

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has." -Margaret Mead

PATHWAYS

VOL 13 NO 3

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDON FOUNDATION

WINTER 2006

A Member of the National Land Trust Alliance

www.MendonFoundationInc.org



Sub-base, base, ties, and rails are all in place as Evan Schmidt drives the final spike in Mendon Station Park

Photo by Warren Wallace

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2006 Eagle Scout Projects

2006 has been a very busy year for Eagle Projects. Building on the enthusiasm generated by our two 2005 projects, Troop 10 Eagle candidates signed up for five new project

West Wye Bridge (Completed, connecting LV Trail to Mendon's Great Bend Nature Park)



Eagle candidate Liam Dooly discusses bridge construction with Scout advisers .



Completed bridge, which involved over 375 man- hours of work.

60' of Rails at Mendon Station (Completed)



Eagle candidate Evan Schmidt and other scouts, learning to be Gandy Dancers, laying RR ties.



Sub-base, base, and ties all leveled and ready for rails to be attached.

It is impossible to adequately express the Foundation's appreciation and admiration for what these young men have accomplished. They have exhibited determination and skills well beyond their years.

Station-master's Garden at Rochester Junction (Near completion)



Eagle candidate Dan Smith and crew remove concrete and black-top cover from old garden.



Working with a local garden club, scouts create a 1920's style garden.



Interlocking Tower & Electrical Box (Completed)
Eagle candidate Ethan Gardner and helpers start removing brush and debris from the foundation of the original tower.



After digging out the old foundation, Scouts start construction of the knee-wall that will outline it.

Six Trail Benches and Clear Trees and Brush

Eagle candidate Ethan Whitenor has selected clearing brush and trees (at eight locations where they have grown too close to the Trail) and building six trail benches as his Eagle Project. He will do the clearing this fall, after the leaves have fallen and then build the benches next spring. The benches will be placed so that (including Kiosk benches) they will be at 1½ mile intervals along the trail.

**LEHIGH VALLEY TRAIL
Bench Location**



- Key**
- B** - New Bench
 - K** - Kiosk (existing)
 - Kn** - Kiosk (to be built)
 - P** - Parking



IMPORTANT!!! 2006 NEW YORK STATE CONSERVATION TAX CREDIT PROGRAM

Since 2000, land trust representatives of the Land Trust Alliance, have worked diligently in creating a conservation tax credit program. They collaborated with the Governor's Office, the State Legislature, heads of state Departments of Environmental Conservation, Agriculture and Markets and Taxation and Finance, leaders of New York's major conservation organizations and municipal associations including the Associations of Towns and Counties and the Council of Mayors

As a result of this six year effort, Governor Pataki proposed a new conservation tax credit program in his 2006 Executive Budget. This program would give a landowner, who donates a conservation easement, an annual tax rebate equivalent up to 25% of the property tax paid on that land, up to a maximum of \$5,000 per year. It was approved by both houses of the legislature and signed into law and added to the state tax code earlier this year. This is the first legislation of its kind in our nation.

There is also a new federal tax incentive recently passed by the Congress. Anyone donating a conservation easement from January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2007 will raise the maximum deduction a donor can take from 30% of their adjusted gross income (AGI) in any year to 50%; allow qualifying farmers to deduct up to 100% of their AGI and increase the number of years over which a donor can take deductions from 6 years to 16 years.

A Conservation Easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and the not for profit Mendon Foundation that permanently protects open space by limiting or restricting the amount and type of development or activity that may occur while leaving the land in private ownership. The easement is designed to protect natural scenic or open space values of real property. These restrictions or easements permit the Mendon Foundation to protect conservation values on lands without interfering with other private property rights of the landowners. When a property owner donates a conservation easement, he or she may continue to live or work on the land, in accordance to the easement's provisions and may sell the land or pass it on to their heirs. There are four types of conservation purposes that are written into the legal agreement. Besides the benefiting from the Conservation Tax credit, there are also significant tax advantages which include the possibility of income tax deductions and reducing estate and gift taxes.

For more information please contact Carl Foss, President or Arlene Cluff, Director. This new conservation easement benefit will enable us to assist interested landowners to explore open space preservation for future generations.



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Joe Spezio... Mendon Foundation's Great Benefactor

The Mendon Foundation has been a work in progress for almost fourteen years now. The lifeblood of this incorporation is the fabulous collection of volunteers who have embraced its vision and fueled its successes in preservation, recreation and education. The level of altruism in this regard is best embodied by the contribution of Joe Spezio, owner of Elam Sand and Gravel and one of the few locally-owned mining operations in Upstate New York.

