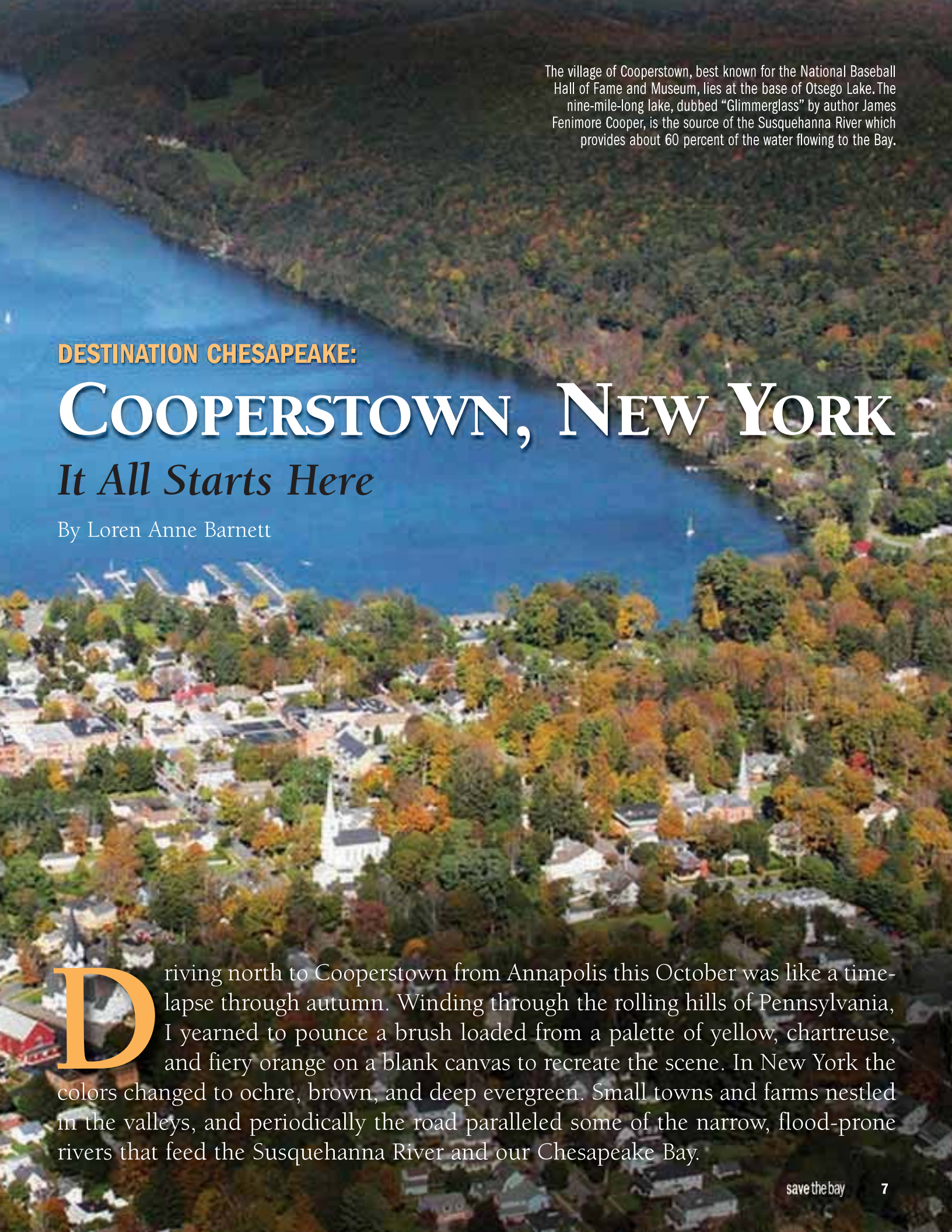


“ You could drop a small boat into Otsego Lake at Cooperstown and it would float with the currents all the way to the Chesapeake Bay, 444 miles downstream. ”

—COOPERSTOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



The village of Cooperstown, best known for the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, lies at the base of Otsego Lake. The nine-mile-long lake, dubbed “Glimmerglass” by author James Fenimore Cooper, is the source of the Susquehanna River which provides about 60 percent of the water flowing to the Bay.

DESTINATION CHESAPEAKE:

COOPERSTOWN, NEW YORK

It All Starts Here

By Loren Anne Barnett

Driving north to Cooperstown from Annapolis this October was like a time-lapse through autumn. Winding through the rolling hills of Pennsylvania, I yearned to pounce a brush loaded from a palette of yellow, chartreuse, and fiery orange on a blank canvas to recreate the scene. In New York the colors changed to ochre, brown, and deep evergreen. Small towns and farms nestled in the valleys, and periodically the road paralleled some of the narrow, flood-prone rivers that feed the Susquehanna River and our Chesapeake Bay.



