

# American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc.

Post Office Box 204  
Port Republic, MD 20676



## NEWSLETTER

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Volume 3 - Number 1

January 20, 1989

Editors: Ellen and David Farr, 4512 Tonquil Place, Beltsville, MD 20705 (301-937-8160)

**Board of Directors**  
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John Mark Switzer  
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### Message from the President

The Annual Meeting of October 29 now seems in the far distant past. Remember when one hundred and twenty-six members gathered to celebrate the retirement of the outstanding debt on our property and heard Keynote Speaker State Senator Bernie Fowler share with us his perspective on county and state environmental concerns? Many took advantage of the absolutely perfect weather and vibrant colors for guided tours of the land while the Board met to organize and rearrange responsibilities for the coming year.

Peter Vogt and Gary Loew agreed to continue as Vice President and Treasurer, respectively; Ralph Dwan and Aileen Hughes swapped roles as President and Secretary. Joe Steller replaced Caroline Van Mason as the at-large member of the Executive Committee. We are pleased to welcome Dr. Stephen M. Bunker of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to our Board.

By the first regular meeting of the Board on November 19 we were off and running. Dan Boesz had taken over as Board liaison to the Land Use task forces and Bob Ulanowicz as liaison with our neighbors, the Scientists' Cliffs Association. Board members Oliver Flint and Don Dahmann continue on as Wildlife and Trails co-chairs and Carl Fleischhauer still heads programs for historic and cultural affairs.

Also continuing are Newsletter Editors Ellen and Dave Farr and John Axley who heads up the forestry management program. Dan Boesz and Arnie Petty will jointly oversee future firewood projects. Anne Moore has taken over Membership while Elaine Cochran will chair a new Outreach Committee to explore and implement ways we can foster greater awareness of land conservation in the larger community through educational programs, scholarship opportunities and establishing closer ties with other organizations with similar aspirations and goals. Through this committee we expect to broaden the base of membership and increase volunteer participation at all levels of activities and organization.

Last and of major importance, the New Lands Preservation Committee, co-chaired by Mark Switzer and Peter Vogt and aided by Ralph Dwan, was so clear on its objectives that the Board unanimously accepted its recommendations. The ACLT will try to acquire with its reserve funds and new contributions several parcels of land in the vicinity of the existing Land Trust preserves. Top priority was given to the "Russell Tract" of approximately 50 acres with its frontage on Parkers Creek. Three small Hance parcels at the intersection of Parkers Creek and Scientists Cliffs Road were given second priority. Both the Hance and Russell properties are in the same small "Jett Stream" watershed as the larger of the two ACLT tracts. This relatively pristine watershed is an inviting focus for our land preservation efforts. Since word of these new efforts has spread via the grapevine, several substantial contributions have been received from charter members demonstrating their approval of our newest efforts. Whether you are a Charter Member, a regular member or a non-member, we welcome your contributions in any amount to keep the ACLT active in land preservation.

Our 1989 Board meetings will be held on the 4th Saturday of every other month at 10 a.m., starting on January 28. If the 4th Saturday of November is Thanksgiving weekend, the Board will meet on the 3rd Saturday. With the exception of the January 28 meeting which will be held at the home of Aileen Hughes, 4023 Evergreen, Scientists' Cliffs, all meetings are scheduled to be held at the Battle Creek Nature Center. All ACLT Board meetings are open, and members are not only welcome but encouraged to attend. If there is interest, we shall try to incorporate mini-programs on issues that concern us into each of our business meetings.

## Volunteers Needed

Among the gratifying aspects of involvement in ACLT activities is the willingness of people to say, "Sure, I can do that," when they are asked to lend a hand. This is how Board positions have been filled, committees formed, newsletters published and distributed, luncheons staged, funds raised, trails cleared and every other step of progress made. ACLT is a dynamic group and will continue to function best with a continuous infusion of fresh ideas and talent. In other words, we need you who have not yet become active or maybe want to do something else for a change. There are a number of categories of tasks to be performed—some require brawn, some brains, some creative artistic or writing talent, some all or none of the above. Please look over the list and volunteer for what activities interest you the most. None of the tasks are burdensome, they can be as time-consuming as you choose and almost all are fun when you share them with others.

