculture is about.

Food is a focus in production, processing, safety, and new federal dietary guidelines. He thinks the public is beginning to realize how integral agriculture is to society and that this growing awareness is a reason the enrollment at ATI has grown. Many ATI students come from rural areas; 65 percent of the student population represents a first generation to go to college. We are fortunate to have ATI and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center right here in our mid-Ohio neighborhood where the soils are rich, farms dot the landscape and agriculture is the number one economic driver. It is certainly good news to learn that things are looking up for jobs in agriculture.

*Maryanna Biggio, President  
KWLTL Board of Trustees*

## Your KWLTL membership helps to conserve area lands

Your membership in the Killbuck Watershed Land Trust helps to maintain the rural atmosphere that has made our area a desirable and unique place to live. Your 2016 membership dues will be used for:

- Conservation education
- Public outreach
- Land acquisition and management
- Legal action to monitor and maintain conservation easements

Annual membership levels are:

- Friend, \$50
- Steward, \$100
- Conservator, \$250
- Protector, \$500

To become a new member or to renew your membership for 2016, write a check payable to Killbuck Watershed Land Trust. Mail it to Killbuck Watershed Land Trust, 133 S. Market St., Wooster, OH 44691. Killbuck Watershed Land Trust is a tax-exempt organization pursuant to Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Donations are tax deductible.