

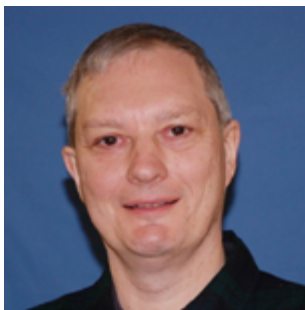


# The Oak Leaf

Newsletter of TRISTATE RAMBLERS

Volume 45 Number 2

FALL 2022



## Message from the President *by John Jurasek*

As 2022 (or year Covid+2, if you prefer) draws to a close, we remain an active, vibrant club. It's interesting that some changes made due to Covid are actually preferred by most of the membership. I am referring, of course, to the use of SignUpGenius. Leaders and participants alike seem to enjoy knowing how many and who specifically will be at a particular event. While labor intensive, the demand for SignUpGenius is so great that it will probably be with us for a very long time in some form.

As a reminder, all participants are required to preregister online for activities listed on SignUpGenius. Anyone who shows up for such an activity without registering in advance will not be permitted to participate.

However, we have reinstituted "show and go" events where an unlimited number of members as well as guests can simply show up without preregistering (although they must sign in upon arrival, as in the past). Unfortunately, no one has chosen to lead this type of event. Since there appears to be some interest in it, I encourage all leaders to consider doing so.

On behalf of the executive board, I welcome Gordon Thomas as our new vice president. Many of you know Gordon from the hikes he has led. He

brings a long list of experiences to our club, and I thank him for "stepping up" to help serve by filling a vacancy.

I hope others will follow in Gordon's footsteps to volunteer in any capacity they can, especially as event leaders. Please consider leading so we can continue offering the number of events we have grown accustomed to. We are one of the few hiking clubs in the region that offer an event almost every day. If we become complacent, this could change . . . and that would be a shame!



**The Oak Leaf** is a publication of TriState Ramblers of New Jersey. Comments or questions may be addressed to the editor, Lise Greene, at [lise.greene@montclair.edu](mailto:lise.greene@montclair.edu). The newsletter is created electronically by the graphic editor, Jay Winslow, and emailed to all members. It is also posted on the TSR website. In order to ensure receipt of *The Oak Leaf*, please keep your email current with John Crump, membership chair, at [johncrump@yahoo.com](mailto:johncrump@yahoo.com).

## Watch Your Ssssststep! *by Paul Sanderson*

In September I was hiking and talking with Tonya Biondi in the Pequannock Watershed. We were moving along well, with her in the lead and me about five feet behind. Suddenly I noticed something unexpected near my feet and jumped away with a yelp. We had just walked past a rattlesnake coiled less than two feet from the path (see photo). It was not rattling and didn't make any effort to strike us, but it sure could have been a problem. The snake was beautifully colored and very unlike a similar encounter some years before.

The first sighting was with Steve Koehler near the fire tower on the Highlands Trail in the Pequannock Watershed. We heard rattling in the shadows, but nothing was visible at first. Stopping immediately, we saw just a few feet away a muted brown rattlesnake.

Moral of both stories: Always look where you are going!





**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, AT NOON**

**TSR members only — no guests. Register for party and hike on SignUpGenius. Link will be emailed to members for registration November 17-30.**

**All participants are asked to self-test for Covid that morning. Anyone who tests positive or has cold/flu symptoms may not attend the events.**

**Wearing a mask is encouraged indoors when not eating.**

**MASKER'S BARN IN WATCHUNG RESERVATION  
2 Cataract Hollow Road, Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922**

**Directions:** On Cataract Hollow Road, pass the Deserted Village and turn right onto a dirt road. At the second grassy field, marked with "TSR Park Here" signs, park head-in (no parking along the road). Masker's Barn is a short walk to the right, down Cataract Hollow Road. There are no restrictions on footgear in the hall.

*Limited handicapped parking is available at the barn.*

**Annual meeting with election of officers for 2023:** begins at noon

**Potluck lunch following the meeting:** hot tea, coffee, and table snacks provided

*Please bring your own cold drink and festive food to share with fellow hikers: hearty salad, entree, nuts, fruit, veggies/dip, cheese/crackers, or dessert (homemade please). Drop food off at the barn 9:00-11:30. Sorry, no food heating/warming facilities available.*

**THE ANNUAL MEETING AND PARTY WILL TAKE PLACE  
RAIN OR SHINE.**

**Equipment repair/knife sharpening services:** From 9:30-

12:00, TSR member Phil Ross will provide advice and repair hiking equipment. Bring your microspikes with loose chains, hiking poles that need adjustment, etc. He will also sharpen kitchen and pocket knives, scissors, and small garden tools such as shears. If you are hiking, drop them off in advance with a note (name, phone, description of requested services) and pick them up after the hike.

