



The Newsletter of the  
*Claymont Society for Continuous Education*

Newsletter

www.claymont.org

Spring 2010



### **Claymont Receives Grant for Mansion Restoration Work**

Claymont has recently been selected to receive \$150,000 from the Save America's Treasures grant for restoration to the mansion. Kit McGinnis worked closely with WV Congressperson Shelley Moore Capito, who sponsored the inclusion of Claymont in the congressional appropriations bill. We deeply appreciate the efforts of Representative Capito and the National Parks Trust in securing the grant. The Save America's Treasures grant is the premiere historic preservation grant in the nation and to receive funds is a great honor and recognition of the historic significance of the Claymont Court Mansion. Prime restoration projects to be completed include repair of the mansion ballroom and renovation of the second floor porch. Other work may focus on upgrading the electrical system and repairing the windows. The grant is a "matching grant" which means that Claymont will need to raise an additional \$150,000 from other sources. Claymont is working with the NPT on fund raising, but donations from individuals are greatly appreciated. You can securely donate from the Claymont Web Site using PayPal.

#### **In this Issue:**

- **Claymont Receives Grant for Mansion Restoration Work**
- **Opportunities for Experience, Involvement and Service**
- **Gurdjieff/Bennett Intensive 2010**
- **Farm Conservation Easement Update**
- **WWOOF Program**
- **Observations on Fourth Way Weekends**
- **Sherborne Memories**
- **Claymont Barn Garden**
- **New Garden at Claymont**
- **From the Board**

**The Save America's Treasures Grant received by Claymont is a "matching grant." Claymont needs to raise an additional \$150,000 from other sources.**

*Please consider making a donation for restoration of the Claymont Mansion.*

#### **Remember:**

- *Your donation is tax deductible*
- *Any donation you make will be "doubled" by the matching grant.*
- *Any money you donate will be used specifically for restoring the mansion*
- *You can securely donate from the Claymont Web Site using Paypal*

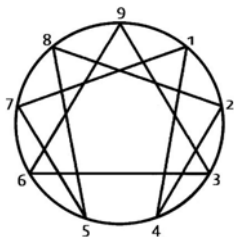
## Opportunities for Experience, Involvement and Service

We want to strengthen our links with the wider community and have more people involved with us at Claymont. As you well know, we have a unique and beautiful place where we can practice inner and outer work and have fun doing it!! Whatever your involvement with Claymont in the past, we want to create more opportunities for you to participate. We offer a wonderful setting for your meditation and personal practice in exchange for 4 hours of practical work per day. You can come for one day, one week, or even longer. We can provide shared and personal sleeping space and meals from our kitchen and garden. This personal retreat is offered during the warmer months when we are running the seminar program. Your time and energy will help support Claymont's seminar business, gardens and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and general maintenance and grounds keeping and other community projects. We welcome all skill levels and enthusiasm that you can bring. Contact us at [registrar@claymont.org](mailto:registrar@claymont.org) or call 304-725-4437 to book your stay.

~~~~~

### Gurdjieff Bennett Intensive 2010

The Gurdjieff/Bennett Intensive will be held at Camp Caravan from June 20th to July 31st, 2010. For more detailed information please visit the Intensive web site using the link below, or contact the registrar, Nanji Davison. Email: [registrar@campcaravan.org](mailto:registrar@campcaravan.org) Phone: 978-249-8068



For more information go to:  
<http://intensive.campcaravan.org/>

**Description:** Inspired by the experiences at Sherborne House and the Claymont Society, and related to the program of those attending Gurdjieff's Prieuré at Fontainebleau, France, the intensive is a unique immersion for those looking for the opportunity to work with daily practice and ideas.

### Aims for the 2010 Intensive

- To equip you with a range of practices—tools—that you can use in your continuing path of spiritual transformation
- To provide conditions in which you may have a taste of a reality different from the lives we ordinarily live
- To help you gain the confidence that this reality is accessible to all who are prepared to work towards it and that it is not something distant and intangible
- To foster the awakening of Conscience so that you are able both to see and to respond to what is right and necessary
- To help you take a step towards your own inner freedom
- To encourage you to evaluate the material of the course in the light of your own experience, taking this as your primary authority, rather than accepting this material uncritically
- To foster an awareness that we all have a task to perform in serving the future

~~~~~

## Farm Conservation Easement Update

This is an update on the current effort to place some of the land which belongs to the Claymont Society into a farmland conservation easement. Multiple attempts have been made in the past. It is with resolute hope that it will finally get done on our watch. There is a Conservation Committee, consisting of Kit McGinnis, Ellen Arrison, Elizabeth Kyle and Hardy Mason. We are navigating the local, state, and federal systems so that the final application can be submitted this year. The Claymont Board has agreed on placing close to 250 of the 345 acres currently owned by the Society into a farmland conservation easement. It may even be possible to receive some monetary compensation for the land being placed into easement. Although that is not the primary reason for this effort, if some monies are realized, a part will go toward the matching moneys needed for the Save Americas Treasure Grant (see Page 1 article).

