

## *Sycamore Field~ Where River Cradles Grassland*



*Photo by John Landon*

Sycamore Field, the Salisbury Association Land Trust's recently conserved property, is an idyllic grassland bordering the Housatonic River and enclosed by forested hills. The parcel, an ideal conservation holding with high-quality agricultural soils, provides scenic views from Route 7 and views for boaters on the river, and a river buffer to protect water quality. Located on Route 7, about a quarter-mile south of Route 112, between the road and the Housatonic, the field is currently being farmed by the Jacquier's Laurelbrook Farm. The Land Trust acquired the property through the cooperation of the owners, John and Joyce Belter, and with the help of several conservation partners.

### *Some Background*

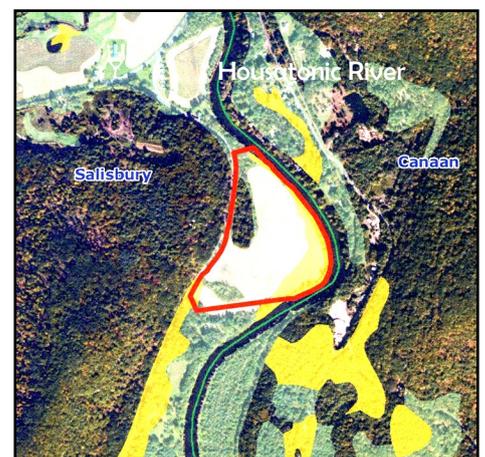
In 1999 the Environmental Protection Agency reached agreement with GE on a financial settlement (Natural Resource Damages funds, or NRD) for remediation of PCB damage to the Housatonic River.

Subsequent to this settlement, the Salisbury Association Land Trust was part of a Nature Conservancy grant proposal to use NRD funds to conserve land along the Housatonic River and Weatogue Road. This year the Trust has a second conservation project underway in that area.

### *How the Project Evolved*

The Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) also received an NRD grant, and the Land Trust's 38-acre Sycamore Field was a project that HVA initiated. HVA often works in partnership with local land trusts, and it invited the Salisbury Association Land Trust to complete the project and own and manage the property. The Land Trust enthusiastically agreed.

The acquisition was made possible through a partnership of the Connecticut Housatonic River NRD Trustee Council, representing DEEP, USFWS and



NOAA; the John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation; and the Salisbury Association Land Trust. To ensure perpetual protection, the Land Trust is donating a conservation easement to the Town of Salisbury.

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“Sycamore Field”— continued from page 1

## Stewardship

A multi-year stewardship plan has been developed for Sycamore Field. Early inspection revealed significant infestations of invasive Japanese bittersweet on the perimeter and along the road. The vines were covering the trees and blocking the views toward the river. If left untreated, the bittersweet would eventually kill the mature trees. Besides bittersweet, exten-

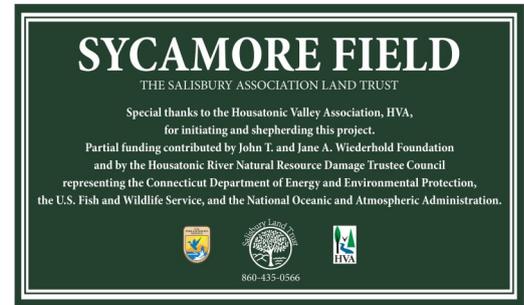


*Hotchkiss students removing brush*

sive populations of Japanese honeysuckle, barberry, and multiflora rose were found.

The first phase of clearing the vines and opening up the view was carried out with help from students and faculty from Housatonic Valley Regional High School and The Hotchkiss School. Future stewardship will include selective clearing along the riverbank as well as more roadside work. The Land Trust has applied for a grant to help defray these costs.

A short public walking trail will be created to allow a view access to the river. Since the riverbanks are high and steep along this section of the Housatonic, watercraft launching is impractical.



## What's in a Name?

When the Salisbury Land Trust acquired the property, the question arose of what to name it. The field is nestled in a bend of the Housatonic River, which briefly made “Riverbend” a contender. But by far an outstanding feature of the parcel is the presence of massive sycamore trees.

