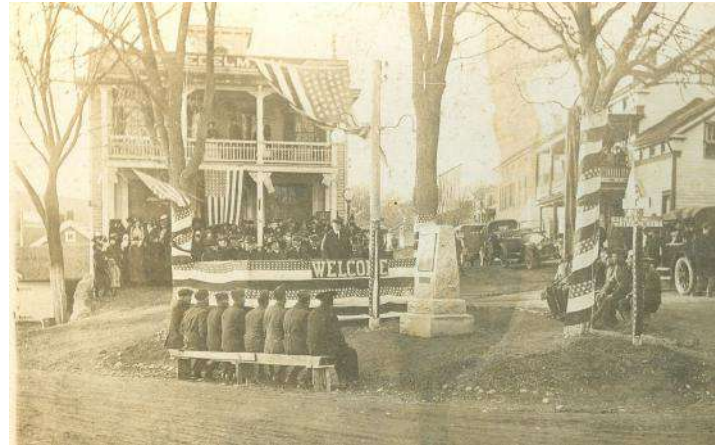


The Changing Face of Downtown Ancram Past and Future Converge in the Hamlet

By Suzan Flamm



James Kennedy, artist, and Bob Bachler, a ceramist, now live and work in the repurposed Simons General Store building, seen in a 1919 photo of the town green during the WWI monument dedication.

Literally overnight Ancram's historic downtown underwent some dramatic changes this summer, starting with the intentional razing of one property in June and the unanticipated damage to another by an inebriated motorist in July, leading to its destruction. Yet while demolitions have altered the architectural landscape of Ancram, renovations are bringing life and occupancy to previously vacant buildings.

The tale of Ancram, like any town, is one of inevitable change. The Ancram Hotel, built in 1845, was a dignified structure in the middle of the hamlet, with a wraparound porch and gracious balcony. It burnt down in 1927. Fittingly, the site has been home to the Ancram firehouse since 1947. Also long gone is the railroad station – trains arrived here in 1875 – where passage to and from the hamlet could be found. And a general store was located at one time on what is today a private parking area on Route 82, until Simons General Store was erected just across the street in 1873. There, at the

town center, Simons served the community, with only brief interruptions, for over a hundred years. Despite being listed in 1973 on the National Register of Historic Places, it was abandoned sometime in the 1990s. In fact, the story of recent changes to the Ancram Hamlet begins with Simons, once again a stately presence – with its elegant cupola and two-story veranda – at the intersection of Route 82 and Route 7.

But it didn't always look this way. After the building was deserted it slipped into a state of disrepair. With an eye to preserving it, a non-profit was formed in the 1990s, the Ancram Preservation Group. They purchased it in 2002, and, with the help of a state grant, stabilized the edifice and restored the cupola. Later, they hired an engineer to design a septic system that could function on the small parcel, and obtained approval from the state for its installation. James Kennedy, an artist and native of Belfast,

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PAST & FUTURE

(Continued from page 1)

Northern Ireland, who had been living in New York City, bought Simons in 2016, commenced renovations, and has been residing and working there with his partner, Bob Bachler, a ceramist, for three years. The renewed life in the building, and the results of the painstaking restoration, are apparent to all who pass by.

"We weren't thinking of buying a place like this," Kennedy explains. "What sealed the deal was the infrastructure work that APG put into it. What also helped was the twenty percent tax credit offered by New York State's Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for rehabilitating a historic structure." But, most important, "the building is right for us because it has room for studio space and living space."

Kennedy is now hoping to take on another renovation effort. He is in negotiations to purchase the adjoining property to the west of the store and adjacent to the Ancram post office. Built in



Robert and Pamela Reed, with their daughters Kelsie Reed and Abby Jennings, are bringing new life to Ancram's "Little Store", which will have a deli counter, baked goods, and other provisions on hand when it opens in 2021.

1894, the home has had only two owners, and has not been occupied for the last seventeen years. Kennedy hopes to change that and revitalize the building, envisioning a rental unit and perhaps more studio space once the refurbishment is complete.

Around the same time that Kennedy purchased Simons, Robert and Pamela Reed bought the building on the other side of the post office, known as "The

Little Store," an early 20th century edifice with a deteriorating porch. It had once been, and not that long ago, an actual little store – Pamela, who grew up in Ancram, remembers shopping there for groceries – but had been unoccupied for many years. Robert, a contractor who builds custom homes, and his family, took on the task of repairing the building and bringing a store back to town. The Reeds' two daughters, Abby Jennings and Kelsie Reed, will manage the shop, projected to open in the spring or summer of next year.

"We're hoping to make a positive addition to the town, and it will be wonderful to see people hanging out on the porch," Pamela remarks. Kelsie and Abby add that they are looking forward to working together and that they have already decided to offer a selection of basic groceries at the store, as well as operate a deli counter. Beyond that, they will figure out details as they go along. But, Abby, says, "Kelsie is a fabulous baker, and we're putting in a great kitchen," so nearby residents can at least hope for fresh-baked pastries, and coffee that someone else made, right at their doorstep.

