Welcome the New Year with a First Day Greenway Hike

After all the food and parties, an easy New Year’s First Day Genesee Valley Greenway guided hike may be just the thing. Three outings are planned at different Greenway locations. Leashed pets are allowed.

11:00 a.m. Scottsville, Canawaugus Park, Monroe County
Two hikes: south to the Lehigh Valley Trail 4+miles round trip. or north to Route 383 2 miles round trip. Bathroom available at the Municipal Building in Canawaugus Park. Additional parking at Municipal Lot behind the Village/Town Hall, 22 Main Street. Salvatore’s Saloon, 11 Main Street, will be open for lunch at noon.

1:00 p.m. Belfast, Route 305 Greenway Parking Lot, Allegany County
Two hikes on the same route, 4 miles and 7 miles, roundtrip. No bathrooms.

Each hike will be out and back and two to four miles in length. If weather permits, bring snowshoes or cross country skis. Don’t be fooled into thinking you don’t need to bring water in winter. Persons versed in local history will help guide each hike. In case of winter storm, consult FOGVG Facebook for cancellation information. For more information and to register number attending, contact Greenway Park Manager Kristine Uribe at (585) 493-3614 or Kristine.Uribe@parks.ny.gov with “Registration” on the subject line.

11:00 a.m. Mt. Morris, Route 408 Greenway Parking Lot, Livingston County
Two-mile round trip hike from the parking area to the dramatic trail bridge spanning the Genesee River offering. No bathrooms.

Next deadline is 1 March
President’s Message

Welcome to the latest issue of the Greenway News and the new opportunities winter brings for you on the Greenway. In addition to snowmobiling there is skiing, riding a fat tire bike, or perhaps trying out some new snowshoes. Of course, if there is not substantial snow cover, there is always hiking.

The Genesee Valley Greenway State Park has scheduled three First Day Hikes on the Greenway for January 1. Start the new year right by joining the hike in Scottsville, in Mt. Morris, or at Rt. 305 near Belfast. Remember that Park Manager Kristine Uribe is requesting that participants in these hikes pre-register. Please see instructions included in this newsletter article on the hikes.

The Genesee Valley Greenway State Park Meetup group, https://www.meetup.com/GVGSP-Enthusiasts/, currently has 206 members. If you are not already a member, please join us. This is a way for you to keep up to date on Greenway events by receiving internet reminders.

We need winter and also summer events for the Greenway. Please let us know if you would be willing to lead a trail event by leaving a message at (585) 658-2569 or contacting fogvg@frontiernet.net.

Thanks to those who participated in our Sept. 30 ribbon cutting, the Nov. 12 trail events and our annual dinner/meeting. Plan to join us again on January 1 and bring friends. Everyone is welcome.

Fran Gotcsik

New Greenway Trail Opens

A one-mile section of new Genesee Valley Greenway trail was officially opened on September 30 with a ribbon cutting at Little Black Creek Park in Chili. The paved trail extends from Little Black Creek south to the CSX Railroad tracks, resulting in three continuous miles of paved Greenway trail extending from Genesee Valley Park to the railroad crossing. The newly-opened section of trail closes a long-standing gap in the 90-mile Genesee Valley Greenway State Park. Before the trail section was completed, trail users were required to detour to Scottsville Road.

Fran Gotcsik
“Not all who wander are lost”

“We have all heard, and many of us have shared stories about being somewhere and suddenly Phil would appear out of the trees. He seemed to materialize out of the network of nature, from childhood up through adulthood. You didn’t hear him, you didn’t expect him; he just was there. …

So today we honor him with this bench, for those who would rest, contemplate, breathe, and restore.

Not all who wander are lost. Phil may have appeared to be wandering, but actually he was absorbing, observing, learning.”

These remarks are excerpted from Cuba Mayor Michele Miller’s introduction during a dedication for the Phil Austin Memorial Bench, installed this September near the “Irish Cemetery” along the Greenway just north of Rockville Lake between Belfast and Cuba. The family donated the money for this handsome bench and plaque, and state park employees made a concrete base for the bench.

