



BRIDGING THE GAP

The Quaker Intentional Village Project Newsletter

Issue #6 (November 2000)

We've Bought the Farm!

The Brauns and Harris-Brauns have purchased a 135-acre piece of land near Powell House. It includes two old houses—one we're getting rid of, one we're renovating for transitional housing for members. Some of you have already been to the land to meet or to help. It's in the village of East Chatham in the town of Canaan. The Brauns and Harris-Brauns plan to turn over the land to a QIVP land trust or other QIVP organization, getting paid back for their up-front investment as other members buy into the project. No one has lived on the land since the early 1990s. The pastures were used for hay most recently. Our Web site has what we've learned about owners and dates and stuff back to 1923.

In other news, we now have six member households (ranging in size from 1 to 5 people) for a total of 9 adults and 6 children. Also some cats, birds, and a gerbil. This does not count the mice, snakes, wasps, termites, and flies recently displaced from the walls of the newer house, because they have not yet paid their member fees.

We will be working with the Columbia Land Conservancy on establishing a conservation easement and are planning a working retreat for this winter, possibly at Powell House. Things are hoppin'!

Next Meetings:

- December 3, 1:00-5:00 on the land (236 Bradley's Crossing Road, East Chatham, New York)
- January 6th, 1:00-5:00 on the land (236 Bradley's Crossing Road, East Chatham, New York)
- January 27th, 1:00-5:00 on the land (236 Bradley's Crossing Road, East Chatham, New York)
- Working retreat: February or March (TBD)

Renovation Report

Work is moving along well at 236 Bradley's Crossing, as well as across the street where the "Meeting Room" is now clean enough to enjoy. Many people have come to help out with the work over the last few months.

We've cleaned up the ground-level garage and gotten lots of junk and trash hauled away, removed the garage doors and walled in two of the openings while building a nice door for humans in the third. That area is now the shop and materials-storage area. It has a dirt floor but is weather-tight.

The electrical panel has been installed and so the generator days are over! Eric has been doing all the wiring beyond the panel box, coming up at least once a week to work. The house is now almost fully wired and functional. Also, inspected!

We repaired the old roof structure where necessary, removed the old shingles, and put on a new, metal roof, all with the help of a great crew of volunteer roofers. Some rafters had to be replaced, but in general the roofing part of the job went pretty easily. The new roof will last longer than asphalt shingles and is very easy to spot from far away on the road.

Inside, Spee, Diane, Natalie, Lucas, Sandra, Eloisa, and others have been stripping, scraping, priming, and painting and Jens has been redoing wallboard and installing wooden paneling. Some walls have been moved, but there will still be two full bathrooms, a utility/laundry room, three bedrooms, a small study, a living room, a dining area/kitchen, and a large mudroom.

The front and back porches and their stairs have been rebuilt for access to the house and the exterior doors have been replaced (as have several windows).

We had the well by the renovated house hydrofractured to increase the flow, which worked fine. Plumbing and heating are coming along but not there yet. A woodstove is to be installed soon to be the main heating source of most of the house. The kitchen appliances are coming in and will be put in soon, and we're reusing some cabinets from the original house (after much diligent cleaning by Spee).

In general we've tried to scavenge from the older house across the street and have made off with a fridge, a toilet, a sink, windows, doors, copper pipe, electrical outlets, and more. By the time the derelict part of that house gets torn down, we'll have gotten all we can out of it. The meeting-room addition to that house will probably stay, and then be added onto when we can manage it. It will probably not be our permanent common house—too far from the probable house site—but may serve as such for a while.



BEFORE: The 236 house before any work had been done (view from N; road is to R of picture)

And we even have a mailbox!

Meanwhile, across the street, groundwork has been done by various volunteers: pruning our old apple trees (which still bear lots of fruit!), trimming bushes, cleaning off the grill area, mowing, and more. It looks like someone loves it now (if not yet lives there).

—Ellen Harris-Braun

**RESOURCES: FREQUENT
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

This is our introductory document and a good way to introduce others to what we're up to. It is printed up for various events but is always current on our Web site.

QIVP FAQs: www.qivp.org/FAQ.html

Property or Land?

I catch myself all the time telling people that I'm going out to the property. I feel uncomfortable when this happens. The land has been "bought," and according to our cultural norms it is "ours" to be owned and used. But the land was here for a long procession of residents before us, and, of course, much longer before any residents. The land *is*. It stays. And will be here for others long after us. We have spoken of this in some of our meetings, and have reflected on occasion on how we actually are the land's, not *vice versa*. I hope I can focus on concrete ways of moving towards a relationship with this land. And beyond the land, with the air, the seasons, the fauna, all of which are interrelated.

