

What Is Mendon?

by Diane C. Ham, Mendon Town Historian

Mendon, Monroe County, New York is one of nine Mendons in the United States, named after Mendon, Massachusetts. And, this is the way it was...

Back in the 1600's when Mendon was largely covered with forests, the Seneca Indians settled here and built a village called Totiakton, near what was later know as Rochester Junction on Plains Road. They lived in longhouses on the hill overlooking Honeoye Creek. After about 20 years, Marquis de Denonville, a French explorer, desired to take this land away from the Senecas. He burned their longhouses and crops, and chased them out of their village making it necessary for them to find another place to live.

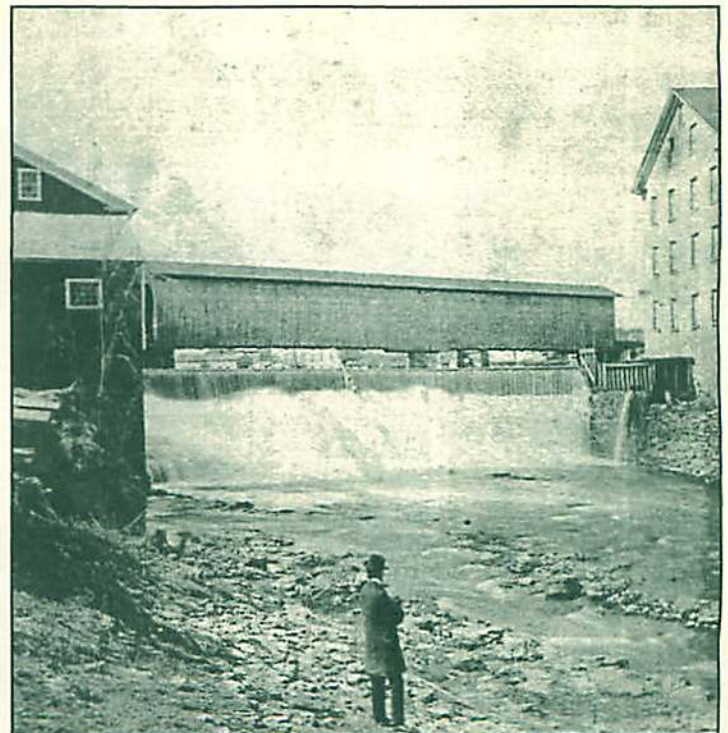
We don't really know what happened during the next hundred years after this, but written in a book called, *Maude's Travels* was this statement: "The road from Geneva to Canandaigua was but an Indian path, upon which only two families had settled. The town consisted of only two small frame houses and a few huts enclosed by thick woods. From Canandaigua to the Genesee River only four families resided on the road or trail." Mendon was located in that area between Canandaigua and the Genesee River.

It was about a year later in 1791 that Zebulon Norton and Enos Boughton came to the falls and named it Norton's Mills — now Honeoye Falls— searching for a location to build a mill. The falls could provide the power to build a gristmill as well as a sawmill. They settled here and built a gristmill on the site of the Upper Mill — our present Town Hall.

About the same time, a few families came to the eastern part of the Town of Mendon — at that time part of Ontario County in the Town of Bloomfield. They came by covered wagon pulled by a team of oxen and usually leading a cow behind. Their wagons were loaded with cooking utensils, a few hand tools, guns, some clothing, quilts, and a few of their most prized possessions. When they arrived, they cut down enough trees to build a cabin and a rail fence (to keep the animals out of the yard) and cleared enough land to plant crops.

