

"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 17 NO 4

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDON FOUNDATION

WINTER 2010

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Photograph by Miika Laurila, Grade 11

Student photos on display!



Rachel Elizabeth Sifferd, Grade 12



Jackson Somes, Grade 12



Who says octogenarians can't enjoy the Lehigh Valley Trail?



Certainly Jack Meyers and Carl Goodberlet say they can and they say it frequently. Jack and Carl grew up as neighbors so they have been friends since childhood. They began riding together 10 years ago and have biked thousands of miles in this timeframe.

Jack, an 81 year old retired Upstate Dairy Coop worker from Honeoye Falls and Carl, an 84 year old retired RG&E foreman from Rush, are seen quite often riding from Plains Road to Mendon. While in Mendon they enjoy a cup of coffee and a nutritious snack. Along the way these two gentlemen who are lovingly called "The Dynamic Duo" enjoy the section of trail from Chamberlain Road to West Bloomfield Road where the horses are found as their favorite section. On some days when they feel really adventurous, they drive to Mendon and ride to Victor for lunch. After a hearty meal and a rest break, it's back on the bikes and a return trip to Mendon. The section from Phillips

Road to Old Dutch Road is the area they enjoy the most.

All along the trail, many other riders have come to recognize these men with comments about their speed or lack thereof. Once Carl was told if he went any slower he would be mistaken for a trail side statue. Having increased his speed, Carl became worried that his rear bearings would overheat and smoke would pollute the trail, so he bought a special thermometer to check the temperature of his bearings and compare them to those of other riders. The results-- his bearings were still colder than everybody else's.

All kidding aside, these men are full of life and a joy to be around. Jack traveled about 1300 miles in 2010 and Carl logged 700 miles.

They invite people of all ages to come out and enjoy the trail and hope to meet more folks taking advantage of this great treasure right here in our backyards.

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An 1895 Mendon Country Christmas



By Diane C. Ham,
Mendon Town Historian

On the Friday before Christmas, everyone attended the Christmas program at one of the district schools such as District 15 on West Bloomfield Road. The children who attended this school had been preparing for their program for weeks—learning their recitations, practicing carols and working on a skit or play. They performed for their audience by the light of gas lanterns, kerosene lamps, and candles in the windows. After the program, everyone was treated to a variety of holiday goodies from the farm kitchens of the ladies in the school district.

Christmas holidays in Mendon in the 1890's were always a special time for family and friends to get together, just as it is today. There were no Jewish families living in Mendon at that time so there were no Hanukah celebrations. Sometimes aunts, uncles and cousins came to Mendon on the train from the east soon after the Lehigh Valley Railroad was built. The family usually left home about the middle of December and went back home about the middle of January. Before they left to come to Mendon, the younger members of the family spent many happy hours looking at the "wish book"—which was the Montgomery Ward or Sears & Roebuck catalog. (After Christmas, when the pictures were nearly worn off their pages, it was carried to the "privy" where it was used again!)

When the journey finally began, everyone was happy, excited and filled with anticipation. The trip was a long ride to get here from places like Philadelphia or New York City. As the train approached Rochester Junction

station, the visitors were filled with awe when they saw the long covered walkway, the large overhang of the roof, and employees scurrying to meet the train. The visitors were met at the station with a team of horses and bobsled, if there was snow on the ground. (The bobsled was a wagon put on runners.) Otherwise, they were met with the horse and wagon. It was a joyous reunion! Lighted candles at the windows of various houses were such a pretty sight as they passed by on the road on their way to the farm.

Being with the family for several days before Christmas was a special time also. There were many activities, and the excitement always made it hard to wait. The days before Christmas found the air filled with a variety of aromas from the kitchens of Mendon. There were freshly baked rolls, mince and pumpkin pies, and mulled cider and cookies. The phonograph playing "Silent Night" and other Christmas Carols were among the fond memories of the Christmas season.

While the children enjoyed their refreshments, the men gathered in one corner of the school house to discuss their crops for the past and up-coming seasons, the weather, and subjects of political interest. The ladies often exchanged recipes of the goodies they brought and made comments on how the teacher managed to pull the whole program off. It was a very pleasant evening and one that everyone looked forward to.

Christmas Eve was the next exciting event. Chores were done early that night with everyone pitching in to help. One of the boys did the milking while someone else fed the cows hay and grain. Another gave the cows clean straw for bedding. The small children helped to feed the horses, chickens and geese. The animals were even given a little extra grain for their special Christmas treat. In the morning, the milk would be taken to the creamery, strained through clean muslin cloth into milk cans to be taken to Rochester Junction and put on the train for

Rochester or Buffalo. (It didn't matter that it was Christmas Day. The work still had to be done.)

After the chores were completed, the whole family got in the bobsled and went to the candlelight dinner at the church, followed by a candlelight service and the reading of the Christmas story from the Bible. After the service, there were refreshments for all, and Santa provided a small red mesh stocking stuffed with candy, nuts and oranges for all the children. The icy ride home in the bobsled was truly exciting in anticipation of Santa's visit during the night.

