

stewardship notes

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Family's legacy preserved by KLT

The Kansas Land Trust lost a good friend on August 12 with the death of Donna Marie Stauffer Lantry of Lawrence.

Donna was one of six children of Kenneth and Mary Stauffer who inherited their parents' 500-acre farm in Saline County. The siblings agreed to sell the land to one of the heirs, except for a 20-acre hilltop meadow, known as Heritage Hill, that would be owned jointly and preserved for family gatherings. When Donna and her husband Bob Lantry learned about the Kansas Land Trust, they realized that a conservation easement would be the perfect way to ensure the preservation of the land long after they were all gone.

The Stauffer family donated an easement on the property in 2002. Today, just five years later, half of the heirs have passed away.

"Donna was very, very pleased that they had done the easement," said her husband, Bob. "She was a great supporter of KLT and very proud of preserving the land."

Developers frequently asked Kenneth and Mary Stauffer to sell their land when expensive houses started appearing in the countryside around it. "Mr. Stauffer always turned them down because there were a lot of quail, pheasants and deer up there," Bob recalled. "He called the wildlife his buddies, and he didn't want his buddies pushed

out. Without knowing it, he was a conservationist."

Donna wrote an extensive description of the land that was included with the easement documents. Here is her account of how the land came down through the generations, and how much it meant to her and her siblings:

"This Protected Property is unique to this area of the state and represents the western edge of the Tall Grass Prairie. This protected property contains over 90 types of flora native to this region. The Protected Property is also unique in this area due to its elevated areas, which provide overlooks of scenic value. Three river valleys, the Solomon, Smoky Hill and Saline, provide background views of expanded beauty and peace. Many wild animals and birds utilize this area due to its protective nature of dense tree growth, bottom wetland, and numerous habitats.

"There is evidence of early settler occupation in the past centuries in the hillside where family and community historical lore show that dugouts were utilized as homes. The original Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, the Rock Island Railroad



Photo by Bob Lantry

Donna Lantry and Mike Stauffer at the conservation easement dedication in 2002.

and the Kansas Pacific Railroad were built approximately one mile to the south, and over the years many railroad spikes and tie-plates have been recovered in the fields. The Union Pacific, which was preceded by the Kansas Pacific, remains today. Historic locations such as Iron Mound are located nearby.

"The historical interest is critical to the conservation value of The Protected Property. The Protected Property was originally owned by the Kansas Pacific Railroad and was

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mission statement

“The Kansas Land Trust is a nonprofit organization that protects and preserves land of ecological, scenic, historic, agricultural, or recreational significance in Kansas.” As a land trust, the organization uses a variety of long-term land protection mechanisms but primarily accepts conservation easements from willing landowners. Conservation easements are legal agreements by which landowners voluntarily restrict the type and amount of use permitted on their property. The Kansas Land Trust (KLT) is tax-exempt as described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations of easements or land to KLT for conservation purposes may have potential tax benefits for donors. KLT is funded by individual contributors, private foundations, corporations, and government agencies.

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outlook



RoxAnne Miller, Executive Director

The work of the Kansas Land Trust is a unique combination of real estate law and ecological assessment. Not only does KLT perform the legal work that makes conservation easements legally binding in perpetuity, it also works with landowners to ensure that the conservation values of their land are maintained forever.

When a landowner contacts the Kansas Land Trust about donating or selling a conservation easement, one of KLT's first tasks is to assess the ecological value of the land. KLT, like most land trusts, is interested in preserving pristine and productive spaces, such as native prairies, grazing lands and crop land. Once those lands are preserved through conservation easements, KLT must monitor them to make sure that they remain ecologically healthy through appropriate management.

That's a big order for a small organization. But KLT manages to do it all through a combination of staff, board expertise, other advisors and continuing education.

When I started with the Kansas Land Trust, my background was in real estate and land use law. But over the years I have gained a tremendous amount of knowledge about the ecology of Kansas landscapes, farming and ranching.

Helping with the scientific end of the business is conservation associate Steve Roels, who has a degree in biology, and board member/ecologist Dr. Kelly Kindscher of the Kansas Biological Survey. On the farming and ranching aspects of land conservation, the board of directors includes several people with expertise, and KLT has numerous experts it can turn to for advice and information. Landowners of easement properties can provide a wealth of insight into farming and ranching practices. And KLT belongs to a loose-knit coalition of farming, ranching, and environmental groups that can be tapped for their expertise.

