

Rhinebeck's Outdoor Classroom



By Maeve Cruikshank

Among the many things that make our town so special are the beautiful and unique points of entry that mark its beginning. From the east, it's the large heart mowed into the hill. From the north it's the fairgrounds. And my favorite can be spotted while driving up from the south. The large white barn on the four lanes of Route 9 serves not only as a gateway to Rhinebeck, but also as the starting point of The Southlands Foundation, a magnificent, two-hundred acre, not-for-profit horse farm dedicated to land conservation and educational horsemanship.

The property captures the best of every light and every season, making it a must-see for tourists and locals alike; but the beautiful scenery is just the beginning of all that The Southlands Foundation has to offer. Founded by Deborah Dows in the late 1930's, Southlands is rooted in its mission to provide continuous opportunity in education and horsemanship for everyone, even as horses and time for riding become increasingly valuable commodities. Today

PHOTOS BY ABIGAIL FOSTER



Southlands is home to over forty horses, as well as a second home to the many humans enamored with them. Spend five minutes there and it will become immediately evident that every person who works there loves his or her job for a unique reason.

For Executive Director Allison King, that reason depends on the day. "Horses have always spoken to my soul," she stated candidly.

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"They are incredibly kind and they don't accommodate anybody for any reason other than that person's being." Talking to Allison, it was apparent that her position at Southlands is far more than just a job for her. Her knowledge of horses rang clear in her voice as she said that "they need you to be confident and clear and then they'll turn themselves inside out to help you. A lot of people have a lot of distance between what they are out in public and what they are inside. Horses bridge that gap immediately."

Whether it's the horses, the landscape, or the people, Southlands is a captivating place for both adults and children. I can attest to this, as I am lucky to have spent a large portion of my childhood riding there, and still seize every opportunity to return. Once you're there once, it's hard to stay away. A nonprofit facility, Southlands operates on a membership basis, and is overseen by a Board of Directors. Board President Eve D'Ambra, got involved with Southlands when she started taking lessons with her daughter over 10 years ago. "I was struck by the high quality of its school horses, the dedication of its trainers, along with its beautiful setting amidst rolling fields, woods, and the river beyond," Eve noted as she described her initial attraction to the site.

Eve shared that what she loves most about serving as Board President is "moving the organization forward while keeping its history alive. Southlands continues to live up to the mission of its founder, Deborah Dows." The Board, along with the staff of Southlands, are working day in and day out to continue fostering broader community involvement, whether it be through the lesson program or by opening the site to the public so that everyone can enjoy the landscape. Southlands develops new programs each year to get members of the community, along with their families, involved with all that they have to offer, including summer camps for children as young as three years old.

Vicki Haak, CFP, member of the Southlands Foundation Board, reflected: "Southlands has provided countless positive experiences for all who have been involved. For me, the special moments have included sunset galas, obedience classes with my late dog Dixie,

and, perhaps most significant, bringing my goddaughter for her first pony ride. Over a decade later, that little girl on the pony is now an equine therapist," Vicki beamed. "And I know everyone has their own set of memories. The incredible commitment of the employees, volunteers, and the board to the preservation of the land, animals, and riding school allows for the continuous offering of opportunities for people of all walks of life to take a step back and connect to nature."

And just as is the case for me, Vicki noted its significance as an entry point to her home community.

"Approaching Rhinebeck from the 'four lanes' and seeing the breathtaking vistas of Southlands tells me I am back home. It's a gem of the Hudson Valley. What an honor to serve on the Board, where I hope to do my part to honor the legacy of Deborah Dows. We really all have her to thank," Vicki shared.

Southlands is open to the public; there are an array of opportunities to connect with animals, the community, and the breathtaking scenery of the Hudson Valley. Memberships are available as well, which include discounts on riding lessons as well as priority registration on summer camps and other educational programs for all ages. Learn more at southlands.org. ■

