2016 Camp Meeting Revival: A “Beautiful Balance”

By Caroline Katmann

Over a hundred guests turned out for fun, community and gospel music for a good cause at the Camp Meeting Revival sponsored by the Sourland Conservancy and Stoutsburg Cemetery Association at Skillman Park on September 17th. The Camp Meeting was a fundraiser for the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum (SSAAM).

Whether in their Sunday best or shorts and t-shirts, a great time was had by all!

Speakers included Reverend Michael Diggs, Sr.; Reverend Tom Hills; Sourland Conservancy Executive Director, Caroline Katmann; Stoutsburg Cemetery Association Trustees Elaine Buck, John Buck and Beverly Mills; and Reverend Edwin Lloyd. Musicians Eric Gambrel, Delia Diggs, Bertha Morgan, Charlie Ashton, Phillip Orr, Ira Serle, Wenonah Brooks, Jim Carroll, Erica McNealy, and a combined choir from the Second Calvary Church of Hopewell and the First Baptist Church of Pennington entertained and inspired everyone with beautiful gospel music.

Hand-made Church Lady Aprons were a huge success at the Camp Meeting. The inspiration to make these aprons came from the Bethel AME Pennington church ladies. During the 1930s, the ladies got together around pedal sewing machines with scraps of old dresses or whatever was available and sewed the aprons for a fundraiser. They sold them for five cents! Four of these original aprons have been donated to SSAAM by Constance Wheeler. Recreated by Beverly Mills and Elaine Buck of the Stoutsburg Cemetery Association, the Church Lady Aprons sold at our Camp Meeting were hand-made by the ladies of Hopewell Presbyterian Church and a few other humble souls and then “blinged out” by Beverly and Elaine.

Although the original Camp Meetings were described as “rowdy affairs,” around 1900, when the AME Church was moved to its current location on Hollow Road in Skillman, the Camp meetings became more orderly. “In fact, the Skillman camp meetings were noted for the good behavior of the participants and the great care they took in their dress.” (New Jersey’s Sourland Mountain by Jim Luce) They were also diverse affairs: “The meetings were more widely attended by both blacks and whites than the earlier ones…”

Like the later camp meetings, our 2016 Camp Meeting Revival featured delicious food, flamboyant hats (and aprons), inspiring music and a diverse group of people. “Scanning the audience, I realized that there was a beautiful balance of people not unlike it would have been so long ago…,” said Catherine Hogan, secretary and treasurer of the SSAAM Board of Trustees.

For more information and photos visit www.facebook.com/stoutsburgsourlandafricanamericanmuseum
Sourland Conservancy

Message from the President

By Joanna Fiori

Autumn again and the Sourlands look spectacular! It is time to enjoy a hike in the woods!

We are three quarters of the way through our 30th year with many successful events behind us. Our hikes in the spring, including a geology walk, a vernal pool hike, a pipeline hike, a plein-air painting experience, a geocache hike, mushroom walk and a full-moon owling hike were wildly popular. And, our first two Train Station Series seminars have been at capacity, one on the emerald ash borer problem that is threatening our forests and the other on a history of New Jersey railroads, ending with the “Frog Wars” between two competing railroad lines right here near Hopewell. Thank you for your support!

The people that braved the heat on July 23rd and came out to the Music Fest had a great time listening to five bands, cooling off in Tim Johnston’s sprinkler tent, drinking craft beer made for the occasion by 902 Brewing Company of Hoboken and Flounder Brewery of Hillsborough, and enjoying the food provided by local vendors. The sunset was the best in show.

Despite the heat during the Sourland Spectacular, riders enjoyed the day. They were sent off after a bagel breakfast, enjoyed fruit and gourmet peanut butter and jelly sandwiches at the rest stops and came back to pizza or barbeque for lunch, topped off with brownie Sundays and customized chocolate mint sauce.

The profits from both fundraising events were higher this year than last and will be used to continue our mission to protect, promote and preserve the unique character of the Sourland Mountain region.