While these structures were given a second life, other historic buildings were not as lucky. Two, known in the neighborhood as "Porters Store" and "Stiehle House," were condemned as unsafe. Their demolitions earlier this year by order of Ancram's Building Department left



The 1858 Porters Store building, which served as both a general store and post office for Ancram, was razed in June 2020; all that remains is part of the stone foundation and an empty lot next to the Ancram tavern.

behind empty lots in the center of town, on opposite sides of Route 82. Stiehle House (see photo on p. 14) was next door to the firehouse, and Porters Store was across from the SWM Mill.

Christopher White, president of APG, which bought the long-vacant Stiehle House about five years ago with hopes of preserving it and still owns the empty lot, was saddened by its destruction. APG had just stabilized the building, he said, when a drunk driver crashed into the front and drove clean through it one night, causing damage and leading to the demolition order. While the exact year of the home's construction is not known, parts of it were probably built well over a century ago. "It was not architecturally significant," White observes. "Still, it served as a gateway, the first thing you would see when approaching from any direction, and was one of the buildings that enclosed Ancram's center." Like some other old towns, the layout of Ancram is peculiar, he adds, and "Stiehle was its physical anchor, like the wall of a medieval city. It was a significant part of the urban fabric." As to the future of the small lot, APG will be considering various options that fit with the "quirky charm" of Ancram.

Porters Store is also gone. Built in 1858 by John Porter it served for some time as a general store and post office for Ancram. By the 1980s the three-story edifice was unoccupied and began a swift decline. It was finally demolished by the owners in June of this year, and is today an empty lot, part of the changing terrain in the hamlet. To some, the demolished buildings were eyesores, and will not be missed. But to those who value historic preservation, the changes brought by the wrecking ball are poignant. A portion of Ancram's identity is embodied in its old structures, White notes. "They are part of the shared heritage of this community, part of the physical tapestry of our past." But, while Stiehle House and Porters Store may now be lost to memory and photographs, other historic buildings in the Ancram Hamlet, such as Simons and The Little Store, have found fresh purpose. This renewed vibrancy and commercial life, in the place of vacancy and disrepair, are likely to be welcomed by local residents.

Standing Tall—The Restoration of a Local Cemetery

By Lynne Perrella



Pat's Road cemetery, dating from 1755 and carefully restored by Ancramdale resident Bill Cohan, catches the day's last rays. Photo by Bonnie Hundt.

When most news seems like bad news, a feel-good tale of history, preservation and stewardship is a welcome respite. The story of Pat's Road Cemetery is about perennial Ancram families, as well as current-day neighbors, and the importance of both.

Long before Ancram's two local churches were built, and before the one-room schoolhouse on Pooles Hill Road was constructed, a small cemetery was created a few yards from the 1755 Hoysradt Barn. Surrounded by a dignified stone wall, this grassy plot of farmland became the final resting place of Benjamin I. Stever in 1831. Archives from our Town Historians reveal that Benjamin, 31-year-old son of Jacob and Anna Maria Strever, was eventually followed by other family members.....Fanny, Eve, Samuel, and others. Inscribed stone markers for Strevers, Hoysradts, and Tanners stand in silent rows, overseen by a simple-but-regal pediment. Surrounded on all sides by rolling farmland, the view from the cemetery hasn't changed much since the 1800s. It is still beautiful in every season.

Like most old graveyards, Pat's Road Cemetery succumbed to inevitable decay. Lichen-encrusted headstones tipped forward and some broke.

The overgrown stone wall was in a tumbled state, and vines invaded every surface. The tall pediment still stood at attention, although it surveyed a scene ripe for restoration.

Enter landowner Bill Cohan. The atmospheric old cemetery is part of his parcel of land, and once he began planning the rehabilitation, it took only a couple of months (and a lot of specialized expertise) to bring the cemetery back to its current admirable condition. Cartie Ovitt, from northwestern Connecticut, brought his various skills and astute attention to detail to the project, creating a special triangular winch device to lift the tombstones and re-set them into their rightful positions. A few broken headstones were carefully pieced together, and now rows of upright, stalwart stones face the pediment, and order has been restored. The tumbled stone wall has been re-jiggered, maybe even better than new. Cohan observes: "I wanted to restore the cemetery to as close to its original condition—that was the right thing to do and it was a long time coming".

A drive past the rehabilitated Pat's Road Cemetery is a worthwhile outing. Slow down and take a long look. Pretty soon the surrounding landscape will turn from autumn-gold to winter-pale... still providing beautiful views in every season.

Voting FAQs for Ancram Voters

By Cathy Redlich

Voting used to mean simply showing up at your local polling place on election day to cast a ballot, but voting during Covid has fueled concerns about crowds, queuing, and safety. Fortunately, all registered voters can skip in-person voting or vote early to minimize crowding. The following Q and A gives you options for voting in the upcoming November 3, 2020 election.

Q: How do I know if I am registered to vote?

A: You can find out if you are registered to vote by going to voterlookup.elections.ny.gov

Q: Can I vote in person *before* the November 3, 2020 General Election day?

