



GAINING GROUND

FALL 2025

40th ANNIVERSARY EDITION

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



As I read the articles celebrating our 40th anniversary in this newsletter, I'm filled with pride for everything that the Dutchess Land Conservancy has accomplished. What began as a small, local land trust has grown into one of the most respected conservation organizations in the country. I am fortunate to not only love what I do, but the people in this community who make it all possible and worthwhile; people who have helped the organization grow and develop in ways we could have only imagined. Our dedicated board of directors and staff, stewards and trustees of the land, generous supporters and incredible network of volunteers consistently raise the bar on what to expect.

In this issue, we highlight our eight past Chairmen of the Board, each of

whom has brought their own unique talents to the post. From Nancy Hathaway's keen business, financial and educational expertise, to Tim Bontecou's deep knowledge of farming, to Rebecca Seaman's nuanced understanding of law, working alongside these individuals has been both a pleasure and an honor for me. We have laughed together, sometimes cried together, but all the while growing and learning together as we reach toward our goals.



We also spotlight our current Chairman of the Board, Tim Mayhew, asking him for reflections as a life-long resident of this area and the future he sees for the DLC and Dutchess County. Meanwhile, we list our major accomplishments in a timeline and I can't help but feel impressed when I read 5,000 acres of protected land reached, 10, 20, 30... as we approach 50,000 acres of land under conservation, a number which continues to astound me even as I write this letter. We dedicated a number of pages to event photos over the years. Looking through them, they bring about a wistful sort of nostalgia. It may be the face of someone who has passed, or the wide grin of a young child who is now getting married, but it's nearly impossible not to look at these photos and smile to yourself, remembering all the wonderful memories

we have shared together. From early small gatherings to major milestones such as the opening of the Jesse and Gayle Bontecou Preserve, I have a lifetime of memories with so many friends at these events and I hope you do as well.

In closing, I just want to offer a note of thanks. It can't be overstated how much this community does for the DLC and for each other. We are so lucky to be able to work, play and share in this wonderful place and I am so grateful for the opportunity to lead this organization forward as we begin our next 40 years!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Becky".

2 Becky Thornton



BOARD SPOTLIGHT: TIM MAYHEW

Tim Mayhew is the current Chairman of the Board at the Dutchess Land Conservancy. A lifelong resident of the area, few people are better equipped to discuss the history of the organization and the impact it has made on Dutchess County. As the DLC approaches its 40th anniversary with nearly 50,000 acres in conservation, we sat down with Tim to discuss the past, present and future of the DLC.

Q: The DLC began with some concerned residents gathering around Leslie Barclay's kitchen table. How do you think the organization has changed since its inception? What has remained the same?

A: I remember that time so well. What has remained the same throughout the DLC's history is the incredible spirit of a true community organization. While the obligation to preserve this remarkable land has remained unchanged, the sophistication of the organization, both in its staff's knowledge and expertise, as well as the tools the DLC uses has grown immeasurably through the years.

Q: Are there any particular properties or projects you feel were seminal to the organization's profile as it became more well-known throughout the county?

A: The preservation of the properties around Millbrook School orchestrated by Everett Cook and others got much well-deserved attention for how the DLC and land conservation organizations can work with the community to do special things.

Q: The DLC is often recognized as one of the premier land conservation organizations in the country. To what do you attribute this success?

A: Oh, without a doubt Becky Thornton and Art Collings and the staff that they have built. Our success is built on the hard work they put in, day in and day out. It would be impossible to achieve what we have without them.

Q: What are the major projects the DLC is now working on that give you the most pride in its progress during your tenure as Chairman of the Board?

A: Learning how to develop and steward the Jesse and Gayle Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve is a major new endeavor for the organization. It is one that will be incredibly beneficial for the community in the years to come.

Q: Given that much of the DLC's progress is measured in keeping the landscape the same, are there any vistas in Dutchess County that you feel are particularly iconic, especially since you are a life-long resident of the area?

A: Any vista on Bangall Amenia Road or along Smithfield Valley Road. You would be hard pressed to find more beautiful land and views anywhere in the county. We are indeed so lucky to live here. 🍃



Leaders of the Pack: 40 Years of Chairmen of the DLC Board

One of the most singular components of a successful non-profit organization is an active and engaged board of trustees. Since its inception in 1985, the Dutchess Land Conservancy has been exceptionally fortunate to have many individuals who care deeply about the preservation of open land in Dutchess County, who dedicate their time, energy and talents to ensure that the DLC not only meets, but exceeds its goals and objectives. At the helm is the chairman, who brings not only their dedication, but also their unique wisdom to the job, ensuring that we continue to chart a steady course for the future. Each of our chairmen has steered the organization through a part of its 40-year history, and what follows are some highlights from each of their tenures.

LESLIE BARCLAY (1985-1987)



The DLC's very beginning was at Fraleigh Hill Farm in Stanford, once owned by Leslie Barclay's aunt and uncle, Molly and Kent Leavitt. She chose to place the DLC's first conservation easement on a portion of this property in 1985 and protected the balance in 1987. There are now more than 12,000 contiguous acres of protected land radiating from this first easement, a testimony to her boldness, forethought and leadership for the many landowners who would soon follow her example. Leslie's profound love of the land began with a childhood spent on this family farm. Over the years, she became increasingly involved in the national land trust movement and would go on to serve on the board of the Land Trust Alliance for nearly a decade.

When she accepted the role as the Founding Chairman of the DLC, Leslie set the stage for the many successes that would follow. Under her watch, the

DLC hired its first Executive Director, Joel Russel, opened its first office next to the Bangall Country Store in Stanfordville and began conserving the initial properties that would form the backbone of the DLC's protected land. By the end of her tenure in 1987, more than 1,900 acres were preserved by the DLC, including portions of the Coon Farm in Amenia.

