

American Chestnut Land Trust, Inc.
Post Office Box 204
Port Republic, MD 20676



NEWSLETTER

Volume 9 - Number 2

Editors: Ellen and David Farr

Spring 1995

President's Report: The Michael Property

While we often refer to ACLT landholdings by using the name of the previous owner, such as the Gravatt Tract or the Wallace Property, the consensus is to call this property "Double Oak Farm." It was a working farm in the past and that tradition is being continued today with the help of our neighbor to the east, Wilson Freeland. In exchange for his assistance in improving the property and establishing wildlife habitats, ACLT has agreed to his farming the fields under a two-year, three-crop rotation. The initial crop will be soybeans and the fields will be surrounded by a 15-foot buffer of clover. The soybean stubble will remain in the fields over the winter prior to the planting of corn next spring and winter wheat in the fall. The trail through the middle of the larger field and a path through the clover will allow us the opportunity to observe the farming at close hand while respecting the integrity of the fields themselves.

The farm was officially opened for tours on April 23. The initial visitors met at the residence for a briefing by Peg Niland before signing the register and starting out to explore the trails. Those who took the Horse Swamp trail were amazed at the work accomplished by Peg and her volunteers to open that trail clear to the stream. For the immediate future, Double Oak Farm will be open to ACLT members and the public for tours only by reservation. Please call the office (410-586-1570) or Double Oak Farm (410-535-0924) to make arrangements.

We dream that some day our efforts will justify a resident park ranger. In the meantime, our administrator will reside on the property in order to oversee its maintenance and provide a level of supervision to insure that activities conform to ACLT's policy for the property. We ask that all visitors respect the fact that the residence is her home and that the products of the gardens are her property, just as the crops in the fields belong to Wilson Freeland. Our motto should always be to enjoy but show respect. This also applies to the wildlife habitats and the various flora that grace this property. Like all other ACLT properties, except for approved work parties, nothing is to be cut or taken off the property.

While we enjoy this new acquisition and work for its improvement, we must remember that it has not yet been

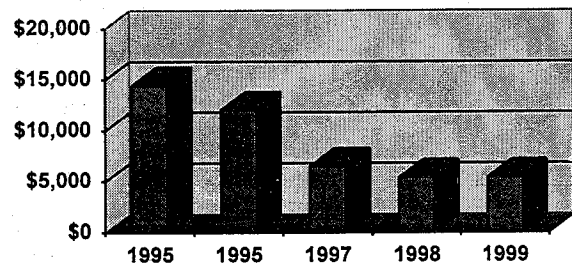
paid for. We have the three loans from the County, the State, and Kenneth Michael that must be retired within the next five years. In addition to marketing the development rights from this and other ACLT properties, we are committed to raising \$100,000 in pledges toward the payoff. The graph below shows the goal and pledges to date for each year. If you have not already made your pledge or if you want to increase it, please return the enclosed pledge sheet today. Your contribution will be leveraged many times over as we work with the state, the county, and The Nature Conservancy to protect the surrounding properties. Pledges for each calendar year will be due in December and a reminder will be sent to you that it is time to renew your investment in the future of Calvert County.

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Amount Pledged Toward
\$20,000/Year Goal



Earth Day Cleanup a Success!

For three hours, over 50 volunteers from Kenwood Beach, Western Shores, Governors Run, Scientists' Cliffs, and Parkers Creek turned out to pick up trash along the county roadsides of their neighborhoods. Two runs to Double Oak Road even cleaned up dump sites along the road leading to our northern-most property.

The biggest cleanup event of the day was the gully project on the east tract next to the Weems farm. More than a dozen ACLT members set up a spackle bucket brigade and cleaned out the trash accumulated over many years, filling a huge dumpster. Another dumpster placed at Governors Run Road received all the "finds of the day" by the southern communities.

At noon the group gathered on the Kenwood Beach picnic area for grilled hot dogs, soda, beer, chips and lots of desserts. Elaine Cratty did a wonderful job arranging the picnic and everyone had a great time!

What's Happening?

Our hard working Outreach/Membership Committee has provided ACLT members and guests with some great activities and hikes this spring. Starting off the season was an introduction to documentary historical research by Carl Fleischhauer. The group that met have already rolled up their sleeves and are digging into the county's archives. Be sure to see Carl's comments on their activities elsewhere in the newsletter.

We couldn't have had a lovelier day than April 15 for Carol Flint's spring flower walk; we all hope she'll be willing to do a fall flower walk as well.

