



Highlands Preservation, Inc.

A Non-Profit Organization Dedicated to Preserving the Highlands' Hidden Historic Resources

103 Whangtown Road

Kent Lakes, NY 10512

(845) 249-8880

www.HighlandsPreservation.org

Editor
Putnam County Times
P.O. Box 608
Mahopac, NY 10541

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Dear Editor,

In response to Renee Fleury's article "Preserving Stone Chambers," the author needs to be reminded that there is a big difference between preservation and vandalism.

Highlands Preservation, a local non-profit organization, has been working to protect and preserve the stone chambers in this area. We work with other organizations, such as the New England Antiquities Research Association (NEARA) and the New York State Historic Preservation Office, in documenting and officially registering these unique structures. While the theories as to their origins are numerous, we do not advocate for any particular theory, but instead focus on the need to protect them from threats posed by man and nature.

Ironically, one of the recent man-made threats to the chambers comes from individuals associated with Ms. Fleury's organization. In their zeal to prove that these chambers are Celtic temples, they advocate for the moving and removing of stones and other artifacts from these sites to strengthen the case for their theories. Unfortunately, they are sometimes supported, directly or indirectly, by misguided public officials. But these activities threaten the historical and archaeological integrity of these sites, endangering the possibility of future archaeological studies which may someday help to definitively

date these structures. And because most of these chambers are now registered as official New York State inventoried archaeological sites, those activities amount to vandalism, not preservation, and violate the New York State Historic Preservation Act.

On May 1st, we, along with some local members of NEARA, thwarted an attempt by Ms. Fleury's chief advisor to manipulate the rocks on inventoried archaeological site #A07902.000032 in Kent, while they celebrated the Celtic festival known as "Beltane." We threatened to call in the local authorities if they persisted in their activities, and they finally relented.

Ms. Fleury also advertises on her website that "For an affordable price we will take you on spiritual hikes to the chambers." This is also an illegal practice on the NYS DEC and NYC DEP properties, where most of the chambers are located.

We will continue to fight for the protection and preservation of the stone chambers in Putnam County. Thanks to the efforts of Highlands Preservation, we recently preserved the chamber on Ludingtonville Road at the old Drew-Merritt mill site, where the county plans on building a new senior citizen center. The county has now agreed to preserve the chamber and build around it. Regardless of one's opinion as to their origins, these are important historical artifacts that need to be protected and preserved, and not manipulated to artificially support one theory over another.

Sincerely,

Thomas F. Maxson

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