In August, Steve Roels and I attended a workshop on the principles of rangeland management, grass and animal ecology. We received information about the benefits of multi-species grazing, including control of *Sericea lespedeza* and brush on prairies. We are amazed at the success some Kansas landowners have had using goats and sheep as well as cattle on their land.

The workshop was just one of many that are available every year in Kansas to help landowners with management issues. One of KLT's goals for the next year is to expand its ability to provide easement donors with the resources they need to enhance the management of their preserved land.▲



Photo by Bill Wood

Douglas County attendees at the Rangeland Management School in Elk County.

left to right: John Bradley, RoxAnne Miller, Steve Grandstaff, Beverly Bradley, Jeff Johnson, Mike Flory, and Bill Wood.

senses of place



Late summer, midday, Osage County

by Elizabeth Schultz

Returning to Kansas after nearly five months in Beijing, I am challenged to experience my familiar terrain in different ways. I find myself struggling to find ways to share this land with my Chinese students and friends. Although many of them nostalgically recall the countryside from childhood, most of them have spent their lives in the city and are fearful of snakes and frogs. With municipal pesticide spraying programs in place, they see few birds, fewer bugs. With pollution prevalent, blue skies and stars are rarities. With high rises proliferating and construction going on apace, the only visible earth is in immense twelve-wheeled trucks toting it away.

Thinking of these friends, I decided to ramble close to home. Thinking of others as they might have experienced this landscape for the first time, I decided to ride a bit of the Santa Fe Trail through Osage County into Burlingame and beyond. Beneath a pale blue sky with mountainous clouds, the landscape unfolds here, a field, a thicket, a tree at a time. Although William Blake may well have been able to perceive "a world in a grain of sand," each grain of sand is different, and the world we thus perceive in that particular grain is different, too. I would tell my Chinese friends that characteristic of the world of Osage County, like that of its neighbors, Franklin, Douglas, and Shawnee (a new Kansas Department of Transportation map identifies this area as belonging to the Osage Cuestas), is an undulating land of diverse patterns—deep green fields of soybeans bordering yellow fields of corn, standing tall and ready for harvest, fields of turned dark earth bordering grasslands with

immense rolls of hay scattered about them like strange spacecraft. The fields are stitched together with windbreaks of cedar or hedge trees, with remnants of woods, densely woven of diverse deciduous trees, with the occasional stone fence. Note the embroidery, here and there, bright threads of roadside blooms—purple thistle, wild parsley, golden sunflower; small shining mirrors which are ponds; knots of cattle clustered under an iconic tree, standing alone on a sweep of pasture. Characteristic of this world is the heat and the wind—94 degrees and ferocious from the South. Heat and wind surge together, pressing down the earth, rumpling leaves of trees and soybeans, running relentlessly through grass.

Bolted in a taxi along one of Beijing's ten-lane ring roads or in my car along Route 56, I am dominated by my sense of sight. Only when I stop to walk down an unpaved side road off Route 56, can I feel the heat and wind of this day and this place, pressing and rumpling. Then only when I stop walking to listen beyond the sound of my own feet kicking gravel can I hear the land's response to the heat and the wind—a collective sighing and sighing it seems, comprised of grasses thrumming, distant leaves rustling, insects—grasshoppers, crickets, cicadas—clicking and snapping. Standing still on this specific grain of sand, seeing, listening, feeling, I breathe in the Kansas heat and wind, and it is as if I can taste and smell them, too. Just now, I would have to tell my Chinese friends, the land is suffused with ripeness, its taste just tinged with salt.

Ruts of the Santa Fe run deep past Burlingame where the main street was

made wide enough for wagons to circle in and stay the night. Fox tail, side oats, and sunflowers fill the ruts, and cars and trucks now park down the center of Burlingame's main street. The imprints of human habitation on this land are numerous and as iconic as the lone tree in a sparse field. There are farms which are flourishing, with well-crafted fences and barns in place, a house with a wide wrap-around porch, a swing in the great burr oak in the front yard, and a mailbox by the side of the road with its red flag up. There are farms which have fallen in on themselves, the walls of barns and houses tilting, their roofs swayback, and silos sprouting wild green crowns. There are cemeteries which resemble complicated chess boards, covering an acre with multiple elaborate monuments, and there are cemeteries with only a few weathered stones, tipped by time in the corner of a field. The steeples of small compact churches provide this landscape with exclamation marks, but the sturdy country schools of Osage County have now become museums or community centers or as derelict as some farm houses, prey to rats and woodrot and memory. I consider the hopes imbued in towns with names such as Centropolis and Pomona as well as the losses indicated by towns with Native American names such as Quenemo and Osage City. But what I wish above all I could share with my Chinese friends would be the sense I have of reaching the crest of hill in this familiar eastern Kansas land and, beneath a billowing sky, feeling the land expand below me with all of its infinite possibilities for shaping life. ▀



Farm Bill needs your support

Two federal programs that have helped the Kansas Land Trust preserve working lands in the state are set to expire this year unless Congress takes action to save them.

