

## The Lehigh Valley Trail – A True Community Project

As you read through this issue of the Foundation newsletter, you can't help but notice the large number of Trail improvement projects that have been completed this year. Another, even more important fact that you'll notice is that in every case volunteers from residents, the business community and government have lent a helping hand.

The Lehigh Valley Trail is a true community resource. Many people who live in the area care a great deal about it and have high hopes for its success. They are sup-

porting the Trail with their own efforts, not unlike a community barn raising of the past.

The Mendon Foundation thanks each and every volunteer for their efforts and support in this large undertaking. Without the support like we've been receiving, this project would not be possible.

There is room for you to help too!

Please feel free to contact any board member to find out how you can be a part of rebuilding the Trail. ■

## Trail Identity Signs Complete

Thanksgiving weekend saw Foundation board members Larry Hillabrandt, Dick Dehm and Wayne Gilman along with volunteers Robb, Erich and Tracy Dehm "Working off their turkey." They were installing Trail identity signs at six of the eight Trail intersections in Mendon.

The Trail identity signs are large, 30" X 36", painted aluminum signs provided by the Monroe County Parks Department. The signs feature a graphic design developed by Kim Rooney and her committee of Larry Fisher and Lynn Price.

Pittsford Tree and Landscape provided a key assist by augering the holes needed to mount the signs on their 6X6 posts.

The signs are intended to clearly identify the Lehigh Valley Trail for users and for passers by.

This project was also supported with donations which will be recognized with small recognition plaques mounted on individual sign posts. We'd really like to thank Mr. & Mrs. Matthew Russel, Nancy Allinger, Mr. & Mrs. Albert Alexander, Jeanne & Peter Loberg, John Langolis & Jennifer Rand, Frank & Mary Pat Pasenello, Jack Perrigo, Theresa & Roy Hanna, Anton Schultz of Mendon Capital Advisors Corp., Mendon Pony Club and Canfield Vet.

As with most projects of the Foundation, community & County support really makes this work possible.



*One of the new Trail identity signs in place*



# Foundation to Maintain Mendon Community Park

Located on the grounds of St. Catherine's Church in Mendon is a playground called Mendon Community Park, built by a group called Mendon Community Park, Inc.

This organization raised the funds to build and maintain the playground. In the 12 years that have passed since construction, the original members of the group have drifted apart by moving and/or having their children grow up. They have been considering who could take over responsibility for maintaining the park.

The group leader, Rayno Niemi, approached The Mendon Foundation and asked if we would be interested in taking over this responsibility. After an initial study of the needs, we have gladly agreed.

A committee has been formed and is headed by Christine & Mark Williamson. Others members of the committee are Kathleen Dombrowski, Tom Seidew and, Christopher and Janice Lyon.

This winter the committee will assess the current needs and create a plan for execution in the spring. For the time being Rayno Niemi will also work with the Foundation's committee to help with the transition.

Any interested volunteers are welcomed to contact Christine or Mark Williamson through The Mendon Foundation. ■



*Mendon Community Park playground*

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## Changes in Our Board of Directors

After years of hard work for The Mendon Foundation, Nancy Allinger has retired from the board of directors. Nancy worked on many projects as well as playing an important role in finance. Thank you Nancy for the tremendous contributions!

Three new board members have been added, bringing us up to a full board of nine members. Paul Booth, Elaine Walker and Larry Hillabrant have each signed on and have begun to find areas within the Foundation to be of great help.

We look forward to their help moving the Foundation forward! ■



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# Eagle Scouts working with The Mendon Foundation

Scouting and the Mendon Foundation has worked together on several projects over the last couple of years. Recently three Eagle Scout candidates have taken on projects to improve The Lehigh Valley Trail.

Each Scout took on responsibility for defining the needs, obtaining and organizing resources to complete their project.

Nick Magarka organized a team which focused their efforts on cleaning up a large section of the Trail between Route 65 and Quaker Meeting House Road. They removed a large amount of brush and debris as well as cutting back overgrown trees and bushes. Then they brush hogged and widened the Trail in the appropriate areas.

Alex Cole's group worked in the Trail Access Park area to help bring it into condition to be cut with lawnmowers next year. Their work included collecting and removing rocks, cutting back vegetation and general clean up.

Chris Colquitt work party obtained the needed materials and mounted Monroe County Parks Department regulatory signs on mounting boards. They then attached them to 4X4 posts and installed them at intersections between the Trail and highways.

Our sincere thanks to all the scouts, their Leaders, families, neighbors and friends who assisted with these projects. We look forward to many joint projects in the future. ■



*One area of the Trail flooded due to poor drainage*



*Monroe County Parks Department regulatory signs*

## Keeping the Trail Dry

A section of the Lehigh Valley Trail near Quaker Meeting House Road has a drainage problem. Water coming off the hillside can't find its way to the neighboring wetlands because of the Trail.

