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## HAPPY HOLIDAYS 2018

I'm sure that I've said this before, and I'm certain that I'll say this many more times, but how in the world is it already December? And you know what means? Yet another year has passed! Time really does fly by when you're having fun ... and when you have small kids (then the days just blur together and you don't even know what month it is). So as we come to the realization that we now find ourselves in the month of December, I always feel that it is the opportune time to look back at the passing year, celebrate your life's highs and reflect on the lows, and then look forward to the coming year.

When I was in college I had a professor who most of the students were afraid of due to his directness. But I got him; I got why he pushed us and that he was challenging us to be the best we could be. Something he said has always stuck with me, he said that every year (around this time) he sat down, by himself in a quiet place, and wrote down with pen and paper his one year plan for the coming year, and then he wrote down his two year plan, his three, four, and five year plans. He said that the act of physically writing it down made it real, vs. having these ideas just floating around in your head where they weren't as tangible. I've performed this exercise a few times, and I am going to sit down to do so ahead of the coming year. I think that this exercise is a very positive one because you not only put your wishes, desires, and dreams down to paper, but you are, in a way, trying to plan your best life. And who doesn't want that?

With that being said, as we look to the future to our best life, we should also look back to our past selves and our current selves, as well as to the lives of those who are around us. I know that this is the month of holidays, merry-making, and a plethora of presents and food, but I urge you to think about your neighbors as well this holiday season. There are people in our communities who could use help, even if it just as simple as having someone to talk to. Giving the gift of love and assistance are some of the best gifts that you can give and receive.

This December, as we bid farewell to 2018 and count down to 2019, I thank you for your continued readership and for being a part of our amazing communities. In 2019 we strive to bring you more positive and interesting stories about the people, businesses, places, histories, and curiosities that make up this amazing area that we call home. Have a happy and safe holiday.

— Thorunn Kristjansdottir



## DECEMBER 2018

From the hills of our beautiful tri-corner area, to our bustling towns and villages, we wish you all a happy holiday season!

Cover photo by  
Lazlo Gyorsok

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# The “Play’s the thing...”

By CB Wismar  
[arts@mainstreetmag.com](mailto:arts@mainstreetmag.com)



The front piece of Tim Prentice’s engaging book *Drawing on the Air* (Easton Studio Press, 2012) starts with his dedication – kind words to his family – then proceeds with a quote from Kurt Vonnegut as a directional beacon for what is to come. “The arts are not a way of making a living. They are a very human way of making life more bearable.”

Sitting and talking with architect and kinetic sculptor Tim Prentice is to be drawn into a conversation that wanders, joyfully, around nature and light and air and color and form ... and leaves the visitor with two powerful reactions.

First, one feels like this man has always been a friend, no matter if this is the first meeting or if your paths have crossed at a local market, at a summer cookout or picking through the bins at the local hardware store.

The second feeling is almost a yearning – the hope that there will be more conversations and discoveries with this brilliantly talented creator.

## Architect to artist

Trained as an architect at Yale University, Tim Prentice graduated with a Master’s Degree in 1960 and headed for New York City where, in 1995, he and Lo-Yi Chan created a firm that would win contracts and awards for their imaginative concepts.

Ten years on, Tim and his wife, Marie, headed north to Cornwall, CT, and settled in a farm house with several barns and an ice house that would become his studio, office, workshop and “imaginarium.” As sculptural pieces were created, they would dot the landscape – hanging from trees, standing in the fields, set carefully near the pond that, in decades past, had been where a farm family had harvested ice in winter.

## A vision of his own

Kinetic sculpture – forms and shapes that moved and shifted in the air ... the wind ... the shifting sunlight – intrigued him. From childhood, the work of Alexander Calder and George Rickey had caught his imagination. The work had ranged from static sculpture through kinetic pieces to Calder’s famous mobiles. It was kinetic sculpture that fascinated Tim – creating pieces that seemed perpetually

in motion as long as there was the slightest movement of air. He did not want to be derivative, but to create a form that was uniquely his own.

There was no doubt that his architectural training had provided the technical skills required to execute his dreams, but there was an ingredient latent in his personality that made his artistic pursuit a passion. He was still very much an architect – 60 homes in the region are the designs of Tim Prentice, many of them based on the fundamental design of a barn. “I like barns because they don’t put on airs. And, I like using local builders who know the materials, the people, the seasons.”

As a point of interest, Tim lives in a Greek Revival farmhouse built in 1830, not a building of his own design. “It simply works,” he says when asked why he would cherish the past rather than create a design of the future. “It has an authenticity that endures. New England homes look like New England ... solid ... convincing.”

If architecture is part of Tim Prentice’s ego, then the extraordinary sculptures he has created are his alter ego. Installations in Australia, Ireland, Japan, Korea, and Switzerland all bear the fluid



imagery of a Tim Prentice creation.

"I make machines to attract the attention of the wind, which then becomes the choreographer who makes the art." That wind may be the breeze blowing through the trees in Washington Depot during their recent Sculpture Walk that made *Charlotte*, a spider eight feet across, move gently in the afternoon breeze, or it can be the air moving through an early Tim Prentice creation suspended above the escalators in the Jacksonville International Airport. It is not unusual to see people riding up and down on the moving staircase gazing skyward to watch the gentle movement of *Flashdance*.

Aluminum, stainless steel, lexan – mirror reflections or meticulously joined colored fragments that shimmer in the afternoon. They are all part of the mystical visions of capturing the movement of air that suddenly gains dimension in a Prentice piece.

### Ready, set, play!

"I always begin with play..." Tim offers when talking about his creative muse. "Without playing, what is the point?"

The concept is both refreshing and startling. Begin with a vision. Begin with a form. Understand the space, the restrictions, the expectations of the client. Begin with a material worth exploring and including in a work. All understandable inclusions. But... "play?"

Psychiatrist and author Stuart Brown is quite emphatic in his belief that Tim's outlook is not only on the right path, it is the only path to allowing the creative spirit the freedom it needs to produce. "The ability to play is critical not only to being happy, but also to sustaining social relationships and being a creative, innovative person... By playing, we learn about the mystery and excitement that the world can hold..." Brown's book is entitled *Play*, and it makes a grand case for

adults re-learning the practice. Tim Prentice needs no remedial instruction. He fully embraces the notion of play and practices it, daily.

And, so, for Tim Prentice "It's the way I begin every project ... every commission ... even every proposal." Surrounded by a loyal group of fellow "players," Tim has spent decades creating pieces to the delight and wonder of viewers all over the world. Widely held in private collections, his public installations continue to soothe and amaze.

### Seeing is understanding

Because still images cannot adequately represent the visual, almost spiritual impact of the air meeting one of Tim's creations, visiting his website is heartily encouraged. Over the years, Tim and his team have recorded the final result of his "playing" and the video clips are neatly ordered on his website – a location that is, in itself, playful. It's simple enough: [www.timprentice.com](http://www.timprentice.com).

Tim Prentice lost the love of his life, Marie in 2018. They were married for 56 years, reared two daughters, Nora and Phoebe, traveled the world under the auspices of the State Department Cultural Exchanges as folk singers in the '60s and traveled it, again, as Tim's work was celebrated in Europe and Asia. Marie had been a teacher, a musician, a potter, a political activist, and a poet. The coda in Tim's *Drawing on the Air* is a poem by Marie entitled *Art Farm*, an homage to the man and his marvelous work.

*The old farmer opens the barn door.  
Silver scales glint in the dark,  
appear and disappear as they  
turn in the light.  
He looks for the cow stalls, the hay.  
The walls he white-washed are  
flaking.  
Beneath the rafters yellow feathered  
wheels are circling.  
No hens in the barnyard – just  
a rusted cage where a tin  
crustacean  
waves long segmented legs as if  
feeling for food.  
He walks down the meadow path*



*to a giant wheel turning on a  
pedestal,  
perpetually rearranging a puzzle of  
white  
discs at its center.  
Across the field an upright rectangle  
of reflections, like the surface of a  
vertical  
pond rippling in light and shadow,  
confuses his eyes.  
The walls his fathers made two  
hundred years ago  
comfort him: stones left by glaciers,  
built  
to last until the next Ice Age,  
far longer than  
these trembling toys.*

– Marie Prentice ●

Visit Tim Prentice's website for more information and discovery ... and play at [www.timprentice.com](http://www.timprentice.com).

Are you an artist and interested in being featured in Main Street Magazine? Send a brief bio, artist's statement, and a link to your work to [arts@mainstreetmag.com](mailto:arts@mainstreetmag.com).

Opposite page, top to bottom: The sculpture, *Charlotte*, from the recent Sculpture Walk in Washington Depot. Tim Prentice, photo by Lazlo Gyorsok. This page, above: *Flashdance* at the Jacksonville airport.



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## friendly faces: meet our neighbors, visitors and friends



**Bryce Dusenbery** has worked for Columbia Tent Rentals for over 15 years, but now a new chapter has begun because he's the new owner! "I have always loved making people's visions of the most special day of their lives a reality, and I am humbled to have learned so much from David and Kelly Reinckens." Aside from work, Bryce loves being a dad to his two kids and spending time with his family. "This past July I married my beautiful bride, Amber. I am looking forward to spending the holidays together, officially as husband and wife." Bryce is also an avid hunter and enjoys being outdoors and in nature. "Every year my buddies and I do an annual hunting trip, which we all look forward to." As a Columbia County native, Bryce is looking forward to raising his family here as well, with small town values and a supportive community. We agree!



**Hayley Cooper** has been a dog groomer/pet stylist at Petsmart for six years and counting. "There are some dogs I've been grooming since they were eight weeks old and now they're four or five. It's almost like they are my fur babies just as much as their owners." Hayley loves to be outdoors and says her hiking has always been a favorite pastime. She also loves to be around her own pup, Graham. "He's like my furry child." Hayley grew up in Columbia County and has always loved it here, "You have mountains to explore, lakes to swim in, and just natural beauty and the scenery is everywhere." As for the holidays go, her favorite holiday tradition is watching *It's A Wonderful Life* every Christmas Eve. "There's nothing like sitting by the tree with the lights on and watching James Stewart learn about life."



**Larissa Morby** is a reading specialist currently working with grades 3-8 at Salisbury Central School. She has enjoyed teaching for nine years, and loves the students and many friends she's met along the way. "It's so exciting to see children learning new things and gaining confidence as they become better readers." When Larissa isn't teaching, she likes to spend time with her family in the outdoors, whether it be while camping, boating, four-wheeling, or snowmobiling. She loves to craft as well, especially during the holiday season. Larissa and her husband even started a small business called Woodland Wonders. They sell their crafts locally, which include table arrangements and decorative wreaths. "I live in Millerton, NY, and I love visiting the local farmer's market and the Rail Trail. My family also enjoys going to the library and participating in the wonderful programs they have to offer!"



**Lauren Kneller** works for Apollo Partners NY Inc./Kneller Insurance Agency, providing health and life insurance, employee benefits, Medicare, etc. "I've been doing this over three years now and I like helping people and finding ways to help them save money." Aside from Lauren's office duties, she loves spending time with her family, friends, and fiancé, traveling, volunteering, being outside, hanging out with her Pitbull Diesel, fashion, and photography." Lauren was born and raised in Ghent, NY, and loves all the seasons, the area's natural beauty, close proximity to major cities, and the people. As the holidays approach, Lauren is looking forward to Christmas Eve Mass, getting together with her family, and making Christmas cookies! "I try to live very consciously of one another, the planet, and of all of the animals in the world. I believe that a little kindness and thoughtful insight go a long way."



**Dave Mallison** is a salesperson for Best & Cavallaro Real Estate in Salisbury, CT. Dave has been in real estate for just over a year, but his construction experience spans 35 years. "I enjoy what I do, and in my spare time I'm a woodworker, a musician, and an amateur naturalist." Originally from the area, Dave moved away for some time and came back in his early 30s because he likes the peacefulness and the beauty of the area. "You can't beat the combination of snow and Christmas lights around the holidays!" He added, "Our area is safe too, and it's a great place to raise children. The Tri-state region is full of history, and I enjoy the fact that I can trace my family roots in this area back to the mid-1800s." That is very cool, Dave!



**Siobhan Yaple** works in the office of her family's business, Race Mountain Tree Services. "I started training in October of 2017 and I am coming back more full-time after being on maternity leave. I love knowing I am helping my father and his incredible business. At the same time it's allowing me to gain knowledge of the business world." Her free time is spent with her newborn son, Jackson. "We love spending time outside and going for long walks. I am also working on getting my Bachelors in Fashion Merchandising." Siobhan was born and raised in Sheffield, MA, and loves the gorgeous views and being part of such an amazing community filled with love. This holiday season she is looking forward to the tradition of having brunch with her family. "I am also very excited to start even more traditions with my own little family."



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# Growing Christmas trees all year long

WENDY & RICHARD PHILLIPS OF EVERGREEN FARM, MILLBROOK, NY

By Christine Bates

christine@mainstreetmag.com

*Wendy and Richard Phillips, owners of Evergreen Farm, talked with me one rainy Friday November morning looking out at the acres of Christmas trees in front of their country house on North Tower Road in Millbrook, NY. We discovered that we shared the same compulsion to do what we love, whether it's writing or growing Christmas trees.*

## You're an architect from New York City? Why did you start a Christmas tree farm?

I grew up in the suburbs where no one really owned land. At age 33 I bought this property with 25 acres, and designed and built this modernist house. I had no intention of becoming a farmer – just a place to get away on weekends. I liked the idea of owning land – it was a big thing for me to buy something. Then my sister, a master gardener, came to visit. It was her idea. “Why don't you plant Christmas trees?” Everyone in our family has a green thumb. The plantation started in 1989 with about 300 small trees purchased from the Cornell Extension in Millbrook. I joined the New York State Christmas Tree Association and learned best practices. My first trees weren't planted properly – the spacing was wrong and weeds grew up around them, but I learned.

