

Ancram TownNews

Spring-Summer 2021

Historic Farming Community Moving Forward

Raising Chickens in Ancram

A Local Farmer Shares Her Wisdom

By Cathy Redlich

The green “Welcome to Ancram” signs that greet visitors entering our town also identify Ancram as “An Agricultural Community,” a description that some find unduly optimistic and others argue is still accurate. Corn and soybean fields may have given way to hay, and horse farms may now outnumber dairy farms, but what about the new generation of farmers experimenting with innovative farming methods, those raising animals such as alpacas, tending bees, growing barley to make whiskey, or raising fruit and flower crops? Whatever one’s view, we can all agree on one thing: the traditional farm usually had chickens, those comical, entertaining, and highly useful animals that enliven the barnyard and bring joy to many.

Linda Pulver of Pleasant View Farm, a dairy farm operated by the Pulver family for generations, has pointers for anyone thinking of becoming a backyard chicken farmer. If you have stopped by Linda’s



Fresh eggs are one of the best perks of living in a rural community.

greenhouse on Winchell Mountain Road to purchase flowers for planting, you have also had the privilege of sitting for a few minutes to de-stress while listening to the contented clucking of her chickens. Linda’s farming credentials go way back. She grew up on a dairy farm in Copake, which she recalls as a wonderful upbringing, and met her husband Jeff Pulver at the Dutchess County Fair where both were showing cows. Linda says that all the young people in dairy farming met through the Eastern NY Holstein Club. Jeff’s grandfather, Stanley Pulver, purchased their 260-acre dairy farm in the 1930s, and Stanley’s several brothers all had dairy farms in the area as well. Stanley’s son Jack and his wife Jean (they too met at the Dutchess County Fair in 1956 and married in 1957) continued to operate Pleasant View as a dairy farm, eventually partnering with their oldest son Jeff who carried on the business.

Selecting A Breed Of Chicks

Linda started raising chickens eight years ago, drawn to the “old time” feel

of having chickens around. The farm’s spring house, formerly used to keep milk cans cool before refrigeration, provided “a perfect spot for a coop,” Linda explains. It is close to the Pulvers’ house, making it easy to enjoy her flock’s antics, collect eggs, and hear their gentle murmuring. “They are comical birds and each has a distinct personality,” Linda says. And, of course, Linda believes fresh eggs have more flavor, a brighter yolk, and a firmer consistency than refrigerated supermarket eggs.

The chicken barn at any local county fair will give you an idea of the many chicken breeds available, from the fancy breeds developed for their exotic appearance to production breeds known for egg production. Others may be meat breeds or dual breeds, combining any of these traits. The first step is figuring out what chicken breeds will best suit your purposes. Linda’s focus is egg production, both for personal use and for selling. Many backyard chicken raisers choose to go with dual-purpose heritage breeds

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RAISING CHICKENS

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for their first flock. Heritage chicken breeds have been genetically preserved over the years and have a breed history. These breeds are often easy to acquire, have friendly temperaments, are hardy, and still produce a good quantity of eggs or meat. Some popular beginner breeds recommended by Linda include the Barred Rock, a black and white chicken; the Rhode Island Red; the Leghorn, a white chicken familiar to cartoon fans as the rooster Foghorn Leghorn; and the Cochin, a large, fluffy bird known for its gentle disposition.

"Another relaxed, beautiful, and easy-going chicken," says Linda, "is the Buff Orpington, which is also a hardy breed that does well in colder climates like Ancram's." Their profusion of feathers keep them warm in winter, and they are reputed to like cuddling with their human caretakers.

Another consideration when selecting a breed is egg color, which ranges from white to brown to green to blue depending on the breed. Linda observes that people from the city seem to want brown or colored eggs. She speculates that they "think brown eggs are fresher or more 'farmy,' but all eggs are fresh whether brown or white."

Linda purchases her chicks locally from Agway, Tractor Supply, or a hatchery. The chicks are first placed in a brooder, a safe, protected place warmed with a heat lamp or other heat source, where they eat and drink from chick-sized dispensers. When the young females (called pullets) begin to lay small eggs, usually between 20-24 weeks, they are on the way to joining the coop.

A Happy Home Promotes Egg Production

Jeff Pulver built eight nesting boxes inside the old spring house that Linda uses for a chicken coop and installed three roosting bars high up. While many chickens prefer to be outside in Linda's



Linda Pulver of Ancramdale's Pleasant Valley Farm collects eggs several times a day. Her various breeds result in the colorful eggs displayed here.

large fenced pen during the day so as to scratch in the dirt and take dust baths in the holes they dig, all will head inside as darkness falls. For those unfamiliar with a chicken's instinctive needs, chickens settle in for the night on a high perch in order to feel safe from predators. Since they will be resting on the perch for many hours, it needs to be comfortable for their feet (flat), long enough to give each bird sufficient space (8-10 inches), and ideally above the nesting boxes so they don't decide to sleep where they lay their eggs and make a mess.