This makes the Trail nearly impassable at certain times and needs to be fixed. Fixing the problem is environmentally sensitive because of the Trail's proximity to the wetlands.

Karen Crook of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working to solve the problem properly. The area has been surveyed and can be solved by installing two drainage trenches under the Trail. These trenches will allow the run off to find its way into the wetlands.

The project is expected to be completed in the spring. As with many Trail projects, The Mendon Foundation owes a great debt of thanks, this time to Karen Crook and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. ■



## New Trail Surface Trial

About a year ago, we laid a surface of cinders on a section of the Trail near Plains road. A year later we believe that the trail surface can be improved in a couple of ways. We have designed experiments to try a new surfacing technique.

On a large section of the Trail near Bloomfield Road, the Trail surface has been carefully graded in preparation for its layer of cinders. We hope that the grading will allow the new surface to settle more evenly and provide a better surface for bikes and hikers.

The grading was made possible with the help of two organizations: Joe Spezio of Elam Sand & Gravel arranged with Syracuse Supply – represented by Dan Voltura to provide a road grader for two days of work.

The next step is to lay down a covering of cinders and roll the surface to pack it down. Time will tell but we have high hopes for an even better surface with this new technique. ■



Road grader beginning to grade trail surface

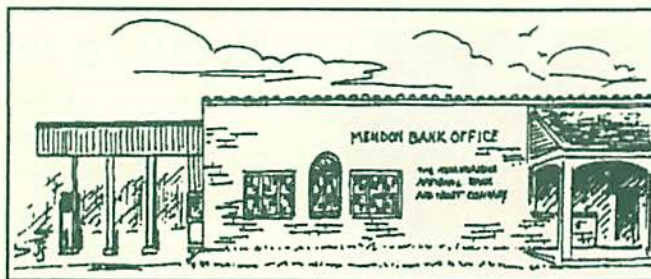
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## Trail Access Park Improvements

In the last year, a lot of improvements have been made to the parking area adjacent to the baseball fields in the hamlet of Mendon. This area is known as Trail Access Park.

Phase one of the landscaping plan was completed last fall with the planting of a large number of shrubs and trees – each donated by a local supporter.

Recently phase two of the landscaping plan was completed with the planting of trees including Sycamore, Clump bush, White Pine, and Blue Spruce. A number of shrubs were also planted including Lilac, Forsythia and Triumphant Spirea.

Small name plaques have been added to identify the supporter for the trees and shrubs.

Our great thanks to the supporters for phase two:

Jill Cicero, Lawrence Bonk, John & Claire Carey, Shirley Darin and the Honeoye Falls Tigers Cloverbud 4-H Troop.

We'd also like to wholeheartedly thank Pittsford Tree and Landscape and Ann Hubregson for their assistance with the design, layouts and planting.

Our continuing thanks to the Honeoye Falls Youth Little League organization for their contributions and assistance with maintenance of the area.

All these groups working together are really helping to make the Trail Access Park a great asset for all to enjoy! ■

## Keeping a Safe Trail

The Lehigh Valley Trail is a county park, hence motorized vehicles are not legal to operate on the Trail. As we've stated in previous articles, please help to keep the Trail safe for all users by letting the authorities know if you see or hear motorized vehicles on the Trail.

If you see or hear a problem, just call 911 and let them know what you observe. Don't be afraid to call as frequently as you spot a problem, the authorities need our help. ■

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## The Lehigh Valley Railroad

### Part Two-B – Mauch Chunk to Geneva

*By Mary Hamilton-Dann*

When the Ithaca roads became available, the Lehigh was burdened with a double expense (Re-loading coal at Waverly into cars that could run on Erie's mainline). Also, Geneva was only halfway to Buffalo.

Except for the intervention of New York City financier J.P. Morgan, the Lehigh would have ceased independent operations at Geneva. Morgan assumed the expense of trackage from Geneva to Buffalo – in return for dictating policy related to his investment. The Lehigh Valley Railroad owed its future to Wall Street.

The Lehigh's new right of way via the Cornell roads was a mixed blessing. Stiff grades out of Ithaca north to Geneva taxed the capabilities of Lehigh engines.

While Cornell University students provided a lucrative passenger business, the Lehigh had reached an impasse for coal transport. With increasingly heavy engines needed for longer and longer drags of coal cars, the Lehigh was forced to build a new line from Van Etenville to Geneva which bypassed Ithaca. The bypass also carried passenger trains.