Christmas Day was busy and filled with surprises, fun, games and food. As soon as the children awakened, they were allowed to "dig into" their stockings that they had "hung by the chimney with care" for Santa to fill with more candy, nuts, and oranges—and maybe even a small toy. After chores were done and breakfast was eaten, the family gathered around in the living room to open their presents. The children received only a few gifts—one

from Santa, one from their Mother and Father, and perhaps a gift from their visitors. The presents were usually something special—and always hand-made. Everyone was very happy with their presents.

Then the ladies hurried to the kitchen to prepare a sumptuous turkey dinner with all the trimmings. Other relatives who lived nearby were invited to come for dinner and an afternoon and evening visiting and playing games. They might have played games such as: I Spy, Hide the Thimble, Pass the Slipper, Charades, Blind Man's Bluff, or Jack Straws. Even Old Maid was a popular game. They often sat by the fireside and told the stories that their parents and grandparents before them had told about the family's adventures through the years.

When it was time for the visitors to go back home, they were taken back to the Rochester Junction station in the bobsled or wagon. A country Christmas was, indeed, very special to all, with wonderful memories that would last for a long time to come.



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Birds of a Feather – Bird Walks in Mendon



Did you ever wish you knew more about the birds in our area? Set some time aside for guided bird walks in our area come spring and you may be whistling a different tune.

Connie Kellogg and Jaye Chambery are keeping their binoculars focused on the following dates for the spring 2011 walks: 4/30, 5/7, 5/14, 5/21, and 5/28.

Generally speaking, walks begin at a collective starting point such as Rochester Junction, Mendon

Foundation property on Mendon Center Road, and the Semmel Road Park. Light refreshments of breakfast at a local restaurant often follow the actual walks and watching.

If you love birds and enjoy comfortable walks outdoors with others similarly inspired, these outings are a “must-do” during spring migration. Mendon Foundation Birdwalk organizers say 30-40 species of birds have routinely been identified on most outings with 56 cumulative species being recorded.

Imagine our parks without litter.



Some of the lucky ones amongst us have been to witness the glories of the Grand Canyon (of the West), the misty plumes of Old Faithful, and to walk in the haunting shadows of the redwoods in Muir Woods.

It is unthinkable to find the detritus of human existence including the Red Bull containers, plastic bags, and paper on the ground in those places.

Those natural parks are being treated by guests as places worth protecting from the flotsam and jetsam of human existence – mainly trash and litter.

At the Mendon Station the carry-in, carry-out policy on personal items has been in place since the very beginning. However, the Monroe County Park's Law, Section 323-23 cites leaving garbage as a violation of County law. And that law is broken at Rochester Junction nearly every day. While along the trails there is less litter but outright dumping of solid waste materials – often construction based.

Volunteers from the Mendon Foundation make it their business to take out the trash. We have other worthy projects for them to do instead.

Solid waste is usually removed by the Monroe County Parks Department.

The park land is for everyone to enjoy so please, if you see people leaving trash ask them to stop doing it immediately.

And if you are uncomfortable about face-to-face confrontations, please call the Monroe County Sheriff's Office or one of the Foundation members listed in this newsletter.

Following discussions with the Mendon Foundation the number of police cruisers going by the Mendon Station area has increased. Please help keep that momentum going in a positive direction.

If you observe any kind of serious polluting we urge you to try and take down the offender's license plate number. As a group we vigorously pursue illegal dumping on public property, and try to keep on top of the litter.

Dumping is selfish and an attack against nature; so help protect our paths and trails.

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Images in time....

Mendon Station Festival

We've heard nothing but great news about the 2010 Mendon Station Festival, September 11th and 12th. The Mendon Foundation is a 100% volunteer-driven organization. So it's rewarding to be able to host this down home, two-day, event.

This year the level of activity was better than ever with our Revolutionary War re-enactors returning, lively Mendon Pony Club demonstrations, a silent auction, "Food of Mendon," Custom Brewcrafters, a big bounce house for kids, informative horse drawn wagon rides along the Lehigh Valley Trail, and more.

Please make plans to join us in 2011.





**THE MENDON STATION FESTIVAL COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND OUR SPECIAL THANKS
TO THE FOLLOWING VOLUNTEERS & BUSINESSES
FOR MAKING THIS YEAR'S EVENT A TREMENDOUS SUCCESS**

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Mendon Collectables – Hank Moffitt's Lehigh Valley Railroad



Harland (Hank) Moffitt as he nears 90 years of age is as clear as a train whistle on why he loves trains. He practically grew up listening to the clickity-clack of the Lehigh Valley Railroad—a train that would eventually take him to the Second World War.

