



The Steep Rock *VISTA* Fall 2004

Adam Woodruff's Eagle Scout Project

Bridge at Macricostas Preserve Crosses Bee Brook

The bridge is a critical part of Steep Rock's trails design at the Macricostas Preserve. The Preserve's main public entrance will be on Christian Street, and the trails system will begin from there. Crossing Bee Brook to access the trails was the first big hurdle to face, so when Adam suggested that he had an idea for a bridge Steep Rock was delighted.

Voices newspaper reporter John Addyman wrote an excellent article for the July 28 edition of the paper, detailing each step of the bridge project—obtaining the proper Wetlands permits, locating a spot to construct the bridge, the construction process and finally the installation of the bridge at the Preserve. Voices has graciously allowed Steep Rock to reprint Mr. Addyman's article in its entirety on our website. Do visit steeprocksassoc.org to learn more about this truly amazing project.

There's no doubt it will always rightly be known as Adam's Bridge!



After the Annual Membership Meeting, Adam's Bridge offered a perfect viewing spot for Ian Branson (left) and Betsy Corrigan (4th from right), to speak to Steep Rock members about the geology and native species of the Macricostas Preserve.

We're Fighting the Invasives Students and Volunteers Join the Battle

By Natalie Dyer

You may have recently noticed several large piles of brush in Hidden Valley and Steep Rock and wondered what was being cleared and why. Thanks to the ongoing efforts of student and volunteer workers, Steep Rock is in the process of clearing the Reservations of non-native invasive plants. Left unchecked, these plants threaten native species, disrupt natural plant communities and alter the ecology. Steep Rock is blessed with volunteers who understand the problems plant invasions cause.

A work day last fall focused on Winged Euonymous in the Baldwin Knoll section of Hidden Valley. On a cold, frosty morning, an able group of **Trail Monitors** and other volunteers pulled, sawed and lopped this beautiful but terribly invasive shrub more commonly known as burning bush. That afternoon, a much younger, but no less enthusiastic group of students from the **Gunnery School's Outdoor Club** continued the assault. All in all, hundreds of Euonymous shrubs and seedlings were destroyed. Although it is, admittedly, almost impossible to eliminate them completely, the main goal is to keep them from invading adjacent natural areas.

The Gunnery School has an annual **Community Service Day** and last spring sent a group of 50 students and faculty to Steep Rock. They removed masses of invasives. The huge brush pile south of the riding ring is proof of their incredible accomplishment. All the brush piles will eventually be removed or burned. In the meantime they are providing excellent cover for wildlife.

In September, after a 9/11 Memorial Service at the fire house, Dick Sears, Washington's First Selectmen and a former scout master, arranged to have **Washington's Boy Scouts** and a visiting NYC troop work in Hidden Valley. Thanks to their enviable energy, Oriental bittersweet vines and other invasives have been removed from the main parking area.

After Steep Rock obtained the necessary permit from the town's Inland Wetlands Commission, two Gunnery students, **Adam Alter** and **Mark Rhoads** cleared one section of the understory near the bridge over Bee Brook.

cont. on page 7

New Trustees Elected

David A. Behnke is a member of Steep Rock's Task Force to Preserve Farmland. He also serves on the Boards of several environmental organizations, including the Connecticut Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and the Connecticut Fund for the Environment.

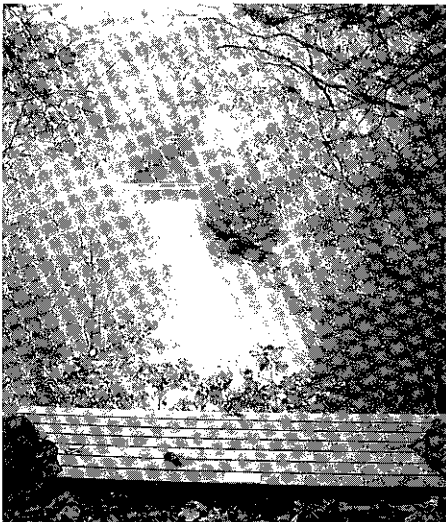
After 22 years as Managing Director with J.P.Morgan & Company, he retired in September 2002.