The first is the federal program called the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program. The FRPP was created in the 1996 Farm Bill and reauthorized in the 2002 Farm Bill. Since then, FRPP has provided \$85 million a year nationwide to help governments and nonprofits pay for conservation easements on working lands. Through 2007, the USDA program has enrolled 2,704 easements for 531,958 acres with a value of \$1.63 billion and a federal contribution of \$537 million.

But the current FRPP is scheduled to expire on September 30 unless the 2007 Farm Bill revives it. The good news is that the version of the Farm Bill passed by the House of Representatives in August contains a big funding increase for FRPP - \$300 million a year over the next five years. Now the Farm Bill goes to the Senate, where there is no guarantee the FRPP will do as well, or even survive. The Senate Agriculture Committee is expected to take up the Farm Bill in mid-September.

"The consequences to Kansas would be severe and immediate if the FRPP program expired," said RoxAnne Miller, KLT executive director. "Efforts of KLT, other land trusts and ranchers to preserve the Flint Hills in Kansas would practically halt. It would be difficult to rekindle the momentum that we've all worked so hard for."

The second land conservation law that expires December 31, 2007, is an enhanced federal tax deduction for landowners who donate conservation easements. The law, signed by President Bush in August 2006, enables easement donors to earn increased tax deductions and a longer time to recover tax benefits from the donation of their conservation easements. The law increased the tax deduction for conservation easement donations from 30% to 50% of a qualified donor's annual income. For qualified farmers, the 2006 law allows them to deduct up to 100% of their income. And for all landowners, the law tripled the carry-forward period for deductions from 5 to 15 years.

Miller said: "People have just started to pay attention to the increased benefits. Unless it is extended, Kansas will continue with very few donated preservation projects. Taxpayers in Kansas would get the greatest bang for their tax dollars if FRPP funding continues for easement purchase and the increased tax benefits for donated projects is maintained."

The Land Trust Alliance, a national group of which KLT is a member, is keeping watch on the two provisions as they make their way through Congress. If you would like to help save these two important laws, join LTA's Advocate program and receive emailed notices when it's time to contact your senators or representatives. Sign up at <http://www.lta.org/publicpolicy/advocates.htm> ▀

kansas land trust membership

To the extent allowed by law, dues, contributions, and donations of land or conservation easements are tax-deductible.

Here is my annual membership gift of \$_____ to the Kansas Land Trust for land conservation.

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| _____ \$5,000 Guardian | _____ \$1,000 Steward |
| _____ \$500 Sustainer | _____ \$250 Caretaker |
| _____ \$100 Keeper | _____ \$50 Member |

- My company will match this contribution.
- Tell me how to provide for the Kansas Land Trust in my estate plans.
- I have provided for the Kansas Land Trust in my estate plans.
- Contact me about buying land in need of protection.

Name(s) _____
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
E-mail _____
Tel _____

If you wish to make your gift in memory of or in honor of someone special to you, kindly attach relevant information and address(es). KLT will be pleased to send notification of your gift.

Please mail this form with check payable to Kansas Land Trust. Our address is 16 East 13th St., Lawrence, KS 66044-3502. Questions. Call KLT at 785-749-3297, email info@klt.org, or visit www.klt.org.



Members gather at Laman prairie June 23



Photo by Craig Phillips

Left: Rare Regal Fritillary on Beebalm. This butterfly indicates Laman's tallgrass prairie is high quality.
Center: View of the Laman Tallgrass prairie.
Right: Kelly Kindscher, center, facing forward, pointing out prairie plants on the walking tour.



