



PRIDE AND PRESERVATION

A PASTORAL PARADISE, THE HAMLET OF NORTH SALEM IS THE EQUESTRIAN HEART OF WESTCHESTER COUNTY, NEW YORK.

BY **REBECCA BALDRIDGE**
MAJOR PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GEORGE KAMPER**

SOME PEOPLE SAY you can't have it all. You're a city mouse or a country mouse. But if you follow Route 22 out of White Plains, New York, into the northernmost reaches of Westchester

County, you'll find Arcadia in easy reach of New York City. Whether you work in Manhattan and come home to rolling green pastures and nickering horses, or you run a world-class equestrian operation and pop into the city for a quick spin through Bergdorf's, you can have it all. In the towns of Bedford and North Salem, New York, more or less an hour from Grand Central Terminal on Metro North, titans of Wall Street, celebrities, and a legion of professional and amateur equestrians revel in the best of both worlds.

COLONIAL HISTORY

The town of Bedford, the first stop as you head north into horse country, is as picturesque a New England-style village as you could ever wish to see, complete with a white-steepled church that dates from 1872 and a village green. Bedford was founded in 1680 when a group of Puritans bought the land from Chief Katonah of the Munsee tribe. It served as the county seat for Westchester during the Revolutionary War and was torched by the British in 1779. While you won't see any pre-1779 buildings given that bit of unpleasantness, Bedford's colonial origins are nonetheless still apparent. The Bedford Village Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 and includes most of the original 1680 hamlet. Gleaming white Greek Revival and Gothic Revival buildings border the green, lending a chocolate-box prettiness that no lover of history can resist.

While Bedford is a proper village,



GEORGE KAMPER



RW PHOTO



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PEGGY SUE



COURTESY PETER LUTZ



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KATHY RUSSELL

with a charming town center that offers visitors opportunities to eat, shop, and amuse themselves, North Salem, just 11 miles up the road, is very different in character. Primarily an agrarian community from the time the town was founded in 1730, dairy and cattle farming sustained the local economy until the 1940s, when the noble steed began its rise to ascendancy.

BOLDFACE NAMES AND WORLD-CLASS FACILITIES

While horses have traditionally played an important role in Bedford, the equestrian business dominates North Salem. Some wags say there are more horses than people, which may or may not be true, but local culture most assuredly revolves around the horse. Massive horse farms, competition barns, and boarding facilities dot the landscape, and every discipline from hunter jumper and dressage to eventing is duly represented.

The jewel in North Salem's crown is Old Salem Farm. This five-star facility, sitting high atop a hill on June Road, is the site of America's Gold Cup, which takes place annually in September. The competition includes a number of important FEI ranking events, and top riders

Previous page: Old Salem Farm has evolved over the years into a world-class venue. Actor Paul Newman and his actress wife, Joanne Woodward, gave the farm its first makeover. Later, billionaire Kamran Hakim invested more than \$30 million in restoration. **This page, top:** Old Salem's trainer and Olympic silver medalist Lucy Davis and manager Alan Bietsch. The first double-level VIP tent in the horse-show world at Old Salem's American Gold Cup. McLain Ward competing at Old Salem. **Center:** Georgina Bloomberg's Gotham North Farm. Joshua Meyers at Pegasus Therapeutic Riding. Bloomberg founded the Rider's Closet, located at Pegasus, to make riding clothes accessible to therapeutic riding programs, pony clubs, intercollegiate riding programs, and individual riders who are in need. World champion Peter Lutz partners with importers Gallagher/Mellers Sport Horses. **Bottom:** Georgina at her barn with Crown 5. Mattias Tromp and his sister, Emmy, operate the family's Beyaert Farm. Brigadoon Stable's head trainer, champion hunter Lainie Wimberly.