(cont'd on page 6)



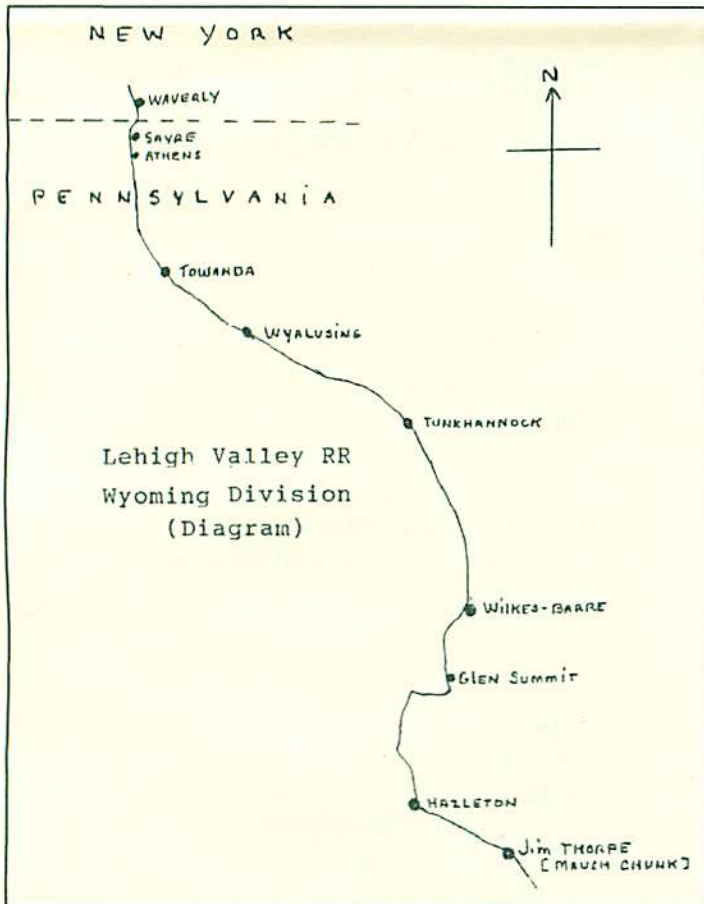
## Lehigh Valley Railroad (cont'd from page 5)

A former resident of Watkins Glen at the southern end of Seneca Lake has childhood memories of the Lehigh: "I watched across Seneca Lake and up on the ridge as LV trains... like the Black Diamond Express... roared through the night like a banshee, heading toward the north with a string of varnish (passenger coaches)."

As freight and passenger trains were shifted onto the bypass, the original Ithaca-Geneva route became a secondary line patronized by fisherman and others who were vacation-bound along Cayuga Lake.

The Ithaca railroad deal had included a third line which followed Cayuga Lake's eastern shore to a swamp (now Montezuma Wildlife Preserve). Although the terminus was unsatisfactory, the grade was minimal. However, the Cayuga Lakeshore route was considered by the Lehigh as more suitable for connection eastward, so it became part of the line's Auburn Division in Central New York.

During World War I, the Lehigh was a primary mover of troops and military equipment. With the onset of World War II, the same duties fell to the Lehigh when Sampson Naval Training Base and the Seneca



Lehigh Valley Railroad Wyoming Division  
Map courtesy of Mary Hamilton-Dann

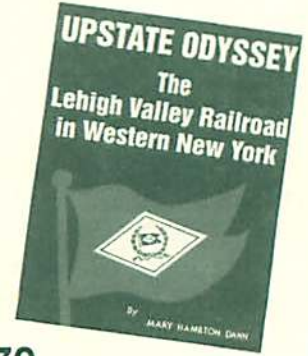
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Arms Depot were established at Kendaia on what was now the LV mainline between Pennsylvania and Lake Erie.

The Lehigh – thanks to an aggressive advertising policy, a purchasing department that kept pace with developments in the manufacturing sector of rolling stock, and a reputation for superior service to passengers and shippers – achieved and continued to maintain its status as a class I railroad in the northeast. (Classification referred to tonnage/miles)

That it acquired an aura of uniqueness during its 130 year life was due to the imagination and creativity of successive generations of managers.

To bring alive the forgoing, one may drive south from Geneva to Van Etten, and from there follow the ex-Lehigh route to Sayre. The Pennsylvania segment leads through Towanda, Wyalusing and Tunkhannock to Wilkes-Barre. From Wilkes-Barre, Lehigh fans will be rewarded by a visit to Glen Summit and Hazelton. Then from Hazelton to Jim Thorpe/Mauch Chunk where many surprises await, among them the beautiful Italian mansion where Asa Packer lived and worked.

In addition, a drive down the east shore of Cayuga Lake follows closely the former Lehigh right of way from Montezuma to Ithaca. When the Lehigh Valley RR ceased operations in the mid 1970's, the Ithaca depot was converted to a restaurant, its trackside wall replaced by a passenger coach parked outside.

After journeys along the various Lehigh routes south of Geneva, one gains appreciation for those early tracklayers who hacked their way by hand through unforgiving terrain. ■



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