

Meetings of the Mendon Foundation are held the 3rd Wednesday of every month, 6:30 P.M., 20 Assembly Drive #108

Mendon Foundation Gets Historic 45-Acre Land Donation

In what is considered to be one of the more historically significant areas in Mendon, N.Y., the Mendon Foundation land trust has received a 45-acre land donation in an area where the Seneca Indian Tribe once had a village known as "Totiakton" or In-the-Great-Bend. The donor of the parcel is Sibleyville Farm Estates.

"We are very pleased that this wonderful site will remain undeveloped," said Carl Foss, President of the Mendon Foundation. "The site is unsurpassed in beauty and in historical significance."

Barry Shapario, one of the partners of Sibleyville Farm Estates said, "We had offers from other developers to buy the site, but we wanted to give the land to someone who wanted to keep the land the way it is. With its goal of preservation, the Mendon Foundation was the perfect group for this donation."

The site was officially turned over to the Foundation on Oct. 31, 2000.

The lower part of the 45-acre parcel borders Route 15A and Plains Road in Mendon, and there is wooded frontage on Honeoye Creek. The upper part of the parcel is a prominent glacial deposit and borders the Sibleyville Farm Estates.

According to Diane Ham, the Mendon Town Historian, in the 1600s, the Seneca Indians built a village of log houses called Totiakton on the hill overlooking Honeoye Creek. The village had about 1,000 Seneca inhabitants. A French explorer, Marquis de Denonville, claimed the land in 1687, and chased the Seneca out of the area. While it is not certain if this is the hill where the Seneca had their actual village, there is evidence that the Seneca were on this property (*see related story*).

From atop the glacial deposit you can see 30 miles to the south. The land also contains some very old white oaks, sugar maples and sycamore trees. One oak tree has a base well over 5-feet in diameter. This site is priceless and will be forever preserved, through the Mendon Foundation, for future generations.

In order to accept this 45-acre donation, the Mendon Foundation had to pay the county, town and school taxes until the next tax roll reflects the Foundation's not-for-profit exemption. "Thus we have an obligation of over \$5,000 in taxes. Fortunately the strong financial support of the Mendon Foundation members enabled us to accept the land donation and meet our financial obligations," Foss said.

This is the second significant land donation made to the

Mendon Foundation. The first land donation was made by Franklyn Johnson who donated a 25 acre parcel off of Mile Square Rd. in Mendon. The land had been owned by his family for over 200 years.

"We want to preserve as much open space as possible in Mendon, and we hope that other Mendon property owners will help in that goal by donating land or development rights," Foss said. "Not only will this allow the beauty of Mendon to be preserved, but it also offers tax benefits to land donors."



Honeoye Creek borders one section of the 45-acre land donation near the Seneca village of Totiakton

The History of Totiakton

by Diane Ham, Mendon Town Historian

Plains Road is the earliest known settlement in the Town of Mendon. The Senecas, the westernmost tribe of the Five Nation Iroquois Indians built a village they called "Totiakton," meaning "bend in the river." Totiakton was located between Plains Road and the bluffs overlooking Honeoye Creek.

They lived in communal dwellings called long houses, constructed by setting upright poles in the ground, fitting these horizontally by means of "withes" (ropes of twigs) and covering this framework with strips of bark.

These tenements were from 50 to 100 feet long by 17 feet wide and divided into sections six-by-eight feet. Through the long house ran a passageway for the fires, generally one for every four families, so that some warmth was obtained. The

The Mendon Foundation Newsletter

The Mendon Foundation is a completely volunteer organization which exists with the generous support of its members, volunteers and contributors. Our newsletter is published three times each year. You may contact us with ideas and suggestions for our newsletter, requests for advertising and suggestions, or membership information. Our mailing address is:

**The Mendon Foundation, P.O. Box 231
Mendon, N.Y. 14506-0231**

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★MENDON FOUNDATION MISSION STATEMENT★

The Mendon Foundation is a non-profit corporation established to:

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.

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.

The Mendon Foundation Membership Form

- I would like to become a member
- I would like to volunteer on / my interests are in:
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smoke went through holes in the roof. Lack of ventilation and close living conditions often caused diseases.

The long-house villages were called chateaux or castles by the French and capitals by others. A capital simply meant a chief town, not a seat of government. Totiakton was such a village with about 1,000 inhabitants, according to Wentworth Greenleagh, an English explorer who recorded his finding after seeing it in 1577.

