Peonies have been esteemed flowers in China for a long time. Because peonies were popular in Sui and Tang dynasty imperial palaces, they are associated with high value, honor and nobility. In fact, the peony is sometimes known as the “king of flowers.”

When a new peony garden becomes a reality for Utica’s Parks & Parkway System in 2014, the CNY Conservancy may have to rename its blooms the “queen of flowers” because they will be forever associated with one of the Mohawk Valley’s most extraordinary women.

Elizabeth F. Canfield, known to friends and family as Betty Ann, died on January 7, 2013. The founder and President of The Central New York Conservancy, William F. Locke, is Betty Ann’s son.

An avid and enthusiastic community volunteer, Betty Ann contributed tens of thousands of hours to numerous nonprofit organizations in the community: the Faxton Council, where she served as President; the Board of Managers of Faxton Hospital; the Children’s Hospital; The House of the Good Shepherd; the Junior League of Greater Utica; the Altar Society of Grace Church.

Betty Ann was a co-founder of the Pleasant Hills Garden Club and was renowned for her horticultural skills and omnipresent “green thumb.” Her talent for scale and composition in designing her gardens was enviable. Among her gardening achievements—healthy, hardy delphiniums—flowers that are notoriously difficult to grow and sustain year after year.

The Central New York Conservancy, too, benefited from the “Betty Ann touch.” She was a gracious and generous donor from the time the Conservancy was founded. She volunteered along with other Pleasant Hills Garden Club members to plant hundreds of perennials in E.T. Proctor Park and along the Memorial Parkway. In 2006, she was among several volunteers who served on the Conservancy’s Gala Committee, and helped raise more than $16,000 to complete the restoration of the Lily Pond and bath houses in the Park.

In Betty Ann’s memory and as a tribute to her love and enthusiasm for Utica and gardening, the Central New York Conservancy will design and plant a peony garden within the Utica Parks and Parkway System. Although the decision on a site is still under discussion, the choice of which peonies to plant has been made: a mix of early-middle- and late-blooming Saunders peonies that will allow for the biggest bloom time possible. It is anticipated that site preparation will begin later this summer and that 40 herbaceous and tree peonies will be planted.

If the Saunders name rings a bell, it should. These are peonies that were cultivated here in the Mohawk Valley, by A.P. Saunders, a Canadian-born professor of chemistry at Hamilton College.

According to an article entitled “The Professor and the Peony,” by Thomas Fischer: “Over a span of almost 30 years, Saunders crossed the lactifloras [more specifically, the Paeonia lactiflora, native to China and then cultivated

Continued on page 4…
A walk on the wild side – the Roscoe Conkling/Valley View Switchbacks!

Quick – when someone says the words “historic heritage”, what’s the first thought that comes to mind? You think of manmade structures, right?

But, there are many wooded areas, especially here in Utica and the surrounding Mohawk Valley, that are also worthy of the historic heritage distinction. In fact, there is a rich history to be found in the non-developed, wooded hills and dales often found in older parks and cemeteries.

Roscoe Conkling/Valley View, the largest historic park in Utica, epitomizes what we mean when we talk about historic heritage. Its switchback section contains flora similar to the trees, shrubs, bushes and plants that were present when European settlers first colonized the Mohawk Valley.

How this land was reforested is an interesting story. Pollen emanating from river valleys was likely blown up from the Gulf Coast. Pioneering plants staked their claim, shed their leaves, and branched out to house mammals and insects. These vegetative “first settlers” – trees, grasses, and forbs – created the soil that invited secondary growth and voila! A Northern mixed forest was born.

Steele Hill Road runs through Roscoe Conkling/Valley View Park. It serves as the main entrance to the Utica Zoological Society. A wooded slope runs behind the Utica Zoo and a series of roads traverse Steele Hill. The woods and roads are known as the switchbacks. It’s very likely that the woods in the switchback area of Roscoe Conkling/Valley View date back to the end of the last Ice Age.

In the switchbacks area, hikers and runners will encounter native flora that the Indians would have used for cultural and medicinal practices. Walk the switchbacks and you will see tree species such as basswood, sweet birch, ironwood, Canadian hemlock, and sugar maples. Shrubs like viburnums, witch-hazel, and colt’s foot grow underfoot. No longer here are elms and chestnuts, but sometimes seedlings of these species in their juvenile form may be seen.