In 2003, Mr. Behnke and his partner Paul Doherty founded Behnke Doherty & Associates, a firm providing advice to individual and corporate clients on the purchase of investment quality art and antiques. Representing only the buyer, Behnke Doherty & Associates provides objective advice to its clients on both artistic merit and market valuation.

David holds a BA degree from Hamilton College, an MM degree from Yale University and an MBA from the University of Chicago.

Randolph (Randy) Bernard has lived in Washington with his wife Sheila for the last 25 years. He has two grown children Zachary & Kathleen. His past community activities included Vice Chairman of Washington's Inland Wetlands Commission and President of the Washington Environmental Council.

Randy's past work experience as Laboratory Director and President of Hydro Technologies, Inc., a New Milford based state certified environmental laboratory focusing on water analysis and his present position as President of GenCell Corp, (a company dedicated to the commercialization of fuel cell technology), give him environmental, technical and managerial expertise.



*The Murphy Bench at Marsh Bight
in the Steep Rock Reservation*

Jim Brinton was born and raised in Washington and spent many hours in Steep Rock while he was growing up.

Over the years he's been involved with the Washington Horse Show, the Boy Scouts, and the Steep Rock Picnic.

Jim is currently a member of the Fire Department, the Ambulance Association, and is an Alternate on the Zoning Commission. Jim serves on Washington's 225th Anniversary Committee and he was responsible for the wonderful parade held on August 28.

Jim is married to his high school sweetheart, Betsy, and has a daughter Erin, who's a student at Shepaug High School.

Gustave M. Hauser served as a Trustee from 1992-1998. He and his wife, Rita, have maintained a weekend home in Washington since 1965. He is chairman and chief executive officer of Hauser Communications, Inc., a New York Based investment and operating company in cable television and other electronic communications.

Gus and Rita have created the Hauser Foundation, which supports non-profit environmental, cultural, and political institutions and projects. The Hauser Foundation, along with contributions from Steep Rock friends, enabled Steep Rock to build the Hauser Bridge over the Shepaug in the Steep Rock Reservation.

The Hausers report they have worn out many pairs of boots hiking and clearing Steep Rock's trails in all seasons and weather. Gus believes "Steep Rock is a treasure that enriches the lives of all who are privileged to experience its peace and beauty".

Benedict Silverman has lived in Washington since 1991, and during that time has shown his interest in the history and preservation of the town's rural character in many ways, including a donation of land to Steep Rock, and the restoration of an historic water powered sawmill on his property.

Benedict serves on Steep Rock's Task Force to Preserve Farmland and believes "the most important tasks Steep Rock and the town have are to preserve not only open space, but also the farming interests in the area."

Members of the Steep Rock Association

For Fiscal Year 2003-2004

Steep Rock has always relied on contributions from friends to help defray the costs of maintaining the land we own. This financial support is crucial to our operating budget, which in the coming year is projected to be over \$250,000.

Our fiscal year runs from October 1—September 30. Our annual membership campaign for 2004-2005 has begun.

We are most grateful to our members for the fiscal year 2003-2004.

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Annual Membership Meeting

In an effort to keep our members informed of all our activities, Steep Rock held a meeting to which the entire membership was invited on July 24th. A sandwich lunch was served to about 75 members and trustees at St. John's Parish House, and committee chairs gave brief presentations recapping the year's efforts and initiatives. Following the meeting, walks and talks were taken and given at the Macricostas Preserve. (see the photo on page 1)

Become a Member of Steep Rock. We Need Your Support!

A contribution of any size entitles you to membership for one year.
The funds raised help us to maintain the reservations. Please use this form to send in your donation.