ANNUALS

Trainers' breakfast: *Equestrian Living* invited some of the area's trainers to Hayfields for a photo by *EQ* photography director George Kamper. **L. to R.:** Judy Richter, Coker Farm; Callie Kuntz-Bauer, Echo Farm; Shelly Burr, Pegasus Therapeutic Riding; Chris DeFilippis, Field Horse Farm; Carol Maloney, Stony Creek; Lyman T. Whitehead, Eight Fences Farm; Linda Van Kooy, Alderbrook Farm; Tracy Freels, Harkaway Farm; Cynthia Williams, New England Farm; Laura O'Connor, Stony Creek.

fresh from the World Equestrian Games will compete for America's Gold Cup on September 30 this year, the final day of the competition. It might be said that living so near Old Salem, with not only the Gold Cup but the spring shows, is like having the Badminton Horse Trials in your backyard.

You'll find plenty of boldface names from the equestrian world too. Georgina Bloomberg's Gotham North sits on the eastern edge of town, while Olympic gold medalist McLain Ward's Castle Hill Farm is just to the north, and silver medalist Lucy Davis has just settled in at Old Salem Farm. Bloomberg says, "Since I grew up riding at Kris Ward's (McLain's mother) farm, and then at Old Salem Farm, I have so many memories of riding in North Salem, at farms, at Old Salem shows, and even out having fun on the trails. There was nowhere else I even considered wanting to base. North Salem is a place I love, and where I feel at home."

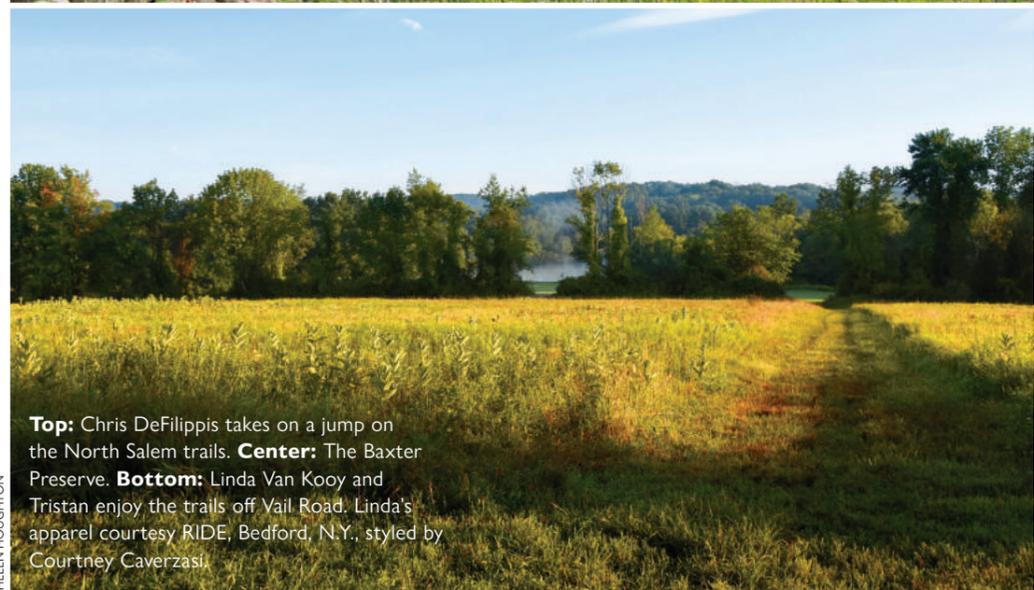
While the proliferation of five-star facilities and world-class riders is likely rivaled only by Wellington, North Salem's rural character and vast swathes of open land make the area truly unique. Breathtaking equestrian properties and centuries-old stone walls give way to verdant fields, forest, and wetlands that are home to a variety of wildlife, including deer, coyotes, foxes, and the occasional bear or wildcat. Preserving the town's rural character is the highest priority for North Sailemites, and three local organizations work together to ensure that the fragile ecosystem is protected.