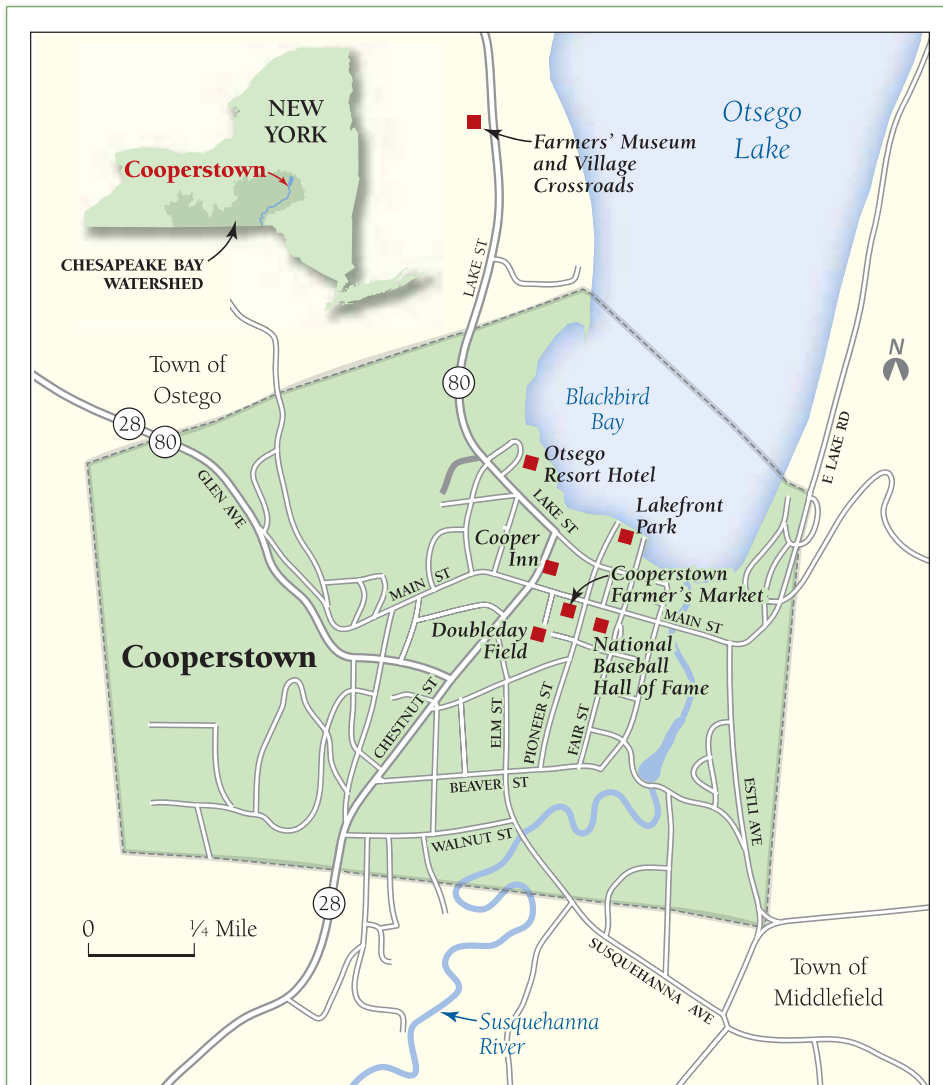
Cooperstown's Farmers' Museum is an open-air museum depicting rural life circa 1840.



In the museum's dairy barn, Farmer Wayne gives Helen a hands-on lesson on milking a cow.



From the back porch at Otsego Resort, the source of the Susquehanna stretches north.



LUCIDITY INFORMATION DESIGN

Cooperstown at a Glance

- **LOCATION:** About 80 miles northeast of Binghamton in New York's Otsego County, Cooperstown lies at the base of Otsego Lake at the northern end of the Susquehanna.
- **GEOGRAPHY:** This 1.8-square-mile village (population 1,884) is surrounded by hilly, mostly forested, rural land where dairy farming is a prominent industry.
- **ATTRACTIONS:** Otsego Lake (fishing, swimming, boating), Glimmerglass Queen boat tours, the Farmers' Museum, Cooperstown Farmers' Market, the Cooperstown Beverage Trail, the Fenimore Art Museum, and the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.
- **CONTACT:** www.thisiscooperstown.com, 703/339-2380.

The mighty Susquehanna River contributes the largest amount of freshwater to the Bay—more than half. The river extends almost to the top of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. At the Susquehanna's source, Cooperstown hugs the base of Otsego Lake.

In season, the lake is prime for swimming, fishing, and boat tours aboard the *Glimmerglass Queen*. Other attractions include the Cooperstown Farmers' Market, the Fenimore Art Museum, The Cooperstown Beverage Trail, and the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.

To the south and west, New York's part of the Bay watershed is largely forested and rural. Otsego County, home of Cooperstown, boasts about 1,000 farms, with dairy accounting for 76 percent of the total agricultural revenue. Although agriculture is a source of pollution to our waterways, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) reports that many in New York's agricultural community are voluntarily making positive changes. And NRCS is helping with nutrient management plans, creation of habitat for wildlife, and erosion control.