### *Brawn Category:*

Post hole digging for trail and plant ID markers  
Hazardous tree removal  
Abandoned car removal  
Bridge and walkway repair  
Cleaning up after tree thinning, stacking logs and branches for wildlife dens and fire precaution

### *Brain Category:*

Plant and wildlife identification for trail markers, educational brochures, etc.  
Copywriting, editing and layout for Trail Guides  
Copywriting, editing and layout for Outreach brochures (desktop publishing equipment available)  
Production of video-tape programs (camera equipment available)  
Publicity other than Newsletter

Fund raising, grant applications  
Legislative oversight and lobbying efforts on environmental concerns

### *All of the above:*

Carpentry for rustic benches, signs, gate posts  
Planning the care and nurture of the graveyard site  
Restoration of the historic buildings

### *None of the above:*

Trail maintenance and blaze marking  
Poison ivy control  
Monitoring the entrances/sign-in boxes  
Monitoring the birdhouses  
Weeding the graveyard  
Stuffing envelopes for special mailings  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

If you can share your time and expertise, please return the enclosed coupon. For more information or to volunteer by phone, call the "specialists": Historic and Cultural Interests (Carl Fleischhauer 301-586-1277); Trails and Wildlife (Oliver Flint 703-370-9522 or Don Dahmann 703-765-3584); Birds and bird boxes (Sue Hamilton 301-586-1494); Forestry Management (John Axley 301-586-1656); Land Use Affairs (Dan Boesz 301-586-2968); Outreach, Education and Public Relations (Elaine Cochran 301-586-0482); Membership (Anne Moore 301-586-2427); Other (Aileen Hughes 301-586-1749)

—Aileen Hughes

## Treasurer's Report

We have closed out 1988, our second year, in excellent financial condition. Our primary source of income was from the sale of Development Rights. We sold 271 rights for \$406,500 in four separate transactions. We also realized over \$17,000 from contributions and membership dues, received a \$10,000 grant, which was applied towards the property survey costs, and \$3,600 from bank interest. Total income for the year was \$252,221.38. A portion of the income from the sale of development rights is counted as an asset reduction, not as income. It is unlikely we will have another year like this soon.

The primary use of the income was to pay off the remaining debt on the property. We paid off the \$300,000 still outstanding on the note and the \$22,785 interest charges associated with the note. After subtracting out the interest charges and survey costs, remaining expenses totaled only \$4,010. The largest bills were for insurance (\$450), dues (\$200), legal expenses (\$223), office supplies (\$333), postage (\$505), the newsletter (\$536) and the annual meeting (\$1550). Approximately one-half of the Annual Meeting costs were paid with contributions received at the meeting. We will make a final statement when the books are officially closed and audited, but these figures are correct within a few dollars. It is testimony to the volunteer nature of the ACLT that we have been able to accomplish so much for so little. An early promise that the Board of Directors made to the membership was that we would keep administrative and overhead costs to a minimum and use most of

the funds received to purchase and manage the property. You can see that we have kept that promise again this year.

Our Balance Sheet shows that we have assets of \$740,574. Most of this is the land and remaining development rights. In addition we have \$154,874 in our savings, checking and petty cash accounts.

### **ACLT Agricultural Programs**

*Background.* The Land Trust operates two agricultural programs: forestry and tobacco. A forestry plan has been drafted for most of the land, and we have begun to implement it. The tobacco operation is carried out by our neighbor, Woodrow Wallace, who uses the fields at our main entrance and a barn opposite Scientists' Cliffs Gate C.

The existence of these programs reflects a mixture of necessity and desire. *Necessity* because we have placed our land in a county agricultural preservation district. It is, of course, Calvert County's far-sighted plan to preserve *agricultural* land that permits us to sell transferable development rights (TDRs). The purchase of TDRs from a farmer enables a developer to build "extra" houses in designated zones elsewhere in the county.

The revenue from the sale of our TDRs permitted us to complete the purchase of our land, and will enable us to purchase additional land in the future. Taking the money obliges us to engage in agriculture—tree and crop farming.

Our agricultural programs reflect our *desire* to manage the land for productivity. The income from forestry will help pay for maintenance and upkeep and the tobacco farmer will repair the barn in exchange for use of the land. But our desire for productivity must be balanced against other considerations. What are these other considerations? These include the desire to foster nature, to maintain a place conducive to contemplation, and to pay tribute to the past. The latter consideration has led several of our members to insist that we leave sections of forested land untouched. Assuming that the depredations of disease are not too severe, the resulting mature forest will suggest the landscape that greeted Europeans when they first arrived in the seventeenth century.

Agriculture itself—especially in the form of tobacco cultivation—also pays tribute to the past. There is a note of irony in pairing this consideration with a desire to recreate an colonial-era forest since Southern Maryland's colonists cut the trees in order to plant tobacco. But today, the health risks associated with smoking, increasing production overseas, and the region's burgeoning suburbs have numbered tobacco's days. The Trust's small ongoing operation keeps the tradition alive, contributes to the farmer's livelihood, and offers visitors a close-up look at an activity that was for three centuries the mainstay of the region's economy.

