The Annual Awards Luncheon and Board Meeting is Monday, April 5, 10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., in the Portrait Room of the American Museum of Natural History. See Page 11 to Sign Up for the Luncheon (12:00 Noon) and Renew Your Membership. The Medal Winner is Michael Welland, for Sand: The Never-Ending Story.

This key program of The John Burroughs Association is possible because of your support; thank you.

JBA Awarded Trail Restoration Grant

The John Burroughs Association has been awarded a $50,000 grant from the New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to improve our network of trails. This is the second grant from OPRHP, following funding for the restoration of the exterior of Slabsides. “This is an exciting opportunity and an essential next step in our plans to improve Slabsides and the Nature Sanctuary,” said David Liddell, acting president of the Association. “We will be able to enhance the visitor experience and further promote the legacy of John Burroughs.”

The Slabsides Trails Restoration Project has three primary components: the design and construction of a new trail loop to the south, the restoration of two of the Nature Sanctuary’s seven trails, and a new topographic trail map. The main focus of the project is the new southern trail loop that will be built in two parts. The first part, the Southern Trail, will start behind Pond House and go south to the southern boundary. Passing through a pristine and varied terrain that includes a mature hemlock forest and lush fern valley, it will give hiking and snowshoeing visitors a longer, much needed route. It will take birders and nature seekers deeper into the woods, where there is more solitude and likely more opportunities to observe nature. More important, it will provide a ready link to the Scenic Hudson owned property that borders the Sanctuary to the south. That property of 600 acres, through which Black Creek flows, had been owned by the West Park Winery and boasts a system of old farm roads and the remains of an old grist mill and adjacent falls. The second part of the new loop trail, the Southern Highlands Trail, will continue east along the southern area of the Sanctuary and then head north to meet the Spring Trail, the trailhead of which is just in front of Slabsides. The Southern Highlands Trail will cross a rugged area of north-south ridges and will be more primitive and challenging in character.

The project will also restore and make improvements to the two connector trails. The Elizabeth Burroughs Kelley Trail starts near Slabsides, passes by a small waterfall and through a low, seasonally wet area, and ends to the south of the Pond near Pond House. In addition to a general restoration, several improvements will be made. The trailhead will be moved from behind the outhouse and will be built up with stone steps added at the bank, using stone from the property. The Alfred Adams Connector Trail, which begins just north of the entrance to Slabsides on Burroughs Drive, goes down a slope to the north of the Pond, and ends at the driveway to Pond House, will also undergo a restoration. Other items covered by the grant include the development of a topographic trail map and new trail signage and markers. All trail work...
will be undertaken to minimize the impact on the ecology, and all improvements will seek to optimize the visitor experience.

Before we begin, a New York State biologist will examine the several low, seasonally wet areas and assess the possible need to reroute some trail sections to leave sensitive areas undisturbed. We will also undertake an archaeological survey to determine if there are important artifacts from an earlier use of the land. There will be several opportunities for members and other friends of the JBA to get involved with the project. First is through financial support. The funding for this grant program comes from the Federal Highway Administration and requires an 80/20 match, making our project total $62,500. We will need to raise $12,500. And, when the trail work begins, there will be an opportunity for volunteers to be part of the project. If you are interested in working on the trails or making a donation, e-mail Joan Burroughs at jjjburroughs@yahoo.com, or contact the Association office at lbreslof@amnh.org.

**Recent Contributions**

**E-mail Campaign**
- Joan Burroughs
- Mathew Tekulsky

**Office Operations**
- Joan Burroughs

**Slabsides Restoration**
- Karen DeGaeta
- Susan Stegan

**Slabsides Repair**
- Vera Julia Gordon
- Michael Maduras Jr.

**Other Important Gifts**
- Barbara Barth
- J. Vernon Crawford
- Paul Hofstein
- Drake F. Loeser

**Welcome to New Member**
- Carol C. Butler

**Life Member**
- Karen DeGaeta

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**Progress Report on a Half-Century of Journals**

*By Jeff Walker*

*(The author gave a presentation on this subject at the fall Slabsides Open House)*

Vassar College Special Collections has a large archive of papers, photos, and other items related to John Burroughs. The papers include large numbers of letters to and from Burroughs, and many letters between his wife, Ursula, and their son, Julian, while the latter was at Harvard. One set of writings of particular interest is the complete journals of Burroughs. The

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**John Burroughs Association**

The John Burroughs Association was formed in 1921 shortly after the naturalist-writer died. Among the Association’s aims are fostering a love of nature as exemplified by Burroughs’s life and work and preserving the places associated with his life. The Association publicly recognizes the best in nature writing with literary awards that are given following the annual meeting on the first Monday of April.

The Association owns and maintains Slabsides and the adjoining John Burroughs Sanctuary near West Park, New York. Open house at Slabsides is held the third Saturday in May and the first Saturday in October. A permanent exhibit about John Burroughs is in the American Museum of Natural History.