A: Yes. In New York State, any registered voter can vote early at the designated polling place for his or her county. Voting during early voting is the same as voting on Election Day. When you get to the early voting site, you will check in to vote, receive your ballot, and vote as in any other election.

Q: When can I vote early?

A: Columbia County early voting hours are:

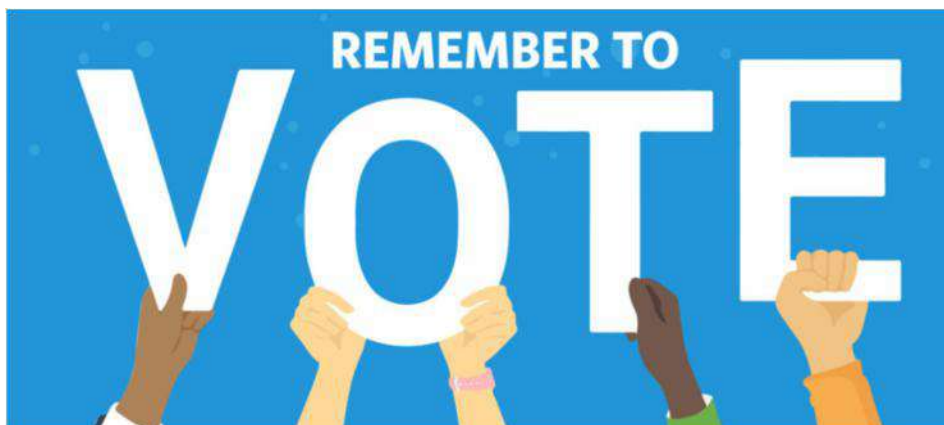
Sat., Oct 24: 9am-2pm
Sun., Oct 25: 9am-2pm
Mon., Oct 26: noon-8pm
Tues., Oct 27: 9am-5pm
Wed., Oct 28: Noon-8pm
Thurs., Oct 29: 9am-5pm
Fri., Oct 30: 9am-5pm
Sat., Oct 31: 9am-2pm
Sun., Nov 1: 9am-2pm

Q: Where can I vote early?

A: Registered voters in Columbia County can vote early at the Columbia County Board of Elections, 401 State Street, Hudson, NY 12534.

Q: Can I vote by absentee ballot?

A: Yes. Due to the COVID-19 situation, the Election Law was recently amended to allow **EVERY VOTER** who is registered to vote in the November 3, 2020 General Election to vote by absentee ballot on the basis of "Temporary illness



or physical disability." You do **NOT** need to be sick or infected with the COVID-19 virus. The risk of exposure to COVID-19 has been designated a sufficient basis for everyone to vote by absentee ballot.

Q: How do I get an absentee ballot?

A: You must apply for one. If you did not already receive an application for an absentee ballot in the mail, you may request one online at absenteeballot.elections.ny.gov. Or you may download one online at elections.ny.gov/NYSBOE/download/voting/AbsenteeBallot-English.pdf.

Q: What is the deadline for applying for an absentee ballot?

A: The last day to apply online, by email, or to postmark an application for an absentee ballot is October 27, 2020. The last day to apply in person at the Board of Elections for an absentee ballot is November 2, 2020.

Q: Once I receive my absentee ballot, what is the deadline for mailing it in?

A: The ballot must be postmarked on or before November 3, 2020.

Q: Can I deliver an absentee ballot in person?

A: Yes. You can deliver your ballot in person to the Columbia County Board of Elections on or before November 3, 2020, or to your designated polling place on November 3, 2020 to avoid waiting in line to vote in person.

Q: Where is my polling place?

A: Ancram Election District 1: Ancram Town Hall, 1416 County Route 7, Ancram.
Ancram Election District 2: Ancramdale Fellowship Hall, 15 County Route 8, Ancramdale.

Q: During what hours may I vote on November 3, 2020?

A: The polls are open between 6 am-9 pm

Q: Can I bring someone with me into the voting booth to help me vote?

A: Section 208 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) gives every voter the right to bring someone of their choice into the voting booth if they need help voting. If you have trouble reading or writing English, have poor vision or are blind, or have another disability, a person of your choosing can assist you in the voting booth, as long as it's not your union representative or employer. You can also ask for a pair of poll workers—a Democrat and a Republican—to assist you.

Q: What If I get to the polls and my name isn't on the voter list, or my signature is missing? Can I still vote?

A: Yes. The first thing to do is to ask the poll worker if you are at the correct polling place. If you are, you have a right to vote by a paper "affidavit ballot." You will be asked to sign an oath saying you are registered, mark a paper ballot, and seal it in an envelope. Election officials will later check their records to see if you are registered and if you were at the right poll site. If yes, your vote will be cast. If not, you will receive a notice to that effect.

Ancram and the Rural Housing Boom

By Bobbie Slonevsky



Six homes that had lingered on the market in the Long Lake Community of Ancramdale sold this summer in the space of 6 weeks, even generating a few bidding wars, as buyers saw the desirability of living in a less congested environment during the pandemic.

