

AT EAGLE POND FARM

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AN OCCASIONAL LETTER

April 2024



On a pantry shelf in the kitchen.

Birthday cake for Eagle Pond Farm!

The first week of May, it will be exactly five years since the farm at Eagle Pond was being sold and two auctions and an estate sale were about to empty the house and barn. Donald Hall had died the year before, in 2018, and the future of the farm was uncertain. It seemed that what had made it more than just some farm in New Hampshire was ending. But it wasn't.

A brigade of friends, neighbors, and colleagues came together to create this nonprofit, At Eagle Pond, Inc., to preserve the farm and what it speaks of. Now we're at five candles on this year's cake, plus that important *one-to-grow-on*.

To help us honor what Donald Hall and Jane Kenyon lived here (and the inspiration in how their work grew here), we invite you to make a donation and be part of what is happening.

Mountains of hours donated by founders, board members, and stalwart friends of this endeavor--who bring long experience in historic preservation, museum education, curatorial practice, public programming, and the art of poetry and prose--allow the nonprofit, at this stage, to proceed with no paid staff, administrative expense, or consultant fees. Our primary operating expenses are those of ownership and stewardship. But those are not small.

Recurring *monthly* costs for insurance, security, utilities, maintenance, and mortgage are approximately \$3,500. Every January we start the year facing the necessity of raising \$42,000--

before anything extra--just to keep the lights on and cover basics. The activities of the nonprofit are about more than that: residencies, workshops, opening the house to visitors, other outreach, broader stewardship, eventual repairs, restoring Jane's gardens and reopening farm views, cataloguing, research, writing, conversation, documentation, collaborations with artists in other fields, encouraging poets and writers, and programs of many kinds. But all of this depends on maintaining the house and barn and farm.

If you have already--early on, along the way, or more recently--made a financial contribution, thank you! If you can sustain your support and make that an annual gift, thank you even more. And if you've not made a donation but could, would you consider it?

All gifts to the organization, an established 501(c)(3) nonprofit, are tax-deductible. Donations can be made online at our website, www.ateaglepond.org (see Donate tab) or mailed to At Eagle Pond, Inc., P.O. Box 452, Wilmot, NH 03287. If this is not the best time for you to make a gift, we are glad to receive your pledge. Our fiscal year is January through December. And if you would like more information about expenses and operation, we are happy to provide that, as we are also glad to discuss planning for what's ahead.

Once the organization can show budgetable public support, we can apply for significant grants that will offset the costs of making the house and barn sound, expand residencies and the overall program of the nonprofit, and begin building endowment. But to get there, we need your help with expenses now--and as we continue.



*Morning of May 11, 2019. The estate sale was about to begin.
Photograph courtesy of 603 Estate Sales.*

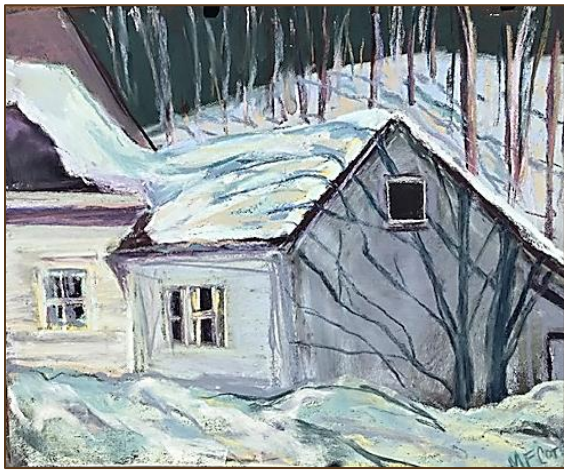
When facing a challenge, Jane often said, “We have come thus far.” As a still-new organization with ambitious plans, we say the same, because we *have* come far. But there's farther to go, there are very real costs, and we would so welcome you with us.

How spring comes to Eagle Pond Farm

It's hard to say exactly when spring begins. The first days of longer sun so soon after December's solstice? The return of crows to white fields in January? The pink tips of February trees and stems that color whole hillsides pink? Or, a month more, thinning ice on the pond, until one day it has gone out? No longer the rumble of plow trucks at night?

Any day can reverse the progression, too. In a diary chronicling years on another homestead in the skirts of Kearsarge, a farmer c. 1910 wrote of neighbors gathering for annual Town Meeting early in March, "Some in wagons, some in sleighs." It's certain, though, that spring is near when mud season sets in.

By February, spring light changes the landscape as snow and shadows turn blue.



A plein air painting by Monica Cote, centered on the woodshed, now garage, beyond the farmhouse kitchen, on February 4th this year. Monica will be instructor for a plein air workshop at the farm in June, an event in collaboration with Twiggs Gallery in Boscaawen, N.H. (www.twigsgallery.org). She will be joined by poet and board member Laurie Zimmerman, who will lead a poetry-writing workshop on the same day. Both programs are almost sold out, but if you would like to be on a contact list for future offerings, let us know.

Mud typically makes New Canada Road, and the road to the pond, almost impassable for several weeks.



Mud owns backroads in mud season.



Towing cars from mud became a farmer's side employment in March.

When days rise above freezing and nights drop below, sap rises in maples. Collected in wooden buckets or metal pails in earlier times, sap at the farm now runs through plastic tubing to portable tanks and is then gathered by neighbors Brian and Gordy Ordway, who boil it down to syrup at their sugarhouse, known as Grandpa's Sugar Barn, two miles up the road in South Danbury.



Traditional sap buckets and pails. Gift of Sue Huntoon and Lance Ford.

As spring took hold, Don's grandmother, Kate Wells, put away winter quilts. But not too soon. Because, until recent years, cold stayed into May.

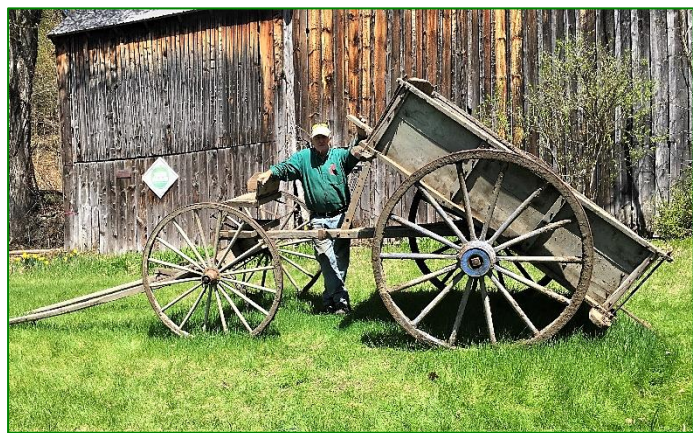


19th and 20th century quilts, also used by Jane and Don in their first year at the farm, before they installed a

furnace. Gift of Carolyn Demers, who bought these at the estate sale and donated them back to the house. Some of the story of older eras of the farm is told now only in their fabric scraps and other furnishings.



Now, Wesley Wells, Don's grandfather, brought the blue ox-cart--converted to manure wagon-- from under the barn and began spreading the fields.



Ox-cart, original to the farm, adapted for use as a "honey wagon." Bought at the estate sale and donated back by Elizabeth and Dennis Hager (seen here) so it could stay at the farm. Photographs, Elizabeth Hager.

Skip some years and, by spring, Don's satellite dish brought baseball instead of basketball into the sitting room. And Jane returned to her gardens, almost before snow left them.

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At Eagle Pond, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit established to preserve the farm where poets Donald Hall and Jane Kenyon shared a writing life, as well as to honor their work, open the house to the public, invite reflection on poetry and place, and provide residencies where poets and others can take up their own work.

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