

Save the Pine Bush

September Activities

09/18 • 33 Central Avenue, Albany, NY 12210 • email pinebush@mac.com • phone 518-462-0891 • www.savethepinebush.org

Vegetarian/Vegan Dinner
Wednesday, September 19, 2018, 6:00 p.m.

Scott Kellogg

of the Radix Center

Justina Thompson

RPI Student, Chemistry Major

will speak about

The Floating Island of the Radix Center & Ecological Stewardship

On Thursday, July 26, Scott Kellogg dropped four baby islands of plants with a solar powered bubbler into the Hudson River near Island Creek Park, just down river from the Big C pipe, where sewage runoff sometimes flows into the river, Justina Thompson along with a plant expert, and student interns, helped to design and construct the device. The goal? For the plants and bacteria to eat the sewage and clean the Hudson. Learn about this innovative method of cleaning a river. Our speakers will also talk about the Radix Ecological Sustainability Center, which promote ecological literacy and stewardship through demonstrations of sustainable technologies.

At the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street (people with cars can park in the lot near the door). All-you-can-eat lasagna dinner, with vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options, salad, garlic bread and delicious desserts. Only \$12 for adults, \$6 for students, and \$2 for children. People who make reservations are served first. For reservations, please leave a message for Rezsine Adams at 518-462-0891 or email pinebush@mac.com.

Interested people are welcome to attend the program beginning at 7:00 for no charge.

Save The Pine Bush is in need of more hike leaders.

For the last few years ; the Save the Pine Bush outing leaders have been Andy Arthur, Claire Nolan, Hugh Johnson and John Wolcott. among others. Our outing events are once a month, usually on a Saturday but, sometimes we adventure out on a weekday evening. Our hike leaders are not always readily available and this month, we are unable to find a leader for the hike. To prevent this from happening again, we are appealing for more volunteer leaders. Save the Pine Bush hikes and walks are a lot of fun.

With more leaders we can hopefully have hikes lead by persons with more time and less competing obligations for any given hike date. John and Andy are available for going over information and ideas about various Pine Bush area and routes. Please e-mail the Newsletter at pinebush@mac.com or call Andy Arthur at (518) 281-9873 if you are interested in volunteering to lead a hike. Hope to see you out on the trail!

www.savethepinebush.org

Ecology and history can walk side-by-side on Pine Bush roads

Reprinted from the *Altamont Enterprisel* Thursday, May 17, 2018

Before there were cars and trucks, before there were carriages and wagons, before there were wheels, people have always made pathways. The routes they traveled linked hunting grounds with dwelling places, became a means of trade and commerce, linked one community to another or allowed one to fight another.

Few of us give much thought to ancient roads in our midst. We didn't until we got a letter from Steven Rider, a Guilderland resident and self-described "old-road nut." He wrote us about the historic roads in the Pine Bush Preserve, parts of which are purposely being closed off to be returned to a wild state.

As a kid, living off of Willow Street, long, long before the community had awakened to the value of the Pine Bush, we used to walk the path that started at Willow Street and would take us all the way to the Thruway. Little did we know that the path was centuries old. We just loved the feeling of peace it gave us to walk there, the sandy soil beneath our feet.

This week, our intrepid Guilderland reporter, Elizabeth Floyd Mair, traveled with Rider to the head of Willow Street, where he posed for a picture next to the closed-off trail. They visited the other places in the preserve,

too, where the ancient roads survive — not obliterated by the relentless push of development.

One of them is the 1712 Palatine Road. We looked back at a story we wrote on Harold Miller's book, setting Hilltown history straight. He had told us how his copious research had shown that the first Helderberg settlers were not Dutch, as many assume, but German speakers from the rich river-bottom land along the Rhine. They lived there before Germany was a nation, when the land was governed by separate fiefdoms.

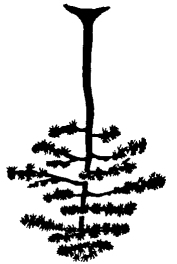
"The winter of 1709 was so bad, it killed their cattle and their apple trees. It broke their backs. There was nothing for them to eat," said Miller. "They left at once." Both Catholics and Protestants made the journey to England.

At first, the Londoners welcomed them, setting up refugee camps for the Palatines to live in. But, when they provided cheap labor, taking jobs from Londoners, they were attacked.