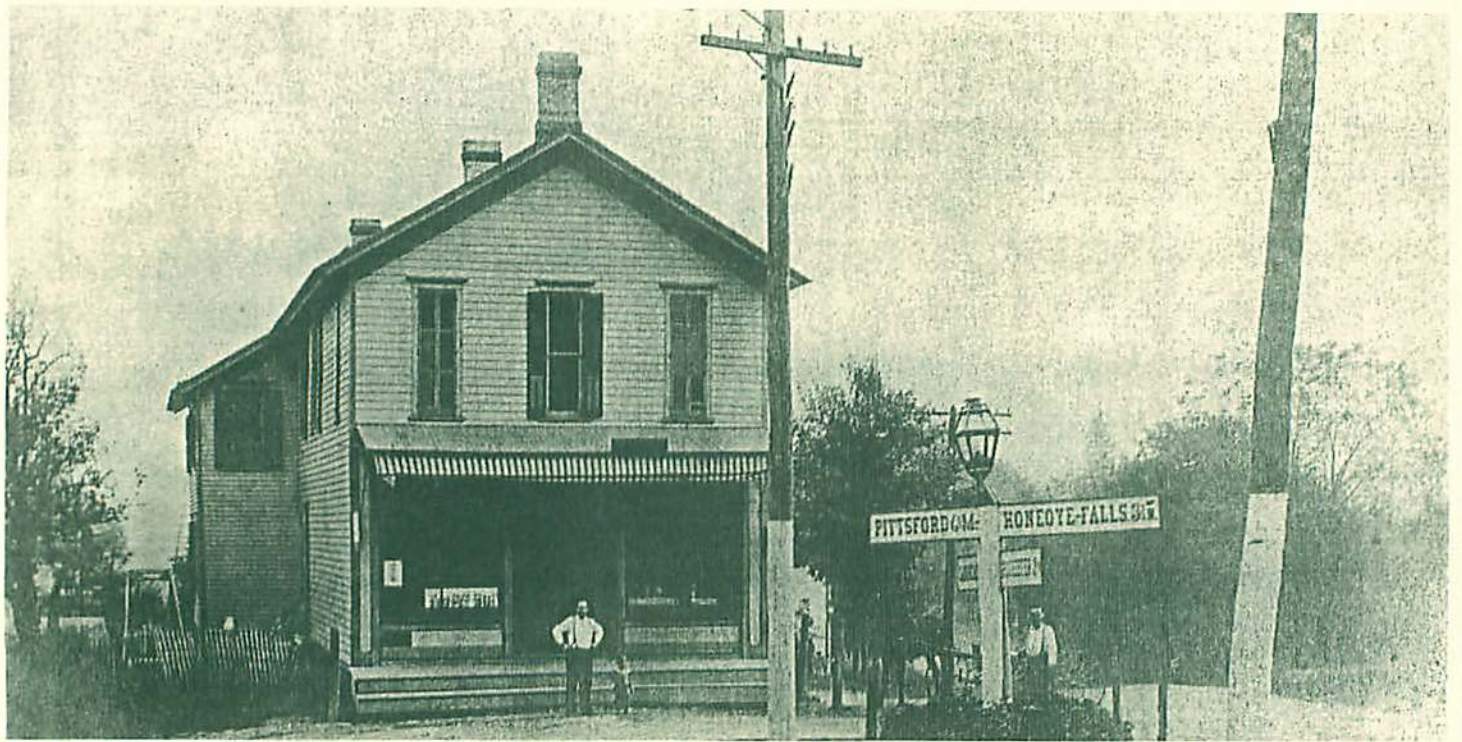
Cornelius Treat started out from Massachusetts in 1793 with an ax and hoe on his back and walked 270 miles in eight days to this new country. He settled on the Mendon-Ionia Road and built a hut from the bark of an Elm tree. He then went back to Massachusetts and brought his family to Mendon. His wife did not live long — her death being the first in the Town. In a few years, Mr. Treat remarried and bought land at the north-west corner of Cheese Factory and West Bloomfield Roads and called it Treat's Corners. The first Town meeting was held there in 1813. Later on, a Cheese Factory was built across the road.

