



Ripples

A Publication for Members and Friends
Killbuck Watershed Land Trust

Volume 1, Issue 4

Spring 2012

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Easement protects Rail Edge Farm forever

Throughout their more than half-century marriage, Tom and Louise LaFrance poured their hearts into Rail Edge Farm. Louise's grandparents had purchased the Ashland County property in 1867. Even though both Tom and Louise worked as teachers, they also raised crops and tended to animals, for years milking about 30 Ayrshire cattle.

The couple agreed they never wanted new houses to be built around their 126-acre piece of paradise in Milton Township. During estate planning following Louise's death in 2004, Tom decided to place a conservation easement on the property to protect it from development. Killbuck Watershed Land Trust accepted responsibility for monitoring, in perpetuity, the farmstead that



five generations of the family have called home.

As a kid growing up in Ithaca, N.Y., Tom hung out on the farm of a veterinarian who inspired him to consider a career in medicine. Of course that was a backup plan for his dream of becoming a New York Yankee.

Tom's choice of Ashland for college led not just to a degree in education but also to Louise, an Ashland native studying to teach. The couple married and moved to a house on her family's farm, milking and doing

chores before dawn and after the school day.

The farm had one of the first pipelines and bulk milk tanks installed in the late 1950s by Sealtest Dairy. Tom remembers they earned more by selling milk than they made from

See LAFRANCE, Page 2

KWLT's mission: Enhance Quality of Life

The purpose of the Killbuck Watershed Land Trust - our mission statement, so to speak - is to Preserve the local charm, natural beauty and ecological integrity of our area; Hold and Monitor conservation easements; Educate and Advocate for preservation and wise development; and Share estate planning strategies (tax benefits).

Eleven years ago as we grappled with the wording of this statement, we asked ourselves, "How can we define the quality of life we love and appreciate in our area," and "How can we be actively engaged in preserving the attributes of our community that drew us here in the first place and now hold us?"

Continuing our series of definitions of words and phrases that are used often in land

conservation efforts, we'll begin with:

Quality of Life - Of course this is subjective, something that is in the heart and mind of each of us. If we're talking about the landscape around us, which is where KWLT fits, Louis Bromfield states it well in *Malabar Farm*: "No sight is more tragic than a worn-out, abandoned farm and none more beautiful than the prosperous home and barn surrounded by rich fields. And no sights present so vivid a symbolism in relation to our welfare and strength as a nation."

Education and Advocacy for Land Preservation - While many "tools" are used to preserve and protect land, a land trust, especially a local organization with a Board of

See LANGUAGE, Page 2

Promoting, protecting and preserving our natural heritage

Oak Barrens reveals its treasures to college class

Students in The College of Wooster's Environmental Analysis and Action class spent a recent Saturday at KWLTL's Brinkhaven Oak Barrens property in southwestern Holmes County with site manager Don Beam.

The class, core course of the college's Environmental Sciences program, is team taught by Dr. Richard Lehtinen, associate professor of biology, and Dr. Daniel Bourne, professor of English.

Students explored the Barrens with Beam, learning the story behind preservation of the property and discussing current management practices.

Working under Beam's direction, the students spent time helping to remove the hedge apples and hawthornes that

flourish in sunny prairie openings.

Beam explained to the students why human labor is now needed to provide a substitute for the natural components that once kept the barrens open: grazing by deer or bison, wildfires, or other natural events.

Since the interdisciplinary course's specific focus this semester is on invasive species and invasion biology, the Brinkhaven trip gave students plenty of material for discussion and research.

Earlier this semester the class visited Cuyahoga Valley National Park and spoke with a College of Wooster alumnus who is now a ranger at the park and who is responsible for invasive species management.

Professor Bourne has directed other college classes in helping Beam to collect big bluestem and indian grass seeds. Said Bourne, "I've known Don's work with prairie and native plant restoration as well as land preservation for many years ... I've also visited the Oak Barrens before, which made me think visiting the Oak Barrens as well as meeting Don would be very beneficial to the class."

Although Bourne is a professor of English, much of his writing involves environmental issues as well as a sense of place. He has been connected with the Environmental Studies program at Wooster since its establishment a few years ago.

LaFrance has preserved farm with conservation easement

Continued from Page 1

their two teaching salaries combined. They sold the cows after consolidation created the new Hillsdale school district and Tom was promoted from teacher to principal of Jeromesville School. "I hated to sell the dairy herd, but we just couldn't keep milking," said Tom. They bought beef cattle to raise instead. This spring he has 40 Black Angus cattle in his barn, fed corn, beans and hay raised on the farm. He and a neighbor join forces to raise and sell the animals.

The LaFrances' only child, Mary Louise, has always lived on the family farm. Just as her parents had done, she and her husband Mike Metcalf, a "city boy" from Ashland, moved to the farm after graduating from what is now Ashland University. Both teach music students at their alma mater. Mike also

operates Mike's Music Corner in downtown Ashland and Mary Louise is an organist at a Mansfield church.

