



Ripples

A Publication for Members and Friends
Killbuck Watershed Land Trust

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Eshleman family farm south of Orrville has evolved over seven generations

Ruth Tisher always knew that her father, Homer Eshleman, was devoted to the family farm south of Orrville. She didn't realize how much he loved the land until, while going through his desk after his death, she found a number of handwritten index cards. "They said things like, 'Don't sell the farm,' 'Keep the property in our family,' and similar sentiments," said Ruth, the only child of Homer and his wife Esther.

Homer's directive made sense. He was the fourth generation to farm the 80 acres of land purchased by his great-grandparents, Jacob B. and Nancy Eshleman, in 1879. The farm lies within a triangle bordered by Church Road to the south, Kansas Road to the west and a diagonal cut across the north by the Norfolk and Southern Railroad.

The farm included a dairy herd (later replaced by beef cattle) and field crops. The stately white



MEMBERS OF the Jacob B. Eshleman family pose in front of their new farmhouse in this photo taken about 1879.

farmhouse, built in 1879, was traditional in most ways but with an exception: it had a kitchen paneled in chestnut harvested from a nearby tree.

When Homer retired from farming in the 1970s he started to replant the former pasture with trees. He joined the Ohio Tree Farm

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Plenty accomplished on Barrens workday

It's 30 degrees at my home as I write this, effectively ending the growing season for another year. I picked everything that I could from the garden in the last few days in preparation for the cold weather. I am getting used to the shorter days as daylight and temperatures modify an outdoor lifestyle. As many of us know there is a lot to be done at this time of year, between concluding the harvests, getting products to market, and preparation for winter.

KWLT had beautiful weather on October 21 for our annual gathering at Brinkhaven Barrens. Several landowners made it to the event, and we

had a pleasant afternoon getting together with the Ohio Natural Areas and Preserves Association. ONAPA had a workday session in the north barrens where we cleared trees and brush encroaching on the meadow. This is the third year KWLT has worked with ONAPA, and the results of this cooperative venture are evident in the two oak barrens. There were 21 volunteers and three ONAPA board members present. What a great turnout!

During the late morning and early afternoon, the large group of volunteers broke into several

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Promoting, protecting and preserving our natural heritage

Woods may become public green space someday

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program and renamed the farm Green Oaks. Over time he gradually sold off about half the farmland and the woods to neighbor John Yungen, who had been renting/farming the land since the late 1970s.

Avid travelers, Homer and Esther visited every state except Hawaii during their marriage, sleeping in their truck camper at night. Ruth remembers that while her father was an official tree farmer, he didn't view his woodlot as a source of revenue. He loved the beauty of the trees and spent many nights in his woods alongside the railroad tracks.

Though Homer's death in 2006 ended the Eshleman tradition of farming the land, Ruth honored her father's wish to keep the farm in the family. In 2007 she sold a three-acre frontage portion with the house, barn and outbuildings to Mara and Jason Stamp. Mara, Ruth's cousin, is a sixth-generation Eshleman. Her children who are growing up on the farm are the seventh generation.

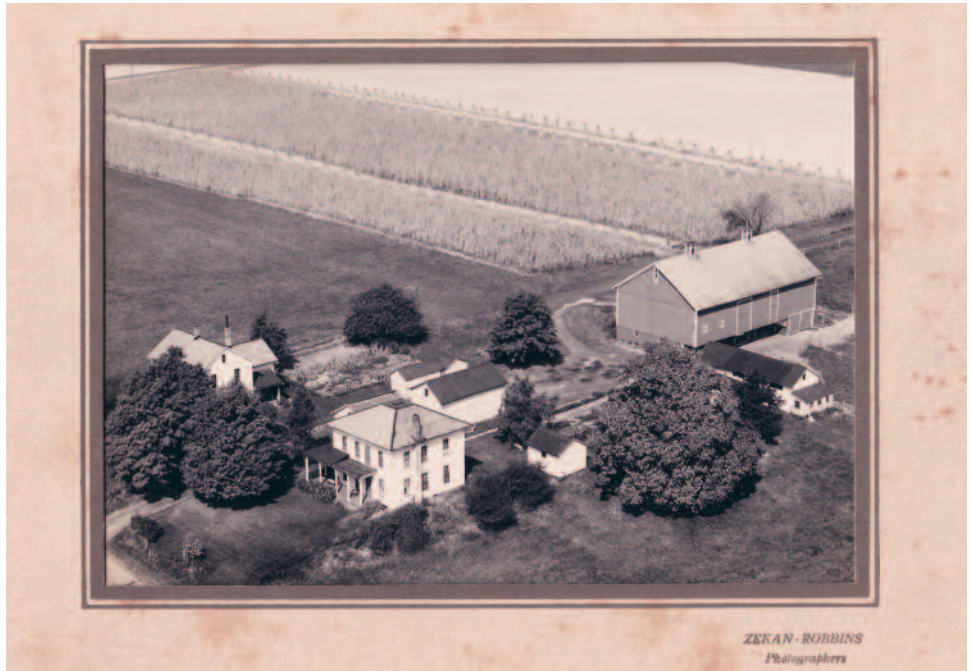
Ruth donated a conservation easement on the remaining 21 acres to Killbuck Watershed Land Trust. A little more than half of the property is in fields farmed by John Yungen. But a very special portion of the protected land is that stand of hardwood trees Homer planted nearly half a century ago. Ruth's dream is that someday the property will become a designated green space for Orrville as the city grows to the south.