The American sycamore, growing 60 to 100 feet in height, can attain the largest trunk diameter of any of our Eastern hardwoods. Its bark is unique among trees; you can identify an American sycamore just by looking at the bark, which is smooth and whitish and peels off in large flakes. Splotches, where bark has peeled off, can be brown, green or grey. Sycamore trees can reach ages of five hundred to six hundred years. Liking moist soil, they are frequently found near streams and lakes.

Animals depend on sycamores too. Because American sycamores usually become hollow as they get older, animals



*American sycamore*

such as Pileated Woodpeckers, Barred Owls and raccoons find homes inside the hollows.

*With thanks to Land Trust members John Landon, George Massey and Roger McKee for information used in preparing this article.*

# Land Trust Outreach

**Wildlife Rehab:** In an April program co-sponsored by the Salisbury Land Trust and Scoville Memorial Library, wildlife rehabilitator Erin O'Connell talked about the process of treating sick, injured and orphaned birds. The goal, she noted, was to eventually return these birds to independent living in their natural habitat. Erin was accompanied by several "educational ambassadors"—birds of prey that had been treated at the clinic but are not able to survive in the wild.



Photo by Ruth Epstein

**Doris Walker Conservation Scholarship:** Two Housatonic Valley Regional High School students, Grace Herde and Noah Watson, are the 2015-2016 recipients of a Salisbury Association Land Trust scholarship. Named in memory of Doris Walker, a pioneer in establishing the Salisbury Land Trust in the mid-1970s, and a member of Salisbury's first Conservation Commission, the scholarship enabled the students to attend UCONN's Natural Resources Conservation Academy over the summer. During the school year they will perform community service on the Salmon Kill Restoration Project, working under the mentorship of Tracy Brown of Trout Unlimited.



Doris Walker



**Battle for Native Woodlands:** In a May program presented by Tom Zetterstrom, tree conservationist and photographer, and Todd Mervosh, weed control scientist, the subject was eradication of invasive plants and the preservation of landscapes. Using the Washinee Park restoration as a case history, the speakers showed how a forested landscape can be returned to balance, beauty and public access through effective management skills and strategies. A tour of Washinee Park followed the talk.

To prevent recontamination of the restored Washinee Park by Asiatic bittersweet, vines in the adjoining conifer grove of Reynolds Rockwell Park were treated using the cut and apply method. Vines ranged in size from pencil thickness to four inches.



Dr. Todd Mervosh and his assistant, Christian Allyn, cut 450 vines. (Photo by Tom Zetterstrom)

# Historically Speaking

## *A Lakeville Walking Tour*

Those walking and driving the streets of Lakeville on June 17 must have thought they were in Colonial Williamsburg as a man in 18<sup>th</sup> century attire led a group of some thirty-odd fifth graders through historic locations in the village.

Sites included the Joshua Porter house (now Petpourri), the Farnam Tavern, the Holley-Williams House, and the Holley Manufacturing Company building.

Tour guide Lou Bucciari discussed the importance of iron in attracting settlers to the town and the role of iron manufacturing during the Revolutionary War. While learning how water was used to power industry, the students marveled at the water turbine that still remains.



*Lou Bucciari, attired as Heman Allen, conducts a student tour.*

## *Coming Soon: A Salisbury Documentary*

Nearly five years ago, Joan Baldwin, Curator of Collections at The Hotchkiss School and a Salisbury Association Historical Society member, teamed up with Salisbury Town Historian Katherine Chilcoat to create the Cemetery Project for Hotchkiss tenth graders.



*Town Hill Cemetery*

Students were asked to select a stone dating between 1800 and 1870 in the Town Hill Cemetery. Using the parameters of name, gender, birth and death dates, and a curated selection of primary and secondary sources, the students created a fictional piece of writing based on the imagined life of their chosen character.

It was difficult to find resources that provided comprehensive background on 19<sup>th</sup> century Salisbury, so Baldwin proposed creating a documentary to serve as a foundation for broader exploration. The 20-minute film portrays Salisbury's history during the period under study, enabling students who have never seen, for example, a one-room schoolhouse, to have a clearer picture of how people lived at that time.