See a PROBLEM on the Greenway? Let Enforcement Officers Know!

IF IT’S AN EMERGENCY
Dial 911 or call

Monroe and Livingston Counties
585-658-4692

Wyoming, Allegany and Cattaraugus Counties
Call 911

Greenway law enforcement is provided by State Park Police, working together and with state and local police forces.

For non emergency issues call:
Park Police Dispatch
1-800–255-3577
Greenway Park Manager
585-493-3614
On June 2, 2014, it was business as usual for the GVG crew. The morning discussions were filled thoughts of what particular tasks were on the day’s agenda, all mixed with a healthy dose of some good natured joking as is their typical style. As they loaded up their trucks with the equipment they knew they would need, the occasional side conversation would ensue as they stopped to take a sip from the almighty coffee cup.

The crew headed out in their small convoy towards the worksite. The plan was to start work on N.Y. 63 near mile marker 26 and head north, hopefully making it to Fowlerville Rd near mile marker 21 before the day was through. Five miles may not seem like a lot; however, when you are combatting nature and wrestling with thick vegetation, it might as well be 50. No problem. This was not the crew’s first rodeo, and they were up for the task...or so they thought.

Nobody expected the spectacle they witnessed once they rounded the curve where the Genesee River runs very close to the trail. Seemingly overnight, the Greenway was transformed from a tranquil piece of heaven into a surreal nightmare. There it was. A large fracture running diagonally across the trail like a lightning bolt. The east side of the trail had sunk down a foot or more in some places. The way the crew described it to me, as this occurred before I took over the park manager position, it was like someone punched them in the stomach and knocked the wind right out of them. The crew takes their trail seriously. They have a lot of pride in what they do. But this? They felt helpless as they knew what would transpire next and all they could do was wait for it to happen. And it did, the very next day.

Imagine if a moving train had come upon this fracture suddenly back in the 1950s!

Over the next three years, the regional engineering department and management at Letchworth State Park toiled over how to go about a fix. They knew this was not going to be easy. The cost to stabilize an ever-changing environment is not only enormous, but risky. The Genesee River has a history of moving itself at will and all we can do is try to stay out of its way. Enter the Abbey.

The Abbey of the Genesee is a community of more than two dozen contemplative monks. They are a member of the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance, commonly known as the Trappists. They have a vast amount of property in this area, part of which is directly adjacent to the washed-out section. And here lay the solution. The concept was to obtain an easement along the edge of their field in which we would create a by-pass until it was safe to return to the original course. The monks were very understanding towards our cause and agreed to help us. I wish to thank each and every one of them for persevering through our state bureaucracy. It took three years to cut through the red tape, but we did it.

A few weeks before Thanksgiving, we were given the green light to plot out the new trail. In the last newsletter, I compared traveling...
through the Conrail property as one of those days you wait your entire career for. Well, now I have two of those days under my belt. Being out on the trail with our senior engineers and trying to decide the best layout of the new trail was exhilarating. I didn’t care about the thorny undergrowth catching on every piece of clothing possible and then slapping me in the face. I didn’t care about the muddy terrain, nor the realization of how out of shape I am. What I did care about was the hours spent by many trying to make this work, and now the ball is in our court to make it happen. It may have been only a few hours I was out there, but it filled me with hope and re-established my belief that if we work hard enough, persevere long enough and keep an open mind we can literally move heaven and earth with positive results.

Moving forward, we will continue to construct the trail over the next month or so until winter sets in and finish up when the weather breaks, if needed. Afterwards, we will tackle the newest washout just up the trail, north of York Landing.

Thank you all for being patient until this favorable day arrived.

Thank you all for your continued support of our beloved Greenway.

Happy Holidays and wishing all the best in the coming new year!

The Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway, Inc. (the Friends, or simply "FOGVG") is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit membership organization, incorporated in 1993.