The phrases "pecking order" and "rule the roost" come to life in the coop, where the older birds claim the higher perches. If Linda is introducing a young pullet into the mix, she does so at night. "I always advise people to bring in a new bird when the others are resting or sleepy so it won't get picked on, and it's better to bring in two birds at once." What about roosters? Linda got rid of her roosters. "They took their job way too seriously," Linda says laughing. "They never let the hens alone. It was too much!" And a rooster is unnecessary if you are raising chickens for eggs not chicks. Linda's coop is a male-free

zone at present, although she admits to missing the morning rooster crow.

Although all the nesting boxes are identical, Linda says that some are "favorites" for reasons known only to the birds themselves. She has entered the coop to find four hens cramming themselves into one box. In general, chickens like a confined space to nest. Linda stresses that, like humans, chickens will be more productive in a pleasant, clean space. She lines her nesting boxes with fresh shavings every day, has a window to bring in daylight, and keeps the coop scrupulously clean. The hens are fed egg-laying pellets and scratch, which is corn and oats, and provided with large quantities of fresh water. In the summer she gives them whatever vegetables and fruits are left over from the garden. They especially love the watermelons that the Pulvers grow, but turn up their noses (or rather, beaks) at banana peels.

"Most chickens will lay at least five days a week," says Linda, "and the heaviest laying is in the morning. Some of the best egg layers will lay 300 eggs a year." With young hens, Linda may place a wooden egg in the nesting box (ever wonder where the phrase "nest egg" came from?) to encourage them to lay in the box and to discourage the chickens from pecking at real eggs once laid. Linda notes that each chicken is born with its lifetime supply of eggs, so as a hen ages its production will drop off. Lower production is also the case in winter when the days are shorter since chickens like the light, or after they moult and are expending energy to grow new feathers. When a hen's production wanes, usually after 6-8 years, Linda permits them to retire in familiar surroundings rather than face the stewpot. After all, they are practically pets.

Free Range?

While some chickens in Ancram can be seen roaming freely around the front yard or barnyard, Linda has her chickens in a roomy pen when outdoors. "Letting them go free on your property will wreak havoc on your landscape," she cautions. And she laughs at the notion that a "free-range" chicken means anything other than one not in a cage 24 hours a day. "If people are envisioning chickens roaming

in green grass surrounded by butterflies, they are mistaken.”

Linda’s chickens are free range, meaning they can freely move from the coop to the outdoor pen and are never confined to a small enclosure. Labels can be misleading, Linda says, so even if eggs are designated “cage-free” or “free-range”, it does not provide any assurance about the cleanliness or air quality of the facility they came from. Which is all the more reason to buy your eggs directly from our local area farmers where transparency is key. “Eggs bought from a local flock are good for at least a month,” Linda says, “if kept refrigerated. If you are using them soon,” she adds “keep them in a basket on the counter for up to a week since room temperature eggs are best for baking.”

Two Last Questions

Believing her to be an expert on all things chicken, we had to ask Linda: “Why did the chicken cross the road?” Linda wrinkled her brow. “To get to the other side?” Linda’s chickens would never cross the road, being too comfortable in their cozy coop, so it is no surprise she didn’t have an answer. Well, how about, “What came first, the chicken or the egg?” Linda wasn’t biting.

What Is Next For Pleasant View Farm?

The Pulver farm is one of the most beautiful in the area, sitting atop Winchell Mountain and straddling Columbia and Dutchess counties, with views in all directions. A number of years ago Linda and Jeff sold development rights to the Dutchess Land Conservancy to keep their property in agriculture, and recently they sold 260 acres to a person who will continue to farm it for hay to sell to horse owners. Their three daughters, Valerie, Laura, and Jenny, are grown and work in other careers, so another generation of Pulver farmers is unlikely. Currently the dairy farm has just a handful of animals left, and Jeff intends to calve out the heifers and then sell the cows and calves after the Dutchess County fair. Linda and Jeff will continue to live on the remaining 120 acres, finally having time to enjoy an easier pace of life.

Solarize Ancram Deadline for Monetary Incentives Approaches

By Suzan Flamm

ANCRAM'S BRIGHT IDEA

Launched in March 2021, the town’s Solarize Ancram campaign has generated over sixty registrations with Solstice Community Solar, indicating significant town interest in renewable energy. These new subscribers to the Landau solar farm in Ulster County will receive a ten percent discount on their Central Hudson electricity bill, plus a \$100 incentive for signing up. Over fifteen percent of Landau’s availability is now claimed by Ancram households and the town garage. The farm is close to full capacity.

As described in the Winter 2021 Town News, www.ancramny.org newsletters, a community solar farm is an array of panels operated by a private company. Energy produced at these farms typically goes directly into the electric grid. Participating with Solstice allows people to connect to a farm with no upfront expense or installation on their own property, or any change to the way their electricity is delivered. Community solar is quickly becoming a popular choice for those whose roofs are too shaded by trees to benefit from solar panels, or who rent their homes. The Landau solar farm, in the Town of Ulster, is situated

on three separate parcels of land that total roughly 64 acres.