## What year did you start selling trees? Were you immediately successful?

In our climate it takes eight or nine years for a tree to be ready to sell and 2000 was our first year. It was so depressing – not even ten people came. We just assumed that if we had trees people would come to buy them. The next year we did more advertising and put up more signs and maybe 50 cars showed up. I knew that we needed to

sell 300 trees every year just to break even. Then with more investment in marketing, word-of-mouth, and a big competitor going out of business, we reached 300. Now we sell 400 to 800 trees every year – last year was our best ever. It took me 15 years to figure out how to do this. My stockbroker always asks me about the number of cars in our parking lot – we're a leading economic indicator.

## What's your busiest day? When should I come?

The day after Thanksgiving is always the busiest and that's when Christmas tree fanatics come. Every Saturday and Sunday from the day after Thanksgiving until right before Christmas is busy. Late afternoons are especially hectic and you need to come while it's still light. We've actually helped customers select trees with flashlights after dark. The least busy time is in the middle of the day around lunchtime.

## What makes Evergreen Farm special?

Buying a tree here is an experience. People love walking between the trees and selecting their favorite. We'll cut it down for them, bundle it, and put it on top of their car. And we're really efficient – we employ four to five people in addition to ourselves to help customers. At the busiest time we load a tree every two minutes. We're like a factory.

Over the years we see the same families come and we watch their children grow up and bring their children. Some customers make it a tailgate party and bring the extended family.

We help people pick out the right trees for them. I know all the trees – to me each one is an individual – and Wendy handles the barn, taking people's money and selling them wreaths. She talks to everyone and knows our customers. It's a real family business.



Above: Wendy and Richard Phillips, owners of Evergreen Farm. Photo courtesy of Richard and Wendy Phillips of Evergreen Farm.

## Where do these customers come from?

They come from all over – from Long Island to New Jersey and Connecticut – not so much from Massachusetts. Most customers come here from Westchester and Putnam counties and from around here. We've noticed on our website that New York City residents look at our website all the time, but they can't get here. They want to come, but they don't have cars.

## What about the competition?

Our customers are looking for fresh, fragrant trees, so the trees that the big box stores sell aren't really comparable. Those trees may have been harvested in October and then wrapped up and shipped up from the South. They never really recover and drop their needles quickly because they can't absorb water.

Continued on next page ...

## CHRISTMAS TREE FACTS

>> 27 million+ real Christmas trees were sold in 2017 at an average price of \$75

>> 21 million artificial Christmas trees were purchased in 2017 at a price of \$107

>> 27% of real trees were purchased at a choose-and-cut farm

>> 1853 - First official Christmas tree in the White House

>> 1883 - Sears & Roebuck started selling artificial trees

>> 1901 - First Christmas tree farm planted in New Jersey





Above: Bundling Christmas trees for customers to take home. Below, right: Rows of Douglas and Fraser Fir Christmas trees under a summer sky at Evergreen Farm. Photos courtesy of Richard and Wendy Phillips of Evergreen Farm.

### What kind of trees do you sell? What about balled trees?

Douglas firs are soft and bulky and decorate beautifully. They're harder to grow so they are a real bargain. Most people know Fraser Firs, which have built up a kind of brand name recognition – they're darker than Douglas firs and thinner with a little more space for decorations. Spruces have very rigid branches, which are excellent for heavy ornaments, but they have stiff, sharp needles and are hard to handle. In another four years we will be selling the newly planted Concolor trees, which are a beautiful blue green.

We don't sell balled trees any more because they are so labor-intensive. It takes an outside crew to wrap and ball them and then buyers realize it's a lot of work to replant them.

### How do you price trees?

We have very simple pricing. Any tree 7' and under is \$55 and over 8' is \$65. Trees always look smaller when they are outside and we encourage people to buy the right size for their home. We also sell very nice pre-cut trees at lower prices. We want everyone to be able to afford a tree at Evergreen Farm.

### What do you need to start a Christmas tree farm?

The question should really be, "what do you need to start a successful Christmas tree business?" You could start with a shovel, dirt, and seedlings, but to have a thriving business and grow beautiful trees you need specialized equipment and a barn to

keep it in. You need to be able to buy gasoline and diesel fuel. You need to understand the best way to farm – the Cornell Extension is a great resource. You need to take command and actively manage your trees. And you need to understand that this is a part-time seasonal business where you won't make a lot of money.

### What happens here when you're not selling trees?

Christmas tree farming keeps you busy all year. In January and February, depending on the snow, stumps are cut down to the ground level. In March I'm checking on tree health. In April we spray to kill diseases and insects that attack trees – aphids, and fungus like needle cast, which can make all the needles fall off a tree. We participate in Cornell's Integrated Pest Management Program and use the recommended least toxic applications.

In May we prepare the ground for planting new trees in between the stumps of trees that have been cut. In early June we are fertilizing and participating in Twilight Nights when agricultural experts come to farms and make suggestions. Farmers participate and learn from each other.

In August through the beginning of September we shear the trees as the new growth stiffens. This is really hard work in the hottest part of the year. I strap an 80 pound, eight foot tall gas-powered clipper on my body and go down the rows. Last year I got hurt doing this. All summer long we're

mowing grass between the trees – the grass stops soil erosion.

Then in November, right now, we're getting set up to sell trees. Clearing out the barn, tagging the trees, setting up tables, washing the equipment, starting to make wreaths – I do that myself in the barn. Wreaths aren't a big profit-maker but customers want them.

### What do you like best about this business?

This may sound crazy, but I like to watch the trees grow. I like the time I spend with them and it gives me something to do outside. I like selling trees to our customers who appreciate them.

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We're a little tree farm but we may be the one of the larger contributors to Trees for Troops in our area. We take a day to cut trees, bale them, and truck them over to Hahn Farm where FedEx picks them up and distributes them to military bases all over the US. You never hear FedEx talk about it, but it's a fantastic charity. Customers see the sign in the barn or on our website and tell us about their relatives in the service and how much the Christmas trees mean to them. •

*You'll find Evergreen Farm located at 407 North Tower Hill Road, Millbrook, NY. You can visit it online at [www.christmastreefarm.biz](http://www.christmastreefarm.biz). Starting Friday after Thanksgiving November 23, and then weekends through December 16, it is open from 9:30am to 4:30 pm.*





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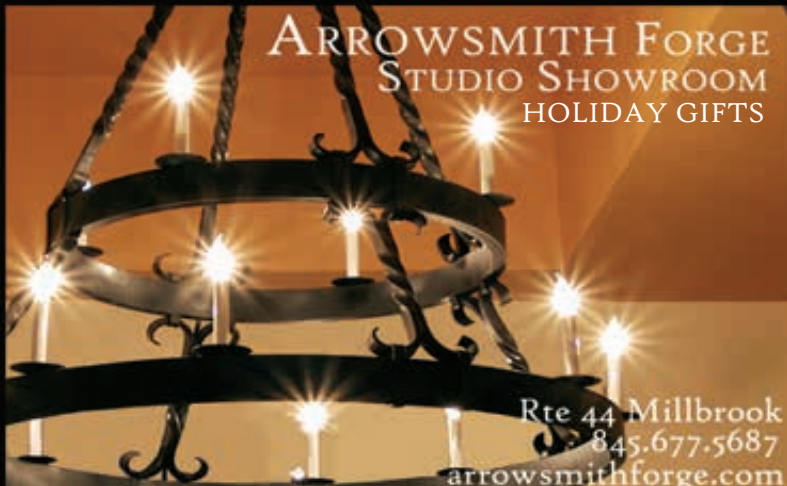


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# Milk

## HAZELNUT REVEL BARS

# chocolate

By Jessie Sheehan  
info@mainstreetmag.com

I love a cookie as much as the next person. Yes, I'm partial to the thick and chewy variety and my forever favorite will always be chocolate chip, but really, I am fond of them all. But cookie-making can be kind of laborious – there's the resting of the dough (a rest contributes to a chewier cookie, if you, like me, are into that sort of thing), the even scooping of the 12 balls of dough for each properly greased cookie sheet (making sure each scoop is of equal size contributes to uniform-looking cookies), and then the baking of the dough which, for "perfectly baked cookies," requires you to bake only one baking sheet at a time, rotating at the halfway point, and then resting the cookies (again) on the sheet before removing them to a cooling rack.

### Cookie vs. bar

But lest I have turned you off of cookie-making forever, I present you with the cookie's cute, yet tough, little brother: the bar cookie. I am a sucker for a bar cookie for all of the reasons that I have issues with regular cookies, and then some: I love the bar cookie's ease of assembly (press the dough into a pan and *voilà* – you're done), the crowd-pleasing number of servings a single tray produces (no need to dirty several cookie sheets), as all 24 (or more, if you cut them small enough) bars are baked simultaneously, and the portability (cookies are portable, too, of course, but cookies can break in transit, but scrappy little bar cookies? not a chance...).

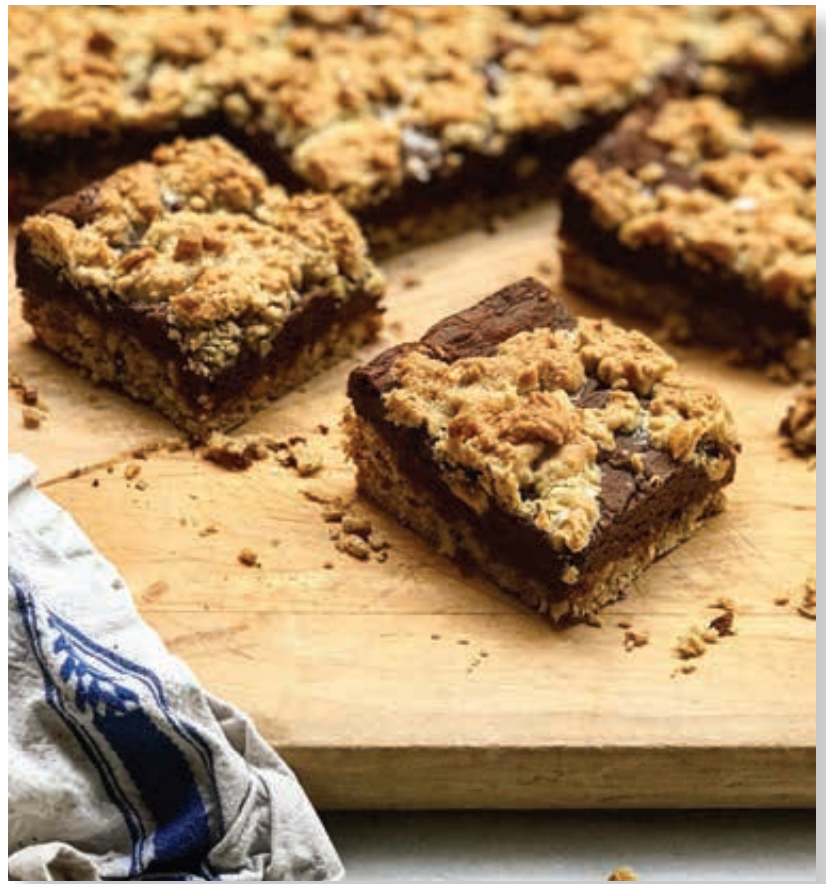
I particularly love a layered bar cookie, and if one of the layers just happens to include a combo of milk chocolate and hazelnut, well then I'm basically in bar-cookie heaven.

### A revel bar

A revel bar, for the uninitiated (a group that included me until quite recently) is a bar cookie made with oats, nuts, chocolate, and sweetened condensed milk. The chewy oat and nut-filled cookie bit forms the base of the bar, as well as the topping, and the chocolate and sweetened condensed milk make for a delicious, fudgy middle layer. In fact, "fudge" is the operative word here, as here's a quick fun fact for you: an easy, old-fashioned, stovetop fudge, that does not require a pesky candy thermometer, is made just this way: by combining melted chocolate and sweetened condensed milk. A recipe for one is included in my latest cookbook, *The Vintage Baker*, and is not dissimilar from the middle layer of a revel bar ... but I digress.

Here, I have substituted toasted hazelnuts for the almonds or walnuts usually called for in a revel bar, and a chocolate hazelnut spread, such as Nutella, for the straight up chocolate and sweetened condensed milk layer typically found in the bar. However, if you'd rather just use melted milk chocolate, you can substitute that for the Nutella. A final sprinkle of flaky sea salt before baking, helps balance all the flavors and keeps the sweetness in check.

Bar cookies are an excellent addition to Christmas cookie swaps and holiday gift giving in general. Although the middle layer of these revel bars might melt a bit if mailed to a friend in Christmas-cookie-need, a quick spell in the refrigerator will firm things up nicely. And to say that Santa would be beyond thrilled to receive a plate of these on Christmas Eve, after a hard, cold night of delivering presents, is an understatement.



### Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups instant oats  
2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 cup hazelnuts, toasted and chopped  
1 1/4 tsp table salt  
1 tsp baking soda  
2 sticks unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly  
1 cup light brown sugar  
1/2 cup granulated sugar  
2 eggs  
1 tbsp pure vanilla extract  
2 cups chocolate hazelnut spread, such as Nutella, or two cups milk chocolate chips, melted  
1 1/4 cup (one 14 oz. can) sweetened condensed milk  
Flaky sea salt, such as Maldon, for sprinkling

### Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 13x9x2-inch baking pan with softened butter or cooking spray. Line the bottom and two short sides with parchment. Set aside.

Combine the oats, flour, nuts, salt, and soda in a medium bowl and whisk together. Set aside.

Add the melted butter and sugars to a large bowl and whisk to combine. Add the eggs, one at a time, and the vanilla, whisking after adding each. Add the dry ingredients to the wet and fold to combine with a rubber

spatula. Reserve 1 3/4 cups of the dough for the topping and transfer the remainder of the dough to the prepared pan. Place a piece of plastic wrap over the dough and press it flat with your hands until it evenly covers the bottom of the pan.