Below is the certificate of commitment from our land celebration, held on September 30. All those present signed.

We come together today as members, attenders, and friends of the Quaker Intentional Village Project to join our hands and hearts, our dreams and our resources, in the joyful celebration of this land and its role in our project. We are thankful to God for guiding us to this place. May we keep our vision for how we live here very clear and our caring for one another abundant.

We are mindful of those who have used this land before us: the birds and other creatures, the grass and trees that are constant inhabitants, the children who played and learned upon this ground and all those through the centuries who have found their sustenance here, rested, worked and been inspired by the beauty of this place.

May we come to a deep relationship with this part of the earth and make all our decisions about how we live with respect and understanding for its integrity. May we be a blessing for this ground as we build our community, just as it is a blessing to us.

Here we seek to live lives based on our beliefs such that this land can be a sanctuary; a community where all may be welcomed and affirmed in simple dignity, and where our children and future children may grow in wisdom and faith.

To these ends, and with a prayer of thanksgiving, we make our covenant together on this 30th day of the ninth month in the year 2000.

I've been doing a lot of thinking over the past few years about various aspects of building a home/community. I'm sharing some of the questions I've come up with below in hopes that all of us can do more thinking about all of these issues as we proceed.

—Jens Braun

CLIPPINGS: THOUGHT-PROVOKING TIDBITS FOR ALTERNATIVE LIVING

From Plain, issue 22:

"There are, I think, three questions that must be asked with respect to a human economy in any given place:

- 1. What is here?***
- 2. What will nature permit us to do here?***
- 3. What will nature help us to do here?"***

—Wendell Berry

Issues in the Placement and Building of Our Homes

Road in: How far into the 135 acres do we wish to place the homes? How much are we willing to pay for a road? (The building codes require that housing clusters be accessible via a road wide enough for two passing firetrucks.)

House placement: South facing, but: How close together, and arranged how? How far apart maximum? Where in relation to parking? It is wonderful to have a distant view from our windows, but is it wonderful for others to have us in their distant view because we choose high ground?

Aesthetics: Do our homes have features that make them encouraging to community life? Porches? Placement of walks? Setbacks? Kitchen windows? Angles and proportions? Beauty and individuality? Flower beds? Shade/sunlight? Creative touches? What are the colors we would like to see on our and our neighbors' homes? How many rules can/should we have, as a community, about how the outsides of our houses look, or their size or height?

Size and Design: How much space do we need? What can be shared? Does each space have a single use or can multiple uses be assigned to places/spaces? Rooms with nooks are said to be much more conducive to multiple uses than your standard rectangle. Do the homes maximize solar heat in winter? How "alternative" should the houses be required to be (since this costs more upfront), or how retrofittable to alterations for solar power, alternative sewage systems, and water conservation?

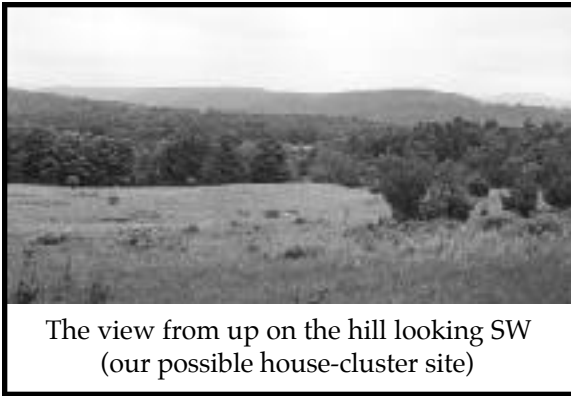
Light: Is use of natural light incorporated in the design such that use of electricity is minimized? Are windows/skylights near high-use areas of the house? Are windows placed to take advantage of the full range of the sun's path?

Materials: Do we know the sources of building materials? Are they made by companies we wish to support, and made of healthy things to have around us? How can we use fewer materials both in design and in construction? Are the materials we use recyclable? Are our houses reusable? Are we building for expediency and short-term use or for the long term—are our houses heirloom quality or are they made of the things with which dumps are filled?

Cars: Are we aware of the impact of cars on our community life? How close do we keep our cars to our homes? Can we find good alternatives to having automotive access to all our homes, particularly for our less physically robust members?