Mary Louise claims never to have been assigned any farm chores, particularly after the rare day when Tom tried her out driving the tractor pulling a haywagon. Her lack of finesse with the clutch resulted in Tom's being thrown off the back of the wagon. The Metcalfs' son Matt, an Ashland High School freshman, sometimes helps Tom with farm work.

Having celebrated his 38th birthday 45 years in a row, Tom still feeds the Angus and tends the row crops on the family farm. The farm has three houses including a rental property and includes about 20 acres of woods. Its name, Rail Edge, comes from the railroad track that runs along the property.

Melody Snure, KWLTL Executive Administrator

Language of land trusts describes an important mission

Continued from Page 1

Trustees who are your neighbors, is the least controversial in public opinion but people must understand how we work.

KWLTL is committed to developing public awareness of the importance of family farms and unique environmental areas including woodlands, wetlands and prairie regions. And we are here to assist landowners who cherish their land and wish to protect it, adding to the "Quality of Life" for the rest of us.

If you own property and would like to discuss a preservation strategy, or if you would like to support KWLTL in other ways, you need to know that we

are a private, non-profit organization and your donation qualifies as a tax-deductible contribution because of:

501(c)(3) Status - "Refers to an organization that has applied for and obtained tax-exempt status from the IRS under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. To qualify for Section 501(c)(3) status, the organization must be formed for charitable, religious, educational, scientific, or literary purposes; for testing related to public safety; to foster national or international amateur sports competitions; or for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals. An organization

with 501(c)(3) status does not pay income taxes related to its nonprofit purposes, can receive tax-deductible contributions from donors, and is eligible for private foundation grants."

Executive Administrator - Melody Snure is the go-to person to answer your questions about KWLTL or refer you to someone else in our organization (See Page 1 sidebar for contact information). We are so pleased to have Melody and our office in the Gault Family Learning Center. We have learned that we are much more organized and effective with Melody's help.

Maryanna Biggio, KWLTL President

**Killbuck Watershed Land Trust
Membership Renewal Notice
Calendar Year 2012**

MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR:

___ Protector \$500

___ Conservator \$250

___ Steward \$100

___ Friend \$50

___ I wish to make an additional contribution of \$_____

Please send your check, made payable to Killbuck Watershed Land Trust, to:

Killbuck Watershed Land Trust
Attn. Melody Snure, Executive Administrator
716 Beall Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691

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 annual membership dues are used for:

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

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.

A Tale of Two Farms continued ...

Editor's Note: David Kline continues the true tale he began in our Summer 2011 issue.

On January 24, 2012, Andy's farm and all his earthly possessions were sold at public auction. In his younger days Andy was a good farmer and took meticulous care of his hand tools and farm equipment. The auction for the smaller items began at 10 o'clock.

Before the first item was put to a bid, the auction crew gave its usual spiel on the tremendous opportunity offered here on the 38-acre parcel. Not so much as a producer of food, but aah ... for home sites. "You betcha, this is your chance to get some Holmes County land. In an excellent school district, though short on money. The real estate sells at 12 o'clock sharp. The farm is not leased! Remember, the last man standing gets her."

Reminded me of Little Bighorn. That time it was Crazy Horse.

Now the auction began. From the two ladder wagons Andy's cherished tools were offered and the bidding was lively ... hammers and wrenches, scythes and seeders, bolts and a bee smoker. I had too many memories to even consider bidding. By 11 o'clock the first wagon load of items was finished and the auction crew moved to the second wagon.

At the other side of the farmyard they began selling the household furniture. A rope bed, granite bowls, the old



cook stove. Our daughter bought the upright desk that had belonged to Andy's dad, Nickel Dave. Solid cherry. A work of art.

At 11:15 the land shoppers began drifting in like hyenas to the kill. They weren't interested in any farm-related tools and equipment; anything that hinted of sweat didn't strike their fancy. One could easily sense the cargo cult mentality with the oil and gas lease people perched on the fringes like baboons cheering the hyenas on.

It was soon apparent that Roland, who owns the farm bordering on the south and had his heart set on preserving at least part of the farm, was in for a lot of competition.

The clock struck 12 noon. The tension built. Offered in three parcels of the buildings (the bank barn was new in the 1970s; my dad sawed the timbers for it on our little sawmill) and 14 acres, and two parcels of approximately 12 acres each.

When the dust had cleared the sum of the three parcels came to around \$870,000. Then it was offered as a

whole and someone topped that bid and bought it as one parcel. No, it wasn't Roland.

Why the exorbitant price? My opinion is that this shale oil and gas craze drove the price on the small farm upward by five to seven thousand dollars per acre. We will never know exactly.

