



# Hunterdon Land Trust

Protecting the places you love

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Hunterdon Land Trusts Preserves Family Farm in Franklin Township

FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP -- Almost a century later, Ted Horoschak still remembers the polluting of the Raritan River. His father frequently took him to a favorite spot for fishing and crabbing, but everything changed seemingly overnight. Industry had moved into northern New Jersey, dumping chemicals into the river. They arrived one morning to see rats and dogs along the water's edge, feasting on the dead fish that had washed ashore.

"My father and I were in our fishing boat and we never saw so many dead fish – thousands of them belly up – floating up the river and into the ocean. The stink was terrible," Ted said.

Now, having recently celebrated his 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday, Ted and his family have helped protect the water quality of the Lockatong Creek and the natural beauty of the surrounding land by preserving their 125-acre Franklin Township farm, known alternately as White Birch Farm or the Horoschak Farm, off Pittstown Road.

The Hunterdon Land Trust worked to preserve the property because it's located between the Lockatong and Wickecheoke creeks, which both flow nearby.

"One of our goals is to protect water quality in the streams that feed into the Delaware River. Preserving the diverse landscape of the Horoschak Farm, which includes wooded wetlands, is not only good for water but also for ensuring we will always have local sources of agricultural products," said Patricia Ruby, executive director of the Hunterdon Land Trust.

Efforts to protect this property, and others like it, also support the goals of the National Park Service's Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic Program, which aims to protect the natural, historic, and recreational resources that earned this stretch of the river the Wild and Scenic designation.

The Horoschak Farm has a rich history. Years ago, it was half of a 250-acre tract known as the California Farm, Ted said. He arrived in this area hoping to recover from malaria picked up in the South Pacific during World War II. He learned the trade by working with his father-in-law, Anton Seckerzycky (whom Ted still calls "the old man"), who owned a dairy farm. A short time later, Ted purchased his farm at an auction.

He worked and cared for the farm with his wife, Sophie, planting soybeans, corn and grains. He farmed while also working at a General Motors plant in Trenton.

Ted cherishes the land and speaks about its history with warmth and wonder. Years back, he found reminders left behind by those whose footsteps once touched this fertile soil: The arrow heads of the Native Americans, a ring that may have belonged to early Europeans, a whiskey still bootleggers built beside a bend in the Lockatong Creek.

Ted credits his son, Richard, for wanting to preserve the land; Richard quickly replies that his dad was the driving force.

"I had hoped originally to preserve this as parkland, because it has wide open plateaus and beautiful views, but it didn't work out," Richard said. "Farmland was the next best option. Thank God for the Hunterdon Land Trust getting involved, because it got this preserved as farmland."

"I grew up here, and there are different sections of the farm and certain groves of trees that are special to me," Richard continues. "We're right between the Lockatong and Wickecheoke creeks, which flow nearby, so this preservation is important to the water quality and the environment. When I was young, my father would show me things on this land that would add a specialness and mystique into everything on the farm. There's so much history wherever you look – whether it's the Indians or slaves or whiskey distillers during Prohibition. Every piece of this farm has its own history; its own unique feel to it. Preserving this land was important to us."

Lora Jones, secretary of Franklin Township's Open Space Advisory Committee, was instrumental in getting the Land Trust in touch with the Horoschak family. The State Agricultural Development Committee, the Federal Farmland Ranch Program and Franklin Township also provided valuable assistance.

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