



SOUTH HERO LAND TRUST

Newsletter

Spring 2021

Keeping a Legacy Alive: Things change and stay the same at Allenholm Farm



article by Emily Alger

A Year of Changes at Allenholm

I called on Ray C. Allen, fifth generation farmer at Allenholm Farm, on a blustery March day. Looking out at the bare branches of the apple trees, it was hard to imagine they would soon be covered in pink and white blossoms, then green leaves, and finally be laden with heavy fruit.

2020 was a year filled with change and challenge, even beyond the effects of the pandemic. The spring shutdown and ongoing restrictions impacted the business in many ways. But then Ray's father, Ray W., was taken and moved to a nursing facility off-island. His stepmother, Pam, passed away on Christmas Day. Ray C. stepped in to keep the orchard open, and is now looking to the future of the farm. Allenholm Farm has a 150 year-old family legacy and an important spot in the heart of many Islanders.

151 Years on a South Hero Farm

Reuban Allen and his son Horace built Allenholm Farm in 1870, and it is the oldest commercial apple orchard still operating in Vermont. The Allen family grows 25 acres of apples, as well as tart cherries, blueberries, and raspberries. Many an Islander and

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Allenholm Farm keeps the tradition of visiting a farm and apple picking alive for many of us. I hope we can all stand with the Allen family at this time, and keep this special legacy going.

~Emily Alger, Executive Director

SOUTH HERO



LAND TRUST

a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the farmland, woodland, natural and recreational areas, and open spaces which give South Hero its distinctive quality of life

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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Like many of you, I've been reflecting on the last year and everything that has changed. It has been a year of communal loss: of friends and family, moments of connection and celebration, jobs, security, a sense of normalcy... It has also been a year of awakening for many, myself included. My eyes have been opened to the violence and deep inequities in our country that put Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) at higher risk of harm from the pandemic and in their daily lives.

Do you ever think about the stories that define your life? My family's stories are tales of generations of Vermont farmers, fishermen, shopkeepers, and teachers. Hard-working and independent men and women who made this land their home. I have been grounded by stories of my ancestors coming to this country, of a childhood spent on the land, and an adulthood spent caring for the land. These stories told me that I belong here, that my impact on this world is generally good. But they are only one strand of a bigger web.

The story of the Abenaki Nations includes being forced from the land I now call home. The story of many Black Americans includes kidnap from their homeland and generations of slavery. The stories of many Asian Americans includes years of labor without citizenship. The stories of all of these people also include a great deal of joy, love, and strength, but it is hard to reckon with the realization that the story of our country is one of racist policies that give power to one group of people by denying it to others.

If these stories are true, are stories that have grounded me lies? If the history of our country is one of slavery and hatred, how can it also be one of freedom and love? I am learning that truth is more complex than I realized; that multiple things can be true at once. My family history is filled with people who were hardworking, who believed in freedom, who cared for the people around them, and who cared for the land. But what they had was built on labor of the BIPOC in our country, who were given few of the advantages that my ancestors or I received. So the stories that have grounded my life are changing.

In January, we were incredibly honored to have three guests join us for an evening we called "Abenaki Storytellers of Ndinna: Perspectives on Place and Culture." Chief Don Stevens and Jesse Bruchac of the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation, and Melody Walker of the Elnu Abenaki Tribe shared stories, songs, and history of their people. One of the things I took away from this was that stories change over time, and new stories are always arising. The Abenaki people have multiple origin stories, from different times in their history, each speaking to something they needed at that point in time. Can we create new stories today, stories that encompass hard truths and beautiful ones, pain and hope?

What I want to take from this year is the beginnings of a new story. One grounded in the lives of many different Americans, a story in which we bravely let go of misconceptions and lies in order to understand the greater truth, and a story that leads to compassion and change. Can we create a community in which people of all colors, abilities, and identities, are equally valued, cared for, and given voice? Can we create a community that is connected to and stewards the land in a way that honors the Abenaki people?

This work requires all of us being willing to learn and be transformed. I hope you will join me.