Comfort vs. Our Values: Our culture seems to make physical comfort one of its greatest priorities. I find that an emphasis on being comfortable sometimes separates us and creates barriers (air conditioned cars, for example). It is often environmentally destructive through encouraging the greater use of resources. It allows considerable physical inactivity (TV remotes, electric windows). Nevertheless, there is much to be said for warm showers, ergonomic kitchen counters, and rocking chairs on a summer evening. As we make decisions about all the stuff and assumptions we might bring in from society at large, how can we best help each other maintain our focus? Can we work to keep the health benefits of walking and lifting, distinguish between labor-saving tools and gadgetry, and seek a balance between getting a job done quickly and the environmental costs of doing it the "easy way"?

—Jens Braun



The view from up on the hill looking SW
(our possible house-cluster site)

135 Acres in Search of Just One Name

We are casting about for a name for our community and have yet to arrive at something everyone feels is right. Fill in the blank: _____, a Quaker Intentional Village Project, 236 Bradley’s Crossing Road, East Chatham, New York, 12060. Below are two suggestions; send *your* ideas to info@qivp.org!

For our community I suggest the name “Friends’ Crossing.” I prefer the name “Quaker Crossing,” but that signifies too much that it’s

just for Quakers, and I think the community should be open for everyone. “Friends” can stand for Quakers but it stands at the same time for people you love. And I thought that “Crossing” is a good idea because it relates to “bridging the gap,” which is the name of our newsletter. Also, “Friends’ Crossing” is a name that will help us remember our road, Bradley’s Crossing (for the railroad crossing at the bottom of the hill). You cross over lots of bridges in your life, living through hard things, but if there’s a friend crossing with you, it makes you feel better, safer.

—*Natalie Braun*

Fox Hill for the community (surely there’s a fox up there where we’ll probably build the houses) and Open Way for the access road we’ll have to build even if we can’t figure out how we’ll pay for it right now.

—*Eric and Ellen Harris-Braun*

Minutes of QIVP Meetings for Business, July through November

Note: These are the numbered minutes only. The full minutes can be found on the QIVP Web site (www.qivp.org) or can be requested from the newsletter / Web-site editor, Ellen Harris-Braun ((203) 426-8662 or info@qivp.org).

2000-07-01: Our first objective in our statement of purpose is amended to read as follows: "1. To increase the mindfulness, spiritual focus and God-centeredness of our lives by finding and living near others who share these goals and thus will reinforce, on a daily basis, our desire to live in worship."

2000-07-02: The property committee was asked to meet and report back at the next meeting on research findings related the Bradley's Crossing property and its zoning, site selection, and neighbors.

2000-07-03: Expenses related to the Bradley's Crossing property will be paid for by the Brauns and Harris-Brauns and kept track of for future reimbursement when ownership of the land is transferred to the community. Ongoing organizational costs will be paid for out of the QIVP account. We may decide later to use membership fees for some property costs.

2000-07-04: After a period of being introduced to the community, prospective members will meet with a clearness committee composed of overseers and members to explore their interest in joining the community. The clearness committee will bring recommendations to the

members for final approval. The current overseers will be asked for their input and agreement to this process. Current members will also be asked to go through the process.

2000-08-01: The Property Committee is now renamed the Land Committee.

2000-08-02: The group approves Dee doing further research on the financial and other possibilities of acquiring the Slattery's Store property.

2000-08-03: We are interested in connecting with the nearby Bruderhof in theory, but not necessarily in visiting their community; however, we would like to hear from them about their experience with community businesses at some point in the future--not right now.

From the 9/00 meeting: "It was felt that, in the beginning of the life of the community, individuals and families will enter with their own value systems, a willingness to discuss values with the community, and faith that the community will discern its values with time and ongoing discussion. Those community values then might influence behavior within individual families, but tolerance for families' private practices would be expected. The group regarded this question as an example of what many felt was the purpose of the community: to live among others who will help us to discern the best path to truth and right living."

2000-11-01: The Finance Committee will meet and work on the financial and income issues of QIVP membership before the next meeting. Eloisa Perez Suarez will serve on this committee along with Spee, Ellen, and Sandra.

2000-11-02: The Land Committee is asked to meet and determine a rough timeline for house construction. For example, if we want to start to build in 12 months, what has to happen first, and when?--site plan, approvals, road, wells, septic, etc.