The mission of the Friends is to assist in the development, protection, promotion, and maintenance of New York’s Genesee Valley Greenway State Park in accordance with guidelines established in the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) Genesee Valley Greenway Management Plan and to support and promote other non-motorized recreational opportunities for the general public along the Genesee Valley Greenway.
The air was crisp as five of us from the Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway and four from the Springwater Trails hiking group gathered at the parking lot in Sonyea State Forest, while others walked the Greenway down in Mt. Morris village. We walked the forested road for a ways and then some of the participants descended to the gorge below where Keshequa Creek runs, and, long ago, the Genesee Valley Canal, followed by the Pennsylvania Railroad Branch. Those who descended into the gorge went down a road that I was able to drive a normal car upon about 25 years ago, but subsequent floods of Keshequa Creek have cut that old road off to a steep end. Larry Seamans is very familiar with the area so agreed to lead those intrepid souls who descended, and they were fascinated by just how much of the railbed and canal infrastructure was still evident … but only in bits and pieces due to frequent floods.

Three of us stayed on the dirt forest road and hiked down into Groveland Correctional Facility on the clearly signed Greenway route. It was interesting to observe the massive amount of barbed wire fencing around what is now the prison. Many of the solid brick buildings of the former Sonyea facility are no longer in use, these dating from its time as the State of New York Epileptic Asylum ( = SONYEA). What had been originally a large property owned by the Shaker religious sect was sold to the state for the epileptic asylum, which later became Craig Colony for various treatments of retarded citizens. The most recent iteration of state ownership has split the old Craig Colony and its hilltop farms and vineyards into the Groveland Correctional Facility, with the forested back end split off to become Sonyea State Forest.

On our way back to the cars, we stopped at one of the cemeteries for the former Sonyea facility. What a sad sight!! Many of the metal markers have rusted away. Nobody seems to care. In a few years there will be no evidence of the cemetery except for one nice little granite stone. Somebody cared about one of them!

Following our hike, we drove back to the VFW in Mt. Morris and listened to our speaker for the afternoon. Pat Coate of Allegany present a well-delivered and humorous PowerPoint talk "A Long Walk: My Journey Along the AT." In 2014, when Pat hiked the Appalachian Trail, the distance was 2,185.3 miles, but this distance varies from year to year. The trail is a footpath from Springer Mt., Georgia, to Mt. Katahdin, Maine. The AT passes through 14 states and generally follows the Appalachian Mountains. There is a 5,000 foot elevation change with 6655 feet being the highest
and 124 the lowest elevations. The average time to hike the whole trail is 5 to 7 months. The trail was completed in 1937, but was mostly roads and private land. Now it is 99% public land and is largely maintained by volunteers.

The AT crosses hundreds of roads making easy access to towns for supplies, a shower, a hostel or hotel for a good night’s sleep, or to get mail. Then again, there are stretches where one walks for days without crossing a road, like the infamous hundred mile wilderness in Maine. There were 2500 attempts to hike the whole trail in 2014. By the time the hikers arrived at the midway point of the trail at Harpers Ferry 1267 remained with only 644 completing the trail in 2014. With the production of the Hollywood film, A Walk in the Woods, the number of attempts has increased significantly.

Pat spent much time preparing for the trip. She hiked 4 or 5 times a week for 6 to 15 miles with a 30 pound backpack on steep hills. Joyce Ermer, who is a very skilled hiker and a Finger Lakes Trail end-to-end, sometimes hiked with her to give her company and encouragement. Her backpack contained cooking and water purification supplies. She had the neatest little stove that used denatured alcohol. The backpack also contained shelter and sleeping supplies like a tent, sleeping bag, pillow, etc. Her clothes consisted of a down sweater, raincoat and pants, shoes, hat, socks. Miscellaneous supplies included headlamp, cell phone, camera, guide book, compass, etc. Of course, Pat also carried water and 4 days’ supply of food in her backpack. She got water from a creek and used her purification supplies to make it safe to use.

She carried water shoes to wear when crossing streams. Sometimes rope was strung across high water to help the AT hikers cross. At the Kennebec River, hikers are required to take a canoe ride because there had been accidents previously.