OLIVIA VAN MELLE KAMP (1987- 1988)



A founding member of the DLC, Olivia van Melle Kamp developed her love for nature during a childhood spent searching coastlines, beaches and woods for tangible evidence of wildlife and objects she would bring home to paint. This love expanded as she studied landscape painting under Carolyn Wyeth in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania

Olivia was extremely active in the formation of the DLC, including meetings with the Land Trust Alliance and the design of the organization's initial logo. When Leslie Barclay stepped down as Chairman of the DLC's board, Olivia was voted to take up the mantle. While her time as Chairman was brief, serving for less than two years before moving to South Africa and then France with her husband and daughter, she continued the legacy of the DLC by preserving the land she had grown to love since the early 1980s. In her relatively short tenure, she helped increase the land protected by the DLC to nearly 2,500 acres. Upon moving back to the United States, Olivia returned to the DLC's board in 2006 and continues to serve as the current Secretary, as well as Chairman of the Education and Outreach and Bontecou Preserve Stewardship Committees.

CHARLES P. SHAW (1988-1990)

Charlie Shaw's career was centered on the environmental concerns of the Hudson Valley throughout the 1980s. So, it came as no surprise that he would be involved with the DLC as one of its founders and third chairman of the board. Previously, his work included his role as the Executive Director of the Dutchess County Environmental Management Council, serving on the Dutchess County Planning Board, the Hudson River Environmental Society, the Mid-Hudson Groundwater Task Force, and the Hudson River Committee of Mayor Ed Koch's Intergovernmental Panel on NYC Water Supply Needs. During Charlie's tenure, the DLC protected the Kain Farm in Amenia as well as many other important properties. By the end of his term, the total amount of land protected by the DLC had grown to more than 3,500 acres.

FARNHAM F. COLLINS (1990-1992)



A key initiator of the DLC's founding and the Vice Chairman at the DLC's first meeting in 1985, Farnham Collins stepped forward to lead the DLC in 1990. A lifetime of walking, hunting and riding in northeastern Dutchess County instilled in Farnham an earnest desire to preserve the countryside he enjoyed and valued, not just for himself or his generation, but for future generations. He became interested in land conservation through Kent Leavitt and the Northeast Dutchess Open Space Committee in the 1960s. Later, as the DLC was forming to prevent development on local farms in the mid-1980s, Farnham was instrumental in setting the organization on its path with a sound legal and financial footing.

By the end of Farnham's term as Chairman in 1992, the DLC was closing in on the protection of 5,000 acres. The organization also completed its first Priority Land Resource Inventory to identify and map natural and cultural resources and prioritize areas for conservation. He continues to serve on the DLC's Advisory Council.

NANCY N. HATHAWAY (1992-1997)



The DLC's current Treasurer, Nancy Hathaway provided strong leadership for the organization in the 1990s. Nancy, her late husband David, and two sons have been staunch and avid supporters of the DLC since its inception. She has served on the Board since 1988, a 37-year span of continuous service to the organization that is unmatched.

Understanding the need for funding a non-profit like the DLC, Nancy initiated the first of what would become a fifteen-year tradition of Dutchess Farm Country Tours in 1992, which raised significant annual funds each year and was an important step toward expanding the public's awareness of the need for farmland preservation in the area. This legacy continues with the DLC's annual Fall Country Luncheon held each year with over 400 attendees. She was also instrumental in the establishment of the Millbrook Horse Trials to benefit the DLC, an endeavor that has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to support DLC programs. Most importantly, she implemented a successful land protection endowment capital campaign that raised more than \$1.9 million to bolster the DLC's land conservation efforts. Nancy also oversaw the growth of the outreach and education programs at the DLC, including the DLC's first Education Program for students. By the end of her tenure, the total acreage protected by the DLC had increased substantially to more than 10,000 acres. In addition to her role as Treasurer, Nancy currently chairs DLC's Stewardship Committee.

RICHARD A. KIMBALL (1997-2005)



Dick Kimball joined the DLC Board in 1986, bringing with him a lifelong concern for the environment and a strong legal background in trusts and estates. While his initial interests in environmental issues were focused on coastal concerns because of his childhood spent on Long Island and Vinalhaven, Maine, they expanded to include agricultural and landscape protection when he moved to the Millbrook area in 1956.

During Dick's tenure as Board Chairman, the DLC saw substantial growth. In sheer acreage alone, the volume of land protected by the DLC doubled from 10,000 acres to more than 20,000 acres. Included in that remarkable number was the protection of a number of large farms in the area: the Parshall Farm in the Smithfield Valley, Miller Pond Farm in Pine Plains and the Walbridge Farm in the Town of Washington. The DLC also completed its first purchase of development rights protection of a working farm, Mead Orchards in Red Hook and preserved the historic Beehive Kilns in Amenia, as well as the beloved Millbrook Equestrian Center property. His love of maps made him

a strong proponent of the development of the DLC's GIS mapping program, which streamlined internal work at the organization and increased the pace of its conservation efforts. This tool is still instrumental in the DLC's conservation work today.

But perhaps no project stands as a more fitting testimony to Dick's term as board chairman than the protection of the Dover Stone Church. An important geological, historical and cultural landmark in eastern Dutchess, its preservation cannot be overstated. It has become one of the premier natural destinations in Dutchess County, engaging thousands each year in the beauty and wonder of the natural world and the importance of the DLC's work.

TIMOTHY M. BONTECOU (2005-2014)



A native of Dutchess County, Tim Bontecou brought his distinct understanding of farming and its community in the Hudson Valley to his leadership of the DLC board. Years spent at Rally Farms, established by his grandfather as one of New York's oldest and largest Angus cattle farms, instilled in him a deep love for the land and an understanding of the need to use innovative practices to protect and enhance natural resources.

