



GAINING GROUND

Fall/Winter 2021

35TH
ANNIVERSARY
SPECIAL

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



The end of the year always encourages a moment to take stock of what we've accomplished as an organization, but this is especially true in anniversary years. Because of the pandemic, we pushed back our 35th anniversary celebration to this year and what a success we had at our Annual Fall Luncheon! Similarly, we decided to push back our special 35th anniversary newsletter to complement this celebration, including a look back at our major milestones. I truly can't believe how much we've managed to achieve in these years, thanks to an incredible, engaged community that has supported our mission from the very start by working with our tireless and dedicated staff and board.

Our first board meeting took place on May 10, 1985 with fifteen members. We honored six of those founders this past October and include a tribute to them here. In that first year, the DLC closed on two conservation easements protecting our first 250 acres; thirty-five years later we oversee more than 44,000 acres and 400 properties. It is because of the ingenuity, foresight, determination and sheer grit of that initial group in those early years that we have the rural landscape beloved and enjoyed by so many today. This mantle has been passed on to new members, supporters and volunteers who enthusiastically carry on our mission to this day.

We worked with the Land Trust Alliance New York Advisory Board to get New York State to successfully enact the first-in-nation tax credit for conservation easements in 2006, and then closed a record number of conservation easements the following year—30 easements protecting more than 2,000 acres. This was followed by another record-setting year of the most acreage in a single year—3,000 acres with 16 easements. Today, we work with countless organizations at the local, state and federal level to preserve land of all kinds: public and private, woodlands, wetlands and farmland.

I am constantly overwhelmed by the generosity of our donors. We held our first fundraiser, a Dutchess Farm Country Tour in 1992. The event netted \$20,000, more than twice what we expected. This year, the Fall Luncheon raised \$200,000. Over the years, the DLC has been the grateful beneficiary of many local events as well as our own Fall Country Luncheon. These events have been re-imagined over the years, including more socially-distanced options during the pandemic, but they have always raised a war chest of funds for our work. It is astounding how each time we raise the bar, the community rallies with sold-out groups of 400 or more, beginning with that very first farm tour, which had some 1,200 people participate. It is truly remarkable that the enthusiasm has never waned.

There are so many other milestones and programs I could mention, from our farmer-match program in conjunction with our neighboring Columbia Land Conservancy, our long-standing partnerships with local conservation organizations, our robust public education offerings, the Dover Stone Church and so much more... In February of last year, we received our notice that we were awarded our Accreditation Renewal through 2025 with no expectations for improvement! I, too, sometimes think we can't do better, but our community of supporters, our board and our staff never cease to amaze me. So, here's to 2021 and onward to 2022!

With thanks,

Becky Thornton



Above: The forever-protected view from the anniversary luncheon; with Bryant Seaman, DLC Founder Farnham Collins and DLC Chairman, Rebecca Seaman.

ON THE COVER:

Winner of our 2021 Photo Competition, Courtney Tsahalís.

OUT IN THE OPEN

CLIMATE SMART

Climate Smart Millerton hosted a special Wetlands Weekend event on September 11th and 12th. Beginning with a Zoom workshop "Wetlands, Floodplains and Global Warming Forum," Tom Parrett, editor of the Climate Smart Millerton



Website, moderated a group including Gretchen Stevens, Director of Hudsonia's Biodiversity Center, Michael Jastremski, Watershed Conservation Director of the Housatonic Valley Association and our own Senior Manager of Stewardship & Education, Julie Hart. Community members were invited to take part in a guided wetlands and floodplains walk led by Julie the following morning along the new section of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail north of Millerton.



BOOK SMART

The DLC took part in the 12th Annual Millbrook Literary Festival on September 18th, put on in conjunction with Merritt Bookstore and the Millbrook Library. Four sessions took place throughout the day with discussions led by community facilitators. The festival chose four short books from Thich Nhat Hanh's "How To" Collection, including How To Walk led by our own Julie Hart and Ralph Schmidt, adjunct professor at the Earth Institute, Columbia University.