Emily

P.S. I'm really grateful to all of the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color who joined us for some important conversations during our Winter Wednesday series this year. You can catch recordings of all of these events on our website if you missed them in person.

visitor have picked their first apple at Allenholm Farm, during the busy pick-your-own season. The farm is both a historical gem in Vermont and a vibrant part of our community today.

The Conservation Project that Started it All

The farm was conserved by Ray W. and Pam Allen in 1997, the first conservation project ever undertaken by South Hero Land Trust (in partnership with the Vermont Land Trust and Vermont Housing and Conservation Board). In fact, the conservation of Allenholm Farm was the impetus for the creation of the South Hero Land Trust. With a great location on South Street, good soils, and municipal water, the farm would have been a prime spot for development. But as the fourth generation of Allens to manage the farm, Ray W. and Pam were determined to protect the land and allow future generations of Allens to grow apples on the land. They were proud of their children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren, many of whom grew up on or near the farm and might carry it into the future.

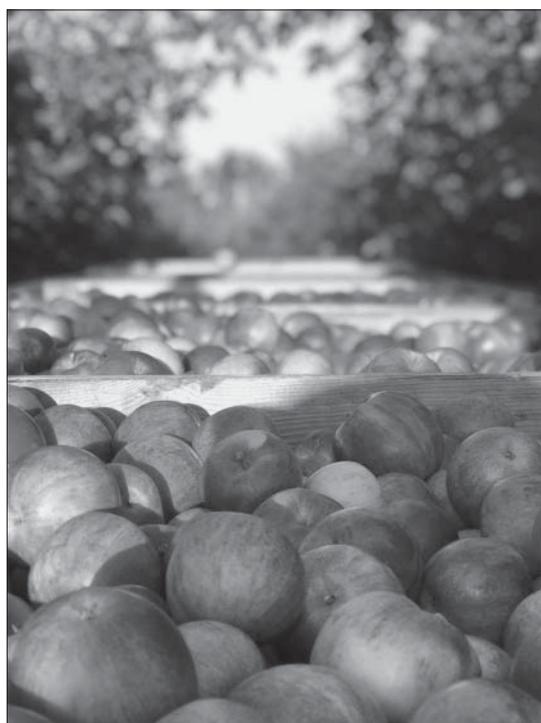
The Fifth Generation Looks to the Future

Ray C. grew up on the farm, and raised his own five children there. It was clear, as we sat overlooking the orchard, that Ray C. feels deeply connected to the land, and knows every inch of it. He also clearly feels a profound love for the community and has a strong sense of responsibility to South Hero and the Islands (exemplified by his long career with the County Sheriff's office, which he now leads as Sheriff). His son Andy, from the sixth generation of Allens, is working at his side this year.



left: Ray W. Allen with his father Reuban. Right: Ray W. Allen with his wife Pam. Photos provided by Allenholm

2020 may have been a devastating year in many ways, but there were bright spots. When Ray C. mentioned the pick-your-own season last fall, I braced myself for a story of hardship. On the contrary, it was one of their best seasons yet. Ray C. brightened with the memory of visitors old and new, from across Vermont, coming to spend a day in the orchard: picking apples, savoring a maple creemee, and passing the time with the Allens. Ray C. set up a special science experiment for the kids, and was pleased to welcome the newest members of families who've been visiting for generations.



Fall apple harvest. Photo provided by Allenholm Farm.

And this enthusiasm seems characteristic of Ray's outlook on the future. He is looking forward to the growing season, and he and Andy are full of ideas. The orchard will be opening this summer, and local baker Julia Small will be keeping up with the handmade pies, as well as providing other treats for visitors. You'll still be able to get the best maple creemee around at the farm store. Ray C. is also looking forward to bringing one of his favorite fair foods to the orchard, cotton candy. The animals in the petting paddock have all moved to good homes, but there will still be a friendly face to welcome you.

Allenholm Farm, along with many local farm stands and farm stores will be opening for the summer season soon! You can get the latest updates on farm and food offerings, hours, etc... in the Northwest Vermont Grown Guide to Agriculture at www.nwvtgrown.com. And South Hero Land Trust will be printing an updated Champlain Islands Grown Map of Grand Isle County in late May, so stay tuned for that great resource too.