You may be asking why are we willing to put in over a year's worth of effort to do this now? The reason is that the current Board, and many in the community, recognize the spiritual and physical importance of the land we call Claymont. In the last ten years, surrounding orchards have been replaced with high density housing developments. We want to protect our land, in its pristine condition, for our future. The purpose of a farmland conservation easement is to prevent farmland from being converted into a commercial development or a residential subdivision, in perpetuity. Rest assured that the possession of the property, maintenance, right of access, and the right to sell remains with the landowner (Claymont Society).

A few highlights of what all this means if our efforts come to fruition:

1) The Claymont Society will not be allowed to further divide and sell any of the land which has been placed in easement. We have carefully listened to all the Board's concerns, and are keeping 2 large, strategically placed parcels out of the easement, so they will be available for future sale or development. One of these areas includes the mansion and its surrounding land. The other is along Huyett Road, from the barn westward (toward Quonset Road). The current vision is to have up to 10 lots available for cluster housing for more residents in the future.

2) Commercial forestry will be prohibited so the North Woods will forever be a natural sanctuary for all to enjoy. The community members will still be able to harvest lumber in the woods for their personal use, as long as it abides by standard timber management practices.

3) Nothing can be built on the easement portions of the land that is not related to agricultural practices. This means that no new residential houses can be erected; however the old ones can be torn down and rebuilt. Barns, farm ponds, and any other structure that will be involved in the agricultural uses of the land are permitted.

4) Rest assured we are not limiting the possibilities of Claymont's future as a sustainable farm, according to its original mission. The list of what is permitted include "the production of plants and animals useful to man, including, but not limited to, forage, grain and field crops; pasturage, dairy and dairy products; poultry and poultry products; equestrian uses; livestock and fowl uses and livestock and fowl products; bees and apiary products; fruits, nuts, and vegetables of all kinds; nursery, floral, greenhouse products and production of plant food; aquaculture; a winery, microbrewery, or grain mill; the primary processing and storage of the

agricultural production of the Property; and agritourism”.

A lot of hard work, involving many agencies and people, are going into this effort. We are stewards of the land and hope it will be around for a long time to serve and be of service.

~~~~~

### **I WWOOFed at Claymont**

Hank Goldstein

When Mr. Bennett initiated basic courses, he couched his “outreach” in large part to the ethos and concerns of young people struggling with the turmoil of the ‘60’s. In his lectures and writings he addressed widespread dissatisfaction with “the establishment,” as well as disillusionment with political activism, and offered an intensive introduction to principles and techniques of inner work as a path to the “real world.” Where is the “center of gravity,” the vitality, of today’s youth? How do we contextualize the benefits and importance of inner work for young people in a way that addresses the current ethos?

For a number of years Claymont has been listed in a directory of opportunities for people wanting experiences on organic farms – “WWOOF” is an acronym for “World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms,” an “international movement that is helping people share more sustainable ways of living.” With token effort and attention, a few handfuls of WWOOFers visited Claymont over the years. Even so, three current residents initially came for the vegetables and stayed for the inner work.

At the beginning of 2008, Claymont’s WWOOF program was organized in earnest. During 2009, we hosted twenty-five WWOOFers. Needless to say, their participation is a great aid to the overwhelming work of life of the farm. Additionally, some of the “potential” that

we know we have here is being realized with the help of strong, young, motivated young people, *viz*, the continuing expansion of the CSA garden.

In recognition that WWOOFERS come to “share more sustainable ways of living,” and not for a basic course, Work ideas are offered, but no one is required or even asked to participate in inner work activities. Yet, books, exercises, and opportunities are available to anyone whose “magnetic center” tugs at the veil of “organic” and “sustainable.”

Do WWOOFers leave their tenure at Claymont with a resolve to work on themselves? Who knows? First of all, the Work is not for everyone – we know that. Secondly, we do not offer a basic course to attract and organize a resolve. I can only present this anecdotal experience with no statistical significance:

Last year, Leah and I visited our children in Seattle. After twelve hours of hard travelling, before napping and still jet-lagged, we were accosted (in a good way) by a former Claymont WWOOFer and three of his friends who could have kept going all night (we couldn’t) asking about movements, Gurdjieff, Bennett, and so on.

I suspect that Claymont’s WWOOFer program will continue to grow as concerns over the food supply, climate change, the instability of political and economic institutions, etc. intensify. I suspect that, just as in the ‘60’s, more and more young people will have less and less belief in the ability of activism to address today’s challenges.

