



**DUTCHESS LAND
CONSERVANCY**

GAINING GROUND

Summer / Fall 2021



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PRESIDENT'S LETTER



When the summer haze gives way to the crisp fall breeze, the world seems to come alive with new energy. Perhaps it's our own academic years, or bringing our kids to school, which makes this season feel like the beginning and not the end of the year. But for the earth, the end of summer feels like a kind of shedding, with these bountiful months yielding the last of summer fruits and vegetables and the planning for the fall harvest, as the leaves turn from their luscious greens to a fiery mix of fall colors.

With the easing of pandemic-related restrictions we have been able to come together once again to celebrate this unique county and realize how lucky we are to live in this beautiful place. Our summer road rally was a tremendous success, raising more than \$192,000, and the planning of our blockbuster fall luncheon on October 17th is well underway. We were set to honor our founding board members for our 35th Anniversary in 2020, but like many celebrations, it was placed on hold. But now we are eager to mark this milestone and are thankful for these occasions that bring our

community together in support of land conservation!

Our smaller get-togethers have resumed as well, not only our seminars, but our office is able to gather and our committees are able to meet in-person once again. All of this has reignited our energy not dissimilar from that "back-to-school" feeling we all know so well. And not unlike the earth, we are seeing the harvest of many months spent organizing, planning and strategizing. In the following pages, you'll see announcements of our future plans, pictures from events this summer and more.



Elsewhere in the issue, Georgina Schaeffer visits Dutchess Views Farm in Pine Plains, a thoroughbred horse farm and one of our most recent easements. As always, our flora and fauna columns by Lucas Gordon and Julie Hart are not to be missed. These stories are, of course, at the heart of our mission. We are seeing a revitalized interest in our work not only for the natural beauty and resources we protect, but also



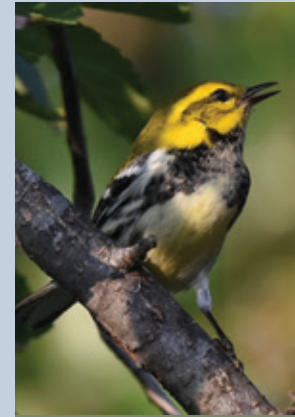
a deeper recognition of land conservation's role in fighting climate change. Each and every one of us can make a contribution in as small a space as our backyard. Please visit our website at dutchessland.org or contact us at 845.677.3002 for more information.

Finally, it is with great sadness that we include an "In Memoriam" in this issue with memories of Theo Budnik and Ralph Weindling, both integral members of our DLC family. As I reflect on their lives, and the lives of so many friends we have lost recently, I think about how each and every one of these individuals made a contribution that added to the essential texture of Dutchess County. It is a remarkable legacy, and one that we are honored to carry forth.

Sincerely,

Becky Thornton

CONSERVATIONIST'S CALENDAR



NEW EVENT!

Join the DLC at **Deer Pond Farm** in Pawling on Saturday, October 16 from 1 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. for a walk and talk at this wonderful new preserve! The 850 acre property was bequeathed to the Connecticut Audubon Society by the estate of Kathryn D. Wriston in 2017 and includes a multitude of hiking options on their extensive trail network. About 100 species of birds have been reported on or near the property, including forest birds like the Broad-winged Hawk and Scarlet Tanager, marsh birds such as Virginia Rail and shrub-nesting birds like American Woodcock, Eastern Towhee and Chestnut-sided Warbler. The sanctuary is open year-round, seven days a week, from dawn to dusk. Parking and access to all trails is at 57 Wakeman Hill Road in Sherman, CT (just across the state line). For more information regarding this event contact the DLC office at 845.677.3002 or visit ctaudubon.org.

FALL BACK

On Sunday, October 17th the DLC will host our **Annual Fall Country Luncheon and Silent Auction** to celebrate our 35th Anniversary and honor founding board members Leslie Barclay, Farnham Collins, Eric Rosenfeld and Olivia van Melle Kamp and pay tribute to founding members Jesse Bontecou and Oakleigh B. Thorne. The event will take place at *Half-Moon House*, the home of John and Terry Regan, at 257 Leavitt Road in Millbrook. Join us for brunch cocktails at 11:30 A.M. followed by a buffet lunch at 1 p.m. For more information regarding this event or to buy tickets, please contact the Development Office at 845.677.3002 or email Karen Karis at karenk@dutchessland.org.