*Actions planned for the winter of 1988-89.* Three distinct actions will be carried out in the Trust's agricultural programs this fall and winter. The first has already taken place and was discussed at the annual meeting. It involves a modest effort at improving a three-acre stand of timber on the east side of the road, near the sand and gravel pit. Timber-stand improvement—TSI in the jargon of foresters—involves removing selected inferior trees in a copse to improve growing conditions for the remaining trees.

The second action will connect forestry and tobacco. Over the past few years, trees have begun encroaching on the growing fields at the main entrance and surrounding the curing barn on the hill opposite Scientists' Cliffs Gate C, and some of these trees will be cut.

The long-term plan for the deeper tobacco field is to trim back the tree line on its southern flank. So much new growth, mostly Virginia pine, has moved into the field that it will take several increments of work over the next few years to restore the old boundaries of the field. Here and there, medium-sized deciduous trees will also be cut.

In the shorter-term, the western edge of the field will be "squared up." Here a mixture of locusts, pines, and shrubs have encroached. In addition, some of the scrubby growth along the lane will be cut to reshape the field for easier cultivation. Similar treatment will be carried out in the smaller field on the north side of the lane.

A tobacco barn depends upon breezes to dry the harvested crop, but the trees and shrubs that surround the Trust's barn have reduced ventilation during the last few years. Woodrow Wallace will cut a number of trees near the barn in order to improve the movement of air. At the same time, he will repair the structure.

The third action will be the identification of stands of Virginia pine suitable for chipping. This tree has very low value as timber but its pulverized remains can be used in chipboard, a type of building material. Virginia pines deteriorate badly after about forty of their sixty or seventy years of life, and they must be harvested before deterioration begins.

For foresters, suitable tracts for chipping are those that contain from three to five acres of contiguous trees and are accessible to the machinery used for harvesting. Chipping is carried out in a way that leaves deciduous

trees standing, and thus may be thought of as speeding the natural succession from pine to tulip poplar and/or hardwood.

In the selection of chipping sites on the Trust's land, however, forestry management considerations will be weighed against aesthetics and public relations. For example, some of the most suitable tracts stand along Scientists Cliffs Road and just south of the Trust's main entrance, but cutting them would mar the appearance of our entrance and the first section of our most accessible foot trail. Thus, an effort will be made to identify other sites, but regardless of location, members are urged to foresee the improved look of chipping sites within two or three years and to await the long-term joys of increased poplar and hardwood growth.

The Trust's forestry manager is John Axley. He will be happy to discuss the program and planning with members. Write him at Box 184, Port Republic, Maryland 20676, or call (301) 586-1656.

—Carl Fleischhauer

### **Firewood Policy**

If you recall, a forestry management demonstration was held on October 1 on the 7 acre tract we have selected for our first venture into forestry management and timber stand improvement. There are still some trees to be marked by the foresters before we can start proceed further, but, in the meantime, John Axley is negotiating with a commercial "chipper" to remove the dead, dying or otherwise unwanted trees from the site. Although we believed we could initiate a firewood program with some of the timber in this particular area, our expert, Arnie Petty, says the firewood off this site would not be worth the effort. In the future, we know there will be opportunities for quality firewood to come off our property. If you are interested in the harvest for your own use, please put your name on our list by card or letter so that you may be notified when and where firewood will be available. There will be no charge, but you must assume responsibility for your own safety, the safety of others and agree to help clean up the debris. Send the card to: ACLT Firewood, PO Box 204, Port Republic, MD 20676.

### **Local Place Names—A Little Lexicon (Part I)**

The American Chestnut Land Trust was born along Scientists Cliffs Road and its mailing address is Port Republic. The larger North Parcel drains into Parkers Creek by way of Jett Stream, while the South Parcel drains into the Bay by way of Governors Run. How and when did these six place names originate?

Let's start with the most recent names: The ACLT was named at its birth in the late fall of 1986. Among other suggested names had been "Liriodendron" and "Laurel" land trust, after the yellow poplar and mountain laurel so common the property. When Charles Manning suggested "American Chestnut" there was instant consensus. After all, a lone mature American chestnut survives on the tract, and the species is intimately associated with Scientists' Cliffs. G. Flippo Gravatt was an authority on the chestnut blight which had reached Calvert County in the mid-1920's. Chestnut logs were still abundant enough a decade later for the construction of Scientists' Cliffs' first house, which is still known, not surprisingly, as Chestnut Cabin. The ACLT Board has met there on several occasions.