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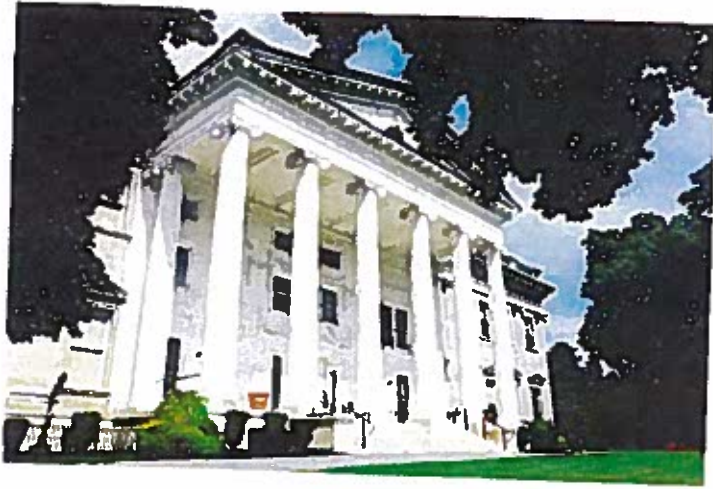
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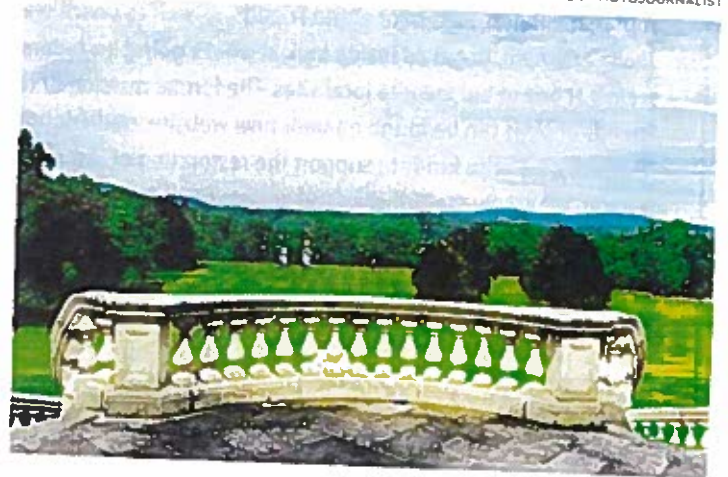
Mills Mansion: A Hidden Gem



By Maeve Cruikshank



PHOTOS BY ABIGAIL FOSTER PHOTOJOURNALIST



From sledding days and historic house tours to family hikes and summer concerts, Mills Mansion at Staatsburgh State Historic Site is a staple of the Hudson Valley

community for residents of all ages. The immaculately manicured property is simply breathtaking. A 72-room mansion from the Gilded Age, commissioned by Odgen and Ruth Mills in 1895, sits on top of a hill, allowing it a stunning view of the Hudson River. Locals of

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Staatsburg and the surrounding communities take advantage of the extensive trails within Mills-Norrie State Park, glorious in every season for hiking, snowshoeing, or even cross-country skiing.

Dedicated employees of the site and members of the Friends of Mills at Staatsburgh, an eleven-member volunteer board, work to keep the rich history of the estate alive. We took the opportunity to sit down with Diane Topkis, President of the Friends, as well as board member Joan Carbonaro, to get an inside look at what's going on behind the scenes at one of our favorite local sites. The formal mission of the Friends of Mills can be found on their new website, millsfriends.org. "Primarily, we raise funds to support the restoration of the mansion's interior, especially the rich silks and velvets that have deteriorated over the years. And we support educational programs and exhibits," Diane told us. She also highlighted for us the passion that each board member has for the history of the mansion and the town of Staatsburg, "about half the board lives in the village so we proudly consider the estate our backyard."

Joan mentioned that "Mills Mansion is a gift from the past to all of us who visit it today. I feel privileged to be a member of the Board, because of all the great work it does to preserve this gem on the Hudson."

Diane continued to detail the current project that the Friends are

working on, which is to restore the dining room to its original splendor. The mansion at Staatsburgh was the Mills family's home from the fall through Christmas time each year.

"The dining room was Mrs. Mills' spot where she could really shine; this room was just stunning. Her guests would be out riding horses or enjoying the outdoors during the day, and when it came time for dinner, they would need to wait in the hall of the mansion until the reveal of the dining room. It was designed to overwhelm her guests," Diane told us. "The sliding door would open and they would be allowed into the dining room. Even today, during our tours, many will point out its magnificence."

Staatsburgh State Historic sites offers a wide array of opportunities for the community to learn more about the mansion's history, from the state-run Teas and Talks to house tours and school field trips. As Joan so eloquently stated, "Mills is a place where both children and adults can learn about the Gilded Age and compare it to life today. It can leave us both in awe of the beauty and grandeur of that era - yet counting ourselves fortunate that society has progressed well beyond the structures and inequities of the past."

