

# Craighead House Chronicles

Volume I No. 1 Fall 2015



## *The Flood Riders of '33*

### President's Message

John Coyle

As summer passes here by the Yellow Breeches, I'm recalling the great 1933 Chesapeake-Potomac Hurricane that hit Craighead on the night of August 24<sup>th</sup>. Not that I was born yet, of course, but I read about it in the *Summer of the Falcon* and heard stories about it as a child. No one really knows how much of the "John, Frank, Jean, Emily, and Bill riding the flood on the morning after the hurricane" story (page 106) was true. And of the flood riders, only John Craighead (99) is still alive to tell.

Growing up with a family business whose address was "Craighead, PA" I was always aware of the legendary status of that family. Though my Dad only took me to visit a few times, I distinctly recall Frank Craighead's old stone house in Boiling Springs with an owl perched outside. I also had a fascination with

Dad's old album with tiny prints showing Tetons, moose and mountain meadows. I even raised a sparrow hawk (courtesy of Frank) in the early 60's before such things were prohibited. And more than once I started to hollow out a tree to live in; like Sam in *My Side of the Mountain*.

But time passes; dreaming boys turn into workingmen, and fathers pass on, leaving only legends. Here by the Yellow Breeches though, little has changed. This summer for example, barefoot children instructed by a Craighead descendant made bamboo fishing poles and caught trout from the railroad bridge. The love of nature passes freely from one generation to the next.

Today the Old Gray House is no longer in imminent danger of collapse. Beautiful new porches have appeared. The front door is looking good again. Weeds & poison ivy no longer rule the



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## **CRAIGHEAD HOUSE COMMITTEE CORPORATION BOARD**

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1923-2014

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### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Craighead House Committee Corporation is to preserve Craighead House and put it to use as a community learning and support center for educational activities related with the Craighead Naturalists' areas of interest and to house offices and museums related to conservation, writing, art, and local history.

## *Flood Riders '33*

yard. The kitchen art is being stabilized and preserved. Soon a new roof and next year a sleeping porch will complete the main exterior work.

I am the President of the Craighead House Committee, the son of "Bill the Flood-Rider." Our vision is to restore the Craighead House and grounds to their 1933 condition. As they were on the night of the Great '33 Hurricane, one might say. We plan to keep this tiny patch of God's green earth as a perpetual place for children of all ages to share and develop their love of nature.

### **Grant Applications**

Craighead House volunteers have been working hard in 2015 to raise additional funds for the house and its programs. They have developed and submitted grant proposals to individuals, foundations and government funding sources including:

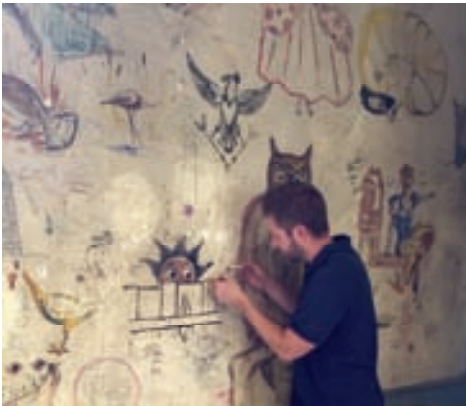
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- G.B. Stuart Charitable Foundation
- Degenstein Foundation
- South Mountain Partnership
- Cumberland Valley Visitors Bureau

The proposals focused on needs such as the kitchen art, roofs, sleeping porch, and teaching curricula.

***Kitchen Artwork Preservation***  
**The stories these walls do tell!**  
Thankfully, the unique and irreplaceable art on the kitchen walls, and the stories they recall, is being preserved.



Technician sets up Leica 3D Laser Scanner to scan kitchen walls, floor and ceiling to create a historical record of the artwork before preservation began, courtesy of RIKORE, Inc.



B. R. Howard & Associates art preservationist tests various products to determine which one would be best for consolidating paint that is peeling back to the plaster.

## *Restoration Report*

Completed Summer of 2015:

***Front/Side Porch Deck Rebuilt*** by lowest bidder McCorkel Construction Services. Our thanks to Capital Campaign donors including G. B. Stuart Charitable Foundation and Foundry Day.

***Education Center Dais, Podium and Benches*** completed in July with materials donated by 84 Lumber. Our thanks to Eagle Scout candidate, Matthew Bear and friends.

Ongoing:

***Kitchen Artwork*** stabilization and preservation funds donated by Donald Goodyear and Barbara Lillich. Scanning and initial preservation testing began in July. Consolidation and preservation of west wall artwork began on September 28<sup>th</sup>.

***Front Entrance*** repairs and painting. Our thanks to PPG Industries, Ginny Goodyear, Tom Schlusser and Larry Rowe.

***Roof Replacement*** with roofing materials donated by GAF and Carlisle SynTec Systems starting Mid/late October. Our thanks to the G.B. Stuart Charitable Foundation and Cumberland County School Librarians.