We were very lucky to have gotten naturalists from Battle Creek Nature Center to lead two other hikes. Andy Brown, assisted by Sue Hamilton, lead a fascinating bird walk as part of our Earthday '95 weekend activities. John Zyla and ACLT's Sandy Roberts met with their "explorers" at the ACLT office and then moved into the woods as John worked with everyone present to identify 12 common species of trees found on our trails.

Throughout the year, staff, board members, and volunteers encourage others to help protect the environment and preserve sensitive land. During the past few months we have:

- Awarded four \$100 bonds to Calvert County science fair winners in the environmental category.
- Donated \$100 to the 1995 Envirothon team, sponsored by the Calvert Soil Conservation District.
- Given a slide presentation and talk to landowners, farmers, planners, and other government officials of St. Mary's and Charles Counties on how to protect land using an Agricultural Preservation Program.
- Held "Committee Day" at Double Oak Farm where 23 members of the Land Acquisition/Preservation, Membership/Outreach, and Administration/Fundraising Committees spent the morning brainstorming and laying plans for the year ahead.
- Approved sponsorship of an Eagle Scout Project by Joshua Lewis in which he will build bluebird houses and, with the help of Andy Brown, Battle Creek Nature Center naturalist, will site them around the tobacco field.

- Hosted a meeting and lunch at Double Oak Farm for the Ward family, owners of 115 acres of land adjacent to Double Oak Farm, and Steve Bunker of The Nature Conservancy, who has been authorized to negotiate on behalf of the State of Maryland, Program Open Space, for the purchase of targeted properties within the Parkers Creek Watershed.

ACLT Calendar of Events

July 1 - 10:00 a.m. Join Joe Turner and Leslie Starr in a walk to identify ferns, birds, and/or to learn the ACLT trail system. Meet at the ACLT parking lot. Joe and Leslie aren't available most weekends, but would be very happy to lead tours on other days. Call 410-664-3133 to make arrangements.

July 8 - 9:00-11:00 a.m. Join David and Ellen Farr for a mushroom walk. Meet at the ACLT Parking Lot.

July 22 - Family Day with a special emphasis on children. See Enclosed Flier

Tick Season

Ticks are a problem in our woodlands from May through September. Remember to wear light clothing, cover up, use insect repellent, and check for ticks when you return home. The deer tick, which can carry Lyme disease, is small—about the size of a sesame seed.

Calvert County Plans for the Future!

The Calvert County Department of Planning and Zoning is working on a revision of the county's Comprehensive Plan, the zoning regulations that can affect the future development of the county. Although the plan adopted in 1983 had a clear impact on subsequent growth, it has been clear to county planners that changes are needed to guide the county in the next twenty years. To this end, the Department of Planning and Zoning has sought input from the county's citizens through questionnaires and, more recently, through a series of meetings with representative of various county organizations. While these representatives can express opinions on the various questions identified by the planners, they need the views of the members of the groups they represent. The following options, or a combination of options, are currently being discussed:

A. **Bedroom Community** has been the predominant development pattern for the last 30 years; providing a residential "retreat" from urban and suburban problems. However, it has allowed development to take place out-

side of designated town centers and has led to fragmentation of agricultural districts and resource protection areas. It de-emphasized economic/employment development and leaves a "void" for children for long periods of time.

B. *Farm Region/Greenbelt* was the predominant pattern until the mid-'70s, characterized by a culture and economy based largely upon farming and fishing. While not unobtainable, it would be very difficult to revert to a farm community and discourage residential and economic growth. New regional markets for farm, fishing and forestry products would have to be created; land uses that are compatible to farming would have to be allowed to augment income; residential growth would have to be directed to town centers and kept within villages in farming and resource protection areas.

C. *"Towns and Villages" Community* is presently only seen in Solomons, Broomes, Island, Lower Marlboro and North/Chesapeake Beaches. This pattern reduces automobile dependence, increases and maintains community social interaction, allows for protection of agriculture and natural resources. However, its success would require the creation of employment opportunities close to villages, use of schools as community centers and increased recreational areas accessible on foot or bike.

D. *Vacation/Retirement Community* while many small communities along the Chesapeake Bay started out as vacation and retirement communities, and a few like Solomons, Scientists' Cliffs and North Beach have retained that characteristic, most support families residing full-time. This options would require a change of focus in attracting vacationers and retirees and would require an increase in tourist attractions, "pedestrian friendly" communities, recreational and social activities directed toward the elderly and the re-design of Town Centers.