The Train Station Series:

A Sourland Mountain inspired program of educational and cultural events

(All seminars are at the Hopewell Train Station, unless otherwise noted with *)

This popular series offers seminars covering a wide-range of topics of interest to Sourlanders:

- Sept. 14: Emerald Ash Borer*
- Sept. 22: There Used to be a Railroad
- Sept. 29: Teachings from the Turtle Clan
- Oct. 6: Lindbergh Family Part I*
- Oct. 13: Lindbergh Family Part 2*
- Oct. 20: Cemetery John
- Oct. 27: Owls
- Nov. 3: What is Race and Systemic Racism? A Sourlands Perspective
- Nov. 10: Early Recreation in the Sourlands*
- Nov. 17: Rare Plants of the Sourlands

*Hopewell Presbyterian Church.

For a brief description of each seminar and the presenters, visit www.sourland.org/events. Registration is required. Suggested $5.00 donation.

For more information and links to register, sign up for our eNewsletter at www.sourland.org.
Executive Director’s Report
By Caroline Katmann

Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum

The Sourland Conservancy has been awarded a 2016 Historic Preservation Grant by the Somerset County Historic Preservation Office (SCHPO), in the amount of $67,688. These funds will support the Conservancy’s Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum (SSAAM) project in partnership with the Stoutsburg Cemetery Association.

Activities funded by the grant include the creation of a preservation and vision plan for SSAAM, preparation of a New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places nomination, signage and construction work to maintain the integrity and safety of the building and grounds.

The SCHPO grant will enable the Conservancy to make huge strides in our efforts to preserve, promote and protect the historic resources in the Sourlands. Thank you, SCHPO, for believing in our mission and in the dream we share with the Stoutsburg Cemetery Association to create the first African American Museum in central New Jersey!

To receive updates on Museum progress and events, become a Facebook friend of SSAAM at www.facebook.com/stoutsburgsourlandafricanamericanmuseum.

To learn more about becoming a Founding Member of the Museum or volunteer opportunities, contact me at director@sourland.org or 609-309-5155.

2016 Grants and Awards

The Sourland Conservancy has also received grant funds this year in support of our stewardship programs. A Bristol-Myers Squibb grant in the amount of $10,000 is funding the second edition of our stewardship handbook for residents, “Living in the Sourlands,” as well as consulting fees for the naturalist advisor to our Sourland Stewards program. Our American Woodcock Habitat Restoration Project is funded in part with a Franklin Parker Conservation Excellence Grant given by New Jersey Conservation Foundation in the amount of $4000.

We are pleased to announce that Sourland Stewards, our stewardship program that provides nature experiences, online and print resources, and community support and inspiration, has been chosen for a 2016 ANJEC Environmental Achievement Honorable Mention Award. Thank you, Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions! We are looking forward to the Awards Ceremony at the ANJEC Conference on September 30th at Mercer County College.

STOP the PennEast Pipeline

It is with cautious optimism, fueled by the strength, unity and determination of the individuals, citizens groups, organizations and officials opposed to this pipeline project, that we write the following: During the comment period for the FERC’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) thousands of comments exposed extremely serious flaws in the DEIS. It was heartening to see that two organizations entrusted with the safekeeping of our environment, the EPA and NJDEP, also commented on the unacceptable gaps in the DEIS.

We must continue with our united efforts to oppose the pipeline. Join the Sourland Conservancy and many other organizations and citizen’s groups opposed to the pipeline on Saturday, October 8th for The Walk Along the Canal, a Rally to HALT PennEast. For more information, visit www.haltpenneast.org.

Stop by the Sourland Conservancy office to pick up your free Stop the Pipeline, Save the Sourlands lawn sign. Together we will stop PennEast!
I started my research for this subject by going to an Audubon web site on Black Vultures. I found the following statement, “With sooty black plumage, a large bare black head and neat white stars under their wing tips, Black Vultures are almost dapper.” Bet you didn’t see that coming. Neither did I. Are they interesting? Absolutely, even fascinating, and they soar and glide with wonderful grace, but “dapper” or any other form of handsome? I don’t think so. And neither is the Turkey Vulture (shown here) a good looking bird. There are a number of things about vultures that are so disgusting that I never considered them in any way beautiful.

