



**THE POUND RIDGE
LAND CONSERVANCY**
PO Box 173
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THE PRESERVES

Armstrong Preserve
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Robert Whitehead
Preserve

Why there is so much open space in Pound Ridge, yet not enough?

Situated between the Harlem and the New Haven lines of the railroad, Pound Ridge was a tough commute. (Those were the days when commute meant New York City.) Land of ridges and rock meant no town water or sewer. Luckily, this made Pound Ridge a late bloomer. When the town did start to grow, the residents understood that they needed to preserve the wetland because it was the source for their wells. They also appreciated the rural quality of their community.

Since the teens, people visited Pound Ridge for its natural beauty and country feel, if only for the summer or weekends. (It was an arty crowd.) Others were fortunate enough to live here year-round. What was understood by all was that Pound Ridge was a special place. A place whose beauty should be protected.

A railroad almost split us in two. The tracks were never laid but the foundation for them exists on the water company's property. The U.N. wanted to settle here. Both were successfully fought off.

People from Bedford and Pound Ridge, recognized the uniqueness of Mianus River Gorge and preserved it. In 1954, it became the first property owned by the Nature Conservancy. Hiram Halle discovered Pound Ridge and renovated many older homes. (Look for a black band on the chimney.) After his death, his heirs arranged for the ravine he owned on Trinity Pass to become part of the Nature Conservancy. Henry Morgenthau's property by Blue Heron Lake was also donated to the Nature Conservancy.

Ben Clark, a successful investor, owned an estate off Stone Hill Road. He loved the land and wanted others to be able to enjoy it after his death. He contacted the Nature Conservancy about donating it to them. They said that they would be delighted but would sell the land and use the proceeds to buy even more, elsewhere,



since they already owned so much in Pound Ridge. Ben was underwhelmed.

In 1975, Ed Russell, with a small group, formed the Pound Ridge Land Conservancy. At that time, as it is again today, significant tax deductions could be realized by donating land to a non-profit organization. The original donors of our land were: the Isaacsons, Richardses, Russells, Della Torres, and Thalheims.

When Ed heard of Ben Clark's unhappiness with the Nature Conservancy, Ben received a phone call. After many walks and many years, Benjamin and Charlotte Clark donated their 76 acres to the PRLC. In 1998 it became our first preserve with walking trails and a parking area.

In 1998, Ed passed the PRLC on to a new group of volunteers. We started mailing newsletters (like this one) to the people of Pound Ridge. In them we mentioned the advantages of land donations and conservation easements. One recipient was Robert Goldfein who called and wondered if we might be interested in

a parcel he owned on Trinity Pass. We certainly were. Now, some of the wooded roadside beauty of Trinity Pass has been preserved forever. When you drive down Fancher Road you will notice an open meadow opposite the Fancher House. Thanks to the Arnov family, The Meadow on Fancher will also always be open space.

2000 was a busy year for land preservation organizations throughout Westchester. The Westchester Land Trust was revitalized and became a partner for many of us. The idea of "Open Space" was being accepted. Bedford was planning to put an open space initiative on their ballot. We thought one belonged on ours. Ray Smith headed the effort in Pound Ridge and the Land Conservancy supplied many of the volunteers. The proposition passed. The town now has an Open Space Acquisition Committee that recommends properties for purchase to the Town Board.

Another benefit brought by the Land Trust was the ability to help with easements. The Land Trust holds back-up easements on all the land that has been donated to us. The Land Conservancy holds back-up easements on the WLT easements in Pound Ridge. To date there are more than 137 acres in Pound Ridge with WLT conservation easements.

The Whitehead Preserve was acquired by the Land Conservancy through the efforts of the Land Trust. The Land Trust and the Zofnas family created the 10 mile (Wonderful) Westchester Wilderness Walk.

In 2002, the Nature Conservancy decided that their future lay in the preservation of large tracts of land. Smaller preserves proved cumbersome. They were aware of the Land Conservancy's activity and suggested that we accept responsibility for the preserves controlled by the Halle Ravine Committee. We happily did and added many of their members to our board. This brought us Halle Ravine, The Bye Preserve, Carolin's Grove and the Schwartz Preserve.