Joe was there virtually from the day in the early 1980's, when Monroe County hired his company to remove all salvageable materials from the abandoned Lehigh Valley Railroad right-of-way through Mendon and Rush and into the adjoining township of Caledonia. Rails, crossties, miscellaneous hardware and even the heavy stone ballast were gathered for resale for various uses, including other railroad applications. Once cleared, a sprout of hope amongst recreational enthusiasts was that the nation's budding "Rails-to-Trails" movement might take root here.

In the family since the time when the Lehigh quit in 1976, Mr. Spezio's father started Elam with three employees and the firm has grown to require a daily average of eighty workers. During the '90's, Mendon Foundation teamed with Monroe County to acquire Federal highway funding and Joe invested countless pro bono hours in feasibility and design studies, including the pricing of materials, labor and equipment. In 1999, the effort fashioned a successful \$1,300,000 grant application that launched the Lehigh Valley Trail toward reality.

An important feature of the trail lies just over the Genesee River, where the old LVRR intersected with a Pennsylvania Railroad branch into Rochester. Known to railroaders as "Wadsworth," a 2,000 foot viaduct carried the Lehigh above the PRR and the river, with a short spur created to interchange rolling stock. Built on the towpath of the abandoned Genesee Valley Canal, the rails of the Pennsy were removed in the 1960's and the Genesee Greenway Trail was eventually established. As it happened, Spezio's company mined several acres in that area, so his first donation transferred eight acres bordering the river and ex-rail lines to the Greenway organization.

Last year, an additional twenty-six acres of the Elam sand and gravel pit were transferred to the Mendon Foundation, with the purpose of creating a "forever wild" state along the trails and the Genesee. That parcel included another key piece of real estate - a strip of land along Elam's northern property line that would allow for the extension of the Lehigh Trail westward to West River Road, ultimately to the village of Caledonia and on to the popular Genesee Country Village and Museum near Mumford. As a result of this donation, the Mendon Foundation, under the sponsorship of Livingston County, was successful in winning a \$20,000 feasibility grant for that project.

Needless to say, Joe Spezio (a.k.a. Elam Sand & Gravel), has been invaluable to the growing success of our trail system. At his inspiration, the route has a firm, hand-capped accessible surface that is kept pristine through the diligent efforts of many volunteers. Thousands of users on foot, bike or horse have and will use this resource for years to come. Predictably, enormous praise has been heaped upon on the organization, with (knock on wood) no seri-

ous injuries to date. Could anyone ask for more?

Well, yes. There's the matter of Federal Tax Form #8283, "Non-cash Charitable Contributions," which Mr. Spezio endorses for the creation of open space/public use lands. Working or fallow farm land and/or environmentally sensitive properties (not necessarily adjacent to the Lehigh Trail) can be offered to the Mendon Foundation in exchange for Federal tax deductions and New York State tax credits.

A "conservation easement" can be established in which property owners legally set aside part of their property, with the understanding that it would never be developed. Otherwise, a "remainder trust" can be donated, wherein the property is retained for the life use of the owner. The tax deduction/credit would be keyed to the value of development rights and it would be recorded at the County Clerk's Office as part of the deed on the property. (A full explanation of this program can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.)

For any right-thinking lover of recreation and conservation, fostering public awareness of the avenues for land preservation can only be regarded as a win-win situation. If you are seeking inspiration, look no further than the record of Joe Spezio and all he has done for the Mendon community, via the Mendon Foundation and its increasingly popular Lehigh Valley Trail - the Route of the "Black Diamond."



*Great
Holiday
Gift
Idea!*

Mendon Note Cards

The Mendon Foundation is excited to be able to offer these beautiful and personal Mendon note cards. The cards are printed in full color on bright white cover stock and were created by Mendon photographer John Buck. Each Town of Mendon image has been digitally enhanced to have a "painterly" effect.

Each \$20 gift box contains 15 cards and envelopes. And the best part...the proceeds benefit the Lehigh Valley Trail and other Mendon Foundation projects. Please look for the cards in the following retail stores:

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LIVERMORE FARM SPARED WHEN TRAFFIC CIRCLE BUILT IN MENDON

By Diane C. Ham, Mendon Town Historian

When the traffic circle at the intersection of Clover and Rush-Mendon Roads was in its planning stages, the DOT assured us that the Livermore property would not be affected. In fact, they were planning to move the intersection a few feet farther away from their property than it was previously.