Before we get into their disgusting traits I would like to point out that there are two types of vultures in the Sourlands—Turkey and Black. They are alike in behavior and often flock together, but Black Vultures are a little smaller than Turkey Vultures, they have black heads to the red head of a Turkey, and they fly with their wings almost flat out from their bodies as opposed to the “V” that characterizes Turkey Vultures wings while they are soaring and gliding. Since they are so much alike I will henceforth just refer to Vultures, meaning both Turkey and Black.

Vultures not only eat carrion, but their guts contain acids that allow them to eat food that is putrefied; they feast on carrion that is infected with botulinous toxin, hog cholera and anthrax—all of which would be deadly to any other animal. Furthermore, in order to get at the tasty entrails of a dead animal they often start their meal at the anus—oblivious to any fecal material that may still be there. If they are on the ground and a predator approaches they vomit at it. (Some scientists argue that the vomit is just a way of clearing their stomach so they can get off the ground quicker; others say it is a defense system.)

But it is hard to avoid vultures’ importance to the ecosystem. It is great that pestilent carcasses are removed from the landscape at no harm to the creature doing the removal. Without vultures the Sourlands would have far more stinking, disease-ridden deer carcasses along the sides of every road.

Most of us also cannot avoid having a soft spot for animals that mate for life and vultures do that. Both male and female take care of the young—bringing food back to their chick in their caws, which they regurgitate for it. (They usually have just one egg at a time.) Vultures don’t really build much of a nest. They use hollow trees or logs, a crevasse in a cliff, a cave or an abandoned building.

It is always interesting to have stereotypes challenged and while there is nothing above to challenge the popular image of vultures as having disgusting traits, it will be a challenge to start seeing them as attractive animals.
Wenonah Brooks Interview

by Andrea Bonette

Wenonah Brooks, a longtime Sourland resident, well known in the area for her talents as a jazz singer, grew up in the Sourlands at a time when the area was quite different from the way it is now. Her great uncle Alexander Brooks, born in the 1880’s, lived in Hopewell Borough but had a farm where he raised sheep and chickens on Province Line Road not far from the Stoutsburg Cemetery. His younger brother Samuel Henry Brooks as a young adult walked all the way from Hopewell, Virginia, to New Jersey in search of his older brother, found him in Hopewell, New Jersey, and settled down here. Samuel’s son Ira Brooks married Evelyn Frances Dunn and started their family. As a small child Wenonah lived with her family on Wertsville-Rileyville Road across from Hillbilly Hall, but in 1948 her parents purchased an eighteenth century farmhouse on Mountain Church Road where Wenonah lives now. It was much more isolated then and black bears were occasionally found wandering around. Because of this children were not encouraged to walk long distances alone. A group of them would assemble for a hike to buy penny candy at the general store at the foot of Linvale Road on Highway 31 - a considerable distance from home.

Wenonah recalls that the Mountain Church neighborhood was populated by European families of Italian, French, German, and Czech ethnic groups who were “up in arms” when a black family moved in. This tension dissipated very quickly however, and Wenonah remembers enjoying attending the traditional European-style weddings as the neighbor children grew up and married. Ira Brooks, who worked in Trenton for the railroad, was able to break the ice early on because he was very handy and very generous with his skills in his free time to help people with all sorts of projects and repairs. Most people had hand-pumped wells so Saturday night was for baths and the rest of the week bathing was limited to “basin baths.” Heat and cooking was done with cast iron stoves burning coal or wood. In a time when the power went out even more frequently than it does now and the Sourland roads were clogged with snow, neighbors would help dig each other out. Eventually, because Stony Brook Road is shared by Mercer and Hunterdon Counties, one road crew or another would come along to clear that road but Mountain Church Road residents were pretty much on their own. The winter of 1950 was particularly bad and Wenonah recalls the family digging a path through the snow to the nearest neighbor, then the next, etc., with whom mutual support was available to get all families through the storm.

