



SUPERIOR LAND PRESERVATION SOCIETY NEWS

SPRING-SUMMER
2009
P.O. BOX 130041
ANN ARBOR, MI
48113-0041

SUPERIOR PEOPLE: THE GRAICHEN FAMILY



Bob is a Korean War veteran and returned from the war to the farm where he continues to actively farm today.

(Editor's note: This is the first in a series of articles spotlighting some of our interesting residents.)



News from the Chair

by Marion Morris

These recent months have been busy, as what was Superior Land Conservancy in 2008 and years before, became in 2009 the Superior Land Preservation Society. Hopefully, the confusion regarding all of this will disappear within a short time.

Yes, there still is a Superior Land Conservancy, a committee that is part of Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy. Our group is no longer a part of this – we broke away at the end of 2008 and have started anew, concentrating solely on preservation issues impacting Superior Township.

We hope to be most effective and beneficial to all by acting as educators and facilitators for people who are interested in protecting their property from development, by assisting those who are interested in reintroducing or improving native trees, flowers, etc. to their landscape(s), parks and preserves, and by working with our local governing body and other conservancies concerning land preservation and management issues within our township.

Your dedication to our efforts is deeply appreciated. It makes the work worthwhile! Please let us know if you have questions or wish to take an

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By Michelle Hartmann (photos by Sandi Lopez)

In 1910 Buffalo Bill, with an appearance from Annie Oakley, put on his last show in Ypsilanti called the "Farewell Proclamation". The show arrived in 46 train cars full of animals, bands, Cossacks, Indians, Mexicans, Spaniards, Philipinos, cowboys and the Famous Rough Riders.

It is also the same year the Graichen family laid roots here in Superior Township. The family farmed the land, raising dairy cattle and chickens as well as being wagon makers. In 2010 the farm will celebrate 100 years of operation.

Currently, Bob Graichen is the fourth generation, and at 78 he still farms corn, soybeans and wheat on 300 acres, including 77 of his own land. One of his earliest memories is of riding on the back of his dad's tractor at the age of 5. He has a notable collection of various antique John Deere tractors, dating back to 1930, as well as other machinery currently in use.

Growing up, he attended the former Gale School on Vreeland Road. He remembers the classes being all boys in one room for grades 1-8. He completed high school in Ypsilanti. The Gale School building is still standing but has been converted into a residence.

Bob's current home was built behind his older brother's home on the family land. In 1955 he met Opal May Phiefer, a local school teacher who taught for over 50 years before retiring. She drove tractors and worked with Bob for many years before having health issues.

News, continued from pg.1

active role in Superior Land Preservation Society, as we are an all-volunteer organization. However, your membership alone is very important, and any donation you give is used only in Superior Township for land use projects.

Marion Morris, Chair
And SLPS Board of Directors

Kentucky Coffeetree *(Gymnocladus dioicus)*

article and illustration by John Copley

While walking in the Cherry Hill Nature Preserve a few years ago on a bright winter day, I discovered on the path, in the snow, the unmistakable seedpod of a Kentucky Coffeetree. At first I thought perhaps someone was attempting to get this unusual and somewhat rare tree to grow in the preserve, but winter seemed to be the wrong time to do that. I looked around the area, and soon discovered another pod. I began to scan the treetops, and to my delight, two very large trees, which I had always assumed were just another pair of Oaks, had more of these blunt brown pods hanging from them. I had discovered a pair of Kentucky Coffeetrees growing just off the trail in Cherry Hill Nature Preserve!

In Southeast Michigan, Kentucky Coffee trees are at their northernmost range, and they are unusual in several ways. They are among the last of the deciduous trees to leaf out in the spring, and among the first to lose their leaves in the fall. They have pinnate leaves, made up of many small leaves on a large branching structure, and produce a dark brown seedpod. These seedpods contain a gooey green pulp and hard black seeds, and the toxin cystine, which if ingested can be fatal to animals and man alike. Early settlers in Kentucky roasted these seeds, (perhaps because they looked somewhat like coffee beans) which rendered the cystine harmless, and produced a reportedly very poor substitute for coffee, and that is where the tree got its name.