Because the house, and its owners, has had such an interesting history, the Town Historian was a little concerned. Probably few of the historic homes in Mendon have entertained more guests or have been the center of so much activity or have played as important a role in local history as the cobblestone house of the Livermores at 4389 Clover Street.

The house was built between 1830 and 1840. William Cornell, an active Quaker purchased it in 1842 from Luther Gates who probably built the house. William Cornell's son, John J. Cornell, a noted Quaker preacher, inherited it in 1877. John Cornell added the frame addition about 1879 in order to have facilities for lodging visit-

ing Quakers and other friends, for here the Quaker Quarterly Meetings were held.

When meeting in John Cornell's house, as in all Quaker meetings, the women were segregated from the men--the women being seated in the large west room and the men in the large room to the north. The speaker stood in the foyer and could be heard and, to a limited extent, seen through open doorways.

In 1896, John Cornell sold the farm to Fred Lord, son of Nathan Lord who lived on the next farm to the south. Fred and his wife, Bessie, had four daughters and a son: Irene, Lucille, Ethel, Ruth and Leonard. The big west room became a playroom for the children with ultimately a rideable merry-go-round, which also attracted the neighborhood children. What a contrast between the laughter of the children and the somber silence of the Quaker meetings!

Fred Lord, a progressive dairy farmer, enlarged the dairy, which he called Elm

Grove Dairy. He drilled a deep well for unlimited water supply, erected a wind mill to pump it, and bought the first tractor in the area.

In 1920 Fred Lord sold the property to Kenneth C. Livermore. Mr. Livermore attended Cornell University graduating in 1909. He became a professor at Cornell in 1914 in the College of Agriculture. While there he developed a course in Farm Management, which is still being taught and also co-authored a text book on the subject. He was included in the 1923 Who's Who for his work.

Early in life, Mr. Livermore decided that farming would be his life work and a number of years were spent in preparing himself for that occupation. While in college he spent his vacations and a full year in the middle of his college course in agriculture, working on different types of farms in different regions. He visited and observed conditions and methods used in the better farming sections of several states. His final choice was the northern half of western New York for his residence—Quaker Hill Farm.

K. C. Livermore brought new ideas in farming to Mendon and put them to practical use on his farm. He produced certified seed which he sold to nearby farmers. He

expanded growing farm seeds: wheat, barley, rye, corn, cabbage, and was among the pioneer producers of hybrid corn. Because of residential increase in the community, Mr.

Livermore branched out into the lawn seed business and chemical pesticides. In the 1960's, Mr. Livermore introduced the sunflower to this area—mainly for bird seed. His sunflower fields attracted many photographers. With Bill Bauer's 40 years of service and grandson David's help, Mr. Livermore, helped spread the gospel of better farming for more than half a century. Eventually, David took over the business.

Many friends have stopped in to see the Livermores. Among these was a young man to whom Mr. Livermore had been faculty advisor at Cornell. An agriculture student, he had also been active in the dramatics club. He returned home to operate the family owned farm operated by his ancestors for generations. He was successful, but not content—he longed to be an actor, but felt obligations to his family. He asked Mr. Livermore for advice. To the young man, he answered: "If you are sure you have real acting ability, life will be much more rewarding to you in that profession and your contribution to humanity much greater than if you stay on the farm." He became an actor—Henry Fonda.

K. C. Livermore died September 20, 1987 at the age of 101. He lived on the farm for 86 years. Today the farm is owned by K.C.'s son, Carter, and is occupied by his son, David, and his wife, Eileen Livermore.

The old cobblestone house, too, has had a life of its own, serving as a farm home, a center of Quaker affairs and social gatherings, an office for a dairy farm, and later a home and office for a seed and chemical business. It has known tragedy and heartache and joy and peace. It, like its present owners, has enjoyed the fullness of life.



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HELP!!!

The Open Space, Land Acquisition and Stewardship Committee is looking for volunteers to join the committee. There are several projects that need to be completed and we can use your help. If you enjoy walking around the open spaces of Mendon; if you enjoy working on the computer entering data; if you like working with children for Earth Day or working at the various festivals and carnivals in Mendon then this committee may be for you. Meetings will be held quarterly or more often as needed. For more information call Arlene Cluff, Chairman @ 624-3182 or e-mail ajcluff45@aol.com.

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PATHWAYS

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The Mendon Foundation

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OUR VISION STATEMENT

We believe in preservation.

We believe in recreation.

We believe in education.

We believe in community stewardship.

OUR PURPOSE

To improve the quality of life in our community.

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. Our phone: **585-624-8730**

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