

Save the Pine Bush

March/April Newsletter

Mar/Apr 09 No. 97 • 33 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210 • email pinebush@mac.com • phone 434-1954 • fax 434-6659 • web <http://www.savethepinebush.org> • Circ. 1000

Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner Wednesday, March 18 2009, 6:00 p.m.

“Waiting for Mercy”

the new movie will be shown

Ellie Bernstein, the filmmaker, Kathy Manley and Steve Downs will speak

Waiting for Mercy tells the story of a fabricated FBI sting operation that took place in Albany, New York during the winter, spring and summer of 2004. The complex operation was designed to entrap Yassin Aref, 37 (a refugee from Kurdistan in northern Iraq) and Mohamed Mosharref Hossain, 51, a United States citizen and an immigrant from Bangladesh. In this day and age it is even more important for citizens to speak up against the wrongful prosecution of people because of their ethnic background and religion. We cannot fight to protect the environment if our civil liberties and right of due process is taken away. Join us to see this excellent new movie, hear the Ellie Bernstein, the director tell us of her journey to make the film, and listen to attorneys Steve Downs and Kathy Manley tell of the trampling of the constitution.”

At the First Presbyterian Church, (State and Willett Sts, Albany, please enter from State St.). All-the-vegetarian-and-vegan-lasagna-you-can-eat, garden salad, garlic bread and homemade pies. Only \$10 for adults, \$5 for students, and \$2 for children. People who make reservations are served first. For reservations, please leave a message for Rezsins Adams at 462-0891 or Lynne Jackson at 434-1954 or email pinebush@mac.com. Interested people are welcomed to attend the program beginning at 7:00 for which there is no charge

Save the Pine Bush Early Spring Hike Saturday, March 21

Meet: 9:45 am **At:** SUNYA Bus Stop, Collins Circle, 1400 Washington Avenue, Albany

Meet: 10:00 am. **At:** Rensselaer Lake Parking Lot, Fuller Road, Albany

Destination: Village of Colonie Nature Trails

Leader: John Wolcott. **For more info:** Call John Wolcott at 465-8930

Come along, enjoy early Spring in the Pine Bush and commemorate the 40th anniversary of the original Earth Day with us. Earth Day was started in 1969 on the Spring Equinox by Environmentalist John Mc Connell.

Solid Waste Management Plan Steering Committee

BETHLEHEM: What is the future of garbage in the ANSWERS community? Come to a Solid Waste Management Plan Steering Committee to find out! The SWMP (pronounced “swamp” — isn’t that a wonderful acronym?) has met three times now. At the last meeting, held in the Bethlehem Town Hall, the City’s consultant, Clough Harbor, presented a powerpoint presentation which included an examination of Waste-to-Energy facilities or, as they are usually known as, incinerators.

The meetings are chaired by Willard Bruce, who retired last year as the director of the Department of General Services for the City of Albany. Now, Mr. Bruce has been hired by the City as a consultant. Some agendas and minutes of the meetings can be found online at <http://www.capitalregionlandfill.com/management/> (scroll to the very bottom of the page).

The members to the SWMP Planning Unit include: the City of Albany, Cohoes, Rensselaer, Watervliet; Altamont, Voorhesville, Green Island; Berne, Bethlehem, East Greenbush, Guilderland, Knox, New Scotland, Rensselaerville, and Westerlo. Information about the members of the SWMP Steering Committee were not available on the Capital Region Landfill website. Save the Pine Bush has been unable to determine who or how people were appointed to the Steering Committee. No representatives from environmental organizations were appointed, but, a representative from Allied Waste, which is by far the largest corporation to dump in the Rapp Road landfill, was appointed.

The February 10 meeting was video-taped by Elise Van Allen and the video can be viewed by going to Albany Community Television on Facebook. The representative from Watervliet complained that he did not want to listen to those people from Albany talking about the landfill, and got up and left during the public comment period. His comment seemed out of place, since the draft SWMP plan assumes that the proposed landfill

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Bert Writes to the Army Corps

The Army Corps of Engineers extended the comment period on their review of the wetlands that will be destroyed if the proposed landfill in the Pine Bush is constructed. Bert wrote an excellent letter outlining many of the problems of expanding the landfill. The deadline for comments was March 5 and the letter was sent to Heidi Firstencel, US Army Corps of Engineers, NY District: CENAN-OP-R, Upstate Regulatory Field Office, 1 Buffington Street, Blg 10, 3rd Fl, Watervliet, New York 12189-4000, regarding Public Notice # NAN-2005-01137-WFI. Here is a summary of the letter.