2000-11-03: We agree to form a Community Life committee to lead the process of coming to agreement on our principles for building and living on the land, so that we can use them as a basis for future planning of both land use and house construction. The Nominating Committee is asked to work on forming this committee and bring recommendations on number of people, specific charge, and nominees to the next meeting.

2000-11-04: QIVP will move ahead on working with the Columbia Land Conservancy on a baseline land study and potential conservation easement, at a cost of approximately \$2,500-3,000.

2000-11-05: Dee Rossman has indicated that she will no longer be actively involved in QIVP, though she extends her good wishes and remains interested. Since she serves on the nominating committee, we need to form an ad hoc committee to appoint another member of that committee. Jens and Ellen will serve as this ad hoc committee and will attempt to find a third member of the Nominating Committee by the next meeting.

Meeting Minutes
Full minutes of all QIVP meetings are made available on the QIVP Web site at www.qivp.org/minutes for your reading pleasure!

2000-11-06: We will plan our annual retreat for late February or early March at Powell House if possible. This would be a working retreat for members, attenders and supporters only, to address some big issues like the clearness committee for members and community-life issues.

CLIPPINGS: THOUGHT-PROVOKING TIDBITS FOR ALTERNATIVE LIVING

Excerpts from the final session of the Second Luddite Congress, June 2000, Stillwater Friends Meeting House, Barnesville, Ohio

(Attended by Spee Braun and Ellen and Eric Harris-Braun)

Our life is a gift. Maintaining consistency in our lives is challenging, and the more so when we do it alone. When we share our lives together with brothers and sisters in community, we give and we gain effective support and stability.

We need to be watchful about our own self-righteousness, and the possibility of anger toward those who live differently. As we make choices for our own lives, we need to be careful not to extend our judgments to others', and listen lovingly to those whose ideas differ. For our message to have power to reach others, it must be undergirded with love. If we witness about our own sense of joy in specific aspects of our lives, we then leave open room for others to join us without feeling judged.

We can develop criteria for choosing between useful and inappropriate technology. Our witness should express what we do and find joy in, rather than emphasizing what we do not do. The point is not that we do not have TV or eat in fast-food restaurants, but rather that we and our children enjoy productive activities together or that the fresh food we produce ourselves is delicious and satisfying.

As we consider changing our lives, we are likely to encounter fear--fear of what people will say, fear of not being able to meet basic needs, fear of casting off from a charted life. When we witness through our lives or words to having overcome some fears, we can help others recognize and surmount their fears. Perfect love casts out fear.

We find that as we make right choices, in obedience to God, people notice and come forward, asking, "How is it that you have made these choices, and how can I choose so that I have the joy or the fulfillment that you have?" At that point we need to model and emphasize the act of stepping back from entanglements and actually making a choice, rather than arguing for the particulars of the choice we have made. Then we have become witnesses for the things that are important.

QIVP Library: Housing Information Wanted

We are gathering materials on affordable, environmentally appropriate, esthetically beautiful, energy-efficient homes. If you have books, articles, or other sources of information, would you mind sending titles and authors? We hope to continue building up our library. Send 'em to Jens at sjbraun@taconic.net or c/o QIVP, P. O. Box 114, Old Chatham, New York, 12136.

Don't Forget Our Web Site! Lots of information for the curious is at ***www.qivp.org***

"The Second Luddite Congress: Computers or Buggies?"

(This is a shorter version of an article by Spee Braun that appeared in New York Yearly Meeting's newsletter, *Spark*.)

Several QIVPers were among 375 delegates attending the second session of the Second Luddite Congress at Stillwater Friends Meetinghouse in Barnesville, Ohio from June 23 to 25, 2000. People came from 31 states, DC, and Canada to share concerns about modern technology, which many believe is out of control and is causing an ecological, social, and spiritual crisis in our culture. The Congress (which also met in 1996) is under the sponsorship of the Center for Plain Living, publisher of *Plain* magazine.

Much of this session was devoted to field reports from some of the 120 returning delegates, who shared what had happened to them and the culture since 1996. Guest speakers, including noted author Wendell Berry, also spoke on this theme. People reported facing increasing difficulty with libraries and schools moving to computerization, scarcity of parts for typewriters and other simple machines, and the continued demise of locally provided goods and services.

Themes other than technology also received a lot of attention as the group explored a larger question: How do we live a life closer to God, in which people are freed from the blinders and controls of modern culture, and released to hear God and live out their beliefs? Key points:

1) Living Simply and Questioning Technology: We need queries for choosing which technologies to use, including: How does this technology affect...my relationship with God? my relationship with other people? stewardship of our earth? my living a real and present life?