In a small bowl, add the Nutella and sweetened condensed milk, and stir with a fork to combine. Place in the microwave on high and melt in 20 second bursts, stirring after each, until combined, about two minutes. The mixture may not be perfectly smooth, and that is fine. Spread the mixture over the dough in the pan and top with the remaining dough, by crumbling it into bits and scattering it over the fudgy layer. Sprinkle with the flaky sea salt.

Bake for 25 minutes until the oat topping is browned. Let the bars set up, at least 4 hours on the counter or place the slightly cooled bars in the fridge for about two hours. To serve, run a paring knife around the edge of the pan and use the parchment paper to lift out the bars. Slice into 24 bars using a chef's knife. Bars will keep tightly wrapped in plastic wrap on the counter for up to three days. •

*Jessie is a baker and cookbook author; you can learn more about her through her website [jessiesheehanbakes.com](http://jessiesheehanbakes.com).*



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# Protecting our forests, reducing your taxes

THE IMPACT OF FORESTRY EXEMPTIONS ON HOLDING REAL ESTATE

By Christine Bates  
christine@mainstreetmag.com

Protect the environment and pay less in property taxes! Forestry exemptions provide property tax assessment reductions to encourage forest preservation by decreasing the expense of holding land. The rules regarding these “exemptions” vary from state to state, but the principle is the same: in exchange for forest guardianship, owners of sizable parcels of land receive a break on their town and school property taxes to reflect land usage rather than potential value.

Depending on your state, the size of your property, and the density of the forest you could qualify for what is known as a “forest exemption.” It won’t “exempt” you from paying taxes, but it will decrease your tax burden. Maybe it should be known as the forest discount tax plan.

## A growing appreciation of forests

Until the end of the nineteenth century forests were cleared for agricultural usage, chopped up for charcoal production, or lumbered off for timber. Massive Catskill hemlock stands were cut down for their bark used in the tanning industry. Forests and trees were a nuisance that stood in the way of settlement, or a natural resource to be exploited.

Forests in the northeastern states had all but disappeared by the end of the nineteenth century when the European concept of managing trees as a renewable resource was introduced. Tree seedlings started to be planted where loggers had left barren ground and farmers had abandoned farms with depleted soil. Areas were reforested with conifers for watershed protection, flood control, and future timber protection. This was before anyone thought of the additional benefits of sequestering carbon, preserving wildlife habitat, or fighting climate change.

To encourage the protection of privately held forestlands, New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut have instituted broadly similar programs creating tax relief for owners of forested lands. All three states require a certain minimum acreage, a forestry management plan, and a ten-year commitment to maintaining the forest – but the details and tax reductions vary. Anyone that is potentially interested should contact an approved state forestry expert to first do an initial assessment and figure out if the tax savings are worth the commitment.

These initial evaluations can cost around \$1,500 and will determine if your “stocking level of trees” qualifies. The types of tree don’t matter – they can be hardwoods or pine trees. The next step would be to invest in a forest management plan which delineates the forest stands, does an inventory of the trees, and makes recommendations about thinning, harvesting, replanting, etc. As part of the management plan timber may be harvested, but as Doug Ramey, a registered forester in New York and Connecticut with over 170 management plans in place, observed, “You don’t get rich selling timber.” He estimated that a red oak tree 16” in diameter with a 16 foot log would be worth about \$500 today. “It’s really about the tax break – it helps you hold onto your property. When towns do a revaluation, I get a lot of calls.”

## New York Rules – 480a

New York State, with its heavily forested Catskills and Adirondacks, has over 19 million acres of forested land, 75% of it is in private hands. In 1977 New York passed Section 480a, which established the rules for forestland exemptions. The minimum size is 50 contiguous acres all owned by the same entity. This required size eliminates more than half of the privately held forestland. Owners must retain a registered forester to evaluate the tree stand and prepare



a ten-year management plan which is then approved by the NYS DEC, which, in turn, notifies the local assessor that the plan has been accepted. The assessor then reduces the assessed value of the forested acres (see chart). Only wood fiber is considered a crop and other forest uses like maple syrup, recreation, and Christmas trees are excluded from forestry exemptions, but could be covered by an agricultural exemption.

The downside in all of these programs is that rollback tax penalties are applied for partial or total change of the land use. In New York enrollment constitutes a lien on the property and the next owner would be obligated to continue the plan for nine years or pay penalties. It’s important to know if you are obligated to follow an existing forestry management plan before you buy.

Above: A trail through the forest at Poet’s Walk in Rhinebeck, NY. Photo by Claire Copley.

Continued on next page ...



EXAMPLES OF APPLICATION OF FOREST EXEMPTIONS IN DUTCHESS COUNTY

Town	Acreage	Classification	Assessor's market value	Forest exemption	Tax basis after exemption	Exempted value as % market value	\$ per acre full market assessment	\$ per acre after forest exemption
Pine Plains	78.8	NYS 912 Wild, Forested	\$493,800	\$361,134	\$132,666	27%	\$6,266	\$1,684
Amenia*	21.1	NYS 322 Vacant Rural Residential	\$201,000	\$152,418	\$48,582	24%	\$9,526	\$2,302
North East	137.7	NYS 322 Vacant Rural Residential	\$1,669,200	\$1,260,700	\$408,500	24%	\$12,122	\$2,967
North East*	9.8	NYS 314 Vacant Rural Residential	\$133,800	\$79,800	\$54,000	40%	\$13,653	\$5,510
Washington	45.7	NYS 322 Vacant Rural Residential	\$383,200	\$218,466	\$164,734	43%	\$8,385	\$3,605
Washington	52.7	NYS 322 Vacant Rural Residential	\$873,700	\$236,843	\$636,857	73%	\$16,579	\$12,085
Washington	55.9	NYS 311 Vacant Residential Land	\$670,200	\$536,160	\$134,040	20%	\$11,989	\$2,398

\* Smaller than required 25 acres but parcel borders on another protected parcel

In practice, New York State forest exemptions, which are supposed to reduce assessed taxable value by 80%, can vary enormously. A small, random sampling of raw land parcels with forest exemptions in Dutchess County shows a huge variation, both in assessed value of forest lands from \$16,000 an acre to \$6,266, and a value per acre after application of the forest exemption between \$12,000 and \$1,700!

Connecticut's Public Act 490

In many ways Connecticut's regulating Act 490 (passed in 1963) is more generous than New York's and now covers almost 500,000 acres. PA 490 requires only a minimum of 25 contiguous acres and currently values forest land at \$240 an acre for tax purposes. Contrast this to the values of protected forests in Dutchess County. Less densely settled towns often have substantial forest exemptions that can constitute a painful hit to the town's tax base. For example, the town of Cornwall alone has 14,000+ acres of protected forestland, which reduces property tax collections by over \$2,000,000 every year. Like New York, a forester's report is required; however, it is the town assessor who determines eligibility – not a state conservation agency.

Massachusetts Rules

In Massachusetts over 500,000 acres of forests are covered under forest stewardship programs 61, 61A, and 61B. Unlike New York, Massachusetts only requires 5-10 acres of land to be considered, and there are less severe penalties for getting out of the program. Every year the state establishes the value of forest acreage for property tax purposes. Currently this is a little under \$100 an acre for 61A, which the assessor applies to the property assessment. If a forest is registered as recreational under 61B, property taxes are reduced by 75%.

Massachusetts further gives landowners flexibility in switching between managed forest plans under 61A and recreational forests, which can just be left natural habitat and not managed.

If you are an owner of substantial forest acreage or are considering buying forested acres, the impact of the forestry exemption can affect the value of the land. If you buy land with an exemption in place, you should determine the requirements and limitations. Everyone should understand the complex rules about annual renewals and dates for the paperwork. Once you recognize the opportunity or the risk, you should consult with a registered forester with your state.



Above: Forests protect our water. Photo by John Harney. Below, left: When you walk through a forest, look up at the sky. Photo by Christine Bates.

*"The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest of wilderness."*  
– John Muir

No one should forget that the reason for forest property tax reductions is to protect acres of wilderness from the fragmentation of building lots, electric lines, cabins, campers, trails, cellular towers, and roads. Walk alone between the trees and look up at the sky, listen to your footsteps, smell the pines. Unlike fields, forests do not need tending; they are mankind's solitary companions on this earth. Guard and appreciate their mystery. ●





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# Celebrate with Eggnog

By Dominique DeVito  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Is the arrival of eggnog as joyous a holiday occasion for you as seeing decorations in the stores or hearing Christmas music on the radio? No matter what your spiritual practice at this cold, dark time of year, a universal way to lift your mood and celebrate is to partake in an abundance of good food and drink. For many of us, eggnog is on this list.

I started seeing eggnog at the supermarket before Halloween, and it was the inspiration for this article. I was amazed by how many types and flavors there are now, and I thought it would be fun to do a *12 Days of Christmas* salute to this very popular beverage. So I wrote *The 12 Days of Eggnog* – to the tune of the Christmas song. It's at the end of the article. I dare anyone to sing it all the way through; I hope you enjoy it.

As I was thinking about eggnog (and enjoying some, of course), I became curious about its origin and how it came to be so popular and synonymous with the holiday season. As one would suspect, its history is as delicious as its taste, with nearly as many iterations!

## Riotously good

I have to start with the Eggnog Riot of 1826 because it happened right here in New York at West Point. Earlier that year, alcohol had been banned from the elite military academy. For Christmas, some cadets managed to bring in a lot of whiskey. A group of about 90 of them used it to spike eggnog that was on campus, and things went from rollicking to rowdy. Property was damaged, brawls broke out, and officers were assaulted. In January, 1827, 19 cadets were court marshalled and 11 of those were expelled. Fortunately for Jefferson Davis, one of the offenders, he was

not expelled. He went on to be the President of the Confederate States during the Civil War. I wonder if he ever drank eggnog again after 1826.

The drink itself has its roots in Medieval England, where it was a wintertime drink for the aristocracy. It was made with eggs and cream and sugar and served hot. While it wasn't an alcoholic beverage at first (and many still enjoy it without alcohol), few objected to the addition of spirits. A drink called posset was popular, made with hot milk and ale. The name eggnog is said to derive from two British slang words – *grog* (rum) and *noggin* (a type of wooden serving cup). Egg and grog drinks were served in noggins.

## George's joy

Then as now, a hot milk drink spiked with booze was welcome on a cold, dark night. No wonder it became so popular. It was a staple of the early Colonists and our forefathers, as milk and eggs and cheap spirits were plentiful in the 1800s. George Washington had his own recipe (included below), though he didn't note the number of eggs. A few noggins of his grog and the wigs had to be flying!

It was in the US that the name eggnog came to stick. Jonathan Boucher, a clergyman from Maryland, wrote a poem about the drink in 1775 which included the line "Fog-drams i' th' morn, or (better still) egg-nogg." His salute was the first appearance in print of a formal reference to the drink. (Hey, maybe my poem will make it to Wikipedia some time!)

Colonists turned to rum as a stronger, sweeter addition to the egg/cream base of their nogs, and soon different liquors were interchangeable, including brandy, whiskey, and sherry. An editorial in *The Chicago Press and Tribune* dated December 31, 1859, said "Eggnog has ruled the country today...It is a



Photo: istockphoto.com contributor NatashaBreen

famous drink in public and private houses..."

## A welcome addition to a holiday party

Today, over 150 years later, eggnog remains a perennial favorite across the country and around the world. For many, it wouldn't be the holidays without it. Making it yourself can take anywhere from a few minutes to several days, and that just gives you more options for pleasure. While homemade eggnog is exceptional, and makes the occasion to partake of it with guests extra special, the selections in the dairy case are pretty good, too. You can even find one if you're lactose intolerant.

## Look for local

There are many companies making eggnogs that are sold in grocery stores large and small. But look for local in our area – in stores ranging from Adams to Hannaford and Price Chopper. You can find delicious and super-fresh eggnogs made by

- Hudson Valley Fresh
- Battenkill Valley Creamery

- King's Dairy, and
- Ronnybrook Farm

Don't limit the local to the non-alcoholic eggnog, either. Our area is a treasure trove of distilleries making fabulous whiskeys, bourbons, rums, and more. I made a killer nightcap with a splash of Olde York Farm's Cacao Maple Vodka poured into a shot of King's Dairy eggnog.

## Three great recipes

As with all things culinary, especially for holiday favorites, recipes for eggnog have been abundant and varied for hundreds of years. I decided to choose three that range from historic to classic to modern so you can experiment to your liking.

## George Washington's Eggnog

Here's a way to impress your guests as George and Martha did over 200 years ago – a recipe ascribed to George himself! Since no one at your gathering will be going home on horseback, you may want to get people's keys when they come in the door. This one's a doozy.

Continued on next page ...



One quart cream, one quart milk, one dozen tablespoons sugar, one pint brandy, 1/2 pint rye whiskey, 1/2 pint Jamaican rum, 1/4 pint sherry. Mix liquor first, then separate yolks and whites of eggs, add sugar to beaten yolks, mix well. Add milk and cream, slowly beating. Beat whites of eggs until stiff and fold slowly into mixture. Let set in cool place for several days. Taste frequently.

### Martha Stewart's "Original" Eggnog

I had to include a recipe by the *Queen of Entertaining* (and a woman who's had a big influence on me). You can't lose when you choose Martha.

12 eggs, separated  
1 1/2 cups superfine sugar  
1 quart whole milk  
1 1/2 quarts heavy cream  
1 quart bourbon  
1/2 cup dark rum  
2 cups cognac  
Freshly ground nutmeg

Beat the egg yolks until thick and pale yellow. Gradually add the sugar to the yolks. With a wire whisk, beat in the milk and 1 quart of the cream. Add the bourbon, rum, and Cognac, stirring constantly. Just before serving, beat the egg whites until stiff. Fold into the mixture. Whip the remaining heavy cream until stiff and fold in. Sprinkle with nutmeg. (From *The Martha Stewart Cookbook*, Clarkson Potter, New York, 1995.)