OUT & ABOUT: GREAT GOINGS ON

NO CHILD LEFT INSIDE

In August, Dutchess Land Conservancy ecologist Julie Hart led a natural history hike at **Dover Stone Church Preserve for Dutchess No Child Left Inside (NCLI)**. The No Child Left Inside program works to get youth outdoors to connect with nature, while also providing important job-training and life skills. The program hires teenagers from the City of Poughkeepsie to become Youth Environmental Educators, who work with their peers and younger youth to teach them about the environment and encourage them to get outdoors. The NCLI Youth Educators serve as role models to the younger youth and their peers and demonstrate that learning about science and nature and getting outdoors can be fun and "cool". The Dutchess No Child Left Inside is a program of Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County and is funded in part by Dutchess County.

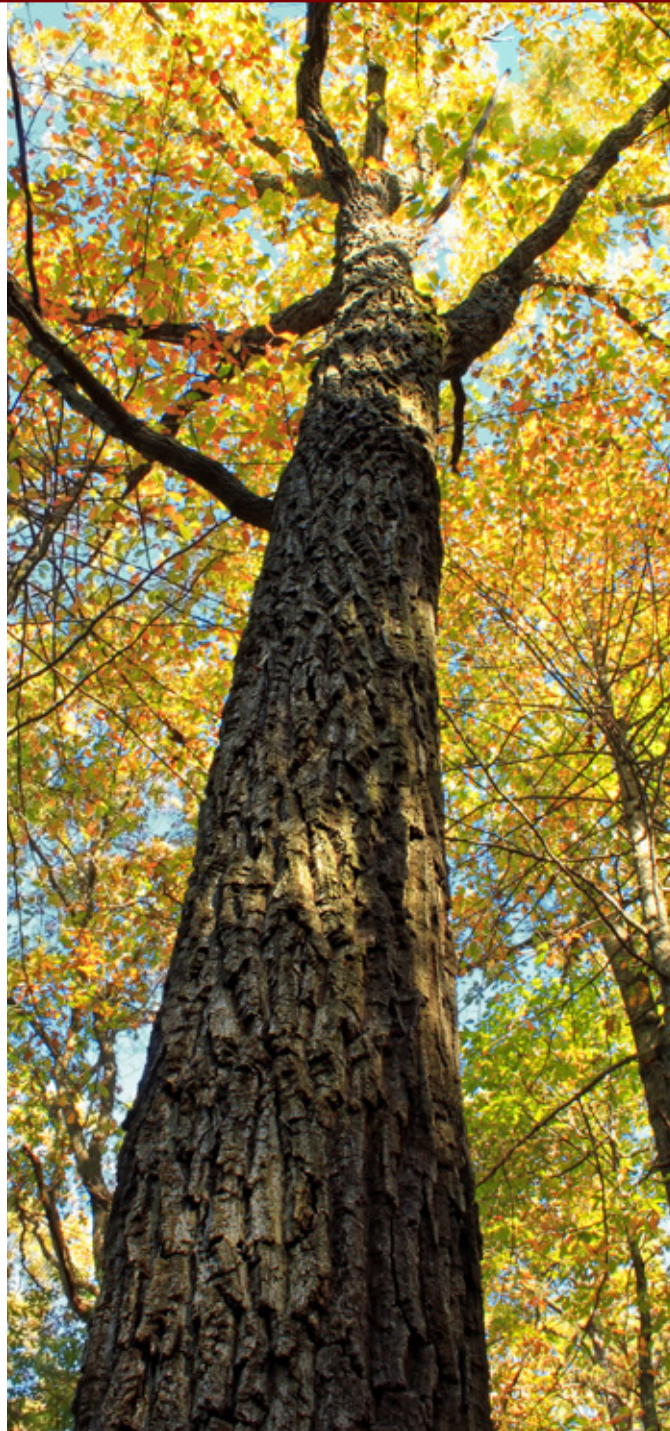


This page from top: DLC President Becky Thornton; fall foliage at Dutchess Views Farm; DLC Chairman of the Board Rebecca Seaman with fellow board members, founders and friends; welcoming friends to our summer Road Rally.

Barbara Beatty Photography

Barbara Beatty Photography

Photo Courtesy Dutchess NCLI



By Lucas Gordon

Tell us about yourself.