**Swap table:** Masker's Barn is the perfect place to stop 'n' swap. Bring lightly used hiking attire, books, maps – anything another member could use. Take home any unclaimed items.

**Hikes:** To work up an appetite, register in advance via SignUpGenius for one of four hikes below; all but one begin at Masker's Barn. Bring water, plus traction devices if conditions require. Steady rain or snow may cancel at leaders' discretion.

(1) Meet 9:30; leader Dean Leistikow (908-789-9413, [leistikow@fordham.edu](mailto:leistikow@fordham.edu)). Approximately 4 miles at a brisk pace (2+ mph) with 410 feet elevation gain; not for beginners. Part of the route is along the rocky cliff

edge of the ridge above Green Brook near Seeley's Pond, with a steep descent and optional near-vertical 20-foot-high rock scramble. Poles recommended.

(2) Meet 10:00; leader Kate Weller (973-557-7913, [Kateweller@optonline.net](mailto:Kateweller@optonline.net)). 2.7 miles with 292 feet elevation gain. From Masker's Barn in the Deserted Village of Feltville, descend and cross the bridge over Blue Brook, then ascend the trail that used to be part of Glenside Avenue. Continuing on the white and purple trails, traverse a scenic gorge with a defunct copper mine, crossing a shallow stream and looping back to Masker's Barn with a stop at the historic Willcocks and Badgley Families Cemetery.

(3) Meet 9:30; leader Tom Pollard (973-600-2301, [pollard.tom@gmail.com](mailto:pollard.tom@gmail.com)). 4 miles with 344 feet elevation gain. Briefly visit the historic Willcocks and Badgley Families Cemetery, descend, cross a bridge over Blue Brook, ascend above a streambed on the blue and orange trails, take the yellow and white trails to Sky Top picnic area (portable toilet), and loop back to Masker's Barn passing the former sites of the historic Drake farm house and barn.

(4) Meet 10:30 in parking lot off Cataract Hollow Road in Watchung Reservation, halfway between Route 527 and Masker's Barn; leader Gordon Thomas (609-977-0267, [thomasg@njit.edu](mailto:thomasg@njit.edu)). 2 miles out and back to beautiful Surprise Lake at an easy moderate pace with 171 feet elevation gain (one hill).

**Thank you to those who volunteered to set up, serve, and clean up.**

**We could use a few more!**

**Contact the Social Committee co-chairs:**

**Kathe Serbin  
973-715-0491**

**[katheserbin@yahoo.com](mailto:katheserbin@yahoo.com)**

**or**

**Elise Morrison  
201-927-4275**

**[tsrsocialcommittee@gmail.com](mailto:tsrsocialcommittee@gmail.com)**

# TREASURER'S CHARTS *by John Crump*

## Simplified Statement of Activities Comparing Two Years Ending September 30

All figures in \$	Twelve Months ending 9/30/21	Twelve Months ending 9/30/22
<b>Revenues</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b>Total Dues</b>	<b>9,529</b>	<b>10,195</b>
Donations	184	
Interest income	8	
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>9,721</b>	<b>10,195</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Printed schedules	3,243	3,442
Events - picnic, holiday, other	1,072	1,797
Gifts for Leaders	1,090	
Insurance	2,470	2,073
Other	913	992
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>9,623</b>	<b>9,245</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>950</b>

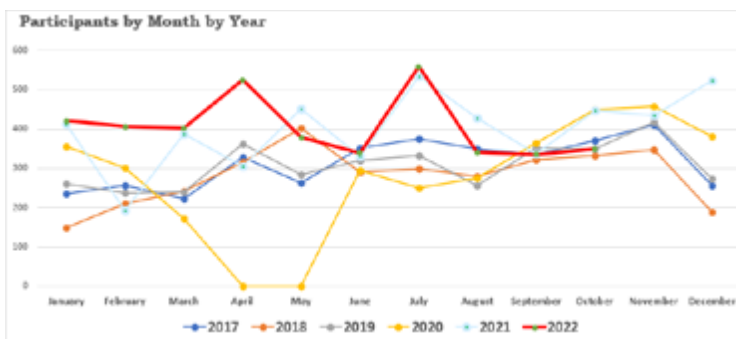
### Statement of Financial Position

<b>Net Assets - Start of Period</b>	13,723	13,822
<b>Net Assets - End of Period</b>	<b>13,822</b>	<b>14,772</b>

### Membership and Events (all figures in numbers)

<b>Number of Members (at 9/30)</b>	<b>783</b>	<b>650</b>
<b>Number of Events</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>414</b>
<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>4,694</b>	<b>5,111</b>

Monthly Participants Analysis						
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	236	149	261	357	414	421
February	257	210	237	302	193	406
March	223	241	239	172	387	402
April	328	316	363	0	305	525
May	262	402	284	0	451	379
June	351	290	320	295	331	340
July	375	298	332	250	533	558
August	350	279	257	276	428	341
September	335	323	352	365	338	335
October	371	332	349	448	446	349
November	412	348	418	457	434	0
December	257	189	274	381	524	0
Total	3,757	3,377	3,686	3,303	4,784	4,056



## Event Recorder — Volunteer Needed *by John Crump*

Our club is looking for a volunteer to help record and analyze our events for both insurance and management purposes. The event recorder should have a moderate level of expertise with Excel and would have read/write access to a segment of the TriState Ramblers cloud server.