### 5-Minute Blender Eggnog by The Chunky Chef

For those of us who are always busy and rarely fussy, the idea of putting everything in the blender and making it a day or two ahead of time is totally appealing. Thank you, Chunky Chef! ([www.thechunkychef.com](http://www.thechunkychef.com))

4 large eggs (the freshest you can find)  
3/4 cup granulated sugar (or superfine sugar)  
1/2 tsp dried nutmeg  
1/4 tsp ground cinnamon  
3 oz cognac (about 1/3 cup + 1 Tbsp)  
3 oz bourbon (about 1/3 cup + 1 Tbsp)  
1 1/2 cups whole milk  
1 cup heavy cream

Add whole eggs to blender and blend on MED speed (or LOW if you only have a HIGH and LOW setting option) for 30 seconds. Add sugar and blend another 20 seconds. Add nutmeg, cinnamon, cognac, bourbon, milk, and heavy cream and blend until combined, about 10-15 seconds. Transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate for a day or so to allow flavors to combine and mellow. To serve after it's settled in the fridge, either give it a good shake or two, or pour into a mixing bowl and give it a whisk to get everything combined.

### The 12 Days of Eggnog (sung to the tune of The 12 Days of Christmas)

*On the first day of eggnog, my body said to me,  
home-made is the most tasty.*

*On the second day of eggnog, my body said to me,  
get some eggs and cream, and home-made is the most tasty.*

*On the third day of eggnog, my body said to me,  
you'll need brandy,  
get some eggs and cream, and home-made is the most tasty.*

*On the fourth day of eggnog, my body said to me,  
how about a party,  
you'll need brandy,  
get some eggs and cream, and home-made is the most tasty.*

*On the fifth day of eggnog, my body said to me,  
I have an idea!  
How about a party,  
you'll need brandy,*



Image courtesy of Ronnybrook

*get some eggs and cream, and home-made is the most tasty.*

*On the sixth day of eggnog my body said to me, which ones will I choose?  
I have an idea!*

*How about a party,  
you'll need brandy,  
get some eggs and cream, and home-made is the most tasty.*

*On the seventh day of eggnog, my body said to me, how about dairy-free?*

*Which ones will I choose,  
I have an idea!  
How about a party,  
you'll need brandy,  
get some eggs and cream, and home-made is the most tasty.*

*On the eighth day of eggnog, my body said to me, soy or lactose-free, how about dairy-free?*

*Which ones will I choose,  
I have an idea!  
How about a party  
you'll need brandy,  
get some eggs and cream, and home-made is the most tasty.*

*On the ninth day of eggnog, my body said to me, light, golden, pumpkin, soy or lactose-free, how about dairy-free?*

*Which ones will I choose,  
I have an idea!  
How about a party  
you'll need brandy,  
get some eggs and cream, and home-made is the most tasty.*

*On the tenth day of eggnog, my body said to me, so many flavors!*

*Light, golden, pumpkin, soy or lactose-free, how about dairy-free?  
Which ones will I choose,  
I have an idea!*

*How about a party  
you'll need brandy,  
get some eggs and cream, and home-made is the most tasty.*

*On the eleventh day of eggnog, my body said to me, lots of ways to like it,  
So many flavors!*

*Light, golden, pumpkin, soy or lactose-free, how about dairy-free?  
Which ones will I choose,  
I have an idea!*

*How about a party  
you'll need brandy,  
get some eggs and cream, and home-made is the most tasty.*

*On the twelfth day of eggnog, my body said to me, celebrate with eggnog!*

*Lots of ways to like it,  
So many flavors,  
Light, golden, pumpkin, soy or lactose-free, how about dairy-free?  
Which ones will I choose,  
I have an idea!*

*How about a party  
you'll need brandy,  
get some eggs and cream, and home-made is the most tasty.*

Wishing everyone a happy holiday season, and a punch bowl that overflows with eggnog. •





Jane Coats Eckert's roots are in 19th and early 20th Century American Artists on whom she wrote and lectured. In 1996 she opened Eckert Fine Art in Naples, Florida where she formed a business relationship and friendship with Robert Rauschenberg. She curated shows on Rauschenberg at three museums and specialized in art by Roy Lichtenstein, Christo, Robert Indiana, Don Gummer and James Rosenquist. In recent years since relocating to the quaint village of Kent, Ct. Jane has placed important art with museums and collectors by Jean-Michel Basquiat, Giorgio de Chirico, Henry Moore, Niki de Saint Phalle, John Chamberlain, and is the exclusive representative of realist painter, Eric Forstmann.

Ms. Eckert has served as the Chair of the Director's Advisory Council at Mass MoCA in North Adams, MA and as the Secretary of the Fine Art Dealers Association (FADA). Litchfield Magazine recently named her as one of the "25 Most Influential People" for 2017 in Litchfield County, Connecticut.

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# Five things about Christmas

LOCALS REVEAL THEIR HOLIDAY THOUGHTS

Everyone has lists – favorite things, things they can't live without, things they carry with them all the time, and on and on.

We decided to canvass people from surrounding environs and question them about the holidays. Here, in no particular order, are their responses.

By Joseph Montebello  
info@mainstreetmag.com

**Richard Lambertson, co-owner and designer of Lambertson Truex:**

**Your most memorable Christmas?**

I was five when I realized there was no Santa Claus. I had snuck downstairs and found my father putting together my bicycle, explaining that Santa had left it in pieces. I didn't buy that for one second!

**Favorite part of Christmas?**

Shopping!

**Best gift ever received?**

Certainly not the snow tires my parents gave me one year! I had a tendency as a young person to return just about everything I got as gifts and exchange them all for the beautiful cashmere sweater I really wanted.

**What gift are you hoping to find under the tree?**

Now that I live in Sharon, CT, full-time, maybe I could use those snow tires again.

**How will you spend Christmas Day?**

Having a dinner party with friends and my 91-year-old mother.

**Plans for New Year's Eve?**

Nice dinner at home, early to bed, and pray that I wake up in 2021 and everything is back to normal!

**Randy Correll, partner at Robert A.M. Stern Architects:**  
**Most memorable Christmas?**

When I was five and received a pair of electric scissors, which I used to perform surgery on the fiberglass drapes in the living room. My mother was not amused.

**Favorite part of Christmas?**

Decorating the tree, which I cut myself from the tree farm at the end of our road. Unpacking the ornaments brings back memories of years past and friends.

**Best gift ever received?**

My sister has made me incredible needlepoint pillows and pictures over the years. I think handmade gifts are the best to give or receive.

**What gift are you hoping to find under the tree?**

Really not hoping for anything, but would be delighted with two turtledoves. We had a pair of doves that lived to be 19 years old and were very sweet.

**How will you spend Christmas Day?**

Dinner with our good friends and their two children who are like family to us. Nothing better than being with children at holiday time.

**Plans for New Year's Eve?**

Dinner at home, then falling asleep to a Turner Classics movie only to be woken up by fireworks at midnight.

**Suzanne Cassano, co-owner Privet House:**  
**Most memorable Christmas?**

When I was six years old and woke up to find a stocking filled with coal

(my mother said I behaved badly.) Yes, really, it explains a lot.

**Favorite part of Christmas?**

Spending Christmas Eve with the dearest of friends. It's our yearly ritual.

**Best gift ever received?**

My father gave me his dog tag, which was of importance to him. He was a World War II veteran, with a Purple Heart, and fought in Normandy.

**What gift are you hoping to find under the tree?**

A winning lottery ticket!

**How will you spend Christmas Day?**

Dinner with local friends. But that may change if I win the lottery.

**Plans for New Year's Eve?**

I never make plans that far in advance.

**Linda Dano, Emmy Award-winning daytime actress, talk show host, designer, and author:**

**Most memorable Christmas?**

As a child my Christmas was always centered on my grandmother. She was so full of joy and I'd wake up to all of these presents under the tree. It was only when I grew up that I learned they were all from her.

**Favorite part of Christmas?**

Definitely the decorating. I love to decorate. I have trees in every room. I am completely crazy and I

Continued on next page ...



get such joy out of it. And I do it all for one person – me. I love how the holiday makes me feel.

#### **Best gift ever received?**

A mink coat that my husband bought me the first year I came to be with him in New York. I was from California and he knew I would freeze without it.

#### **What gift are you hoping to find under the tree?**

I have all the best gifts – friends, beautiful home, dogs. There's nothing that I feel I absolutely need or want.

#### **How will you spend Christmas Day?**

I throw a huge party for friends, neighbors, workers, anyone else I can think of. I love to share it and prepare for it. Then I got to bed for five days to recover.

#### **Plans for New Year's Eve?**

Not a fan of the holiday – it's always felt like such a forced occasion. I do nothing.

#### **Joseph Cicio, retail merchant and CEO and author of *Friends Bearing Gifts*:**

##### **Most memorable Christmas?**

In 2001 I was working for Sun International who owned Atlantis on Paradise Island in the Bahamas. I took my ten-year-old son there for the holidays. On Christmas Eve while he was asleep I decorated our hotel suite with everything from a six-foot tree, an animated four-foot Santa, and gifts in abundance. When he woke, expecting nothing, he gazed around the room, displayed a big smile saying, "There really is a Santa and he followed us on vacation."

##### **Favorite part of Christmas?**

Christmas day dinner with family and friends.



#### **Best gift ever received?**

Three cases of Genova canned tuna. I live on it.

#### **What gift are you hoping to find under the tree?**

The next billion-dollar lottery ticket.

#### **How will you spend Christmas Day?**

I will be at Weston Priory in Weston, VT, where I am always welcomed into the small family of Benedictine Monks for the week. Fraternal love and an opportunity of spiritual contemplation.

#### **Plans for New Year's Eve?**

Always a quiet evening at home with my two dogs, an old black and white movie, 6oz. of beluga caviar and a large baked potato.

#### **Eric Johnson, partner at Ostafin Design Ltd.:**

##### **Most memorable Christmas?**

Decorating my Charlie Brown tree with my grandmother with our homemade ornaments.

##### **Favorite part of Christmas?**

Reading the jingles my mother wrote on every stocking gift, and guessing what was inside.

##### **Best gift ever received?**

A trip to London.

#### **What gift are you hoping to find under the tree?**

Anything from Serge Lutens.

#### **How will you spend Christmas Day?**

In Atlanta with my family.

#### **Plans for New Year's Eve?**

At an annual New Year's Eve themed soiree with a group of friends.

#### **John Truex, co-designer and owner of Lambertson Truex:**

##### **Most memorable Christmas?**

Every Christmas is special.

##### **Favorite part of Christmas?**

Making Patsy's Bourbon Slushes. Patsy is my mother and she is famous for them.

##### **Best gift ever received?**

A 6-pack of white T-shirts.

#### **What gift are you hoping to find under the tree?**

A 6-pack of white T-shirts.

#### **How will you spend Christmas Day?**

I will open my gifts from "Santa" and then spend the day riding my horse Thomas.

#### **How will you celebrate New Year's Eve?**

At home in my kaftan watching Apple TV, cocktail in hand.

#### **Nancy Kissinger, philanthropist, and the wife of former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger:**

##### **Most memorable Christmas?**

Very hard to remember at my age. But my fondest memories are of the ones with my family when I was growing up.

##### **Favorite part of the holiday?**

The music. Christmas carols and church music are just wonderful.

##### **Best gift ever received?**

A red velvet bathrobe.

#### **What gift are you hoping to find under the tree?**

Nothing! I am old and I am trying to get rid of things.

#### **How will you spend Christmas Day?**

Quietly, with friends.

#### **Plans for New Year's Eve?**

To avoid any big party.

*Interesting that even among so diverse a group, so many of the responses are similar. Once again, reflecting the universality of all that is Christmas, no matter what age. Have a happy and healthy holiday season! ●*



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# Preserving history: Millerhurst Farm

By Regina Molaro  
info@mainstreetmag.com

For many of us who are striving to keep pace in today's frenzied, fast-paced digitally driven lifestyle, it's difficult to imagine living and working on a family farm that traces its history back hundreds of years.

Waking up at dawn, tending to farm chores, and turning in early to ensure a restful night's sleep are all part of life on the farm. Farmers also put a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into this labor of love; many bumps and bruises are earned along the way.

Although there's been a rise in the number of farmer's markets and farm-to-table restaurants from the Hudson Valley to Manhattan and beyond, many people aren't well attuned to the realities of farm life.

## A legacy is created

The land that the Millerhurst Farm sits on in Ancramdale, NY, dates back to 1770, but since 1887, several generations of Miller family descendants have toiled on the land. Beyond being a livelihood for brothers – Mike, Jim, Joe, and Tom and their wives – producing milk was a means of carrying on a family legacy.

In 1770 Johannes Streibel purchased the farm, which was part of the original Livingston land grant. In 1785, he granted the 234-acre farm to his daughter Eve and her husband Henry Hoysradt as a wedding gift. The Miller boys' great grandfather Harmon Miller married Annie Barton whose uncle was a Hoysradt.



The farming lifestyle was directly passed on to the Miller sons through their grandfather Clifton Miller and their father Harold. "Our grandfather's older brother Barton Miller had a prolific herd of registered Holstein cattle and our father became interested," explains Mike Miller who runs the day-to-day operations of the farm.

When he was just a schoolboy, Harold was already milking 40 cows. He and his lifelong friend Jack Pulver were introduced to opportunities to upgrade the genetics and raise superior cattle through the Pine Plains FFA's agricultural education program.

The farm's first registered purebred cow hailed from Bos-Haven Farm in Verbank in 1947. By 1953, Harold graduated high school, and in ten years, he had a milking herd of nearly 100 registered cows.

## Farming success

Throughout the years, Millerhurst Farm has enjoyed many successes. The Miller's ancestors were once honored with the Century Farmer Award – the most prestigious in the state. In 1976, the farm was recognized as a National Bicentennial Farm. Beyond its award-winning cows, Millerhurst Farm benefitted from the sale of some of its prized cattle.

The Millers pitched in to explain what farm life was like several decades ago when the Hudson Valley region was a prime area for desirable cattle.