As the ACLT representative in this important planning process, I need your considered judgments on these matters. Please communicate your preferred option or combination of options and let me know why. After the plan has been drafted, a series of public hearings will be held for further input.

—Peg Niland, ACLT Administrator
410-586-1570

Planned Giving

It was recently reported that a residence in Scientists' Cliffs was left by will to a charitable organization. The name of the charity is not important except to the beneficiary, but the event has reminded the ACLT Board that any responsible public charity must look for the means to sustain its mission.

A gift through will can provide estate tax advantages, especially residences or land which have appreciated in value over the years. When making or revising your will,

you might consider a bequest to the ACLT to conserve the land in our area of the Chesapeake for future generations.

You could also take advantage of the tax laws to make a gift now of appreciated property, such as stock. Another option that you might consider would be to invest in transfer development rights (TDRs) currently held by the ACLT, which you could leave to heirs.

You should, of course, consult with your estate or financial advisor, but please keep the ACLT in mind. If you are interested in learning more about these planned giving arrangements, call the office at 410-586-1570. All inquiries will be confidential.

ACLT Participates in Amphibian and Reptile Study

"Over increasingly large areas of the United States, spring now comes unheralded by the return of the birds, and the early mornings are strangely silent where they were once filled with the beauty of bird song. This sudden silencing of the song of birds, this obliteration of the color and beauty and interest they lend to our world have come about swiftly, insidiously, and unnoticed by those whose communities are as yet affected."

When Rachel Carson wrote these words in 1962, she was writing in response of the effects of DDT and other pesticides that caused the deaths of countless songbirds and birds of prey in the U.S. The specter of a "silent spring" seemed to be a possibility, as the familiar vernal songs would be silenced by the toxins unleashed into the natural environment. Today the threat of silencing other voices is quickly becoming a concern, these are the songs of the frogs and toads that are the harbingers of spring's arrival here in Maryland. Since 1989, scientists from around the globe have been reporting an alarming decline in amphibian populations. As of this time, the degree of the decline and what the potential causes might be, are as yet to be determined. An important strategy will be to establish monitoring programs to collect baseline data on amphibian population levels. This will provide scientists with a biological yardstick by which to measure trends in populations levels.

The American Chestnut Land Trust has been selected by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources as a study site to begin monitoring reptile and amphibian populations. The DNR has installed a drift fence array, a standard method for collecting reptiles and amphibians. The fence diverts reptiles and amphibians into either a pitfall trap or a funnel trap (similar to a minnow trap), as they forage at night or as the move to their breeding locations. The traps are checked daily, and the animals that are collected are measured, marked, and released back

into the wild. This study will help to provide information on species diversity and on the relative abundance of reptiles and amphibians in the state of Maryland. This DNR study is also being conducted in Calvert County at Flag Ponds, Battle Creek Cypress Swamp, and at King's Landing Park. This state-wide project extends to sites at the Pokomoke River, Baltimore County, and Garrett County.

Another dimension of this project is that it includes high school students as data collectors. Students enrolled in Environmental Science classes, participate in this study as part of their CHESPAX field trip. Students inspect the traps for specimens, collect data on a variety of environmental parameters (such as water and soil quality), and assess the surrounding environment as habitat for amphibians.

The DNR will operate the drift fence arrays until August of 1996. The information that is gathered will be shared with ACLT to help provide data on species diversity at this location. The traps have already documented the presence of Four-toed Salamanders (*Hemidactylum scutatum*), a species that is somewhat rare in the county.

A group is forming to begin a citizen's amphibian monitoring project in southern Maryland. Beginning in the spring of 1996, volunteers will help to collect data on amphibians in their local community, as well as to identify habitats critical to amphibian survival. If you are interested in being placed on the mailing list for this project, contact Tom Harten at 410-535-2960.

—Tom Harten
Environmental Educator, Chespx

Port Republic: Community as Cultural Resource

Nature, Culture, and Geography. From the start, the ACLT has concerned itself with nature and culture; our "environment" is one that *includes* people. We define *natural resources* broadly, to include land and water, flora and fauna. We sometimes think of *cultural resources* in terms of *history*, although our accommodation of the Wallace family's contemporary tobacco operation reminds us that "history" can be very much alive and with us.

Nature and culture can be seen geographically. In recent years, we have focussed our energies on protecting the Parkers Creek *watershed*. But many of us also feel a strong interest in the Port Republic *community*.

