

THE PLANT PRESS



Volume VII, No. 3

Newsletter of the Friends of the Herbarium

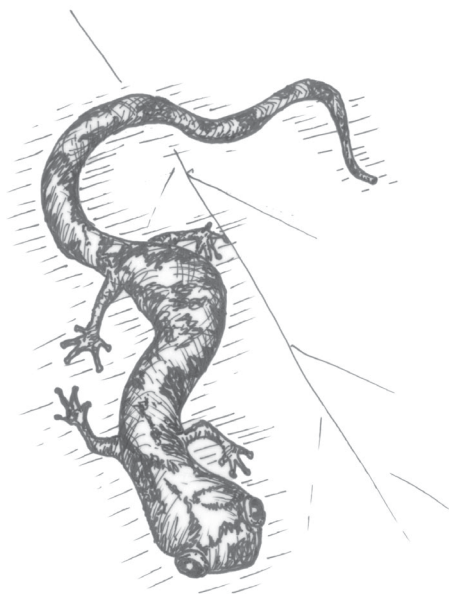
Summer 2003

Protecting Shakerag Hollow

Few places in the Eastern United States can rival the botanical richness of Shakerag Hollow. From the rare sandy outcrops along the Hollow's rim, to the spectacular displays of spring wildflowers, to the mosses and leafy liverworts that grow along creeks and on the bark of old growth trees, the Hollow is a treasury of interesting plants. Shakerag's varied terrain is also home to threatened species of birds and salamanders, adding a zoological shine to the botanical jewel.

The southern portion of the Hollow is owned by the University of the South but, as the map (p. 4) shows, the northern edge is in private ownership. This property is now for sale and the South Cumberland Regional Land Trust (SCRLT) has launched a fundraising campaign to purchase and protect this land. SCRLT plans to buy these two hundred acres of forest, then place the land under a conservation easement (which will prevent development and resource extraction in perpetuity), then donate it to the University of the South. The University has expressed its enthusiasm for this project and will absorb all future stewardship costs. The easement will be held by one of SCRLT's partner organizations, The Land Trust for

Tennessee. Other partners on the project are the Sewanee Herbarium, the Sewanee Landscape Analysis Lab, the Sewanee Office of Forest Management, and the Tennessee Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. Once complete, the project will maintain the



unique educational, scientific, and recreational value of the Hollow. The purchase will also protect the view from Green's View, Piney Point, and parts of the Perimeter Trail.

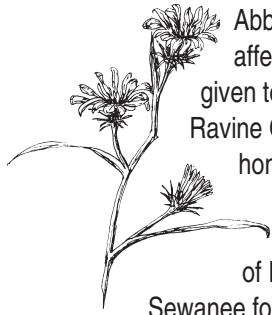
One acre of this land can be protected with a donation of \$750. A donation to protect the first acre has been made by E. O. Wilson, *Emeritus* Professor at Harvard University. In his Convocation address at Sewanee last

fall, Dr. Wilson said of Shakerag, "It is a cathedral of nature, more valuable for the history it preserves, of millions of years, than any building. It is irreplaceable . . . I'm reminded of my friend John Sawhill, the late director of The Nature Conservancy . . . [who] said, 'A society is defined not just by what it creates, but by what it refuses to destroy.'" Wilson has also pledged a signed copy of his latest book, *The Future of Life*, for donors who contribute \$1500 (two acres) or more. Current and retired University faculty and staff from the departments involved with environmental studies have made a gift of a further fifteen acres, underscoring the importance of this forest to our local environment.

The Land Trust welcomes donations of any amount, including gifts in memory or in honor of loved ones, to help them reach their goal of protecting this incredible forest. Donations may be sent to SCRLT, P. O. Box 3188, Sewanee, TN 37375. All donations are tax-deductible. For more information see www.scrilt.org/shakerag.htm, or contact David Haskell, associate professor of biology and SCRLT board member (dhaskell@sewanee.edu).

—David Haskell

A Brief History of Abbo's Alley



Abbo's Alley is the affectionate name given to the Sewanee Ravine Garden. The name honors Abbott Cotten Martin (1899-1974), professor of English at Sewanee for over 40 years.

Tremlett (Polk) Spring and nearby ATO (Otey) Spring form a stream that runs about a mile before dropping over the edge of the plateau. These springs were the first water source for Sewanee and important in selection of the campus site. Even today there are clear reminders of rockwork pools,

which were used by early students for bathing, and remnants of a pump house, which pumped water to a standpipe. One of the bathing pools was recently restored as a Koi pond.

A resolution by the Board of Trustees in 1886 states "That the ravine beginning near the Polk Spring, with adjacent slopes as far as may be necessary and the ground near the head of the ravine as far as the Breakfield road be preserved for Park purposes and that the commissioner of buildings and lands be directed to take measures for the clearing and improvement of this space. This reservation to be extended as far as Hodgson's pond." At this same session the trustees called for the continued employment of a forester and the employment of a landscape gardener.

The early response of the University's administration to the strong resolution of 1886 is not known, but it appears to have created little action. For administrations since then it has been an item of low priority, but there has been considerable voluntary activity in the garden.