Responsibilities include storing incident reports and downloading information from SignUpGenius to update an Excel analysis worksheet each month. On a quarterly basis, an analysis is generated and distributed to board members. Select information is also provided to *The Oak Leaf* editor to share event analysis with our members. These processes are described in work procedures and the total yearly workload is estimated at 75-100 hours.

Below is list of responsibilities and outputs along with an estimate of the time required to perform each task.

### Event Recording and Analysis Responsibilities and Tasks

1. Name and store any incident reports (2 hours/year)
2. Update Excel workbook model for recording and analysis of events (10 hours/year)
3. Generate monthly report from SignUpGenius (15 minutes/month)
4. Export and process reports from SignUpGenius (15 minutes/month)
5. Transcribe reports into event analysis model (2 hours/month)
6. Document all processes so that responsibility can be transferred easily (5 hours/year)
7. Generate quarterly event analysis reports and share with board members (5 hours/quarter)

8. Generate information for *The Oak Leaf* (2 hours/biannually)

Interested members are invited to contact our Nominating Chair, Sheree Bennett ([shereestarrett@yahoo.com](mailto:shereestarrett@yahoo.com)).

### Notice of Correction to Constitution and Bylaws

As required by the TriState Ramblers constitution and bylaws, members are notified of a correction to the document made by the executive board at its meeting on October 31, 2022. Article IV has been retitled from "Meetings" to "General Membership Meeting."



## TSR's Rich History

Archived issues of the schedule booklets (back to 1950) and *The Oak Leaf* (back to 1986) are posted on the TriState Ramblers website. They document our rich history as a hiking, biking, and paddling club and are accessible to members from the "More" tab (under "Archives" and "Newsletter" respectively). We owe special thanks to longtime member Betty Mills for retaining and sharing these interesting records, to Gail Biggs and Terry Kulmane for locating them, to John Crump for scanning them, and to Dianne Jones for posting them. Enjoy!



## Exciting Eighties-Plus!

*This is the first in a series of articles by/about TSR leaders age 80 and above. We invite others to share their hiking perspectives and experiences in future newsletters.*

## HIKING AND ME by Gail Biggs

I've always loved the out-of-doors, yet it wasn't until my fifties that I discovered "real" hiking. In 1992,

just taken a mini-vacation. I was hooked!

After retiring and moving to

the days before the internet (there really was such a time), I saw a newspaper ad inviting participants in the Union County Hiking Club.

Because I was still working, I hiked with the club only on weekends. One of my first outings was at Ramapo Mountain State Forest – wearing sneakers. Club members advised me to buy hiking boots! Although it

was a very low time in my personal life, hiking made me feel like I had



club and eventually found myself elected president in 2013. Union

a townhome community, I discovered that a neighbor was also a UCHC member. Every Tuesday and Thursday we carpooled all around New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. Soon Harriman became a favorite haunt. When I remarried in 2003, I made sure my new husband was a hiker – no couch potato for me.

I took on various positions with the

County Hiking Club was in transition: I was challenged to keep old traditions while making necessary changes to keep us viable going forward. My first order of business was to change our name because the "Union County" moniker was no longer relevant.

At age 81, I continue hiking and leading hikes – on vacations, with our club, or privately with friends I've made over the years. There is no substitute for the sense of wellbeing resulting from a jaunt among the trees. Throw in a stream or waterfall and it's nirvana! Besides the mental benefits of hiking, continuing physical exercise keeps me going long after many have fallen by the wayside. I may have slowed down, but I haven't stopped. There is always a hike that feels comfortable.

A few physical challenges in recent years (including a new hip) cannot hold me back! There is still nothing like a walk in the woods.

# Who Does What? TSR Officers and Their Duties

Are you curious about who does what for our club? In preparation for the election of 2023 club officers at the holiday party on December 3, listed below are excerpts from the 12 position descriptions in our constitution and bylaws along with photos of the nominees on the ballot. We encourage all members to contact any officer to discuss the position in more detail. Please consider helping out now and offering to serve in the future.