Anyone who has ever bought or sold a house is familiar with the real estate mantra “location, location, location.” At least that *was* the mantra... until the pandemic. Now we hear “space, space, space”—space indoors and out for locked-down kids, office space for two adults not just living, but also working, at home, and space for fired or furloughed adult children who can no longer afford their former living arrangements.

The effect of COVID has been to drive residents out of bigger cities and crowded apartments into smaller cities, towns and rural areas. Many have bought country homes and occupied them more or less full-time while the coronavirus is still with us. Others who have used their vacation homes part-time in the past have decided to move into them permanently. Nationwide, these less congested geographies have become boomtowns—or in current parlance, Zoomtowns, for the electronic technology that has allowed people to work from anywhere. And Ancram is no exception.

Typically in our town, real estate offerings have lingered on the market for some time and price adjustments have

often been required before they have sold. Not so now. According to Jennifer Capala of William Pitt Sotheby’s, the company’s home sales in Ancram and Ancramdale from March through the early weeks of September 2020 have more than doubled as compared to the same period in 2019. The median sale price, Capala reports, is up 25 percent. Properties remain on the market for a very short time and multiple bids are not unusual—a previously unheard of occurrence in this region. Cases in point:

- A large home with scenic views in Ancramdale was put on the market in 2017. Often with high-end homes, the seven-figure price and corresponding tax bite constitute a barrier to entry for many prospective home buyers, thus requiring a long wait before just the right person comes along. And that’s what happened here. There were a number of price reductions...to no avail. Then in the rural rush of COVID, the property was bid substantially back up and sold.
- The Long Lake community off Wiltsie Bridge Road in Ancramdale

is a mix of permanent and part-time residents. Its concept of low-maintenance, free-standing homes—for which much of the maintenance is borne by the homeowner association—was extremely popular in the early 2000s. However, in the aftermath of the recession, houses up for resale moved slowly. Even seemingly solid deals sometimes fell apart. Until COVID. There were six homes on the market this summer. They all sold within a matter of six weeks... and two of them were the subject of bidding wars.

Another authoritative take on the subject comes from Ancram’s Building Inspector, Zoning and Code Enforcement Officer, Ed Ferratto. When COVID first emerged, “Everything shut down,” he remembers—there was zero demand for building permits, title searches, certificates of occupancy, etc. But within a short time, that state of affairs changed dramatically. New owners and formerly temporary residents now spending more time in their Ancram homes fueled a whirlwind of renovations, and increased demand for building permits along with them. As of September 2020, Ed reports, the number of permits issued was way over last year’s number, bringing in some \$5,000 more in revenue. Title searches reflected a similar trend: punctuating a steady demand, there were times when the department got as many as six requests in a day. “Normally we wouldn’t get six requests in even a month,” the building officer explained.

Perhaps all this shouldn’t be much of a surprise. Although COVID may be the driving force, Ancram has its allure. Its southern Columbia County location makes it conveniently close to the metropolitan area for those who are still tethered there. It is also quiet, with beautiful views—many of them protected by conservation easements. So buyers know that their cherished panorama (and investment) will always be there.

(Continued on Page 6)

HOME SALES

(Continued from page 5)

Some people worry that the influx of more permanent residents could have a negative impact on our town. It is true that there has been a significant increase in traffic, and a corresponding increase in the number of speeding tickets issued by sheriff's deputies and state police.

Schools come to mind too. Has there been an unmanageable rise in student enrollment? Not according to the superintendents of both the Pine Plains and Taconic Hills Central School Districts. An increase in the public school population has been either non-existent or minimal, and because the number of students has been in decline in recent years, any new students are easily absorbed. Town Supervisor Art Bassin is clear: other than the uptick in traffic, he is unaware of any ill effects of the real estate boom.

One reason Ancram may have been insulated from such effects is that, in absolute terms, there is not a great deal of housing stock available in our area. In fact, there never has been. But COVID has limited it even more. Older residents are the demographic most likely to sell. Now, sticking close to home, they may see moving as something of a health threat. In addition, all those previously empty rooms, the thing that usually spurs the decision to sell and downsize in the first place, may now be occupied by returning children or extended family.

Now that the summer is over, says Capala, activity is quieting down somewhat. Of course, nobody knows when COVID will disappear. If it continues through the winter and city people are feeling even more cooped-up and crowded than during the nice weather, we may yet see another boom. Even if the pandemic recedes, many experts are predicting that the ability of professionals to do their job from home will forever change work and living patterns, and the current trend of abandoning urban centers will continue.

Wonderful news if you have any thought at all of selling your home!

One Family's Journey to Ancram

J.T. was living with her husband and two toddler boys (1 and 2 ½ years old) on two floors of a Brooklyn brownstone. Pre-COVID, both parents worked outside the home and left the boys with a caregiver. After hours, when everyone was home, there seemed to be plenty of space for everyone and Mom and Dad felt very lucky to have such a living situation.

Then came COVID. The parents had to work from home. The boys could no longer go out to the local playground or library and so remained indoors. And because the family's living space featured an open floor plan, "There was nowhere we could escape from one another," J.T. lamented.