The membership year begins in April. Contact Secretary, John Burroughs Association, Inc., 15 West 77 Street, New York, NY 10024-5192, or e-mail: breslof@amnh.org. Telephone 212-769-5169. Web site: http://research.amnh.org/burroughs/


earliest notebook in the journals folder includes intermittent notes taken between February 1860 and November 1865. Then in May of 1876 John Burroughs made a conscious decision to keep a regular journal. He planned to record his daily thoughts, observations about the weather and natural history, as well as his ideas for essays and ruminations about life. Burroughs wrote in his journal faithfully for the rest of his life, resulting in a nearly fifty-year record comprising fifty-three volumes.

Burroughs’s journals were transcribed not once but twice, and copies of both transcriptions are also housed in Vassar’s Special Collections. The first transcript, by Burroughs’s literary executrix Clara Barrus, was over 1,100 pages long, and contains much useful additional information, including identities of people mentioned in the journals only by first name. Barrus also took the opportunity to edit Burroughs’s prose, adding punctuation, correcting misspellings, and removing slang. She even appears to have expunged some parts of the journal. Burroughs’s granddaughter Elizabeth Burroughs Kelley retyped Barrus’s transcription, and added handwritten annotations that further clarify the text.

Clara Barrus used her transcription as the basis for her book The Heart of Burroughs’s Journals (published in 1928 by Houghton-Mifflin), and for many years this book was the only available source of writings from the journals. When Vassar acquired the journals and transcriptions in the 1980s they became available to scholars, but they are still not easily available to the general public.

For the past several years my students and I have been creating Microsoft Word files of the Kelley transcription, and then checking those files against the actual writing in the journals, restoring the spelling, punctuation, and text as originally written by Burroughs. We have even been able to include material that was struck out, or even erased but still faintly visible. To date, we have completed the first decade (1876-1886).

This year, a generous grant from the Mellon Foundation allowed Special Collections to create digital images of the actual journal pages, and to link those images with transcriptions of each individual page. The digital images and the transcriptions will be combined using the software package CONTENTdm, so as to display the digital image of a journal page along with the MSWord transcription and any other notes, all on one screen. Readers will then have all of the journals available to them instead of edited portions. Once the material is imported into CONTENTdm, the separate journal pages will also be searchable as if they were one document. Once we complete the process for the entire first decade of the journals, we will begin transcribing the second decade of journals, and similarly linking them with digital images.

The journals of John Burroughs are important for several reasons. John Burroughs was a well-known essayist at the turn of the twentieth century, and many of the ideas in his essays were worked out first in his journals, so the new transcriptions will make it possible to trace the development of ideas from conception to print. He also edited the material in the journals as he wrote, rewriting sentences for more effect. This gives us a glimpse into his creative process, which is something he wrote little about directly.

John Burroughs’s journals also are significant from an environmental studies perspective. Burroughs is considered the originator of the modern nature essay, so the journals provide information on the development of that important literary style. Burroughs also was a careful observer of nature, and recorded his observations in his journals. For this reason, the journals are an invaluable record of natural history of the mid-Hudson Valley over a span of nearly fifty years. Burroughs was especially interested in the arrivals of migratory birds and the blooming of spring ephemeral flowers (which he recorded to the day each year). He also reported on the freezing and break-up of the Hudson River (on whose shores he lived), as well as periods of intense cold in winter and heat in summer. All of those records potentially could be used to create a picture of climate change effects in the Hudson Valley during Burroughs’s time.

We hope to unveil the first decade of journal transcriptions to the scholarly community at the next Sharp Eyes Conference at SUNY Oneonta in June 2010, and to have a grand unveiling for the general public in the fall of 2010.

Jeff Walker is Professor of Earth Science at Vassar College. He is the author of numerous papers on John Burroughs, and the editor of a reissue of John Burroughs’s Signs and Seasons (Syracuse University Press, 2006).
Algonquian Place Names in
John Burroughs’s World

By Evan Pritchard

(This article was adapted and expanded by the author from his Slabsides Day talk of May 15, 2009. Copyright © 2010 by Evan Pritchard.)

John Burroughs was born near Roxbury, New York, in Delaware County, named after the Delaware bay and river and Thomas West, Baron De La Warr (1577-1618). Although the original inhabitants of the county are commonly known as the “Delaware Indians” (as are other nearby peoples who spoke Algonquian languages), they are more properly called the Munsee and Unami. Thus we might say that, except for a brief time in Illinois and several years in Washington, D.C., Burroughs lived his whole life in Munsee territory. For much of that robust life, he divided his time between Woodchuck Lodge, a farmhouse he renovated near Roxbury, and Slabsides, near Riverby/Ulster Park—his winter and summer homes, respectively.