Because of their tolerance for harsh environmental conditions such as heat, cold, road salt and poor soils, these trees are sometimes used as urban street trees. In fact, there is a very large one in front of Hill Auditorium in Ann Arbor, and there used to be two of them on Main Street near William in front of

the old Elks Lodge. Recently a small group of them were planted next to the new U of M Biomedical Science Research Building on Glen Street.

Kentucky Coffeetrees can spread by seed or by interconnected underground root systems, and sometimes form groves. There are several small ones coming up along the trail near the parent trees in CHNP, and perhaps one day there will be a grove of these unusual trees right here in Superior Township!



OUR MISSION

- To maintain and protect open spaces in Superior Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan. These areas include, but are not limited to, nature sanctuaries, nature preserves, natural areas, many of which contain or contribute to habitat for wildlife and plants.
- To help residents of Superior Township obtain conservation easements on their properties to prevent them from being developed.
- And, overall, to preserve land resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

FAQ On Conservation Easements

By Dan Moerman

Note that these questions and answers are very general in character and probably will not exactly characterize any individual situation. This is a generic, not a legal, account.

What is a conservation easement (or CE)? A CE is a legal document between a landowner and a land trust, or governmental unit, which prohibits development of the land (or perhaps restricts cattle grazing or logging) in the future, usually “in perpetuity,” or, “forever.” The landowner continues to own the property and uses it as he sees fit, and can grant, rent, lease or sell it, within the terms of the easement. There are a number of local land trusts of varying sorts (both government agencies and non-governmental organizations) including the Ann Arbor Green Belt, the Legacy (formerly Washtenaw) Land Trust, Washtenaw County, and the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy. SLPS does not, and will not, hold easements, but will work hard to help arrange them for landowners and trusts.

How many land trusts are there; how much land is protected? There are approximately 2000 land trusts in the US protecting about 10,000,000 acres of land. (This is an estimate based on a census done in 2003).

Why would I want to get a CE? Because you do not want a developer to build 5 houses, or perhaps an apartment building, on the woods behind your home. You would prefer to have that woodland be there instead, forever.

What are the financial costs of a CE? A CE is a legal document and it should be properly drafted by an attorney familiar with the law surrounding such easements. Depending on the complexity of the easement, it might take from one hour up to maybe five hours of an attorney’s time (lawyers usually charge by the hour). The attorney may also require a survey of the property, a legal description of the actual land involved. A simple survey can cost up to a few hundred dollars.

What are the financial benefits of a CE? Under federal law, you can take a deduction on your income

tax for the foregone value of your property. To do so, you need to get a “double appraisal” (this is also ordinarily at your expense). That is, an appraiser will look at your property and decide how much it is worth without the easement, and how much it is worth with the easement. Subtract one from the other, and that’s your deduction. But, the IRS being what it is, it’s not quite that simple. There are limits on how much of the deduction you can take each year, and you can only take the deduction for 6 years. Note that this only works if you pay a fair amount of income tax. So, your tax break may vary.

What is the role of the land trust? The land trust guarantees that the provisions of the easement are kept. To do this, they ordinarily survey the property each year to see that no prohibited changes have been made to the property. This obligation costs the land trust some money; someone has to become familiar with the property and the easement, visit the property, and write a report. Depending on the property, this might take a few hours or a few weeks (some properties with easements are many thousands of acres in size). These routine examinations are a modest expense. The larger problem comes should a property owner decide that s/he wants to build those 5 houses regardless of what it says on some paper signed 50 years ago. Such a situation, probably rare, could occasion significant costs for legal work. Most land trusts have an endowment which they can draw on for such expenses; many purchase insurance policies to protect against serious violations of easements. Land trusts often request or require a contribution to their endowment from a grantor.

What properties are most sought after by land trusts? Trusts look for many things in this area. They prefer property which is environmentally important, with interesting animal life, with a bird rookery, a running stream, a productive wetland, steep slopes, or land adjacent to, or near, already protected property. Properties which are relatively large are often preferred (a small property probably has the same assessment costs as a much larger one; but if the small property has several important features, it may be fine.) No two situations are the same, and what might not interest one land trust might be fine with another.

DONATIONS

We thank all the folks who have given so generously to Superior Land Preservation Society during the last year.

