

Land Legacies

BLUE RIDGE FOOTHILLS CONSERVANCY

A Local Resource for Madison and Greene

Volume 9 Number 2

The Fort Legacy Lives On

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(l-r) Catherine, Tom, Sarah, Eleanor, and Jim Fort

Jim and Catherine Fort left a long and permanent legacy behind in Madison County and the Piedmont. It was with a heavy heart that I attended Catherine's Memorial Service this past year, and then I met her granddaughter, Eleanor.

Eleanor Fort grew up in urban Chicago with her parents and spent a month or two each summer with her grandparents at their farm near Etlan. She learned to ride horse back with Moody Aylor, hiked White Oak Canyon, scrambled up Mitchell Mountain and fished with her grandparents in their pond. Attending nature summer camp in Rappahannock, she soon could identify every native Virginia bird.



At the same time her grandfather, Jim Fort, passed away and with the realization

that the family farm would have to be sold, she became aware of the hill topping for coal that was permanently and irrevocably altering the precious eco-system of another community, not unlike the ones she had shared with her grandparents here. This awakened in Eleanor a strong and keen political activism that had begun at Vassar College as a political science and geography major.

Upon graduation, Eleanor worked a year for Green Corps and then Environment Massachusetts. There she worked as a Preservation Advocate to protect open space, funding for state parks and clean water issues.

The Forts, early supporters and former Board of Director of the Piedmont Environmental Council, were among the original founders of The Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy. Their continued generous support was the seed money for the Greene County Conservation Fund. The Fund will be used to make interest-free loans to landowners to help defray the costs of putting their land in conservation easement.

Eleanor Fort fishing at her grandparent's pond near Etlan, Virginia.

Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy's Annual Meeting Celebrates Preservation of 1,474 Acres in 2011

At its Annual Meeting on October 2, 2011, Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy members gathered to honor landowners who, by donating conservation easements on their property, have preserved an additional 1,474.4 acres of open space in our region--800.3 acres in Madison County and 674.1 in Greene.

On behalf of BRFC, Carl Schmitt presented conservation awards to James Aylor (Madison), Julie Connelly (Madison), Diane and Larrie Uberte (Madison), Susan Harrison and Elizabeth Harrison Hale (Greene), George and Susan Overstreet (Greene), and David and Trish



The Greene County Young Farmers were honored with a Conservation Award for their partnership with BRFC in 2011. Members Darrell Eppard (center), and Evan Bowman (right), with their guest, Mike Houch (left).

Crowe (Greene).

Evan Bowman also accepted an award on behalf of the Greene County Young Farmers for outreach to their members about the benefits of preserving agricultural land through conservation easements.

The theme of this year's Annual Meeting was the connection between land preservation and historical resources. Local historian Harold Woodward re-created the tumultuous events of the Civil War by vividly describing troop movements and engagements of Union and Confederate armies in Madison and Greene counties. An appreciation of how the farms and forests in our region are indeed hallowed ground, in turn, underscores the importance of preserving this land for future generations.

A Greene County Conservation Fund, enabling landowners to borrow money at little or no interest to aid in the costs of filing an easement, has been created. BRFC donated the first \$5,000 and raised in excess of \$5,000 in matching funds. (See cover article about the Fort family legacy.) Madison County already has its own conservation fund, which has helped numerous landowners pay for the legal and survey work necessary to donate a conservation easement on their properties. Both Greene and Madison County funds are operated in partnership with the Piedmont Environmental Council and the Piedmont Foundation. This financial assistance

fies the



Harold Woodward, Jr.

Letter from the President

Our Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy Annual Meeting is an important time of reflection for me and for our Board. The recognition of our neighbors who have put their properties in land conservation easements is always awe inspiring. It is a time of celebration. The Possum Ridge String Band continues to serenade us and the South River Methodist ladies, spear-headed by Ethyle Giuseppe, indulge our sweet-tooth with desserts that are out of this world! Our Board of Directors comes together to set up and break down.

During the Civil War Sesquicentennial, it was especially moving to hear Harold Woodward bring to life the Battle of Stanardsville in 1864. In March of that year Greene County suffered the inroads of General Custer and about 1,500 Union soldiers, who were on their way to Charlottesville (to draw J.E.B. Stuart's Cavalry away from Richmond, Virginia). They burned bridges and mills, and in Stanardsville took the local men hostage until the troops' returned from Charlottesville. As the Union Troops retreated through Greene County there was more sporadic firing. These skirmishes, now referred to as the Battle of Stanardsville, were written up and vividly illustrated in the March 26, 1864, issue of *Harper's Weekly* under the title, "General Custer's Raid." Copies of this *Harper's Weekly* article are currently for sale at the Greene County Historical Society. Our thanks to Historical Society President, Jackie Pamenter, for making these available at our Annual Meeting. We are reminded that our region is, indeed, hallowed ground.

I would like to suggest that our love of the land, of this place, does not rest in our politics, nor ultimately in the economy. It rests right here with you and me. I suggest that we live a life of permanent purpose. With the realization that every person we reach out to, speak to, share a meal with, share our joys and sorrows with --- is affected by our love for this sacred place. We each have different paths to follow, different obstacles; but if we are dedicated to a common goal to preserve this land, our hope for our families, our places of worship, our businesses, our nation and our world will be a better place. Every move we make and every action we take, matter not just for us, but all of us ... and for all time.

I hope as you close out 2011, you will consider a year-end, tax-deductible gift to the Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy. It has been the decision of our Board to make this appeal here in our newsletter, as opposed to a separate and expensive mailing. We continue to be conservative with our funds and want you to know that we are tightening our belt, too.

With great appreciation,

Trish Crowe

Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy 2011 Year End Contribution

My Gift Amount: _____ make payable to BRFC

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone and e-mail address: _____

The Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy is a 501-c3 tax exempt organization. Your contributions are deductible to the full extent of the law.

BRFC
PO Box 116
Hood, VA 22723

Other Dates to Remember

November 16, 2011: 7:30 pm-Madison County Comprehensive Plan-Public Input. Held at Madison County Administration Building-Madison, Va

February 4, 2012: 10:00 am-4:00 pm. "Old Rag Master Naturalist".

Old Rag Master Naturalists

Saturday, February 4, 2012, 10 am-4 pm
Eastern View High School, 16332 Cyclone Way, Culpeper, VA 22701

We invite you and your organization to participate in the Old Rag Master Naturalists first habitat open house. More than 20 governmental and nongovernmental conservation organizations are being invited to exhibit information and answer visitors' habitat questions. Participation and attendance are free.

Please RSVP to ormn.openhouse@gmail.com by November 30, 2011, to ensure inclusion in the printed program that will be given to visitors. In the event of severe winter weather, the event will be cancelled.

Old Rag Master Naturalists, based in Madison, Virginia, is a chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalist program and serves the counties of Madison, Rappahannock, Culpeper, Greene, and western Fauquier and Orange.

Pam Owen
Old Rag Master Naturalists
NighthawkComm@gmail.com
(540) 227-0137

November 4, 2012: Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy Annual Meeting.

Board of Directors

Trish Crowe- <i>President</i>	Carol Merrill-	<i>Land Protection:</i>	Rob Gardner
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Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy, Inc.
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