Several early settlers stayed in and around the hamlets of Mendon. Some went on farther west. A "hamlet" in New York was described as a small settlement usually with a post office, a church and a few shops. A "town" is a section of a county where the people make their own rules. The hamlets in the Town of Mendon were: Mendon, Mendon Center and Sibleyville. Norton's Mills (Honeoye Falls) was the only village in the Town, as it is today. ■



Norton's Mills — now Honeoye Falls

Photo courtesy of Diane C. Ham, Mendon Town Historian



Mendon Center General Store

Photo courtesy of Diane C. Ham, Mendon Town Historian



Catholic Church and Mendon Academy

Photo courtesy of Diane C. Ham, Mendon Town Historian

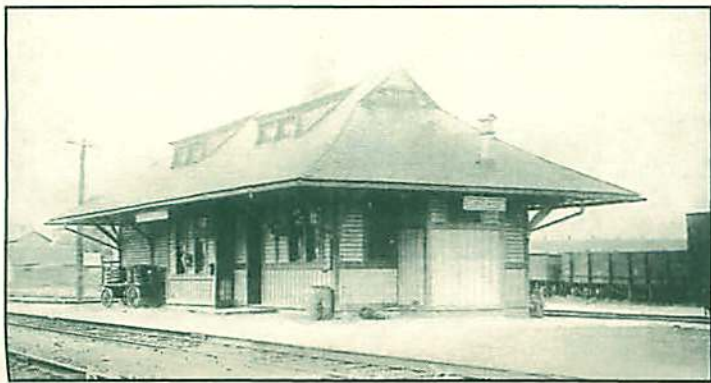
The Lehigh Valley Railroad

Part Two – Mauch Chunk to Geneva

By Mary Hamilton-Dann

From his office in the village of Mauch Chunk, south-eastern Pennsylvania, millionaire Asa Packer directed the activities of the railroad he had founded. In partnership with fellow Pennsylvanian Robert Sayre, he had brought to reality a project beset by the topographical difficulties imposed by the Appalachian Mountains.

Packer staked his fortune on a successful outcome for this venture, and his ability to inspire confidence in others had garnered support when the Lehigh Valley Railroad was merely a paper railroad given up as a bad job by the former backers.



Lehigh Valley Railroad Depot In Mendon from 1890's to 1952
Photo courtesy of Dianne C. Ham

The founder did not live to savor the eventual fruits of his effort, but the railroad did indeed fulfill his expectation, albeit 13 years after his death in 1879.

In the meantime, outward circumstances – together with sound management and a well defined goal – brought the railroad north into New York State. And the goal? Buffalo, a lake port where freight could be trans-shipped to western markets.

Asa Packer had begun his working life as a carpenter. Subsequently, he bought a pair of canal boats which carried hard coal on the Lehigh Canal to outlets on the Delaware Tidewater. This led to his acquiring interests in the coal mines themselves. During Packer's lifetime, production and distribution of the anthracite was a guaranteed money maker. The Lehigh Valley Railroad was conceived and developed primarily as an anthracite carrier.

From its founding in 1846 until its arrival in Buffalo in 1892, the railroad had inched its way north and west to Lake Erie in stages marked by labor trouble, bad weather, national financial crises, daunting terrain and competition from other lines. It was also heavily in debt.