During Tim's tenure as DLC Board Chairman, the organization saw record-setting years in terms of both the number of properties protected and the total acreage preserved. In addition to the conservation of the 1,650-acre Mashomack Preserve, the DLC added 142 acres to the Dover Stone Church Preserve, quadrupling the size of this public landmark. Among the farms conserved within just a few years were the Abel Tree Farm in Union Vale, Pierson Farm in LaGrange, Fishkill Farms in East Fishkill, and nine working farms in Red Hook. The DLC further solidified its commitment to farming in the Hudson Valley when it partnered with the Columbia Land Conservancy to develop a joint Farmer/Landowner Match Program in 2013. This much-lauded program brings together

landowners and farmers, allowing for more land to stay in agricultural production. By the end of Tim's term as chairman, the DLC was nearing an astounding total of nearly 40,000 acres protected.

The DLC saw an expansion of its influence and reputation during Tim's decade at the helm as well. The organization achieved accredited status through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission for the first time in 2009 – one of the first land trusts in the country to receive the designation. In 2006, the DLC launched a Municipal Conservation Areas Program that brings together local governments with the DLC to aid in the protection of natural spaces throughout Dutchess County. Tim continues to serve on the DLC's Board as Chair of the Conservation Committee.

REBECCA M. SEAMAN (2014-2022)



With an extensive legal background, Rebecca Seaman brought a unique perspective to her term as DLC Board Chairman. Previously, she practiced law in Dallas, Texas and taught as an adjunct professor at the Southern Methodist University School of Law. It was the incredible beauty of the Hudson Valley and the strength of the horse community that initially attracted Rebecca to Dutchess County. Her passion for using her legal background to encourage smart growth and preserve the natural resources and scenic beauty of the area led her, in turn, to the DLC.

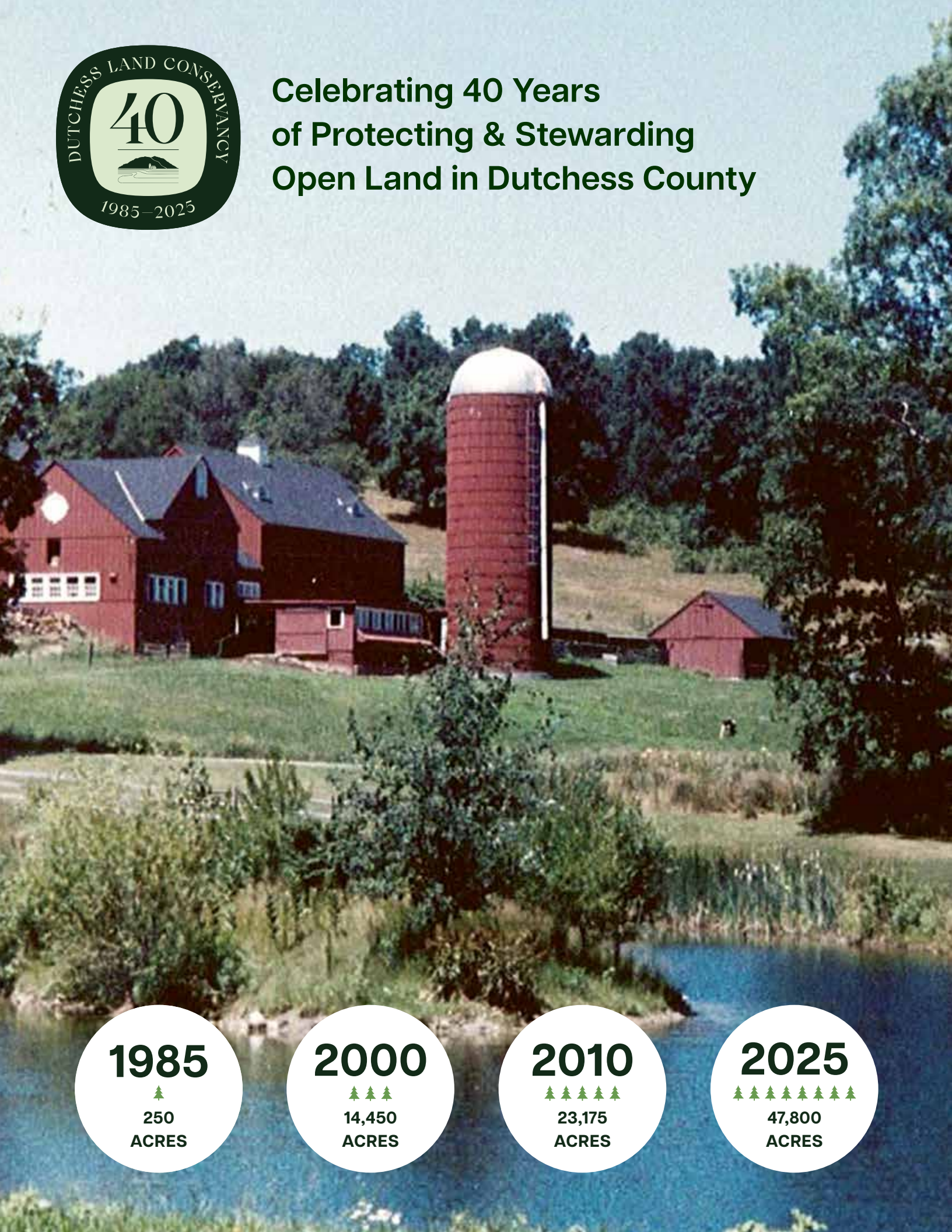
In addition to the more than 6,000 acres conserved during Rebecca's term – including Shekomeko land in North East and Locust Grove Farm in Pleasant Valley – she helped the DLC to make some important decisions that highlighted the financial acumen of the organization. In 2016, the DLC secured \$4.7 million in federal, state, county, town and private funding to protect 777 acres of farmland in Dutchess County. Then, in 2018, Rebecca, DLC President Becky Thornton, and Rebecca's son, Bryant Seaman IV, presented a land trust sustainability model at the Land Trust Alliance's Rally in Pittsburgh,

Pennsylvania. This model placed the DLC in the forefront of financial modeling for land trusts across the country.