Jett Stream was also named in 1986. The largest stream on trust property, Jett Stream, drains the 336-acre North Parcel and continues past Warrior's Rest to its confluence with Parkers Creek. Warrior's Rest is the home of Dr. and Mrs. Page C. Jett. A prominent County physician for many years, Dr. Jett was chosen U.S. "Country Doctor of the Year" in the 1930's. Dr. Jett distinguished himself as a horticulturist, his holly plantings at Warrior's Rest being unrivaled outside the National Arboretum in this region.

The name Scientists' Cliffs originated in 1936 and referred to the early cabin owners, not to the fact that the fossils in the cliffs were of interest to scientists. Sometimes the entire Calvert Cliffs are mistakenly referred to as "Scientists' Cliffs." The photo caption at the bottom of page 66, *Natural Washington*, (Bill and Phyllis Thomas. Henry Holt, NY, 1986), asserts that "Calvert Cliffs are often referred to as Scientists' Cliffs because of their rich fossil beds." Meanwhile the term Calvert Cliffs is often used for the BG&E nuclear power plant rather than for the cliffs. Although the cliffs were first called "Rickards Cliffs" by John Smith, they were generally called "the Cliffs" or "the Cliffs of Calvert County" until the 20th century.

If someone knows who named Governors Run, why, when, or for which governor, please let me know. Not many Southern Maryland streams are called "runs", perhaps because the term "creek" referred to a stream whose lower parts were estuarine and hence navigable, which Governors Run certainly is not. At any rate, the name was in use at least as early as 1835, when land presently occupied by the community of Governors Run was part of "Mr. Frazier's Plantation." In the following decade the land passed into the ownership of the Dorsey family. The low, flat valley floor at the mouth of Governors Run forms one of the few gaps in the

Calvert Cliffs and offered colonial farmers access to the waterfront. Its use as a transshipment point for tobacco hogsheads and other good is revealed by an 1824 map which refers to "Frazier's Landing." An 1847 map already refers to the beach area as "Governors (sic) Run." A steamboat pier was build soon thereafter, the last remains of which lasted until the hurricane of 1933. The present recreation-type piers were built in recent decades.

—Peter Vogt

[Still to come: Port Republic and Parkers Creek. The Editors regret that Peter's contribution had to be split between two issues.]

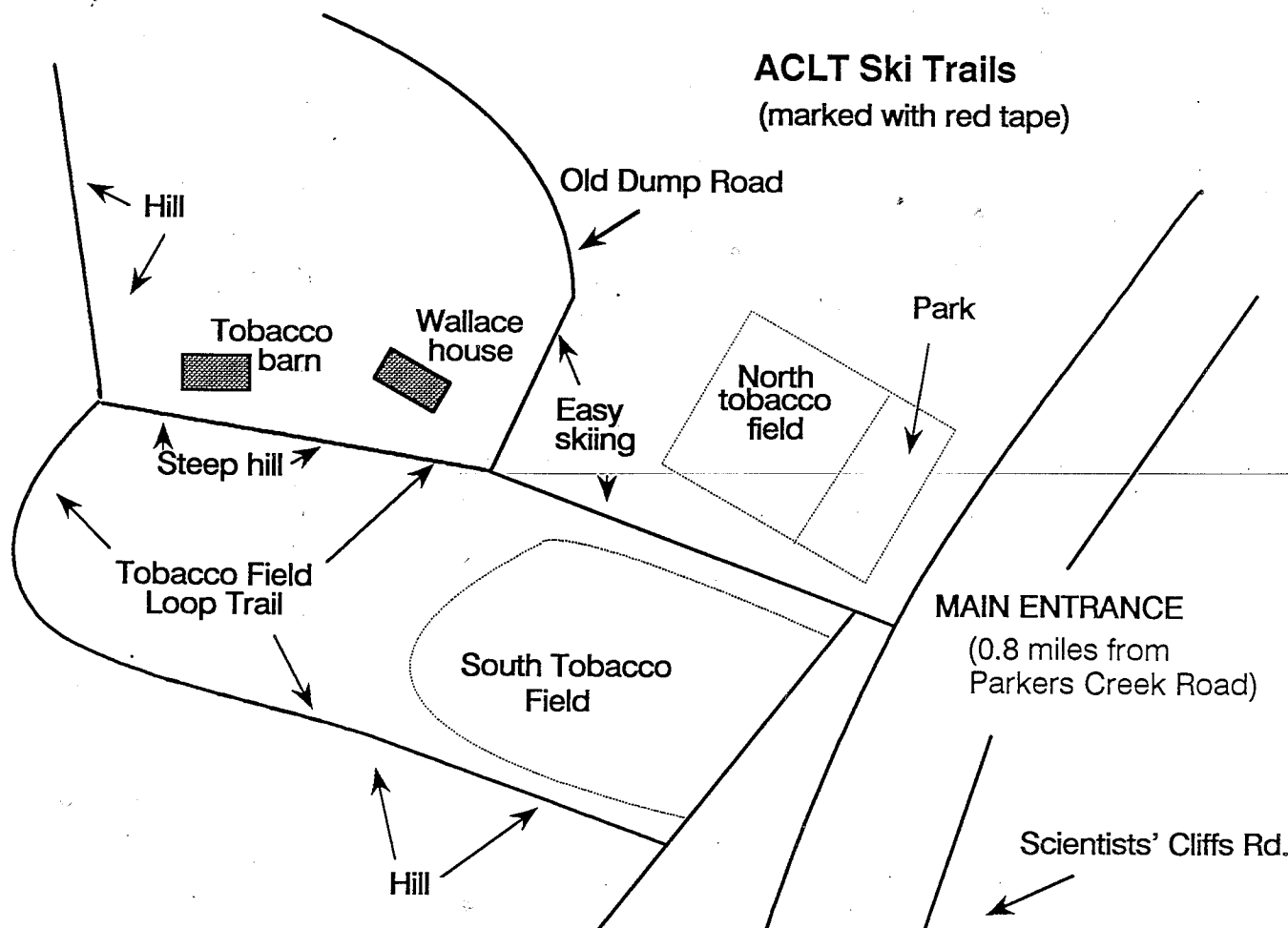
### Recommended Cross-Country Ski Trails