In planning for eventual public access to the property, the family kept a lot for an entrance along Kansas Road, just around the corner from the farmstead owned by the Stamps.

Three years ago Ruth transferred the 21-acre property to the Ruth M. Tisher Irrevocable Trust with her children, Greg of Vermont and Lori of the Akron area, as trustees. They share their mother's vision to keep the remaining Eshleman land natural as they remember it from their childhood years when they went there to visit their grandparents.

The family's conservation plan for the land is a nod to an essay that Homer Eshleman wrote in July 1986 titled "My Philosophy" (in box at right).

*Melody L. Snure
Ripples Editor*



THIS PHOTO of the Eshleman farm was taken in about 1950 as part of a series of aerial shots arranged by *The Courier-Crescent* for a "guess where this is" contest. Not only did Orrville newspaper readers earn money by correctly guessing, the aerial photographer profited by selling copies of his photos to the landowners.

Thanks to the Tisher family for providing photos from their family album

MY PHILOSOPHY

BY HOMER ESHLEMAN

When I talk about woodland management, it was not dollars that first attracted me to the woods. I knew what a white oak tree was before I knew that the best of them were measured in board feet. I paused to listen to the bluebird sing before I knew the site could grow 300 board feet of lumber per acre per year. I watched the yellow leaves of the tulip tree float to earth before I realized the tree would grow into dollars.

There is a time to sell timber and a time to walk the woods and collect the intangible dividends. For my woodlands, I know the intangibles stack higher than the dollars.

All men may not be created equal depending on how much money they have. But we all are born with 24 hours a day. What we do with those is up to us. We all have access to beautiful woodlands. I'm looking forward to spending some hours watching the leaves piling up in my woods this fall, knowing that come next May the dogwood will again be blooming white. Doing this I probably won't have a grand inspiration that will make me a lot of money, but somehow a relaxing day invested in the woods gives me a feeling of real worth. Like the growth rings of my tree, I will store up another layer of memories that will make me a rich man.

The best things in life are free – fresh air, pleasant sunshine, clean water and healthful exercise.

Over the past number of years I have spent over a thousand nights among the trees, in many states, with no electric, water, sewer or telephone. I could not have been happier otherwise.

The pileated woodpecker

For as long as I can remember we have been feeding birds at feeders in the wintertime. Before the days of sunflower seeds, or perhaps before my parents could afford to buy seeds for the wild birds, we would crack black walnuts and put them out for the birds.

Every autumn several bushels of black walnuts were gathered and dehulled with the hand-cranked corn sheller, the nuts washed and placed on a sheet of metal, and then left in an open, airy place to dry and cure. Once properly dried, the nuts kept almost indefinitely.

When we cracked them with a hammer on top of the closed vise in the farm shop, we boys competed with the birds for the crisp and sweet nutmeats. Of course, we ate all we wanted (when our oldest daughter was a toddler she would eat them as fast as I could pick them out of the shell) and the rest went to the birds.

Nuthatches and woodpeckers especially loved the high-energy walnuts. Today the woodpeckers eat beef suet instead of walnuts, which is a good substitute for their usual fare of ants. All of the local species of woodpeckers have visited our feeders (the yellow-bellied sapsucker feeds on sap-trapped insects on the pine trees during migration) except the pileated. Only once have I seen the big red-crested bird

in our yard, and that was more or less a flyover with a brief stop in the maple tree.

There is a pair of pileated woodpeckers in the nearby woods that raised a brood of young last spring, and visit our neighbors' peanut butter/suet feeder. Pileateds are usually wary, almost as spooky as great blue herons, but the



male of this pair is surprisingly trusting. I see him and hear his loud cackle almost every day.