Dear Ms Firstencel:

I am writing in regards to the City of Albany permit application for a Dept. of the Army permit to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S. C. 1344).

This permit application should be denied for the following reasons:

The Albany Landfill sits on a protected Principal Aquifer which is protected under the provisions of 6 NYCRR 360-2.12(c) which prohibits siting a landfill (or expansions) over a primary water supply or principal aquifer. During the rule making process, the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation stated that even a double liner system was not adequate protect for the State's important water resources. The City, in addition to the Corps Permit application, is seeking a variance from this regulation.

Significant pressure and/or influence enabled the City to obtain a variance for the last expansion and DEC granted this based on a "double liner" system as adequate along with economic hardship reasons. It has been documented that since the last expansion, there have been a number of liner leaks requiring significant repairs along with major long term pump failures resulting in the installation of a separate test well. DEC's original decision on double liners as being inadequate/not acceptable for landfills over aquifers has proven to be correct. The City has attempted to get the aquifer declassified without success, no matter how much they have spent on private consultant studies', they continue to press their view that the potential groundwater contamination is inconsequential in the latest draft environmental impact statement. Rather, their number one concern is revenues gained from operating the landfill.

Referencing a section from the City's Fourth Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the propose landfill expansion: "Groundwater recharge occurs primarily through precipitation and infiltration within the shallow Sand Unit. Recharge to the deeper units, such as

the Intermediate Silty Sand and the deep Silty Clay/Silt and Sand Unit occurs from infiltration through the upper units. Locally, groundwater often emanates as surface water within small streams and surface water within small streams and surface water bodies such as the tributary to Rensselaer Lake, which is on the east side of the AIL." (Albany Interim Landfill)

This is important to note for the following reasons: the presence of sizable wetlands that would be impacted, tributaries from the site to Rensselaer Lake whose fingers reach just across the street from the landfill; the water table is at or close to the surface at the site as evidenced by the wetlands, tributaries and groundwater measurements under two feet in much of the area; the presence of an existing leachate plume from the older unlined section of the landfill, the direction of the groundwater is documented in the direction of the tributaries and Rensselaer Lake, the fact that these combined characteristics show the site is actually part of the Patroon Creek watershed which flows into the Hudson River and should also be under federal jurisdiction.

Further, a research study published June 19, 2006, "Measuring the effects of wetland and riparian zones on water quality in the urban Patroon Creek Watershed, Albany County, NY Final Technical Report" by John G. Amason, Dept. of Earth & Atmospheric Sciences and George R. Robinson, Dept. of Biological Sciences, University at Albany, indicates that the leachate plume from the landfill has already reached the southern tributary of Rensselaer Lake, and/or runoff coming from one of the two culverts connecting with the landfill side. The following is quoted directly from this document: "Principal Findings 1. Significant spatial variations in major ion concentrations in surface waters of Patroon Creek and Rensselaer Lake indicated the presence of four principal components: 4) groundwater contaminated by landfill leachate with elevated sodium, chloride, and ammonium, and low dissolved oxygen. The last component is observed only in the headwaters of the south branch of the Reservoir; closest to the City of Albany Sanitary Landfill. 2. Rensselaer Reservoir (14.3 ha) is a eutrophic waterbody that is an emergency water supply for the City of Albany . . ."

The site of the landfill expansion should be considered the headwaters to Patroon Creek which flows to the Hudson River.

The City of Albany, in the same year the Save-the-Pine Bush lost is court battle with the City over the last expansion, sold the water rights to Rensselaer Lake to the Water Authority for \$7 million dollars as an emergency water supply (this action should have automatically reversed the DEC's decision to grant the variance).

As part of the last expansion environmental review the City touted an "Environmental Benefit of the last expansion if approved" - a feasibility study of the existing leachate plume - the result of which was a "DO NOTHING" alternative. How this could be considered an Environmental Benefit?

There are other environmental concerns as well: namely the impact on the Pine Bush Preserve which abuts the landfill; the years of public health and economic impacts on the residents, workers and businesses near the landfill from years of obnoxious fumes (the DEC had fined the City several times for this and the complaints about odors and sickness are documented); significant methane concerns, the impact on a rare and endangered species - the Karner Blue Butterfly; and the long term endangerment of this important water resource.