An interesting footnote: many of the streets that intersect or run perpendicular to Valley View Road are named after the ancient trees that grow in the switchback area – Ironwood Road and Viburnum Drive are good examples.

Want to experience the switchbacks for yourself? Join the Landmarks Society of Greater Utica and the CNY Conservancy’s Landscape Designer, Katelyn Cardamone, on Monday, August 26, for a walking tour of the Roscoe Conkling/Valley View Switchbacks. Come and see the area most often visited by Boilermaker racers, cross-country runners, and skiers. Cardamone will help you identify the historic plant mix as you walk and experience the rich humus smell of the detritus in the soil. You’ll also hear the creatures that make their home in this more remote and historically unique section of Roscoe Conkling/Valley View. The summertime event also includes a picnic at 7 p.m. and mini-concert by Silky Soul. The tour will begin at 6 p.m. Walkers will meet at the Valley View Pavilion.
We love our parks... this much!

No doubt about it. Those of us who live in the Mohawk Valley love our local parks. Check out F.T. Proctor Park any day of the year — and you’ll see hikers and joggers, dog walkers and baby carriage pushers, Frisbee throwers and outdoor enthusiasts.

On Saturday, May 4, you can share the affection and love with other like-minded “parkies” as New York State celebrates I Love My Park Day. Now in its second year, the celebration of the State’s parks and historic sites recognizes the importance they play in a community’s quality of life. More than 70 I Love My Park Day events are planned throughout New York State.

This is the first year that Utica’s Parks and Parkway System will be rightfully celebrated as part of I Love My Park Day. The Central New York Conservancy and its partners — The Utica Zoo and The City of Utica — have received enthusiastic support from some very special friends and volunteers to make this year’s event memorable.

Utica’s I Love My Park Day features Roscoe Conkling/Valley View Park. From 11 a.m. — 2 p.m. on May 4, the following activities will occur during this family-friendly event:

- **Reduced admission to the Utica Zoo**, which is located in Roscoe Conkling Park. Admission is $4.25 (ages 12-61); $3.50 (ages 62 and older); $2.50 (ages 4-11); and free (ages 3 and under and all Zoo members);
- At 1 p.m., Landscape designer Katechen Cardamone will present an informal lecture about the Roscoe Conkling/Valley View Switchbacks (lecture will occur at the Pavilion at the Switchbacks entrance to the Park, off Valley View Road);
- **Utica Zoomobile** — come talk to the animals and their human educators (at the Switchbacks entrance to the Park);
- **Walking tours of the Zoo** — Memorial Parkway Entrance;
- **Lecture on Grasses** — Utica Zoo Auditorium;
- **Chobani Yogurt Give-Away** — enjoy a refreshing cup of yogurt, thanks to a donation from our friends at Chobani — available at the Zoo Auditorium. Chobani is also a major sponsor for the statewide I Love My Park Day;
- **Vintage Cars Display** — check out the pre-WWII vehicles on display throughout the Zoo grounds, organized by Barton Rasmus.

In addition to the activities outlined above, volunteers will be cleaning trails, tidying walkways and otherwise giving Roscoe Conkling/Valley View Park and the Zoo a thorough spring cleaning. Members of the T.R. Proctor High School NJROTC, under the direction of Master Chief Mark Williamson and the Conservancy’s Katechen Cardamone, will spruce up the Switchbacks area from 10 a.m. — 1 p.m. Seventy-five teens from Our Lady of the Rosary Church will work some spring cleaning magic to give the Utica Zoo a springtime luster.

So c’mon…Fall in love with your parks on May 4! And, if you’re interested in learning more about NY State’s I Love My Park Day, visit http://www.ptny.org/ilovemypark/findanevent.shtml on the web.
Proposed peony garden...  

continued from page 1

in Europe after its introduction there] with every other herba-
aceous species [of peony] he could lay his hands on..."

His first crosses were “stunning”, according to Fischer’s ar-
ticle. Renowned for their immense size and their intense color, Saunders continued to experiment and expand the number of
crosses.

The Conservancy’s memorial peony garden is made possible
by contributions from the family and many friends of Betty Ann
Canfield. If you would like to contribute, please contact the
Conservancy’s President, William F. Locke or use the envelope
enclosed with this issue of Borrowed Views.