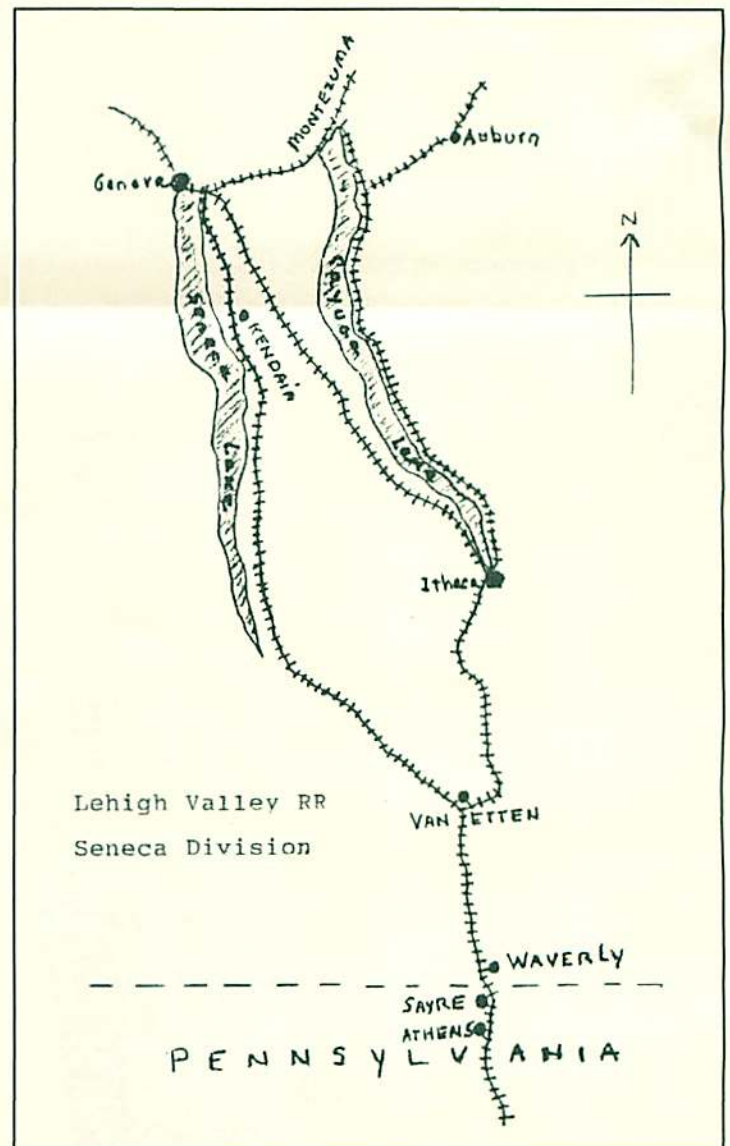
New York State was already awash with railroads when Lehigh Valley arrived. Looked upon as an outsider and unwelcome rival by local rail interests, the Lehigh nevertheless had a stroke of luck along the way.

Ezra Cornell and Asa Packer were contemporaries with similar backgrounds. Each had begun his working life as a carpenter; each had little formal education; each had amassed a fortune – Cornell by acquiring Western Union stock, Packer through investment in hard coal mines. Each founded a university of the applied arts.

There is no record that the two men ever met, but their lives intersected by means of a railroad.

Cornell's sights were set on Ithaca, a backwater village at the southern end of Cayuga Lake. He envisioned a university that would transform Ithaca to a metropolis of western New York.

(cont'd on page 4)



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

Lehigh Valley Railroad (cont'd from page 3)

Ithaca lay among the Appalachian foothills, with transportation limited to a primitive rail line south to Owego and lake steamers north on Cayuga. Ezra Cornell backed the construction of a railroad from south Ithaca to Athens, a small village in Pennsylvania near the state line. This was later followed by a line north from Ithaca to Geneva.

Neither Cornell nor Packer was a 'railroad man'. Both considered their railroads to be merely a means to an end: a prosperous Ithaca via the railroad would benefit the university, and a line to Buffalo would provide an outlet for Asa Packer's coal.

After the death of Cornell in 1874, the Ithaca roads became insolvent, where upon the Lehigh purchased them for \$50,000.

However, LV was still under contract to the Erie Railroad. Upon reaching the state line at Waverly, N.Y., the Lehigh had faced a dilemma: either track directly northwest to Buffalo alongside the Erie's right of way, or construct a line paralleling the Ithaca roads north to Geneva thereby increasing the mileage to Buffalo.