Later a Quaker family moved in next door with a cow whose milk the Brookses were given for their family which had grown by then to ten children. As a young adult Wenonah remembers being served for the first time homogenized, pasteurized milk in the US Air Force and not liking it at all because it bore little resemblance to the fresh milk “from a bucket” she grew up with. Her family raised almost all of their own food so that hot dogs and beans were a special treat. She recalls how the Brooks family raised a young bull to maturity until one day he was taken away by a stranger. Not long after that the whole family was enjoying a delicious steak dinner in the course of which she and her siblings were asked how we were all enjoying our own steak. Her parents announced that the bull had been slaughtered and the steaks came from him. One of the children said, horrified, “We are eating Bucky!” at which point everyone stopped eating and began to cry.

Grandpa Samuel was much loved and respected. He insisted the family had to go to church on Sunday and so they did. Wenonah’s favorite was the Mountain Church, which is now a private residence, near their home, for Sunday afternoon services. Many of her Sourland mountain neighbors also went there. Unfortunately (from Wenonah’s perspective), because her Uncle Alex was pastor of a Pentecostal Church on Route 518 near Province Line Road, all ten kids frequently got taken there on Sunday mornings. Services started with a community breakfast, then Sunday school classes, morning service, a light midday snack, afternoon services, dinner, and finally evening services. When Wenonah protested about spending all of Sunday in church, her uncle remonstrated “Whose day is this?”- and she dared not complain again.

Both Samuel and Ira loved to sing and were very good at it in church and with family at home. Singing together was a pleasurable way for the whole family to pass the time when the electric power went out for long periods. Grandpa Samuel encouraged Wenonah to sing, starting with the original format of a song but transitioning it to a more personal rendition as jazz or other way of presenting a song. Although as a young person she sometimes was uncomfortable with being in ways different from her siblings, both grandparents accepted her for who she was. She describes herself as “a dramatic kind of kid.” The three of them read books together and they encouraged her to write stories as well at a time when “You had to do a lot of stuff on your own in those days.”

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Wenonah Brooks Interview, Continued

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The neighborhood children all attended the Hopewell elementary school through eighth grade. The first day of one school year Wenonah was surprised to be handed a rather well-worn math textbook which had her great-aunt Madeline’s name in it from years before. The children in the Brooks family were for the most part oblivious to racial differences but many of the older black kids separated themselves in the cafeteria and on the playground. Wenonah was not really comfortable with that and found a more tolerant social environment when she started high school in Pennington.

After high school Wenonah knew her family could not possibly afford to send her to college, so she researched which service would give her the best opportunity for further learning. She chose the Air Force and was sent to basic training at Lackland AFB in Texas. She met her husband at Randolph AFB after she finished basic training and technical training school. Later, when she returned to New Jersey, she and her five sisters formed a singing group called the “Brooks Ensemble Plus” (“Plus” referring to the musicians), singing at events and church functions. Gathering her courage, Wenonah went to the Off Broad Street Theater in Hopewell and offered to do a one-woman show. They accepted her idea and for the next twenty-five years along with her backup musicians she returned there annually. This led to a new career performing at weddings, corporate functions, and private parties.

Anyone who meets Wenonah these days cannot help but notice what a remarkable person she is- a product of family, environment, and most of all, as Grandpa Brooks always said, who she is.

Our 2016 Interns

Thanks to interns Katie Elliott, Rob Drobish and Sommer Bell of Rowan University for working with us this summer – in the field, on the trails, and in the office.

Joyce Lu, a Hillsborough High School REACH student, also interned for the Sourland Conservancy this summer and will continue this fall. Joining Joyce, is another Hillsborough High School REACH student, Matthew Lee.

We appreciate all of the energy, talent and hard work that these interns brought to our organization this summer and fall.