"In the 1970s, we were exporting heifers. The genetics of cows in this country were in demand all over the world. The Hudson Valley had some of the most desirable cattle and there's very few of them left," says Mike.

Some of these sales resulted in exciting business trips, which turned into vacations – far away from the open fields of Ancramdale. During the 1980s, the \$245,000 sale price of one cow whisked Joe and Tom off to California. "We were treated like



This page: Miller family photos. Courtesy of the Miller family.

kings. Here we were flying around in private planes – just a couple of country boys," says Joe.

At its peak in 2008, Millerhurst Farm sold 2.9 million pounds of milk and had approximately 100 milking cows.

Then there are the personal connections the Millers have with their beloved animals, which prompts several family members to reminisce. "When James and I got married, the first Christmas gift I received as part of the family was a calf," says Janice. The cow's name was Fantasy, but Janice renamed her Oxy. Janice proudly mentions that Oxy went on to have nine or ten calves.

Other family members chime in lovingly on the hazards of working with the cows and how they often unintentionally cause bodily harm to the farmers. "The farm is no place for the faint of heart. It's tough on the body," says Mike.

"Mike is my father reincarnated. He knows cows and has a way with them. There's not many people like that anymore," adds Joe.

"We could go on and on with cow stories. There was a depth of pedigree

and the bloodlines carried on. There were cows here that went back to the origins of the breed. These were some of the greatest cows," concludes Joe.

## Tragedy hits

On the evening of October 14 of this year, the Millerhurst Farm experienced a devastating blow to the family farm when a fast-moving fire swept through the barn.

"I was here at the house and the power went out. I could see smoke and I raced over to the barn. At that point, I don't even know what time it was. It's really a blur," says Emily, who along with husband Mike are the owners and operators of the farm.

Photographer Michael Molinski was the first to report the fire. He was driving home from a photo shoot at around 7:30pm when he saw the barn ablaze – all lit up in flashes of orange.

"Both my hired men (Victor and Mike) were down at the barn, but the smoke was incredible and we knew that there was no going in to save the cows," reveals Emily.

Continued on next page ...



Beyond taking an emotional toll on the Miller family, the fire also made an impact on many of the local communities that dot the Hudson Valley. The fire claimed the lives of 46 precious cows and destroyed 16,000 square-feet of barn space, 1,000 bales of hay, a tractor, and feed mixer.

"The cows are the hardest loss," reveals Mike. The Millers explain that their cows were like children to them. Several members of the family described some of the animals and their unique personalities.

Among the cows that perished were Gadget, who was the youngest at two years old and Stella, who belonged to a friend, Shannon Fletcher. She was nearly ten years old and was the oldest.

Mike also fondly recalls a special calf, Arieal who was awarded First Place Spring Holstein Calf and was Junior Champion in 2015 at the Dutchess County Fair Youth Show. This year, she was awarded First Place in the Junior Three-Year-Old category at Rhinebeck's Dutchess County Fair.

The morning after the disaster, the family was happy to discover that one of the cows, Glow survived the blaze. The Millerhurst Farm currently has 70 cows remaining. At the time of the

fire, some of them were outside while others were housed in another barn.

Investigators later determined that an electrical malfunction in the wiring behind the milk-house panels is what sparked the fire. "Unfortunately it takes tragedy to unite family. We've all gone our own ways and have had our differences. It's been a long time since this family sat together and reminisced as a family," says Joe.

### United they stand

In the wake of the fire, there was an outpouring of support from the community. Friends and neighbors joined local farms and businesses, and they all pitched in to assist in whatever way possible.

While some cooked meals, others came by with coffee and pastries. Some pitched in to clean up the debris while others offered equipment, donated hay, or established fundraising campaigns and events.

"There's been a disconnect between rural and suburban people. The communities used to be so intertwined back in the heyday. This tragedy goes to show there's still community, but we just don't see it every day. When push comes to shove, they're there for you. It's like that with family and close friends. It's like a snowball affect – everybody pitches in," says Joe.

The day of the fire, a meal train was started. Beyond feeding the family, the generous food supply also fed those who volunteered on the clean-up efforts.

The Miller family was quick to praise the efforts of Ginocchio Electric in Ancram, NY. "By 2am, we had



Above top to bottom, L-R: The milking barn before the fire. Photo by B. Docktor. Miller family photos. Courtesy of the Miller family.

power back at the house. The electricians worked the whole next day to restore power," says Mike.

"Jake Meiller of JLM Excavating and his crew and Superior Sanitation's crew worked non-stop for a week. They cleaned everything up and graded off what was left, so we didn't have to look at this pile of crumpled steel and tin," says Emily. Mike George Plumbing & Heating was quick to restore the water supply to the remaining calves and heifers.

Farms2Tables organized a Millerhurst Farm Benefit Dinner, which was held on November 3 at Heermance Farm in Tivoli, NY. More than 40 local farms donated food and wine. Artist Todd Germann auctioned off paintings at the event.

One hundred percent of self-serve coffee sales at the Pine Plains Platter in Pine Plains, NY, was also donated to the farm. The staff encouraged customers – and those who were not patrons – to stop by and leave a donation.

Grogger's Bar & Grill in Poughkeepsie, NY, organized a line dancing event, which was held on October 21, and exceeded the fundraising goal.

A GoFundMe campaign was initiated by Susan Klein on behalf of the farm. Although unfamiliar with the family, Klein read about the fire via the Hudson Valley Farm Swap. She

was inspired to launch the campaign because she believes in random acts of kindness and assisting those in need.

Other fundraising initiatives included a chicken barbeque held at the Lion's Club Pavilion in Pine Plains, NY, and an event at Stissing House, both on November 11. The Ancram Firehouse Company also hosted a fundraiser.

The Miller family is very grateful to the community for its support. At press time, they were still adjusting to the situation and engaged in community fundraisers.

"We're going to take some time to look at other barns and options. We will research different types of dairy farming," says Mike. The barn was 50 years old and now that it's been destroyed, there's an opportunity to modernize. Mike mentioned a mission to purchase new comfort mattresses for the cows.

"This farm has seen hard times, through the depression, world wars, but you work at it because you love it. You take the good with the bad and you keep going," concludes Joe.

Although difficult and painful, the Miller family is looking ahead to rebuilding and celebrating the 250th anniversary in 2020. •



Above: An aerial photo of the farm just days before the fire. The day after the fire. Photos by B. Docktor.



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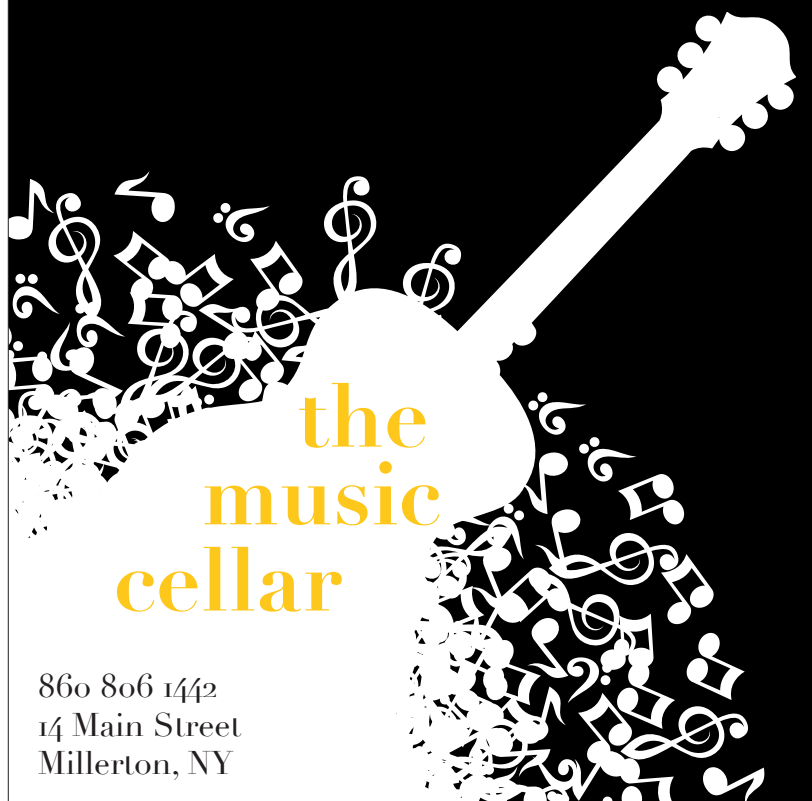
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# A little slice of heaven

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO  
CROSS COUNTRY SKIING

By Ian Strever  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Decades ago, as a Boy Scout, I spent a winter weekend shivering in a lean-to at Strang Scout Reservation in Goshen, a bucolic preserve filled with massive white birches, the likes of which are becoming less and less common in this climate. Those trees were my first association with northwest Connecticut, though, and I marveled at their resilience when I returned the following summer, noting how they had sprung back to form after a winter spent under a burden of ice and snow.

## Closer to nature

But in the winter, it was this burden that captivated me during my first experience on cross country skis. The arcs of glistening white limbs transformed the landscape and brought Robert Frost's poem, *Birches*, to life: "They click upon themselves / As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored / As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel. / Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells / Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust— / Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away / You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen."

Something about the near-silent swish of my skis brought me in closer contact with those surroundings. As the branches clicked and cracked upon each other, my skis glided along without even the gentle harumph that my footprints would have made at each step. When I paused for a breath, the entire world seemed to breathe with me.

## Wonderous places to ski

Few other activities connect us so intimately to the natural world, and my only lament is the shortness of the ski season and a warming climate that seldom provides the stark, biting cold that is so good for skiing. But there are still plenty of good days for cross country skiing,

and without the expense and travel required to downhill ski, I have discovered plenty of wondrous places nearby for skiers of all abilities and levels of intrepititude.

## Make no excuses

The first impediment is equipment, and allow me to disabuse you of that excuse. Most of our towns have transfer stations, and if you keep looking, eventually a pair of old skis will show up, and they will probably do just fine. I have two pairs from my local transfer station swap shop, and my first pair of boots was a \$30 snip off of E-bay. Look for skis that are about your height, and that will be close enough. Waxless skis are most common, and in addition to being nearly indestructible, you can expect to hit some rocks now and then anyway, so shiny and new is not even all that desirable. Moreover, as the name implies, you won't even need to wax them. Just make sure you get boots with the right type of binding to match your skis ("three-pin" is old school, but works just fine, NNN and SNS are the modern standards). When you are ready to upgrade, Kenver in Egremont, MA, and The Arcadian Shop in Lenox, MA, can set you up with all kinds of gear, and the Salisbury Winter Sports Association Ski Swap has a cross country section, too. This always occurs on the first Saturday in December, and if you get lucky with sizing, you can usually get set up for under \$100.

## Ideal conditions

So you've got skis and boots – now what? Well, yeah, you kind of need snow, so sit and wait for a solid 2-3 inches and don't just rush out at the first sign of a flake. Ideal conditions are 4-5" of very cold, Goldilocks snow – not too powdery and not



Above: Sturdy old skis like these – salvaged from the transfer station swap shop – are fine to get started.

Continued on next page ...





Above, top: It is hard to beat the aerobic benefits of cross country skiing, whether you are touring or competing. Above: Ice-encrusted trees are one of many attractions to be discovered on cross country skis. Right: Skiing through the Yale Forestry School at Great Mountain Forest is a momentary lapse into Scandinavia.

too wet. Wet snow is the worse of the two, and will stick to your skis, clump up, and potentially result in you trudging back to your car with blocks of snow on your feet. Just stay home and admire the scenery on those days. There are different waxes that can deal with these kinds of fluctuations in temperature and conditions, but leave that to more advanced skiers who seem to get just as much enjoyment out of waxing their skis as they do actually skiing on them. That's another lesson.

#### The best places to get started

You could try out skis in your backyard, but there are probably better places to get started. Some of the loveliest settings for winter outings are rail trails and abandoned rail beds. They criss-cross our area, vary in length and level of maintenance, and offer quiet escapes, often just blocks from your backyard.

The Hudson Valley Rail Trail is one of the longer paths, running along the border of New York and Connecticut beneath the Southern Taconic Range, but there are shorter rail trails in Salisbury, CT, and Great Barrington, MA, as well. They are flat or slightly graded, making them perfect for practicing your form and avoiding the downhills that require more advanced techniques to stop and control direction. Moreover, snow-laden limbs often provide an idyllic canopy above the path, and young birches often take root there. Robert Frost would have loved it.

#### Going with the motions

The basic cross country motion is called a diagonal "kick," alternating arm and leg motions to propel on flat terrain. On rail trails, however, skiing is more like shuffling, as you will be breaking snow and will not have the luxury of a good glide like you would at a groomed trail system.

Learning to ski on ungroomed trails will force you to develop technical skills and balance, and as you begin to explore more undulating terrain, you will acquire more skill in varying conditions. A herringbone technique will help to scale small hills, and while there are varying ways of arresting a descent, simply dragging poles in the snow

to slow you down seems most doable for the novices I've met.

#### A mid-point

A good mid-point between rail trails and groomed trails is Great Mountain Forest in Canaan, CT. The main trail network is frequented by skiers, so there is usually a track to follow, making the skiing easier. There are some hills, but the area sits atop Canaan Mountain, so the descents are never too long. Moreover, portions of the trails are groomed, and in particular the section that passes through the Yale Forestry School, where exotic pines are labeled for study and serve to transport the skier to Scandinavia for a moment.

Alas, there are few designated cross country ski areas in the Tri-state region, but a trip to the northern Berkshires, Catskills, and even central Connecticut will deliver you to facilities with rental options, lessons, and the opportunity to explore skate skiing, the faster and more athletic cousin of classic cross country skiing that you have probably seen at the Olympics. Most of us are well aware of the aerobic demands of the sport, and while it can drive your heart rate to new highs, a casual foray into ski touring can be a much more peaceful and serene experience. Just get out, breath in the air, and take in the birches. •





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# ON PURPOSE:

creating meaning in our lives

By Mary B. O'Neill, PhD  
info@mainstreetmag.com

At its core, purpose is connecting and contributing to something larger than self. For each of us, what lends purpose to our lives might vary. There's no one-size-fits-all for defining what gives each of us purpose. Despite these differences, the benefits of having identified a purpose to our lives are consistent and demonstrable.