At night, Pat stayed in her tent about 63% of the time. There are 270 shelters along the AT which ranged from crude to fancy. Sometimes, she stayed in one of these shelters as it was fun to get together to chat or barter for something she needed. Along the trail, there are also hostels that cater to hikers. Occasionally, she went into a town and stayed in a motel to relax and have a change of pace. She said that the privies also varied greatly in quality. Most had some type of enclosure, but some did not.

Pat also talked about some quirks of the trail. Trail magic is when people put out a cooler with “goodies” along the trail. A hiker really appreciates home cooked food like brownies or cookies. Some people also put out jugs of water for the hikers. Boy Scouts sometimes do “trail magic” as well. Trail Angels give support to the hikers. They might provide a ride, for instance. Pat said that there were some very generous people along the trail.

We ended the annual meeting with a delicious pot luck meal and a short business meeting. At the business meeting our board was voted in as shown on the last page (no changes).

And to keep spring alive in your vision…

By Mark Getzin
(excerpted from a September article published in the Patriot and Free Press: serving Allegany County since 1862. Mark is a member of the Southerntier Hiking Group.)

This year my first hike outside Allegany County took place north of Scottsville on the Greenway. Here, Mr. Elijah Kruger from the educational staff of Letchworth State Park led us on a 3.4-mile hike from Brook Road to the Double Arch culverts across Black Creek and back. Elijah has a wealth of knowledge about birds, trees, and animals. We heard the melodic opera of the red breasted grosbeak as well as many warblers, thrushes, cowbirds, and catbirds. We viewed and discussed silver maple, honey locust, swamp oak, staghorn sumac, basswood, red oak, sugar maple, yellow birch, hop hornbeam, honeysuckle, dogwood, black cherry, choke cherry, tulip trees, cotton wood and elm. We learned to differentiate between the eastern tent caterpillar which is black with a white stripe down its back and the forest tent caterpillar which is black with white dots down its back. Finally, we viewed the Double Arch Culverts, which are one of the most spectacular man-made artifacts along the former Genesee Valley Canal.
Greenway Beginnings – Earlier than you think

Text and Pictures by Fran Gotcsik

It is easy to think of the Genesee Valley Greenway as a rather recent phenomenon, though not too recent, as 2017 marked its 25th anniversary. The first two miles of trail were opened in July 1992 in the Village of Mt. Morris. But the Greenway story actually began long before that when the corridor was first used as a transportation route. From 1840 to 1878, the corridor served as the Genesee Valley Canal and then from 1882 to 1964 as the Pennsylvania Railroad, Rochester Branch.

120 years ago a bike path
Unbelievable today but beginning in 1896, cyclists pedaled parallel to Pennsylvania trains between Genesee Valley Park and the Village of Scottsville on the Scottsville to Rochester Sidepath. Built as a cinder path on the other (berm) side of the canal prism, the sidepath was created because of the condition of the city’s streets and roads made riding impossible and the City of Rochester had banned bicyclists from the sidewalks. With the coming of the automobile, the sidepath was abandoned by 1907, but to this day there is evidence of its existence.

Railroad abandonments set the stage for future trail use
After World War II, the proliferation of cars and trucks caused railroad revenues to decline. In 1962, the Pennsylvania Railroad petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission for permission to abandon its unprofitable lines, including the sections of the Rochester Branch in Livingston, Wyoming, Allegany and Cattaraugus counties.

The Monroe County portion of the rail line between Wadsworth Junction at the Livingston/Monroe County border and the City of Rochester was retained. This allowed Pennsylvania trains to travel from Buffalo east over the Lehigh Valley Black Diamond tracks to Wadsworth Junction where a spur connected them to the Pennsylvania tracks to journey north to Rochester. After the Pennsylvania and New York Central railroads merged in 1968, the Monroe County section of the Rochester Branch was also abandoned and the tracks and ties removed.