Two easy-to-reach areas of the ACLT lend themselves to cross-country skiing. One area is immediately adjacent to the Trust's main entrance (see map). Here, a skier may choose an easy route along the lane between the tobacco fields and continue along the road to the old Scientists' Cliffs dump. This route offers about one mile of relatively level ground to the dump (nearly invisible in a bamboo thicket), at which point the trail drops down a steep hill; most skiers will backtrack when they reach the hill.

Two small hills add a bit of a challenge to the trail that loops around the southern tobacco field. If the loop is traveled in a clockwise direction, skiers will first confront a gentle hill when they enter the woods south of the field. They will face a steeper hill when they reach the old Lemuel Wallace house, but they will be at the top and can glide (or snowshoe) down. The loop offers one interesting northbound spur that can be found between the house the the skeleton of the old tobacco barn. It begins with a up-and-down dip, but the stays level as it follows a ridge line to its dead end.

For more information call Sandy Roberts (586-1791).

—Carl Fleischhauer



## **National Geographic Article Brings Heartwarming Response**

The letters from nineteen of our United States and seven foreign countries generated by the National Geographic article last November have now all been answered. Some of the cards and letters were brief notes of congratulations or "tell us how you did it" requests; others wanted more detailed information as it would relate to specific environmental concerns of the correspondents. Two or three were hoping to find pen pals.

Over these weeks, we have been able to assemble varied packets of materials to help tell our story. Our Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation were included where they would be helpful. Peter Vogt's November 1987 article on the Parkers Creek area was included where interest seemed to lean in that direction. Whether the inquiries arrived on a scrap of re-used paper or on business stationery, we took them seriously both for our benefit and for theirs. Nothing would please us more than to learn that we have helped stimulate effective conservation activity elsewhere.

Ed Hacskeylo, the plant physiologist on the ACLT Board, answered the letters on the blight and decline of the American Chestnut tree and explained why we have no "seeds" to distribute. Ed has arranged, however, for George Switzer, one of our Charter Members, to try to germinate and grow the carton of American chestnuts that were sent to us from Seattle where a 75-year-old tree is alive and well. In the next issue of this newsletter we will include an article by mycologist Dr. David Farr explaining in lay terms the genesis, spread and devastation of the blight and the prognosis for success in this experiment. Letters from those who wanted to know more about the Parkers Creek were referred to marine geophysist Dr. Peter Vogt. Elaine Cochran's one-page retrospective was sent to everyone. ACLT members Fran Valanidas and John Lemerond have written to the woman in Czechoslovakia and the man in Tasmania who were looking for "pen pals." This month's newsletter will be sent as a further follow up to all of our new friends.

If any members of ACLT would look to look over our history packet, please send a note to ACLT, Box 204, Port Republic, MD 20676. We will try to arrange to provide them at cost or through a circulating library arrangement.

—Aileen Hughes

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