The DLC achieved a number of firsts during Rebecca's tenure: the first short film, "Forever Protected," starring Liam Neeson, the first Road Rally to showcase protected lands, and the first awarding of scholarships to 4-H youth. But none of these firsts could exceed the DLC's first preserve – the generous donation of the 1,258-acre Jesse and Gayle Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve, a keystone property that will allow the DLC to highlight its conservation work and serve as fertile ground for ecological studies and educational events. In addition, as the DLC was bulging at the seams at its current office with the growth of its staff, the DLC was honored to receive the gift of the Perkins home on 25-beautiful acres in the Town of Washington for use as its new headquarters. The DLC also launched a successful volunteer program which has grown substantially. Rebecca continues to serve on the DLC Board and is currently Chair of the Building and Grounds Committee. 🍷



Celebrating 40 Years of Protecting & Stewarding Open Land in Dutchess County



1985



250
ACRES

2000



14,450
ACRES

2010

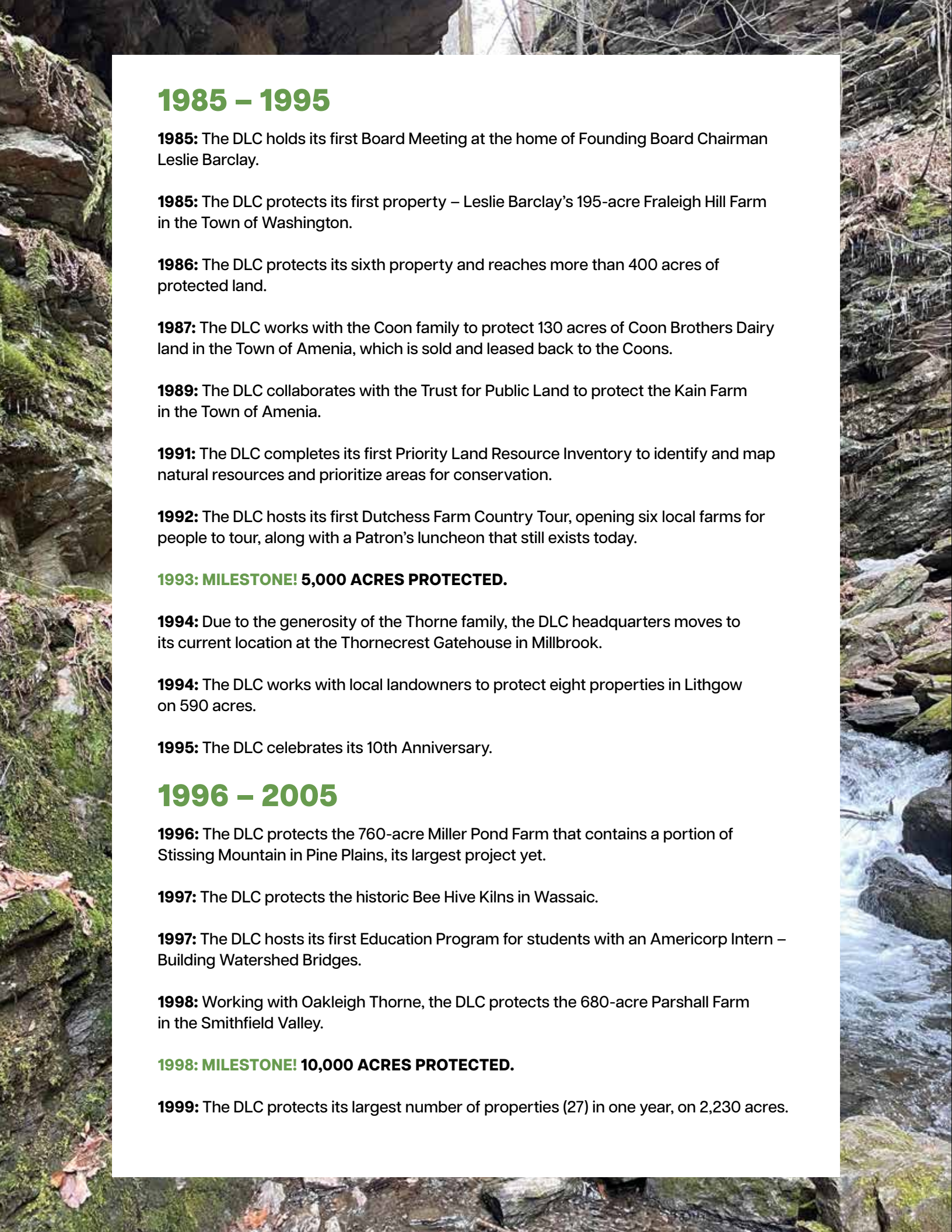


23,175
ACRES

2025



47,800
ACRES



1985 – 1995

1985: The DLC holds its first Board Meeting at the home of Founding Board Chairman Leslie Barclay.

1985: The DLC protects its first property – Leslie Barclay's 195-acre Fraleigh Hill Farm in the Town of Washington.

1986: The DLC protects its sixth property and reaches more than 400 acres of protected land.

1987: The DLC works with the Coon family to protect 130 acres of Coon Brothers Dairy land in the Town of Amenia, which is sold and leased back to the Coons.

1989: The DLC collaborates with the Trust for Public Land to protect the Kain Farm in the Town of Amenia.

1991: The DLC completes its first Priority Land Resource Inventory to identify and map natural resources and prioritize areas for conservation.

1992: The DLC hosts its first Dutchess Farm Country Tour, opening six local farms for people to tour, along with a Patron's luncheon that still exists today.

1993: MILESTONE! 5,000 ACRES PROTECTED.

1994: Due to the generosity of the Thorne family, the DLC headquarters moves to its current location at the Thornecrest Gatehouse in Millbrook.

1994: The DLC works with local landowners to protect eight properties in Lithgow on 590 acres.

1995: The DLC celebrates its 10th Anniversary.

1996 – 2005

1996: The DLC protects the 760-acre Miller Pond Farm that contains a portion of Stissing Mountain in Pine Plains, its largest project yet.