Year-Round Farm Market to Open: A New Spot for Local Farms in South Hero

Local farmers Alisha Utter & Kyle Bowley of Arbor Farmstead in Grand Isle are opening a year-round farm market in South Hero. We checked in with Alisha and Kyle to get the inside scoop on how this new market will feature farms from across the Islands and Vermont.



Alisha and Kyle in front of the new Arbor Farm Market. Photo provided by Arbor Farmstead.

South Hero Land Trust: *What kind of space do you hope to create?*

Alisha and Kyle: While we love living on the Islands, fresh, healthy, local food is not always accessible, especially when the farmers' market is not in season. Many Islanders still travel into Burlington to access local food despite the plethora of farms in Grand Isle County. We live on the Islands for a reason, so why find a reason to ever leave?! Arbor Farm Market is a contemporary take on Vermont's iconic general stores and farmstands. The store will capture the vibrancy and seasonality of Vermont. We foresee the vibes being akin to a country store where community stories are shared: told through the products on the store shelves and swapped neighbor-to-neighbor on the front porch bench. The Market is a farmer-owned store focused on Islands-grown produce, Vermont food products, beer, wine, and gifts.

South Hero Land Trust: *Arbor Farmstead practices veganic agriculture. How will the farm store exemplify that mission?*

Alisha and Kyle: Arbor Farm Market embodies Arbor Farmstead's commitment to sustainability, responsible land stewardship, and community wellness. As part of the working landscape of Vermont, it is invaluable to us to bring together those with land-based livelihoods and connect them with a consistent, year-round market for their products. Solidarity with farmers and supporting food sovereignty are values that we extend beyond our local product sourcing. For provisions grown elsewhere, we have carefully selected sources that meet Fair Trade standards and/or contribute to social good.

South Hero Land Trust: *What will you offer from the farm?*

Alisha and Kyle: The Market will feature fresh produce, herbs, cut flowers, and fruit preserves from Arbor Farmstead. Our signature hand-shaved, homegrown fruit snowcones will also be making a comeback this summer through pop-up events at Arbor Farm Market! K. Bowley Woodcraft's one-of-a-kind electrically etched and stone inlaid homewares and selection of local topographic maps carved from wood will also be among the Market offerings, too.

South Hero Land Trust: *What local farms are lined up to sell through the Market?*

Alisha and Kyle: The heart of the store is fresh produce and we are thrilled to be working with Allenhalm Farm, Blue Heron Farm, Darby Farm, Pomykala Farm, Sandy Bottom Farm, and Savage Gardens. We are carrying eggs from Savage Gardens, a curated selection of dairy (and non-dairy) products from around the state, fresh baked goods from Wally's Place and Red House Sweets, and a variety of provisions and dry goods (e.g., Grand Isle Pasta). We are also curating a selection of local wine and beer through partnerships including Kraemer & Kin and Ellison Estate Vineyard.

South Hero Land Trust: *When can we visit?*

Alisha and Kyle: We will open our doors for our soft opening on Arbor Day (Friday, April 30). From that point on, we will be open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays from 10 am to 6 pm and Fridays and Saturdays 10 am-7 pm (closed Mondays and Tuesdays). We will officially kick off the season with a grand opening celebration on Memorial Day Weekend!



Arbor Farmstead's blackberries will be on the shelf this summer. Photo provided by Arbor Farmstead.

Growing the Seeds of Change: Gardens help feed our community

Over the last year the pandemic has impacted our jobs, our schools, and our families in almost every way. For families struggling to make ends meet, it has become harder than ever to make sure there is food on the table each day. Last summer South Hero Land Trust worked with local volunteers to create a three part “Grow for Your Neighbor” campaign. We provided vegetable seedlings from local farms (and some fresh fruits, vegetables, and eggs) to families through food shelves and meal programs in the Islands, developed a seed library, created a donation plot at Health Hero Farm to grow vegetables for local food shelves, and supported townspeople in growing an extra row for the food shelf in their home gardens. The need for extra fruits and vegetables remains still high in our community this year, and we are committed to helping. We hope you will join us!