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Send To:
Steep Rock Association
PO Box 279, Washington Depot, CT 06794

Steep Rock Establishes Task Force to Preserve Farmland

Steep Rock has established a new committee—a Task Force for the Preservation of Farmland. The mission of the Task Force is to develop and implement programs for the preservation of working farms and farmland in Washington, CT.

The Task Force will operate as part of Steep Rock's already existing Preservation Committee but with a specific focus on working farms and farmland. Its activities will be closely coordinated with those of the Town's Conservation Commission and its Open Space Plan.

The Task Force intends to raise large sums from private sources and leverage this pool of money by funding different projects in cooperation with the Town, Federal and State Agencies and private organizations dedicated to preserving farmland.

Examples of these agencies and organizations are the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, CT Dept. of Agriculture's Farmland Preservation Program, CT Department of Environmental Protection's Open Space Grants Program, the Trust for Public Land and the Connecticut Farmland Trust.

Steep Rock has been active in past years in the acquisition of farmland either in fee or through conservation easements. It owns in fee 118 acres of prime farmland that continue to be farmed. An additional 148 acres of prime farmland are held by Steep Rock under conservation easements that are also being farmed. The Association was also involved in the purchase by the State of Connecticut of the development rights to another 503 acres of farmland.

Carlos Canal was named Chairman of the Task Force. Its other members are David Behnke, Susan Branson, Natalie Dyer, Betsy Manning, Ecton Manning, John Millington and Benedict Silverman. The Task Force has established a dialogue with a number of prominent local farmers who are prepared to share their knowledge, expertise and ideas with respect to the various programs that will be developed by the Task Force.

Chairman Canal stated, "The need for the Task Force arises from an aging farmer population that exists in Washington with no apparent successors waiting in the wings. The result is that over the next decade some 800 acres owned by active farmers and 1500 acres leased by them will have to be dealt with." He went on to say, "The challenge will be to develop and implement programs that will allow these 2,300 acres to continue being worked as active farmland."

Steep Rock Association

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The 225th Parade and Picnic

It was a terrifically hot day, but that didn't stop hundreds of people from coming out to see the marvelous parade. Steep Rock's float won a second prize for overall excellence!

We co-sponsored the picnic with the Fire Department and served more than 1,000 hamburgers and hot dogs. Thanks to Bill Fairbairn, Tom Osborne and Chris Charles who organized it all, and the trustees and volunteers who helped that day.



The Steep Rock float. From the left: Honorary Trustee and past President Bob deCourcy, Steep Rock Trustee Natalie Dyer, her grandchildren Owen and Polly Heminway and her daughter Lissy Heminway.

Invasives, *cont. from page 1*

We plan to erect a new entry sign/ information board at this site. We'll clear more of the area, and, when the invasives are gone, we'll plant native species of shrubs and trees. Our information board will describe the project. In this way we hope to inform the public about alternatives to non-native plants.

Last spring Dave Werkhovens's AP (advanced placement) **Biology class from Shepaug High School** asked for a project they could work on several mornings a week. They knew the threat from invasive plants and the need for habitat restoration so they rolled up their sleeves and got to work uprooting and cutting Honeysuckle, Multiflora Rose, Japanese Barberry, Winged Euonymus and Oriental bittersweet vines. Native species such as Maple-leaved Viburnum will soon be returning to the cleared areas near the Steep Rock riding ring.



Shepaug High School AP Biology students, after a morning fighting invasives.

Control and management of invasives is a daunting task. Steep Rock has hired a consultant, Josh Ellsworth from Ellsworth Management, LLC, to help us develop long-range conservation goals and to raise public awareness of the need to maintain and protect Steep Rock's natural diversity. Removal of the non-native plants invading Steep Rock and Hidden Valley and the restoration of habitats are expensive endeavors, but the cost will only increase if we ignore the problem.

We're extremely grateful for all the excellent volunteer help we received last year. It's reassuring to know that our volunteers will think twice before buying Burning Bush or Japanese Barberry!