A more complete description of Prof. Saunders peonies and a
profile of his work may be found at http://overplanted.com/pro-
files/peony.php. Thanks to Tom Fischer for permission to quote
from his online blog.

*http://www.ehow.com/facts_5760038_symbolic-meaning-
peony.html#ixzz2PcKw6RtB

Lawns

Liberate your lawn! A new movement is taking shape across the
nation.

Well perhaps it’s not so new. Some may see it as a re-branding
or continuation of the “green revolution” that gathered momen-
tum in the 1970s, when fuel costs soared. Large, sprawling lawns
that required constant maintenance with gas-reliant machines
was “out” and in its place was a new landscaping aesthetic. And,
while large lawns made a return in the prosperous decades that
followed, we may have come full circle thanks to the economic
downturn of 2008.

Big lawns that need constant mowing and grooming have been
replaced once again. But this time, there are a number of creative
approaches to consider, from “no-mow” backyards that look
more like small meadows and fields to the mixed use of various
plant materials that offer a look that’s more English garden than
golf course.

Give up the green carpet

Back in the 1970s, the original idea was to remove as much
lawn as possible and to replant with ground cover and trees (pref-
erably native) and shrubs. Now the fashion is to keep some lawn
and let it naturalize.

The lawn of the 21st-century allows clover, plantain, moss, ve-
ronica, ajuga, thyme, and other creeping flora to thrive. The latest
look of the liberated lawn is less uniform green carpet and more
Persian rug.

This style of a mixed lawn with many wild herbs and “weeds”
has its roots in the English mead, a tall lawn with English daisy,
buttercups, violets, and other flowers growing among the grass.
Added decorations to plant are dwarf narcissus and species tulips
scattered here and there.

There are many sources where plants that will enhance the look
may be found, including local garden centers. Ask for steppables
or creepers. A lawn like this may be mowed in late June once the
plants have dropped their seeds. The mower should be set at its
highest setting.

The no-mow lawn

Another approach is to plant clump grass mixes such as the no-
mow lawn or Pearl’s Clump Grass Lawn Seed. These lawns have a
higher grass that self-seeds and looks like wild grassland. Water-
ing, fertilizing, applying herbicide and mowing are rarely required
to sustain this look.

Lawn liberation is a state of mind

The liberated lawn is a habitat for butterflies – a pollinator’s
haven and source for edible herbs and weeds. Some of these will
come up from the seed bank when you allow the lawn to grow.
Others can be bought or seeded in. Try a small patch to see the
results. Exotic invasive will also come to call, and these should be
weeded out.

The biggest obstacle to lawn
liberation is changing your
thinking about what a lawn
should look like and letting go
of the ingrained “look” we’ve
come to associate with lawns.
When we wish to experience
nature, many of us leave our
homes to visit woods and fields.
The liberated lawn brings
nature right to our doorstep.
2012 Donors to the Central New York Conservancy

Since 2005, the Central New York Conservancy has raised $191,050 in private gifts and grants to restore, maintain, and sustain Utica's historic Parks and Parkway System. We gratefully acknowledge the contributors listed below who made gifts during 2012: January 1-December 31, 2012. Although we do our best to ensure the accuracy of these lists, please advise us of any changes, corrections or omissions at centralnewyorkconservancy@gmail.com.

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CNY Conservancy 2013 Events

Save the date! You won’t want to miss any of these upcoming CNY Conservancy & partners programs:

May 4  
I Love My Park Day – Roscoe Conkling/Valley View Park  
11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

June 22  
Cornell Cooperative Extension – Herb & Flower Festival Judd Rd, Whitestown  
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

July 4  
City of Utica – 4th of July Celebration Location TBD

August 26  
Landmarks Society of Greater Utica & CNY Conservancy – Monday Night Walks & Talks, Picnic & Concert Featuring “Silky Soul”  
6 p.m. walk/talk  
7 p.m. picnic & concert

Put down some roots.
Join the Central New York Conservancy

___ $1,000 PARKS PROTECTOR ___ $ 125 SUSTAINER
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Name: ____________________________________________

Contact Phone: __________________ Best Time to call: ___ Daytime _____ Evening

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