~~~~~

### **Observations on the Fourth Way Weekends**

Liz Kyle

As an organizer of the ongoing 3 day Fourth Way weekends, I knew what we

were doing was part of something greater than our individual efforts. It was not until I facilitated the latest retreat in silence that I glimpsed some of the other forces involved in these weekends. There are higher beings and energies that are helping us in our inner Work from the past, present and future. Let me share some of what I experienced.

Past: From the initial meeting on Thursday night, all the way through the weekend, I am not alone in the feeling that the efforts of all those who worked before us at Claymont has built up, and is still available to help us in our present work. The work efforts of our teachers were there. There was stored energy from all the past course graduates. There was the maintained physical venue that the current community is overseeing. It was like entering a space, lovingly prepared for us. I found it easy to access the collective wisdom.

Present: I saw that my role, as facilitator, was to consciously maintain the container by attending to the present moment so others could tap into the collective wisdom as well. Each day, at the end of our morning sittings, I would set as my intention to be an instrument of serving the higher. Each day it took a slightly different form, but it was always about focusing on what was needed, never what I wished to do. I found that by having a strong clear wish, I released an energy field that helped create the outward manifestation of the day's events, while simultaneously attracting help to us. It was a two-way streak.

Future: At the beginning of every activity, I always invoked the saying: "May all beings be well and happy, and those who wish to aid us in our work, be welcomed here now." It is not uncommon for me to actually feel a breeze enter the room, even when all the doors and windows are closed. I am able to sense the presence of the beings that join us. My body instantly fills with sensation and an energy that was different

than just moments before. I have done this often enough now, that there are a few beings who make themselves known to me, like old friends.

Let me remind you of a story that Matt Marmorella told about what happened during the last weekend retreat that he attended. At one point, when he was sitting alone on the mansion veranda, he said that he found himself in a room filled with 5 or 6 beings. They were having a meeting and knew he was there. According to Matt, they were pleased with the weekend and were wondering "what to do with this place now". It touched him deeply because he had never before had such a real experience of being in the other worlds.

I have been witness to similar gatherings of beings operating outside of our tangible senses. During this last silent weekend, instead of my going to them, they came to us. Before the weekend, I had written things out to say, planned certain activities, and imagined how it would be. But each day, after that invocation, it was they who told me what to say, what to do and when to do it. They guided me in every step in order to build the container for us to do our work in. Those invisible beings were very real for me. I was only an instrument for their will. And I have not been the same ever since.

The good news is that we have help. Many of us have experienced it. We are serving a future we do not know. Now I am most interested in exploring what conditions are necessary to lower the veil between these worlds that is so thin at Claymont. Please continue to come to these weekends and help me pay attention to not only what is done or said, but "who" is doing them. How can we access the consciousness behind the "doing"? It was easy in the silence of the weekend. Is that a key?

*“Stillness and Silence are the portal of any states consciousness beyond our ordinary states. It is not so easy in this world of ours to have stillness and keep stillness in the midst of the noise and chaos of the world.”*



of  
to

*“When people are accustomed to sharing silence, they come to love it. They know that we are closer to one another in silence than in speech. They know that speech is a form of communication that is only useful for the outward things of this world. Necessary because we live in these bodies and we have to deal with material objects and gesture or speech is an appropriate way of communicating about those things.*

*But the truth is that Everything that really matters to us is beyond speech.”*

*Opening words of JBG's talk: [Cosmic Consciousness](#)*

“This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.  
A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.  
Welcome and entertain all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.  
The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.  
Be grateful for whomever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.”

-- Rumi

## SHERBORNE MEMORIES

Roberta J. Chromey

“Hey Jack, you ready?” I poke my head into his dorm room on the first floor of Sherborne House. It's early Fall on the Second Course, 1972. Little Peter Franke is looking at a pile of assorted 2x4's he's been collecting on the floor next to his bed. Paul is standing by the fireplace, gazing at it. Van Carter's lounging on his bed reading a book. Jack's juggling three lacrosse balls. It's Friday night.