As a farmboy growing up in Roxbury, Burroughs was always eager to learn new words. That eventually led him to leave home and study at Cooperstown Seminary, and later to a career as a writer and educator. Although he never wrote much about the subject, he must have been intrigued by the Native American place names that surrounded him from the day he was born. Those interesting “new” words were in fact quite ancient, predating Burroughs’s birth by perhaps a thousand years or more.

Which of the region’s Algonquian-based place names would the young nineteenth-century naturalist have learned? The immediate and logical answer would seem to be “all of them.” But some of their derivations he would have not been able to learn, and most are not obvious even today. So, just as Burroughs the hiker often took arduous journeys on foot to exotic places like Peekamoose and Shaupeneak, let us take a somewhat rigorous journey of the mind into the probable meaning of those same poetic place names. (Hiking conditions hazardous, not recommended for the weak at heart!)

Burroughs was born near Utsayantha Mountain, whose name clearly sounds Native American, but what does it mean? According to Helen Budrock, Assistant Director of the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development,

Mount Utsayantha got its name from the legend of a local Indian maiden, Utsayantha—which means “beautiful spring.” She was said to have borne a child whose father was white, something that made her father, the chief, so furious he buried a tomahawk in the white man’s skull and rowed with the baby to the center of a nearby lake and drowned it. Utsayantha followed her father to the lake, and in her despair, drowned herself too. Upon discovering what she had done, the legend says the chief recovered her body and carried her up the mountain, where he buried her. Her grave site was believed to have been discovered in 1862, and although many doubt its authenticity, a monument was placed at the site in 1936. (“From Mount Utsayantha Overlooking the Queen of the Catskills,” in Catskill Center News, Fall, 2003)

But let us not put too much credence in this tale. Utsay does not resemble a Munsee word for beautiful, nor -antha a Munsee word for spring. Perhaps it is from the Takabatchi dialect of Shawnee, in which Utcheantha means The Little People, referring to nature spirits. Or was the name made up by nineteenth-century romantics in pursuit of a good story? -Antha is most likely a variant on -anda (based on -aan, to go), meaning “action.” But utsay- is mysterious. The mountain lies near the Delaware River’s headwaters, the East Branch that the Munsee called Pepacton (the reservoir there now bears this name), and the West Branch now known as the “Big” Pepacton.

Pe- (pee) means “water,” pac means “flat-looking,” or “still” (apaakee means “it is flat”) and the -tun suffix means “a village” (coincidentally resembling the English word “town” but based on the older Algonquian suffix -atun. So it is a village at the place in the Delaware where the water is peaceful. An important village also near today’s Hancock, New York, was called Pa-ka-ta-kan (Paghkataghan). Pachat tachan means “splitting wood,” and is another name for the Delaware’s East Branch. The West Branch was also called Namaes-sipu, “fish river.”

Munsee lore suggests that the source of the West Branch of the Delaware was at Cooperstown,
New York, near the Great Council Rock. It was in this town that the young Burroughs went to study words and other noble things at school. Did he learn the meanings of any of the local Native American place names there, with rumblings of both Iroquoian and Algonquian speech? Probably not.

As an instructor, Burroughs taught of the beauty of words for a while at Olive, New York, near Shandaken, a term derived from *ashind-*，“hemlock trees,” and -akee, “land of.” The Moravians spelled this Munsee place name Schin-di-ke-u. Olive was located even closer to Ashokan, the native name for Winchell’s Falls (which is now submerged under the Ashokan Reservoir!). Asho- means “forceful or hard current or rapids,” followed by -aq’n, “a state of being.”

Burroughs eventually ended up at Slabsides, which is near another forceful waterfall, Shaupe-neak, whose name is built on the same prefix. Shau- is short for *asho-* as found in Ashokan. The syllable *pe- or m’be*, again means “water.” But the suffix -neak is not so certain. Many locals pronounce it Sho-pin-eek, but this is not a Munsee interpretation. It is more likely pronounced Shao-pee-ny-ak, with the ending pronounced like the New York town spelled Nyack, which means a prominent point of land, based in turn on the Matouac (Long Island) term *narrioch*.

If Burroughs walked one mile east to Broadway (now U.S. Route 9W), then two more miles north, and turned left on an important Indian trail now called The Old Post Road (Ulster County Route 16; a dollar to the first person to locate the Algonquian name, if there ever was one), he would soon find himself at the head of the rugged up-and-downhill trail that follows along Sheaupeneak Ridge. If he had followed it to Shaupe-neak Falls, as we still can today, he would probably have seen a much more vigorous torrent of water in his day. This stream pours off a small but prominent point of rock in the midst of a beautiful deciduous forest. Was it strong enough to be called a *shau*? Yes, in the springtime, when the woods are full of freshets, right after a rainstorm. Was the rock truly a prominent point of land? One would have to use his or her imagination. Many a leaf has fallen atop its stony crest over the centuries, leaving a layer of soil to diminish its prominence; but it is still there, fitfully trying to live up to its powerful name.