They were familiar with our area and found it beautiful. They had never bought a second home, however, because they felt "It was just too far to drive with two very young children." But now with the ability to work remotely and not have to commute back and forth, it was time to reconsider.

Through March, April and May, the family temporarily abandoned Brooklyn and rented a home in Pine Plains. Then they took the plunge. They went into contract to purchase a home in Ancram. Child care has been a bit problematic and has caused them to commute back to Brooklyn somewhat more than they would like. However, as soon as that part of the puzzle is solved, they look forward to spending extended time in their new home in Ancram.



For Sale signs have sprouted along the rural roads of Ancram as sellers see a good opportunity.

Animals May Be the Best Medicine

By Lucy Sheldon

Editor's Note: Lucy responded to our Invitation for teen reporters, and we are delighted to have her on board. She is 15 years old and a high school sophomore, now living in Ancram with her family.

Covid-19 came as a surprise to most of us, and we were ill prepared to deal with its effects. The last time the United States went through a nationwide pandemic similar to Covid-19 was in 1918 with the H1N1 virus, often referred to as the Spanish flu. What we are experiencing as a country is historical: a pandemic coupled with a financial crisis. The virus holds no prejudice and affects everyone, so as a country we have tried to wear masks and socially distance. We have managed to come up with creative ways, some more successful than others, to continue to work and do school either safely in-person or online. Although we've addressed the problem of remaining physically safe, we haven't done as much to manage the crippling effects of quarantine on a person's mental health.

Living in Ancram, I have seen how caring for animals can positively influence a person's mental health. Owning a pet of any description can make a difference in a person's outlook and well-being. My family and I have adopted and cared for animals since I was born in 2005. We began with two dogs and three cats, but once we bought a bigger house in the country we began to expand our family of animals. We now have one cow, two dogs, two cats, two rabbits, two sheep, three donkeys, five ducks, and seven chickens. To care and look after these animals has been both a blessing and a privilege.

It's rewarding to care for an animal. The chores and responsibilities range from just giving water and food, to picking fields and cleaning a shed. The animals that require more work are the farm animals rather than the indoor animals. The chickens are let out usually by 9 am every morning. They roam freely throughout the day but must be ushered in late at



Lucy Sheldon finds caring for the family's farm animals an antidote to the stress of Covid. Here she grooms Xeyna and Jojo, mother and son donkeys.

night. We fill up a baby pool for the ducks to splash around in during the day outside of the coop, even though they are welcome to swim in our ponds. I clean the coop thoroughly once a week and fill with fresh bedding. I also fill the 4-gallon water jug and the other 2-gallon jug with fresh water and put in a full bag of feed once a week. The sheep and donkeys live together and we give approximately a bale of hay a day and then feed them all-stock sweet feed twice a day. We have to pick their field and shed about once a week to keep their habitat clean.

The cow has been the most difficult to handle. The first few months of life for a cow are critical because they are more susceptible to infection and diseases. She had Cocksackie for a week or two which we treated with two shots of penicillin and we gave her a ton of electrolytes to keep her hydrated. She gets fed two pints of milk three times a

day six hours apart, 7 am, 1 pm, and 7 pm because she needs to digest it. Owning as many animals as we do is not a realistic option for everyone, but even adopting a cat or dog can offer many benefits. Caring for another living creature may encourage a person to leave the house to exercise their pets, provide a calming effect, offer a fun distraction during a time of isolation, and give a pet owner purpose and structure. Covid-19 has taken a toll on everyone's mental health in some manner and the depression rate has spiked since the pandemic began. Contributing factors to the rise in depression rates include the required physical distance, loss of community, and reduced access to either kids and grandkids or parents and grandparents. Having an animal in your life may not necessarily rid one of all of the stress and sadness that Covid brings, but it can definitely be a rewarding and supportive activity in this time of need.

Harlem Valley Rail Trail Adds Eight Miles, for a 23-Mile Unbroken Stretch

By Bobbie Slonevsky

It's finally happening! The new Millerton-to-Undermountain segment of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail (HVRT) is projected to open around Thanksgiving, and it is beautiful.

The Taconic Range rises into view on one side, while the trail itself—unusually open and expansive—passes through native wetlands that have been undisturbed for 50 years. Beaver, snapping turtles, salamander, snakes and birds—an extraordinary number and variety of birds—are some of the creatures you can expect to see. Six bridges over gurgling creeks provide the perfect observation platforms. And the biggest bridge, some 1300 feet long, runs along a shallow lake between White House Crossing and Undermountain. The lake is thought to be a seasonal home to many migratory water fowl—including magnificent Sandhill cranes, heron, geese, ducks and possibly even nesting swans. Indeed, in the opinion of both Dick Hermans, Chairman of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association (HVRTA), and Lisa DeLeeuw, its Executive Director, this is probably the greatest section yet.

Users of the trail know that the ultimate vision is a *continuous* 46-mile path stretching from the Wassaic Metro-North train station all the way to Chatham (see map). With the new eight-mile segment, just about 50 percent of the dream—from Wassaic to Orphan Farm Road—has come true. But it hasn't been easy.