Most recently, good press and good neighbors helped us receive the Armstrong Preserve, 40+ acres that we are readying for the public.

While all this is wonderful, we must recognize another group of Pound Ridge volunteers, the members of PRUP.

In 1969, the Bernier subdivision came before the Planning Board. Because ecological factors were never considered in determining lot size, a group of citizens



A walk in Halle Ravine. Photo: Ian Carlson

came to believe that the town lacked the proper “tools” for environmental planning. This group, which became Pound Ridge United for Planning (PRUP), was headed by Mary Jane Russell. (Richard Mendes, who served on the original board, presently serves on the Conservation Board.)

The goal of PRUP was to provide a total environmental impact study with specific recommendations for zoning and development based on the carrying capacity of the land. Professors and experts from Pratt Institute and Yale University, with many local volunteers, put the study together. The effort took seven years.

This was an effort by private citizens outside of the town government. Much of the report was ignored but it never died. The PRUP study is valued reference for our land identification program and the contributions we make to the master plan. Its basic premise that the ecology of the land should determine the zoning is still being argued.

The PRLC has preserved environmentally sensitive land, we’ve preserved view sheds, we’ve provided recreation, and we are teaching. Today the PRLC has 14 preserves with 335 acres and is supported by more than 400 Pound Ridge families. We hope yours is among them.



Look for a Pickerel Frog at the Clark Preserve. Photo: Gail Jankus



Birding at the Russell Preserve. Photo: Rob Powell

How to preserve your property through donation or the creation of a conservation easement.

You can help preserve Pound Ridge's beauty and get tax benefits while still enjoying the use of your land through land donation or conservation easement to the Pound Ridge Land Conservancy and the Westchester Land Trust.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement by which you can protect land you own that has significant conservation value, such as important wildlife habitat or scenic open space.

It is a promise to protect the conservation value of your property by limiting future development on all or part of it. The easement runs with the land forever, and the PRLC and WLT will ensure it is adhered to now and by future owners of your property.

A conservation easement will be tailored to fit your needs and the conservation value of your property. For example, you determine whether or not to allow public access to the land, and how much land is protected. A conservation easement on your property might, in some cases, even leave open the opportunity to construct additional structures, as long as they don't interfere with the conservation value.

What are the benefits of a conservation easement?

A conservation easement on your property means it will remain unspoiled for future generations. If enough landowners in our community continue to preserve land with conservation easements, we can keep our area's natural beauty, wildlife habitat and water quality from disappearing.

While a conservation easement restricts future development, you continue to own and control your property, live on it, sell it, mortgage it or pass it on to heirs.

In addition, the IRS considers conservation easements to be tax-deductible charitable contributions. The value of the donation is equal to the fair market value of the property before the easement, with its development rights intact, minus the fair market value after the easement.

This value is tax-deductible in an amount up to 30% of your adjusted gross income for the year in which the gift is given and any unused amount can

be carried forward for five additional years.

In certain instances, conservation easements also have estate tax benefits, and there may be property tax benefits as well.

How do I get started?

There is no better time than now to get started with the process of donating a conservation easement.

It is important for more landowners in our community to follow the lead of others and act before it is too late. Once our natural landscape is gone, it will be gone forever.

When you contact us to express your interest in donating an easement, a member of the Land Conservancy and a member of the Westchester Land Trust will visit your property to evaluate its conservation value and will present the proposed easement to its Board of Directors for approval.

The other steps involved in creating the easement include coming to an agreement about the terms of the easement, obtaining a qualified appraisal if a tax deduction is going to be taken, commissioning any engineering work needed to support the appraisal, and consulting with your legal and tax advisors throughout the process.

The PRLC and WLT will work with you every step of the way to create the conservation easement and will contact you or future owners of your property on an annual basis to monitor the easement.

Who do I call?

Call Elyse Arnow, President of the Pound Ridge Land Conservancy: 914-764-4778 or Paul Gallay, Executive Director of the Westchester Land Trust: 914-241-6346