**President** – Act as presiding officer at meetings of the club and of the executive board, oversee all aspects of the club's activities, and ensure that they are conducted in accordance with the general principles laid down in this constitution and bylaws. The president can make policy decisions, consistent with the constitution and bylaws, without executive board approval except the following: changes to the constitution and bylaws, dues, and designation of honored members.

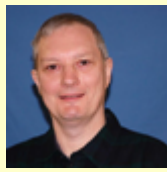
**Vice President** – Assist the president with responsibilities as delegated and handle the president's responsibilities whenever the president is unable to do so. In the event that the president resigns, the vice president shall assume the position.

**Treasurer** – Handle all financial aspects of the club's activities such as receiving, holding, and disbursing funds as authorized by the executive board. Keep records of all receipts and payments and render a report on them at all executive board meetings and the general membership meeting. Establish and maintain a checking account for the club's business. All checks shall be signed by either the treasurer or the president.

**Recording Secretary** – Take minutes at the general membership meeting and at all executive board meetings.

**Membership Chair** – Process membership applications, send out dues notices, and maintain an up-to-date listing of the club's membership by adding new members when they have paid their dues and deleting

## TriState Ramblers Officers



**President:**  
John Jurasek



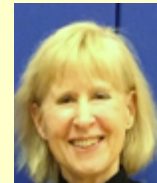
**Vice President:**  
Gordon Thomas



**Webmaster:**  
Dianne Jones



**Outing Chair:**  
Linda Hetcher



**Oak Leaf Editor:**  
Lise Greene



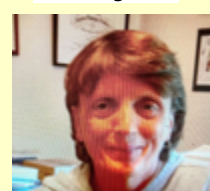
**Outreach Chair:**  
Kaat Higham



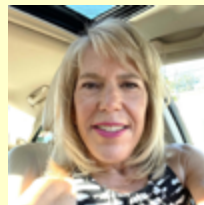
**Nominating Chair:**  
Sheree Bennett



**Recording Secretary:**  
Karen Rychlicki



**Schedule Coordinator:**  
Nancy Sierra



**Social Co-Chair:**  
Elise Morrison



**Membership Chair & Treasurer:**  
John Crump



**Social Co-Chair:**  
Kathe Serbin

members who have failed to pay their dues.

**Schedule Coordinator** – Assemble a full and interesting schedule of hikes and other outdoor activities. Be responsible for publishing two schedules of activities – one covering the first six months of the year, the second covering the last six months of the year – and for having them printed and mailed (including via electronic means) to each member. Organize a committee with as many members as necessary to assist in the development of the schedules.

**Social Chair** – Organize all social functions of the club, including refreshments at meetings of the club's membership. Organize a Social Committee with as many members as necessary to help with the club's social activities.

**Nominating Chair** – Organize the activities of the Nominating Committee.

**Editor of The Oak Leaf** – Collect and edit the club's newsletter and have it distributed via electronic means to each member at least twice per year, with one issue preferably sent about two weeks before the General Membership meeting. *The Oak Leaf* shall contain notices of the club's business, articles, photos, and information about outdoor activities of interest to members. It may contain information about conservation-oriented organizations and activities, but not advertisements for commercial organizations,

although they may be mentioned in articles describing outdoor activities (including how to contact them).

**Outreach Chair** – Disseminate information about the club to the public. As many outlets as possible shall be used to maximize exposure in order to introduce more people to the outdoors and increase club membership. Free media shall be used when available to reach local communities.

**Webmaster** – Maintain the website with information about the club's activities as well as general hiking information beneficial to the membership. It shall also inform the public about the club.

**Outing Chair** – Oversee all outing coordinators. Use the leader guidelines to mentor weekday and weekend coordinators in recruiting and training new leaders, and supporting them in posting and executing appropriate hikes.



## Farewell to Our Friend: Lee Fanger *by Nancy Wolff*

It is with great sadness that I learned of the death of our good hiking friend Lee Fanger on July 4, 2022. She was 94 years old, according to some. But I came up with an old voting record that said “Birth date, circa 1925.” Lee was a gem at any age.

I met Lee on a Memorial Day 1967 hike in the Catskills. It was the beginning of decades of glorious trips in New York, the White Mountains of New Hampshire, Vermont’s Green Mountains, and many venues throughout New Jersey.

I don’t recall our initial conversation; she was quiet, unassuming, staying in the background. But when we tackled a strenuous summit, there she was, moving steadily with determination on very long legs.

Through the years we camped in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine as we attained the summits of New England’s 4,000-footers and New York’s 3,500-foot Catskill peaks. Each mountain provided unique memories. In those glorious years, the Union County Hiking Club (now TriState Ramblers) scheduled joint weekends with the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC). As the song goes, “Those were the days, my friend; we thought they’d never end.”