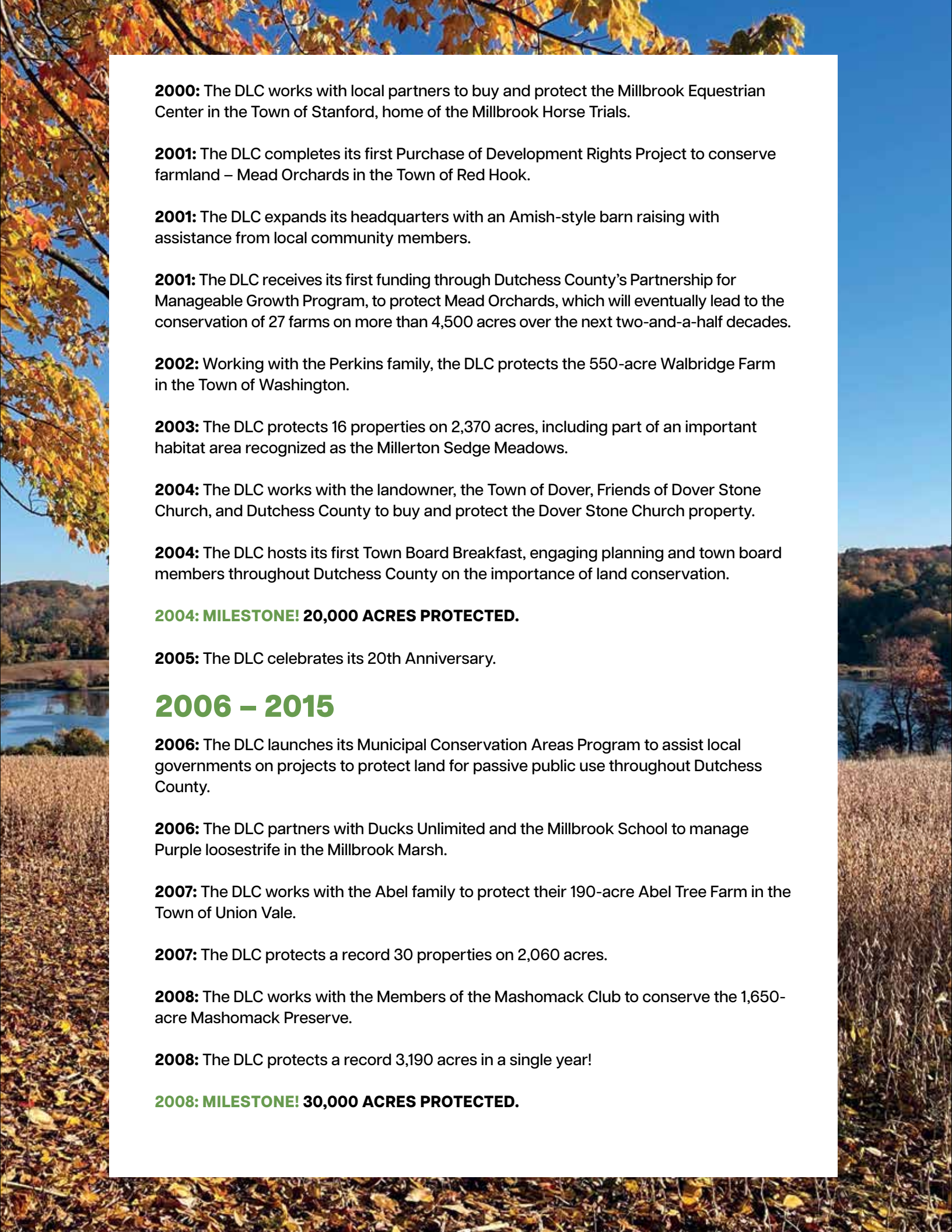
1997: The DLC protects the historic Bee Hive Kilns in Wassaic.

1997: The DLC hosts its first Education Program for students with an Americorp Intern – Building Watershed Bridges.

1998: Working with Oakleigh Thorne, the DLC protects the 680-acre Parshall Farm in the Smithfield Valley.

1998: MILESTONE! 10,000 ACRES PROTECTED.

1999: The DLC protects its largest number of properties (27) in one year, on 2,230 acres.



2000: The DLC works with local partners to buy and protect the Millbrook Equestrian Center in the Town of Stanford, home of the Millbrook Horse Trials.

2001: The DLC completes its first Purchase of Development Rights Project to conserve farmland – Mead Orchards in the Town of Red Hook.

2001: The DLC expands its headquarters with an Amish-style barn raising with assistance from local community members.

2001: The DLC receives its first funding through Dutchess County's Partnership for Manageable Growth Program, to protect Mead Orchards, which will eventually lead to the conservation of 27 farms on more than 4,500 acres over the next two-and-a-half decades.

2002: Working with the Perkins family, the DLC protects the 550-acre Walbridge Farm in the Town of Washington.

2003: The DLC protects 16 properties on 2,370 acres, including part of an important habitat area recognized as the Millerton Sedge Meadows.

2004: The DLC works with the landowner, the Town of Dover, Friends of Dover Stone Church, and Dutchess County to buy and protect the Dover Stone Church property.

2004: The DLC hosts its first Town Board Breakfast, engaging planning and town board members throughout Dutchess County on the importance of land conservation.

2004: MILESTONE! 20,000 ACRES PROTECTED.

2005: The DLC celebrates its 20th Anniversary.

2006 – 2015

2006: The DLC launches its Municipal Conservation Areas Program to assist local governments on projects to protect land for passive public use throughout Dutchess County.

2006: The DLC partners with Ducks Unlimited and the Millbrook School to manage Purple loosestrife in the Millbrook Marsh.