Just when Abbott Martin first adopted the garden is not known. The story is told that his interest in plants was aroused when he spotted an early crocus after his first cold winter here in 1929. The first record of his activity that I could find is a letterhead stating that the Sewanee Ravine Garden was established in 1942 and that Abbott Cotten Martin was superintendent. His stated goal was to grow "every flowering plant which would grow in our latitude".

As a self-taught gardener with meager resources, Abbo was never able to fully achieve his dreams. With the labor of students and the help of German POW's from nearby Camp Forrest, however, he was able to bring beauty to a place where trash and brush had prevailed. He brought in numerous wildflowers and various shrubs and trees, but the main attraction was an abundance of daffodils, which made the garden a springtime delight.

In 1964 The Sewanee Ravine Garden was officially named The Abbott Cotten Martin Ravine Garden, and the occasion

was noted by placement of a plaque on a large stone at the upper garden entrance. It reads: "A soul whose Master bias leans to home-felt pleasures and gentle scenes" (Wordsworth). In declining health even before his retirement in 1969, Abbo could give little attention to the garden in his later years.

In 1972 Vice-chancellor Bennett asked me to chair a committee to "revive and reinstate the Sewanee Ravine Garden." With support of students and community volunteers, progress was steady but slow. In 1975 the group adopted the name "Friends of Abbo's Alley," and Albert Gooch was elected president and assumed the role of head gardener. After a request for \$1000 from the University was rejected, work continued with volunteers and some student labor financed from dues. Albert left in 1982 and leadership was passed to Don Pippen, and then to Stevens Anderson, who also moved away. After that, the Alley floundered for several years.

In 1990 the "Friends" group was reactivated and Rogers Beasley was elected president. Recently retired history professor Joe Cushman, who had worked for Abbo in his student days, volunteered to serve as head gardener. The University offered support in the form of some grounds crew time and work-study students. Several other recent retirees now volunteer their time as work-study supervisors, and Louis Rice was recently designated head gardener. The Friends of Abbo's Alley group has provided funds for equipment and supplies. Several memorials have been received including a gazebo, a sculpture, a butterfly garden, bridges, benches, and a "tool crib."

The dreams of Abbo and the vision of the trustees who set aside the garden area have yet to be fully realized. The daffodils are thriving, and numerous other plantings add to the beauty of the place. But there is much to be done. The grass is mowed, the brush is cleared and the deer-browsed azaleas are replaced. But the Alley still waits for a full time gardener.

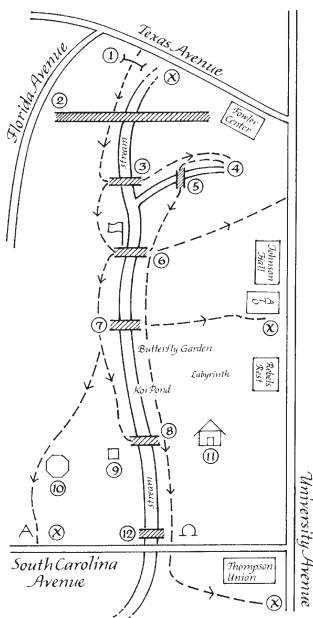
—George Ramsey

Abbo's Alley

Abbott Cotten Martin
Ravine Garden

KEY

- 1 Sanborn Gate
- 2 Suspended Overpass Bridge
- 3 Bedell Bridge
- 4 Tremlett Spring and Pool
- 5 Jervis Bridge
- 6 Tuhan Bridge
- 7 Seibels Bridge
- 8 Bratton Bridge
- 9 Rice Sculpture
- 10 Lyman Gazebo
- 11 Tool Storage
- 12 Cravens Bridge



Summer Calendar of Events

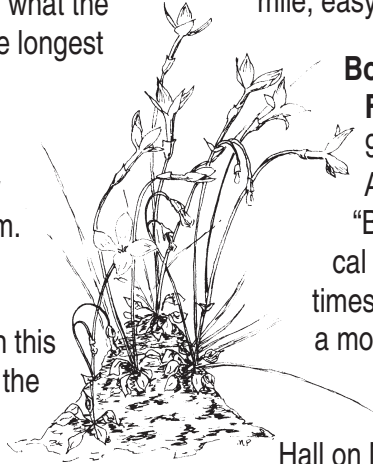
In summer-days like grasshoppers rejoice. —Homer, The Iliad

Solstice Stroll on the Tennessee Williams Trail — Wed., June 25, 4:00 p.m. Yolande Gottfried

Meet at the Cross for an easy walk on the footpath that parallels Tennessee Avenue to see what the plants are doing on the longest day of the year.

Charlotte Gailor's Garden & Abbo's Alley — Wed., July 9, 4:00 p.m. Mary Priestley

Botany, history, and horticulture combine in this leisurely walk through the Abbott Cotten Martin Ravine Garden, culminating with tea in Charlotte Gailor's Garden. Established as a park in the 1880s, the "Alley" did not begin to take shape until Professor Martin brought it under his care in



the 1940s. The Herbarium is maintaining two beds of native plants in Charlotte's renovated garden. Meet at the South Carolina Avenue entrance to the Ravine Garden. One mile, easy.