HABITAT SMART

On Saturday, October 16th the DLC joined forces with Connecticut Audubon for a walk around their Deer Pond Farm and a discussion on habitat enhancements. Our own Julie Hart and Jim Arrigoni, Conservation Biologist at Connecticut Audubon, shared how our organizations achieve a variety of conservation objectives – because conservation can be undertaken in different ways – as well as different options homeowners can employ, from a farm to a quarter-acre lot or even a city apartment.



WHERE THE WILD BOOKS ARE: VIRTUAL BOOK CLUB

This virtual book club is a collaborative effort between the Dutchess and Columbia Land Conservancies and meets monthly October through March on the second Tuesday of the month, from 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm and continues via a list-serve year-round. To sign-up, visit the DLC website at dutchessland.org or the CLC website at clctrust.org.

EARTH MATTERS: VIRTUAL WINTER SPEAKER SERIES

We're launching our winter speaker series and bringing you a new topic and expert each month from November through April on the Zoom platform. Sessions will run from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month. The series kicked off on November 3rd with Kim Eierman from Ecobeneficial, LLC and her talk "Native Landscaping 101." For more information, visit dutchessland.org or call our office at 845.677.3002.

Dec. 1:

Doug Tallamy:
Nature's Best Hope
(Recording available on our website.)



Earth Matters Speaker
Doug Tallamy.

Jan. 5*:

Heather Holm:
Attracting Bees and Beneficial Insects with Native Plants

Feb. 2:

Becca Rodomsky-Bish:
The Challenges Birds Face and How Our Yards Can Help

March 2:

Joyce Tomaselli:
Controlling Invasive Plants in Managed Landscapes and Beyond

April 6*:

Margaret Roach:
Nonstop Plants: A Garden for 365 Days

*At the request of the speaker, starred webinars will NOT be recorded and will be unavailable for future viewing.

THE FOUNDERS OF THE DUTCHESS LAND CONSERVANCY

It is perhaps ironic that northern Dutchess County and its surrounding villages have come to stand out more by staying the same than through change, but it certainly is not by accident. For more than 35 years the Dutchess Land Conservancy and its community of supporters has steadfastly held the gate, welcoming new members, volunteers and friends to the land conservation movement that has since swept the nation. This past October at Terry and John Regan's Fraleigh Hill Farm, the DLC honored our founding chairwoman, Leslie Barclay, and five additional founders who stayed active and engaged with land preservation both locally and nationally: Farnham Collins, Olivia van Melle Kamp, Oakleigh B., Thorne, Jesse Bontecou and Eric Rosenfeld. It was at Fraleigh Hill Farm that the DLC was born—when Leslie Barclay placed the first conservation easement on her then property in 1985. There are now more than 8,000 acres of contiguously protected land that radiates from this first easement, part of the 44,000 acres now protected in Dutchess County by the DLC. What follows are the reflections of three of the founders and tributes to those who have passed.

Leslie Barclay



It all began in the 1980's when a rumor reached me that a neighbor's farm was going to be sold to developers who planned to cover its beautiful hillsides with a development. It was my deepest fear coming true! I immediately sought help from Farnham Collins.

During the next few weeks, we reached out to all our friends and neighbors, inviting them to come to a meeting at Wethersfield Farm at the invitation of Mr. Chauncey Stillman. At this critical meeting Mr. Stillman spoke passionately of the need to protect our lands and shared with us his desire to purchase the adjacent farm to protect it from any development if the owners would agree to sell it. This crucial time resulted in the simultaneous creation of the DLC and the purchase by Mr. Stillman of this neighboring farm.

Had it not been for Molly and Kent Leavitt, my aunt and uncle, I would not have enjoyed a wonderful childhood learning to farm, to ride to hounds and to run behind packs of beagles and basset hounds. They chose to build their wonderful house and barns on Fraleigh Hill and spend their lives raising a family, producing milk and cheese for the village and for the Millbrook School.