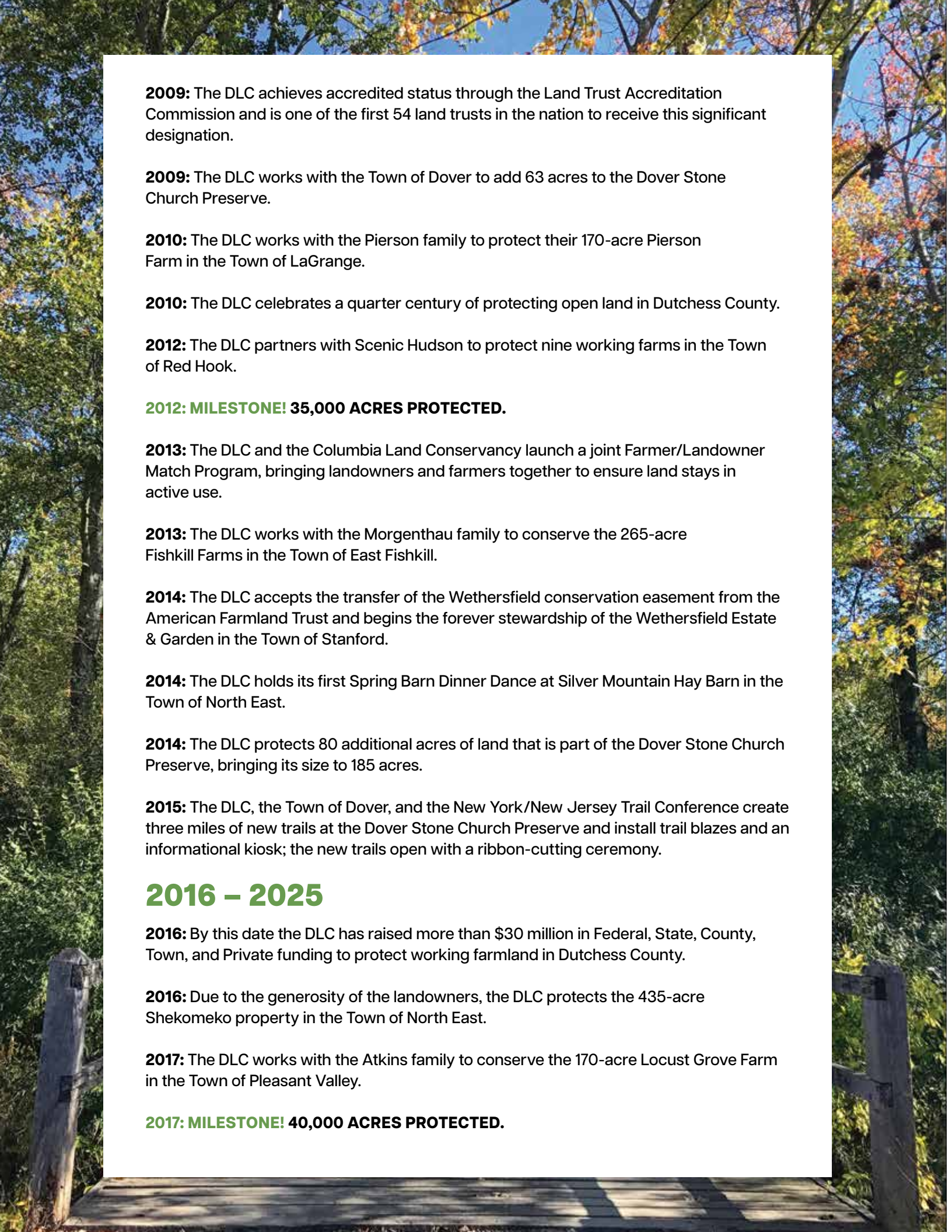
2007: The DLC works with the Abel family to protect their 190-acre Abel Tree Farm in the Town of Union Vale.

2007: The DLC protects a record 30 properties on 2,060 acres.

2008: The DLC works with the Members of the Mashomack Club to conserve the 1,650-acre Mashomack Preserve.

2008: The DLC protects a record 3,190 acres in a single year!

2008: MILESTONE! 30,000 ACRES PROTECTED.



2009: The DLC achieves accredited status through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and is one of the first 54 land trusts in the nation to receive this significant designation.

2009: The DLC works with the Town of Dover to add 63 acres to the Dover Stone Church Preserve.

2010: The DLC works with the Pierson family to protect their 170-acre Pierson Farm in the Town of LaGrange.

2010: The DLC celebrates a quarter century of protecting open land in Dutchess County.

2012: The DLC partners with Scenic Hudson to protect nine working farms in the Town of Red Hook.

2012: MILESTONE! 35,000 ACRES PROTECTED.

2013: The DLC and the Columbia Land Conservancy launch a joint Farmer/Landowner Match Program, bringing landowners and farmers together to ensure land stays in active use.

2013: The DLC works with the Morgenthau family to conserve the 265-acre Fishkill Farms in the Town of East Fishkill.

2014: The DLC accepts the transfer of the Wethersfield conservation easement from the American Farmland Trust and begins the forever stewardship of the Wethersfield Estate & Garden in the Town of Stanford.

2014: The DLC holds its first Spring Barn Dinner Dance at Silver Mountain Hay Barn in the Town of North East.

2014: The DLC protects 80 additional acres of land that is part of the Dover Stone Church Preserve, bringing its size to 185 acres.

2015: The DLC, the Town of Dover, and the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference create three miles of new trails at the Dover Stone Church Preserve and install trail blazes and an informational kiosk; the new trails open with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

2016 – 2025

2016: By this date the DLC has raised more than \$30 million in Federal, State, County, Town, and Private funding to protect working farmland in Dutchess County.

2016: Due to the generosity of the landowners, the DLC protects the 435-acre Shekomeko property in the Town of North East.

2017: The DLC works with the Atkins family to conserve the 170-acre Locust Grove Farm in the Town of Pleasant Valley.

2017: MILESTONE! 40,000 ACRES PROTECTED.



2018: The DLC, along with its volunteer financial guru, Bryant Seaman IV, presents a sustainability model at the Land Trust Alliance's National Rally in Pittsburgh, PA, that places the organization in the forefront of financial modelling for land trusts.

2020: DLC President Becky Thornton receives *Hudson Valley Magazine's* Women in Business Award.