Charles and Roberta Anderson
Eric & Pat Appleberry
Bob & Kathy Asselstine
Cathy Bach and Brian Hazlett
Rosalind and Bob Barnsdale
Tom Berry
Carla Bisaro
Janis Bobrin
Holde Borcherts
Shirley Brehm
Leonardo Brito
Howard Bromberg
Betty Brower
Paul and Linda Burger
Tim and Carol Burton
Misty Callies and Bill Secrest
Nancy Caviston
Neil and Jeanne Chapel
Dr. Carl and Cathy Christensen
Conway Family
John Copley and Jan Berry
Rachel Distelzweig
Beth Dugdale and Martin Friedburg
Chloe Duke
Rod & Karen Folland
Ford Foundation
Tom and Cathy Freeman
Glenn Gail
Jay and Gwyn Gardner
Florence Gasdick
Joellen Gilchrist
Jack and Margaret Goodnoe
Mary C. Guest
Lionel & Carol Guregian
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Haidys
Kim & Dan Harber
Michelle Hartmann and Jordan Davis

Jeffrey Head
Robert & Sue Hughes
Susan Jaranowski & William Sickon
Rich Kato
Robert & Judy Kelly
Martha Kern-Boprie
Susan Kornfield
Ellen Kurath
Terry Lee Lansing
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Sandi Lopez
David Mason
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Daniel Moerman and Claudine Farrand
Peter and Marion Morris
Wayne & Dorothy Morsfield
Virginia Simson Nelson
Max Nemazi
Brian Oatley
Dennis & Tom Patrick
Terry & Pat Patton
David Phillips
Morand & Jan Piert
Charles & Joann Raeder
Hal & Linda Rex
Leon Ringl & Barbara Schueler
Bruce Robinson
David Saffer
Linda Scherdt
Steve and Darlene Secrest
Claudia Sherwood
Shively Family
Sandy Suarez & Jimmy Boutin
Marianne Udow-Phillips & Bill Phillips
Jane & John VanBolt
Ellen Elliott Weatherbee
James Weyman
Kay and Karl Williams
Judith Wysocki
Karl and Ann Zinn

WILD TURKEYS

By Marion Morris (illustration by John Copley)

Did you know Superior Township has become the habitat of wild turkeys? A long time ago, there were many thousands of wild turkeys throughout the United States. Due to development and unregulated hunting, the turkey all but disappeared from Michigan's landscape.

Wild turkeys were reintroduced to our state sometime in the 1950s. Today, they are thriving, particularly in northern Michigan. Hunting is closely regulated by the DNR.

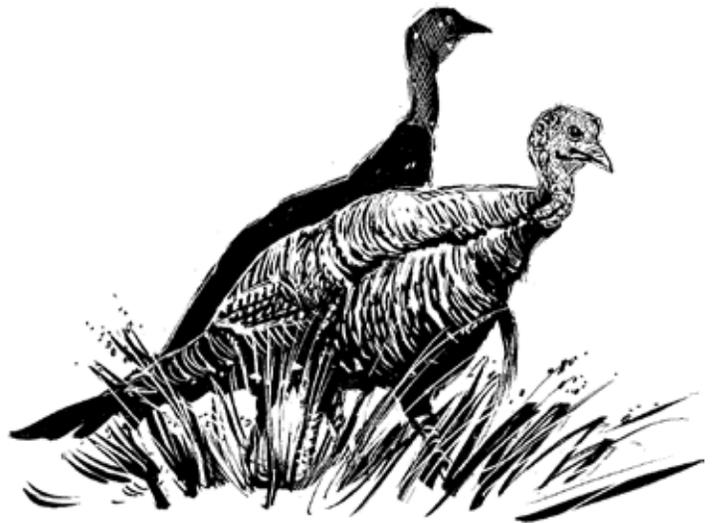
Recently, my neighbor told me that he, in the 1980s, bought wild turkey poults, and fed and sheltered them, but did not socialize them. When grown, he turned them loose – back to the wild. He never saw them again.

After the disappearance, he was talking to another neighbor who told him wild turkeys had appeared at their farm and followed their chickens into the coop. Perhaps a few of them escaped..... because beginning 2 or so years ago there have been wild turkey sightings. This year, there have been several reports of turkeys seen in Superior Township, in groups numbering anywhere from 12 to 30.