The idea of the trail was conceived after the New York/Penn Central rail bed

north of Wassaic was abandoned through the 1970s and into 1980. From the outset, the need for relentless grant-writing and fund-raising on the part of HVRTA, plus complicated construction and construction permitting have characterized the decades-long project. And the most difficult and time-consuming section of all has likely been the current one.

Wetlands are, of course, environmentally sensitive.” Beaver, in particular, are aggressively protected. Still, it is hard to believe that it took 13 years to get a permit from the State to build along the Millerton-Undermountain tract.

Normally, Hermans explains, no construction at all is allowed in Class 1 wetlands in New York State. However, the rail bed was laid through the area so long ago that it preceded any environmental laws. So there was room for argument. Happily, HVRTA's argument in favor prevailed. Naturally that meant that New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) was going to be especially demanding and vigilant. And it was. While the Dutchess County Department of Public Works (DCDPW) repeatedly proposed simple and relatively inexpensive ways to do the construction, DEC insisted, over and over again, on all the most rigorous techniques. Permits were even required from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. And as the trail passes through Class 2 and 3 wetlands as well, each class required separate engineering approaches.



DANGER!

The Millerton-Undermountain section of the rail trail is still under construction and **CLOSED**. Please keep off until the barriers are removed.



The new 8-mile segment of the Hudson Valley Rail Trail, soon to be open to the public, passes through wetlands and forests, with views of a pristine lake and gurgling streams, and provides bikers and walkers ample opportunity to see a variety of birds and waterfowl.

One of the major concerns, in addition to protecting wildlife habitats, was the prevention of trail erosion where there is water on both sides. The bridges that span these areas are designed to keep water levels equal on both sides, thus preventing water from rushing high to low and eating into the ground the trail is built on. For durability, the bridge surfaces are made of heavy concrete slabs, which, in turn, require uncompromising stability. Thus it was compulsory to drill down into bedrock to sink the steel posts that support the slabs.

Despite all the challenges, triumph is just weeks away. So, what's next after the new segment opens?

The first order of business, according to Hermans, will be HVRTA and DCDPW's joint project, a "Bridge to Nature" display on (and to either side of) the widest bridge. Located about 1,000 feet north of Millerton, it will explain the area's natural

history, including its ecology, geology, plant life, biodiversity, evolution of land forms and the chronology of human presence. Pending design approval, there will be benches at the site of the exhibit and possibly even a weather station.

After that, the focus will be to join Orphan Farm Road with the completed, but still unconnected, Black Grocery portion of the trail. Plans call for the construction of a new pedestrian/biking bridge across Route 22. It will rise from Black Grocery, where a former railroad bridge once stood before being removed in the mid-1990s. Then a mile-long trail segment will be developed south of that to connect with Orphan Farm Road.

The Federal and State governments have provided \$1.9 million and \$238,000 respectively in funding to support these projects, with the proviso that another \$238,000 be matched locally. HVRTA has already begun its fund-raising and urges

Ancram residents to donate whatever you can (<http://hvrt.org/donate/>). In recent years, proceeds from the September "Roe-Jan Ramble" bike ride have contributed significantly to the HVRTA coffers. This year, because of COVID, the event has been canceled. Nevertheless, riders are being encouraged "to ramble on your own," to quote the website (roejanramble.org), and contribute. Routes (some new), maps and cue sheets are available on the site, as is a link to the rail trail's donation screen.

There's no doubt the HVRT has become an iconic feature of life in our region. Cyclists, kids learning to be cyclists, walkers, runners, even skate-boarders revel in the largely traffic-free space. Particularly in this time of COVID, it offers a relatively safe, outdoor venue for exercise. And soon the new Millerton-to-Undermountain segment will wow you with its spectacular landscapes and wildlife.

Ancram Horse Farms

Part of Our Historic Agricultural Landscape

By Marie-Claude Stockl

The role of horse farms in our community has evolved over the centuries, but they remain integral to the fabric of Ancram's agricultural community, and a continuation of Hudson Valley history. For as long as the Hudson Valley has been settled, there have been horses to plow fields, carry soldiers to battle, provide transportation and entertain us.

Impact on Local Economy

Ancram might well be viewed as a microcosm of NY State, where the equine industry is the second largest agricultural commodity after dairy. In this small rural community, no less than four working/commercial horse farms house 115 horses, and if one includes private horse farms, the number is possibly double. They offer services ranging from boarding, lessons, breeding, and competition to corporate team building.

Horses are notorious hay burners, and it takes a village to feed them. "We have good hay around here," says Bill Broe of A Horse Drawn Affair, who sources his hay from nearby Rothvoss Farm. Kristy and Ronan Moloney, who own and operate Kinnitty Capall Stables, spend "tens of thousands of dollars" on hay every year, mostly from farms within a 3-mile radius. Cricket Hill has put 60 of their 200 acres in hay fields.

