



Landscapes

Summer 2020

The BISHOP Story

The story of Wally and Carolyn Bishop is a tale of great romance, and an abiding love affair with the country.

Carolyn accepted Wally's hand in 1959, but not without Wally having to press his suit. He was a civil engineer in Martinsburg, and she was native of Romney. It was difficult for Carolyn to wrench herself away from her home town. "It was a hell of a struggle. Everyone who lives in Romney loves Romney." Wally promised her that they would live in the country. But, Carolyn said, "we never dreamed we'd be lucky enough to find a whole farm."



"The joy of our lives is to know that it will stay this way after we're gone."

They searched for two years before purchasing the 139-acre Saber farm with its beautiful barns and historic 1841 house on Tuscarora Pike. Graced with mature trees and sitting on a sparkling year-round run, the Bishop farm nestles into a picturesque region of Berkeley County that still retains a number of its old farms alongside housing developments. The Bishops named it "Finale Farm" - a tribute to Carolyn's first beloved Golden Retriever.

The preservation of Finale Farm for perpetuity protects more than its metes and bounds. The property holds a huge portion of the story of our region in its bricks and mortar. It tells the story of generations of Cushwas and chronicles the marriages of three generations of daughters. The history of farming is told in the design and placement of the barns and the footprints of outbuildings - each created to house the self-sufficient lifestyle of people who plowed with strong horses, kept a forge, planted and harvested crops, butchered, salted and put up meat for the winter.

Skills that have been all but lost are revealed in the construction of the house and barns. An itinerant worker spent a winter painting the plaster walls of the house's entrance and staircase to look exactly like quarried stone tiles.

It was to this rich legacy that Carolyn and Wally added their own story. Their story

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The 25th Anniversary OF THE LAND TRUST

The Land Trust is Celebrating its 25th Anniversary! Last year's newsletter (2019) told the story of the Land Trust's beginning and the people who were part of its inception. We are grateful for their foresight. Thank you to the people of the Eastern Panhandle who loved and cared about the land, and voluntarily protected it with 50 Conservation Easements. Your resolve has helped preserve the beauty of our landscape, and protect its resources for all of us. We share the first of many stories about some of the wonderful people who provided this gift to us and to future generations. To keep and to enhance our promise of land protection FOREVER, we proudly announce the establishment of a **Legacy Fund with the Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation** to provide financial support in perpetuity to protect and grow conservation easements. Two people in addition to preserving the land and its history have made monetary gifts to establish the **Legacy Fund**. Now with your gifts, we can all be part of the **Legacy for future generations**.

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LIFE AT THE LAND TRUST IN THE DAYS OF COVID-19

OUR SINCERE THANKS AND GRATITUDE

Thank you to all those on the “front lines” who are working hard to keep everyone safe. Many of you or your family members are part of this amazing team of individuals working non-stop each and every day.

A TIME FOR REFLECTIONS

As the board of the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle of WV (LTEP) reflects on our current global health crisis and the impact on our community, we find ourselves also reflecting on our organization, our mission, and our short and long-term impacts.

In preparing for our 25th anniversary celebration we found ourselves needing to cancel and rethink many of our celebratory events. At the same time, this reflection allows us an opportunity to consider what is happening around us and what we can do in the next 25 years to make us a more powerful organization for taking care of people, water, and land.

People in our community are literally “recharging” safely in their own backyards and neighborhoods. Neighboring roads with rolling hills, working farms and conservation easements, are being used for walking, biking and simply a drive to enjoy nature as part of staying safe and healthy.

Conservation through easements is long lasting. COVID-19 is a reminder that we often do not fully understand all the benefits of protecting and preserving precious resources, such as the quality of the water that sustains us. We do know that conservation easements are an important part of that protection, and we will continue to make them a priority for this community.

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

When we all work together, the LTEP can continue to preserve the scenic beauty and historic character, protect productive farmland, work for a healthy, balanced economy, and preserve the natural resources of the Eastern Panhandle of WV for the short and long term.

Please take care of yourself and your families.

HISTORY OF THE LAND TRUST (PART 2)

While land conservation efforts began in the Eastern Panhandle 25 years ago (see Part 1 the 2019 Landscapes) such work moved into high gear only after county and national programs began offering landowners money – not just federal tax deductions – for protecting their land.

“I don’t make enough in a year for a tax deduction to matter,” Sam Donley, a farmer and early easement landowner once explained.

Thus, while the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle completed three conservation easements in its first five years, it did 30 in the next decade, working with newly formed county Farmland Protection Boards (FPBs), the USDA’s National Resource Conservation Service and the National Park Service’s American Battlefield Protection Program.

The county Farmland Protection Boards were authorized by the 2000 West Virginia Voluntary Farmland Protection Act, whose adoption was promoted by a group of Panhandle residents. Two years later the same group succeeded in getting funding for the FPBs through an increase in the transfer tax.

Clint Hogbin of Berkeley County and Cam Tabb, Jane Tabb, Effie Kallas, David Hammer, Lavonne Paden and others, working with newly elected state senator John Unger, collaborated in the drafting and lobbying for this legislation. Success stemmed from the emphasis that the program was voluntary and that farmers, such as Cam Tabb, advocated it as a way to preserve farmland.

Cam Tabb had been one of the original convenors of the Land Trust, and the two efforts – that of the Land Trust and the one for Farmland Protection Boards – became intertwined as Effie Kallas and Lavonne Paden joined the Land Trust Board. The Land Trust had experience in doing conservation easements and was able to offer help to the new Farmland Protection Boards with documentation of the state of a property at the time of an easement as well as with content for the easements themselves. It became co-holder of many of the early FPB easements in Berkeley and Jefferson Counties.