Teaching Community Skills in the Garden at Folsom School

We can't wait to start growing in our newly rebuilt teaching garden at Folsom.* Last fall we were able to host outdoor classes for students, who helped harvest the summer's produce and build the new garden space. This year students, teachers, and volunteers will be growing food for the school kitchen and the Food For Thought Summer Meal Program, and of course a little taste testing in the garden. In addition to math and science, students are learning about how we take care of each other as a community.

When school is out, summer garden volunteers take over. Interested in helping? As a garden volunteer, you participate in an orientation with SHLT staff, and then show up to help on a schedule that works for you.

Growing for Donation and Preserving Legacy at Health Hero Farm

Community member and garden champion Regan Henry worked with South Hero Land Trust and a group of motivated volunteers to develop a donation garden on land provided by Bob Fireovid and Joan Falcao at Health Hero Farm. We will be planting this plot again, with vegetables bound for the Grand Isle Food Shelf. This year we will also be growing traditional Abenaki beans as part of the “Abenaki Land Link” project of the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuck-Abenaki Nation, NOFA-VT, and 40 participating farms and garden. This project aims to to preserve the living legacy of traditional Abenaki crops and to grow food for Abenaki people in need.

A Different Sort of Lending Library Helps Home Gardeners Grow a Little Extra

This is the second year of the free seed library housed at the Worthen Library. We've been collecting extra seeds from gardeners and our South Hero Land Trust stash. They are sorted and available at the Library for any gardener to take home and plant, for your own dinner table, or to help out a neighbor. If you would like to pick some up and grow a little extra in your garden this summer, we would love to support your efforts. We've developed a guide to growing extra for donation, with recommendations for the fruits and vegetables most needed by various food shelves and meal programs, as well as information about when, where, and how to donate your extra.

If you would like more information about any of these programs, have seeds or seedlings to donate, or would like to volunteer, e-mail guy@shlt.org.



Students and teachers at Folsom School harvest the last of the green beans in the old garden beds.

**Supported by grant funding from the Vermont Community Garden Network, the Ben & Jerry's Foundation, and Rise VT.*

Ready for a little Spring Cleaning? Volunteer as a Trail Steward

South Hero Land Trust Programs Director, Guy Maguire, loves spring because it's a season of renewal. Each year he watches the melting of snow transform the grey and brown landscape, bringing back the textures and colors of growth and change—running water, fat-budded branches, and the emerald leaves of new forest wildflowers. He likes that spring is also a time of renewal at home—time for “spring-cleaning,” changing out storm windows for screens, organizing the garage, or putting away the heavy quilts for lighter summer blankets.

This is true for our shared spaces as well as home, and each spring South Hero Land Trust puts together a list of projects for cleaning up and repairing our community trails. South Hero's trails are being used more this year than ever before, and we need your help to keep them safe and beautiful! As coordinator of our trails and volunteers, Guy could use some help.

A Tasty Invasive: Tackling Garlic Mustard

Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) is an invasive leafy green that is currently spreading over multiple public trails in South Hero. Garlic mustard is allelopathic, which means that it exudes chemicals that harm other plants, and prevent them from growing. And, it emerges very early in the spring, giving it a head start on other plants. Together these traits allow it to out-compete native flowers and even shrubs, reducing local biodiversity and wildlife habitat. On the upside: named for the distinct scent of its crushed leaves, garlic mustard is edible and quite tasty!

If pulled in early spring before flowering, it is much easier to control. That's why SHLT is seeking volunteers willing to work independently at removing garlic mustard this April and May. No experience is necessary. We will be flagging problem spots, helping volunteers identify the plants, providing tools, and assigning trail sections.



Garlic mustard in full bloom, image courtesy of http://www.gardenopoliscleveland.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/garlic_mustard_flowering.jpg

Jobs for the Handyman, Woman, or Kid's List

We work with partners and volunteers to maintain trails in a variety of ways. As we move into summer and fall we hope to host safe volunteer work parties to repair split rail fencing at the Landon Community Trail, repair muddy spots on the trails, and other projects. These events are a fun way to help keep our trails open while spending time with friends and neighbors. Join our volunteer list to learn more about these projects! Visit www.shlt.org/volunteer.

