This Issue Is Dedicated To Rufus J. Thayer
With Fond Memories, Deep Affection, and Great Appreciation

Readers of the BFS Reporter know that Rufus Thayer passed away last spring. He was a true gentleman and a dedicated conservationist who supported the BFS and others with related educational missions over the years. He gave monies to Cooperstown High for students with career goals involving natural resources and similar subjects. He funded the Rufus J. Thayer Otsego Lake Research Internships at BFS for undergraduate college students. Several years ago he and his cousin Janice Whipple gave us over 300 acres on the flanks of Rum Hill to conduct ecological research and environmental education. We maintain about 7 miles of trails there. More than 1000 local pre-college students visit the site each year to study the impacts of native Americans, the first settlers, and more recent agricultural activities on land cover, runoff and its effects on the character and water quality of Otsego Lake.

A 1.2 Million Dollar Unitrust
Rufus arranged a trust for himself that is now available for our use. The principal will provide a flow of income that will be used for equipment, supplies and infra-structural maintenance and improvements to the Lakeside Farm and to support the endowed chair. (See page 3.) It cannot be used for personnel.

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Located in Cooperstown and founded in 1968, the Biological Field Station is a unique facility serving the Upper Susquehanna Watershed, Otsego County and the immediate Cooperstown area. It is primarily a teaching and research center for undergraduate and graduate students from across New York, the United States, and Canada. Directed by Dr. Willard Harman and staffed with talented, experienced professionals, the Biological Field Station is presently the focal point for information about issues affecting Lake Otsego and the Susquehanna River.

Do we have your correct address?
Rufus Thayer, cont.

The Thayer Memorial

Last fall we erected a monument to the Thayer family near the top of Rum Hill at a site of Rufus' choosing. It is a bench made of native blue-stone in a place where his older brother Willie used to pause while coon hunting to rest and look over the farm and Otsego lake. An inscription reads "In memory of THE THAYER FAMILY who walked these woods for the entire span of the 20th century and insured these spaces remain open forever through their stewardship and generosity."

The Lakeside Farm

All of the Thayer lands, including buildings and the parcel below Rt 80 with the boathouse and lake access, have been given to the BFS. The Bartlett family who has farmed it in recent years will continue to farm the meadows and tilled areas. We will monitor the quality and quantity of runoff from those lands as we continue to refine of our understanding of the problems of non-point source pollution in the Otsego Lake watershed.

Because of the lake-level access and the boathouse, we are planning to move many of the water-based activities from the main laboratory near Cooperstown to the Thayer location. A floating dock will be installed and the RV Anodontoides will be kept there, along with several smaller boats. Further, our entire diving operation will be moved to the site as well as all boat repair and storage functions.

We expect to use the renovated sap house and adjacent clubhouse as a trail-head interpretive center and move the majority of the activities of our pre-college field trip programs to that site. It will be more efficient than the main laboratory since school busses can drive there, and it’s within walking distance of several ponds, meadows, wetlands and mature woodlands.

We will develop a series of trails from that area to other significant sites on the Farm and Rum Hill.

The barns and shop will be used to house and work on equipment and boats and to protect a lot of items, including vehicles, that now are left outside near the main laboratory. The residence and the main barn may possibly be used for student and staff living facilities if future renovations are undertaken.
An Endowed Chair for Otsego Lake Research
Rufus has left about $400,000 toward an endowment to hire a faculty member whose primary duties will be to monitor the water quality of Otsego Lake and strategic portions of its watershed. The position is important to facilitate the necessary understanding and provide documentation for regularly upgrading the Otsego Lake Management Plan in perpetuity. Rufus perceived the endowment as necessary because Bill Harman’s eventual replacement by the college might be someone with no particular interest in the protection of the Lake. We are striving to increase this endowment to the point where we can hire an individual to keep an eye on Otsego, forever.

Conservation Easements
The Oneonta Foundation holds about 500 acres of land for BFS use, including the Thayer Farm, the Thayer Rum Hill Parcels and Goodyear Swamp Sanctuary. It has developed conservation easements in concert with the Otsego Land Trust to protect all of the land from any chance of future development. The BFS is now steward of nearly 2,500 acres of land, with about 1,700 acres protected by conservation easements.

Updates, cont. from p. 4
from the viewing deck. This project was a joint effort between the BFS and the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society. Ospreys, large fish-eating birds of prey, were practically extirpated from North America because of DDT, but have rebounded since the banning of this pesticide. They are seen regularly around Otsego, but reports of nesting are rare. This site seems ideal, as it offers protection and an ample supply of food.

News from Oneonta
• Nancy Bachman, Asst. Prof. of Biology, was awarded the 1999 Richard Siegfried Junior Faculty Prize for Academic Excellence. Congratulations!
Alumni

- Dave Warner, former graduate student, now engaged in work for a PhD at Cornell University, recently gave a paper at the "1999 Annual Meetings of the International Association for Great Lakes Research" titled "Biotic and Abiotic Influences on Forage Fish Abundance in Eight New York Lakes." Other authors included; Steve Effler (Upstate Freshwater Institute), Cliff Callanan, Web Pearsall and Tom Chiotti (NYSDEC), Rich Ruby (SUNY-ESF), Bill Harman (SUNY Oneonta-BFS) and Ed Mills and Lars Rudstam (Cornell-BFS).

- Stefanie Komorowski, BFS grad 1994, is now doing wetland and water quality work for "Environmental Consulting Services" with offices in Wellesley, MA, and Providence, RI. Her work covers Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Happenings

- BFS volunteer divers certified for ice diving. Picture shows Lee Ferrara standing by for entry, Jeff Opar entering the water while instructor Bob Harmon waits in the water. Jenn Szarek is tending.

- The newest addition to Goodyear Swamp Sanctuary is an osprey nesting platform, visible

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