“What time is it?” Jack asks as a ball sails over his shoulder and into his long tapered fingers.

“It's time to go down to the Theme meeting.”

“O.K.”

As we step out into the broad corridor others are walking by, everyone heading downstairs to the Horse Parlour. The room isn't that large, so we all crowd in, most sitting cross legged on the carpeted floor. There's a few chairs around the edges of the room for some of the older staff members.

Mr. Bennett's chair, with its curved arms, red cushioned seat and straight wooden back, is facing us at the head of the room. It takes awhile for all ninety of us to squeeze in and get situated. We're quiet, expectant.

Mr. B. strides into the room from the door behind his chair and folds his long gangly limbs into the seat. His broad forehead sets off his long angular face and wild white hair, which seems to defy combing. I notice the sleeves of his perennial tweed jacket are a bit too short or perhaps his wrists too long. His large hands rub back and forth on the worn wood of the chair arms. Several minutes go by. You could hear a pin drop. We know by now that he's not just lost in thought, he's most likely traversing some by-gone eon, looking for the answer to an Essential Question. He looks up.

Scanning carefully around the room, bright eyes shining, taking note of who's here,

“Well then, who has something to say?”

## Claymont Barn Garden

Rebekah Goldstein-Hawes

We approach the garden in a co-creative spirit, hoping to learn from nature and allow for processes beyond our current understanding to take place. Within this framework we draw on all the information and experience of other master gardeners to help us. We understand that not everything will work as we expect, and so we plan for some ‘failures’ along the way. It’s all part of the learning.

We pay attention to the biodynamic planting days, and keep track of what we do to eventually determine through our own experience what works and what doesn’t. We use compost and organic fertilizers where they seem appropriate, and we have tried to design the garden to make best use of all our available resources, including chickens, visitors, compost, and more! We are moving towards no tilling, and continue to experiment with seed balls and living mulches. We joyfully wildcraft wherever we can, the extensive bounty of this property.

The garden doesn’t neatly fit into any category described above, but embraces any approach that honors the land and our ongoing relationship in the cycle of food in a long-term holistically sustainable way.

Weeds tell us a great deal about what is going on in the soil – what nutrients are lacking, what perhaps the soil is heavy in. In this way they are a valuable diagnostic tool. The weeds themselves often serve to remedy soil imbalances, long well-established tap-roots like doc and pigweed, bring precious minerals up to the soil surface where more delicately rooted vegetables can partake of them. Some weeds like clover and Johnson grass are particularly good at breaking up heavy dense clay soils. Some weeds provide a lovely rich ground cover which

retains moisture in the soil, prevents soil erosion and acts as a living mulch for other plants. Other weeds have valuable medicinal or culinary properties just waiting for us to fully utilize them.

With all of the benefits that a common ‘weed’ can bring to the garden, weeding becomes an entirely different process.

In the Barn Gardens at Claymont, we strive to maintain a balance in the small ecosystem that is developing. This means selectively ‘thinning’ volunteers that might otherwise take over (like chicory for example) while allowing a few plants to continue to grow, along borders and out of the way places. This brings color and beneficial insects to the garden and the long tap roots make a good hot drink. We are thankful for dandelion and lambs-quarters which choose to grow in the fertile soil, again selectively thinning to keep the whole garden in balance. Clover is allowed to grow prolifically on pathways and borders, its nitrogen-fixing properties and living-mulch capacity much appreciated.

This doesn’t mean we have no difficulties with weeds! There are several plants which have overrun the garden, and seem unable to share at this point. Johnson-grass, which its ability to thrive in over-tilled and under-fertile soil, is giving us both a strong message, and a real challenge!

Our selective approach to weeding and companion planting leads to a distinctive and somewhat ‘wild’ garden look and feel. Rather than straight and predictable rows of one-vegetable-at-a-time, you may find various plants co-habiting, a zucchini nested in amongst the clover plants, surrounded by nasturtiums to keep away the squash bugs.

### **The purpose of the garden is:**

- 1) To be a research space for experimenting with sustainable wholistic gardening methods.

- 2) To provide a bounty of high quality vegetables, fruits and herbs
- 3) To provide the community with sacred garden space, which generates and holds healing energy for self-renewal, and connection with nature.