A premier screening of the documentary, with an opportunity to speak with Anne Villano, film director and instructor at Hotchkiss, and Peter Vermilyea, script writer and HVRHS social studies teacher, will be held on Saturday, October 17, at 7:00 p.m. in the Science Lecture Hall at Hotchkiss.

Funding for the project was provided by The Hotchkiss School, the Salisbury Association Historical Society, the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, and Connecticut Humanities.

### *Students Engage in National History Day*

Sponsored by the Salisbury Association Historical Society and guided by Salisbury Central School social studies teacher Brendan Reilly, two eighth graders prepared projects and participated in the 2015 National History Day (NHD). NHD is not so much a “day” as a series of competitions on regional, state, and national levels, where students address a given history theme. This year's topic was “Leadership and Legacy in History.”



*Eighth graders Mercedes Moody and Alice Villano participated in a National History Day competition.*

On March 7, Mercedes Moody and Alice Villano took part in the regional competition at Torrington High School.

Mercedes’ exhibit compared the leadership and legacies of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. Alice produced a documentary on women's rights activist and Taliban target Malala Yousafzia.

For more information about National History Day, go to [nhd.org](http://nhd.org). If you would like to work on an NHD project with a student, please contact Lou Bucceri at [lbucceri@yahoo.com](mailto:lbucceri@yahoo.com).

### *Historical Society Enrolls in StEPs*

The goal of the Salisbury Association Historical Society is to record, preserve and present the Town's history through interesting and informative exhibits, lectures, collections and publications. In addition, the Society supports educational programs and works cooperatively with the Town Historian and community organizations.

To enhance these functions, the Historical Society has enrolled in a program that assists small- and mid-sized museums, historic sites and houses, and history organizations, including all-volunteer groups, to assess their policies and practices, manage daily operations and plan for the future.

Created by the American Association of State and Local History, StEPs is the Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations. Its curriculum helps historical societies build professionalism, ensuring that programs and collections remain vibrant community resources. The StEPs-CT program, based on the national model curriculum, is the first in the nation to be implemented on a statewide level.

If you would like to know more about this program or how to become involved, please contact Laura Carlson at the Academy Building: 860-435-0566.



*StEPs-CT participants in the meeting room at the Connecticut Historical Society. The display is a collection of old tavern and inn signs.  
(Photo by Lou Bucceri)*

# Happening in Salisbury

## Possible Use for Train Station

The Salisbury Association and Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area have proposed sharing the space in the vacant Lakeville train station. The Association's Historical Society is looking for space where it can display and interpret artifacts from its collection including objects that were once housed in the Holley-Williams House and the Salisbury Cannon Museum. The Heritage Area is seeking office space as its regional role expands.



## A Brief History of the Station

The train station, built in 1871 by the Connecticut Western Railroad, received passengers until 1928. Freight was handled in a separate building that no longer exists. That service ended in 1938. The land and building were given to the town by Mr. and Mrs. Frederick R. Bauer in 1951. Since then, the building has housed the Salisbury Visiting Nurse Association and later the radio station.

## Checking It Out

Representatives of the Heritage Area and the Salisbury Association have appeared before the Board of Selectmen and the Planning and Zoning Commission. So far, the proposal has received positive feedback.

The potential partners have engaged structural engineers and other professionals to come up with a cost estimate for the renovations needed to re-purpose the space. The hope is to create a place to welcome visitors to town, celebrate local history, provide programs for school groups, and better inform the community about our regional heritage. Stay tuned.

## Rained Out . . . Again?

For the second consecutive year, weather played havoc with the Independence Day celebration at the Town Grove, a popular event sponsored by the Salisbury Association Civic Committee. Luckily, July 4th fell on a Saturday this year and the committee was able to re-schedule a rain date for Sunday, the 5th.

As always, EXTRAS, the after-school day care center at Salisbury Central School fired up its grills and served foot-long hot dogs and soft drinks, raising hundreds of dollars for an essential service. Holly Reid once again directed the children's games, a costumed Lou Bucceri read the Declaration of Independence, and the Salisbury Band played a rousing selection of patriotic tunes.

