



Trackin'

The Chautauqua Rails to Trails Newsletter

Fall 2006

Portage Trail / Trolley Line Nature Trail Opens



The Sharp family at the opening of the Portage Trail / Trolley Line Nature Trail. The trail is dedicated in memory of William (Bill) Sharp.

A ceremony opening the Portage trail from Mayville to Quilliam Road was held Saturday, September 30th, under cloudy skies. The trail is dedicated to the memory of William Sharp, PHD, who was a local naturalist and educator. He was instrumental in beginning a program of health education, Growing Healthy, in the county school systems. Many members of his family were present to celebrate his memory with the ribbon cutting ceremony.

Dr. Robert Berke, President of Chautauqua Rails to Trails officiated at the ceremony. After welcoming those present, Dr. Berke introduced Jim Fincher, trail manager whose talk described the origin of the Portage trail and the history of the trolley line and work of Herb Hern, Sr. in turning the old trolley line rail bed into a Boy Scout hiking trail.

Dr. Berke then dedicated the trail to the memory of Bill Sharp. Dr. Berke and Cathy Sharp unveiled a sign designating the trail and cut a ribbon leading to the trail.

A hike was held along three miles of the newly restored trail. The rain held off allowing the group to enjoy the fall scenery and admire the four newly placed benches at strategic locations along the trail.

Family Health Services Eighth Annual Benefit Golf Tournament

Family Health Services held their Eighth Annual Benefit Golf Tournament on June 21, 2006 at the Chautauqua Golf Club. In keeping with Family Health Services' commitment to giving back to the community, and to encouraging a healthy lifestyle through physical activity year round, Dr. Robert Berke donated the proceeds of this year's tournament to Chautauqua Rails to Trails, Inc., Mayville, New York, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving abandoned rail corridors throughout the county for conversion into safe off-road trails for recreational use.

The tournament hosted 133 participants this year. More than thirty staff and community volunteers organized and presented the annual event. Businesses throughout the county generously contributed to a luncheon at the start of the day, an hors d'oeuvre buffet and drinks at the club house, and door prizes and raffles during the catered dinner. Tournament sponsors, Associated Healthcare, DFT Communications, Jamestown Open MRI, Lake Shore Orthopedic Group, and Physician Sales and Service generously donated, making this year's event a tremendous success.

Dr. Berke presented a check for \$7,000.00 to the Trail Manager, Jim Fincher, on August 5, 2006. Proceeds will help the group develop new trails and provide trail maintenance on more than 30 miles of reclaimed rail bed. The trails are open to the public at no charge. County residents are encouraged to use the trails for nature hikes, horseback riding, bicycling, cross-country skiing and winter recreation sports.



Treal Manager's Report

by
Jim Fincher

Are you ready for a little history lesson?

It was in August of 2003 that we submitted a grant request to the East Hill Foundation in Buffalo for money to fix the Portage Trail/Trolley Line. We received the money a bit late to do much work, but we got started. The next year, 2005, if you recall, was a very soggy summer. Rain, rain and more rain and lots of mud, which effectively kept earth moving equipment off the trail. We were able to do a little though, but not enough to make the trail people friendly. But, in 2006, we got some good weather and were able to go to town with repairs. Finally, we got to the point where we were about 98% done, and we had our opening ceremony.

We had a nice turnout for the ceremony and a nice day, too. Even if it was a bit overcast, the rain held off and we had a good hike after the ceremony. The trail is opened in memory of Bill Sharp, PhD, a local naturalist and educator who passed away a while ago. His family came in from out of town for the ceremony. Dr. Berke and Cathy Sharp unveiled a sign announcing the trail and cut a big red ribbon officially (re)opening the trail. Herb Hern, Jr. was on hand as was his son Eric, to remember Herb Hern, Sr. who worked long and hard to open the trail as a Boy Scout hiking trail in the mid 1970's. We have a lot of people to thank for this trail and I want to publicly acknowledge them right now. First off, we need to thank Marty Hardenburg, Steve Johnson, and Reed and Jane Powers, who own the old trolley line in the

Village limits of Mayville, and Tom and Diane Parker, who own the railbed from the Village limits to Quilliam Rd. Without the willingness of these folks to work with us, the trail would only be a flat place in the woods. Thank you so much for your cooperation and community mindedness. We owe you.

We thank the East Hill Foundation and Senator Cathy Young for their grant money and the friends of Bill Sharp who donated funds in his memory. Without this very necessary financial help, the trail would still be only a memory.

