

Trackin'



Bringing you news and information about your Chautauqua Rails to Trails

Fall/Winter 2012

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From The Locomotive

By Robert Berke, MD – President, CRT

I drove home last night in a driving hail storm...signs that winter may be just around the corner. Still time to enjoy the waning fall colors along the trails. I was out this past week and they are just magnificent. Work by the Board goes on as we plan for the future of the Rail Trail project. We are now linked solidly to overall regional Greenway initiatives to comprehensively look at what this county has to offer in recreational venues. We still seek support in the form of membership and volunteers. There is more work than hands to manage it and your assistance and enthusiasm would be welcome. This is your chance to help perpetuate both an historical and recreational legacy in Chautauqua County. Join us on the ride...the train is just leaving the station for a tour of this beautiful part of the globe.

Another Battle in the Beaver War – See Inside!

The latest battlefield in the conflict with beavers who try to remove the rail-trail is taking place again just north of the Titus Rd trailhead. Read inside for an update and more information on this continuing struggle.

Read on page 2



Another Battle in the Beaver War

By Jim Fincher

The latest battlefield in the conflict with beavers who try to remove the rail-trail is back again just north of the Titus Rd trailhead. About Sept 9, one would see the picture at right above as they left the trailhead.

Curious to see what caused the above tree to fall, I looked for the stump and saw the mark of the beaver!

The stump has teeth marks left by our industrious pest, the beaver. There was another tree felled by the beavers very near this one. It was felled some time ago, from the looks of the wood and it fell away from the trail.

The trunk above has had

some of its bark stripped off.
Dinner for the beavers, maybe?

Directly above, you can see the drain pipe clearly in the foreground. Interestingly, the pipe itself was not blocked. The beavers had constructed a 'dam' in front of the pipe and covered it with stick and branches as you can see. The water you can see in front of the drain pipe would not flow under the trail because the water in the pool of the discharge (other) side of the pipe was so high, it blocked the flow. When we opened the dam causing the pool, water began to flow.

We are hoping that doing this repeatedly will discourage the beavers and encourage them to go elsewhere and leave the

trail alone.

About a week after the first tree was discovered, another tree was downed by the beavers, coming to rest on the trail about 6 feet from the first tree. Again, the stump told the tale on the beavers.

After clearing the tree, we did look around to see what other troubles the beavers could give us. As it happens there are three more poplar trees in the area. If the beavers topple them, one would fall away from the trail, but two could easily fall on the trail, again in the same area as the first two. We are presently waiting and hoping the beavers find their new home unpleasant enough to move on.

Rant and Rave!

When we went to clear the tree on the trail near Titus Rd that the beavers cut down, we saw these marks on and near the trunk: A 4-wheeler driver was trespassing on the trail, arrived at the tree trunk, and decided to go over the trunk. To do that, all four of his wheels had to spin in order to lift the machine over the trunk. This is one of the reasons we don't allow ATVs on the trail. However, had the 4-wheeler gone home, retrieved his chain saw and cleared the tree, we might feel differently. There has been a bird watching blind on the edge of the wetland near Titus Rd for many years. It was originally built and installed by the Hewes BOCES conservation class. It has been repaired a couple of time due to what we thought was wind damage.

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Photo Courtesy of Jennifer Schlick

Didn't autumn fall upon us quickly? (Yes, pun intended.) It seems like as soon as we turned our calendars to September, the temperature dropped. I once again got out my wool socks, a sure sign of the end of summer. As I sit here writing there is a chilly, fine rain outside. What cheers me however is the bright orange of the maple tree outside my window and the birds chipping and chirping despite the rain. Most birds are done with pairing up and territories have broken down this time of year. You can find mixed flocks of Chickadees, Goldfinches and Juncos as they search for food. They perch on branches, eat

directly from coneflower that has gone to seed and scratch through fallen leaves. The meaning of the “chip” is not as simple as the musical songs of spring used to impress a mate and establish a territory. They could be identifying themselves, passing on information about food or announcing a predator. I can't interpret the calls, but the birds know what they mean.

When listening to the bird chatter, you may hear a “peep” coming from the forest floor. It is not the same defending “peeping” that comes from breeding ponds of spring peepers in the early spring. The brief and isolated calls come from where the little brown frogs will spend the winter, under the fallen leaves. Some plant

and animal behaviors are triggered by photoperiod, the length of day and night. The length of a fall day is similar to that of a spring day. And some plants and animals respond in the fall accidentally, exhibiting behaviors usually seen in the spring. On a walk, a distinctive sweet smell led me to about a dozen honeysuckle flowers, usually seen in the spring.

One plant whose flowering is not an accident in the fall is witch hazel. A woody shrub of forest edges and wet areas, witch hazel seems to do the opposite of most other plants. It is after the leaves drop that the fragrant, spindly yellow flowers bloom September through November. So even after the leaves on other deciduous trees turn brown and drop, there may still be a burst of color to be found along the trail. Just remember to wear your wool socks.

Rant and Rave! (continued from page 2)

This year, we repaired it again, but knew the damage was caused by vandals, not nature. The Hewes BOCES class again helped us repair it and what we saw recently is to your right. There should be a wall on the right side of the platform. It has been kicked over again and again by vandals. It is now lying in the weeds. We have a real good idea who did the damage, but can't quite prove it.