The structure of Community Supported Agriculture has its own special benefits. It allows the consumers to receive produce fresh directly from the garden, experiencing a much closer connection with natural seasons and eco-system. In the garden, it means we are not restricted to varieties which are travel and shelf-life hardy, but can focus on flavour, color, drought tolerance, and other useful traits. As gardeners, it allows us to focus on the gardening, without having to be sales reps as well.

{In the context of the Claymont Community, it means that residential and non-residential community members can choose their level of involvement in the garden, and the best form of exchange for them. If they have money, they can pay for vegetables; if they have time, they can lend a hand digging beds; if they have motivation they can take on responsibility for an area of the garden or distribution of vegetables.

In the larger system, it means we are not wasting resources in the transporting of produce all over the world. Economically it keeps the money local. Generally this means that more of the money spent on food actually goes back to the growers and the gardens, where it can support quality sustainable practice.

If you need any other reason to see the benefits of the CSA structure, it also brings joy and learning as we connect as a garden community around the growing, harvesting and eating of our own delicious food. We

all share in the investment, in the labor, in the failures, and the rewards. Just like real life.

*The preceding is an excerpt from an article titled 'approaches to agriculture' from the recently published "Claymont Community Garden Companion".*

***To purchase the book, please email claymontgarden@gmail.com***

~~~~~

## **A New Garden at Claymont**

Julie Ford

A few years ago, some of the community members expressed a desire to have a garden where we could come together, learn, experiment and grow our own fruit, vegetables and flowers. At the same time, the land in front of the Dom House was calling to be productive. The result has been named "the Meadow Garden."

The Meadow Garden will be entering its third growing season this spring. It's a large garden with many rows for personal and shared planting. Of course, we end up sharing everything as there is always plenty to share. We have had an abundance of tomatoes, squash, melons, lettuce, herbs, green beans, flowers and more.

With the collective effort of friends, it has been a joy to see this space become a garden. Some notable efforts include Liz, for her hard work, vision, persistence and knowledge of gardening; Richard, for his construction of the garden shed and gate; and Ernest, for installing the water system standpipe (as well as his laughter and consistent support).

With each year, the improvements to the garden are evident by the harvest. This last growing season, we added an irrigation drip

system. This coming spring we hope to improve the quality of the soil and the beds.

You are welcome to join us in the garden this spring. You can have your own plot, or share in the group effort. There are no rules, other than to be thankful for the land and the bountiful gifts of the garden. You may contact me, (Julie), at ford-clan@comcast.net for more information. We usually connect by email as to what days work best for gardening together or we just wander down on our own. We hope to see you there.

~~~~~

### **News from the Board:**

*Meet the New Claymont Society Board Members:*

Douglas Martin and Hardy Mason were elected to the Claymont Society Board of Directors at the November 2009 Annual General Meeting. Below are brief bios on them.

#### Douglas Martin

Doug has read a great deal about the Fourth Way and became a student of a Fourth Way school, the Summa Foundation in Philadelphia, PA, beginning in 1995.

After moving to Frederick, MD he started attending movements classes at the Claymont Society in 2007. Doug has participated in numerous work weekends, weekend intensive workshops, and other Claymont Society Fourth Way events. In addition, Doug has attended the Sufi Celebration at Claymont in 2007 and 2008.

Doug is married to Elizabeth A. Martin and has two children, Andrew, 23 years old and Ingrid, 21 years old. He works in the environmental engineering group of the Bechtel Corporation, an engineering and construction company.

#### Hardy Mason

Hardy began Gurdjieffian group work in the mid-'70s and was part of the 5th Basic Course at Claymont. He has since worked with a number of groups of different lineages. In recent years he has helped organize and facilitate both 4th Way and Mevlevi events at Claymont.

Hardy's first career spanned 10 years of increasing responsibility in computer systems, including the management of large budgets. His next 10 years were spent managing projects and departments for large corporations. In 1998 he started his own investment advisory business, which he continues to operate when not tending his woods and raspberry beds.

~~~~~

#### *Claymont Board of Directors*

Ellen Arrison, Chair  
Amy Silver, President  
Matt Zenkovich, Secretary  
Elizabeth Shor  
Deborah Rose Longo  
Hardy Mason  
Doug Martin

#### *Board of Directors meetings for 2010*

March 7  
April 25  
July 18  
September 19  
November 7 (Annual General Meeting)

#### **Contact us:**

Claymont Society  
667 Huyett Road  
Charles Town, WV 25414

Phone 304-725-4437  
Email:seminars@claymont.org