Slabsides today rests in the rustic township called Esopus, a fascinating Munsee word. Of course there is the Klyne Esopus Creek nearby, derived from *klein*, meaning “small” in Dutch, and *e-see-poo-us* or “little river” (*see-poo* is “river,” plus the diminutive -us ending which means “small”). But also in the vicinity was the Groot Esopus, now called the Rondout (it has also been called Kit Davit’s Kill, after the interpreter/trader who came in on the first boat after the Mayflower and who settled in Stoneridge, New York). An island in the Klyne Esopus is called Little Esopus Island; formerly it was called Rappoos, derived from *whaphoos*, “the narrow, small passage of water”; and there once was an Esopus Island in the Rondout.
Why did the Dutch turn E-see-poo-us or Sheepush into Esopus? Any quick glance through the pages of Greek mythology will reveal that Asopus was the real name of Aesop, the author of the famous fables.

The territory around Slabsides is often called Shatemuck. Shatemuck is also said to be an Algonquian name for the Hudson River, but it seems to refer only to the section of the river between Kingston and the Devil’s Dance Chamber in Newburgh. It also seems to refer mainly to territory on the western shore, which maintained its Algonquian sovereignty even during the time the British were establishing Kingston. *Shate-* means “straight” (*schachachgeu*, “it is straight,” is a more common form), and -*muck* is probably derived from *mough*, a superlative meaning “greatest,” with the *k* ending acting as a plural suffix indicating “the people of” or simply as a locative ending. It is therefore logical to assume it means “the Great Strait Way to the Hudson.”

If you look at any map, you will see that the western shoreline of the Hudson makes a straight north-south beeline from the Devil’s Dance Chamber to Kingston. This is also the eastern border of the great Warranawongkong territory, which Edward M. Ruttenber assigns to the Munsee Delaware (*Footprints of the Red Men* [New York State Historical Association, 1906]). This is the geographical feature Henry Hudson reportedly called Lange Rack (Long Reach). According to English-speaking sources, the Wappingers on the opposite side of the river above Poughkeepsie referred to themselves as “Indians of the Long Reach.”

This term was most likely a translation of “Shatemuck,” and its northern territorial limit at the Beekman Arms Inn in Rhinebeck is parallel to that of the Long Reach to the west. (Crum Elbow, which means “bend” or “elbow” in the shoreline, is also used as a northern marker.)

The -*muck* ending might also be an abbreviation for *Mough-hikan-i-tuck*, the real Algonquian name of the entire river from Albany to the Atlantic. Shatemuck is an area defined by the principle of *kelakalabi*, “as far as the eye can see.” But Mohicanituck refers to the whole river, at least up to the rapids that were at Troy Dam. *Mough-* is a superlative meaning “Greatest.” *Hikan* is an “arm of the sea” (the real name of the Esopus Chief “Ankerops” was Kawatch Hikan, or “Great Sea”). And the -*tuck* ending means “it ebbs and flows both ways.” What an appropriate name: “The greatest of estuaries that ebbs and flows both ways.”

John Burroughs spent much of his time in this Warranawongkong region, an area resounding with Indian place names like birds in a spring glade. Let’s imagine Burroughs on horseback, riding from his cabin at Slabsides to the farm at Woodchuck Lodge, taking note of the various puzzling place names he encountered. At a tenth of a mile, he’d pass what is now the John Burroughs Sanctuary, fording a stream a tenth of a mile later. A mile and a third westward he would have crossed the Swarte Kill (now called Black Creek). In *John Burroughs Talks: His Reminiscences and Comments*, as reported by Clifton Johnson (The Riverside Press, 1922), we find the following episode from September 1897: “Burroughs and I walked over the western ridge and down into the valley of the Shattega, a favorite resort of his. The Shattega is a luscious, swampy little river that in one place breaks into a waterfall.” I understand that In Mohawk *shatatik* means “dark” and that -*ega* is a common Mohawk suffix denoting water. This then would be the origin of the term “Black Creek,” and Shattuck as well, although it’s doubtful Burroughs ever knew.

Burroughs then would have crossed the Indian Trail now called the Swarte Kill Road, which follows Black Creek. Two-thirds of a mile farther, and he would reach the T with the Old Post Road, Ulster County Route 16. To the right would be Poppletown and Shaupeneak Ridge, to the left, New York State Route 213, another Indian trail whose name is now forgotten. When Sojourner Truth escaped from slavery in West Park she arrived here on foot, then found the home of her friend then living in Popple Town, Levi Rowe, who had fallen ill and who died soon thereafter. For this reason, a major part of The Old Post Road was dubbed “The Sojourner Truth Freedom Trail,” as this bold escape led ultimately to her role championing emancipation during Lincoln’s administration.