We owe our thanks to all the families who chose to come to Dutchess County in the early 20's and 30's: the Thornes, the Collins, the Bontecous and so many more. Now we must care for this wonderful corner of the world and continue to protect its waters, its wood and fields.

Farnham Collins

Excerpted from an article written by Farnham Collins in 2005.

In the 1950's Kent Leavitt, who owned Fraleigh Hill Farm, became interested in preserving open space and farming in our part of Dutchess County. He formed the Northeast Dutchess Open Space Committee which promoted education and efforts to preserve open space. After Mr. Leavitt's death in 1973, the Northeast Dutchess Open Space Committee became moribund and essentially disappeared from the public eye.

In 1983 or '84 Owen Boyd, the manager of Chauncey Stillman's Wethersfield Farm, became aware of a long dormant bank account in the name of the Northeast Dutchess Open Space Committee. Mr. Stillman, Mr. Boyd, Leslie Barclay (Mr. Leavitt's niece and then owner of Fraleigh Hill Farm) and I went to a meeting to explore the possible revival of the Northeast Dutchess Open Space Committee. Shortly thereafter a potential developer secured options on the Sheldon and Van Benschoten farms.

An article appeared in the *New York Times* showing the subdivision of the Sheldon farm into house lots. This galvanized Mr. Stillman and others into action. Mr. Stillman advised me that he would buy the Sheldon farm, but it was up to those who cared about open land to buy the Van Benschoten farm to keep it out of the developer's hands. The same developer had secured an option on James Cagney's farm.



Movement came quickly on two fronts. First, Leslie Barclay and a small group realized we needed a local land conservancy. She arranged for us to go to Chadd's Ford, Pennsylvania to meet with George (Frolic) Weymouth, the chairman of the very successful Brandywine Conservancy, and the Brandywine staff to learn all we could about creating a land conservancy. On our return, we solicited two years' worth of financial support from a small group of backers and started the legal work to create the Dutchess Land Conservancy. Until our own conservancy was formally established, Brandywine agreed to hold our funds. One could say that the Brandywine Conservancy midwived the Dutchess Land Conservancy.

The second and paralleled effort saw the creation of North Dutchess Properties, a group established to buy and preserve with DLC easements threatened property. This group purchased the Van Benschoten farm and eventually the Cagney farm. While North Dutchess Properties is no longer in existence, the general model has been used by Everett Cook to secure DLC easements on land in Deep Hollow and the former Kinney farm (Millbrook Equestrian Center) and by David Hathaway on some lands along the Millbrook School road.

The further history of DLC and these other efforts is well-known. Thousands of acres of countryside are now protected for present and future generations. This worthy cause is ongoing.

Olivia van Melle Kamp

As a shy child I was passionate about nature. I spent endless hours roaming the coastline, rocks, beach and the woods. Mostly I looked down, picked up shells, crab parts, horseshoe crabs and their egg sacs. I took them back to draw and paint them, just to get to know them better. I knew every bird, their nests, and every mushroom in the woods... Later I went to study painting with Carolyn Wyeth in N.C. Wyeth's studio in Chadds Ford, PA. What beautiful open countryside! I began looking out—not down—and loving the landscape.

I came to Millbrook as a weekender in 1980. Again, this love of landscape and open vistas grabbed me. I happened to go back to Pennsylvania; what a shock to see what had happened there, but luckily Frolic Weymouth had started the Brandywine Conservancy. After a fire that killed 17 competition horses at the Millbrook Combined Training Center closer to town in Millbrook, a few of the horse owners regrouped and purchased the

189-acre Kinney farm, a former dairy farm on Bangall Amenia Road to build the Millbrook Equestrian Center. Further down the road was the Van Benschoten farm that was under threat of development. I learned that a group from Millbrook was starting a land conservancy



and had consulted Frolic Weymouth. I jumped in with all I had. What can I do to help? I designed the logo, went to a Land Trust Alliance (LTA) meeting with Leslie in Boston, convinced Daniele Bodini to fly his helicopter over Cagney's property so I could take photos for the cover of the newsletter. Whatever it might take, I was willing.