Lee never blew her own horn, and here’s an example: I was editor of *The Oak Leaf* for about five years, long ago. When our mutual friend and hiking buddy passed away, I asked Lee to provide information for a memorial article and learned that Ruth Robinson had summited the two highest mountains in Norway. Wow! Then, recalling that Ruth and Lee had been in Norway together, I asked, “Does that mean you also climbed those mountains?” Well, she said reluctantly ... yes.

Although Lee didn’t ask for help, she volunteered to help any friend who asked. She didn’t want to be a club officer, yet served on committee after committee – nominating, social, anything of a supportive nature. Hiking clubs are built and grown on the shoulders of the Lee Fangers of this world.

During summer vacations from teaching kindergarten, she climbed Colorado’s 14,000-footers. Returning to Jersey in August, she and I would join the Wednesday Walkers to celebrate the reopening of school.

Her memory was sharp even in later years. During a recent phone call, I mentioned a trip to Chamonix. Lee corrected me on the year, even though she had not been present!

Lee formed many bonds during AMC’s August Camp: strenuous hikes on glorious blue-sky days in magnificent scenery; sharing Southern Comfort in a tent; and hiking in cold, rainy weather. One postcard read, “Three yucky hikers went on a yucky hike on a yucky day.”

Several friends shared memories of Lee:

Lori Ledyard: Many years ago, Lee offered to help me hike a trailless peak; I had no idea how to navigate a mountain path with no trail. “Not to worry,” Lee said, “here is a compass, this is the setting, just follow it. I’ll go with you.” What do you know, it worked! We came out exactly where Lee said we would. She was a classy lady.

Eck Khoon Goh: She was a wonderful travel companion, always considerate and selfless and yet adventurous and game to try anything – riding a camel in the Nubian Desert, rolling up her pant legs to wade in the Mediterranean, climbing the steep steps of the

Bagan temples in Myanmar. The last few years that we went to New Hampshire’s White Mountains, Lee had some difficulty climbing. But that didn’t stop her from joining the group to Mount Willard (2,865 feet) on what turned out to be her last trip there. I remember her joy on reaching the summit, as well as a bit of sadness on realizing that would

likely be her last view from there.

Marion Chalat: What I appreciated most about Lee was her uncanny ability to “read” the trail and find the best route through some almost impossibly rocky stretches. I still think of these trails as Lee’s Way.

Other friends mentioned Lee’s quiet competence, long legs navigating a stream crossing, empathy, dry sense of humor, and

southern drawl with which she described a difficult day hiker (getting off the New York City bus at the trailhead wearing loafers and carrying no pack or water) or a large bear (placidly rooting a stump for goodies).

Lee was a True Friend, to use her term. She was always there. And now she isn’t. I see a Tiger Swallowtail butterfly and wish Lee could see it. I walk on wooded trails and think, “Oh, I could send a photo to Lee ...” – and then I remember.

Memories fade, but some friends stick around the heart.



*Photo by Gail Waimon*



## Cranberry Lake Colors

by Terri Petner



The colors of the leaves were just beginning to change when club members enjoyed a paddle on Cranberry Lake in early October. But Halloween colors greeted us! I was amused by the decorations lakeside.

## Dickerson Mine Preserve – Sights Along the Trail

photos by Paul Sanderson



*Tree with fabulous fungi*



*Just needs a few parts*



## Once Upon a Water Shoe *by Martin Frahme*

We paddlers all have a pair of “water shoes.” Usually they are sandals that drain easily after we take a few steps out to the boat or wade ashore. But on one TriState Ramblers paddling trip, I stepped into our canoe from the bank – and lost my balance going over the gunnel.

Tumbling headfirst into the water, the boat was pushed farther out. When I surfaced and stood up, both

feet sank deep into the muck and mire below. On the first step back toward shore, one shoe came off and stuck deep down in the goo. I moved more carefully on the next steps and got to shore with one shoe on, the other gone.

As it happened, a week later I had an appointment in the direction of that canoe put-in. So I took a rake and went back to the spot. Sitting on the bank, I reached the rake out into the

three feet of water and down into the muck. Pulling it in, working left to right ... wow! On the third sweep, my shoe came loose and floated to the top. Gotcha! But what a smell it had after a week of soaking in swamp muck.

Back home it took a lot of washing, a little bleach, and some sunshine – good as new, and back in use ever since.