The other day I walked over to our daughter and son-in-law's farm and took a detour through the woods. On the way I watched the male pileated woodpecker demolish a dead tree searching for carpenter ants. Chips would fly for awhile and then he paused to feed on

the exposed insects. After 10 to 15 minutes of frantic feeding, the woodpecker opened his big wings, cackled, and flew up through the woods.

The pileated woodpecker appears almost as large as a crow, as one birder described it, "The size of a crow with the sturdiness of a kingfisher." The Sibley Guide to Birds lists the pileated at 10 ounces and the crow at one pound – a considerable difference in weight.

It is surprising for the size of the pileated woodpecker that it survived the glory days of market hunting, or rather that period (late 1800s through the early 1900s) when quality repeating shotguns became available while there were few laws protecting passerine birds. Its near-relative, the ivory-billed woodpecker, was gone by the 1950s.

By 1920 the pileated woodpecker, too, was gone from much of its former range as mature woodlands had been cleared for farming. Then during the Depression years many farms in the eastern part of Ohio were abandoned for more fertile and level land to the west and northwest. These vacated hill farms soon reverted to woodlands.

What benefited the white-tailed deer and wild turkey also helped the pileated woodpecker. As long as there was enough dead wood around to harbor ants, beetles, and grubs, the pileated woodpecker thrived and made a slow but steady comeback.

Around here the pileated woodpecker is fairly common. Well over a hundred pileated woodpeckers have been counted in one day on the Millersburg Christmas Bird Count. That is good news because I like the impressive bird with his bright red crest and prominent black and white wing pattern; the cock-of-the-woods, as pioneer naturalists called him. I like to watch him fly through the trees to swoop up onto a dead snag, cock his head one way, then the other way, cackle a time or two, and then lay into the wood and make the chips and chunks of rotten wood fly for a meal of ants.

Definitely a bird that knows what he wants.

David Kline, KWLTT Trustee

Remember KWLTT in your year-end charitable gifts

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. We hope you will consider sharing your end-of-year philanthropy dollars with the land trust. We are a 501(c)3 organization and a donation to your local land trust is tax deductible. We thank you, so many of you, for your past support and hope you will continue to assist us financially as each year brings new challenges and great rewards.

Annual membership levels are: Friend, \$50; Steward, \$100; Conservator, \$250; and Protector, \$500. To become a new member or to renew your membership for 2018, 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.

Partnerships are an important part of KWLT

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teams to remove invasive brush, saplings, and small trees that are encroaching on the barrens. The highlight of the ONAPA work trips is in helping maintain unique natural areas with a group of like-minded folk. Volunteers came from as far as Bowling Green and Cleveland to help out on this project. Much has been accomplished in the four work sessions we have completed with ONAPA volunteers. Many thanks to this fantastic group!

In the afternoon KWLT board members, landowners and a few local Holmes County residents assembled for an annual meeting and had the opportunity to meet the volunteers as they returned from their adventure. Maryanna Biggio baked cookies and other sweet treats for the event and we had a chance to feed the yellow jackets in the vicinity! They were only a slight annoyance as we had a tailgate get-together at the parking lot and took advantage of the splendid weather to take a walk up the recently completed Holmes County Rail Trail to the North Barrens. I encourage those interested in KWLT to join us next year for our annual gathering.

One of the goals of our annual landowner meetings is to bring together landowners, board members and others interested in KWLT into a gathering to highlight the work of the land trust. This



ONAPA VOLUNTEERS took a break during the fall workday at Brinkhaven Barrens in southwestern Holmes County. Their efforts have been invaluable in maintaining the unique KWLT-owned property.

year we chose to highlight the work of ONAPA volunteers and showcase the work that they have accomplished at this unique natural area along the Holmes County Rail Trail. These partnerships are important, and I would like to continue to grow our partnerships with like-minded organizations. It is vital to foster our growth as a land trust and to continue to provide a valuable service to landowners, farmers, and regional public agencies in enhancing and protecting our land base,

and promoting wise use of our natural resources.

As we move into the winter season it is customary to begin again visiting KWLT landowners as we complete our annual easement monitoring. Hopefully I will get the chance to meet some that I haven't met, and looking forward to seeing those I haven't seen in awhile.

***Randy Carmel, President
KWLT Board of Trustees***



KWLT SUPPORTERS enjoyed a tailgate party in the Brinkhaven Barrens parking area at the end of the ONAPA fall workday. Randy Carmel (at left in photo on right), is president



of the KWLT Board of Trustees and a retired Wooster High School science teacher. He discussed the significance of the property and its unusual ecosystem with the group.