To this village also came a succession of Jesuit missionaries. Father Fremin was responsible for building a chapel known as La Conception at the nearby side of another Indian Village called Gandachiragou. Authorities today think that the latter was a somewhat earlier settlement than the Plains Road location. Gandachiragou was at the junction of Route 15A and Honeoye Falls Number 6 Road. The chapel was burned, and it is thought that another with the same name was built on the Totiakton site, since Abner Sheldon, the earliest settler in 1803 on Plains Road found remnants of such building.

Charles Wray and Harry Schoff, noted Indian archeologists of this area have, in the last few years, found fairly good evidence that in about 1565 the Senecas began migrating in two directions – toward the northeast and northwest, whenever they had need for more wood or food, or perhaps protection.

Noting the number of European trade goods found in their archeological excavations, they were able to trace and date the patterns of migration. They noted two large villages or capitals with a nearby satellite village south of each, almost parallel in latitude at the same period of time. Thus, they believe that the village, formerly on the Dann Farm, was earlier than the one at Totiakton.

One other very small village was Gannonata, perhaps where the chief lived, and was also located to the south of Totiakton. It is of importance because here in 1684 Governon Dongan, the English governor of New York, ordered the coat of arms of the Duke of York to be placed on the gate proclaiming this territory should belong to England, denying any French claim. Denonville later found this coat of arms when he destroyed the village. It is believed that everyone crossing Seneca territory in any direction had to stop here to get permission from the gatekeepers of the Western Gate.

In 1687, the French General Denonville, in an effort to gain control of the fur trade, decided to attack the Senecas, the strongest tribe and the one nearest to Fort Niagara. With a force of 3,000 men, including 400 Indians, he left Irondequoit Bay on July 12, 1687 for Ganondagon, the principal Seneca village south of Victor at what is Boughton Hill Road today.

The Senecas attacked them in the swamp, just before they reached the village. The French proclaimed the victory, but both sides suffered great losses. They burned Ganondagon, nearby Fort Hill and St. Michel, which was near East Bloomfield.

Denonville and his men then marched to Totiakton, but the Senecas had heard of their approach and had deserted the village leaving only corn and pigs. Denonville continued his devastation of the countryside, burning a little town, most likely Gannonata, two leagues distant, then returned to

Totiakton, destroying all the crops.

On July 19th, 1687 at Totiakton, with many notables present, the French claimed possession of all the Seneca country. Many of the men were sick from eating corn and fresh pork, so Denonville made no effort to pursue the Senecas, whom captives said had fled to the East. The army marched back to Irondequoit landing and went on to Fort Niagara.

Totiakton was never rebuilt by the Senecas. It was the end of an era.



The Great White Oak near "Totiakton"

Meet Our Newest Board Member . . .

The Mendon Foundation is pleased to introduce its newest board member, Ellen Hickory Smith of Mendon. Ellen is the owner of Legal Publication Services, based in Arlington, Va. An award-winning journalist, Ellen has volunteered to write the Mendon Foundation newsletter and assist with press relations. She has been in the newsletter business for 14 years, and has won 12 journalism awards. Before entering the publishing business, she was a press assistant for former N.J. Congressman Jim Florio. Ellen lives on Pittsford Mendon Center Rd. with her husband, Tim Pryor and their 5-year old son, Will, along with a menagerie of dogs, cats, rabbits and chickens. Ellen and Tim are actively involved with a wetlands restoration project on their old celery farm and with guidance from the Mendon Foundation have entered into a conservation easement in perpetuity for a 12 acre section of their farm.

Grassland: Disappearing Wildlife Habitat

At the time of European settlement, New York state's forested landscape included large tracts of grassland. These tracts were created by wildfires and by clearing and burning by Native Americans.

But today, grassland may be one of New York state's most rapidly disappearing wildlife habitats, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Why? The answer is a combination of changing agricultural practices, rural development and natural plant succession. Development has eliminated or fragmented grassland across New York.

As the grassland disappears, biological diversity

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diminishes. Grassland is an important habitat for game species, including the Ringneck Pheasant, Woodcock and Mallard Ducks. In New York state, some of our more interesting and elusive birds are grassland dependant including the upland sandpiper, eastern meadowlark, northern shrike, bobolink, short-eared owls, barn owls, northern harrier, grasshopper sparrow, vesper field sparrow and Henslow's sparrow. In New York, population declines for grassland-nesting birds are estimated to be more severe and widespread than for any other group of birds, including forest species. For example, the Fish and wildlife Service reports that from 1966 to 1995, upland sandpipers declined by 84% and grasshopper sparrows declined by 97%. The Henslow's sparrow continues to decline at about 12% a year.