The boundaries of the Parkers Creek watershed are scientifically precise, drawn by the rain, so to speak. The watershed includes every place where the falling drops find their way to the main creek. Parkers Creek is literally a depression, centered in the low ground and wet

meadows lying between Port Republic and Dares Beach Road.

What are the boundaries of Port Republic? The community occupies the high ground on the southern side of the Parkers Creek watershed and extends into the watersheds of neighboring creeks. Today, I suppose, the *de facto* boundaries may be those of the zip code line neatly drawn in the Alexandria Drafting Company map for the Calvert County. But was any earlier government entity ever so precise?

Maryland's colonial precedents established the primacy of the county and, for two hundred and fifty years, Calvert's towns and hamlets were left unincorporated and their lines never drawn. Like their counterparts throughout the South, Southern Maryland farm communities (sadly, we must now say *former* farm communities) are characterized by indefinite or hard-to-discern boundaries. In striking contrast to the well-defined Vermont village, the beginnings and endings of Mutual, Appeal, St. Leonard, and Port Republic are hard to see.

These invisible lines plague newcomers (like this writer) more than lifelong residents. In a talk delivered to the Calvert County Historical Society on January 20, 1995, Waters Ross displayed his own map for Island Creek, a community more or less between Mutual and Broomes Island. Of course, Waters has the advantage of remembering landmark crossroads stores and other small businesses that disappeared during the 1930s and 1940s, and of knowing where residents went for their mail in a day when the county had many more post offices than today.

Calvert County does have a few communities with more visible boundaries. The post-Civil War communities of Solomons and Broomes Islands are clearly demarcated, reflecting these hamlets' waterside locations and maritime industries. The boundaries of the turn-of-the-century resort towns of Chesapeake Beach and North Beach were established by actual incorporation (unique in Calvert County). And, more recently, the county's planning and zoning authorities have defined the boundaries of certain "town centers," although Port Republic is not among them.

The 1884 Gazette. ACLT board member Paul Berry has provided a copy of the *Delaware, Maryland, and West Virginia State Gazetteer and Business Directory* (Baltimore: R.L. Polk and Co., 1884). Here's how it describes our hamlet, with bracketed notes added by this writer:

PORT REPUBLIC. Is near the Chesapeake Bay, in Calvert County, 5 miles southeast of Prince Fredericktown c.h. [court house]. Ship by rail to Mechanicsville, distant 12 miles, on SMRR [Southern Maryland Railroad], and by

boat to Governor Run landing on Chesapeake Bay, 3 miles southeast. Population 50.

Kate L[aveille] Dorsey, postmaster.

Bowen, B[eniah], general store

Coats, George, flour mill

Dawkins, J.T., physician

Dorsey, C.H., flour mill

Gott, Joseph, flour mill

Gray, John B., lawyer

Hawkins, E.J., carpenter

Hellen, C.E., general store

Howe, Anthony, carpenter

Kelton, F.P., carpenter

Lox, John, flour mill

Monett, C.H., shoemaker

Peterson, Wm., general store

Weeden, Wm. general store

Weisman, John, blacksmith

Contemporary readers can hardly fail to be surprised at the mention of four flour mills and five general stores. The number of enterprises, in fact, suggests that Port Republic must have been dispersed; why else would fifty people need five stores? However far-flung, the farmers would have sent their tobacco to market by steamboat, from the wharf at Governors Run. In order to reach the more-distant railroad at Mechanicsville, residents would have had to cross the Patuxent by ferry at Hallowing Point.

The 1884 Gazette makes no mention of the Drum Point Railroad, an off-again, on-again enterprise started in the late 1860s and sputtering out—having never laid a mile of track—in the early twentieth century. An 1868 railroad survey document shows that the Drum Point line was to pass through Port Republic; sections of roadbed can be seen today in the vicinity of Tommy Hance's excavating business, a little north of town.

The Gazette is silent as well on the presence and role of African Americans. Throughout its history, Port Republic has been home to numerous black families whose neighborhood may have centered on the now-inactive Browns United Methodist Church and a now-disappeared school for African American children, both near the end of the paved section of northbound Parkers Creek Road. This neighborhood center may have emerged after the publication of the Gazette; one local historian told me that land records indicate that the descendants of Joseph Wallace donated the land for the church in 1919.