2020: The DLC premieres its first-ever short film, "Forever Protected," starring Liam Neeson, at the Four Brothers Drive-In in Amenia.

2021: The DLC hosts its first Road Rally showcasing protected lands.

2022: The DLC accepts the significant donation of the 1,260-acre Jesse and Gayle Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve from Gayle and the late Jesse Bontecou.

2022: The DLC graciously receives the generous donation of the Nancy Perkins home and property for use as its new headquarters.

2022: Working with the Cranes and the Town of Dover the DLC helps acquire and protect the Seven Wells property, adding 165 more unique and important acres adjoining the Stone Church Preserve.

2022: The DLC awards its first-ever scholarships to 4-H youth to help defray the cost of attending the Dutchess County Fair and to support our next generation of farmers.

2022: The DLC launches a new volunteer program with ecosystem stewardship and trail building events.

2022: MILESTONE! 45,000 ACRES PROTECTED.

2023: The DLC creates and distributes Nature Exploration Backpacks to every library in Dutchess County through a grant from Dutchess County's Learn, Play, Create Program.

2023: The DLC works with the landowner and Dutchess County to conserve the 35-acre Bennett Park in the Village of Millbrook.

2023: The DLC works with Scenic Hudson to protect the 170-acre Cookingham Farm in the Town of Red Hook, where a 12-acre adjoining portion will be used to provide affordable housing.

2024: The DLC works with the Reese family to protect the 145-acre Obercreek Farm in the Town of Wappinger.

2024: The DLC celebrates the opening of the Jesse and Gayle Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve.

2025: To date the DLC has protected an additional 500 acres bringing its total land protected to almost 48,000 acres.

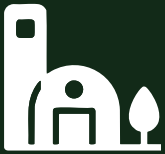
2025: The DLC volunteers near completion on trails at the Seven Wells Preserve in the Town of Dover, connecting it with the Dover Stone Church Preserve.





NUMBER OF
CONSERVATION
EASEMENTS HELD

453



ACRES OF
FARMLAND
PROTECTED

21,000+



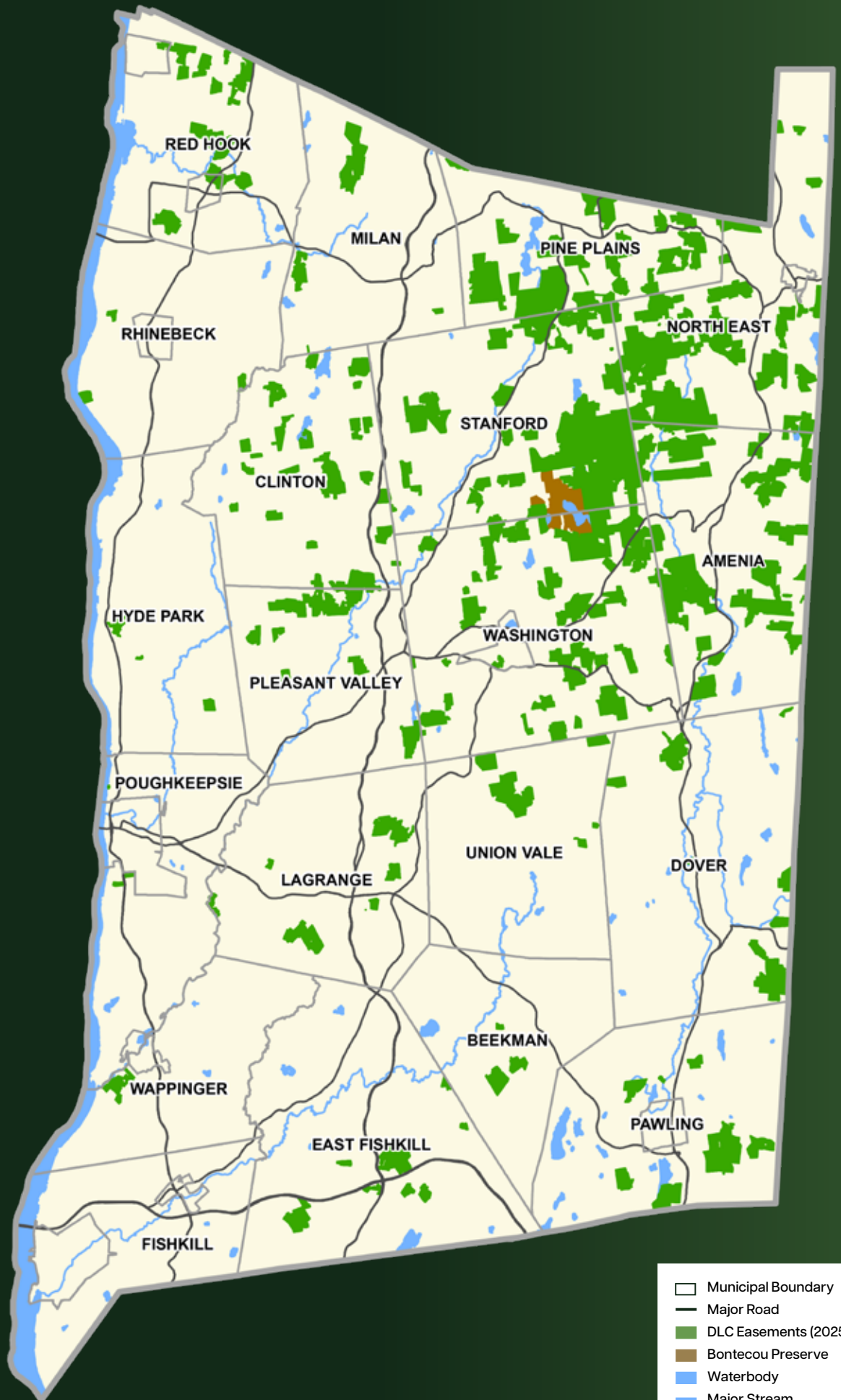
ACRES OF
FORESTS
PROTECTED

21,000+



ACRES OF
WATER +
WETLANDS
PROTECTED

5,000+



THROUGH THE YEARS

A Look Back at 40 Years of DLC Events



From the early days of Farm Country Tours and the years of being the beneficiary of the Millbrook Horse Trials, to our blockbuster 2024 Fall Luncheon held at the DLC's Jesse & Gayle Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve; from our first swinging Spring Barn Dance held at Silver Mountain Hay Barn with live music and dancing, to our socially distanced events of Drive-In Movies and Road Rallies, the DLC has always been honored by the support of a community that time and again answers the call to come together and wave their paddle (often literally, sometimes figuratively) for land conservation. As you enjoy this look back through some 40 years of memories, we reminisce about the fun we've shared at these parties, we remember fondly the members of the community we have lost and we celebrate the incredible accomplishments we've achieved together. 🌿