At 2.7 megawatts of energy production, the farm generates enough power for approximately 400 homes serviced by Central Hudson.

Why Sign Up?

It’s A Win-Win for The Town & You

Ancram residents who sign up with Solstice by June 30 will:

1. Reduce their energy bill
2. Get a \$100 Visa gift card
3. Generate a \$100 contribution to the Town of Ancram
4. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

It can take a few months between when you enroll with Solstice and when you begin to see solar credits applied on your utility bill, but after that you will enjoy monthly savings. Households can register at app.solstice.us/register?r=ANCRAM or visit www.solstice.us/ancram for more information and to get in touch with an enrollment representative. While Solstice will continue to enroll people who want to support clean energy – at a solar farm other than Landau once it reaches its limit – the deadline for the incentives is June 30th.



Digging holes is an instinctive behavior for chickens. They enjoy taking “dust baths” in these small craters, which serves to keep their feathers clean and rid them of mites, lice and other parasites.

Artisanal Distilling and Sustainability

What's Old Is New Again at Hillrock Estate

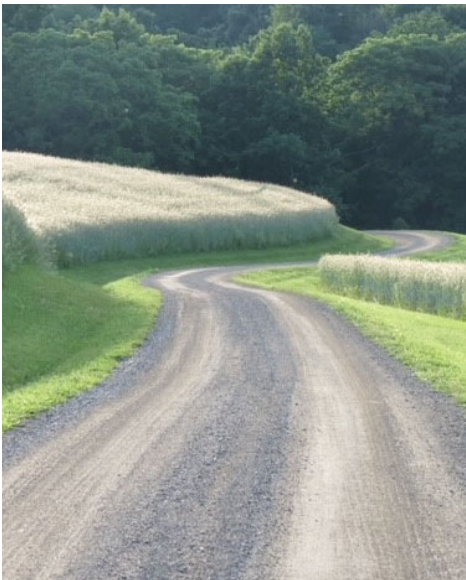
By Marie-Claude Stockl

Looking for a local experience for your family and visitors this summer? Look no further than Poole Hill Road in Ancram, home of Hillrock Distillery, where tours are available 7 days a week by reservation. While the setting is spectacular, the hospitality second to none, perhaps the most memorable part of the experience is learning about the history and sustainability of this and other farms in Ancram.

Hillrock is the perfect convergence of the town's goal to establish Ancram as an attractive place for new and expanded farm ventures, and a couple's vision to become the first distillery in the country that grows its own grain, malts on site, and makes great whiskey by controlling the process and the quality from the field to the glass.

A Field-To-Glass Model

One could say that this farm was 200 years in the making. Way back when, our area was the breadbasket of the country: in the 1820s, New York State



The Estate farms 1,000 acres from Copake to Stanfordville, several hundred of them in Ancram, in order to produce the grains needed for their handcrafted premier spirits.



Situated on Poole Hill Road in Ancram, the Hillrock Estate Distillery offers behind-the-scenes tours of its distillery, malt house, and rickhouse.

grew two-thirds of the barley and 50 percent of the rye in the country. Over one thousand distilleries were producing whiskey and gin. Then came prohibition in the 1930s. Distilleries shut down and, with it, local farming of barley and rye.

Fast forward 90 years and the climate and soil in this part of the country prove right for grain growing. Today's Hillrock Distillery is the brainchild of husband and wife Jeffrey Baker and Cathy Franklin. They are farming 1,000 acres between Stanfordville and Copake, several hundreds of them in Ancram, and produce handcrafted premier spirits traditionally in small batches on the estate.

"The Ancram farmland is the heart of our Field-to-Glass® operation," says Baker. "We are looking for well-drained, gravelly parcels, preferably large ones close to the distillery. When we lease, owners know that we will farm the land organically."

Not surprisingly, given that dairy farms in Ancram have dropped from 15 to four over the last 20 years, much of the land now used to grow grain was previously farmed for dairy. If the fields were planted in corn, and sprayed with pesticides, Baker puts them in cover crop for several years before harvesting for the distillery.

As with everything in farming, it's not a get-rich-quick scheme. Baker says Hillrock is holding back 80% of its annual whiskey production for long-term aging. "We are doing this for the future, hopefully a generational business." Currently, Hillrock employs over 20 employees. A recent visit suggests that the younger generation is eager to learn the craft, and happy to share their knowledge with visitors.

Farming Sustainability

Impressive as it is to wait several years to produce organic crops, set aside whiskey to age for future blends, and infuse high standards into the next generation, it

begs the question: Is Hillrock's farming model profitable and sustainable?

With his background in finance, Baker is quick to answer: "Yes, we have been profitable for more than 6 years. A decade ago, I knew it had the potential to be successful. We are incredibly proud we pulled it off. Having a profitable business allows us to farm sustainably and contribute to the local economy."