## Purpose as a choice

Nazi concentration camp survivor and psychotherapist Viktor Frankl credits his strong sense of purpose for surviving the horrors of the camps and the ability to rebuild his life, despite the tragedies he experienced.

In his powerful book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl evokes an existential approach to purpose, which became the basis for his therapeutic model of logotherapy. Based on his experience, Frankl believed that we must decide our own purpose. It doesn't exist outside of our choice to create it.

There's no inherent meaning in the universe that waits for us to discover it. We are ultimately responsible for manufacturing our purpose and seeking ways to fulfill it. For Frankl, lack of self-defined purpose leads to a life of meaninglessness, shallowness, misplaced priorities, and self-destructive behavior.

In recent research, a strong sense of purpose has been identified as a key to well-being and happiness, and studies increasingly prove this connection. This is because it gives us a framework within which we can structure a life well-lived and serves as a guide to our actions.

Purpose provides a larger intentional context for decisions, allows us to be more resilient in the face of setbacks, and connects us to others and our world in a meaningful way. It creates our skin in the game of life.

## Purpose in our whole lives

Many of us separate the pursuit of purpose in our work and personal lives. Perhaps this doesn't need to be the case. Organizations are increasingly seeing the measurable connection between cultivating purpose in the workplace with happier employees, increased productivity and work quality, and higher profits. Individuals are seeing the benefits of unifying their work and personal lives. When this happens there can be less dissonance and more alignment between various parts of our lives.

We can consider purpose a sense of calling, but that makes it sound like a state reserved for a chosen few who have seen the light, leaving the rest of us to muddle through. That's not the case. There are concrete actions we can take to strengthen purpose in our lives and integrate our

whole selves in the process. While achieving this sense of alignment through purpose takes an effort to identify and maintain, it does lead to a more effortless way of being because our lives and priorities are in synch.

Sounds good, right? So, how do we do it? Well, there are some ways of creating perspective, doing some deep reflective work, and incorporating smaller life hacks that can set the stage for greater purpose. But first...

## Baby steps

Embrace that personal change of the magnitude of creating and deepening purpose must be done in baby steps. No behavioral change or mind-shift can be sustained with sudden large alterations.

Remember that diet that eliminated all carbs in one fell swoop? Great for a few weeks, hard to keep doing in the long term. It's better to change one meal at a time. Go from a two slice of bread sandwich to an open face. Pare down servings of pasta from a big bowl to a smaller one. And so it is with the long-term work needed to sustain purpose in the face of setbacks, upheavals, and change. Create small changes, fold them into your life, and celebrate being able to keep them going over time.

That's not to say you won't have lapses. Here's where self-compassion comes in. Life happens. Change is

easier when we feel robust, harder when we feel emotionally fragile. Take the Bunny Hop approach to life change – one jump forward, one jump back, and, if we're lucky, three jumps forward.

## Glass half full

One method to frame purpose in our lives is Appreciative Inquiry. This organizational change model can easily be adapted and applied to our whole lives. It begins with taking stock of what you bring to the table – your skills, talents, and traits. It asks us to envision moments when we felt most engaged and effective. Thus, we begin from a place of fullness and not of lack. We don't begin with what we don't have or can't do. Starting from that place leaves us paralyzed with fear and doubt, not hope and energy.

Then we look at the end of the continuum and imagine what our ideal purpose might be and what our best self might look like. Where do we want to be? How do we want to feel?

Envisioning that desired state of being becomes a beacon in the distance – one that we can get to with some work and persistence. And our starting point? Not at the other end of the continuum where all the perceived negative aspects of our lives lie, but likely somewhere

Continued on next page ...



in the middle.

Because we've started from a place of strength and capacity, the gap between where we are and where we want to be is more narrow than if we had started by listing all the traits and resources we don't have.

### Feeling vs. doing

Danielle LaPorte, in her book *The Desire Map*, identifies an interesting distinction between what we want to do and how we want to feel. This distinction can also help us identify and cultivate purpose.

LaPorte believes that we spend much of our time identifying goals

Then look for baby steps to create those feelings. While doing that, it's critical that you be intentional about the feelings you're trying to create and honor the steps you've taken to create them.

Suddenly, the creativity you crave can be found in a new holiday menu, a poetry reading on date night, or rearranging your living room.

### Personal mission purpose statements

Mission statements are critical to the organizations we work for. They define what the organization does. They give direction and focus to

contributions we want to make, and our core values. From these reflections, we create a purpose statement that governs how we conduct ourselves in our lives.

### Go with the flow

Another method for exploring purpose is flow. This concept, researched by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, is the sweet spot of a pursuit. It's that thing you do that is challenging – but not frustrating, encourages a merging of self with the activity, cultivates a sense of control and mastery, stems from intrinsic motivation, and causes you to lose track of time. It's when you look

Mindfulness practices, such as meditation, draw us back to the now – which exists in our consciousness and is the only moment we can control. Our past lives in our memory and our future dwells in the imagination.

We are a future-seeking species, thanks to that part of the brain behind our forehead. However, while it's natural to imagine a future or multiple futures, it's not always beneficial. These imagined futures can be a source of distraction, worry, fear. We tend to give these created scenarios the full weight of reality. Yet, the faculty of imagination has no such reality. We could



in terms of the things we want to do – be a this, do a that. While this might garner us an impressive resume, LaPorte asserts that a more fulfilling and spacious way to look at our lives is to ask how we want to feel, e.g., challenged, competent, creative, loved, valued, energized.

Once we identify those core desired feelings then we look for situations and relationships that generate them for us. This allows us to see multiple ways to achieve those feelings. We become less attached to a specific path and its destination and more to the scenery along the way.

LaPorte allows that we may be situated in a certain life with structures and demands that can't be altered at the moment, and suggests a baby step approach. Not feeling energized and creative at work, but can't change that at the moment?

strategy, anchor employee behavior and motivation, and inform the customers about what the company is trying to achieve.

A growing number of companies are creating purpose statements. These statements provide a more existential reason for being, create an emotional connection, and draw attention to how the organization impacts its customers and employees. It asks, "How does this company change or enhance lives?"

Purpose statements create empathy and emotional connection. Why? Because neuroscience is showing us that the seat of our decisions doesn't lie in reason, but in emotion. Want someone to love what you do or make? Go for the heart – not the mind.

We can also create purpose statements for our personal lives. These statements are not the taglines at the top of our resume. They are a statement about how we live our lives. They involve identifying the kind of person, friend, parent, community member we want to be, the

up from what you're doing and the clock has advanced two hours when it felt like five minutes. Flow can be found in creative arts but also the seemingly mundane – working on a math problem, gardening, tinkering with an engine, writing poetry, or DIY projects.

Studies on well-being indicate that creating more opportunities for flow state in our lives improves purpose. Many of us already have these flow activities in our lives. Again, be intentional about what they are, celebrate the importance of them in your life, and do them more often.

### Mind the gap

Mindfulness is the single greatest creator of purpose and well-being. At its most basic level, mindfulness is the awareness of the present moment without judgment. Many times we go along in our lives unaware of how we are being impacted, how we impact others, and how many of our actions are driven by emotional reflex and not thoughtful decision making.

easily imagine a number of different outcomes that could occur.

Mindfulness allows us to build the pause, create the space, so we can experience the moment we're living now. Then we can put it in context and observe it without judgment. This creates the intentionality of thoughts and actions critical to building purpose.

### On purpose

Creating and sustaining purpose in our lives requires persistence and resolve. But as with any task, if we can see the big picture and we believe it's worthwhile, then we embrace that we are working hard in the name of something larger and enduring – and that makes this work, well, seem less like a slog and more like the self-creating activity that it is – and one that we do on purpose. •

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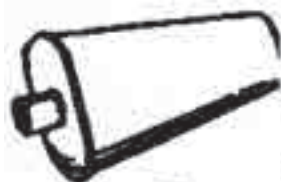
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# MUSIC ON THE MENU

By CB Wismar  
info@mainstreetmag.com

It's really all about the music.

Of course, it's also about the food, the atmosphere, and the overwhelming sense of being an important part of the community. For Elissa and George Potts, however, the common thread that winds playfully around and through The Fife 'n Drum in Kent, CT, seems to be the music.

Elissa grew up on Long Island, daughter of Audrey and Dolph Traymon ... he a celebrated Julliard educated pianist who, in his long career, accompanied Sinatra, Peggy Lee, and countless other performers of the *Great American Songbook* ... and she a representative for a greeting card company who visited Kent, CT, as part of her territory – and fell in love.

## Humble beginnings and hard work

When Dolph and Audrey opened The Fife 'n Drum restaurant in Kent, CT, in 1973, the current vibrant village was in its infancy. Poised along Route 7, traffic would come through on weekends – especially in leaf season and during summer vacation times – but finding a place for lunch was a bit of a challenge. The old roadhouse at the north end of town had been a tavern of sorts since 1830. It clearly

needed some love, but Dolph and Audrey saw possibilities, and “The Fife...” was born.

It seemed only natural that Elissa would, on her vacations from Lake Forest College in Illinois, come home and work in the family business. For several years, the family continued to live on Long Island, commuting up to Kent at strategic times to include buying the produce (Tuesday in Hunt's Point) the meat (Wednesday on West 12th Street in the City) and the fresh baked goods (Friday in Greenwich). Everyone pitched in.

“One vacation stint working in the restaurant and I was hooked,” professes Elissa who is the ever-present, ever-gracious restaurateur in the flourishing Kent location that now includes an inn and gift shop. “I love everything about this business – and that's not an overstatement.” She is decisive. She is in love.

## Goalie or guitarist?

For George, who also grew up on Long Island, music was to be his chosen profession. Attending Lake Forrest, where he met Elissa, he made the strategic decision to step away from being a hockey goalie to pursuing his mastery of the guitar. “Being the varsity goalie at Taft didn't mean much in college when the guys from Canada showed up and I gracefully took my place on the bench.”

With college completed, George joined with band mates and formed Redwood Landing, a folk/jazz/rock fusion group and set out to conquer the Chicago music scene. Voted *#1 Unsigned Band in Chicago*, they made their run at fame, toured the college circuit and evolved their membership and sound, but when the coveted recording contract didn't materialize, life moved on and George moved with his young bride to Connecticut. The digital



memories live on, however, and if one wanders onto YouTube and looks for Redwood Landing, their final reunion concert at SPACE in 2011 will appear with George featured on vocals.

## Footsteps on the ceiling

The “music” for Elissa? “I can be down in the wine cellar, pulling a bottle for a dining table and I can hear the shuffle of feet on the wide board floors, the momentary clatter of dishes being set in a bussing tray and the murmur of conversations and the laughter of folks celebrating and I think – ‘what wonderful music!’”

Music at The Fife 'n Drum has always been a major attraction. Until his death in 2016, her father was a fixture at the Steinway piano

Above, top to bottom: Fife 'n Drum as seen from the inside, followed by the exterior of the restaurant. Below, left: Elissa Potts in the restaurant. Photos courtesy of the Potts.



Continued on next page ...



near the bar, playing from memory hundreds of songs. When George came into the family, he expanded his musical expertise by mastering the upright bass and joined the Fife 'n Drum Trio.

"I wasn't really looking to learn a different kind of music," allows George, "but after playing with Dolph for years, if someone says 'All the Things You Are in B flat,' I'd be right there."

These days George continues to revel in his music, being an active part of The Joint Chiefs, a group that started with three people jamming in 1995 and now as a foursome, continues to attract a fiercely loyal following to fund-raising concerts, special events, and the occasional appearance at Infinity Hall in Norfolk, CT. The Fife's website offers up the music schedule a month in advance – and also allows the inquisitive to view a performance of The Joint Chiefs at Infinity Hall. After all, it's a family affair.

### Keeping the rhythm ... and avoiding the blues

There is an undeniable elegance required to run a successful restaurant. That elegance has a rhythm and tone that can surely be identified as musical. Elissa has maintained that nightly concerto as "The Fife ..." celebrates over 45 years in business and welcomes regulars and newcomers every week.

"We were on vacation in the islands," recalls Elissa when she identified the "true north" that keeps the restaurant consistent in quality, imagination, and customer loyalty. "We went into a well-known restaurant and when greeted, one of our party assured the owner that we were all looking forward to dinner. 'We've heard this place is terrific ...' was the greeting. The owner shook his head and said 'That doesn't mean anything. We're only as good as the last meal we served you. If we don't please you tonight, you won't ever come back.'"

Every new employee that joins the team at The Fife 'n Drum hears that line and subscribes to it. Elissa and George's two daughters, Kate and Sarah, learned the "mantra" early and spent summer vacations from school working in the restaurant. George recalls, "we also used to dock them 25 cents each if they didn't go up to a customer, shake their hand, and say hello after we had asked them to ... a lesson they both learned very well."

The unswerving focus on courtesy and service may well be one of the reasons the staff on the floor has had so few turnovers. Some of the staff have been at the restaurant for 20 years or more – an outstanding record of loyalty on both sides of the employer/employee relationship in the hospitality industry.

And, as the restaurateur in St. Bart's suggested, satisfied customers come back.

There are standing reservations for Friday nights as weekenders flee New York City and head into the Litchfield Hills and the Berkshires. There are weddings for the children of couples who had their wedding receptions at the restaurant years

before. There are always specials and imaginative seasonal offerings on the evening menu, but there are also the reliable dishes that folks begin talking about on Tuesday in anticipation of a Friday evening dinner reservation. "We still create a Caesar Salad at table-side," reflects Elissa. "That and the duck, which we also carve tableside are the two dishes that continue to be the most popular after all these years."