Landfill fumes from the landfill have reached into homes and businesses for over a decade. The many reports of illnesses, (including by Thruway workers) and the impact on use of homes and yards demonstrates there has been a Negative Impact on the Health Safety and Welfare of the Public as a direct result of the operation of this landfill. I have copied and read many of the comments and consent orders by DEC. The Save-the-Pine Bush submitted a very thick comment document to the current environmental review (to NYSDEC) that contains much of this information.

Considering the "DO NOTHING" alternative for the existing leachate plume as not being cost effective, the State and Federal taxpayers could also be at risk were a clean-up required for the existing plume, or any additional problems from liners leaks from the last few expansions along with the current expansion proposal. The impact is not just local, but reaches the Hudson River. What will the future impact on Rensselaer Lake now enjoyed by the public? A recent article from the Times Union (February 17, 2009) regarding the contamination of Nassau Lake from a toxic dump upstream emphasizes the long term impacts that can destroy our water resources. In this case, the State spent millions of taxpayers money on cleanup efforts and recent studies show it is still contaminated. The Albany Landfill, Rensselaer Lake and the Patroon Creek are within a densely urbanized area, the long-term impacts from ground and surface water resources must not be allowed to be increased from further expansion. Examine the proximity of the landfill to both residences and Rensselaer Lake (just across the Rapp Road). I hope that there will be studies of health impacts on area residents,

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Trader's Hill Found

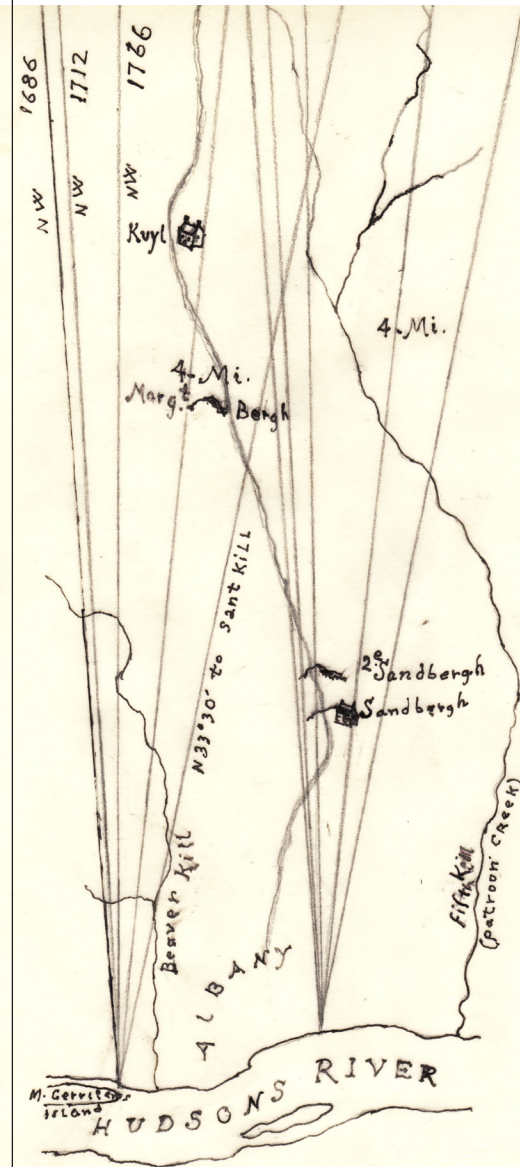
Part Two of "Looking For Trader's Hill"

by John Wolcot

The next piece in the puzzle of "Where is Trader's Hill?" is an amazing very old parchment map in the Albany City Engineer's collection. It is the only map known to show Margriets Bergh, and was drawn in January 1773 by Jeremiah Van Rensselaer from a survey done by himself in 1772. This survey and map were ordered by the City in an effort to correct a series of mistakes in a former survey of it's bounds. The City Charter of 1686 had specified the boundaries of Albany to be a 16 mile long parallelogram. The two sides to run "due north west" from fixed points on the bank of the Hudson, one at the north side of the City, the other at the south of the City. It turned out that "due" was not a good choice of a word. Governor Dongan worked hard as governor but he wasn't a surveyor. After a few years when at the first survey of the City bounds, the city fathers (that's all that we entitled to then) interpreted "due northwest" as by the compass. The trouble with this was that the City Surveyors prior to Van Rensselaer never knew about the annual variation of the compass and shiftings of earth's magnetic poles. Prof. Henry Gellibrand's exposition on magnetic variation was published in London 1635, and it's information, did no reach Albany for a long time. 137 years? Yes! I guess that's a little of cultural/scientific lag, and the Charter specs appear still not understood by local officialdom in 1773. However, they may have been understood by the surveyor. The former City survey lines displayed all across Van Rensselaer's amazing map with helpful reference features, are unintentionally a guide to locating many sites in the Pine Bush including Margriets Bergh. The City Fathers were informed that all of the successively mapped north west lines had been shifted over time by magnetic variation and that "natural" (geographic) northwest "remains constant." Their response was something like, "We'll stop this shifty looking magnetic motion un-natural nonsense." They then went on to declare the City bounds to be forever fixed and securely anchored down along "natural northwest." This lasted only until 1800, when replaced by another notion. All mistakes, but they are helping us now, none the less. So important was this "fixing the shifting," at the time, that mile distances were ticked off along the map's natural NW boundary version. It turns out that the edge of Margriets Bergh is sketched on the map along the south natural NW city line, a little east of the four mile tick. Remember to not always depend on officialdom, value variation in nature, in people, and in your compass readings, and always seek the high ground.