While considering the options, Lehigh managers resorted to a temporary measure. Since LV's standard gauge rolling stock could not run on Erie's wide gauge tracks, Pennsylvania coal was off-loaded to Erie's hopper cars at Waverly on the Erie's main line. This unsatisfactory arrangement was soon replaced by another. The Lehigh financed construction of a third rail on the Erie which permitted its own cars to run to Buffalo. ■

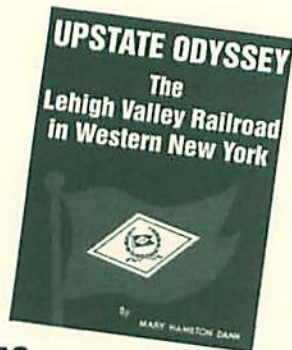
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PRESERVE, protect and enhance the scenic, natural, recreational and structural resources in the Town of Mendon and directly adjacent properties,

MAINTAIN a responsible stewardship of assets and properties held or controlled by the corporation,

ESTABLISH and promote local environmental education on issues pertinent to the preservation of natural resources in the Town of Mendon,

ESTABLISH and promote programs to monitor the natural resources in the Town of Mendon.

As we succeed in these objectives, we enhance property values for all Mendon property owners. The Foundation is supported by membership fees, grants and other contributions. Donations to the Mendon Foundation are tax deductible.

Proceeds are used to cover easement acquisitions, monitoring and communications.
All labor is volunteer.

Getting Along On the Trail

Sometimes when people share an important resource, conflicts arise concerning its use. The Lehigh Valley Trail has seen some conflicts arise concerning the use of motorized vehicles. Following is an update on where we stand.

History

In the last couple of years, an organization of snowmobile enthusiasts asked Monroe County for permission to use the Trail. After careful study and polling of area residents, permission was declined.

Lately, ATV's and off-road motorcycles have been using the Trail a lot. This has created some problems that are now being addressed.

What uses are ok?

The Lehigh Valley Trail is a County Park. The law is quite clear in that motorized vehicles are not legal on the Trail. While each group of Trail users has their opinions about what uses should be ok, right now it's simple - No motorized vehicles.

There has been a fair amount of discussion at other parks about the use of mountain bikes (non motorized), they are welcome on the Lehigh Valley Trail!

What has been happening?

There have been a number of ATV's and off-road motorcycles riding on the trail. This has created several problems:

- Noise - neighbors of the Trail complain frequently
- Other Trail users - we have received complaints from others trying to use the trail about noise and safety.
- Harm to the Trail - we have seen harm in the form of wearing away the surface and damage to the bridges.

The number of these riders is significant and is getting worse. Indications are that the Trail is becoming known as the place to ride.

What's being done?

The County has updated its law to include confiscation of motorized vehicles caught on the Trail.

The Sheriff's dept. has been patrolling the Trail and will continue to do so. So far, several arrests have been made. The Sheriff's Dept. is very concerned about this problem and is committed to helping us solve it.

Neighbors of the Trail have been calling the Sheriff when they see or hear riders on the Trail.

What should you do if you see or hear a problem? Call 911

Please don't worry about calling too often. The number of calls is one way that they judge the size of a problem.

If the 911 operator seems unfamiliar with the Trail, that's ok, the patrolling deputies will know where it is.

Summary

The Trail has to be managed for overall good of the residents, the County, and all the trail users. Sometimes this will mean that certain uses cannot be welcomed.

It is The Mendon Foundation's sincere hope that all the Trail users can keep the good of the whole Trail in mind and understand that sometimes choices have to be made. ■

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Donation of 25 acres of land



Board members walk the land donated by Franklyn Johnson. L to R: Dick Dehn, Wayne Gilman, Franklyn Johnson, Carl Foss

Mr. Franklyn Johnson has donated a 25 acre parcel of land to The Foundation for preservation as open space.

Mr. Johnson formed many childhood memories while he was growing up on this land. Preservation such as this is a key part of our mission and the Foundation looks forward to other such donations.

While preservation of open space and preservation of memories are Mr. Johnson's main goals in making this donation, he will also receive the tax benefits of such a donation.

These situations really represent a win-win scenario and the Mendon Foundation is happy to participate in donations of land or in the donation of conservation easements.

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- I would like a Foundation member to contact me.

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