While this is not a rant or a rave, let us encourage you to help keep up the rail-trail. If you could take a hand held trimmer or lopper with you on the trail, feel free to cut back vegetation that needs to be cut back. Let us know if there are maintenance needs that require attention. You might consider taking a plastic grocery sack with you and picking up any trash you might see on the trail. We do have occasional trash left by people on the trail, but there is really very little in comparison with other areas.



Greenway Plan

The recently published Chautauqua County Greenway Plan calls for the establishment of many recreational trails in the county. Concurrent with the beginning of building the plan, equestrians in the eastern part of the county began to plan and build a horse riders trail in the Cockaigne/Arkright area. Eventually, there could be up to 40 miles of equestrian trails in the area. Also, in Cattaraugus County, another equestrian group has begun building about 30 miles of trails in the Pine Hill/ Round Top area. All these trails are to be multi-use trails meaning hikers and bicyclists can use the trails also.

Area mountain biker enthusiasts have begun building a mountain bike trail in the eastern part of the county and we hear there is another equestrian trail being planned in the Panama area.

Trails are coming!

There has been a bit going on since last newsletter. Here we go!

The New York Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, in cooperation with New York Parks and Trails, Inc. offered us a chance to determine the number of trail users we have. We counted trail users in September and submitted the count papers to Parks and Trails New York, who will analyze the count and come up with a pretty good estimate of the number of people who use the trail per year. We are looking forward to the results.

We have a Mobility Impaired Person Policy, per direction of the US Department of Justice. It is on our website (chaurtt.org). We have had an impaired person ask to use the trail with his 4-wheeler. Should you encounter a 4-wheeler, you can tell if the driver is trespassing or not by noticing a handicapped sticker, similar to the one displayed on cars, displayed on the 4-wheeler. Stop and say hello and thanks for appreciating the rail-trail.

Our attempt to obtain artwork to display along the trail has not been successful so far. We advertised in magazines oriented towards artists, but had no takers. We will continue to try.

Trail Managers Report

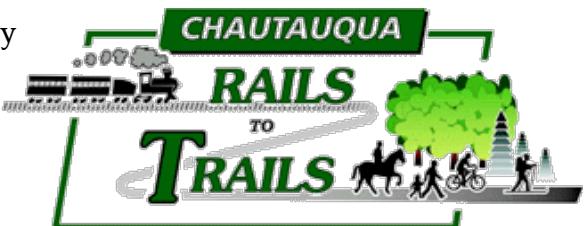
By Jim Fincher

Just as a reminder, gates are required on the trails to keep cars and trucks off the trail. Cars and trucks are the vehicles that can drop off refrigerators, sofas and mattresses along the trail that we have to clean up.

Additionally, cars and trucks are dangerous to trail users and have no business on the trail.

Let me mention again, we'd be happy to consider your pictures for the front of the trail guide. The picture should be an "action" picture, not a still photo of at least 2 people, on the trail: hiking, biking, horseback riding, etc.

Hope you have a great winter, here or in the south, and that you will use our rail-trail or some other trail whenever you can.



From the Corral...

By Mac McCausland

Many regular users of Rails-to-Trails have crossed paths with horses and riders out enjoying the trail as well. What might come as a surprise is that many of these large animals placidly walking along the trail and walking past cows, deer and other natural obstacles first earned their keep on the racetrack.

Fans of Thoroughbred racing often don't realize that the racing life of a Thoroughbred averages three years and that many of these animals "retire" at a very young age and have to find a second career.

Others may assume that OTTB's (Off the Track Thoroughbreds) become show jumpers or take up some competitive career. The idea of an animal bred for speed turning into a "trail-potato" does not always leap foremost into one's mind.

Due to the proximity of racetracks to Chautauqua County, OTTB's are a readily available option that has been exercised by a number of local riders. Racehorses are used to large amounts of

vehicle traffic. Race gates leave the horses unfazed by tight fits between gates or poles on the trails, and they do not tend to be interested in moving fast anymore.



Horseman who might be interested in taking on an OTTB as a trail riding project should visit www.fingerlakesfinesttbs.com for more information.

Equestrians using the rail trail should check out the parking areas at Thayer Hill and Prospect Station, which were



designed with horse trailers in mind.

Due to the gravel surface of the trail, riders should consider whether their horses are shod or not when planning a ride. The Fall colors make for a lovely ride and the trails are very rarely muddy.

So take a hike on horseback.

Like Our "New" Newsletter Format?

We would love to hear from you! Please drop us an email at crtt@fairpoint.net.

We are looking for ideas for our next newsletter.

Happy Trails!



Support The Efforts of CRT!

Yes, I want to support CRT's effort to change the abandoned rail lines of Chautauqua County into multi-use trails which can be enjoyed by all.

Individual \$25 Sustaining \$100
 Family \$40 Benefactor \$500
 Patron \$60 Sponsor \$1000 & up
 Business Partner \$100/\$200 per year for 10 years

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Detach & mail form to: Chautauqua Rails to Trails,
P.O. Box 151, Mayville, NY 14750. *Thank you!*



P.O. Box 151
Mayville, NY 14750