Getting Closer

The "Natural" NW version of Albany's south boundary line can be fairly easily re-created on a modern topographic map. If you want to try it yourself, use preferably the 7&1/2 minute Albany Quadrangle of 1953 updated to 1980. Draw a north south line starting at the outer bend of Gansevoort Street in the South End. (This was where Albany's south boundary line was to start by directions in the Dongan Charter). This north south line has be parallel to a meridian line indicated at the top and bottom edges of the map.



Note: "Sandbergh" is where Swinburne Park is; "Tweede Sandbergh" is where Bleecker Apartments now are; and "Kuyll" is where the Campus Pond and Indian Quad at SUNYA now are.

This will align with true north. Now take a round protractor, or cut out a paper one by the directions on page 36 of Bjorn Kjellstrom's Orienteering Handbook. Pages 109-114 describe "variation" and the magnetic north pole. Now draw a line at 45 degrees west from your vertical meridional line. This is 315 degrees on a round protractor and makes for precisely Geographic, true, or

"Natural" North West here. Now measure off four miles by the topo map's scale along this NW line. This should land you just past the SW corner of the Tax Dept. Bldg. on the Harriman Campus opposite the north end of Rugby Road. Four miles or 320 chains from the beginning point at the bend in Gansevoort Street. No! The location of Trader's Hill is not quite solved yet. The problem here is that our Natural NW line doesn't quite match the match for where it hits Margriets Bergh. In fact it doesn't hit it. Instead it hits the south end of a remnant of a very large parabolic sand dune about where the Albany Hospital's extremely ideal fresh air TB Sanatorium used to be, near the west end of the Harriman Campus, by it's inner perimeter road. Health giving aromatic aerosols are said to emit from evergreen trees. This spot lines up right with the drawing of the parchment map, but it is west of the four mile mark instead of east of it. By the parchment map's own scale Margriets Bergh is found to be 14 chains or 924 feet east from the four mile mark. Now measure this back along the NW line on the topo map. It comes out even with Eagle Hill, a high eminence set between Western Avenue and the outer perimeter road of the Harriman Campus. But it remains that the line runs a little north of Eagle Hill instead of through it. These are the two high hills that could qualify, but which one is Trader's Hill? One is too far west, the other too far south. Well! I would give up, at this point, and consider it a toss of the hat, save for one additional as yet, unused puzzle piece.

What's In A Name?

Sometimes a lot can be in a name. Take "Ye Noonda It Shut-Chera" the Mohawk name for Margriets Bergh in the 1836 article quoted in Part I of this essay. Another version of the same name: "Yonondis-Itsutchera" is quoted likewise in Part I from Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's *Aboriginal Places Names of the State of New York*, 1845. In this book Schoolcraft translates the Mohawk name as "Hill of Oil." As to why, no one still knows. Later on in 1906, the eminent priest and ethnologist, Rev. William M. Beauchamp wrote his own *Aboriginal Place Names of New York*. This was published by the State Education Dept. as "Museum Bulletin 108 Archeology 12." In this work The Rev. Beauchamp frequently comments on Schoolcraft's observations. On page 18 of this work under "Albany County" is to be found the following: "The Indian title was so soon extinguished in most of Albany County that few local names remain. It belonged to the Mahicans, but for their safety they lived mostly on the east side of the Hudson and the Mohawks

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Army Corps, continued from page 2

especially those in the Village of Colonie whose residents are fed up with the fumes emanating from this landfill.