Burroughs turns his mount to the left and rides the five miles along a twisting, turning path past Church Hill to the junction with NY 213. Here he must turn right or left. If he turns left, he takes the road to Woodchuck Lodge. But let’s imagine that he turns right instead. He passes the birthplace of Sojourner Truth at the Sturgeon Pond near Rifton (at Rondout Bay) the site of an unknown Algonquian village near the power station, then crosses the Rondout at Rosen-
dale. He passes the Binnewater area, which is Dutch for “inland waters,” but this was called Ossangwak by the original inhabitants, probably achsun (“stone”) or achsunual (“mountain”) plus k (plural) plus wa’qn (a state of being). At mile 11.6 of his trip, he connects with Abelie Street, and goes three miles to the T with Broadway (the Minisink Trail, essentially New York State Route 209) as it reaches the Rondout Landing in old Kingston. He is now a stone’s throw from the site of a field, at the corner of Hone and Pierpont streets, where the Great Game of the Creator was played—Bagettaway, now called LaCrosse. If he goes left here, he follows the path of the Minisink Trail around Kingston out to Hurley, the site of the Atharhakton village, which means “fields ready to plow.” That famed trail would lead him to Kerhonksen, Wawarsing, and to Minisink Island (some translate this as “stony island place”), the capital of the Munsee people.

To get to Woodchuck Lodge, as mentioned earlier, he would have had to turn left on NY 213. If he did, he’d have begun a journey of astounding beauty, under the spell of the mountain views and of the place names themselves. Let’s saddle up and take that journey with him.

As we ride along this trail, we immediately come to the banks of the Wallkill leading to the town of New Paltz. According to certain documents and deeds, the native name of New Paltz before the Huguenots was Sawarnock. *Nock* is “a place near water” (usually a landing); *sa* is “old” (as in sagamore, a paramount chief); and *war* is a Renneiu word for “good,” a variation on woolay, the original Munsee term. Archaeological research attests that the area where the stone houses now stand has been used almost uninterruptedly for at least 9,000 years, so the term “old” certainly seems appropriate. It is close by what we call the Wallkill River—originally Twischsawkin—hence the suffix “nock.” And common sense says that it must have been “good” for so many to have lived there at once.

Just beyond the Wallkill is New York State Route 32, a prominent Native American trail from Albany to Harriman that linked many smaller waterfalls together in a north-south route, following a gentle land rise. It could be called the Head-of-the-tidewater Trail, because the Hudson’s tributaries to the west are rarely tidal beyond this point. Burroughs would take that route north, then follow NY 213 again as it made its tortured way west across Warranawongkong. If he took a left turn, it would lead to the Mohonk Preserve.

The name Muhonk (Mohonk) was most clearly recorded in the original deed to Louis DuBois on May 26, 1677, at which time it was described as meaning “high hill.” The land formation is 1,000 feet to its apex and then rising 400 feet more above the brow of the hill is Sky Top. The native word for Sky Top was Muhonk.

Forty-five years later, in 1722, old chief Ankerop, whom they called “the last Indian,” and who must have been 100 years old in that year, took a group of three Town Justices from New Paltz to the southern end of Lake Mohonk, the boundary of the old patent, and told them this area was the place referred to in the deed he had helped to arrange so many years earlier, called “Mogkunk.” This he translated as “place at the foot of the hill.” The muugh- prefix means “greatest of all,” and *kong* is the side of a hill, and the final *k* of Mogkunk is “place,” and so he must have meant it was a place at the side of a supremely large hill, or mountain. (In Munsee, the phoneme we spell with a K is actually right between hard K and soft G—a “KG” if you will—so that sometimes you see the word for near a mountain spelled *kong* and sometimes *gong*. In fact it is neither.

The centenarian apparently bounded up the rocky mountain, leading the panting young justices to the top of Skytop Cliff, calling it Maggeanapogh, which is Munsee for “greatest rock.” The word *apugh(k)* has been translated as “rock” (as in Ramapough, which means “slanted rock”) although it is an unusual form. The gee-ana interpolation is unusual, and implies “where you go,” or “where you walk.”

Not too far away is another forceful waterfall, called Coxing, which is derived from Koghksohsing, “near a high place.” Here Burroughs would be in the heart of the Shawangunks, or “Shawngums,” a term first spelled Chauwangung. There has been a longstanding feud among those in the region as to whether the real name of the range of mountains that start at Rosendale and head south should be pronounced Shaw-ANN-gunk or SHAWN-gum. Folk tradition emphatically states that the old-timers called them the Shawngum, however this is clearly not the Native American term. The indigenous language of the region is Munsee, and shaw-ANN-gunk means “the
way or trail near the mountains where we go south,” in every-day Munsee (shaw is “south,” ann is “way” or “trail” (or “to go”), and gunk means “near a mountain,” or “between mountains”).