To learn more about how you can get involved or attend one of our events, visit millsfriends.org or send us an email at Friends@MillsFriends.org. ■



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Shaping Future Generations



By Maeve Cruikshank

Upon returning home from college and settling back into Rhinebeck life, I found myself thinking about the number of different shapes communities can take, even in one small town. I've been lucky to have strong, tight-knit connections within the population of horseback riders in the area, as well as a wonderful group of peers from high school, many of whom I grew close with over our 12-plus years together. For a town that is both small in size and population, we have a wide array of communities within that offer a true sense of belonging.

Peter Dykeman found his inner community through the overlap of his career as a science teacher and his extensive involvement with the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. Raised in Pawling, NY during the time of the Great Depression and World War II, Peter spent his childhood playing neighborhood games and exploring the woods around him, sparking a passion for the outdoors at a young age. He began his first job at a floral shop at the age of 13, while also mowing lawns and assisting local farmers with jobs such as haying.

Peter's work ethic extended to the school setting. In high school he played football, basketball, and baseball, was a member of the band and chorus, and portrayed Willie Baxter in his school's production of *Seventeen*, as well as Sir Joseph Porter in *HMS Pinafore*. Recalled Peter, "Pinafore" was our senior play and nearly everyone from the 26-member student body was in the cast. It was amazing for a school the size of Pawling to have all the major parts filled by very capable singers and pianists." He graduated Valedictorian of the

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Class of 1953, and left home to study chemistry at the College of Forestry at Syracuse University and SUNY Albany.

"The Korean War was ending, but the draft was still in effect. College students with good grades were granted exempt status to finish their educations," he reflected.

By chance, his fraternity house at SUNY Albany was located adjacent to a women's dorm that was part of Albany Business College. Peter reminisced: "There I met a charming person named Helen Brown. Shortly after my graduation we got married in her hometown of Warrensburg, NY." Following their wedding, they moved to Pine Bush where Peter taught Science, and eventually became parents to three sons: Peter, Michael, and Andrew.

Long before raising children of his own, however, a young Peter decided to join Cub Scouts at 10 years of age. It was a decision which led to a lifelong commitment to the organization, a skill-set and value system he'd pass on to his children, grandchildren, and

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great-grandchildren, and an irreplaceable sense of community in his life. "At age 12 I joined Troop 34 in Pawling and remained a member throughout high school. Since then, except for a few years in college, I've always been active in scouting. Troop 34 met in the basement of the high school, marched in Memorial Day Parades, and attended camporees and summer camp at Camp Nooteming." Peter served in a leadership role early on in his scouting years, running meetings and guiding the younger scouts.

He credits his success as a scout during that time to a Council executive by the name of George Darlington, and cited the highlight of his teenage scouting years as attending the National Jamboree in 1950 with the Dutchess County contingent where President Truman addressed nearly 50,000 Scouts and Leaders. "Fresh off World War II, with the country's wounds still healing, Truman challenged the Scouts to continue with that march toward world peace and understanding people from other countries," Peter shared. He remembered a quote from Truman in which he stated that living, camping with, and understanding people from other countries "is the first step toward settling world problems in a spirit of give and take, instead of fighting about them."

Ever a student and mentor as a Scout himself and with up-and-coming scouts, it's no surprise that classroom teaching also became a significant part of Peter's life. His career in education started in 1957, the same year that the USSR launched Sputnik, which Peter identified as "an event that stimulated greater emphasis on science education."

Especially impactful for Peter were the moments when his passions for scouting and teaching merged. "Several of my high school students were members of the local Boy Scout troop and urged me to get involved. So, I served as the Explorer Advisor and Assistant Scoutmaster during my Pine Bush years. That began my long participation in Boy Scout leadership," he noted.

During this time, Peter was also working towards earning his permanent teaching certification by attending National Science Foundation (NSF) summer sessions at Albany in 1959-60. Peter explained that the NSF sponsored these programs in response to the ongoing shortage of science teachers. In 1960, the NSF announced availability of scholarships for the 1960-61 academic year, so he applied and was accepted to Syracuse University to work

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 6



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on his Master's degree.

"Since I would have no guarantee that a position would be available at Pine Bush, I was faced with the task of moving three times in one year with a young family," Peter recalled.

At the time they were renting an apartment in Albany. As a solution, Peter and Helen purchased a mobile home to be moved to Elbridge, near Syracuse, in August. During his work on his Master's, Peter concentrated primarily on botany. "I was fortunate enough to be able to work with Professor Mildred Faust, a well-known botanist in the central New York area and enjoyed several courses in botany and microbiology." Peter completed his degree in the spring of 1961 and was then offered a position as a teacher in the science department at FDR High School in Hyde Park. The Dykeman family relocated their mobile home to Staatsburg and Peter began teaching.