When I came back to the United States after years away, I was so proud to see that the DLC was still doing great work: education, outreach, so many more acres protected. I am so proud of what the DLC has become, leaders in the Land Trust Alliance. I hope our local supporters realize the national status of the DLC in the larger land trust community.

For more than 35 years the Dutchess Land Conservancy and its community of supporters has steadfastly held the gate, welcoming new members, volunteers and friends to the land conservation movement that has since swept the nation.

Support the DLC

The Dutchess Land Conservancy protects and stewards thousands of acres of open farms, forests, streams and wetlands in Dutchess County for the people who live, work in and visit this special place. The land gives so much to us—clean water, food from local farms, forests where wildlife thrive, picturesque landscapes that we enjoy, and places where we can be outdoors and leave the stress of daily life behind. We are rewarded with the knowledge that we are protecting and stewarding this land for generations to come. But we can't do it without the help of our community; your support makes all the difference. For more information on how to support our work with a tax-deductible gift, get involved with our mission and much more, please contact our office at 845.677.3002 or visit our website at dutchessland.org.

Jesse Bontecou (1926-2020)

Jesse was both a founder, and a long-time and generous supporter of the DLC's work. He was an incredible steward of his family's Rally Farm, purchased by Jesse's father, Frederick Bontecou in 1926. Rally Farm was home to a herd of registered Angus cows that included numerous national champions and was one of the largest and oldest Angus farms in New York State, known for using innovative practices to protect and enhance natural resources. When the DLC was being formed, Jesse had a vested interest in what was



the 1990's and Fall Patrons Luncheons. Jesse was instrumental in the protection of land on Tower Hill Road that he sold to Annie Dyson in 1998 that protected a significant viewshed and important agricultural land. Jesse had a great sense of humor and with a twinkle in his eye he could often be heard telling a funny story that would be remembered and re-told for years to come. You felt yourself lucky if you were the one he was telling the story to. As he got older, still wanting to work on the farm, he would often accuse people of raising the height of his tractors; a practical solution being to let the air out of his tires so he could get on, then to blow them back up once he was seated.

His DLC founding legacy and his deep love of his land and commitment to sound planning and agriculture helped shape the sense of place that everyone has come to love and enjoy.

Eric Rosenfeld (1939-2021)

Eric was a founder and longest serving member of the DLC's Board. Except for a brief hiatus, he served on the board since its inception.

One can only imagine Eric's excitement in those early days, to join the board of a brand-new organization, beginning during a time of threat with the proposed development of the Sheldon and Van Benschoten Farms on Bangall Amenia Road in the mid-1980s. At that time, Eric not only offered his legal expertise, he also joined and became the architect for complex projects undertaken by North Dutchess Properties.

At that time NDP's 10 original members each subscribed \$50,000 or \$100,000 and guaranteed twice the amount pledged in order to help secure land under threat. This group purchased the Cagney and Van Benschoten Farms on Bangall Amenia Road, as well as land on Carpenter Hill, and other parcels on which they placed DLC and hunting easements. This was all happening at a time when



land conservation was not well-known or supported. Challenging times, with great outcomes, that is what Eric loved. He also joined the Shekomeko Village Company, another group that purchased threatened lands and preserved them with DLC easements.

After he sold his Chestnut Ridge property, he and Dede bought their home on Bangall Amenia Road, right in the middle of the area where the DLC first started, which was now widely preserved. He and Dede protected their land, too.

Eric wasn't a board member who just served in name. He was active in countless ways, including on the DLC's Executive Committee, that meets monthly helping to guide our work. He always added something meaningful to the conversation, and he would stay after, to ask if there was anything his help was needed for. He was constantly ready to take on the projects that, in his own words, needed a little "linebacking." He often worked with staff to review stewardship issues, or current practices to protect the DLC's interests. He once noted that he tried to bring both his legal, and work life experience, to what was before the DLC, and that he always valued the fact that his voice was heard.