A plan was hatched to ship the Palatines to New York where they would make tar from pine resin to waterproof British ships. Toward the end of December 1709, about 3,300 Palatines were packed into the holds of nine

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ships; they stayed in the crowded and unsanitary confines until setting sail in April 1710; hundreds died of typhus.

The ships arrived in New York Harbor in the summer of 1710 and the refugees were isolated in tent camps on an island in the Hudson. Church records of refugee marriages in 1710 show about half were between widows and widowers.

"A lot continued to suffer and die," said Miller. "The widows and widowers had to marry each other, or who would bring up the children?"

That fall, Governor Robert Hunter sent a survey team to the Schoharie Valley, and the Mohawks gave land there to Queen Anne for a Christian settlement. Hunter accepted the gift of land but decided it didn't have suitable pines so, instead, about 1,200 Palatines were settled in camps not far from the Hudson near New Amsterdam. Each adult was allotted a third of a loaf of bread and a quart of low-grade beer daily.

By the spring of 1711, the Palatines were close to rebellion, demanding the land in the Schoharie Valley. Their rifles were confiscated and they were forced to remain in the work camps. About a quarter decided to go to Schoharie. "They called it the Promised Land." The meaning was literal.

In October 1711, one-hundred-and-fifty families left immediately. "They weren't allowed to take farm implements, cattle, even their guns," said Miller. They pulled their few possessions, by hand, on sledges with iron runners. They began their journey in what is now Dutchess County and traveled up the Hudson River.

So that is the history of one of the trails with remnants still preserved in the Pine Bush. Another is the King's Highway, first used by the Mohawks, connecting the Hudson and Mohawk rivers. They would bring their furs to Beverwyck, which later became Albany.

"These woods form a copse above your head almost all the way betwixt Albany and Schenectady, and you ride over a plain, level, sandy road till coming out of the covert of the woods, all at once the village strikes surprisingly your eye, which I can compare to nothing but the curtain rising in a play and displaying a beautiful scene," wrote Dr. Alexander Hamilton who traveled the path and described it in his 1744 travel diary, "Gentleman's Progress."

Soldiers made the path a road during the colonial wars and, after that, it was used by settlers traveling west. By the 1790s, William McKown's tavern was a fixture on the route, near the modern Fuller Road. But, in the early 19th Century, the construction of the Great Western Turnpike, now Route 20, and the Albany-Schenectady Turnpike, now Route 5, drew traffic away from the road through the pine barrens.

Even though a segment of the Pine Bush Preserve is called the King's Highway Barrens, we believe few visitors are aware of its history. Understanding the history of these roads is important — they tell us, quite literally, where we have been.

We're not sure the choice has to be as stark as choosing ecology over history, as Rider has written. We'd like to see both accommodated.

We understand that the commission is putting into place a plan meant to preserve native habitats. Beyond the much-heralded Karner blue butterfly, which is listed as a federally endangered species, the Pine Bush is home to other rare and at-risk species, too.

The preserve plan, for example notes a number of bird species as well as the rare inland barrens buckmoth. "The buckmoth caterpillars are common along trails in July and appear especially vulnerable to trampling during their larval stage," the plan notes.

In a way, the preserve is a victim of its own success, attracting 100,000 visitors annually. That's a far cry from our childhood over a half-century ago when we could walk for miles on an ancient path and never see another person — not one.

We understand the need to protect the habitats that preserve rare creatures and we also understand that the Pine Bush is already divided into quadrants by the Thruway and Route 155 but we wonder, since there are trails to be used for non-motorized recreation, is it too late to designate parts of the historic roads as trails, letting some of the newer, historically inconsequential pathways return to nature?

If it is too late to preserve those clues that Rider and others so relish, we urge the staff that develops such worthwhile programs for the Pine Bush Preserve Commission to educate the public about the human history in their midst as well.

Wouldn't it be worthwhile to learn about the Palatines who suffered so in their homeland and then were oppressed in this new world until they traveled the trail still surviving in the Pine Bush to get to their Promised Land?

And couldn't we benefit from knowing more about the Mohawks who wore the path that became the Kings Highway? And about the soldiers and settlers who then used it, too?

Wouldn't it be possible for the Pine Bush Commission to mark off sections of these trails, with signs to educate people about their history? We could literally walk in the path of our forebears to better set our future course.

— Melissa Hale-Spencer