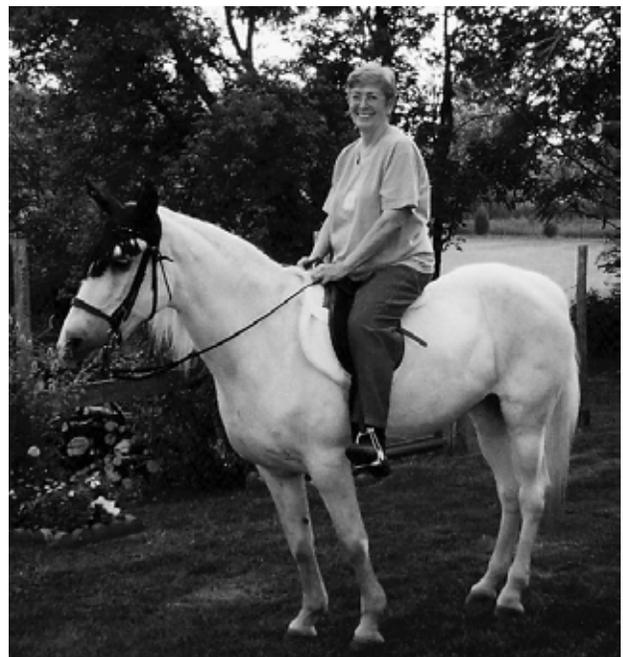
The wild turkey is a very streamlined version of the domestic turkey. The domestic turkey is heavy breasted, can't fly, and has white tips to the tail feathers; the wild turkey has black to chestnut tail feathers. The wild turkey's voice is similar to the "gobbling" of domestic turkeys, and their adult length is 3 to 4 feet. The male is glossy brown with a bare pale bluish head and red wattles. The female is smaller and duller. The male puts on a spectacular display in breeding season, spreading his tail, swelling his wattles, rattling his wings, gobbling and strutting the whole time.

The wild turkey's habitat is oak and brush, deciduous woodlands and wooded bottomlands. They roost in trees and feed on the ground, eating insects, berries, seeds and nuts. The hens incubate sometimes as many as 20 eggs in a clutch in a grassy hidden nest. Wild turkeys are very wary and difficult to approach. They can fly well for short distances, but prefer to walk or run.

So, keep your eyes open! What a delight it is to see Superior Township wild turkeys!



Your SLPS Board of Directors



MARION MORRIS, CHAIR

My husband, Peter, and I have lived in Superior Township since 1969. I am from Atlanta in northern Michigan, and Peter is from Allen Park. We have 3 married children, 6 grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren. My career was in the medical field, his in the auto industry for Ford Motor Company. We both retired from work in 1987 (but not from being busy!).

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What initially drew us to Superior Township was the rural atmosphere, and it continues today through the efforts of many people. There is also a strong community spirit, which reminds me of my hometown. I have worked to give back to my present community. I served on the Superior Land Conservancy Board for 17 years, and now serve as Chairperson for Superior Land Preservation Society. I have been an elected Superior Township Parks Commissioner for many many years, and I have assisted with Township Activities when called upon. I feel so fortunate to live here!



CLAUDINE FARRAND, TREASURER

Born in Strasbourg, France, at the beginning of the Second World War, Claudine was French, German, and French again before she came to Columbia University in New York for graduate school in geology in the early 60s, and became an American. Settling in Michigan, she was a librarian before she became a Certified Financial Planner, and created a successful tax service in Ann Arbor. She is now the Treasurer of SLPS. She is shown here churning stocks with her grandson, Spencer.