Appropriately, our very first stop was the Cooperstown Farmers' Museum. My copilot, daughter Helen, and I were ready to "get our boots dirty."

The open-air museum depicts rural life in the 1840s. The village's interactive exhibits include a blacksmith shop, country store, and working farmstead.

As we mooed at a cow in the dairy barn, Farmer Wayne approached. Helen was quickly engaged in a lesson and successfully milked "Daisy May" while I snapped photos. We toured the rest of the exhibits and made our way into town.



Green farmers Ilyssa Berg and Javier Flores produce artisan cheeses at their Painted Goat Farm.



Happy goats graze on a rotational cycle on the farm's 110 hilly acres.



A variety of award-winning goat cheeses are made every other day at Painted Goat.

Helen and I checked into our room at the Cooper Inn, built in 1813 and converted for lodging in 1939. Our room was lovely, and we were tempted to put our feet up for a few minutes. But the sun was sinking and we hurried off to The Otsego Resort for dinner and a beautiful sunset.

The view of the lake from the resort was spectacular. We relaxed on the back porch waiting for our table, taking in the lake, fall foliage, and neighboring golf course.

After dinner, we made ourselves at home back at the Inn. Helen was busy with some school work and I thought of the museum's farm and the industrialization of agriculture.

High-yield farming—driven by our nation's demand for “cheap meat”—has been stimulated by new machinery, fertilizers, genetics, and politics. Farmers who wished to continue with ecological, free-range, non-chemical methods became the organic, “alternative” farmers of the late 20th Century's environmental movement.

Agricultural polarization has continued. Today, although by number more farms are family-owned (91 percent), agribusiness handily collects more revenue (73 percent).

The downside to the environment has been pollution, from over fertilization, poor manure management, erosion, and extended transportation needs. The social downside has been less nutritious food, confined animals, and the waning of a philosophy that protects the lifestyle and income of a small farmer.

Helen and I were excited to spend the following day with family farmers Ilyssa Berg and Javier Flores at their Painted Goat Farm (www.paintedgoat.com).

I went to sleep dreaming of goat cheese, Ilyssa's last e-mail playing in my head: “Don't wear heels.”

Early the next morning, just a few miles outside Cooperstown, we found Painted Goat's mailbox in the middle of what many would call “nowhere.” We called from the car. “I see a barn and some pigs.” “Uh-huh,” answered Ilyssa. (At home, this would be a helpful landmark.) “Look for our green barns at the end of the road.”

Ilyssa greeted us outside the building that houses their living quarters, milking room, office, cheese-making lab, and storage cave. Ilyssa and Javier built everything themselves and it was impressive.

Ilyssa met Javier in a farming region of Ecuador's Andes while Ilyssa was doing research for her Master's in Ecological Anthropology at the University of Georgia. Her approach to farming is holistic, covering anthropology, the environment, and cultural relations.

She talked about Javier's home country, how much more environmentally conscientious the Ecuadorian people are, even without regulation and infrastructure. There, most people live in rural areas. Their love of the land is cultural, tied to their family's past and future. They value organic farming, happy animals, better food, and a healthy environment.

The couple had thought to remain in Ecuador. Instead they settled here with the idea to follow a surge of interest in food that is gourmet, local, organic, and healthy.

Painted Goat's 110 hilly acres are home to 80 goats (mostly Alpine and Nubian), 24 chickens, two roosters (the younger still working on his crow), and Juju, a very

friendly Jack Russell. The goats are rotated from field to field where they graze on grasses and get exercise and fresh air. They winter in the barn with hay.

Following kidding in February, the nannies are milked twice per day for about ten months. The kids drink cow milk until they are able to eat solids.

Helen and I watched Javier making cheese in the lab. The milk had already been pasteurized and cultured. Javier scooped the glistening pure-white curds into various molds, while the whey drained off the table into buckets.

The nutritious whey is consumed by the neighbor's pigs who love it so much they reportedly no longer drink water. A sip was enough for me.

The resulting fresh and aged cheeses are sold at local farmers' markets and specialty food stores. Painted Farm won a Blue Ribbon at the 2011 New York State Fair. The cheese is sublime and we were anxious to meet the prized milk makers.

The goats were friendly and affectionate, crowding around as we approached the gate. I shared a long embrace with a black and white Nubian while we talked. I knew that on the car ride home I would have to tell Helen we couldn't have a goat.

The goats bleated as we left, and I joked that they were saying “good bye.” But Ilyssa knows her goats and corrected, “They are saying ‘come back.’” We look forward to it. 🐐



Loren Anne Barnett—CBF's Director of Creative Services and Editor of *Save the Bay* magazine—grew up on Maryland's Severn River.

HELEN BARNETT APPEL