Hi, I'm Chester the chestnut oak! You might also know me by the names rock oak, tanbark oak, *Quercus montana* or even *Quercus prinus*. My species is native to the eastern United States with a range stretching the length of the Appalachian Mountains. Most often found lining the ridges of these mountains, we thrive in rocky, rugged soils like those found in Dutchess County. Stomp your way up any stone-littered mountain in the area and you'll find my friends and I waiting for you, trunks wedged between boulders, roots swelling over crags and branches basking in the sun high above already lofty surroundings.

Sounds like you're one tough character.

Ain't that the truth. Rugged to the core, the first thing you'll notice is my striking, irregularly staggered and shaped, deeply-ridged brown bark, the thickest of any North American oak. Next up: my solid, sturdy build at sixty to eighty feet tall, with a rounded crown just as wide. Our well-drained, nutrient-poor soils prevent us from growing to the same heights of other native oaks, but we still make the best of what we've got. How else could we stick around for 300 - 400 years?

That's a long time! How old are you?

I'm still a young'un at 94, meaning I am considered a "second-growth" chestnut oak. Nearly all the original old-growth trees in the Hudson Valley were clear-cut around 200 years ago to fuel the dramatic tanning, farming and lumber needs of nearby New York City. This brings to mind my aforementioned pseudonym: the "tanbark oak," a name attributed to our bark's remarkable abundance of tannin. This substance is used to treat animal skins in leather production. Though we suffered major losses to this industry in the 19th century, our adaptability and large, hardy bunches of acorns reliably masting every four to five years ensures the circle of life continues. These days, tanning a bygone era, the consumers most interested in my wares are the mammals and birds who prize my acorns as nutritious snacks!

So, chestnut is a different type of tree than oak? Does being called the "chestnut oak" mean you're a hybrid?

A fair assumption, but the "chestnut" in chestnut oak comes from esthetic rather than genetic similarities. Our leaves favor a chestnut-esque, long, veiny, streamlined, dully-toothed shape over the wider, deeply lobed shape of other oak leaves. Coincidentally, American chestnut was another tree known for supplementing the enormous needs of the tanning industry. Unfortunately, that tree hasn't recovered its numbers like us due to a disease called chestnut blight. We aren't completely out of the woods either. A current threat we face is the gypsy moth, *Lymantria dispar*, which has been increasing in severity in recent years. These moths aggressively defoliate many northeastern trees. Be sure to refer to NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) guidelines to keep your forests as healthy as you can as they continue to face this threat and many others. Trees face a wide range of challenges, but take it from me, a conscientious human ally makes a world of difference. 🌿

By Julie Hart

You've seen them - those strange-looking swellings on plant leaves and stems...great big round ones, little bitty cone-shaped ones, weirdly fuzzy lumpy things and funny little freckly spots. What are they? They're called galls, and they are another great example of the many important partnerships between plants and insects.

Galls are formed when an insect (often an aphid, wasp, fly or midge) cuts into a stem or leaf to lay its eggs, while at the same time secreting substances that cause the plant tissue to grow into these fantastical formations. The resulting structure provides a safe place for the insect larva to mature, and when it is fully grown it will emerge as an adult.

Most gall-producing insects are highly host-specific and will only lay their eggs within a certain species of plant. And as with many cycles in nature, timing is everything. The insect must insert its eggs while the plant cells are growing and dividing quickly, generally in the spring or early summer.

While they can look alien and frightening to us, galls usually do not cause harm to their host plant. In fact, removing gall-infested leaves would do more damage to the plant than the galls themselves. So be on the lookout for these weird, wild and sometimes woolly creations, and prepare to be wowed by the intricate beauties of the amazingly diverse world of plants and insects! 🌿

Want to be sure what you're seeing is actually a gall? Check out the "Seek" app from iNaturalist for iPhone and Android. It'll help you identify galls and a whole lot more!



Goldenrod gall



Witch hazel cone gall



Beech mites



Elm sack gall



Wool sower gall



Spongy oak apple gall

The Lure of Horses at Dutchess Views Farm

by Georgina Schaeffer

“On a clear day you can see the Catskills off this way and straight to the Berkshires this way,” Michael Lischin orients me by stretching out his arm to the left and then to the right, as we stand on the highest point of his property in Pine Plains. I’ve come to the aptly named “Dutchess Views Farm” on a hot and humid day in July, but even with the mid-day haze, the vista can only be described as panoramic. Originally part of an 800-acre dairy farm, Michael and his wife Anya Sheckley now operate their thoroughbred racehorse business on just shy of one-hundred acres in Pine Plains. This year, the couple decided to sell the property’s development rights and place the farm under a conservation easement with the Dutchess Land Conservancy.