Here By Choice

None of the families who own and operate horse farms in Ancram grew up here. All of them chose Ancram as their home. They are effusive about their love of the area, their animals, and farm life.

When Sue and Art Bassin purchased Cricket Hill Farm in 1978, they raised dairy herd replacement stock, selling or leasing 120 calves a year to dairy farmers until 1986. They built the smaller barn on their property for mares and foals in 1984, and erected the 46-stall barn and indoor arena in 1986, which has been open to the public since 1987. "We chose Ancram for the same reason people choose it today: beautiful, open land," they explain.



Bill Broe of A Horse Drawn Affair demonstrates his carriage driving skills with his Morgan horse Rosevale Leggo.

Marie-Claude and Larry Stockl sold their Manhattan apartment in 1994 and purchased a 20-stall horse facility now known as The Horse Institute. Marie-Claude grew up in France, Larry in California. "We visited 12 horse farms in March, when horses were knee deep in mud. The only farm with good drainage was in Ancramdale," says Larry Stockl. They added an indoor arena, and they have been in operation for 26 years.

Bill Broe, who hails from the Adirondacks, bought his horse farm with his wife Nancy in 1999 from Dr. Peter Auld. Dr. Auld still retains 20 acres and calls Ancramdale his home. "Hands down, Ancramdale is one of the nicest places I have been in my life because it is quiet," says Broe. Since Nancy's passing, his daughter Daniele Fiore has teamed up with her father to operate the business.

Ronan and Kristy Moloney founded Kinnitty Capall Stables in 2008 and moved to their current location in 2015. "We love the area, it is beautiful, and the clientele is here," says Kristy. "Their farm was empty for five years before they bought it. They work hard at

improving it. "The farm family is our family," Kristy adds.

Sustainability

When asked if a horse business can be profitable, Bill Broe puts it this way: "There is a point in the horse business where you can handle a lot of money but it does not stay around very long." Sue Bassin sums it up: "Few understand how demanding the work is. In the end, horse farming is a farming enterprise, not just a sport."

Bottom line, there is no economy of scale in the horse business: more horses mean longer hours for daily horse care, facility repairs, and pasture management, plus grooming, working and training horses. Finding reliable help and taking time off is an issue, as horses need care every day of the year.

The secret to these four horse farms' longevity is hard work by the owners, finding their niche or comfort zone, and loving what they do.

For example, The Horse Institute supplements its boarding business with team building and leadership development programs that have brought executives



Ronan Moloney of Kinnitty Stables participates in the cross-country water complex, part of a three-day event that has its roots in a comprehensive cavalry test requiring mastery of several types of riding: dressage, show jumping and cross-country.

from all parts of the world to learn non-verbal communication and emotional intelligence from horses. "We saw an opportunity to leverage our corporate backgrounds, we saw a new way to partner with horses to provide experiential executive coaching that accelerates the learning process," says Larry Stockl.

Cricket Hill is able to support animal science in local schools with "hands on" labs on the farm for Future Farmers of America (FFA) and 4-H through its Cricket Hill Academy, a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit NY corporation. Clinics, shows, and camps help raise money. "One of our important programs with the Pine Plains school has been running for five years," notes Sue Bassin. "It is free of charge for 4th and 5th graders, many who have never touched a horse."

Not surprisingly, the pandemic has increased interest in outdoor activities that allow social distancing. Kristy Moloney reports an increase in lessons. "Boarders who used to ride on the weekend are now booking lessons and riding three or four times a week," she notes.

Whoa Nelly!

Regrettably, the pandemic has also brought an influx of fast drivers to the

area's picturesque but winding country roads. Broe, who teaches his horses to drive carriages, is particularly aware of the danger of speeding cars around blind curves. "Radar speed signs have helped," he says. Kristy Moloney concurs, adding that kids, barn cats and dogs are also at risk.

Under New York State law, motorists must "exercise due care to avoid colliding with any horse being ridden or led along a public highway"; "shall approach a horse...at a reasonable and prudent speed..."; and shall not "sound the horn when approaching or passing a horse...". NY VTL 1146-A. In short, *slow down* when you see a horse; your neighbors will be thankful, and you will avoid a potentially catastrophic accident.

In these uncertain times when lives are upended, Winston Churchill's famous quote comes to mind: "There is something about the outside of a horse that's good for the inside of a man". It may just be that horses are needed more than ever to teach humans to be in the present, shed anxiety, and help them exercise. Fortunately for the residents of Ancram, the horses are a hop and a skip away.

Scroll down for information on some local horse farms, and happy trails to all!