The Farmland Protection Boards could access matching funds for conservation easements from the US Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service. Beginning in 2004 additional easement money began flowing from the National Park Service’s American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) to preserve parts of the five congressionally-recognized Civil War battlefields in Jefferson County.

Noah Mehrkam, then an employee of the Civil War Trust, brought the ABPP program to attention of the Land Trust. The \$1 million allocated for this project ultimately protected 520 acres in six separate conservation easements in the Shepherdstown and Summit Point battlefields, often paired with money from the Jefferson County Farmland Protection Board and, in three cases, from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. (Additional ABPP money for Land Trust-led easements flowed in 2011-19, bringing the total to nine, protecting 826 acres.)

As result of this activity, the Land Trust closed seven easements in 2004, beginning a period of intense activity in conjunction with the FPBs, particularly the Jefferson County FPB. By the end of 2019, the Land Trust held 50 easements, protecting over 4800 acres in the Panhandle, with the majority of those easements in Jefferson County and co-held with the Jefferson County FPB – sometimes with the Land Trust as the lead holder and sometimes with the FPB as the lead holder.

Through all of this, the Land Trust has remained an all-volunteer organization. Members of the nine-person board have done the work of negotiating, documenting and monitoring the easements, drawing on contractors on occasion but keeping control in the hands of the volunteer, unpaid board members.

introduced a new way to keep the farm a farm, and wove into its fabric a concept that was needed in the county - the concept of animal rescue. "I married an animal lover" said Wally, "and I learned to love dogs. We showed Golden Retrievers, then Bull Mastiffs. then Norfolk Terriers." Said Wally without a trace of displeasure, "Don't expect to make money off farming or showing dogs."

In 1985 the Bishops created and incorporated the first dog rescue in Berkeley County, and built spacious runs and kennels next to their home. A gifted artist in her own right, Carolyn continued the tradition of the itinerant farmer who painted their walls, painting beautiful portraits of dogs in her studio.

Wally, who came from a background of construction and contracting, worked hard to get up to speed with farming. His entire farming resume consisted of a single course he took at Cornell on "How to Be a Farmer." He shared some things he learned from experience. "People who talk about buying a farm need to know this. You need to search to find a farmer." Over the years, farming on the Bishop land has been entrusted to a number of different farmers. Some worked out better than others, but Wally learned from each of them, and today, the place is farmed by Mike Reder. The farm itself has never been profitable, and it has been a struggle for the Bishops even to break even.



Bishop's 1841 Historic House

"It is worth it because we want to live here like this." The Bishops are adamantly, passionately clear on the decision they made to purchase and protect their farm. They have never regretted an instant of it. They have accepted that there is always something that needs to be fixed - a fence, a barn roof - and they have adjusted to the disruption of turn-over in farmers.

Their greatest worry and fear was what would happen to the farm when they were gone. "That worried us. We love it too much to have it developed." In 2005, after much study and consideration, the Bishops placed their farm under protective conservation easement with the Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board and the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle. "It took a while to get used to the idea. We didn't fully understand it, and had not given much thought early on to farming OR conservation."

Once they had mulled over the concept of a conservation easement, the Bishops realized it was "just what we were looking for. The joy of our lives is to know that it (the farm) will stay this way after we are gone."

If the Bishops have one concern, it is centered on the future of the other remaining farms in the region. Said Carolyn, "I'm most concerned about it, in fact, I dwell on it. I stay up at night and worry about too many people selling to subdivisions."

But for the most part, the Bishops rejoice in having done the best they could with their own piece of the beautiful landscape that has been their home for 58 years, and will live on to write another chapter of life for a future farmer or placeholder.

Landscapes

News from the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle

YOUR PARTNER IN RURAL CONSERVATION

Our mission is to encourage people to preserve open space and rural landscapes in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle. We use private, voluntary initiative and education to:

- Preserve the scenic beauty and historic character that have long made our region attractive to people;
- Promote a healthy, balanced local economy by preserving productive farmland and encouraging appropriate development;
- Encourage wise stewardship of the region's natural resources.

We are a private, non-profit, tax-exempt charitable organization incorporated in West Virginia in 1995. Our board is composed of men and women from a variety of backgrounds from Morgan, Berkeley, and Jefferson counties.

We meet monthly at the Berkeley County Development Authority in Martinsburg. Special appreciation and thanks to Sandy Hamilton, Executive Director, for making her conference room available to us.

Board Members

Grant Smith
Barbara Humes
Georgia Jeppesen
Lucien Lewin
David Lillard
Kevin T. McLaughlin
David Plummer
Bonnie Stubblefield
Susan Whalton

Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle

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Support Your Community Conservation Partner!

- ☐ Please contact me to discuss **protecting** my land through a conservation easement.
- ☐ Please contact me. I am interested in **volunteer** opportunities and **sharing my expertise**.
- ☐ I would like to **support** the Land Trust with a tax deductible contribution:
 - ☐ \$500
 - ☐ \$100
 - ☐ \$75
 - ☐ \$50
 - ☐ Other \$ _____
- ☐ I would like to have a part in the **Legacy and Future of the Eastern Panhandle**:
 - ☐ ***My Legacy Gift \$** _____

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY/STATE/ZIP

PHONE

EMAIL

**More information about the Legacy Fund can be found on our website.*

Mail to: Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle • PO Box 2240, Martinsburg, WV 25402
Visit our website for more information: www.landtrustepwv.org