In an informal conversation a few years ago, county resident and local historian Margaret Prouty told me about her grandmother Kate L. Dorsey, listed in the 1884 Gazette as postmistress. Kate's father was William P. Dorsey, who bought the property called *Sharp's Outlet* in 1856. The 1884 post office may have been located in that

house. In 1885, Kate married the lawyer John B. Gray, also listed in the Gazette, thus connecting the Dorsey and Gray names. Margaret recalled that her grandparents soon moved to Prince Frederick where, in 1889, they bought the house called *Linden*, still standing opposite St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Years later, Kate and John's son John B. Gray served as Chief Judge of Seventh Circuit Court of Maryland. He died in 1989 at the age of 95.

The Heritage Remains. Today, this observer perceives the core of historic Port Republic as the neighborhood surrounding the intersection of St. Leonard Road (route 765) and Parkers Creek Road. There are at least two outlying elements: a western cluster consisting of Christ Church, its rectory, and the one-room school; and, to the south, today's post office at the intersection of St. Leonard and Governors Run Roads.

The core neighborhood evokes the Port Republic of the Gazette listing. Today's antique store was in 1884, Beniah Bowen's general store. In later years, this store was kept by Eddie Bowen (died 1940) and subsequently by a man named Ogden. A second general store stood almost exactly across the road, operated by Brook Bond at the time of its demolition in the 1950s, when the highway was realigned.

The most prepossessing structure in Port Republic's core neighborhood is *Sharp's Outlet*. The house is set at an angle to today's highways, with the original front door (today's back door) facing what once was the main road to Christ Church. According to the historic sites inventory published by the Maryland Historical Trust, *Sharp's Outlet* started life in the eighteenth century as a small log house, still hidden within the larger structure. But the antique aspects of *Sharp's Outlet* must be "seen through" later overlays. For passers-by today, the house has the look of the period in which the Gazette was published.

Thus far, Port Republic has suffered less drastic change than many other crossroads hamlets in Calvert County. Although the town does not have the intensely picturesque quality of, say, Tylerton, on the Chesapeake's Smith Island, Port Republic is relatively open and unspoiled, not yet encroached upon by adjacent subdivisions. Like Parkers Creek, the community is a small treasure in a dramatically changing region.

—Carl Fleischhauer

[The writer acknowledges his debt to Paul Berry, Elvin Howard, Ailene Hutchins, Margaret Prouty, Waters Ross, Mark Switzer, Bobby Weems, and others. Corrections of errors and additions will be gratefully received. Additional jottings on cultural history will appear in this newsletter in the future.]

ACLT Trail Map Updated

At long last the revised ACLT map and trail guide is ready. Much effort has gone into its planning and production and many thanks are due. We are especially grateful to Direct Mail Lithographers of Prince Frederick who generously donated half of the printing costs. This made it possible for the map to be printed in color, which otherwise might have been too expensive. Michael Deyette of Direct Mail was unfailingly gracious and helpful through several weeks of phone calls. Board member Mimi Lacouture provided the initial contact with Direct Mail.

Mark Switzer has an ongoing project of plotting ACLT trails and other features on a large topographical map. His map was copied and reduced to create the new map, making it as geographically correct as possible.

Pam Bartlett and Peg Niland both made arrangements of the front page text and map legend. Their work was consolidated to present this material in an artistic and easy-to-read format.

Revising the text on the back of the map proved challenging, as we had much more information than space in which to put it. Carl Fleischhauer had written several pages on cultural resources and was valiant in paring it down. Sue Hamilton and Joe Turner contributed material on flora and fauna, and Peter Vogt and Mark Switzer offered revisions to geology and forests. Editing was done by Paul Berry. Peg Niland helped this novice with the word processor in order to get the text ready for printing and also made some last minute amendments.

The task of making the trails conform to the map is almost finished as of this writing. Signs at the main entrance and on the East Tract point out the various trails, and blazes on post or trees show trail colors to keep the hiker on the right path. Joe Turner and Art Cochran have been the main helpers with this part of the project.

I hope this map will help ACLT members and visitors enjoy what we have all worked hard to preserve. Thanks again to everyone who contributed.

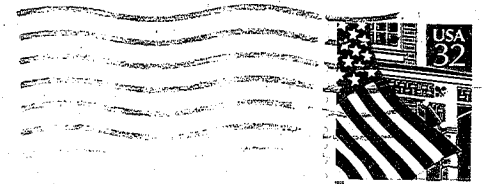
—Leslie Starr



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**Family Day Picnic
July 22**