Tell us what you think about our print newsletter, Sourland Journal!

- Do you like the newsletter, as is?
- What do you like most about the newsletter?
- What else would you like to see in the newsletter?
- Other comments:
  Email your response to info@sourland.org – your name will be entered for a chance to win a copy of New Jersey’s Sourland Mountain by T. J. Luce.

THANK YOU!
Announcing a New Sourland Stewards Stewardshop: Water, Woodland and Meadow

By Laurie Cleveland

Saturday, October 22nd 10am-12pm, Van Dyke Road, Hopewell: We'll tackle questions about native plantings, seeding, deer, invasive species, and wildlife diversity as we observe a pond, created meadow, and troubled young woodland at a real Sourland resident's property. Be part of the team to figure out the answers as we learn by doing, guided by Naturalist Advisor Jared Rosenbaum. Space is limited. Advance registration is required. Watch for your Sourland Conservancy eNewsletter with registration information for this and all SC events. Sign up to receive our eNewsletters at www.sourland.org. Registration information is also posted on our Facebook page.

Stewardshops are novel learning experiences designed to involve participants in stewardship and ecological restoration at a practical level. Participants work collaboratively to solve a real-life ecological challenge, guided by an experienced practitioner. Stewardshops are hosted by Sourland community members who are interested in being caretakers of their property and in implementing stewardship practices as part of the Stewardshop process.

Stewardshops are offered as part of the Sourland Conservancy's Sourland Stewards program, with grant support from Bristol Myers-Squibb and a Franklin Parker Conservation Excellence Grant from the New Jersey Conservation Foundation.

THE POET’S CORNER

WHITE ASH

I take the high track
where the path splits
wondering if the felled trunk
remains to block my ways

but it’s been sawn
and someone impeccable
has named the tree
numbered its annular rings:
"1872" "1905" "1950"

in this enormous trunk
a mere two inches
mark all the years
from my own grade school
until this tree-death

--faint the rings
and fainter still the penciled
letters naming this compacted
wood -- preferred for baseball
bats because it does not crack

my own annular rings
do not bear numbering

Many thanks to author and photographer, Carolyn Foote Edelmann, for this poem. Visit Carolyn’s blog about New Jersey’s wild wonders:
http://njwildbeauty.wordpress.com/

Editor’s Note:
This poem is published here as an homage to ash trees, which will, in all likelihood, fall prey to the emerald ash borer infestation occurring throughout Canada and the United States.

Emerald ash borer (EAB) larvae eat into the bark and burrow deep into the trunk to insulate themselves against the cold. In the process, they cut off access to the nutrients and water that the tree needs to survive. “Ninety-nine percent of the ashes in North America are probably going to die,” said Andrew M. Liebhold, a research entomologist with the United States Forest Service.

For EAB info, visit: www.emeraldashborer.nj.gov
Sourland Cuisine: Grilled Venison with Chimichurri

**Ingredients:**
- 1 (2- to 3-pound) venison backstrap or beef tenderloin, silverskin removed
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon coarse sea salt
- Chimichurri, (recipe follows)

**Instructions:**
Preheat grill to high heat (400° to 450°).
Pat venison dry. Coat evenly with oil and sea salt.
Grill venison 3 to 4 minutes with lid of grill closed, then turn and grill 3 to 4 minutes more. Reduce heat to low, and grill with lid closed 4 to 7 minutes more, or until meat reaches desired degree of doneness.
Remove from heat, and let stand 10 minutes before slicing.
Cut meat into thin slices, and serve with Chimichurri.

**Chimichurri**

**Ingredients:**
- 1 cup packed parsley leaves
- 5 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 medium shallot, peeled and roughly chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh oregano leaves
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon cracked black peppercorns
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice

**Instructions:**
In the bowl of a food processor, combine parsley, garlic, shallot, oregano, salt, and peppers; pulse until chopped. With motor running, add olive oil and lemon juice; process until combined. Transfer to a small bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate at least 2 hours or overnight.