2) Living in Place: Our culture is rapidly losing an understanding of the importance of place. Few Western cultures today have a model of living in place (the Amish are an exception). Also important is good stewardship of whatever land we have.

3) Personal Witness and Public Activism: We need to change how we eat, travel, and use time. How much of our effort should go into living as plain and God-centered a life as possible and letting our lives speak? How much effort should we devote, on the other hand, to spreading the word about simple living, fighting destructive global trends, and serving others? Some Congress delegates are active in such causes as sustainable agriculture, home-steading education, small farming, service to the poor, and simple, family-centered burial. Others primarily focus on living their own lives more simply. It's hard to do both personal witness and public activism well: the latter takes our attention away from our families and our land, and we use environmentally unfriendly technology and travel long distances to be effective activists.

4) Intentional Community: Over and over again, speakers and delegates at the Congress noted that we cannot achieve our goals alone, that it must be done in community. And with modern communities so fluid and their members' lives so separate, we need to live in intentional community. Why? Because by working together in close proximity we can help each other stay closer to God. We can make better decisions about the use of technology and other matters at the community level and can support one another as we "go against the

grain" of mainstream culture.

5) Outreach: Scott Savage, the Director of the Center for Plain Living, asked that the Congress delegates think about how we can fulfill our responsibility to reach out to others. (Editor's note: For more on this, see the Clippings on page 7.) The primary form of outreach since 1993 has been the Center's magazine, *Plain: The Magazine of Life, Land, and Spirit*, but it will be laid down later this year. Other activities will continue, however.

The richness of this gathering can't be conveyed in a few words, but its main message was: The most important quest is to live a life closer to God. How moving it was to be among those who are living simple and religious lives today!

Levels of Commitment to QIVP and How to Contribute

We have three levels of official commitment to QIVP to accommodate different interests and people at different stages in their lives. Each level has a different yearly contribution, payable in January. We also happily accept donations toward our work and are open to offers of substantial loans, though we're not set up to accept them quite yet. You can contribute in other ways, too, of course: through helping with our land projects, donating items we might need, sharing your skills, expertise, or connections.

Current special needs: expertise about bank mortgages and construction loans; wall painters; more excerpts and book/Web-site resource suggestions for our newsletter.

Please contact us at the address below if you want to help out. Thanks!

Members: Members are those who see themselves becoming a part of the residential community in the relatively near future. Members are expected to participate in meetings regularly and help make decisions about the project. Members initially contribute a minimum of \$200 per adult to attain member status, and are also assessed \$50 per year per adult to cover ongoing costs while the project is being developed. Thus the initial "buy-in" amount for a family of two adults and any number of children is \$500. ("Children" are dependents under the age of 21 who live in your household.) These funds go toward subscription to the project newsletter and other communications, as well as expenses incurred for project start-up, including professional services, supplies, and materials.

Attendees: Attendees are those who are not yet ready to be members, but who are otherwise very interested in the project and in contributing their time and skills. Attendees are expected to participate in meetings regularly and help make decisions about the project. Attendees contribute a minimum of \$50 per year per household. This amount covers subscription to the project newsletter and other communications and materials.

Supporters: Supporters are those who are interested in the project but do not expect to become members, and whose level of interest or geographic location is such that they do not expect to attend meetings or help make decisions. Supporters contribute a minimum of \$15 per year per household, which covers subscription to the project newsletter and other communications costs.

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We believe community can be a means to advance the following five objectives:

1. To increase the mindfulness, spiritual focus and God-centeredness of our lives by finding and living near others who share these goals and thus will reinforce, on a daily basis, our desire to live in worship.
2. To strengthen our family life both by creating a “village” setting in which to raise our and others' children, and by caring for our elders. This includes an emphasis on leaving behind cultural obstacles that interfere with providing the time and energy that healthy family life requires.
3. To examine carefully our participation in the national/international consumer economy and begin to build the critical mass necessary for viable business networks and sources of goods and services more appropriate to our Quaker testimonies.
4. To focus on a lifestyle that is environmentally sound and that attempts to give back to our planet as much as is taken from it.
5. To include a good measure of joy, fun, outreach, and service in our lives as we strive to meet the first four objectives.

Send us ideas, questions, musings, excerpts from thought-provoking articles, clippings, books, Web sites, etc., and we'll share them via this newsletter with others who are interested in intentional community...all to learn how to bridge the gap between conventional American life and the communities we would like to be part of instead.