

## The Editor's Corner



photo by John Macek

### THAT "WONDROUS" KINDNESS

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“A fellow-feeling makes one wondrous kind,” wrote David Garrick, an 18th-century English actor. The origin of the word *fellow* dates back centuries before to the Old Norse word *felag*, meaning a joining of property, hence a partner. The word’s definition broadened to mean comrade and then fellow. Fellowship is now defined as companionship; its closest cousins are camaraderie and fraternity.

In Garrick’s day, fellowship was needed on a more basic level. In 1788, 18-year-old Selah Tuthill built a gristmill on the Shawangunk Kill in the ridge’s eastern watershed. Tuthill’s neighbors gathered to help him, hands ready to haul, to pound, and to sweat. With the last board in place, he hung a twig from the top of the door, a sign that the gristmill was open. Today, the Tuthilltown Grist Mill in Gardiner, NY, still grinds flour the traditional way, a testimony to Tuthill and the fellowship of his neighbors.

In the essay *Phases of Farm Life*, Hudson Valley naturalist John Burroughs wrote about how his grandparents settled in the Catskills in 1795: “When my grandfather and grandmother came into the country where they reared their family and passed

their days, they cut a road through the woods and brought all their worldly gear on a sled drawn by a yoke of oxen. Their neighbors helped them build a house of logs, with a roof of black-ash bark and a floor of hewn white-ash plank. A great stone chimney and fireplace — the mortar of red clay — gave light and warmth . . .”

When a new building was needed, people returned the help that they had received. The stories above were repeated throughout the Shawangunks, as mills, farms, and small hamlets grew during the 19th- and early 20th-centuries. In the northern part of the ridge, witness the hamlet that sprang up just west of the Trapps, including the Van Leuven cabin, and the mills that dotted the Coxing Kill in the Clove. People joined to create homes, and homes became communities; communities, in turn, nurtured the families who created them.

Here, at the Preserve, we are joined in caring for the land, its creatures, and each other. This feeling of community or group spirit is at the heart of everything we do. We extend fellowship when we help visitors find their way, teach children about the joys of nature, or stop to help a turtle cross a road. Like Tuthill’s or Burroughs’ neighbors, we give gladly with ready hands. We share a common goal and are grateful for our part in it. That’s when, as Garrick knew, it comes, the “wondrous” kindness that emerges when we give of ourselves to others.