Botanical Drawing in the Field — Sat., July 19, 9:00 a.m. Ann Seiters Ann, who has taught our "Bug's Eye View" botanical drawing class several times, is taking us outside for a morning of sketching. Meet at Charlotte Gailor's Garden behind Chen Hall on North Carolina Avenue.

Bring paper and pencil or supplies for other media, and something to sit on if you wish. Adults and children with their parents.

For more information about these outings, contact Mary Priestley.

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WEB SITE

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Drawings, by Mary Priestley, are of prairie wood aster, green salamander and bluets.



Membership Application/Renewal

The Friends of the Sewanee Herbarium support the work of the Herbarium: education, research, and conservation. A \$10.00 annual contribution would be very much appreciated. The date of your most recent contribution is printed on your address label.

Name and Address (if different from that on the mailing label on the back):

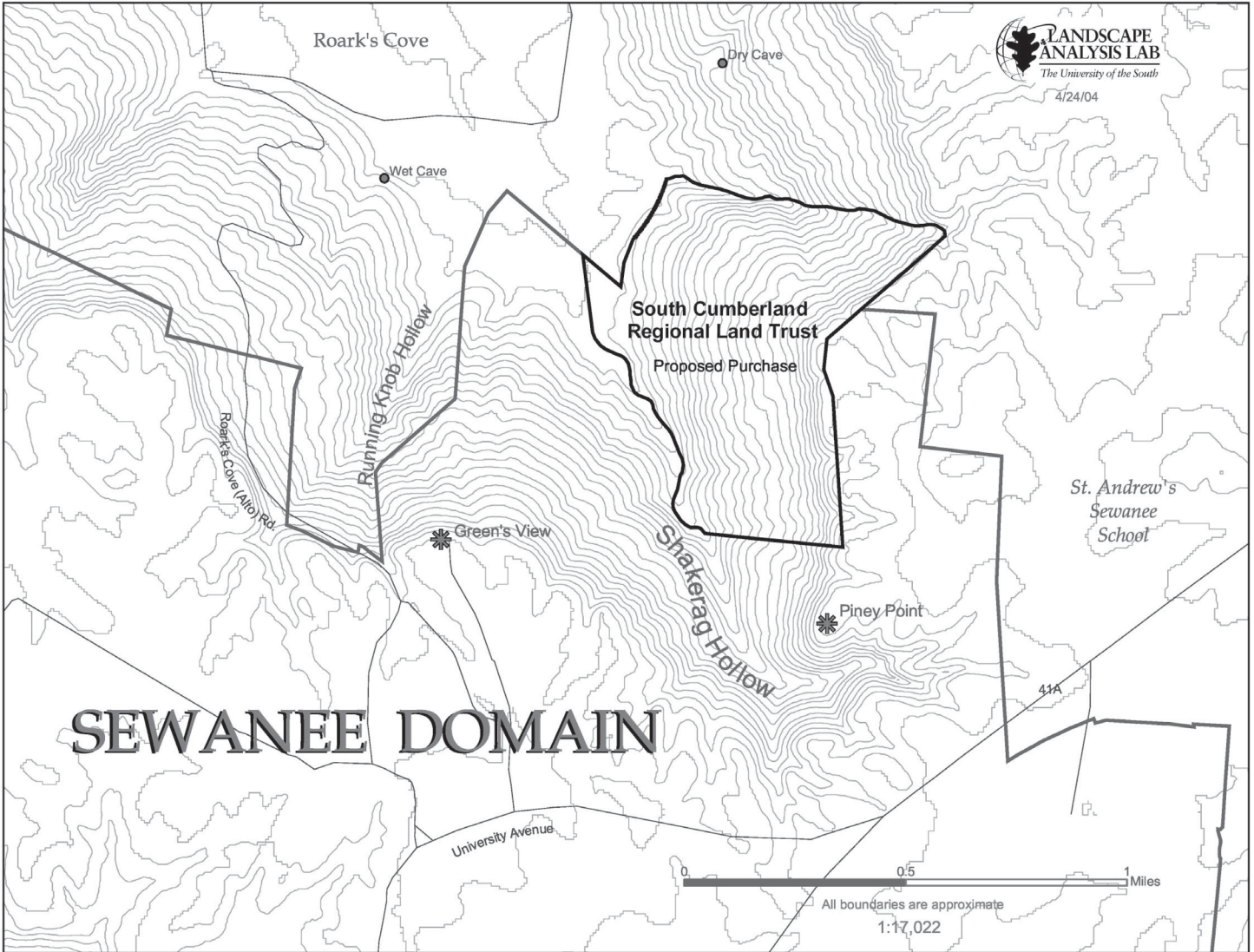
Amount Enclosed: \$10.00 Other: \$ _____

Please make check payable to The University of the South. Gifts are fully tax deductible. Send to:

Sewanee Herbarium
c/o Mary Priestley
735 University Avenue
Sewanee, TN 37383



Others who might like to receive *The Plant Press*: _____



Proposed Land Purchase in Shakerag Hollow (story p. 1)

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