Being profitable in farming locally is the exception, not the rule. Back in 2010, when the Ancram Comprehensive Plan was first released, only 20% of our farmers said they were profitable in 2009, and 40% were just about breaking even. Over 70% of Ancram farmers said they relied on off-the-farm income. The answer to profitability in farming may be what Baker calls "value add" and what the Ancram Comprehensive Plan calls "consumer branding and better quality to justify higher prices" (Ancram Comprehensive Plan 2010). Along with locals Sarah Chase and her brother Rory Chase of Chaseholm Farm, and Jack Peele of JACUTERIE, Baker and his team are producing premium products that fetch prices above and beyond commodity prices to cover their costs and make their farms sustainable.

The one caveat to this farming model is its complexity. "The challenge is to put together farming, a distilling business, retail tours, and a lot of components," adds Baker. "Value add businesses are hard to start. It has been a long time since people have had to sell their own products direct from the farm."

It Takes A Village

Baker credits local supporters including Town Supervisor Art Bassin, Dutchess County Legislature Chairman Gregg Pulver, Barry Chase, the Columbia Land Conservancy and many others. "We would not have proceeded [in Ancram] without being supported." Hillrock and other local farming operations demonstrate that it is possible to maintain the agricultural character of our area, keep the land open, and preserve scenic views with community engagement. Reservations for tours of Hillrock Distillery can be made on the website www.hillrockdistillery.com or by calling 518-329-1023.

Ancram Opera House Theatre Announces Its Sixth Season

By Cathy Redlich

During a bleak 2020, the Ancram Opera House rose to the challenge of providing programming during Covid with virtual and free-of-charge performances that brought live theatre into Ancram homes. AOH will kick off its 2021 summer season in June with two work-in-progress play labs presented virtually, and then in July and August will transition to in-person performances at an array of outdoor venues. The play lab projects, which were selected through a juried RFP process, will be accompanied by related events throughout June, including artist talks and free community workshops.

A bit of mystery and fun will surround the performance of three short original plays during August, each of which will take place at a secret outdoor location near the Opera House. For this special theatrical event, AOH has commissioned works from actor and playwright Frank Boyd; author, actor and activist Celeste Lecesne; and playwright-director Georgina Escobar. The site-specific works will be presented as a progressive performance with audiences traveling by car to each location to experience three self-contained plays in environments relevant to their content.

So mark your calendars and look forward to a season of new and returning artists, real people telling real stories, musical theatre and artistry, and changing outdoor venues. See the full calendar below.

SUMMER PLAY LAB 2021

June 17, 18 and 24, 25 at 8 p.m.
(Streaming)

PERENNIALS (June 17 & 25 at 8 p.m.) is a theatrical concert piece written and performed by the members of Emergence Collective that asks what survival and healing mean as we emerge from this year of pandemic.

SUNWATCHER (June 18 & 24 at 8 p.m.) is the story of astronomer Hisako Koyama (1916-1997), intertwined with the ancient Japanese myth of the sun



The historic Circa 1799 Barn in Ancramdale will serve as the venue for Joseph Keckler in concert on July 24.

goddess Amaterasu, in a music-theatre retelling inspired by the structure of classical Noh theatre.

CRYSTAL RADIO SESSIONS UPSTATE July 10 at 7 p.m.

The Hilltop Barn at Roe-Jan Park, Hillsdale

The featured reading is author Dave King's O. Henry Award-winning short story "The Stamp Collector". A long-time resident of Philmont, Dave is best known for his acclaimed novel, *The Ha-Ha*.

JOSEPH KECKLER IN CONCERT Saturday, July 24 at 8 p.m.

The Circa 1799 Barn, Ancramdale

Joseph Keckler is known for his expressive and powerful voice, sharp prose and stirring songs, and absurdist operatic monologues.

REAL PEOPLE REAL STORIES Saturday, August 7 at 7 p.m.

The Hilltop Barn at Roe-Jan Park, Hillsdale

Four local residents share authentic personal narratives.

THE PLEIN AIR PLAYS August 12, 13, 14, and 15 (Times TBD)

A series of three short original theatre pieces to be performed at three outdoor locations near the Opera House.

LOCAL CHARACTERS

Monthly releases of short segments featuring community residents presented on AOH's website and YouTube channel.

More detail on all upcoming performances is available at www.ancramoperahouse.org.

Artist Eric Sloane and the Green River Gallery

An Interview with Boston Corner Gallerist Art Kerber

By Bobbie Slonevsky

You may have heard of Eric Sloane (1905–1985). He was (and still is) a celebrated artist of the latter half of the 20th century who lived for a time in our area. He is most widely known for his paintings of iconic barns and rural landscapes reflective of time spent in Connecticut and Vermont. In some quarters, he is considered a late incarnation of the American-centric Hudson River School.

You may or may not have heard of the Green River Gallery. It too has lived in our area—in Boston Corner since 1977 to be exact. Proprietor Art Kerber has specialized in Eric Sloane paintings for over 35 years, and his home/gallery is a modern-day shrine. The artist's work is literally everywhere—hanging on walls, propped up against furniture, sitting on chairs, and even displayed on the front parlor grand piano.