While studying at Syracuse, Peter had been introduced to Bill Mignault, whose family would eventually become close to his own. "Bill was a participant in the Syracuse program, but was also the waterfront director at the Onondaga Council's Sabattis Scout Reservation in the wilderness between Tupper Lake and Long Lake," Peter explained, "The camp was looking for someone to fill the Camp Commissioner and Program Director position for an 8-week camping program. Bill suggested I might like the job, and I agreed." And so after attending the camp administration training program and getting settled into life in Staatsburg, the Dykeman family packed up again to spend the entire summer of 1961 at Sabattis Scout Reservation.

"The property was approximately 2,000 acres and included much of Lowe's Lake area of the Bog River, which flowed into Tupper Lake. The only building on the property was a large army Quonset hut," Peter said. Subsequently, the family spent their nearly 10-week-long stay in a 14x14 army tent with a lakeside view enjoyable enough to bring the whole family back the following summer, and again in 1964 when Peter returned to fill a director's position. "By that time, cabins had been built for the senior staff and families were able to enjoy modern facilities that were lacking in our earlier summers."

Peter has wonderful memories from summers at Sabattis Scout Reservation. "During the spring of 1965, one of my students brought a baby skunk to school. She had rescued it from the highway where the mother had been killed. We named her Flower and brought her up to Sabattis for the summer, where she accidentally sprayed the interior of our cabin," he remembered fondly. They were able to obtain a permit to keep Flower for educational purposes, and she became a popular attraction at the camp.

Upon their return to Staatsburg, Peter got to work at FDR. He connected

with some of his students about scouting, which eventually put him in touch with several troop leaders in Hyde Park and led to countless council volunteer positions and events over the years.

Eventually, the Dykeman family became eager to build a home in Rhinebeck, and were introduced to a lovely 7-acre plot out on Vlei Road, a property originally owned by Katharine Suckley who lived in a small house on a hill above where they would build their home. "Katharine was an outdoors, hands-on person who preferred to have a hammer or saw in her hands than a cup of tea. When we first met her she was busy putting up a bird house she had built," Peter recalled. The Dykemans finalized the purchase of the property in June of 1965, and spent the next two years building the home they still inhabit today.

Over the years, Peter formed many strong ties in Dutchess County through scouting. He volunteered extensively with Pack 28 in Rhinebeck, and served as Cubmaster and Webelos Leader as his sons went through the Cub Scout program. "In 1967, the Pack needed another leader and a volunteer was hard to find. Walter Nesel agreed to become Cubmaster if I would be committee chairman. Walt was the best thing that happened to scouting in Rhinebeck. He was a master at working with youth," Peter reflected, "Two of his sons, Dennis and Gerard, as well as the Dykeman boys, were members of the Pack and Helen was one of 10 Den Mothers." Just two years later the pack had more boys graduating on to Boy Scouts than could be handled, so Peter and Herman Tietjen met with District Commissioner Roland Block to form a second troop for Rhinebeck.

In 1969 Peter took a two-year sabbatical from teaching to complete the Cornell Environmental Education Program as well as a graduate assistantship at the Cornell Plantations. He completed his residency and obtained his PhD in 1976. During his time in Ithaca, Peter was also able to volunteer as an Assistant Scoutmaster for Troop 3 in Trumansburg where the Dykeman family resided temporarily.

Upon their return to Rhinebeck, Peter and his sons rejoined Troop 128 and went on to make some of their best memories at Sabattis, and on trips to New Mexico and Colorado, as well as when they attended the National Jamboree at Moraine State Park in 1973, and, of course, countless memorable experiences as part of Rhinebeck's Memorial Day Parade. "Walt Nesel was always with the troops in the parade, riding in his modified golf cart with his sidekick, Jessica Jameison. We frequently included a trailer with canoes or other equipment and for a few years our troop bus with sketches of Snoopy, Charlie Brown and other cartoon characters in the windows. Our troop mascot, Herman the Crocodile, has been a marcher, except when under repair. He was named in honor of Mr. Tietjen, our first committee chairman." Throughout Peter's scouting career he has received numerous awards including the District Award of Merit, Silver Beaver Award, and the

Rhinebeck Good Scout Award from the Dutchess County Council, all awards for service to scouting.