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS PRESERVE THE LANDSCAPE

The Open Land Foundation spearheads the charge to preserve the open land that's the soul of North Salem. Founded by a group of local residents in 1974, the foundation currently owns 25 parcels of land, comprising nearly 753 acres, and holds conservation easements over another 469 acres. This land, 1,222 acres



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HELEN HOUGHTON

Top: Chris DeFilippis takes on a jump on the North Salem trails. **Center:** The Baxter Preserve. **Bottom:** Linda Van Kooy and Tristan enjoy the trails off Vail Road. Linda's apparel courtesy RIDE, Bedford, N.Y., styled by Courtney Caverzasi.

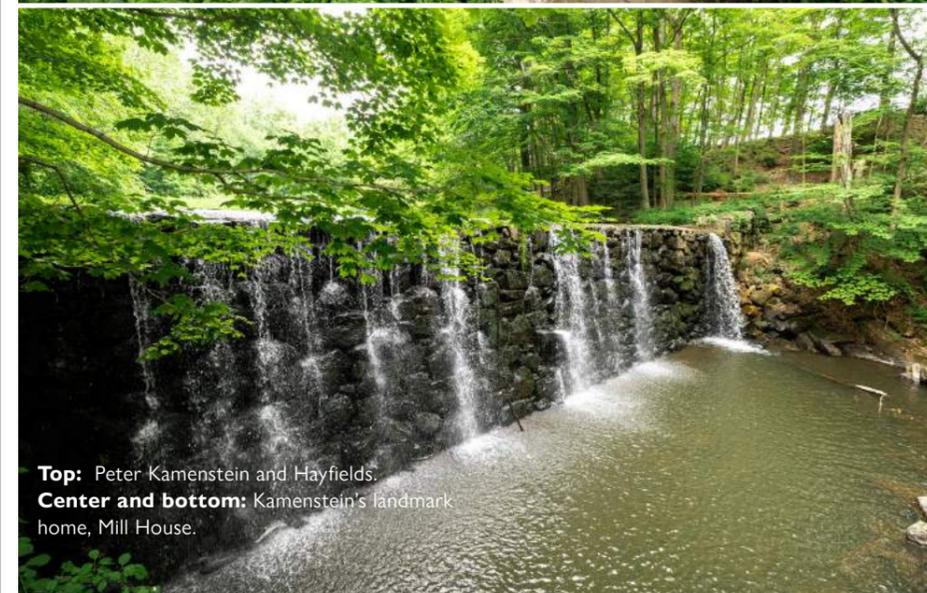


MARINA KIRIAKOU

in total, will remain forever pristine and undeveloped. One of the most popular and beloved preserves is the Baxter Racetrack, a 114-acre parcel donated by the Baxter Road Group in 1979. The group was made up of local foxhunters who were deeply attached to the land and wanted to preserve it for future generations of foxhunters, riders, and walkers. The Open Land Foundation encourages local residents to get involved as volunteers and can offer landowners assistance in donating land or obtaining conservation easements.

Working hand-in-glove with the Open Land Foundation is the North Salem Bridle Trail Association (NSBTA), which depends entirely on its membership and volunteers to maintain a historic system of more than 100 miles of riding trails in North Salem and nearby Ridgefield, Connecticut. The trails wind through miles of countryside that includes challenging forested and rocky terrain as well as fields suited to a gentle meander past acres of hay and wildflowers. The fields along Vail Road, although privately owned, are open to NSBTA members and offer jumps for lower-level riders as well as log- and stone-wall obstacles that will have the boldest hunter white-knuckling the reins. The graciousness of local landowners in allowing riders access is just another example of the spirit that makes North Salem so special.

The NSBTA works hard to marshal community interest in preserving the horse country and sponsors events such as trail rides, trail cleanup events, and a barn dance in the fall. Another event that's designed to bring the community together is the Jingle Bell Jog, which was started 10 years ago by Yolanda and Richard Knowlton of Windward Mark Farm. Yolanda says, "We wanted to find a way to bring together riders from



Top: Peter Kamenstein and Hayfields. **Center and bottom:** Kamenstein's landmark home, Mill House.