Who would have thought that bucolic Boston Corner could be an artistic hotspot? Kerber fills in the back story.

Town News: Who was Eric Sloane before he became famous?

Art Kerber: Sloane was born in New York City. Early on, he studied lettering with his neighbor, the eminent typography designer Frederick Goudy, followed by a stint at the Art Students' League. After applying his calligraphic skills painting signs on barns and stores and buildings all across America, he moved to Connecticut and began to paint landscapes.

When I was a kid in the 50s, he and I both lived on Long Island. Somewhat successful by that time, he frequented an upscale restaurant in East Norwich called Rothman's, which was popular with a lot of important people. (As far as I know, it's still there.) Sloane loved to eat and drink and entertain many of the friends he made there. And he would pay for all of it with his paintings. He even paid for a car with his paintings. The first time I met him, when I was eight, was at the restaurant.



"Barn on the Hillside", like most of Sloane's paintings, was executed in oil on Masonite rather than on canvas, a material Sloane preferred for its durability.

Town News: How did you become interested in his work?

Art: I guess it started because I liked reading his books. He authored 38 wonderful titles on early Americana, now considered authoritative historical sources. Probably the most famous ones are "A Reverence for Wood," "A Museum of Early American Tools," and "Diary of an Early American Boy." But he also explored farm techniques and folk wisdom of the past, and all his books were embellished with his own illustrations and hand lettering.

Like his books, many of his paintings capture a part of America that we're not going to see anymore. Beyond that, his best works have a movement, a flow... in the grass and clouds. They are not the static views that characterized the Hudson River School, despite the frequent connection made between them. He creates an almost spiritual atmosphere. And, if you look at his snow scenes and storms, he is a master of light.

Town News: Did your career begin with him?

Art: No. Not at all. I did a number of

things before becoming a gallerist, including breeding Texas longhorns. Then, when I first opened the Green River Gallery, I showed Western art. I ultimately acquired a few Eric Sloanes and would have liked to have more, but it wasn't possible.

Beginning in the 60s until his death, Sloane was handled by the prestigious Hammer Gallery in New York. They catapulted him into important art circles and museums (today numbering over 40). His paintings became investment grade, and small establishments like mine were frozen out.

Town News: Then how did you get to be such a prolific dealer of his art?

Art: After Sloane died in 1985, his wife and Hammer let their contractual relationship lapse and things opened up. Rothman's Restaurant had quite a collection and his daughters sold them to me. Also, Sloane was extremely productive, reportedly completing one painting a day...supposedly before lunch. So many other opportunities came my way. Since I advertised the works I had for sale in such magazines as *American Art Review*, *Magazine Antiques*,



Eric Sloane's oil "The Open Door" reflects the artist's interest in imagery and architecture evocative of a rural life. Aging barns, covered bridges, and rambling stone walls are frequent subjects.

Connecticut Magazine, Litchfield Magazine and the Maine Antiques Digest, my name became known and I built up my collection.

At the moment, I probably have upwards of 20 of his paintings—barns, snowscapes, farm fields, skyscapes, water scenes, pueblo art from when he lived in Santa Fe. And I am his premier dealer. Case in point: at a major show that took place a couple of years ago in Lambertville, New Jersey, I'd say that about three-quarters of the exhibited works were mine. I also have his art on display in other venues. There is a seven-foot wide, two-foot high snow scene with a red barn hanging in Harney's Real Estate on Main Street in Millerton, and another significant work at Heirlooms & Antiques in Freeport, Maine.

Town News: I learned from my research that you are not only the premier dealer in Eric Sloane's, but also the premier expert.

Art: That's true. I don't just sell his paintings, I also authenticate them. You'd be surprised how many times people have come here with what they thought was a genuine Eric Sloane, and it turned out not to be. I've even identified fakes at high-end auctions. There are lots of them out there. But I've been dealing in his paintings for so long, from his early work until his death, there's always a little detail that jumps out at me as wrong. And then I take a closer look.

Would-be-imitators just can't duplicate his technique.

I've also contributed a chapter to his biography, "Aware: A Retrospective of the Life and Work of Eric Sloane" (Carrigues Publishing). It is, in fact, about the changes in his painting style and technique over time, though, of course, I don't divulge everything. What's more, I'm the repository of a number of Eric Sloane stories.

Town News: Like what? Were you good friends?

Art: No. We weren't buddies. But I got to know him at the Wings Club, a private flying club in New York. He wasn't a licensed pilot, but he loved airplanes and sky and weather. In addition to rustic scenes, planes and cloud formations were among his favorite subjects. In fact, he sold a canvas of clouds to Amelia Earhart way back when (for \$25!). And he is the creator of the giant cloudscape mural in the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum. It's 70 feet wide and two stories high. The irony—if you can imagine a scaffold and the mechanics of painting such a towering work—is that he was afraid of heights.