Future Projects *Needing Funding:*  
**Sleeping porch, ADA restroom, Mechanical systems.**

## *FALCONRY PRESENTATION AT CRAIGHEAD HOUSE*



**Rain prevented Fran Gray, Central Director for Pennsylvania Falconry and Hawk Trust, from giving his presentation on falconry on Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup> but he graciously rescheduled his talk for the next afternoon in the new education center and the weather cooperated. Turnout was good, especially considering the short notice.**

Mr. Gray brought with him a Harris hawk and his son, Nate, who is also a falconer. The younger Gray handled the hawk, which was just coming out of moult, its annual refeathering. Hawks in this state are difficult to handle and aren't in condition to hunt. Nate did an excellent job of calming the Harris hawk throughout the talk. Fran provided much information from his practical experience not easily found in books. One learning included how adult hawks are now trapped, rather than stolen from the nest as babies, as was done at the time the Craighead twins took up the sport. The very interested attendees asked numerous questions, all of which he answered at length. Afterwards, Fran commented on how much he appreciated such an interested audience. We hope he is willing to come back some time in the future.

## *Did You Know?*

**Falconry was virtually unknown in America until two teenagers took it up?**

In 1932 the sport of falconry was essentially not practiced in the US. Only four people, all adult males, trained birds at that time. That is, until the Craighead twins, then 15, met a young West Point grad and US Army aviator by the name of Luff Meredith who interested Frank Jr. and John in the ancient sport of kings.

They studied an ancient text they found in the Library of Congress and absorbed a well-researched article on falconry from a 1920 *National Geographic* written by Louis Agassiz Fuertes, a non-falconer.

Hooked, they studied the hawks available to them to train as falcons. They decided upon the Cooper's hawk, a bird no one had tried to train before. They thought its physical and flight characteristics suited the terrain around Craighead Station, Pennsylvania, the place where they would be training their first hawks, well. They

swiped a pair of female Cooper's hawk eyasses from a nest high in a tree along the Potomac River in Maryland and brought them to Craighead House where they trained the birds to become falcons and themselves to become falconers.

Well-versed in the scientific method by their scientist father – Frank Craighead Sr. was Chief Forest Entomologist for the US Department of Agriculture for decades – and logged every step and experience of training the young hawks in a ledger. They faithfully recorded their failures and things learned over the summer and the next few years as they acquired and trained, or tried to train, numerous hawks, owls and eagles. Dare we say, falconry 'took flight' at Craighead, PA!







**Gathering crawfish, digging worms and swinging into the creek on a rope aren't typically classroom events.** But the Craighead House curriculum is anything but typical.

This summer I had the pleasure of teaching hands-on classes at the new Environmental and Nature Center. Close to fifty children participated in four outdoor classes. What a great location it is for discovery, filled with outdoor options and void of computer games.

In my first class approximately 10 children ages 7 to 12 were shown how to make bamboo fishing rods using local bamboo and "screen-door hook" guides. After threading the line through the guides, they had a great fishing rod. Like Sam Gribbley, there was no reel but the string was long enough to fish. Still, one item was missing! So, we trekked to the meadow.

There I showed the kids how to gather crawfish and minnows

by stirring up the water and using nets to catch the bait. Fish were caught and released during both classes and one student caught his very first! The kids loved the program and a couple of them came back to my second class to help the others.

My second class was sharing the book *The Summer of the Falcon*, written about the Craighead House by my cousin, Jean Craighead George. We talked about the book, then explored and played games like kick ball and croquet from the 1930s.

We visited the meadow to see the "clay pits", the fishing holes and the fun generations of children used to have. We also walked in the shallow part of the creek. I told them about the railroad tracks and the Craighead Bridge, for the South Mountain RR. Their very favorite thing to do was to swim in the creek and jump off of the rope. This class had about 12 students in each

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## Also at the Educational Center:

On August 6, the Boiling Springs Civic Association held its annual ice cream social.

On September 13, Fran Gray gave a presentation on falconry.

## Coming in 2016:

First Day of Trout Season, Food for Fisherpeople. (Date TBD)  
April 30, 2016, Perennial Plant Exchange.

April 2016, Larry Luxenburg will talk about the Appalachian Trail. (Date TBD)

## Off-Site Presentations:

October 8, 2015, South Mountain Partnership Lecture, "Summer in the South Mountain - The Craighead Family Legacy", Tom Benjey, 7PM in Todd Hall at the Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle.

April 11, 2016, 1PM; Tom Benjey will present "The Craighead Naturalists" at Mechanicsburg Women's Club.

## Fishing

class with some kids returning for another session. I'd say all had fun times, myself included!

Classes planned for next year include a pre-school program and other explore and discover adventure that all young naturalists will enjoy. Other programs will be explored. Our objective is simple but so important - help youth touch nature and learn of the wonders that wait at Craighead and beyond.



Several students caught their first fishes with the poles they made in the class but none were large enough to keep.

## I Support Craighead Preservation and Education Activities!

**The story of you began in a house, your house, where you learned to read and think, explore and discover.** Like your house, the Craighead House has much to tell. Stories of books, wildlife, friends and family created here can educate and inspire a new generation, *with your support.*

Thanks to friends and local support, the house has gained new life but ongoing restoration is critical to preserve this resource for the community. Your financial contribution is essential to continue this process and to insure new stories of discovery are created.

To make a financial contribution, please make checks payable to Craighead House Committee, P.O. Box 335, Boiling Springs, PA 17007. A 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions are tax deductible.

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