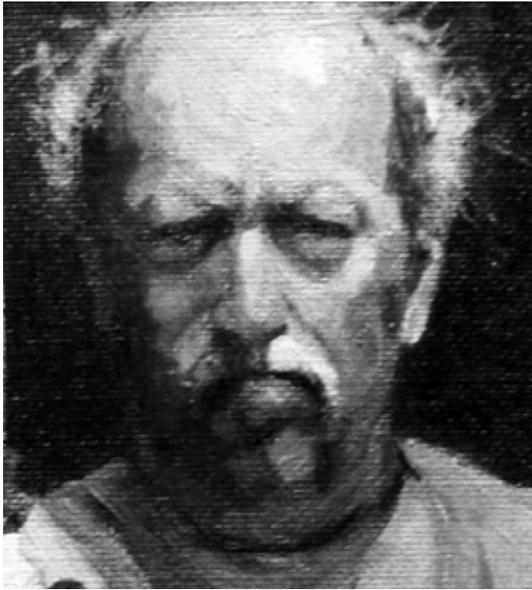
DAN MOERMAN, VICE-CHAIR

Born in New Jersey of Michigan-born parents, Dan returned to the "home state" in 1959 to go to college. He ultimately received his PhD in anthropology from the University of Michigan. After many years of teaching at UM-Dearborn he shifted his concern to land conservation and is now committed to facilitating conservation easements by residents of Superior Township. He is also trying to learn how to draw flowers. He is shown here discussing discussing easements with his grandson, Owen.



MICHELLE HARTMAN

A corporate refugee from interactive and traditional advertising, I find myself these days more of a migrant worker for several of the local food entrepreneurs. Although I still keep a toe in the corporate world, I



JOHN COPLEY

I was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1946. I attended Angell, Burns Park, Tappan, and Ann Arbor High schools, and then the University of Michigan School of Art and Architecture, graduating in 1969 with a BFA degree. I have been employed in the arts in many capacities throughout my life, from making traffic signs to painting backdrops for theater and murals for the U of M, but now I am predominantly a studio painter. My current focus is on Superior Township landscapes, documenting what has been preserved, and what may no longer be here in the future. I have been married to my wife, Jan Berry, for 22 years, and we still live in the house on Cherry Hill Road that I bought in 1975. I have served on the Superior Township Planning Commission for the last 18 years, I am the Land Steward for the Cherry Hill Nature Preserve, and remain an active member of the environmental and land preservation movement in Superior Township.

find my passion lies in creating a more sustainable environment.

I moved to Superior Township 4 years ago and knew I had found home. The beauty around our township continues to amaze me on a daily basis. In the morning I wake to the symphony of various birds that spring brings. Through out the day I see many deer, hear the distinct sound of the sand hill cranes, and it is not unusual in the evening to listen to the song of the coyotes. It is this beauty that has motivated me for the past several years to help save Superiors' rural lands.

SANDI LOPEZ

I have lived in quite a few places over the years. In 1992, a friend had a rental property on Vreeland, and asked me to take a look. I had never even heard of Superior Township or been out here, despite having lived in the area for quite a while. I drove by the house, the irises were blooming in the front yard, and the field across the street was being plowed. At that moment, I decided to move in. The house was worn down (and has since been repaired), but has a wonderful view of the fields and woods and awesome neighbors. I surprised myself by starting to put down roots. Eight years later, I bought the small house two doors down, on an acre of land. Those roots are now a taproot. I cannot imagine ever leaving here.

I retired from Chrysler as an environmental specialist late last year. I do some independent consulting now, and I am an inactive attorney. Digital imaging is my hobby and I am actively involved with our Township. I serve on the Wetlands Board and help out where I can. I am deeply gratified by the opportunity to help protect our land.



VIRGINIA SIMPSON NELSON

(Ginny) is a long-time resident of Superior Township. She moved to the township to enjoy the country and nature. She was on the Board of SLC in the late 1990's and now serves on the SLPS Board. Her goals are to see the township remain rural with controlled growth and to preserve as much land for open spaces as possible. In her daily life, she is a pediatrician and rehabilitation physician at the University of Michigan Medical School.



ORNITHOLOGY

The wind in the trees gently thrums
A constant background to their songs
While the Woodpecker and Nuthatch keep time

First to the Microphone
The House Wren sings an intense scat,
Accompanied by the Oriole's trumpet riffs

There is Chick-a-dee-dee-dee back beat
To the Robin's lead of the melody
Which the Grosbeak soulfully mimics

A Tree Sparrow sweetly harmonizes
With the running water song of the cowbird
While the Cardinal murmurs his birdie-birdie

poem by Sandi Lopez, illustration by John Copley

If you share our goal...

... of preserving the rural character and natural habitat of Superior Township, please become a member

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Great Horned Owl
\$1000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Red-tailed Hawk
\$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooper's Hawk
\$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Screech Owl
\$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goldfinch
\$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other
_____ |

Name _____

Address _____

Please send to SLPS, P.O. Box 130041
Ann Arbor, MI 48113-0041



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