Another interesting tidbit is that he sold or possibly donated a painting to Mikhail Gorbachev...of a sickle. He did a show in Russia in the early 1970s. Gorbachev was apparently impressed with him and there was a great deal of



Art Kerber, outside of his Green River Gallery in Boston Corner, specializes in the paintings of American artist Eric Sloane, known for his bucolic New England landscapes.

correspondence between them. However, it wasn't quite a free exchange. All the letters from the political leader of the Soviet Union had to be vetted in Washington by the intelligence services before they were allowed to be released to him.

Town News: What else can you tell us about him?

Art: He was quite a character. He could be a terrible curmudgeon. At the same time—the usual cliché—he would give you the shirt off his back. He was utterly magnetic; people liked to hang out with him, including very important people and including, I suppose, women. He had six wives.

Professionally he was just as offbeat. Getting back to his oil painting technique, for example—it was, to quote Andrew Wyeth, "different." He would apply a thick impasto and then scratch it off with a palette knife or a razor blade or even nails. This led him to prefer painting on Masonite rather than canvas because it resisted destruction. A major problem at the time was that patrons didn't want Masonite; they wanted canvas. So Sloane would throw the Masonite artwork on the floor and stomp on it to demonstrate its durability. I remember at least one painting that came to me that had a shoe print on its back. Today many artists use Masonite.

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ERIC SLOANE

(Continued from page 7)

Town News: How did you come to settle in Boston Corner?

Art: By the mid-70s I had become disenchanted with the overdevelopment and glitterati culture of Long Island. I had driven through this area on a number of occasions and found it beautiful. So I moved up here lock, stock and barrel. You might think that my business would have suffered being in such an out-of-the-way location. But it didn't. In retrospect, I realized I had had very few walk-ins on Long Island. And many clients, even big names, were not averse to making the trip up here.

What drove my success, I believe, was that I always bought and promoted only Sloane's finest quality paintings, the "magical" ones. This has worked for me, as well as for him. It has perpetuated his reputation and inclusion in important collections, and has maintained the value of his work. His paintings have generally sold in the high five figures, although recently I think I'm seeing an uptick.

Town News: You sell other artists as well, don't you?

AK: I do. I buy what I like. Harkening back to my Western art days, I have a pen and ink of an infantryman by Remington and a Charles Russell bronze of a Texas longhorn steer. I also have work by Keith Haring, George Bellows, George Luks and Rockwell Kent. But Eric Sloane represents at least 50% of my collection and sales. The truth is, though, that I don't really care if I sell them. I just like living with them.

Editor's note: The Green River Gallery is located at 1578 Boston Corner Road and is open Saturday 10–5 and Sunday 12–5, or by appointment. The Sloane Stanley Museum in Kent, Connecticut, houses Sloane's own personal collection of Early American tools, some of his paintings, as well as an exact replica of his painting studio.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors— If You Live Here, Please Pitch In

By Bobbie Slonevsky

During the past year, Ancram has changed in a number of ways. New residents have bought or rented homes, weekenders have become full-time, and some city dwellers now view Ancram as their primary residence. Whether you enjoy the beauty of our area part-time or full-time, Ancram needs everyone to pitch in according to their abilities if we are to maintain the quality of life we enjoy. Consider joining a town board, committee, or council; running for local office; volunteering one's time to an organization serving Ancram, such as the volunteer fire company, a local place of worship, or the Roe-Jan library; or making a financial contribution. It is a great way to meet people and become a true Ancramite. Check out the Ancram website for a list of organizations that serve the town (www.ancramny.org), or drop an email to Town Supervisor Art Bassin to express your interest in becoming involved.

Which brings us to Ancramdale Neighbors Helping Neighbors Association, a pillar of our town. America grew up in the neighborly traditions of barn-raising, "covered dishes" for ailing families and church drives for those in economic distress. So it is probably not surprising that Ancram has given rise to such an organization. What is surprising is the breadth and depth of the organization's activities. Its origins, however, were decidedly simple: Way back in 2003, several Ancramdale residents recognized that their older neighbors often needed help. They needed a ladder, or help with errands, or someone to clean their gutters. The group posted a call for volunteers in the Post Office and The Farmer's Wife. "Some 15 people who knew how to do things responded," says Jack Lindsey, a motivating force and current Co-Chair of the organization. And presto, what is known today as the Ancramdale Neighbors Helping Neighbors Association (ANHNA) was born.



Food-filled backpacks provided by ANHNA ensured that children would have enough to eat over the weekends when they were not benefitting from school meal programs.

Obviously, it has evolved. Over time, a succession of dedicated advocates has helped the association and its mission grow. Bottom line, according to the group's other Co-Chair, Hila Richardson: "It now reaches all of Ancram Township (sometimes even beyond) and provides an extensive slate of services."