## Civic Activities Scholarship

Master of Ceremonies David Bayersdorfer announced the Carl Williams Civic Activities Scholarship that honors the devoted service of the late Carl Williams. The goal of the scholarship is to encourage young people to participate in the life of the community.

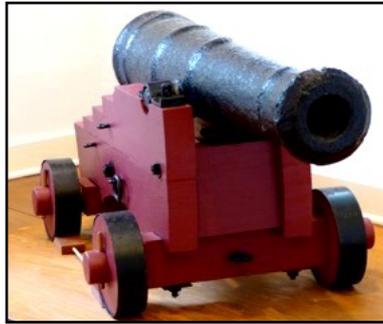
Last year's scholarship recipient, Housatonic Valley Regional High School graduate Christian Umaña, now at Cornell University, is interested in landscape architecture. This year's recipient, Erin Chin, also a HVRHS graduate, is entering Harvard University. Both have a strong record of civic engagement.



*With thanks to Lou Bucceri, Salisbury Historical Society co-chair, for providing information used in preparing the history- and civic-related articles.*

## Historic Cannon on Display

In the fall 2014 newsletter we reported the acquisition of a Revolutionary War-era iron cannon, likely of Salisbury origin. This “find” was the culmination of a five-year search by the Salisbury Association Historical Society. Now the 820-pound cannon and its carriage have been installed in the Academy Building on Main Street, home of the Association’s office and exhibit space, and a great setting for the public to view this historic object of local and national significance.



Installing the cannon in the Academy Building. Left to right: Reggie Lamson, Bill Morrill, Russell Johnson, Lou Bucceri. (Photo by Patrick Sullivan, Lakeville Journal)

## Smithsonian Lists Association Portraits

Following a year-long effort by Salisbury Historical Society volunteer Ted Spickler, all of the portraits owned by the Salisbury Association, many of which are displayed at the Academy Building, are being listed in the Catalog of American Portraits, National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. A detailed form listing the information known about each portrait, along with a photograph of the portrait taken by Joseph Meehan, will soon be available on the Smithsonian website.



Ted Spickler with portrait of Mrs. Winthrop Lakey Carter

## Now Accepting Credit Cards

For your convenience, you can now use a credit card to purchase Association publications, obtain tickets to the Association’s Christmas Concert or other events, or to make a contribution supporting the work of the Salisbury Association Land Trust or the Historical Society. Your support matters, and makes a big difference!



You can use your Visa or MasterCard in person at the Academy Building or by calling 860-435-0566 during office hours: Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m..

## Annual Christmas Concert

This year’s Christmas Concert, organized by the Salisbury Association, is scheduled for Saturday, December 5, 7:00, at the Academy Building. The event brings a return engagement of a popular trio: Judith Dansker (oboe and recorder), Marcia Young (vocalist and harp), Christopher Morrongiello (lute), plus special guest vocalist Alici DePaolo. Ticket \$30, includes desserts and beverage.



## Fall History Events

Co-sponsored by the Salisbury Association Historical Society  
and Scoville Memorial Library



**September 26, 4:00 p.m.** “Catholicism in Salisbury: The Story of the Church of St. Mary on its 140th Anniversary” by local historian Louis Bucceri, at the Wardell Room of Scoville Memorial Library.

**October 17, 7:00 p.m.** Premier: “Documentary on Salisbury History 1800 to 1870,” with post-screening discussion by director/teacher Anne Villano and historian/teacher Peter Vermilyea, at the Science Lecture Hall, Griswold Science Building, The Hotchkiss School. Additional sponsorship from the Connecticut Humanities Council and the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area.



**November 7, 4:00 p.m.** Tribute to Dean Hammond: “The Historic Inns and Taverns of Northwest Connecticut” by local historian David Bayersdorfer. Site to be determined.



**December 5, 4:00 p.m.** Book talk: “Brass Valley: The Fall of the American Brass Industry in the Naugatuck Valley” by award-winning photographer Emery Roth II. Site to be determined.

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