"During the half-century existence of Troop 128, 54 Scouts have achieved the Eagle Scout rank, several during the past year. Their projects are evident throughout the Rhinebeck area. Trees in the village parking lot, benches in the park, signs at entrances to the village and town, tables at the fairgrounds, cemetery maintenance and church carpentry are a few of the many physical projects in addition to many community service programs," Peter told us with pride. Among his many accomplishments, Peter and Tom Elias also co-authored a book titled Field Guide to North American Edible Wild Plants, for Outdoor Life Books.

All three of Peter's sons graduated from Rhinebeck High School, and two of them, Peter and Matthew, went on to serve four years in the Navy. Peter started Collision Med, an expert witness service for attorneys to handle their small claims accident cases, and Matthew was employed by commercial airlines as an aircraft electronics specialist. Today he operates a flourishing real estate business in Tampa with his wife Laurie. Andrew graduated from SUNY New Paltz and is now Manager of Vendor Services at the Manhattan center of ACI Worldwide.

Peter and Helen also have four grandchildren and four great grandchildren. Through and through, they've shared their interests in a way that has helped shape the lives of their family members. Helen, who gave lessons to many aspiring guitarists in Rhinebeck throughout the 1980s, inspired two of their sons to go on to become professionals; Andrew was a member of the local band known as White Water and later Trade Winds, and Matthew plays gigs in Tampa. Peter entertains locally in the Lake Arrowhead, CA area as a Neil Diamond impersonator.

Helen herself joined the activities department of the Baptist Home for twelve years through the 1990s, recently returning to play her guitar and sing with the residents as a volunteer. She and Peter are very active in the Wurtemberg Church. Peter, of course, continues to be active in Troop 128 and plays softball in the Poughkeepsie Seniors league.

From the warm smiles that welcomed our team to their photo shoot, it's clear that this wonderful couple's sense of belonging runs deep - and they'll do all they can to give the next generations the same sense of belonging that has shaped their lives. ■

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Zimmer Brothers: The History



By Maeve
Cruikshank

The number of family - founded and operated businesses in the Village of Rhinebeck is just one thing that helps to foster the tight-knit

community we all feel so lucky to be a part of. Among these family operated businesses is Zimmer Brothers Jewelers, founded in 1893 by Thomas Zimmer. Raised in Poughkeepsie by a local cigar maker and proprietor of Zimmer House Hotel, Thomas started his career in jewelry quite young, following an apprenticeship as a bench jeweler with Hallowell & Co. Jewelers at the age of fourteen. After working in New York City with George O. Street Jewelers and Tiffany & Co., Thomas returned to his hometown of Poughkeepsie where he and his brother Fred ran their own jewelry store on Garden Street.

He was eventually joined by his son, Leonard Sr., in 1914, who navigated the business through the hardships brought on by World War II and the Great Depression. Leonard Jr. came on in 1948 and is credited for expanding Zimmer Brothers immensely, and adding on the services they offer today. Leonard Jr.'s son-in-law Michael Gordon joined in 1971 along with his daughter Jocelyn Gordon Klastow. Today, Michael and Jocelyn represent the fourth and fifth generations of Zimmer Brothers' founding family.

Jocelyn gave us insight into the incredibly unique aspects of their Rhinebeck location, an expansion of their flagship store in Poughkeepsie. The Rhinebeck location is celebrating their four-year anniversary, and, in celebration, has freshened up the interior design of the shop and added all new collections! "We've added our 'Astor' collection which includes pieces from the Art Deco period featuring platinum, diamonds, and pearls," Jocelyn told us. But

that's not all. "Our flora fauna 'Ferncliff' collection includes jewelry with a floral motif as well as whimsical animal pins and rings," she continued. Stop in to see what's included in the "Woodstock" and "Omega" collections!

Jocelyn also explained other ways in which Zimmer Brothers works to maintain its local feel. "We are honored to be showcasing the work of talented Hudson Valley jewelry designer Rachel Atherley. Her pieces are inspired by the beauty of the natural world through a modern perspective," Jocelyn explained. "Our family cherishes our Hudson Valley roots so we strive to support and showcase this awesome community." Zimmer Brothers also carries wonderful collections from all over - from Gumuchian gold and diamond jewelry made by women for women in New York to Fope luxurious 18k gold from Italy. Finally, Zimmer Brothers specializes in full service jewelry/watch repair and restoration. They also buy jewelry and offer trade-ins and engraving. Currently, their most requested service is their Custom Design Center, which uses state-of-the-art CAD design to reimagine old pieces family heirlooms into designs inspired by you!

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