Food Program

A few years into the ANHNA's existence, holiday food baskets were added to its outreach. This led to the notion that a community food pantry could serve folks every week. About six years ago, a benefactor expressed a wish to both support farmers and feed people. The result was an annual contribution to help fund CSA shares in Millerton's Sol Flower Farm (now Rock Steady Farm). This provided a huge boost to the charitable organization's centerpiece program—the distribution of wholesome, fresh provisions to Ancram's food-insecure. Shortly afterward, membership in the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York in Albany also significantly expanded the program. The Albany group accumulates foodstuffs from donors, government surplus, handlers of dented cans and misshapen produce; *Neighbors* then purchases (and transports) some 2,200 pounds of food every week for the incredible price of 16¢ per pound. A good part of this supplies the Monday food distribution at the

Ancramdale Presbyterian Church, while the rest goes to help other pantries in Hillsdale and Pine Plains.

Backpack Program

Many children qualify for free meals at school. But it occurred to local school officials that a considerable number of these children were left underfed on weekends. For about five years, *Neighbors* helped pay for food-filled backpacks that kids took home on Fridays for Saturday and Sunday. In each pack was enough for the school-age child as well as pre-school siblings. The program has been so successful, it now has broader reach and wider commercial sponsorship, although *Neighbors* still collects the food items, and also donates food to local after-school programs.

Adopt-a-Family

Related to the holiday food boxes, this program ensures that local families can give their children a truly happy holiday. Eligible parents provide a wish-list of needed clothing (warm coats, gloves, shoes) and a dreamed-of present for each child, plus a suggestion of household items to benefit the family as a whole.

School Supplies and Scholarships

Educational assistance looms large in *Neighbors*' thinking. During its annual school supply drive, Board members and volunteers collect donations of school supplies and fund the purchase of new school clothes for students. A gift-card serves as back-up to help families buy other school clothes and supplies not provided by the drive. With funds raised from the community, the organization also offers grants to teachers for needed classroom supplies at the three Ancram school systems (Pine Plains, Taconic Hills and Webatuck).

ANHNA also provides education grants for students who have completed high school and have been accepted to a college or vocational school. Adults, too, may benefit from the scholarship program; funds are available throughout the year for such vocational needs as job re-training, advanced classes or expanded skills. (See the highlighted box).

Health Support

"When the Copake Rapid Care opened some four years ago, the group realized

that many of our families did not have health insurance," says Co-Chair Richardson. Credentialed as a Public Health Nurse and on the Board of Columbia Memorial Hospital (the Rapid Care affiliate), Richardson helped work out a supportive plan. *Neighbors* is notified when a family is unable to pay the facility and the bill is subsidized. While payment originally came out of general funds, there are now specific annual donations from the community that cover the cost.

COVID has, of course, complicated everyone's lives, so *Neighbors* has tried to help with mitigation where it can. When the county offered two-gallon containers of hand sanitizer, the association repackaged the sanitizer into consumer-sized bottles and made it available at the Ancram Town Hall and Ancramdale Post Office. It similarly boosted what has come to be known as the "Mask Project," which enlisted mask sewers to aid an Ancram resident who was single-handedly sewing many hundreds of face coverings and provided a \$1,000 grant to partially offset materials costs. (See *The Ancram Town News*, Spring 2020).

General Help

Neighbors' original concept has not been forgotten. Chores, errands and emergency repairs are still carried out by a cadre of volunteers or funded by the group. Whether it's a car that has broken down, a furnace that has ceased to function, or a drafty door, there is someone who will take up the challenge.

It hardly needs saying that this expansive operation is a costly undertaking, and financial support has been key. In 2010, the group applied for and received 501-3C status, which permits it to issue receipts for charitable donations and thus make financial participation more attractive. Compared with a budget of \$4,000 ten years ago, the current budget is in the vicinity of \$45,000, and the spending model is extraordinary.

The guiding principle of the organization, Lindsey explains, is being able to respond immediately to an emerging problem. That means having funds on hand, and that means keeping overhead down to almost zero. No office, no paid

employees. Just a pool of dedicated volunteers who can be called upon at any time. The result is that the only non-end-purpose expenditures are required insurance and tax filings, amounting to about \$1,000 a year. The other nearly 98% of the budget goes to *Neighbors*' core programs. Anyone wishing to make a donation should send it to: ANHNA, P.O. Box 97, Ancramdale, NY 12503; or call Jack Lindsey (518-329-7306) or Hila Richardson (917-414-8270).

Who's Who at ANHNA

Co-Chairs: Jack Lindsey & Hila Richardson

Current Board Members:

- Eric Weiner, *Secretary/Treasurer*
- Jane Moore, *Holiday Baskets, Adopt-a-Family*
- Laura Ponkos, *Food Program, Adopt-a-Family, Scholarships*
- Mike Sturdivant, *School Supplies, Scholarships*

Board Members Emeritus

Glenda Rose Hermance & Jane Shannon

Adrienne Citrin Memorial Higher Education Grants Deadline to Apply is July 1, 2021

For the eighth year, ANHN is pleased to offer higher education grants up to \$1,500 to help full-time students from Ancram, Ancramdale, and Boston Corner who will enter an accredited college, community college, or vocational school this fall. The grant is intended to help students pay for food, clothing, books, and/or transportation, and will be based on financial need. Preference will go to first-year students, but all continuing college, vocational, and graduate students may apply.