Eric knew a lot of people, and he constantly urged them to support the DLC. He helped the DLC establish initial relationships with many people, as he was forever meeting someone new. He was also well known for donating and collecting fine wine for our silent auctions.

Eric was immensely proud of his role as a Founding DLC Board member and being honored would have meant the world to him.

Oakleigh B. Thorne (1932-2020)

Oakleigh was the Founding Treasurer and then Secretary/Treasurer of the DLC Board for 22 years until October of 2007, when he resigned from active service on the board to join the DLC's Advisory Council. As someone whose family had settled in the area more than 200 years prior to the DLC's founding, he was a dedicated conservationist, sportsman and lover of the outdoors whose incredible support and dedication guided the DLC's work since its inception.

Oakleigh was among the first group from whom Farnham Collins asked \$5,000 a year for two years to help the DLC's initial start-up. While Oakleigh's initial contributions were through personal means, he later also provided funding through his family's foundation, the Millbrook Tribute Garden – support that the family has generously continued to this day.

Early on in the DLC's history, in addition to joining the DLC's Board, he was one of the 10 members of, and served as treasurer for, the conservation buyer

He inspired many successful conservation projects during his lifetime, which resulted in the protection of thousands of acres, protecting not only family land, and land he had a personal stake in, but encouraging others to do so.

He attributed his land conservation ethic as part of a proud family tradition, speaking fondly of the Millbrook Tribute Garden that had been given as a park to the Village of Millbrook by his great grandfather.

Oakleigh once noted, *"I have seen change in the many different places I have lived, including the Millbrook area. Population growth is inevitable. By channeling growth, rather than trying to stop it, organizations like the DLC can make development not only more aesthetic, but ensure that land is better able to sustain human and animal life."*

Oakleigh made a quiet, but incredibly powerful impact on the DLC's work. He was always very humble about his contributions, which were countless and deeply meaningful. He inspired many successful conservation projects during his lifetime, which resulted in the protection of thousands of acres, protecting not only family land, and land he had a personal stake in, but encouraging others to do so. He leaves an incredible legacy of conservation, commitment and generosity that made a lasting imprint on this area he so loved.

group named North Dutchess Properties, that protected almost 1,100 acres from 1987-1993. After NDP disbanded, Oakleigh continued to purchase threatened properties and to protect them with DLC conservation easements.

In 1994, when the DLC needed a new place for its office, Oakleigh said, "I know just the place" and he generously provided the DLC with a home where the DLC resides today. When the DLC decided it was crucial to have funds in hand for a conservation easement defense fund to help ensure its ability to oversee its hundreds of conservation easements into perpetuity, Oakleigh was one of the first people to step up with a generous gift.

















Dutchess Land Conservancy's 35th Annual Fall Luncheon

More than 400 patrons and friends were welcomed to the event with a signature cocktail from the Fizzy Filly to enjoy while perusing the silent auction. An aerial performance by Hudson Valley Circus Arts captivated attendees before the buffet lunch catered by the Farmer's Wife. DLC Chairman Rebecca Seaman opened the celebration acknowledging founding Chairman Leslie Barclay's leadership, followed by special individual tributes honoring founding board members 🌿