Cricket Hill Farm

Founded: 1978

Owners: Sue and Art Bassin

Trainers: Kira Steines-Mason, Krys Schrom, Nina Trotto

Disciplines: Dressage, jumping for cross country and stadium

Services: Boarding, training, lessons, shows

Breeds: Hanoverian, Dutch Warmblood, Holsteiner, Welsh Pony, Pony of the Americas, Quarter Horse, Iberian, Belgian, Thoroughbred, Irish Sport Horse

Website: crickethillfarm.org

Fun facts:

- Eight school horses that are show worthy
- Entered the Columbia Land Conservancy in 2001
- Camp cancelled due to COVID-19, reservations recommended for next year

The Horse Institute

Founded: 1994

Owners: Larry and Marie-Claude Stockl

Trainers: Reinhard Teetor, Bree Sprik

Disciplines: Working equitation, fox hunting, Equine Assisted Learning (EAL)

Services: Boarding, training, clinics, team building, leadership development

Breeds: Dutch Warmblood, Hanoverian, Irish Sport Horse, Canadian Sport Horse, Thoroughbred, Selle Français, Quarter Horse, Fresian

E-mail: mc@thehorseinstitute.com

Website: thehorseinstitute.com

Fun facts:

- Indoor arena will be open to the community on Sundays through the Winter, reservations required to comply to COVID-19 guidelines.
- Schedule includes horse circles for non-riders; and working equitation play dates - Bring Your Own Horse (BYOH), open to all disciplines.



Kira Steines-Mason, Cricket Hill's head trainer, competes at the Regional Championships on Dellah, a Hanoverian Arabian cross bred on the farm.

A Horse Drawn Affair

Founded: 1999

Owner: Bill Broe

Trainers: Bill Broe, Daniele Fiore

Disciplines: Dressage, Driving, Hunters, Field Hunters

Services: Training, sales, boarding,

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HORSE FARMS

(Continued from page 11)



"Leadership Box" is one of 40 activities used at The Horse Institute in its leadership training course. Here, 1,500-lb Lance willingly joins up with an executive who invited him to her circle of influence because she exuded confidence and used effective non-verbal communication.



Local students proudly display their Certificates of Achievements after completing a three-week Horsemanship Program offered free of charge by the Cricket Hill Academy, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit. Krys Schrom, pictured, teaches the program.

breeding

Breeds: Morgan, Hanovarian, warm-bloods

Website: ahorsedrawnaffair.com

Fun facts:

- Bill Broe's horses have appeared in movies and commercials
- Resident stallion is Rosevale Leggo (Rumbrook Immortal Image x Meziadan Royal Teala)

Kinnitty Stables

Founded: 2008

Owners: Ronan and Kristy Moloney

Trainers: Ronan Moloney (jumping), Kristy Moloney (dressage)

Disciplines: Eventing, fox hunting

Services: Boarding, training, shows, breeding, sales

Breeds: Thoroughbred, Caspian, Percheron cross, pony, Tennessee Walkers, donkey, rescue horses

Fun facts:

- The plastic horse skeleton in the driveway was originally a Halloween decoration. It became a permanent fixture (and Instagram worthy) when the rivets froze. "Bony pony", as it is now known, sports seasonal accoutrements.
- Ronan Moloney takes 14 customers to compete in South Carolina for three months every winter.

Oops! We Missed Two Ancram 2020 Graduates

In our last issue, we congratulated graduating seniors from Taconic Hills and Stissing Mountain high schools. We did not realize that some Ancram high schoolers attend Germantown High School. A proud mother brought this to our attention.

Congratulations and best wishes to Germantown High School 2020 graduates:

- **Clayton Thomas Gilbert Meriam**, who is attending Hudson Valley Community College as a Business major
- **Paige Handlowich**, who is attending Columbia Greene Community College

Historic Marker Unveiled in Boston Corner

By Marie-Claude Stockl

The Ancram hamlet of Boston Corner, as many residents know, has a colorful history. Formerly part of the town of Mount Washington, Massachusetts, it was ceded from Massachusetts to New York on January 11, 1855, because its geographical isolation from the rest of Massachusetts made maintaining law and order difficult. In short, the state boundaries were altered to rid Massachusetts of a troublesome area that could presumably be better policed by New York.

A new blue and yellow border marker now highlights roughly where the original stone marker, believed to have been erected in 1731, marked the pre-1855 southwest corner of Massachusetts. The exact location of the original stone marker remained somewhat of a mystery until it was identified by local residents Jim Mackin, Bruce Darling and Jane Peck on the Boston Corner property of Carol Falcetti and Norman Osofsky. The trio located the survey marker by using coordinates found in an internet blog discussing how a small corner of Massachusetts became part of New York.¹

The new marker was unveiled on September 12, 2020 before an audience of area residents, including Boston Corner Community Organization chairman Carol Falcetti and Ancram Town Supervisor Art Bassin. It was made possible through a grant from the Pomeroy Foundation, which has funded over 1,200 signs across the United States since 2006. Falcetti applied for the grant and Ancram Planning Board Clerk John Hoffman assisted in the application process.

¹ <https://forums.geocaching.com/GC/index.php?/topic/260609-tri-state-station-that-never-was/&tab=comments#comment-4481386>.



BCCO chair Carol Falcetti and husband Norman Osofsky pose with the new marker at the September unveiling.



The original survey marker designating the former SW corner of Massachusetts, thought to date to 1731.



The Stiehle House, over a century old and an informal gateway into the Ancram town center, was razed after a car drove through it in July 2020. The Ancram Preservation Group, which owns the lot, is considering suitable options for its future use.