Trail proposed more than 40 years ago
At about the same time, the NYS Canal Recreation Development Program was established when the NYS Office of Parks and Recreation and NYS Department of Transportation formally agreed to develop the 524-mile canal system for recreational purposes in 1972. As part of this Program, and now more than 45 year ago, The Old Genesee Valley Canal Trail was proposed as a state recreation trail. Nothing further happened, but at least the corridor was recognized as having recreational potential. In addition, in the 1980s, the section of Genesee Valley Canal and Penn Central railroad corridor within Monroe County was identified by the County as the Penn Central Trail and deemed one of the top four priority trails in its Recreationway System.

State Parks undertakes acquisitions
Between 1967 and 1978, State Parks acquired sections of canal and railroad corridor in Portage and Leicester surrounding Letchworth State Park. But the possibility of trail did not begin to materialize until 1984 when State Parks paid $155,000 for the 10 miles of rail bed and former canal between Wadsworth Junction and where the Monroe County Public Safety Training Academy is today on Scottsville Road.

Not included in the purchase were the Penn Central tracks between Genesee Junction and Little Black Creek. To this day the tracks are used by CSX freight trains accessing 84 Lumber on Scottsville Road, south of Little Black Creek. This still active rail line is why the newly opened trail along Scottsville Road was needed between Little Black Creek and Genesee Junction.

In 1986, just about the time that the concept of rails to trails was taking shape nationally, Monroe County entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with State

(Continued ...)

Calling All Photographers
– a chance to add to the new FOGVG website

The Friends of the Greenway are creating a new website, with assistance from a Parks & Trails New York - NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Partnership Grant. A central feature will be gorgeous images of the trail in all seasons and at multiple locations along the Greenway’s 90-mile length.

If you have beautiful, high resolution images showing people bicycling, walking, cross country skiing, horseback riding, and snowshoeing and enjoying the historic small towns along the trail, the Friends may be interested in including them on the website. There is no guarantee the photos will be used, but if they are you will receive a photo credit. Email photos to fogvg@frontiernet.net.

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Parks to cooperatively develop, operate, and maintain the 10 miles of corridor for recreational purposes. However, due to budget constraints, no trail development took place.

At the same time, officials from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and representatives of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference discussed the possibility of the State acquiring the remaining 80 miles of Rochester Gas & Electric (RG&E)-owned portions of the corridor using funds from the Environmental Quality Bond Act, approved by New York voters in 1986. Negotiations began with RG&E, but did not progress far enough so that the corridor could be purchased with funds from the 1986 Bond Act.

**The pieces all fall into place**

There may have been no 90-mile trail yet, but these multiple efforts provided the recognition, visibility and 10 miles of state ownership that eventually attracted Parks & Trails New York and RG&E in 1991 to launch a broad based local government, state agency, and community effort aimed at finally initiating trail development. In 1992, the first two miles of Greenway trail were opened in Mt. Morris under a licensing agreement between RG&E and the Village.

Three years later, the Greenway as we know it was officially launched. NYSDEC, State Parks, and the Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway partnered to obtain $2.5 million in federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act funds that would provide the resources to acquire the remaining 80 miles of corridor from RG&E and begin trail development between Genesee Valley and Letchworth Parks.

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**A new user group for the Greenway?**

You just never know who or what you’ll see on the Greenway. On Saturday December 9th on a walk in Nunda, I could see two blaze-orange clad people ahead. I was being generally blinded by the 3 PM sun right in my eyes, so couldn’t tell what they were doing, but I hoped that my little blaze orange hat would keep me safe.

It turned out that it was a couple, an apprentice falconer, with their juvenile redtail hawk who was learning to return to them upon signal. He was having his own “walk” as they tried to scare up squirrels from the trees to give him some exercise. On my way back later, he was on one gloved hand, with his hood on, and I got to see him close up. The hawk will be returned to the wild next year. Of course I didn’t have a camera with me, not even a measly phone, so there are no pictures for this tale.

But you just never know whom you’ll see enjoying the Greenway, do you? At the end of my walk, a hunter with a rifle was just entering the trail.

*Irene Szabo*
Membership News

DID YOU REMEMBER TO RENEW?