PHOTOS: GEORGE KAMFER

different disciplines who might otherwise never see each other.”

On the first Sunday in December, equestrians dress in festive attire to join a trail ride that kicks off the holiday season. (Last year, 70 riders, including one dressed as a gingerbread man and another as a nutcracker, enjoyed a jaunt that ended with a police escort down Route 121 to Hayfields.) Once the last horse is snug in its stall, the riders head back to Windward Mark Farm for the Knowltons' annual holiday party.

You can't spend more than half an hour in North Salem without running into Peter Kamenstein, the town's deputy supervisor. There's no civic endeavor he's not involved in: He's a trustee of the Open Land Foundation, a member of the NSBTA board, a volunteer fireman, and the owner of both Three Ponds Farm and Hayfields, the café that serves as North Salem's unofficial town center. As a town father of long standing (he moved here in 1985), Peter says that it's really the people that make North Salem special. "You can be as involved as you want to be," he observes. "The town is basically run by volunteers. People participate because they love the community. It's very democratic here, despite the concentration of wealth. Everyone has an equal voice, without a doubt."

GOLDEN'S BRIDGE HOUNDS KEEP TRADITION ALIVE

The Golden's Bridge Hounds (GBH) is another essential pillar of the North Salem community. Since 1924, horses and hounds have been pursuing the elusive *Monsieur Reynard* through the hills and dales of the local countryside. While the social aspect of a good day's hunting with a close-knit group of friends should never be underestimated, the hunt also plays a significant role in conservation efforts. Many GBH members are also farm owners with a deep attachment to the land. While members want to preserve the land for future generations of



ALL PHOTOS THIS SPREAD: HELEN HOUGHTON

At right: GBH Master of Fox Hounds Eugene Colley and his son Bruce.





Top: Bedford's landmark Sunnyfield Farm.
Bottom: Peter Leone's Lionshare is based at Sunnyfield (Leone is shown with Cascaval Z owned by GG Equestrian); Sunnyfield's Jerry Nielsen, Joanne Nielsen, and Sandra Nielsen Baumann.
Opposite, above: Coker Farm's Judy Richter.
Below: Martha Stewart's barn in Bedford.



foxhunters and keep their beloved sport alive, the entire community benefits from their efforts. Indeed, it was the GBH that first created North Salem's trail system.

GBH functions under the stewardship of Masters of Fox Hounds (MFH) Eugene Colley, his son Bruce, David Feureisen, Ed Kelly, Peter Kamenstein, and Yolanda Knowlton. Master Knowlton emphasizes that the hunt is important in maintaining a sense of history and encouraging traditional country pursuits. She also notes, "As well as preserving our beautiful landscape and keeping rural traditions alive, our goal is to give members and guests a day of great sport, with our quarry escaping to continue the chase another day."

As part of that sport, GBH also sponsors three pace events during the year, the GBH Spring and Fall Paces, held at the Baxter Preserve, and the North Country Pace, which takes place in Amenia, 45 minutes north up Route 22. Of course, there are plenty of social opportunities as well, given the numerous hunt breakfasts and the annual hunt ball. While some might perceive foxhunting and its associated social aspects as elitist, Peter Kamenstein, MFH, emphasizes that the Golden's Bridge Hounds is very egalitarian and warmly welcomes any rider who'd like to give hunting a try.



GEORGE KAMPER

BEDFORD LOVES HORSES, TOO

Bedford is so traditionally steeped in equestrian tradition that there is even a local initiative called Bedford Loves Horses to promote the equestrian lifestyle. The town is also famed for its cherished system of riding trails, which are maintained by the Bedford Riding Lanes Association (BRLA). With over 500 members, the group includes both riders and walkers, all of whom are dedicated to preserving and protecting Bedford's rural and equestrian character. The organization's president, Barbara Matarazzo, says, "Preserving open land and a love of the equestrian lifestyle are the reasons I and many residents moved to Bedford. I feel

we have a responsibility to this wonderful community to preserve its living history, and I am honored to be given the reins to assist in that continuing effort."

