

**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## **A ‘Magical’ Mix of Art and History for Local Historical Society**

Will fairies and other mythical woodland creatures help a local historical society survive the pandemic? That’s what the Bristol Hills Historical Society is banking on in a novel art-and-publishing venture that aims to connect local landowners and an illustrator with a whimsical take on the natural world.



Historical Society board member John Holtz, the former South Bristol town historian and owner of 120-acre Berby Acres Tree Farm, commissioned a painting of a favorite spot on his land from artist Anna Overmoyer, a Bloomfield native who teaches illustration at Rochester Institute of Technology. Overmoyer’s watercolor and ink work features mythical creatures in woodland settings. A “green man” graced the scene that Holtz chose (pictured here). Overmoyer says of her approach, “I grew up in the forest and have always imagined the creatures that lurk just beyond our sight, pulling nature’s strings.”

Holtz was so pleased with the result that he had an idea: invite other local residents to commission their own Overmoyer originals set in the beauty spots on their own properties or elsewhere in the region. With permission from the artist and the art buyers, approximately 15 pieces of art will then be published in a book to raise money for the Historical Society, which has had to suspend its programs and fundraising events in 2020 because of COVID-19. The new art patrons will explain the site they chose and tell stories about their land and the magical hold it has on them.

What’s the local-history connection? Holtz explains, “We are living in an area with a reputation for magic and old stories” rooted in Seneca lore. He continued, “The definition of magic depends on each individual’s use of that term. These spots of magic could be a dramatic waterfall, a simple stack of firewood next to a tree, a stone wall, a view where mist rises up off a pond, or a field where you spot deer in the moonlight. You know your land and you know what spot grabs your heart when you look at it. Those are the spots we want to share with the world in this book.”

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Bristol Hills Historical Society members will get first dibs on filling the 15 slots. Then the opportunity will be opened to all other area residents. Once enough people have expressed interest, the Historical Society will convene a meeting with Overmoyer to discuss costs. Overmoyer will need photographs of the sites she is to depict in the paintings.

The Bristol Hills Historical Society is the product of the merger of the historical societies of South Bristol and Bristol, which the state of New York has just formally approved in September 2020. The Historical Society is the caretaker of two historic buildings that require costly upkeep, including a new roof this summer for the 1923 Grange Hall in Bristol Springs, a building on the National Register of Historic Places. The other building is the 174-year-old Bristol Center Church. For more information on the society, memberships, and future plans, visit the society's Facebook page or website at [bristolhillshistsoc.org](http://bristolhillshistsoc.org). Overmoyer's website, with samples of her work, is at [AnnaSketchStudio.com](http://AnnaSketchStudio.com).

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