The time to renew or become a new member is now. The FOGVG membership year is from September 1 through August 31. Current members are listed below. If you are not presently a member, renew or become a new member for 2017-18.

To join or renew, go to our website at www.fogvg.org where you can download a form or complete your membership and payment online.

NOTE: In the future we can afford to print and send paper copies only to current members who request that we mail their newsletters. Join the Friends to ensure that you continue to receive the newsletter electronically or by the USPS.

A BIG THANK YOU to all our members for their generous support.

2017-18 FOGVG Members

Crystal Abers
Ron & Mary Abraham
Joan Armbruster
Andrea Barber
Louise Bickel
Terry Bohling #
George & Nancy Brinkwart
Thomas Burkman
*Michael S. Buskus
Tom & Barb Byrnes
Ronald De Groff
*Tony D'Imperio & Louise Michaud
Cody & Katie Donahue #
Dwight Folts
Mark Getzin
Coleridge Gill
Jeff Goodyear
*George & Frances Gotsesik
Peter Gradoni
Carole Grooms
Mary Gulesano
Will Haines #
Myra Hershly
Hinsdale Historical Society
Edward “Ned” Holmes
Alan Hopenwasser
Peter & Sally Humphrey
*Allen Kerkeslager
David L. Kipp
James & Susan Knauer
*Lakeland Rovers Hiking Club
Paul & Roberta Mac Lean
James & Jeanette Maxim
Michele Mc Call & Amy Stanley
James Mc Master
Davies Nagel
Joe & Marilee Patterner
Ric & Sandy Perry
Pete and Sue Piraino Family
David & Ruth Reid
Jennifer Ries-Taggart
Thomas Rodwell
Gary & Cheryl Rouleau
Ronald & Linda Sallade
*Fred & Gerry Sauter
*Joan Schumaker
Larry & Joy Seaman
David A. Shaw
Stephanie Spittal
Springwater Trails, Inc. #
Greta Stephany
Robert L. Stear &
Gary R. Maneebey
David & Grace Strong
Irene Szabo
Jo Taylor
Alice Thompson
*Pat Tindale
Mary E. Tyndall
Mary Innes Wagner
*Norman Wetterau
Robert Wheeler
*Chan & Karen Whitford
Robert A. Wood
Charles Woolever
Peter Wybron
Robert Younger

* Membership/Donations of $100 or more in 2017-18. Thank you!

# NEW Members in 2017-18 . Welcome!

A Special Thank You to

The Highlander Cycle Tour

for their Support

Join them at
Bristol Mountain Ski Resort
September 15, 2018
http://highlandercycletour.com

Exciting New Terrain!
Apparently Marilee Patterer visits her trail section north of Cuba frequently and in all seasons, because she shared several pictures of local Amish harvesting ice from frozen canal water. Often one sees a Styrofoam block shed in the yard, which is their refrigeration shed, and now in winter, the ice is free. Above, a young man has a team pulling a sled filled with ice blocks. We won't use a picture taken of the Amish unless the face is obscured, by their request.
Long before the Greenway …
there was a railroad

Norfolk Southern’s new single arch bridge over Letchworth gorge carries its first train.

11 December 2017

All I had heard was that the first train over the new bridge should go between noon and two, so naturally I stood there from noon to 2:30 when a three-engine train finally crept slowly onto the arch and... stopped! It was 25 degrees and luckily not windy, but such a gloomy day that distance shots looked like this was black and white film, with no colors visible until I zoomed in on a guy walking the old bridge in lime-green safety garb.

Worst of all, the old bridge eclipsed the top half of the train from our lowly vantage point below on a park trail. Fortunately John Kucko of WROC Channel 8 News in Rochester had a drone in the air so took this vastly better picture. In his picture, we are looking down on the new bridge from the south, so the old bridge, scheduled to come down next year, is beyond. The Greenway goes under the bridges on the right side in this view, so we can hope it will reopen soon.

The last train over the old bridge crossed this morning at 6:30 after which the tracks to tie old into new were finished.

Irene Szabo