Indeed, it's the equestrian character of Bedford that draws so many people to the town, and there is no shortage of stunning farms. One of Bedford's most famous landmarks, Sunnyfield Farm, greets visitors who arrive via Route 172. Originally owned by an A&P heiress who named the farm for the company's popular brand of butter, the capacious barns, situated on 230 acres of gently undulating pastureland, are still painted a warm shade of butter yellow. Joanne Nielsen, the farm's octogenarian owner, is an enthusiastic breeder of Thoroughbreds, and the farm has seen several of its colts run in the Kentucky Derby. Among the crop of 2017 foals are two progeny of Triple Crown winner American Pharoah.

However, Triple Crown babies aren't Sunnyfield's only celebrities. Olympic silver medalist Peter Leone runs his Lionshare training operation from Sunnyfield, and you'll find him honing the skills of both promising riders and show jumpers at his Bedford base.

Judy Richter, the Grande Dame of Bedford equestrian society and a world-renowned trainer, show judge, and author, is the mistress of Coker Farm,

WHAT'S AVAILABLE IN THE REGION?



S & L FARM in nearby Sherman, Connecticut, is the ultimate equestrian property in the Northeast and certainly among the best in the country. This horse-owner's paradise, with unsurpassed views, is being sold fully equipped and is owned and was designed by an iconic fashion-design couple renowned for their highly developed aesthetic, with over 50 years of experience with horses and building the best of equestrian farms across the U.S. It includes both indoor and outdoor rings, a renovated antique colonial home, jumping-derby field, guest house, and every possible amenity, including pool, tennis, and a 20-stall stable with wash stalls, grooming stalls, his/hers baths, tack and feed rooms, and a lovely lounge with a bar on the second level overlooking the outdoor riding ring. Listed by **Sally Slater at Douglas Elliman**, Bedford, New York sallyslater.elliman.com \$14,750,000.



LE BESTIAIRE. Adjoining the vast trail system of the Bedford Riding Lanes and with 1,000 feet of frontage on the Beaver Dam River, this iconic 58-acre compound is set amid the great estates of Bedford. Supremely private and with multiple dwellings, the property is bucolic, defined by large stretches of fenced pasture, stands of weeping willow, and an allée of sugar maples leading to an internal network of bridle trails. The equestrian center includes two barns totaling 14 stalls and indoor and outdoor riding arenas measuring 205 by 75 feet and 205 by 90 feet. Constructed in the 1920s, the main residence is simple, warm, and unpretentious, with a lovely swimming pool and stone cabana. Pastoral, farmlike, and simply beautiful, the property is offered for the first time in over 50 years. Listed by **David Turner at Houlihan Lawrence**, Bedford, New York. davidturner.houlihanlawrence.com \$8,500,000.

one of the most famous hunter-jumper barns in America. There are few people in the horse world whom Judy doesn't know, and her knowledge of the equestrian industry is legendary. A protégé of George Morris in her youth, Judy has been a professional horsewoman and trainer all her adult life and has guided countless young riders toward championship rosettes.

Amateurs and professionals alike call Coker Farm home. Olympic medalist show jumper Norman Dello Joio and his son Nick, also a highly ranked show jumper, base their jumper-training operation out of Coker, as does Cynthia Williams' New England Farm.