Local trappers will often Anglicize complex Native American terms, and Shawngunk would not be a surprising short form for this area. But there is a distinct gap between Shawangunk and Shawngum that is not typical of this shortening, in that the M seems so distinct and so deliberate. A “Double Dutch” type of analysis, as I like to call it, gives us some insight into what might have happened. If Shawngum were a Dutch term instead of an English one, a new and fitting meaning comes into view. Schoen would mean “beautiful,” or “pretty.” The expected Double Dutch solution would be to turn shaw-ann to schoen and then turn gunk into gang, or “passageway,”—in other words, schoengang, “a beautiful passageway,” which would aptly describe the angular series of passageways, with walls of many-colored stone slabs that lead one through the famous Ice Caves below Sam’s Point. It would have been a stroke of Dutch linguistic genius worthy of Erasmus.

But that’s not what happened. Instead they chose to honor and immortalize the more famous and visible “crest” of Shawangunk conglomerate that is visible at the top of Sam’s Point. This fifty-foot-tall “cock’s comb” or stripe of gleaming white quartzite is visible for a hundred miles in three of the four cardinal directions, and is a highly unusual landform. It marks the tallest point in the Shawangunk range. The natives called Sam’s Point Ioskawasting, or “It wears the buckhorns from across the way.” (It has always been part of Algonquian tradition to name the largest of a mountain or animal as the “chief” of that range or species—and only a chief wears a hat of buckhorns.) This mountain wears a great wide “hat” of gleaming marble-like quartzite.

Now the Dutch word for “a beautiful crest” at the top of a mountain would be schoenkom. The -kom ending is related to the English word “comb,” as in cock’s comb, but it literally means “crest,” such as that of a mountain. The word for the noun comb is spelled kamm. So that could be the source of that mysterious M. Further, just as the proper name Schoenberg is Americanized to Shawnberg, we can imagine later English settlers changing Schoen to Shawn, and komm to gum. This shift from a hard K to a soft K (G) in gum is very common throughout the world, and could turn out to be part of a local Low Dutch dialectical shift and not English at all.

From High Falls, northeast of Mohonk, we continue west on NY 213, then turn left on the Native American trail white colonists called Lucas Turnpike. On our left we find the Kyserike (Dutch for “rich Emperor”) burial ground, site of the old Kyserike Indian village (native name lost) and then a dry streambed on our right. Walking along the streambed we come to Pompey’s Cave, literally a hole in the ground. Although legend has that it was named after a slave named Pompey, have no doubt that it is derived from the Munsee word pomp-ey-lay-oo, “it is in a dry stream bed,” as that is exactly where it is, 100 paces west from the road where we left our mounts. Climbing down into the hole, one is surprised to find a cold, swift current of underground water running through the cave, just as John Burroughs would have found it. We take a drink, and bring some up to the surface for our horses.

We continue south on Lucas Turnpike bringing us to NY 209, the legendary Minisink Trail, and the town of Accord. Locals say the latter is named after an Indian Treaty. On his way to Woodchuck Lodge, Burroughs would have guided his pony southwest a mile along NY 209, or what was then called “The Old Mine Road.” Just up the Mettacahonts Road on his right, he would water his horse at the stream called Metta-coo-honts, “a shallow trout stream where the pine tree boughs bend low and create shadows on the water.” This is the same prefix, metta-, which was part of Mettawan (“trout stream”), a creek running through Beacon, New York, which now bears the Dutch translation Fishkill. (In John Burroughs’s day, upper Beacon was still called Mattawan, a variant of that name, and lower Beacon was called Fishkill Landing. He witnessed the union of Mattawan and Fishkill Landing as Beacon in 1913.) Mettacahonts township would stand just to the north.

Continuing southwest along The Old Mine Road, or Minisink Trail, Burroughs would soon find the Samsonville Road, also on his right, which leads to the town of Mombaccus. It was named after the “living tree mask” of the Munsee Delaware by a Dr. Westbrook. Living tree masks were depictions of woodland spirits known as the M’sing-(w): a face was cut into a living tree and half the face was painted red, half black.
Westbrook saw one such mask cut into a sycamore, in commemoration of a battle and in honor of one particular hero, or so he claimed. Such masks were found in the 1600s near Mumbaccuskill. The term Mumbaccus comes from *mum* which means “mask,” and Bacchus, the Greek God of the woods, wine, and revelry, the closest that the puzzled Westbrook could come to the M’sing(w) in European terms, having glimpsed the shamanistic dances and rituals from afar.

Just a mile or so in from The Old Mine Road, Burroughs would see The Waterfalls Road on his left. Taking this rustic path, Burroughs and horse would have found a special waterfall where the Native Americans often went to make prayers and speak as one with the Creator. Today it is still marked on our road maps in correct Munsee, Pataukunk. *Pachtau-k* means prayers, or “that which we say to God.” (the *k* indicates the plural) and *–hong-k*, which means waterfalls. Just beyond the falls is the Long Path, a Native American trail that is still in its original form, used only by hikers. Long Path may be a translation of the original Munsee, which would have presumably been Kitchaaney, “Great Path.” If Burroughs were to ride along this “long path” he would come to Samson Mountain, and beyond that, Peekamoose Mountain.

