



PHOTOGRAPH BY KORKY PODMANICZKY

Benefit Blast

Conviviality and pheasant shooting are on tap each year at the Friends of Corbin Benefit Shoot at Hudson Farm Club in Andover, New Jersey.

BY JOE HEALY

In an example of shooting being the bridge that brings together like-minded folk, with an added benefit of raising funds for good causes, The Friends of Corbin Benefit Shoot was founded in the early 2000s. Supporters of sporting artist Peter Corbin, from Millbrook, New York, had an idea to hold a shooting event at which participants would have a chance to win an original Corbin painting; the painting would also be used as a keepsake print for the shooters (the 2015 keepsakes were a necktie bearing original art by Corbin and a framed pencil drawing); and entry fees to the event would benefit nonprofit groups. The first event was held at Tamarack Preserve in New York's Hudson River Valley in 2002. Guests enjoyed camaraderie, conviviality, and lots of shooting. The missing element was on-site accommodations, as guests were bused to Tamarack from a local inn. However, moving the event to Hudson Farm Club in Andover, New Jersey, solved that issue. "When we moved to Hudson Farm Club, people stayed right upstairs at the club house, or in the cottages and had a short walk to the house at the start of the event. It was good exposure for the club, good for the shoot, and we were able to raise substantial money," said Corbin. Since its inception, the shoot has grossed more than \$600,000.

At the turn of the 20th Century, Hudson Farm Club was a country home and dairy farm, and in the 1920s the Hudson Guild operated a New York City settlement house there, allowing city residents a temporary refuge in the country and providing summer camps for youths. The property was purchased in 1997 and redesigned as a shooting club and recreational campus, with the main house transformed into a club house with nine guest rooms, club rooms, a large dining room, and parlors. Guest cottages and office space are also on the grounds. The property now comprises nearly 4,000 acres, and the offices of gunmaker Griffin & Howe are located there. At the event last year, Fort Ticonderoga staff members demonstrated antique firearms, such as a reproduction 18th Century French flintlock *fusil de chasse* (hunting gun or shotgun), while guests cast fly tackle or warmed up for the next day's pheasant releases by shooting clays. Later, at the night's sit-down dinner, fort staff

gave a spirited presentation on the history of "America's Fort," as Fort Ticonderoga is called because of its vital role in the birth of our nation. Located on Lake Champlain about two hours north of Albany, New York, the fort was key in the French and Indian War and later the Revolutionary War.

"The Corbin Shoot helps fund our destination education program, where youths from inner cities visit Fort Ticonderoga for an overnight immersive experience. Students spend the night in the barracks, and discover what life was like for soldiers in the early days of the American Revolution as they struggled for freedom. They learn about the American Revolution, including Fort Ticonderoga's collection of 18th Century artillery, which is considered the largest of its kind in the Western Hemisphere. It is without a doubt an unforgettable experience for students," said Beth L. Hill, President and CEO of Fort Ticonderoga. "The fort changed hands four times in 30 years during the French and Indian and Revolutionary wars. We could all very easily be speaking French today, without the fort," said Corbin.

The Corbin Shoot kicked off at the club house with a traditional blast from Hudson Farm Club's antique cannon. Guests then climbed aboard a gun wagon bound for the shooting grounds. Shooting duos were arranged, and teams spread out at pegs for the pheasant release: High birds very much like a driven shoot in the UK, the pheasant soared off ridgelines as the guns below worked to connect. Before long, the pickers-up with retrieving dogs were doing their duty at the end of the first release. We switched pegs for the next round of shooting, and then moved to another shooting course for two more pheasant releases. The group of 25 guns (the limit at the event each year, though guests of participants are invited to socialize at the club house before and after the shoot) enjoyed good-natured ribbing and boasts of high birds taken, with humble acknowledgments of many more missed. Fellowship lifted all spirits that afternoon, a sunny autumn day at a fantastic facility, Hudson Farm Club. The winner of an original Peter Corbin painting of a fly-fishing scene titled "Drifting the Edge" was . . . Jonathan Gibson of New Jersey. For information on the 2016 event, to be held again at Hudson Farm Club, go to petercorbin.com/foc. 🍂