Mendon Foundation and Pheasants Forever Launch Pilot Program for Habitat Restoration

The Mendon Foundation and the Genesee Valley Chapter of Pheasants Forever have begun a pilot program with several Mendon residents to restore pheasant and grassland-bird habitat.

Pheasants Forever was founded in 1982 in response to the decline of the Ring-Necked Pheasant population. The group works on habitat improvement, public awareness, education and land management programs that are mutually beneficial to farmers, landowners and wildlife.

The first phase of the Mendon Foundation/Pheasants Forever program was just completed. The groups sought to identify and qualify participating landowners.



Front Row: Jennifer Franklin, Kevin Keith, Jennie O'Brien
 Back Row: Dawn Vandermallie, Paul Ziegler, Laura Geary

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A qualifying parcel of land must be of sufficient size to support adequate nesting and cover without jeopardizing the safety of wildlife that populates it.

For example, a site of only two acres could leave nesting birds extremely vulnerable to foxes and other predators, whereas a minimum of four or five acres would provide sufficient enough space for secure nesting.

The arrangement of the site is also carefully considered, and the plot needs to have or be near other necessary habitat elements such as food, water and other cover.

Finally, a commitment from the landowner is necessary, whereby an agreement is made to leave the habitat project in place for an indefinite period, with minimal maintenance required on the part of the landowner.

Pheasants Forever and the Mendon Foundation were very pleased to identify five such sites, totaling nearly 30 acres.

Phase two is scheduled for Spring 2001. These parcels will be prepared for planting. The soil will be tilled, and soil samples will be taken to determine the pH and if any fertilization is needed. Then a cover crop of sorghum will be planted and that will be tilled-in at the end of next autumn, providing a fertile plot for follow-up planting of switchgrass.

The final phase is the planting of switchgrass, scheduled for Spring 2002. Switchgrass is a very hearty and durable tall grass that will remain upright through winters and other severe weather, providing much needed nesting and cover for the ring-necked Pheasant and other upland species.

Landowners must be very patient during this phase, since switchgrass takes a couple of years to become established. Once it is established, the landowner needs to mow it once every two to three years to a height of eight- to ten-inches. The

landowner may also maintain a trail or trails through the site for nature walks and family recreation.

An established plot of switchgrass is a natural attraction for pheasants, and through these projects, the local pheasant population will once again flourish.

There are financial benefits for the landowner as well. The portion of the property used for pheasant habitat needs to be put into a conservation easement. The landowner still owns the land and retains control, but agrees not to develop the land that is placed in the easement for pheasant habitat.

By donating a conservation easement to the Mendon Foundation, the landowner will receive tax benefits in the form of a deduction on state and federal income tax returns, as well as an ongoing tax savings resulting from the reduction of the property's assessment value for the acreage covered by the easement. It's a win-win situation for the wildlife population and landowners alike.

Look for updates and progress reports on this program in future issues of the *Mendon Foundation Newsletter*. We're looking forward to success and expansion each year with the cooperation of additional Mendon property owners.

This program is funded entirely by the Genesee Valley chapter of Pheasants Forever, which derives its financial support through private contributions, fundraisers and grant monies from various private and government conservation-minded organizations.

If you are interested in a pheasant/wildlife grassland restoration project, or you would like more information about *Pheasants Forever*, please contact Giorgio Bragaglia at 624-1785. For more information on the tax benefits of a conservation easement, contact Carl Foss at 624-1634.



Brian Eder, Carl Foss & Erin Eder at the Oct. 14 playground cleanup

Oct 14th Trail Park Workday A Success

A heart-felt thanks from the Mendon Foundation goes out to the volunteers who helped cleanup the Mendon Trail Park, located next to the Little League field on Oct. 14. The Mendon Foundation is responsible for maintaining the Trail Park and the Foundation would like to extend its gratitude to the

following for making the clean-up day successful:

Warren Wallace	Darliene Lyons	Gwenn Voelckers
Judy Beers	Brian Eder	Erin Eder
Joan Foss	Carl Foss	Kelly Shaefer Foss
Donna Friedlander	David Friedlander	Jonathan Friedlander
Stacy Brown	Barry Brown	Pat Brown



Volunteers at the Oct. 14, 2000 Trail Park cleanup

Volunteer Needed for Marketing

The Mendon Foundation seeks a volunteer to obtain merchant advertising for this publication. The printing and mailing costs are completely funded by advertising, and hence, it is an extremely valuable service for the Mendon Foundation. It only takes a few hours three times a year. If you are interested, please contact Ellen Smith at 582-3211.