To apply for a grant a student needs to be a resident of the Town of Ancram and should already be accepted into an academic or vocational program that begins in 2021. Students should submit an application with a letter describing their educational plans and the need for additional financial support as well as documentation of financial need and college acceptance.

Interested students or parents should contact Mike Sturdivant at 518-329-6106 or Laura Ponkos at 518-329-2031. Also contact can be made through email ANHNAinfo@gmail.com, and by mail to PO Box 97, Ancramdale, NY 12503, for more information.

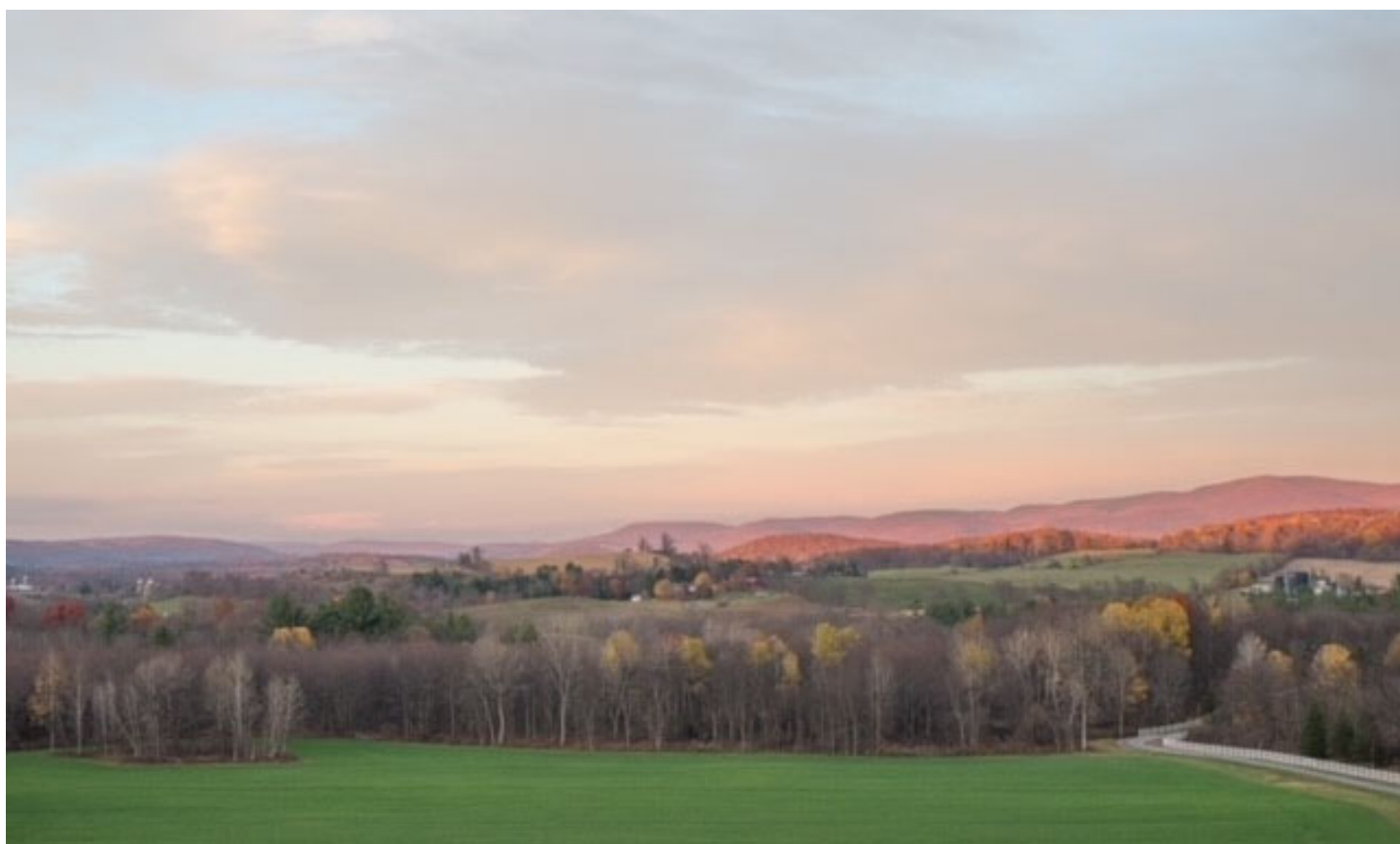
**Town of
Ancram**
1416 County Route 7
Ancram NY 12502



Historic Farming Community Moving Forward

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PAID
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Local
Postal Customer



*Hillrock Distillery is beautifully situated overlooking rolling barley fields with the Berkshire Mountains in the distance.
The original Georgian house on the property dates back to 1806 and was built by a grain merchant and Revolutionary War captain.*