

# Forever undeveloped and natural

By Wilma Young

**PULTNEYVILLE** – The Cornwall family settled in Pultneyville in 1809 moving here from Colonial Connecticut. For over 200 years, the Cornwalls have lived on and cared for the land they now own which extends west of the hamlet. Some of the property bears fruit. Some of the acreage is vacant scrub land and woods. Some of the land lies directly along Lake Ontario with two-thirds of a mile of shoreline.

Over the decades, the Cornwalls donated pieces of their land for community needs. Civic minded, they shared land along the Salmon Creek/Lake Ontario harbor for boating enthusiasts to use. It is noted that descendent **Fred Cornwall** gave land to two of his favorite organizations, the Masonic Lodge and the Pultneyville Fire Company. He was dedicated to the community he lived in.

With Fred's passing his family, who were no longer living in the area, have struggled over what should happen to the estate. Fred's son Mark lives in Spokane, Washington; two daughters now live in Idaho.

Recently, the Cornwell Trust has sold some of their properties with houses, from the Cornwall's vast 350 acre holdings. Additional space was sold to expand Lake View Cemetery. But nothing much has been sold since.

"The market sent them (Cornwall family) a message that this particular parcel was not easy to sell to developers," said Pultneyville resident Walter Gilges. "So, the Cornwall family started looking at different alternatives."

Enter conversations with the Genesee Land Trust (GLT), about their possible interest in some of the land. GLT's focus is to preserve habitats, safeguard important shoreline breeding areas, provide places for the public to enjoy Lake Ontario, and protect scenic family farms... something that the Corwalls were also interesting in as well.

According to GLT's information about their Protecting Our North Coast program, a map of Lake Ontario from Hamlin Beach Park to Fairhaven identifies open spaces, much of the property east of Irondequoit Bay and West of Sodus Bay is held in private hands. GLT would like to see some of that be converted into protected lands.

The move forward by Genesee Land Trust to preserving the Cornwall property, and fundraising to do so started in earnest this summer. Their quarterly newsletter "The Preserve" included front page coverage of the "Once in a lifetime opportunity to purchase 74 acres of the remaining Cornwall farm.



Outline of the 74 acres of Cornwall property that the Genesee Land Trust is proposing to become a nature preserve.

"We are focused on the habitat part of the property that has lake access with minimal agricultural land," explained Gay Mills, Executive Director of the Genesee Land Trust. "As you walk from the cemetery you look (to the north), and you can see the beautiful backdrop of Pultneyville. From our perspective, that's a piece of land that the community would care about."

The cost to purchase the property is \$674,000. Genesee Land Trust plans to raise all of that through a combination of two state grants (\$300,000 if successful), and fundraising efforts of which Gilges is dedicating his time and effort towards. There is also a \$50,000 challenge from the Bullis Fund if it can be matched by Wayne County residents.

"This land would not be like Forman Park. It would be a nature preserve, a place to walk with a small parking lot with trails through the woods to the scenic lake vistas... keeping it essentially as it is," said Mills. "There are no immediate plans with the agricultural acreage. We need to work out protective measures and make it available without intruding on agriculture."

There is currently a lease with Orbaker Farms that extends until 2017.

If the Genesee Land Trust is successful in raising the funds that they need, management of the property would be under their auspices. Mills said they are trying to have a conversation with everyone that owns adjacent properties and come up with a plan that will work.

"We (GLT) usually don't try to do a big project like this. It's a big decision and this property has many excellent qualities," noted Mills. "There is so much that

goes into this, not just the purchase but the land transfer costs, signage, management design (and liability coverage).

"If we're lucky enough to get the



Gilges

grants (and raise the needed funds), then we need to have good partners to help us maintain it. We are hoping for really good neighbors who will keep an eye on things and help us. We're hoping for people next door who love it and want to

volunteer to take care of it," continued Mills. "Volunteer in a variety of ways, active stewardship or just to call us when issues arise.

"We understand that Trailworks is interested in the project.

"We have met with some of the members of the Lake View Cemetery Association, to discuss what their concerns are with the change in ownership," Mills added.

Gilges was inspired to help from the ground up and believes there is substantial support for the project both in and out of Wayne County. He is going door-to-door trying to convince people to make contributions.

"If we can raise \$50,000 in just Wayne County then we suddenly have \$100,000. The more we can show that Wayne