Michael grew up near Belmont Racetrack where, working on the backstretch as a young man, his life-long passion for horses and horseracing began. After graduating from NYU Law School and becoming an attorney, he started working for Fasig-Tipton, a leading horse auction company in 1978. He settled in Midway, Kentucky for 15 years, but moved back to New York State to realize his childhood dream of living and working his own farm 25 years ago. This property was especially appealing to Michael because a polo player had developed the 90-acre parcel into an equestrian facility, so most of the infrastructure was already in place. “We converted the indoor ring into a broodmare barn with 40 stalls, we added the breeding shed, some of the run-in sheds, but the other barns and fencing were here,” Michael says as we drive around the property, passing eighteen paddocks dotted with horses grazing in the noontime sun. “We have six stallions currently standing at stud in Saratoga,” he explains. “It’s a joint-venture with Irish Hill Century Farm called ‘Irish Hill and Dutchess Views Stallions,’ which we began in 2018.” This year, the partnership’s stallions include New York State’s leading sire, Big Brown, as well as the state’s leading sire of two-year-olds, War Dancer.

As we continue, Michael delineates each barn’s purpose: one for horses coming or going to the track, one for horses who have come here to rest, another for horses being prepared for sale. In August the couple will send five yearlings to Saratoga for sale. It is in the sale barn that Anya meets us, having returned home from bringing their thirteen-year-old son to—where else—his riding lesson. Equine expertise and enthusiasm run deep in this family as Anya, too, was bitten by the horse-bug as a young girl. Born and raised in upstate New York, Anya worked at show barns in exchange for her riding lessons as a teenager. As a young adult, she tried to leave the horse world behind her and moved to New York City to pursue a career in finance. But the lure of horses was always in the background,



Photos Courtesy of Dutchess Views



watching thoroughbred racing and researching pedigrees as a hobby. After the events of 9/11, she knew her love of horses could no longer be part-time. She joined Michael’s business as the office manager in 2002 and later as the general manager. In addition to owning and managing the farm with Michael, Anya also developed Hammertown Insurance Agency, an equine mortality insurance agency. As we wander through one of two offices, the walls are lined with winning race photographs and other memorabilia, including some of their most successful horse, “Married to the Music.”

Their partnership has been just as fruitful personally as it has been with the horses; the couple were married at the Beekman Arms in Rhinebeck and live with their son in the house at the bottom of the hill. “The previous owner planned to build a house over here,” Michael gestures to a flat part of land. The location would be ideal for a home, as the views would reach out to the horizon, but Michael and Anya placed the entire property under easement. “When we had our initial conversations with the DLC about selling the property development rights, we thought it was a wonderful idea,” Anya says. “In some ways, it’s almost too good to be true since we get to stay living and working this beautiful land, but we are also compensated for not allowing the land to be built up in the future.” The couple plans to use the funds from the purchase of their development rights for different projects and ventures on the farm that will bring in additional revenue, as well as improving some of the existing barns and structures. “Preserving land is so important to protect valuable resources—water, farmland, wildlife habitats— and for the next generations to enjoy,” she continues. “It feels really good to be part of a solution for positive change and not just another part of the problem!”



CROSSING THE FINISH LINE

On Saturday, June 5th,
250 people turned out for the
DLC's First Road Rally.

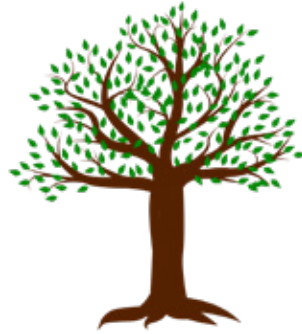
Vintage car aficionados began their route at Bob Wilder's in Stanfordville and followed co-chairs Steve Benardete, Ottavio Serena di Lapigio and Olivia Fussell to Lime Rock Park racetrack in Connecticut, while trivia whizzes took a self-guided tour of the area to test their local knowledge. Both routes passed by scenic DLC forever-protected properties and ended at the Mashomack Preserve Club, where guests enjoyed a seated luncheon under the trees by the lake or a tailgate picnic viewing the vintage cars. We would especially like to thank our sponsors, Bank of Millbrook, Harney & Sons, Peter Pennoyer Architects, Millbrook Equine, Mutual of America, Lime Rock Park, Pepe Auto Group and Precision Auto Storage, as well as our co-chairs, start host Bob Wilder, the Mashomack Preserve Club, club manager and DLC supporter David Thieringer and his staff, our generous underwriters and all the participants who helped us raise more than \$192,000 to fund land conservation.