### The song has ended ... but the melody lingers on

There is a coda to this story, a kind of *Twilight Zone* moment that affirms that "the melody lingers on..."

With the passing of Dolph Traymon, there was a question of whether Elissa would continue to offer music at the restaurant. George was in charge of bringing in performers to fill the "Fridays at the Fife" schedule, but most nights the classic Steinway stood silent.

Out of the blue one afternoon, a stranger walked into the Fife and found Elissa who was behind the bar. "I heard you might be looking for a piano player..." he said, modestly. Roger Young is a gentle soul, and though he'd never been to the Fife before, and never heard Dolph playing there, the word of the vacancy had found its way to him.

It didn't take long for Elissa, with George's encouragement, to offer Roger a trial night or two. When he sat down to play, it was almost mystical how his style, his musical selection, and his impact on the dinners reflected that of Dolph. "I was blown away," offers Elissa. "It

was uncanny ... almost eerie. Some of the same quirky songs, the linking of songs to diners who would appear and be greeted by their favorite tunes – it was as if he was channeling my Dad."

But, there was more – a moment that was so profound that it left George and Elissa Potts standing, speechless.

Ready to offer his second set of the evening, Young turned to the two and said the same words her father had offered every time he sat down to play. "I guess it's time to make some noise."

Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Monday nights, the music lives on at The Fife 'n Drum. ●

*The Fife 'n Drum is open every day but Tuesday for lunch, dinner and, on Sunday brunch at 53 Main Street in Kent, KT. Reservations suggested at [www.fifendrum.com](http://www.fifendrum.com) or (860) 927-3509. Ask for Elissa. She'll be there. For more information about George and The Joint Chiefs, visit their website at [www.jointchiefsmusic.com](http://www.jointchiefsmusic.com).*



Above: The Joint Chiefs. Above, top right: George Potts in 1976 and George today (photo by Katherine Griswold). Photos courtesy of the Potts'.



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# Historic Houses of Worship

By John Torsiello  
info@mainstreetmag.com

December is a month of religious holidays, as residents fill churches and synagogues to reflect upon and celebrate their faith.

The Millerton area is blessed with a number of historic places of worship that have stood the test of time and the whims of an ever-changing society. Indeed, a number of these places are considered so significant and important to our past, present, and future that they are listed on the National Register of Historic Places

## Beth David Synagogue in Amenia, NY

According to the Register, the Beth David Synagogue in Amenia, NY, formally known as Congregation Beth David, was erected in the late 1920s. It was built by the area's small community of Russian Jewish emigrants. It has transitioned from its original Orthodox affiliation to Conservative and eventually to Reform practices. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2002 and is reportedly the only synagogue in New York east of the Hudson River and north of New York City to be listed.

The website says that many of the Russian Jewish families settled in Amenia. Some had come from Sharon, CT, where they farmed and rented rooms to visitors from the city in summertime. By the 1920s, several families went into the resort business full-time, opening hotels around Lake Amenia. Members first worshiped in their homes, raising money over several years to build their own syna-

agogue. The cornerstone of the present building was laid in April of 1929.

The synagogue, opened later that year, was originally a flat-roofed structure with low parapets similar to those in Eastern Europe. Its interior plan, with centrally located *bimah* (the raised platform in the synagogue from which the *Torah* is read and services led) and upstairs gallery for women, reflects that region's Orthodox traditions, in keeping with origins of the founding families. The exterior brickwork shows some Georgian influence.

After World War II, in the 1950s, changes in vacationing habits led to some summer resorts closing down. By 1970 the synagogue was down to 12 members. To sustain itself in the following decades, it first became Conservative then Reform, says the website. In 2004, the congregation celebrated the synagogue's 75th anniversary, and Beth David is said to be again a vibrant Reform Congregation, drawing membership from both permanent residents and weekenders in Dutchess County and Litchfield County in Connecticut.

## The Nine Partners Meeting House in Millbrook, NY

The Nine Partners Meeting House in Millbrook, NY, was built by a group of Friends (Quakers) from Cape Cod and Nantucket and Rhode Island in 1780. The Register called it the largest meeting in the Hudson Valley and many other meetings split off from it. Unusually, it was located near a developed area, and the Friends in it were more prosperous than their co-religionists elsewhere in the region.

Its size and use of brick, along with several other architectural features, are unusual for meeting houses. It was said that Quakers from other meetings who visited found the Nine Partners' Friends and their meeting-house "somewhat worldly."

Attendance at meetings dwindled over the course of the 19th century, and in 1897 control of the property was turned over to the Nine Partners Burial Ground Association. It is still used for occasional Quaker events,



Above: Nine Partners Friends Meeting House. Below, left: Beth David Synagogue. Photos: Daniel Case.

and is well preserved from the days of its regular use. In 1989 it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of a Multiple Property Submission of Quaker House in Dutchess County.

The meeting house is a two-and-a-half-story four-bay structure with brick and masonry walls on a stone foundation topped with a gabled roof pierced by brick chimneys at either end. The interior is one large room, divided into two chambers width-wise with counterbalanced, sliding wooden partitions through the middle of both floors. The doubled style design allowed for the separation of sexes during worship services, as was the custom of the day. A feature unique to Nine Partners among meeting houses in the area is the vestibule created later by building a lengthwise interior wall along the south side.

The second floor consists of a balcony forming a gallery looking into the central area of each first floor chamber, divided in the same manner as the first floor. There is a provision to place wood planks over the gallery opening to the first floor, separating the second floor from the first floor completely.

"With few exceptions, such as the placement of one lengthwise interior wall creating the above-mentioned vestibule, gutters added in the 1970s, composite shingles on the roof intro-

duced the following decade, and basic repairs and maintenance, the structure remains unaltered from its original state," the website explains. There has been no retrofitting of electrical, plumbing, or central heating.

Notably, says the Register, through the Civil War, the Nine Partners Meeting and School was known to coordinate the Underground Railroad activities in Dutchess and Columbia counties.

The Nine Partners Monthly Meeting continues as a part of the New York Yearly Meeting. The meeting house is used during the summer months, while during the winter, the meeting is held at the Lyall Memorial Federated Church in Millbrook.

## The Oblong Friends Meeting House in Pawling, NY

The Oblong Friends Meeting House in Pawling was built in the mid-18th century and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

Members of the Religious Society of Friends settled on Quaker Hill in the 1730s and sought permission to establish a meeting and build a meeting house in 1740. According to the Register, the first meeting house was constructed across from the present



Continued on next page ...



building in 1742, but as membership grew, this building became too small and in 1763, the Yearly Meeting decided to erect a new house in 1764 and is the structure that has remained on the site since.

During the Revolutionary War a portion of the Continental Army camped in the nearby hills, both during the fall of 1778 and the winter of 1779. The meeting house was commandeered by General George Washington's officers to be used as a military hospital.

Membership in the area's Society of Friends declined in the course of the 19th century and the meetings were "laid down" in 1885. The property was acquired by the Historical Society of Quaker Hill and Pawling in 1936 which has preserved the building since.

The building is a two-story building, five bays wide and two bays deep. Inside the shingled structure, there are sliding panels which divide the men and women's portions of the building. As with most meeting houses, there are two front doors, one for each gender.

### St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in Amenia, NY

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in Amenia is a mid-19th century brick church designed by Richard Upjohn in the Gothic Revival architectural style. It is considered "one of the finest American imitations of an English country parish church."

Inside, it has a historic organ and Tiffany stained glass windows. In 2005 it was added to the National Register of Historic Places.



Upjohn was a British-born American architect who emigrated to the United States. He was partially responsible for launching the Gothic Revival movement in the United States. Upjohn also did extensive work in and helped to popularize the Italianate style. He was a founder and the first president of the American Institute of Architects.

"Both inside and out," William Pierson, Jr. said in *American Buildings and Their Architects*, "St. Thomas is a coherent and austere beautiful building, as expressive of its immediate circumstances as it is reflective of the ancient Gothic tradition from which it is born."

The congregation was established in 1848 by local residents following missionary work in the area by the Rev. Homer Wheaton of the hamlet of Lithgow in the nearby town of Washington.

The Register says the church is a one-story building on a stone foundation faced in white-painted brick marble trim. It is topped by a steeply pitched gabled roof shingled in asphalt. A flat, slightly projecting tower capped with a gabled bellcote (a small framework and shelter for one or more bells) is on the northwest (front) facade above a hooded lancet-arched double wooden door and narrow lancet opening.

Inside, the nave has its pews arranged around a central aisle, with wooden floors and plaster walls. Pointed arch brackets support the purlins (longitudinal elements in a roof frame used for supporting rafters or the like between the plate and the ridge) of the high ceiling; the windows have deep splayed plain surrounds. A three-part stained glass window at the rear of the chancel (the space around the altar) depicts an elderly St. John being carried into church. A geometric-colored glass window behind the organ is the only original one.

The church's design reflects the principles of the high church movement in American Episcopalianism, of which Upjohn was a part. "The English



Oxford Movement strongly favored Gothic-styled churches like those found in English country parishes. They believed the form was ideal and conducive to the liturgical practices they advocated."

Most important was that the chancel face east, toward the rising sun. This was easy to do on the site, but awkwardly sited the church parallel to the road. Upjohn mitigated the effect by putting the porch entrance along that wall. "It had the added benefit of being asymmetrical, another feature promoted by the high-church advocates, in contrast to the classically inspired church architecture of the early 19th century."

Inside, the deep chancel is the most prominent high church feature, its floor raised to emphasize the altar and what goes on around it. The three lancet windows symbolize the Trinity. Says the Register, "Minimal ornamentation reflects a belief that ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction of the building, a position held just as firmly by Upjohn."

Later additions to the church include the stained glass, two of which are believed to have been Tiffany windows. In 1869 a bell, cast in Troy, NY, was installed, and the tripartite chancel window was imported from England in 1875 and installed in memory of a then recently deceased rector. In 1886, the six-rank Odell organ was purchased from Jardine and Son in New York.

There have been no significant changes to the church interior since then, other than the replacement of most of the other stained glass in the 1950s. The church exterior was painted over in white in the hope of preventing flaking. In the early 2000s, the organ was restored and then des-



Above, top to bottom: Oblong Friends Meeting House. Photo: Rolf Muller. Smithfield Presbyterian Church. Below, left: St. Thomas' Episcopal Church. Photos: Daniel Case.

igned a historic instrument by the Organ Historical Society.

### Smithfield Presbyterian Church near Amenia, NY

Smithfield Presbyterian Church is a historic Presbyterian church near Amenia, NY. It was built 1848, and is a one-story, Greek Revival style heavy timber frame church sheathed in clapboard. It has a stone foundation and gable roof and features a tetra-style portico supported by four Ionic order columns. The church was refurbished in 1938. Also on the property is a contributing horse shed, and Sexton's House (1857).

George Whitefield (an English Anglican cleric and evangelist who was one of the founders of Methodism and the evangelical movement) is said to have given an open air revival sermon at the church in June 1770.

The church was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2012.

These, and other area houses of prayer and reflection, serve as important religious and social links to the past, imbuing those who enter their doors with an enhanced belief in a sustained purpose and place. •





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photos: JD Urban

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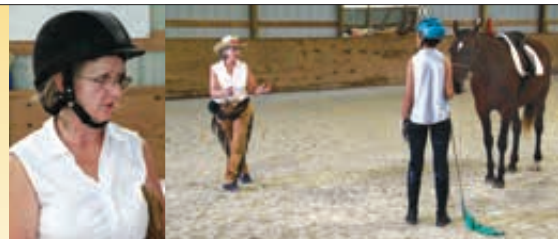
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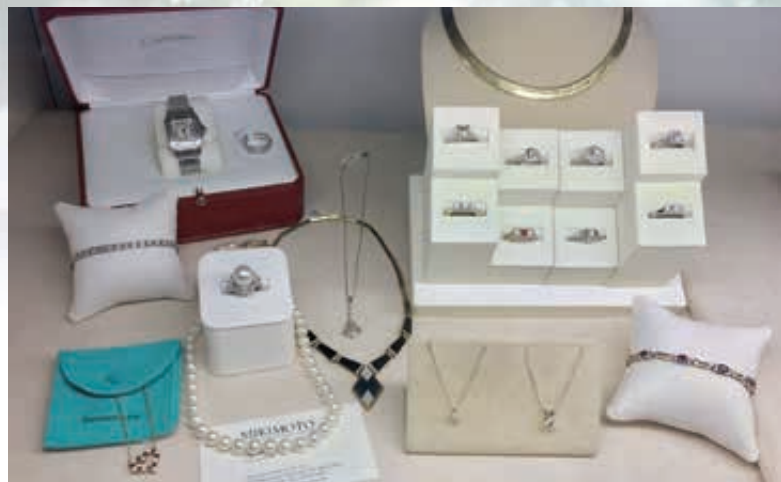
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# Olana: Past perfect

FREDERIC CHURCH'S HOME AND SPRAWLING LANDSCAPE WAS INSPIRED BY THE ARTIST'S EXOTIC GLOBAL TRAVELS



**O**n a hill, high above the Hudson River is Olana – a historic home and 250-acre landscape that boasts majestic views of the Hudson River Valley, Catskill Mountains, and Taconic Range. Built in 1872, the site was once home to landscape painter Frederic Church – a central figure in the Hudson River School of American landscape painters. Its aesthetic was influenced by his travels to the Middle East.

Although Church originally hailed from Hartford, CT, he came to the Hudson Valley area to study under painter Thomas Cole – founder of the Hudson River School. In 1845, he became acquainted with the sprawling property that is now Olana while sketching there.

Recognized as one of America's most prominent painters, Church is renowned for capturing the golden glow of the sunsets and the dramatic mountain scenes that the Hudson Valley area is renowned for.

Church achieved professional success while in his early 30s and used his creativity to exhibit his highly detailed works in a rather theatrical manner. He once

charged guests twenty-five cents for admission to view his “great picture,” *The Heart of the Andes*. His artwork endured and remained relevant to American collectors at a time when they were increasingly gravitating toward European art.