*Martin's lost shoe*



*The paddle*



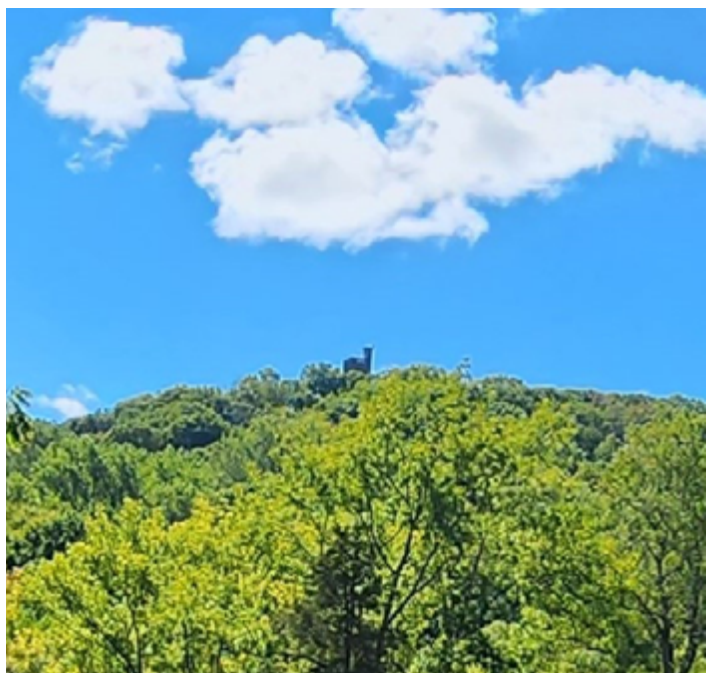
*The rake*

## In the Footsteps of Washington's Army *by Gordon Thomas*

On Thursday, September 29, TSR members completed a 12-mile hike along the route of Washington's army in December 1776, partly in New Jersey and partly

in Pennsylvania. Lunch was at the site of Washington's encampment near New Hope with Bowman's Hill in the background (now with a tower on top, as shown in my photo). The

second photo, by Laurie Larstanna, shows part of the group next to the Delaware River: (l-r) Gordon Thomas, Marianne Teetsel, Robert Jacobs.





## A White Mountain Hike Is Sort of Like a TSR Hike, But Not *by Philip Ross and Gordon Thomas*

**W**e two hike leaders confess to going out of TSR's activity bounds. A downside to the hike was that the drive to the Crawford Notch trailhead in the White Mountains of New Hampshire was about seven hours instead of our usual, lesser New Jersey schleps. We led each other through parts of three days, with two overnight stays in an Appalachian Mountain Club hut in the hills – again, instead of our usual TSR outs and backs.

The distance hiked through the Whites was 26.3 miles with elevations that added up to 5,988 feet. We could do this in three consecutive Thursdays in New Jersey, but normally not in three consecutive days. We climbed up a series of 4,000-foot peaks, which would be miraculous in TSR country.

Maybe the best parts of the hike in the Whites were that the weather in mid-August was cool, the mosquitoes were few, one of us bathed twice in the waters of Zealand Falls, and the views from the 4,000-foot heights were extensive.



*Gordon Thomas and Philip Ross on top of Mount Zealand at 4,260 feet near Crawford Notch on August 10, 2022*



*Gordon Thomas overlooking the Pemigewasset Wilderness just off the Appalachian Trail with 4,700-foot Mount Carrigain in the distant clouds*



## Lusscroft Farm *by Patti Weiss*



*Alan and Joyce Breach (seated) with hikers at Lusscroft Farm Manor House (photo by Paul Sanderson)*

On August 21, Joyce and Alan Breach led 15 lucky Ramblers through five peaceful miles of mixed deciduous forest, including part of the Appalachian Trail, within the 578-acre historic Lusscroft Farm in Wantage. Although its thousands of cows, horses, pigs, and poultry are long gone, I could sense the animals' former presence while gazing at the beautiful frameworks built to hold and nurture them. After our lunch break in a breezy amphitheater overlooking Brink Pond (named for a man who toiled in these parts from 1835-1871), we learned the farm's history. Our guide was Heritage and Agriculture Association (H&AA) volunteer Kevin Mitchell, whose father was director of the Rutgers University Dairy Research Station from 1964-1970.

At the headwaters of the west branch of Papakating Creek, plentiful water and a panoramic valley view of the Kittatinny Ridge foothills captured the fancy of James Turner, a Montclair stockbroker. He spent half a million dollars from 1914-1930 to establish a scientifically grounded, innovative dairy farm with two ponds and 23 buildings. These included the three-story Turner mansion (Manor House), manager's house, giant dairy barn, stables, and Outlook Lodge – a log cabin sporting a carved owl, cross, and slate roof. The farm was named for Turner's ancestral farm ("croft") in the Scottish village of Luss.

According to Kevin, the mansion was Turner's summer paradise and a sort of utopian experiment. He

designed the mansion to be expanded as needed and stayed in the adjacent farmhouse during construction. The last renovation included converting the three-story staircase into a spiral. Lusscroft housed the finest Guernsey herd in the region, producing the highest butterfat content milk.