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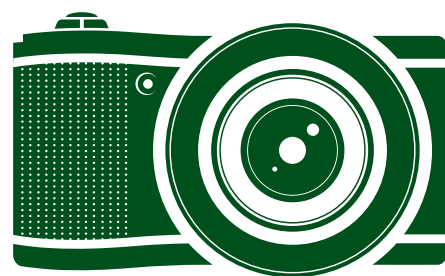
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...our new monthly virtual speaker series! The distinguished entomologist and author Doug Tallamy joins us on December 1st to discuss all things insect. Tallamy teaches at the University of Delaware and has written and co-authored several books, as well as many papers. Beginning in November and continuing through April, the speaker series will focus on the importance of native species. We hope you'll tune in each month over the winter to learn from the experts about the many aspects of this multifaceted topic.

New Books for Fall Leafing

Where the Wild Books Are returns this fall! 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 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. and continues via a list-serve over the summer months. To sign up, visit the DLC website at dutchessland.org or the CLC website at clctrust.org.



Last Call for Shutterbugs!

The DLC Photo Contest deadline is October 1st. Please send your entries to kristenb@dutchessland.org or tag your photos with #DLCPhotoContest on Instagram! Each participant is allowed up to four submissions, one for each season. The winning photograph will be featured on the cover of a future Gaining Ground. For more information, visit our website at dutchessland.org.

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.

Ralph Weindling

It is with great sadness that we report the loss of dear friend and former board member Ralph Weindling on May 1st. Originally part of the DLC's Advisory Council, Ralph served on the board from 1999-2017 and as treasurer from 2014-2017. His keen eye and attention-to-detail didn't miss much and, although he was naturally quiet, he was not afraid to speak up to get the group back-on-track when discussions expanded beyond the issue at hand or if they were not leading to a practical solution. Ralph delivered his wise and thoughtful opinion with elegance, wit and tremendous foresight. He was the truest of gentlemen and an integral and well-respected part of the DLC for decades.

In addition to serving on and directing countless DLC board committees, Ralph also was a member of our "Land Stewards Team," a committed group of volunteers who helped monitor protected properties in our early days. He led us through two consecutive strategic planning processes pro bono and ensured that following the plans was both achievable and fun. Ralph was a generous supporter as a founding "Trustee of the Land," an incredible mentor and a wonderful friend to many. He and his wife France-Helene were long-time owners and stewards of the easement-protected "Why Not Farm."

Ralph and his family continue to be generous to us through an incredible bequest, as well as thoughtful memorial gifts in his honor. These legacies will help us carry out our mission to protect the beauty and resources of the area he so deeply loved. He has been sorely missed as a board member since the day he retired and even more so now, as a friend. We will remember him for all his contributions that helped make the DLC the strong, well-respected organization it is today.



Dr. Theodora Budnik

We are deeply saddened to report that Dr. Theodora Budnik died on June 8th. "Theo," as she was known throughout her life, joined the DLC Board in 1991 and participated during our formative years. In 2003, she left the board and became a member of the DLC's Advisory Council, where she served until her recent passing. Theo's family has a storied history with land conservation in Dutchess County. Her late father, Chauncey Stillman, helped inspire the DLC's formation, protecting his well-known Wethersfield Farm in 1988, and her sister, Elizabeth, also conserved her 165 acres that same year. Theo followed suit preserving her own 209-acre farm on Pugsley Hill Road and her 645-acre Wheatley Farm on Layton Road in 2009. In total, the Stillman family ensured that more than 2,000 acres will remain open and undeveloped in perpetuity.

In addition to her work for the DLC, Theo was also a founding member and investor in the conservation buyer group, North Dutchess Properties (NDP). Originally established to protect the Cagney and van Benschoten properties on Bangall Amenia Road

from imminent development, the group continued to buy threatened properties and protect them with DLC easements through the late '80s and early '90s, conserving a total of more than one thousand acres.

For the many years Theo was active with the DLC, she was a constant source of wonderful and thoughtful insight, input and advice. She will be enormously missed by all those who had the great privilege to know her.