Whether you live in Westchester's horse country or you're just visiting, the stimulation from so much verdant beauty and prime horseflesh can be overwhelming, albeit in the very best way. Fortunately, there are other diversions available. Like shopping. Of course, if you're in Bedford or North Salem, you're

likely to be in the market for an economy-sized tub of Mrs. Pasture's cookies or a pair of figure-hugging Equiline breeches. At one end of Bedford's main drag you'll find the Horse Connection, where competitive rider Natasha Tarasov offers a wide range of riding attire, tack, and books as well as the ephemera that makes a great gift for your horse-loving friends. At the other end is RIDE, where owner Courtney Caverzasi will be ready to kit you out in the most fashion-forward equestrian wear. If you're pining for a pair of burgundy custom boots with faux-alligator tops, Courtney's your girl. Of course, she still offers a broad range of classic clothes for the show and schooling rings. In North Salem, Beval Saddlery offers not only tack and classic riding clothes but also grooming aids, fly spray, barn supplies, and all the equestrian accoutrements you'll need.

If you've just rolled into Bedford and you need somewhere to stay, the Bedford Post Inn offers luxurious

accommodations and two restaurants—the Barn, for casual dining, and the Farmhouse, for elegant and elaborate fare. Co-owned by Bedford local Richard Gere, the Post Inn also offers a yoga studio, an exceptional wine cellar, and outdoor dining on its flagstone terrace. For visitors looking for a cozy bed and breakfast, hosts Christina and Abbott Fleur at Honey Maple Grove offer guests a warm welcome as well as delicious home-cooked breakfasts with honey from their very own hives.

It's also vitally important to know where you'll find the local troughs and watering holes, as so much horsing around is bound to make a person pretty peckish as well as parched. During the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 94

Opposite, Top: Beval Saddlery in North Salem and the Horse Connection in Bedford. **Center:** RIDE in Bedford and the eight-guest-room Bedford Post Inn. **Bottom:** The Inn's owners, Richard Gere and Russell Hernandez. Hayfield's offers a nursery and tasteful gifts. Visitors can enjoy live music on Friday evenings.





LAURENCE GUILLEM

GEORGE KAMPER

PETER MICHAELIS

GABE PALACIO

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 48

day, famished equestrians crowd the counter at Hayfield's, lining up for the café's famed Frickin' Chicken sandwich. Co-owned by Peter Kamenstein and Renea Dayton, Hayfield's offers much more than a cup of coffee or a sandwich. The nursery keeps local landscapes supplied with plants and flowers, while the shop offers an array of tasteful gifts, many locally made. On Friday evenings in the summer, you can stop by for live music, while the cold-weather months offer a trivia night that inspires a veritable mania in some regulars.

If you want to grab some healthy organic soy milk or a box of spelt, stop by The Market at Union Hall, where owner Daniel Pereira offers upscale organic products as well as a range of baked goods, snacks and, of course, organic coffee. He opened the shop and café just over a year ago and says, "I chose North Salem because of the incredible energy. It's so

Top: The Market at Union Hall and the well-known landmark, Balanced Rock. **Center:** Ed Taylor and Michael Kaphan and their Farmer and the Fish restaurant. **Below:** Midway between Bedford and North Salem, make a pit stop for Westchester's best ice cream at Bluebird.



positive with such grounded people. Every day when I come here it feels like a vacation."

In the evening, you should find yourself at Purdy's Farmer and the Fish for a dinner that will delight the

most insufferable foodie. Located in an 18th-century farmhouse, the restaurant specializes in seafood and vegetables grown on-site. The cozy bar, peanut shells crunching underfoot, is always hopping, and if you're lucky, co-owner Ed Taylor, still clad in his riding boots from the day's hunting, might stand you a drink.

The city mouse who declares country life too dull to be endured has clearly never been to this neck of the woods. Bedford local resident Muffin Dowdle says, "To be able to run, ride, hike, skate, fish, and cross-country ski in your backyard every day is a gift. This is paradise."

The Westchester horse country has something for everyone, save perhaps the most relentless urbanite. If breathtaking scenery, welcoming people, great food, and fresh air leave you cold, I don't know what to say. But I'd paraphrase Dr. Johnson. When you're tired of Bedford and North Salem, you're tired of life.

EQ + CONTACT INFO | PAGE 106