In 1931, he donated the farm to the State of New Jersey as an agricultural research station where Rutgers University continued

research in genetic improvements to dairy cattle, automatic water troughs, new machinery, high quality seeds, and rural electrification. Innovative research in artificial insemination made cow breeding safer, preventing injury and even death to farmers from "ornery" bulls. Other states followed this new science, making New Jersey a pioneer in artificial insemination and grassland farming. In 1955, Rutgers' College of Agriculture and Environmental Science (later named Cook College) established a forestry program at Lusscroft, utilizing Outlook Lodge for summer educational and training programs.

The farm became a 4-H outdoor education center in 1973. When Kevin directed the program, he lived in the manager's house next to the mansion. The 4-H kids and their horse companions camped and learned to live in harmony. Following the program's end in 1996 due to declining enrollment and rising maintenance costs, years of neglect created collapses, leaky chimneys and roofs, and fallen stonework.

High Point State Park and the State Agriculture Development Commission now administer Lusscroft with help from H&AA volunteers who write grants, provide community outreach, and offer lots of TLC through labor-intensive restoration work: mowing acres of grasslands, pulling invasive plants, dealing with damage from fallen trees, and more. Maple syrup is produced in the spring, with proceeds

sustaining this activity as well as building and grounds restoration. (In 2022, the syrup sold out on the very first day; apparently the locals know how good it tastes!)

Appreciating Kevin's forthrightness about current financial needs, we hikers bartered our dollars for items selected at a big sale in the partly restored cow barn. (I found smooth black leather figure skates, which fit perfectly!) There are at least five barn sales annually, held in cooperation with the state's Department of Environmental Protection/Division of Parks and Forests. Proceeds are used to refurbish buildings and open them to visitors as an agricultural heritage center. Although the trails are accessible year round, the buildings are shuttered except for events such as horse shows, outdoor recreation, organic gardening displays, and the annual holiday open house (this year on November 26).

Kevin shared with us his hopes for future uses of Lusscroft Farm, including agri-ecotourism and agricultural/environmental education. He provided the TriState Ramblers with a fine tour, patiently answering our numerous questions and fascinating us with his plain-spoken, often humorous anecdotes. Thank you so very much to Alan and Joyce and Kevin!



*Manor House (photo by Paul Sanderson)*



# THE TATTOO *by Alan Parnau*



It was the summer of 2004. I had seen a listing in our local paper that Union County Hiking Club was having a hike from the Trailside Museum in Watchung. Divorced and without a steady girlfriend for the past year, I participated in hikes and other events in hopes of meeting someone with similar interests.

At the parking lot, the hike leader gathered us into a circle to introduce ourselves by first name and town. I noticed a woman across from me and thought she was cute. Her name was Laurie. As the group headed off on the trail, I tried to get next to her and come up with a clever opening line. The next thing I knew, she walked up to me and said something, and we started chatting. Now that I could get a closer look, I guessed she was about 35 and figured I was too old at 52. As we walked and talked, she said that the older of her two daughters was 22. Doing some quick arithmetic, I figured she must be at least in her early 40s unless she had her children when she was a child herself, so maybe there was a possibility here! We walked a little farther and she mentioned being born in 1953. Since I was born in 1952, I gave myself imaginary high fives. We said goodbye at the end of the hike.

The next weekend was kind of rainy and drizzly, but there was

another UCHC hike scheduled and I went to the location, hoping to meet up with Laurie again – only to learn that it had been canceled. The following week I tried again, and Laurie was there. We walked and talked together the entire way. At the end, I asked her out and we were a couple from then on. Some time later, I learned that there was a mutual attraction as soon as we saw each other.

We were married on July 18, 2009. One gift was a picture frame where we placed a wedding photo. It was hinged on one side, attached to a clock with two wedding bands linked. We also had another picture frame with linked hearts in one corner. Laurie and I were together until cancer took her from me on November 16, 2020. I was holding her hand as she passed.

I took Laurie's rings off her finger and gave the engagement diamond to her daughter, but kept the wedding band. The gifts mentioned above gave me the idea to have our wedding bands linked, like those on the clock face and the hearts on the frame. We could not be together, but our wedding bands could. Knowing I couldn't wear it after they were linked, it took about six months before I was able to remove my own ring; it was an emotional

acknowledgment that Laurie was gone. A jeweler linked the rings and I put them in a little display case.

Without my wedding band, I wanted another permanent reminder and decided on a tattoo. Very early in our relationship – maybe even one of those first two hikes – Laurie said she was not a fan of tattoos. Then she paused and asked, "Do you have any?" When I said no, she breathed a sigh of relief. Wanting the approval of Laurie's daughters for this idea to honor their mother, we discussed it and concluded that she would cut me some slack as long as she approved of the design. One of their ideas was two hearts linked, with our names inside the hearts. That fit nicely with the rings linked on the clock face, the hearts linked on the picture frame, and our wedding bands linked.