Photo by Steve Roels



Photo by Craig Phillips

About 50 people came out to celebrate the prairie on a beautiful June day at Jane Laman's preserved land near Manhattan. We not only got a tour of Laman's tallgrass prairie but we also helped celebrate the 96th birthday of a new member, Harold Reese. The food, catered by Magpie Market, in Oldsburg, Kansas, was spectacular. The music was an informal bluegrass group from Alta Vista (thanks guys!) and the pies... yummm - homemade - nothing better. We hope to see you at our next event.

Stauffer continued from page 1

sold to early settlers in order to promote westward growth. This land was first obtained from the railroad in 1875 and Daniel Donmeyer, our Great-Great Grandfather, bought it in October of 1884. He was the father of our Great Grandmother, Laura Donmeyer Stauffer. She became the owner in 1890 and eventually our parents became owners. Simon Donmeyer our ancestor, who brought his family to the area from Johnstown, Pennsylvania, founded the town of New Cambria along with the first store and post office. New Cambria was named after Cambria Township, his home in Johnstown. School District #10 in New Cambria was organized in 1873. This school district was where our father K.L. Stauffer, our uncle H. Dean Stauffer, our aunt Mildred Louise, cousins, as well as the Trustees attended school. It was here our father served on the school board for all those years we attended and it was at this school where our mother was an integral part of all entertainment and fund raiser functions for the school and community.

"On April 20, 1873, the Peace Lutheran Church was organized with the first service and first communion held in Lewis Donmeyer's (a relative) barn. A Mason-Hamlin organ owned by Simon Donmeyer (a relative) was used and is still in use today. Our father farmed the ground for most of his life and that land was donated by members of the Kirtland family (also relatives) to the Peace Lutheran Church, with all proceeds going for support of the church. Two miles south of the Protected Property is the Donmeyer Cemetery where many of the first ancestors who came from Pennsylvania are buried.

"Through living the joys and trials of a farming family we harvested a deep association and love of the land. We grew to know ourselves better because of our connec-

tion with nature, its rhythms, gifts and complications. We could contemplate the richness of nature's gifts and see its simple beauty. Our hidden connections, the invisible tangibles are our moral standards, sensuality, spirituality, memories and aspirations. These helped formulate who we are today. This Protected Property is a living legacy and is a metaphor of life as there is both joy and discontent. On the Protected Property we sought recreation such as sledding, hunting, campouts, hide and seek and ball games. It was also a refuge from work and trouble, a contemplative respite. At one time a small corner had supplied food as a corn patch and at times minor grazing was provided. The Protected Property owned by our ancestors will forever be a legacy from them to all those who, like us, will forever be a part of the land from whence we came."

Heritage Hill is open to the public. Markers commemorating Stauffer ancestors are located along a walking trail that loops to the top of the hill. It is located east of Salina and easily reached by taking the I-70 exit for Niles Rd (exit 260). Go south approximately 1/2 mile; then west on Campbell Road, for 1/2 mile, to the gate on the north side of the road, look for a large steel butterfly near the gate. Park outside the gate and follow the trail up the hill.

Donna Stauffer Lantry, who died at age 73 after a 15-month struggle with cancer, requested that donations in her name be made to the Kansas Land Trust, 16 W. 13th, Lawrence, KS 66045 (Stauffer Conservation Easement) and the Audio Reader Network, Sensory Garden Project (Attn. Diana Fredrick), 1120 W. 11th, Lawrence, KS 66044. ▴



KLT offers leadership opportunities

The KLT Board of Directors will have a few vacancies soon. If you are a KLT member and have an interest in serving on the board, contact Donna Luckey for more information about the fun, satisfaction, and work of being a board member. Donna Luckey, 16 East 13th St., Lawrence, KS 66044 or email, luckey@sunflower.com



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mark your calendars

Please check our website for updates, www.klt.org.

- ◆ Join KLT for **Fun in the Flint Hills**. On Saturday, October 13, 2007 you are invited to a hayrack ride tour of the prairie and a barbeque lunch at the Kent and Rose Bacon Ranch near Council Grove. The event begins at 10 a.m. with the hayride tour of the 500 acre ranch, which is permanently preserved by KLT. Lunch will follow. Registration is required for this event.

Reservations required by October 5th. \$10 per person, includes meal and all activities.

Name(s)

Address

City, State, Zip

Email

Phone

Number of people attending _____ x \$10 Total enclosed _____



Photo by Jim Turner, Jim Turner Photography

Please mail this registration, with your check, by October 5th, payable to:

Kansas Land Trust
16 E 13th Street
Lawrence, KS 66044-3502

You will receive a confirmation email or telephone call with directions to the event.