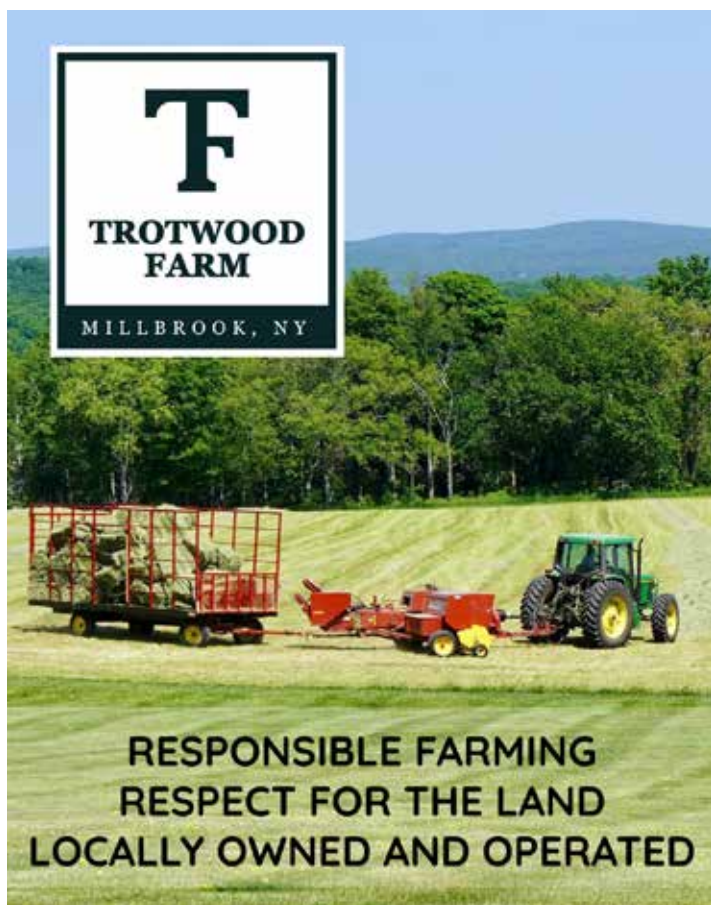
THROUGH THE YEARS





THROUGH THE YEARS





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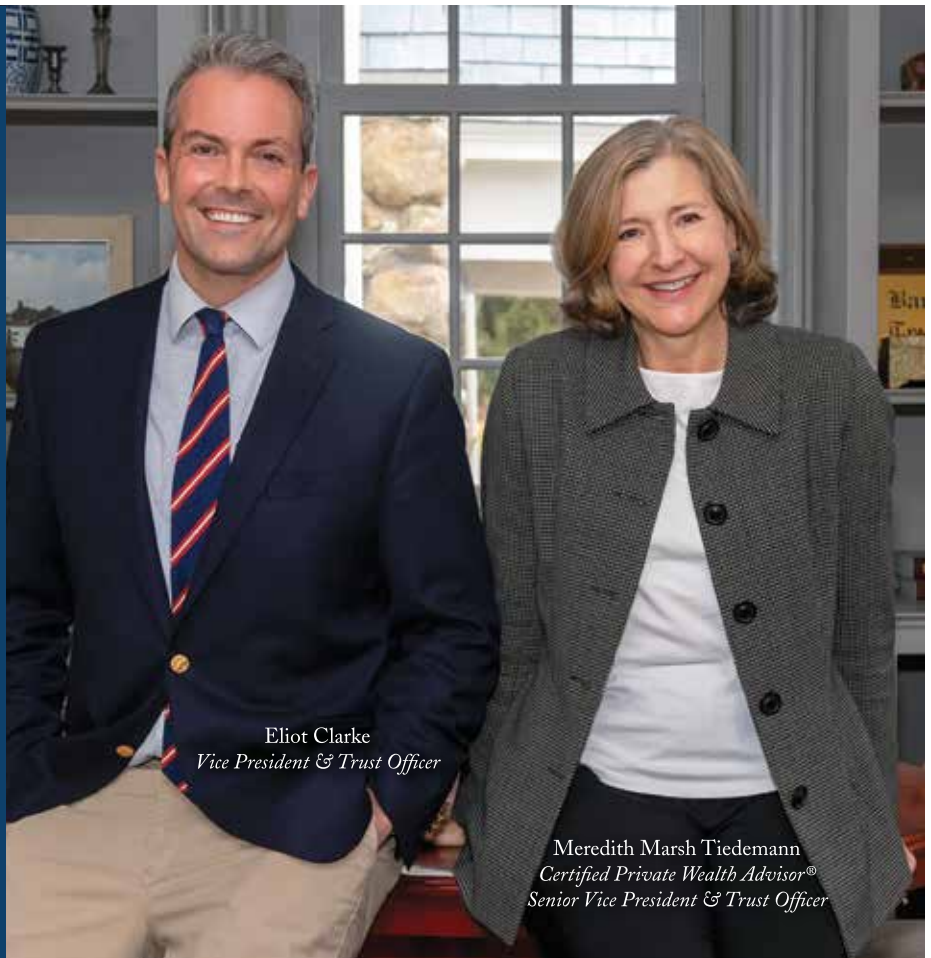


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