I also wanted to include the date we met, which led me to contact Union County Hiking Club through the website. Knowing it was a long shot, I asked if they had a record of a hike starting at the Trailside Museum on any of four possible dates I identified from 18 years earlier. Well, they did, and it was July 17, 2004. That completed the tattoo design, which was done on August 11, 2022. It is on my left forearm for the same reason wedding rings are worn on the left hand – it is closer to my heart.

# Picatinny Arsenal Tour *by Thea Landesberg*

Let's start with a quiz!

1. The Picatinny Arsenal military base was established in:
  - a. 1880
  - b. 1924
  - c. 1963
2. What happened at Picatinny Arsenal in 1926?
  - a. PFC Roger Clements swam across Lake Denmark and back in a record time of 62 minutes, 38 seconds.
  - b. President Calvin Coolidge married his high school sweetheart in the base church and stayed overnight at the Lake Denmark Hotel.
  - c. A lightning strike hit a base munitions warehouse, triggering an explosion that spread to two other warehouses, causing 19 deaths and the destruction of 187 buildings.
3. Base employees and their guests can do the following at Picatinny Arsenal:
  - a. Play 18 holes at Picatinny Golf Club
  - b. Frolic at Frog Falls Aquatic Park
  - c. Admire the beauty of Lake Denmark
  - d. All the above

If you were lucky enough to be part of our group that visited Picatinny Arsenal on July 8, you know that the answers are a, c, d.

Thanks to the organizational wizardry of Lise Greene, 30 members of TriState Ramblers took a guided tour of this huge military research installation in Rockaway Township, New Jersey. Originally scheduled for April 2020, the visit was canceled due to Covid. On a warm Friday in July 2022, however, we enjoyed the expertise of two guides who shared with us historical highlights and pointed out noteworthy sites within the 5,850+ acre base.

We first walked to the entrance to Spicertown, an unincorporated farming village purchased by the US government (or, in some cases, obtained through eminent domain) in 1941 to expand the area of the military base. The residents of Spicertown eventually moved away and the houses were demolished in the early 2000s. Our guides, Jason Huggan and Rachael Winston, then



*Archeology plaque*

led us past the “old burning grounds,” the site of waste left from earlier combusted explosives; today it is the location of a large field of active solar panels. Here, and in other areas on our tour, Jason pointed out remnants of the Wharton & Northern Railroad tracks which, at different periods, transported coal, explosives, and testing devices to and within the base. We then stopped briefly to read informational placards describing the Native American artifacts located in that area. Rachael explained that they were uncovered as part of the arsenal's mission of historic preservation of cultural resources.

After lunch, we drove our cars to the Picatinny Arsenal World War II monument that was being relocated

from the arsenal's main gate to Navy Hill. This bronze plaque is mounted on a large rock taken from nearby Picatinny Peak. On it are engraved the names of 90 arsenal employees who died in the war. From there, we drove along Lake Denmark Road's many twists, turns, and picturesque greenery in all directions to the Lake Denmark picnic area. Jason recounted the history of Partnership Field, once a rocket engine testing area and now a ball field.

*(continued on next page)*



*Denmark Forge*



*Army rocket test area*



We walked along the shore of beautiful Lake Denmark, stopping at the early 1900s location of the former Lake Denmark Hotel that hosted vacationers. A little farther on, where railroad tracks once ran, we looked across the lake to an island that can be seen in the 1916 Douglas Fairbanks silent movie *His Picture in the Papers*. In this densely green area, I noticed that there were no visible spotted lanternflies, an invasive species rampant in New Jersey and New York. Rachael explained that the base had conducted a large-scale

effort to identify the host trees of heaven, locate heavily populated areas of the species across the arsenal, and remove them to limit the threat of further infestation.

As a refreshing shower started to fall, we passed by a historical marker describing Denmark Forge, which had operated on the shores of the lake. We learned that in the 1700s and 1800s, a couple of iron ore mines and forges operated in this area – all now gone.

When our group's tour ended at 2:00, we left with a wealth of

knowledge. I would have gladly continued with Jason and Rachael, visiting other locations on the base. I had no idea of the vastness of this site hidden in the hills, its history, and its contribution to the military over the 140 years since its inception. I'm not alone in hoping that our club can enjoy another tour so we may learn more.

Special thanks go to our Picatinny Arsenal guides: Jason Huggan, Environmental Affairs Division Chief, and Rachael Winston, Cultural Resource Manager.



*Hikers at Lake Denmark*



*Jason at Partnership Field*



*Spicertown plaque*



*World War II monument*



# Scenes from the Summer 2022 Picnic *Photos by Margo Moss*