Please Be Our Eyes and Ears

By the way, we rely on local residents to be our “eyes and ears” on the trail, letting us know when there's a downed tree, a big hole, or other issues. Then we coordinate with our partners to get it fixed. You can call 372-3786 or email guy@shlt.org with your reports, and be a trail champion. Thanks for your help!



Volunteers work with staff from South Hero Land Trust and Lake Champlain Land Trust to repair a section of fence at the Landon Community Trail in 2018.

Excerpt: In Naming a Town Beach, Impact Matters more than the Intent

The following article excerpt was written by Emily Alger in response to community conversation in January and February 2021, following a vote by the Select Board to call our local public beach the South Hero Town Beach. We are sharing this article here because it represents an important shift in the way that we are thinking about land access and equity within our work. As a result of our continued learning about the widespread systemic racism that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color face in our country and our community, we are committed to changing how we do our work and show up for these communities. While this article is specific to the public beach in South Hero and the history of segregated beaches and pools in our country, the message is relevant across our work. We still have a lot to learn, but we are actively working toward better understanding, and hope that you will join us.

There is a rugged mountain in southwest Vermont with a rustic cabin, tall trees, and thick blackberry brambles. There is a cold lake in the Northeast Kingdom where the hills are perfectly reflected in the still morning water. There is shale beach in my hometown in the Champlain Islands where I learned to swim. These places in Vermont defined my childhood, and in many ways define my identity today. It can be hard when the places we love change, whether it's houses being built in the back field of my childhood home, or a name change at the public beach. But on the issue of renaming what has historically been called White's Beach in South Hero, it is clear to me that enormous good will be done for many by changing its name.

Most of my memories of these special places of my childhood are happy. I was free to run in the woods, swim in the lakes, and explore the mountains in safety. I was welcome everywhere, watched over by family and neighbors, safe in the arms of a community that cared. I can only imagine what it would be like if I had not felt welcome, if I had not been safe in these outdoor spaces.

What if those beaches and mountains had excluded me, my parents, and my grandparents? What if being in those spaces had actually been dangerous, like they could be for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities? This name change cannot hurt me, my family, or my memories. But it can do a great deal of good by making our beach welcoming and safe for people of all colors. And to illustrate this, I think we should look at the historical context of who has been able to swim, picnic, and enjoy our beaches throughout the last 100 years.

“We think of beaches as wide-open spaces, and we associate them with freedom, but they have also been subject to very concerted efforts to restrict access, often along racial lines” (Crawford, 2018). The history of public beaches and pools in the United States is a complex and sometimes dark story. After the Chicago Race Riot of 1919, which began on the shore of Lake Michigan, towns and cities across our country enacted policies and practices designed to segregate outdoor recreation spaces and exclude people of color from those spaces. In the South those policies were explicit, and many cities “prohibited African Americans from stepping foot on any of their public beaches, and for years ignored blacks’ demands for public beaches of their own. Whites’ indifference to the health and humanity of black communities often had deadly consequences. Throughout the Jim Crow era, shockingly high numbers of black youth drowned each summer while playing in dangerous, and unsupervised, bodies of water. When white officials did respond to black demands for beaches and parks of their own, they invariably selected remote, polluted, often hazardous, locations” (Kahrl, 2018).

You might think that this was a problem of the South. It was not. Methods of segregation in the North were subtler but equally effective. “Predominantly white suburbs and towns in the north-east, for example, designated their public beaches for residents only, or charged exorbitant access fees for non-residents, or barred non-residents from parking near the shore, all designed to keep minority populations in neighboring cities out. City officials, meanwhile, failed to provide black neighborhoods with safe and decent places of public recreation and deliberately made beaches and pools frequented by middle-class whites inaccessible to the poor and people of color”(Kahrl, 2018). *Read the rest of the article at www.sblt.org.*

Sources

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in South Hero: 3-6 PM, from May 26 to September 15

Saturdays at St. Joseph's Church
in Grand Isle: 10 AM-2 PM, from May 22 to October 2

get the latest information on shopping safely at www.champlainislandsfarmersmarket.org