Now that the trail is open, we expect all of you to TAKE A HIKE.

There are 3 parking spaces on Quilliam Rd. There is parking at the Rt 430 end of the Portage trail, in the Great Lakes Energy lot, and across the street in the Family Health Services lot. The trail is really pretty, but remember, there is still raw dirt on the trail and if it is wet, will be muddy, so be prepared. Hopefully, the mud will grow grass next spring, with the help of some seed. We have list of trails (or potential trails) to work on next. Rather than list them here, I'd be happy to talk with you about them. Contact me.

Take care now, and as we say in the Rail-Trail business,
TAKE A HIKE.



Dr. Berke & Mrs. Sharp

View for the Locomotive

by *Robert Berke*, CRT President

As the Holiday season approaches, it is great to reflect on another milestone year for CRTI. Work on all the trails continues with maintenance and upgrades but the big news is the recent opening of a section of the Portage/Trolley Line (Bill Sharp Memorial Nature Trail) from Rt 430 in Mayville to Quilliam Rd.

What a splendid piece of raw beauty with beaver pond, elevated wooded views and a serene quiet majesty tucked away with easy access from the center of the village of Mayville.

We had a slightly wet but otherwise uplifting opening ceremony with the Sharp clan and friends to officially declare the trail open for use. This is a "must see" for all of you who enjoy the trail



WILDLIFE VIEWING

By Tom Simmons

Have you seen any elk lately? Herds of elk, cows and calves attended by heavy-antlered bulls, can be viewed in a day trip from our area. After driving two hours from my home in Jamestown recently, I spotted the first elk of the day in the town of Benezette in (appropriately) Elk County, Pennsylvania. Following the winding, but paved, road towards the designated Elk Viewing Areas, several stopped vehicles alerted me to the presence of a herd of 35 elk. In the fever of the fall rutting season, the large animals were all moving about, grazing as they moved. One mature bull charged at

another that he apparently considered too close to "his" cows. (Several years ago, I was able to observe two bulls with locked antlers engaged in a dominance dispute for the control of a harem.) The elk seemed to pay no attention to the dozen people gawking at them with binoculars and cameras. Several times, bulls "bugled" – a wonderfully wild sound of nature, ranking with wolf howls and loon wails. Twenty more elk were spotted during the day as I drove through the area enjoying the fall foliage – maple, oak, elm, and sycamore trees sporting yellow, orange, and red leaves. Twenty-five species of birds were observed, including soaring Turkey Vultures and ravens, and many little dickey birds – sparrows, warblers, kinglets, and vireos near the Hicks Run Elk Viewing Area.

So, if you have not seen any elk lately, you could do the "Elk Scenic Drive" in a day trip from our area. (For more information, go to PAwilds.com.)

As background: Elk are large members of the deer family. Females, "cows," can weigh 600 pounds; males, "bulls," well over 700 pounds. The local elk were extirpated by the late 1800's, and western elk were transferred to Elk County in the early 1900's. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has collaborated with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to enhance public lands, including reclaimed strip mines, to make suitable habitat for these large grazing animals.

Have you been keeping up with the fall bird migration? Most of "our" orioles, tanagers, swallows, and martins have already "flown the coop." Many sparrows are moving through now. Soon, the larger, hardier waterfowl will be flying south. And, of course, great places to see the birds moving are our local Rail Trails.



Dr. Robert Berke presenting Jim Fincher, CRT trail manager, a check for \$7000 as a result of Family Health Services' 8th Annual Benefit Golf

**Take
A
Hike**
It's good for
you



A section of the Portage Trail



Beaver pond along Portage Trail



P.O. Box 151 Mayville, NY 14757-0151

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 _____ E-mail _____

Mail to: Chautauqua Rails to Trails
PO Box 151
Mayville, NY 14757-0151

Check out the *CRT* website at:
www2.cecomet.net/crtt

Watch For Jim

Our trail manager, Jim Fincher, filmed a spot on Local access channel 8 TV plugging the TAKE A HIKE idea, titled 'Where do you walk'? The idea of the spot s are to show people where good spots to walk are located, encouraging them to TAKE A HIKE.

Jim should be on the air in November. Unfortunately, we don't know any more details at this time. As you can see, we are trying to publicize the rail-trails.

**If you are renewing your membership, please consider raising your level of giving.
Thank you**