Now for the rest of the story ... the young man and his family who were the final bidders decided to sell off 10 acres to make the farm more affordable for them, and that became Roland's opportunity. The deal has been closed and the 10 acres (over a quarter of Andy's former farm) will be added to Roland's 88 acres, which is already in a conservation easement with the Killbuck Watershed Land Trust.

With Roland buying the 10 acres, it enables the new owner to keep the balance of the farm intact, for now. So in a sense, our mission was accomplished in saving the farm. Just in a roundabout, and I could say, stressful way.

Yesterday the perimeter of the 10 acres was measured and plans are made to build a new fence. It will need lime and manure and the expectations are to have a nice pasture established by mid-summer, grazed by organic Jersey heifers.

And Roland wants to plant Canadian hemlocks along the north boundary this fall.

David Kline, KWLTL Board of Trustees

WMP Friends hosts summer cross country series

Are you looking for a challenging way to enjoy Wooster Memorial Park this summer? How about touring its trails in a 5K cross country series?

Friends of Wooster Memorial Park are sponsoring a six-week cross country series, all on trails within the park, starting Wednesday, June 13, and continuing every Wednesday through July 18. Each event will begin at 6:30 p.m.

The course will begin and end at the Education Area parking lot and will be entirely on trails: 1) part of Education Trail (from the parking lot, east around

the old field area to the Spangler Trail), 2) a section of Spangler Trail (on the north edge of the old field area), and 3) two loops of Old Field Trail.

Goal of the series is to provide exposure and enjoyment of the park for people who may be unfamiliar with it while minimizing impact on the park itself. There will be no porta-johns, no refreshment stands, no water bottles given out, and no spiked shoes.

Volunteers will be posted along the course to direct runners, keep them on the trails and monitor for problems.

The cost will be \$5 per person per week or \$25 for the series. Revenues after expenses will go to FWMP to be used to maintain and improve the park.

Further information about the summer cross country series will be available at woostersweaters.blogspot.com.

Wooster Memorial Park, which is part of the City of Wooster park system, is located at the intersection of Jefferson and Silver Roads, west of Wooster off US 250. Further information about the park is available at www.friendsofwmp.com

Through partnership, Stickney farm is learning laboratory

A partnership between KWLTL and the Coshocton County Career Center is providing a hands-on opportunity for students to learn about management of natural resources.

In December 2010, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Stickney donated to KWLTL a 31-acre rural property near Bakersville in Adams Township, Coshocton County. In making the land donation, the Stickneys expressed the wish that their property be used to promote the wise use of natural resources. While most of the tract is open farmland, the property has two stands of timber totaling 4.69 acres.

Coshocton County Career Center, whose curriculum includes a natural resources program, was interested in using the property as an outdoor laboratory as part of its program. A partnership was forged between the school and KWLTL.

Last fall, instructor Tim Kilpatrick worked with his students to conduct an extensive survey of the property. They sampled the soils, identified species of trees and invasive plants, and observed wildlife that utilizes the area. With support from Coshocton County Soil and Water staff, students completed a water quality analysis of Evans Creek that runs through the property.

Students recorded maple, ash, elm, walnut, oak, cherry and sassafras trees along with multi-flora rose bushes and wild grapevines in the understory.

With data in hand, Kilpatrick prepared a forest stewardship management plan. It recommended removing the invasive grapevine, then planting trees on steep slopes where agricultural use of the land is not practicable.

In January, Kilpatrick and KWLTL board member Dewey Thompson of Coshocton described a timber management plan for the Stickney property to members of the KWLTL board. Thompson's son Jordan is in the natural resources class. The board approve spending \$3,000 for Kilpatrick's students to remove invasive species, prepare the land for planting, and get two-foot-tall trees into the ground as



STUDENTS IN Tim Kilpatrick's Coshocton County Career Center's natural resources class pause from planting a thousand red and white oaks on the steep hillsides of a property donated to KWLTL by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Stickney.

soon as spring weather arrived.

In April the students planted 500 white oak and 500 red oak seedlings, putting their classroom discussions to practical use. We appreciate their efforts and their expertise and look forward to our continued relationship.

We estimate that over the next five years it will cost about \$10,000 to improve the donated Stickney property. We plan to seek grants and private donations to help us fully implement the forest stewardship management plan. *Melody Snure, Executive Administrator*

Now is the time to renew (or to become a member)

Enclosed in this issue is your Membership Renewal Notice for 2012. 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 annual dues are 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

Please take time TODAY to complete the enclosed form and return it with your check. 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.

If you have already paid your 2012 dues, we thank you!

Help keep our lands clean; Pick up litter in your travels!

We know you appreciate the beauty of the land in our Killbuck Watershed area of Ohio. May we suggest that you resolve this summer to help us keep it beautiful?

Whenever you're out and about, please take time to pick up litter along your way.



If you don't feel inclined to stoop down, or to touch the stuff that needs to be picked up, use an inexpensive litter picker like this one.

Thank you for helping us in this simple land conservation effort!