## History and design

In 1860, a few months before marrying Isabel Carnes, Church purchased a 126-acre farm. A country cottage known as “Cosy Cottage” was the first addition to the property, which Church and his new bride referred to as “The Farm.” Although Church worked with architect Richard Morris Hunt on the home's design, he worked solely on the planning of the picturesque gardens and orchards. He also planted trees, dredged a lake, which provided a water source for plumbing, and built an art studio.

After the loss of the Church's first two children – a son and daughter – the couple retreated to Jamaica for several months and then to Vermont. In 1867 they acquired more land and planned to build another home, which became the main house. After an 18-month trip to Europe and the Middle East, Church hired architect and landscape designer Calvert Vaux to work on the design of the main house. Construction began in 1870.

The duo envisioned a stately home that would incorporate Middle Eastern elements and designs. Vaux, who also designed the buildings in Central Park, had close personal ties to the Church family. It's believed that he was responsible for the structural elements while Church designed ornamental elements of the home.

Olana's architecture reflects a fusion of Victorian elements and Middle Eastern decorative motifs. The stately villa boasts an asymmetrical massing of towers and block masonry. It is punctuated by fanciful windows and porches.

The exterior and interior are intricately stenciled with designs that Church created, which were based on his adoration of patterns illustrated in

*Les Artes Arabes* by Jules Bourgoïn – a book in his collection. The motifs on the exterior were also created out of colored brick, wood, slate, and ceramic tile.

Isabel Church is credited for the name of the property. Initially written as “Olâna,” it first appeared on a letter she wrote to the wife of another Hudson School painter. It was explained as “the old Latin name for a place in Persia.”

## The interior

The rooms of the main home are arranged around a central hall. The downstairs level boasts a foyer, east parlor, court hall, sitting room, corridor, library, pantry, dining room, and studio wing. Church designed the studio wing, which was completed in 1890. One of the largest rooms in the house, it is significant for its size, function, and symbolic value. Church's bedroom is upstairs along with a dressing room and landing. The Ombra Room and Evelyn and Maurice Sharp Gallery are also located upstairs.

Thousands of objects and painted décor evoke the great civilizations of the past, and present a rich contrast to the natural world, which is visible through the windows. Eclectic furnishings hail from Church's extended trip abroad while others were purchased in New York City or obtained through a missionary in Persia.

Continued on next page ...

By Regina Molaro  
info@mainstreetmag.com



Above, top to bottom: Southern view panorama from Olana. Photo by Beth Schneck Photography, 2013, bschneckphoto.com. Frederic Edwin Church, *Clouds over Olana*, August 1872, oil on off-white paper, 8 11/16 x 12 1/8 in., OL. 1976.1. Collection Olana State Historic Site. New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.



The interior remains much as it was during Church's lifetime, exotically furnished and embellished with objects from his global travels. The house has approximately 40 paintings by Church and his friends.

Interesting furnishings include a carved teak fireplace by Lockwood de Forest; Chinese-style scrolled back chairs that were originally upholstered in blue silk velvet (c. 1890); and Cashmere India Chairs, designed by Lockwood de Forest and made of painted teak and upholstery (1881-84).

### The Charter Oak

Another item of interest is the Charter Oak Chair, which is believed to be constructed from tree branches and roots that hail from a famous Charter Oak tree in Hartford, CT. The story of the oak dates back to 1687. Sir Edmund Andros – the English-appointed governor of New England journeyed to Hartford to take possession of the charter for the colony of Connecticut, which detailed the rights and privileges of the colony.

According to legend, during negotiations, the lights went out and when they were restored, the charter was missing. Hidden in the hollow of an oak tree, this document became a symbol of determination for independence.

In 1846 Church chose the iconic

tree as the subject of his painting, *The Charter Oak, Hartford*, which remains at Olana. In 1856, the tree blew down and Church visited Hartford and secured portions of the wood. Part of the tree was gifted to the American Museum of Natural History, but two other sections of it remain at Olana. Furniture and smaller commemorative items were crafted from pieces of this oak. They include a chair and a letter opener, both still at Olana.

### Notable guests

Notable guests of Olana include Mark

Twain and railroad tycoon William H. Osborn among others. Former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy and former Governor Nelson Rockefeller both had a hand in preservation efforts of Olana, which was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1965.

### Old meets new

The Olana Partnership has been working with contemporary artists for years, but collaborated with the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in 2015 with the inaugural contemporary art exhibition, "River Crossings: Contemporary Art Comes Home." Since then, Olana's team has invited contemporary artists to react to and be in conversation with Frederic Church and Olana.

Olana's sprawling landscape is open daily, year-round from 8am to sunset. There is no admission fee to access the landscape, which is used for leisurely walks, dog-walking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and beyond. Visit [olana.org](http://olana.org) for the tour schedule.

Construction is currently underway for the Hudson River Skywalk, which is scheduled to be completed by Spring 2019. The Hudson River Skywalk will provide a continuous walking path from the Thomas Cole National Historic Site over the Hudson River via the Rip Van Winkle Bridge to the Olana State Historic Site. ●

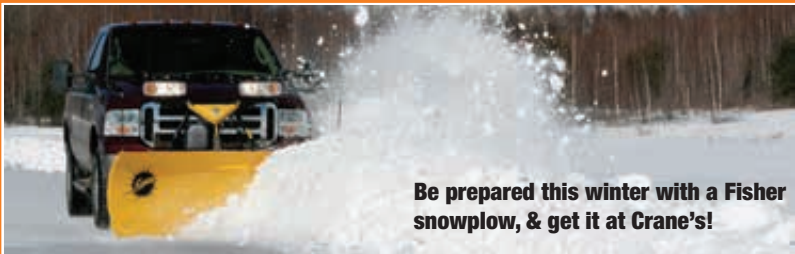


Above, top to bottom: View of the South Façade of the Main House at Olana. Photo by Stan Ries. Frederic Edwin Church, *Sunset from Olana*, July 2, 1870, oil on off-white academy board, 11 1/16 x 16 1/8 in. OL.1976.8. Collection Olana State Historic Site. New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.



Above: Court Hall of the Main House at Olana. Photo by Andy Wainwright, 2004.





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What started as three individuals in the lawyer industry was later turned into the firm we know today based in Millerton, NY; Downey, Haab & Murphy PLLC. Founded by Edward Downey, Michelle Haab (whom is now retired), and Gary Murphy in 1996, it is still practicing law with three attorneys and three assistants. It is a general practice law firm, but spends the majority of its time on real estate, estate planning, estate settlement, and real estate titles, in addition to other legal matters such as guardianships, small litigation, business formation including corporations and LLCs, and a small amount of criminal and domestic relations. All of these services are practiced in New York, primarily in Dutchess and Columbia counties. "We have a lot of experience among all of us here. Every one of us is also from the area and we know the community well, which is special to our firm when we help our clients," says Gary. At Downey, Haab & Murphy, they do their very best to work around their clients' busy schedules and offer their legal advice after work hours, on weekends, and via email if needed. Downey, Haab & Murphy's attorneys receive up-to-date training and information concerning changes to NYS law through attendance and participation in continuing legal education and are able to meet your ever-changing legal needs. Your legal matters are in good hands with the entire team.



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Three partners formed Burkart Williams Contracting, LLC. in July of 2016: John, Erik, and Tom. Each partner has well over a decade of experience in the construction industry, being both second and third generation construction professionals. Each partner also brings a unique skill set enabling this dream to become reality. Fully insured, they provide commercial and residential framing, drywall, finishing services, and can provide estimates from either detailed digital construction documents or in-person field verified dimensions. Primary operations include: metal framing, building insulation, drywall, finish taping, acoustical ceilings, door and hardware installation. Their service area is primarily within an hour's drive of the greater Capitol Region, including the greater Hudson and Claverack area. Their market analysis allows them to provide the most economical cost to their clients while maintaining a high standard of quality. "It's not to say that hard work will automatically equal success; instead we believe hard work combined with skill and opportunity will give us the best shot at meeting our goals." Going forward they plan to see many happy clients, strengthen relationships while starting new ones, which will allow them to continue to meet their high expectations.



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Construction can be a challenge, and it takes someone reliable and talented to bring a plan to life. Carrying full insurance, True Country Construction started swinging the hammer in February 2014. With four years of experience under their tool belts, proprietor Josh Clapper and his crew continue to provide all phases of interior and exterior construction as well as sales of Modular Homes (from affordable to custom design, in addition to providing installation and completion of the project, making it turn key/move in ready). No job is too big or too small. True Country Construction is based in Dutchess County, NY, but it offer its services within a 150-mile radius. True Country prides itself on the relationships that it build with its customers, "We strive to keep our customers long-term. We treat our customers with the utmost respect and it is humbling to have them return again and again for different services. And we can't thank them enough for the word-of-mouth referrals that allow us to continue to grow," says Josh. In the years to come True Country Construction is looking forward to maintaining the relationships they've already created, and to foster new ones. When you begin to think about- and plan your next construction project, feel free to reach out to True Country Construction for a free estimate.



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## INSURING YOUR WORLD

Winter is upon us so it's time to review your coverage under your homeowner's policy to ensure that you have the right coverage. Does your policy afford "All Risk" coverage on the insured dwelling? You can check this by looking at your policy, there should be a HO-3 designation in the forms and conditions portion of the policy. If there are outbuildings on your property, make sure they are covered for collapse should there be a heavy snowfall, and also check the value that the building is insured for so that you may replace it with the same size structure. Now that we've checked your policy, what about taking precautions to avoid having a claim? Has your chimney been cleaned and furnaces been serviced? Have gutters been cleaned and heat tapes installed and plugged in on roofs that have limited sunlight during the winter months? Make sure all generators are serviced and ready to go and low temperature sensors connected to a hard-wired telephone line, and lastly, if you are a second homeowner, be sure to shut off the power circuit to your well pump to avoid further damage should a pipe break due to a freeze-up and run a continuous stream of water in your home causing extensive water damage. These simple precautions can save tremendous headaches during the cold winter months!



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## Attracting winter birds

The exact birds you have visit your yard in winter will depend on how well you meet winter birds' needs for food, water, and shelter. Here are a few tips to help entice more winter visitors to your backyard:

- **Food:** Offer sunflower seeds, suet, and Nyjer (thistle) seed in several feeders, and keep ground-feeding areas clear for sparrows and juncos to enjoy. Platform feeders should be covered to keep off the snow, and large feeders can more easily accommodate hungry winter flocks.

- **Water:** Birds need water just as much on cold days as they do on hot ones, and it takes a lot of energy for them to melt snow or ice to drink. Add a heater to your bird bath or invest in a heated bird bath to offer liquid water on the chilliest days, and be sure the bath is clean and full.

- **Shelter:** Birds seek out shelter during the harshest winter storms, and if your backyard provides safe shelter, they will take advantage of it. Evergreen and conifer trees are ideal, or you can build a brush pile in a sheltered location for birds to use. Roosting boxes are another option to keep birds safe and snug.

There are many great birds to look forward to in winter, and if you take steps to offer them the food, water, and shelter they need, you'll be surprised at how many different winter birds visit your backyard. After following these simple steps you might be surprised to find Dark-Eyed Junco, White-Throated Sparrow, Purple Finch, Red Crossbill, Common Redpoll, Pine Siskin, Evening Grosbeak, American Tree Sparrow, White-Crowned Sparrow, or Cedar Waxwing's at your feeder. Happy bird watching!

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## HOW TO INTERVIEW YOUR JEWELER

Often customers come in the jewelry store with sentimental or expensive pieces of jewelry that need repair. It could be their great grandmother's platinum diamond ring or a plastic beaded necklace given by a loved one. Every time a jeweler takes in a piece of jewelry for a repair, there is some degree of risk. For example, the store could get robbed or a diamond ring could crack if there is an existing internal flaw. Sometimes we suggest the repair is not done, because our customer does not want to take any risk. If you decide to move forward with a repair, you should ask if the jeweler carries an insurance policy. If the jewelry store does not have an insurance policy that covers repair work, you may want to consider going to a different store. Before you leave the store, you should receive a receipt with a detailed description of the piece of jewelry you are leaving for repair. The description should include a count and size of diamonds, type of metal, weight of metal, number and size of pearls or beads, and an insured value if you have an appraisal. There are additional questions you may want to ask: How long have you worked with your repair people? Do you often do repairs like the one I am asking you to do? How long will it take to complete the repair? If something happens to your piece of jewelry, a jeweler should work hard to replace it with a similarly valued piece. I believe every jeweler has the best intentions to make your experience a positive one, but if something happens, you want to make sure you are protected.



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## Winter driving

**Winter driving season is upon us. Here are a few things to consider and to be prepared for during the holiday travel season.**

**Tires:** the number one most important thing, you can have the latest, greatest and most powerful SUV on the road. Without good tire tread, you could be another car in the ditch waiting for a tow truck. Especially on our local hilly, winding roads.

**Vision:** Its hard enough to see in a snowstorm, keeping your windows and headlights clean will maximize your safety. Fresh wiper blades are also a must.

**Fuel:** Keep your fuel tank as full as possible for two reasons, first in case you get stuck somewhere and second, its better for your car. The fuel today has ethanol in it and that makes it more prone to moisture. A full tank will minimize the risk of water contamination in your fuel tank.

**Tools:** A roadside safety kit is highly recommended. L.L. Bean offers a nice AAA deluxe roadside safety kit [A nice gift for your loved ones]. Don't forget a small compact shovel just in case. One time coming back from a trip I found my car plowed in at an airport parking lot. I had fun digging it out with a CD case! Live and learn. Take care and drive safe.



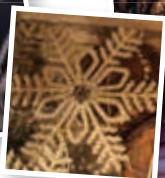
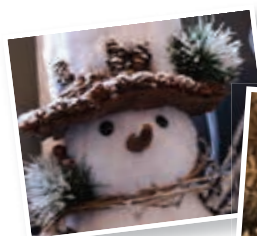
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