Evocative as it sounds in English, “Peekamoose” has never been adequately translated. One source, *From Abbotts to Zurich: New York State Place-names*, by Ren Vasiliev, states “possibly named with an Algonquian word, meaning ‘broken off smooth,’ but why is unknown.” According to avid hiker Simon Mercer, the top of Panther Mountain is broken off smoothly, and is plainly visible from Peekamoose. However, this information is not found in the Munsee word Peekamoose.

*Peek* generally means “still waters,” such as a pond or lake. This could apply to Peekamoose Lake, which drains into the Rondout Creek in its upper parts. But what does *–amoose* mean? This is a mystery. The ending *-moosumal* is Munsee for “moose,” but it is unlikely that moose were in this region in the last thousand years—plus there is that unexplained *-a*. The word *amu-us* in some dialects means “small bees”—but after all indigenous honeybees are mostly the same general size, as are wasps, hornets, and yellow jackets. The Munsee word for rabbit is *mooshingwsumal*, but again the *-a* is missing and rabbits don’t swim.

The most convincing source to me is Peek-a-moo-xh(w)-us, “the lake where there are small beavers.” Although the more elaborate Delaware word for beaver is the Unami *ta-ma-qua*, the late Beulah Timothy, a fluent Munsee speaker, taught me that *amoos-xh(w)* is the Munsee word for beaver. Add the standard ending *-us*, meaning “small,” and you get Peekamoose. Beavers love freshwater ponds and streams and they can swim. What’s more they have tails that the Munsee still find delicious, and the rest is arguably edible as well.

Following the Long Path, we find our way back to Ashokan. Heading west on a mishmash of trails that became “The Plank Road,” and which we now know as New York State Route 28, we circumvent 4,180-foot-high Slide Mountain, a favorite of John Burroughs from his childhood. He related that he could see it from his boyhood farm near Lexington and spent his youth daydreaming about climbing to the top. Today, there is a John Burroughs trail and at the top, a bronze plaque memorializing the naturalist who made Slide Mountain famous. Slide Mountain earned its name in 1823 after a major landslide changed its appearance, but its native name seems to be lost. After passing Big Indian, named after a tall Native American named Winnisook, we soon reach the ridge which marked the boundary between the Esopus Munsee and the hunting land beyond. Turning right on New York State Route 42, which follows the ridge, we find Lexington, a place of much Munsee history and the homeland of John Burroughs. Just to the west, glowing in the fading light of sunset, is Woodchuck Lodge, and there silhouetted against the sky is the mountain called Utsayantha, whatever that means! Our journey into the sacred wordscape of the Algonquian people is at an end.

**Evan Pritchard**, of Mi’kmaq and Celtic descent, is the author of *Native New Yorkers, No Word For Time*, and the newly released *Henry Hudson and the Algonquins of New York*, all from Council Oak Books. He is also the author of *Native American Stories of the Sacred* (Skylight Paths) among many other books. He has been an adjunct professor in Native American studies at Vassar, Pace, and Marist and gives lectures all over the eastern U.S. and Canada on a variety of subjects. His Web site is [www.algonquinculture.org](http://www.algonquinculture.org), and he can be reached at 212-714-7151.
A cool, wet summer here at the Sanctuary; so much so that I am still behind in getting in the firewood that Pond House is going to need, and may need to purchase several cords this fall. It has been a much drier fall, having but scant rainfall for all of September until the weekend of September 26. It has been much warmer as well, with temperatures soaring into the 80s, a temperature scarcely reached even during high summer. As the golden, slanting rays of fall turn all days to perpetual morning, the squirrels fastidiously rain their hail of hickory and walnut casings in the woods, and try to force their entry into the attic of Pond House. The cardinals still flit about in mated pairs, and the blue jays scream at one another, but the springtime birds have long ceased their melodious morning songs, and even the crickets have traded in their short, quick, staccato for a long, drawn, droning, meditative constancy of sound that I have long thought of as the sound of the very Earth going to sleep: not a snore exactly, but something akin to the sound of a child’s breath as it deepens and lengthens as he slides into the twilight between waking and sleep.