Further, the City, in their draft environmental review document, maintains it has been adequately looking for alternative sites, but has focused its attention on land it purchased in the Town of Coeymans which they have known for many years would not be a suitable site due to wetland concerns. It seems the revenue stream from the existing site is too desirable for real alternatives. This is evident in the City's current effort with the ANSWERS consortium to develop a new Solid Waste Management Plan as required by NYSDEC. I was quite surprised they began this process by using their own consultant to develop a draft plan and then start meetings with the communities. Whereas, this should have been the other way around, the communities would meet and work together on developing a draft plan with public input. . . .

Sincerely yours, Bertil K. Schou

Please take a moment to read the rest of Bert's letter at: http://www.savethepinebush.org/News/2009_03_04/ArmyCorps.html#Continue

Trader's Hill Found, continued from page 3

had names only for prominent places. Those given by Schoolcraft alone may be of his own invention." Schoolcraft was known for doing this at times, and very cleverly and convincingly so. It's doubtful however, that this was the case with "Yonondis-Itsutchera" since it appeared first in 1836. The spellings were different in the 1836 source, and Schoolcraft seemed not to have read it, as he didn't report the Dutch name for the hill. By the way, there are at least two prominent places in the Pine Bush with Mohawk names. On page 20 of the above cited work Beauchamp continues, "It-sut-chera is a name of his assigned

to Trader's Hill, once three miles northwest of Albany. He prefixed Yonondio, Great Mountain, and then defined it: 'Hill of Oil.' This is not satisfactory, nor do I find any such word relating to oil in Iroquois dialects."

A Missing Piece Completes the Puzzle

In the summer of 1894, an American historian in Amsterdam made an extraordinary and startling discovery in someone's attic there. The historian was James Grant Wilson, author of *Memorial History Of The City Of New York*. The lost manuscript found collecting dust in an Amsterdam garret for 259 years was a journal kept by Harmen Meyndertse van den Bogaert. He wrote the journal as leader of a diplomatic delegation sent from Fort Orange to the Mohawks in 1634. At the end of the van den Bogaert Journal is a vocabulary of Mohawk words with their Dutch equivalents. Grant's translation of this document, published in 1896 as the *Report of the American Historical Association for 1895*, reveals the following in its Maquas (Mohawk) vocabulary: "Maquas: Schakari English: Eagles." (The original manuscript resides in the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino, California.) This matches well with the 1836 "It-Shut-Chera" and Schoolcraft's "Itsutchera" reported in 1845. It might be helpful to consider the "It" to be an article or particle or prefix, or something like. "It" can be removed, which leaves Shut-Chera, or sutchera, both being basically the same as "Schakari." Therefore, I will English "Ye-Noonda-It-Shut-Chera" as "Hill of the Eagles" and identify it with the hill called Eagle Hill at the corner of Western Avenue and Oxford Road in Albany. This hill is where St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Albany has maintained their cemetery since 1859. We owe it to St. Paul's that Eagle Hill has been preserved. Otherwise it surely would have been levelled for more inner suburban streets with English academic names, or for an addition to the Harriman State Office Campus. Eagle Hill

or Hill of the Eagles, can now be recognized as a visible landmark of Dutch and Mohawk history in the Pine Bush, in addition to being consecrated space, it's significance to the Lutheran Church, and to local nineteenth century German American history. Remember William Beauchamp's sage advice that wherever you live, you can look all about your area, and you'll always find and learn much of wonder and interest.

SWMP, continued from page 1

expansion in the Pine Bush will be built

The issue of how best to dispose of municipal solid waste, or garbage, is very important to the Pine Bush. SPB urges more members to attend the SWMP meetings and comment about sustainable methods (reduce, reuse, recycle) versus expensive, high-tech, incineration. See meeting information below.

The Public is Invited to the Solid Waste Management Plan Steering Committee March 17, 2009 – 4:00 PM

200 Henry Johnson Boulevard, Albany

The agenda includes Institutional and Implementation Alternatives, Waste Flow Control, Special Purpose Authority or Agency, Waste Reduction, Reuse and Recycling and Criteria for Evaluating New Technologies.

Save the Pine Bush Landfill Committee Meeting

Want to get involved? Want to see a sustainable solution to the solid waste problem? Join the Save the Pine Bush Landfill Committee! Next meeting:

Tuesday, April 7 at 6:30 PM
Albany Public Library, 161 Washington Avenue, Albany, 12210, 2nd Floor
Large Conference Room

Email pinebush@mac.com for more info



Save the Pine Bush

A Project of the Social Justice Center
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