The Winter Garden

Look over your landscape to determine if additional winter protection is needed for any of your plants.

Evergreens that experienced some browning of the foliage last winter, or newly set plants should be considered for protection. It is difficult to protect plants against low temperature injury. Selection and use of the hardiest plants is your best bet. Not all plant injury is explained by low temperatures. In the long run, a combination of conditions results in most injury. Low temperatures and dry blowing

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winds can injure winter hardy plants in certain instances.

Plants set in windy locations, especially newly planted material and broadleaf evergreens, should be protected. Wind barriers placed in front of these materials will reduce the total amount of wind passing through the plants. This will reduce the total amount of water that is blown away from the leaves which eventually results in drying and death of the leaves.

A common barrier for this purpose is snow fence, used alone or covered with burlap or plastic to increase its effectiveness. Another alternative is to fill the snow fence with leaves. Stakes and burlap will also afford a good degree of protection from the wind. Get the stakes into the soil before it freezes.

Under no circumstances should you enclose plants in an airtight manner. Plants covered with large trash bags, for the misguided purpose of protecting them from the wind, does keep the wind off the foliage, but on sunny days temperatures inside the bag can be high enough to practically cook the plant to death.

Anti-desiccant sprays can be effective against moisture loss from the leaves of evergreen plants. Anti-desiccants form a moisture barrier over the plant surface where they hold in water or slow its outward movement.

To be effective, these sprays need to be applied when air temperatures are above freezing for several hours. Several applications are recommended during our winters. The first

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application should go on in late November, the next in January and the third in March.

Anti-desiccant sprays aren't foolproof. They help reduce winter injury caused by drying winds but under severe conditions they won't prevent it completely. Most garden centers and supply outlets handle several brands of anti-desiccants. All are about equal in effectiveness if applied according to directions.

Snow is a mixed blessing in the garden. Fluffy and light, freshly fallen snow is an excellent insulator. Its millions of tiny air pockets hold warmth in the soil around snow-covered plants. When frigid weather comes after a heavy snowfall, the snow cover may save many plants of borderline hardiness.

Be careful when using deicing salts around driveways and walks this winter; salt is toxic to many flowers, trees, shrubs, and lawn grasses. Sand, sawdust, or a combination of these

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work well for deicing walks and will not injure plants.

Start conditioning seeds that require stratification, such as many of the woody ornamentals. Plant them in a cold frame or put them in the refrigerator or freezer for the required amount of time. Ventilate cold frames on sunny days and do not allow plants to dry out. On very cold nights, cover cold frames where semi-hardy plants are being overwintered. Use old carpet scraps, burlap bags stuffed with leaves, or bales of hay.

In home greenhouses, tomatoes, peppers and eggplants are typically started in January. Although tomatoes, peppers and eggplants self-pollinate, to insure ample fruit, take a cotton swab or a fine paintbrush and transfer the pollen from one flower to another. Swirl the swab or brush lightly inside each flower, one after the other. Repeat this process the next day. Don't wait too long after the blossoms appear to pollinate them. For most plants, the most successful pollinating can be done the day after blossoms open. If successful, you will be able to see tiny fruits as the flowers wilt.

If you get a live evergreen this season, the tree should stay indoors for no more than two weeks to keep it healthy. Live evergreen trees need to acclimate slowly to the indoors. Start by putting the tree in the garage for a few days before bringing it inside. When moving it back outside to plant, do the same in reverse. When you buy your tree also buy top soil and bring the soil into the house. When you plant the tree after the holidays, use the warmed topsoil to lessen the shock.

When decorating with fresh needled-evergreens, do not place directly on finished furniture or a mantelpiece. Sap from branches may take the finish off wooden surfaces.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Are you interested in maintaining the feeling of natural spaciousness that is Mendon today?

Do you enjoy watching the wildlife in your open, wooded or wetland areas?

Would you feel comfort in knowing that there is a plan and an organization to support preservation of the rural Mendon charm that attracted so many of its current residents?

Could you use a tax deduction that a conservation easement or land donation would bring?

LET US HEAR FROM YOU

By completing the form at the bottom of the second page of this newsletter, you will tell us of your support for the Mendon Foundation or that you have an interest in more information about us. Volunteer your time, talent or expertise. Join the Mendon Foundation today. Your membership fee is tax deductible.

For information on land donations or conservation easements call
Mendon Foundation President Carl Foss at 716-624-1634.

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