Photo Courtesy: Wethersfield Foundation

Thanks to our Trustees of the Land

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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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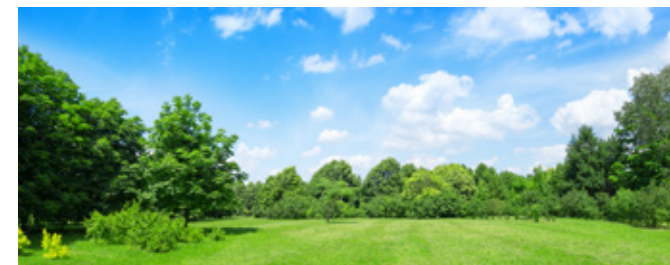
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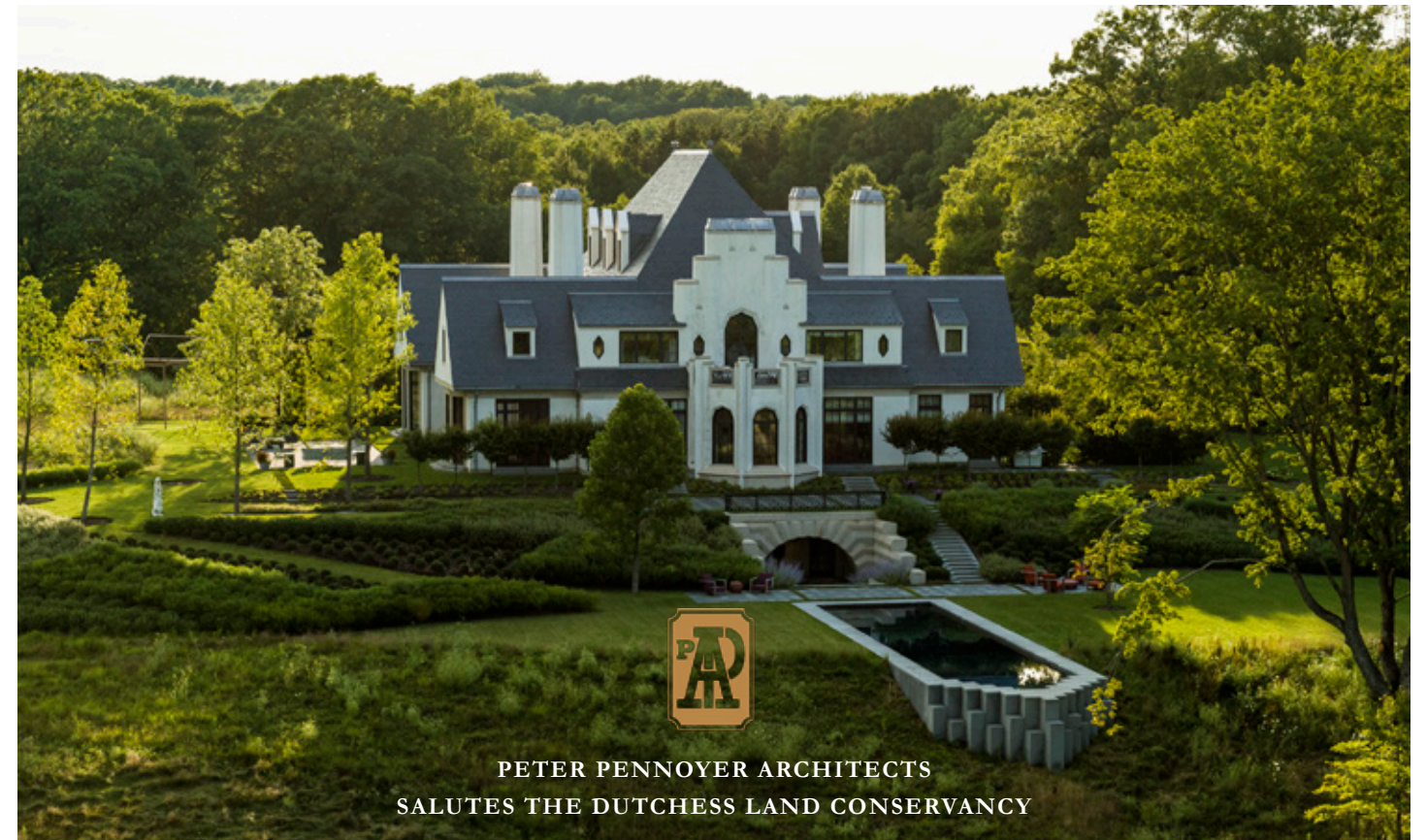
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