PHOTOS: BARBARA BEATTY PHOTOGRAPHY

DLC MILESTONES

- 
1985 First DLC Board Meeting held at the home of Founding Board Chair Leslie Barclay.
 First land protected by Leslie Barclay - 194 acre Fraleigh Hill Farm, Washington.
- 
1987 New Record! 1,770 acres protected in one year on 11 projects.
- 
1989 New Record! 16 projects close on 1,070 acres.
- 
1992 First DLC hosted Dutchess Farm Country Tour.
- 
1993 Milestone Reached! 5,000 acres protected.
- 
1996 New Record! Largest property protected – 760 acre Miller Pond Farm in Pine Plains.
- 
1997 1st Education Program for students: Building Watershed Bridges.
 The DLC protects the historic Bee Hive Kilns in Amenia.
- 
1998 New Milestone Reached! 10,000 acres protected.
- 
1999 New Record! Most projects closed in a single year: 27 on 2,300 acres.
 The DLC becomes the beneficiary of the French-American Polo Challenge held at Mashomack Preserve in Pine Plains.
- 
2000 A group of 35 committed individuals through Millbrook Land Associates work with the DLC to buy and protect the Millbrook Equestrian Center in Stanford.
- 
2001 First Purchase of Development Rights project on Mead Orchards in Red Hook.
 Millbrook Horse Trials to benefit the DLC is established.
- 
2002 Eleven donors join our new ardent supporter group as Trustees of the Land.
 New Record! Largest working farm protected – 550-acre Walbridge Farm in Washington.



DLC MILESTONES

- 2003  New Record! 2,459 acres protected in one year on 16 projects.
- 2004  New Milestone Reached! 20,000 acres protected. Initial 58 acres of Dover Stone Church property acquired and protected in Dover.
1st DLC Town Board Breakfast.
- 2006  Launch of the DLC's Municipal Conservation Areas Program.
- 2007  The DLC is awarded Better Business Bureau Accredited Charity Status.
New Record! 30 projects closed in one year on 2,062 acres.
- 2008  New Record! Most acreage protected in one year: 3,186 acres on 16 projects.
The DLC protects its largest property yet - 1,650 acres at Mashomack Preserve, Pine Plains.
New Milestone Reached! 30,000 acres protected.
- 2009  The DLC is one of first 54 land trusts in the nation to achieve accredited status through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.
50 additional acres protected and added to the Dover Stone Church Preserve.
- 2010  DLC's 25th Anniversary with celebrations in the spring and fall.
- 2012  New Milestone Reached! 35,000 acres protected. The DLC partners with Scenic Hudson to protect 9 working farms in Red Hook.
- 2013  Launch of DLC/Columbia Land Conservancy Farmer/Landowner Match Program.
The DLC is one of the first to join Terrafirma – the land trust conservation easement defense insurance program.



-  2014 The DLC takes over stewardship of Wethersfield Farm in Stanford.
The DLC holds its Inaugural Spring Barn Dinner Dance at Silver Mountain Hay Barn in North East.
79 additional acres protected and added to the Dover Stone Church Preserve increasing the Preserve to 183 acres.
-  2016 New Milestone – In total, the DLC closed 30 purchase of development rights projects protecting over 4,000 acres of working farms.
New Milestone – The DLC raised over \$30 million in Federal, State, County, Town and Private Funding to protect working farmland in Dutchess County.
The DLC is awarded a record number of new State and County grants to protect farmland.
The DLC receives its largest donation ever – the 435-acre Shekomeko property in North East.
-  2017 New Milestone Reached! 40,000 acres protected.
-  2020 The DLC safely and seamlessly transitions through the COVID-19 Pandemic.
The DLC's new short film, "Forever Protected," premieres starring Liam Neeson.
The DLC is awarded Accreditation renewal through February 2025 with no expectations for improvement!
-  2021 The DLC hosts its first ever Road Rally showcasing the land protected by the DLC.
The DLC celebrates its 35th Anniversary honoring Founding Members still involved in the DLC (one year late due to the pandemic).
New Milestone Reached! 44,000 acres protected.

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COUNTRY LIVING

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Trustees of the Land, the DLC's most ardent supporters, demonstrate their steadfast commitment to land conservation with annual gifts of \$10,000 or more.

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Founded in 1985, the Dutchess Land Conservancy (DLC) is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to preserving the rural character, important resources and open lands of Dutchess County, New York. We encourage sound, well-planned growth, balanced with the conservation of our important natural resources and working landscapes to ensure healthy and vibrant communities for the benefit of all generations.

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Runner-up of our 2021 photo competition, Susan Treacy