House at Macricostas Preserve Has Significant History

Steve Solley and Bill Fairbairn, both Steep Rock Trustees, suspected all along that the Christian Street house on the Macricostas Preserve has historic value.

Bill searched the Washington and Kent Land Records and the Litchfield Probate Records and discovered that the first dwelling on this property was probably built between the years 1756 and 1761. The property was part of Kent until Washington was incorporated in 1779.

The first reference to "a dwelling house" on the property is set forth in a Warranty Deed from Jonah Camp to Isaac Camp dated 1/17/1761. Jonah Camp acquired the property in 1756 and there is no reference to any structures in the deed to him. Isaac Camp was born 9/9/1740 in Milford, Connecticut and died in New Preston on 4/3/1793. He is buried in Judea Cemetery in Washington. He fought in the Revolutionary War as a member of the 8th Connecticut Regiment under Captain Samuel Mattocks. He fought in the Defense of Philadelphia and spent the winter of 1778 at Valley Forge. Camp participated in the engagement in New Jersey when British General Clinton withdrew from Philadelphia to New York in June of 1778.

Isaac's estate was probated in the Litchfield Probate Court in 1793. These records give a detailed list of the real property and structures on the property – "dwelling house, barn, cowhouse, stable and hoghouse, horse shed and shop." He died intestate (without a will) and as a result there is good description of the house detailing the rooms. It would appear the house was a originally a saltbox consistent with colonial architecture of the 1740 to 1760 era.

At its Annual Meeting on May 8th of this year the Trustees of Steep Rock voted to clean up, clean out, paint and secure the house.

Some Trustees hope to work with local groups to set up a historical society which would take title to the house and raise funds to restore it. The plan would be to restore it to its original condition as an 18th century farmhouse. Anyone interested in becoming involved in this project should contact Steve Solley or Bill Fairbairn at the Steep Rock office.

Here's a bit of historical trivia – Meeker Swamp was called "Fairman's Swamp" in 1793.

Visit Our Web Site!

www.steeprockassoc.org

The site is updated regularly. You'll find lots of useful information, as well as links to other environmental web sites. There's also more about Adam's bridge and the Task Force to Preserve Farmland.

Steep Rock Tribute to George Murphy Trustee 1974-1999

Steep Rock and the Town of Washington lost a great benefactor when George Murphy died last December.

At its regular Trustee meeting on December 6, 2003, the following tribute was read into the minutes:

"We, the Trustees of Steep Rock, thank George Murphy for all he has done for the Washington community in general and for Steep Rock in particular. He has served this organization for more than thirty years: as an officer, trustee and friend.

George was an exceptional man who never sought recognition and gave of himself in endless ways - to his fellow man and to the forest and streams that surround us.

Regardless of his passionate desire for anonymity, he will be remembered by the Board of Trustees as a kind and generous man."

Murphy Bench Dedication: On Sunday, October 17, more than 50 friends gathered at Marsh Bight in Steep Rock to dedicate a bench to the memory of George Murphy.

The teak bench, designed and built by Steep Rock Trails Assistant Clark Gifford, can be found at Marsh Bight, in the Clam Shell section of the Steep Rock Reservation.

At the dedication, Rick Johnson, George Murphy's son in law remarked that the bench, like George himself, was unobtrusive, beautiful and powerful all at the same time.

Marsh Bight got its name in the 1970's when Forester John Marsh cleared a narrow, steep section of the hillside in the area of the Steep Rock Reservation called the Clam Shell. In doing so he created the spectacular view of the Shepaug River near where it takes a rather sharp turn (a "bight", in nautical terms). The view now includes the Hauser Suspension Bridge, built in 1991.



After the dedication of the George Murphy bench, Yolanda Joseph, Ruth Murphy and Kirsten Peckerman (under the canopy from the left) enjoy some refreshments.



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