Leaves dance and tumble slowly over and over on their one and only flight, abandoning their progenitor, their function complete, landing on the ground or in the pond, leaving naught but their ripples behind and soon forgotten—a reminder of our own mortality and relative unimportance. Soon all the world will be silence here. The frosts will come, and the snows all too soon after, blanketing the Sanctuary in a muffling, white cover of silence. The stars will reel overhead again, unobscured by the mists and moisture of the warmer seasons, making one dizzy to look upon them. The pond will freeze over and the surroundings transform into something unrecognizable—nearly a desert compared with the memory of the fecundity of spring and summer. But today, the rays of the sun still warm, and last night’s rain drops glisten on the trees like diamonds; all the world has been washed and is new and its gifts are ripe for picking. All seasons, like all phases of life, have their splendor, if we can but be present to take pleasure in them.

As I left the Sanctuary one fine morning this summer, some bird had the unmitigated audacity to defecate upon my windshield. This, to be sure, was no cute little sparrow poo, but a rather copious wad that hit the windshield with a resounding smack. Somewhat startled, and disgruntled, I was about to hit the washer to (as I hoped) flood away the offensive wad (in truth I feared it would serve only to spread the mass the length and breadth of the windshield). Before effecting my plan, I chanced to look more closely at the offending glob, when lo and behold, what should my guano have, but eyes and feet? My defecacious little mass had turned out to be a peeper, descended from on high. I shudder to think what might have happened to my little sucker-toed amphibious friend had I forged ahead with my windshield wiper plan. As it was, I was forced to stop the car and kill the engine, and corral my little peeper in my hands, and coax him onto my palm. He promptly crawled out onto my pinky and perched, allowing me to examine his sandy blond body and gold-flecked amphibian eyes before he leapt to safety on a nearby smooth rock face.

All levity aside, this is the real joy of living at the Sanctuary. Even when I have places to go, and people to see, and things to do that on the face of them seem so very important at the time, I am often forced to stop, take a breath, step away from my oh-so-important pursuits and re-engage with my life, and the world about me—the world of nature. It lends a real and connected quality to my life that I would otherwise miss, and indeed I believe many of us miss. It is as Burroughs said in his essay “Wildlife About My Cabin,” that “life’s complex equations” disappear here, and one is forced repeatedly to re-engage, to stop and take a breath, to look about and re-evaluate, which is only one of the many reasons that I am so very grateful to remain the Resident Naturalist here at the John Burroughs Association Sanctuary at Slabsides.

A Member Highlight about Jason Dempsey will appear in the next issue of Wake-Robin
Annual Dues

Please assist in supporting the mission of the John Burroughs Association by becoming a member. Becoming a Patron or Benefactor will reflect an even greater interest and help in the goals of the organization. Stewardship of the John Burroughs Association will benefit with your generous contribution.

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Reserve ____ place (s) at the annual luncheon Monday, April 5, Noon:
Member $95 Nonmember $125

Make checks payable to the John Burroughs Association and mail to: John Burroughs Association, Inc., American Museum of Natural History, 15 West 77 Street, New York, NY 10024-5192. Alternatively you can pay by credit card online through NYCharities.org. Start at our Web site http://research.amnh.org/burroughs. Scroll down to “Now You Can Contribute to the JBA online!” and click on the New York Charities link given there. We are a 501 (3)c tax exempt organization

Annual Meeting Proxy: Please complete and return the form below

KNOW ALL PEOPLE BY THESE PRESENTS, that I ____________________, residing at ____________________________________________, being a member of the John Burroughs Association, Inc., do hereby constitute and appoint Lisa Breslof as my proxy to attend the Annual Meeting of the members of said corporation to be held at the American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, New York, New York at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, April 5, 2010, or any continuation or adjournment thereof, with full power to vote and act for me and in my name, place and stead, in the same manner, to the same extent and with the same effect that I might were I personally present there at, giving to said Lisa Breslof full power of substitution and revocation, and I hereby revoke any other proxy heretofore given by me.

Date _______________________mm/dd/yyyy
Signature ___________________________________ Member
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Photo by Craig Chesek

The John Burroughs Association informs members through Wake-Robin and the Web site http://research.amnh.org/burroughs. Occasionally, we reach out via e-mail with news alerts and timely news. Please send your e-mail address to the Secretary (breslof@amnh.org) so that we can better serve you. Members are encouraged to submit articles or news items for publication. Deadline for submissions to the Summer 2010 issue of Wake-Robin is June 1, Direct inquiries to the editors.
**Wake-Robin**
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**Calendar**

**April 5** — 10:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.: Annual Awards Luncheon and Board Meeting at the American Museum of Natural History (see page 11)

**May 15** — 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.: Slabsides Open House. The Spring Slabsides Day on this Saturday will feature the trails of the John Burroughs Nature Sanctuary, highlighting our plans to add two new trails to the trail network and to restore the two connector trails. This exciting work is being funded by a grant from the New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Please refer to page 1 for the full announcement. Slabsides will be open at 11 a.m. for an interpretive tour. A presentation about the trails and their route through the woods of the Sanctuary will be made at 12 Noon. Guided nature walks will also be offered. The featured speaker will be announced on our Web site, http://research.amnh.org/burroughs.