"I had enlisted at age 21 and the Army sent me a travel voucher. My mother and father and my girlfriend at the time took me to Rochester Junction to climb on board the LVRR train. The Lehigh ended in Buffalo where I went to the New York Central for the ride to Waco, Texas."

Of his many train-centered collectables and memorabilia is a beautiful classic-train-car tea set of sugar and creamer, boldly emblazoned with the flying flag logo that was the LVRR. The Rochester LVRR station, with its name still prominently displayed on the building's facade is now Dinosaur Bar-B-Que by Rundel Library.

"My uncle Seymour Davis, my mother's brother, was a station agent, and later in the Tower House in Rochester Junction with the LVRR. On Saturdays I'd go with him," Hank explains. First in the LeRoy station and later at Rochester Junction, Hank accompanied his uncle to "watch the trains go by." It's a preoccupation he

still enjoys with his wife Marie whom he met in 1943. They loved the fast train they rode in Paris. For the past 30 years or so, they have booked and enjoyed an overnight train ride from Rochester to Miami Florida on their annual retreat from a long Mendon winter.

Their home in Honeoye Falls has as many photographs of trains as it does of their three children, eight grandchildren, and nine great grandchildren. Various train dining car serving pieces line the shelves while original art work and photographs of trains decorate the old farm house.

One of Hank's childhood memories includes a long pole-like contraption where the operator positioned a letter or message to be picked up by trains that weren't scheduled for a stop as the engines slowed while traveling through the station. On the Lehigh Valley run the Black Diamond was famous for the dining club car and comfortable sleeping births. Hank says, "People ask me why I ride trains, and I say it's the French Toast. They tell me that the coal burning stove and warming ovens made it special."

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"I always thought the Black Diamond was the first class train," Hank says. "But it wasn't the fastest. My uncle said that a train called the Star was faster." In 1988 Hank and his wife Marie and 14 other train buffs got to ride #353--the Black Diamond--from Rochester to Cape Cod thanks to a wealthy train collector who could hook his private car onto an Amtrak train in order to entertain his friends.

With posh leather seats and candle lit meals they managed to go back to a time when trains were king and passengers were treated like they were special. Certainly the LVRR sugar and creamer that Hank bought at auction for just under \$1,000 about 30 years ago, harkens to the days when travelers could dine in splendor surrounded by a privileged few.

A thousand dollars for a tea set turns out to be a very good investment. Train buffs pay a good price for history, but 30 years ago it was a lot of money. Hank does admit to took some time before he shared the details of the silver service with Marie. When did he tell her? "Yesterday," he quips.



Editor's note: If you or someone you know has an item of interest to early Mendon history and you would like it share it with Pathways, please contact Carl Foss, 385-2330 or Laurie Mercer, 226 2993, email: laurmec9@aol.com.



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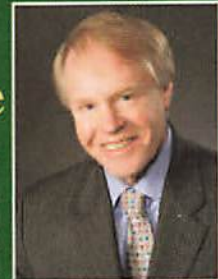
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American Idol Brings Gifts of Song

Hamlet of Mendon-Hot Jazz on a Cold Winter Night returns to a festive Westminster Hall & Chapel on Friday night December 17th. The music begins at 7:00 p.m., so please join us to celebrate and congratulate HFL alum Jonathan Stills '04 an American Idol finalist. Jonathan will sing holiday favorites including "Oh Holy Night."

HFL's prized Jazz Ensemble under the direction of Mark Borden returns for their 2010-2011 premiere playing "Big Band Christmas," "Tippin on the QT," "La Suerte de los Thunder" and finishing with an Ellington-Strayhorn classic "Such Sweet Thunder." Once again we'll move into the chapel as Ken Goold and his Select Choir won't miss a beat making heavenly sounds under the nave leading off with "Heal the World," "Breath of Heaven" and then a Gospel blues piece--"City Called Heaven" featuring Jonathan.

We will welcome back another HFL grad, Michael Radi '06 and the SUNY Geneseo's South Side Boys, an A Cappella group performing "Good Ole A Cappella," "Southern Cross" and "Stay with You."

Let the snow fall as the carolers greet you as you make your way into Westminster Hall, check you coat, find friends, get something warm to drink and indulge your sweet tooth. We expect once again that the event will be standing room only. Parking is available in Mendon Station Park or across Route 251 at the baseball field lot.

Tickets are \$18/Adult \$15/Student-Seniors and will be available at Mendon Pharmacy, Sacred Grounds, from Mark Borden – mark_borden@hflcsd.edu, Ken Goold – kenneth.goold@hflcsd.edu, or by calling John Farrell at 233-0094. Come join us for another joyous evening of great music and Christmas cheer together in the place we are all proud to call our sweet sounding home.



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& Views



PATHWAYS

is the newsletter of the Mendon Foundation, a completely volunteer organization which exists with the generous support of its members, volunteers, and contributors. This newsletter is published three times a year and paid for through the generous support of our advertisers.

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