

Finger Lakes Trail NEWS

Winter 2020



Inside...

- * *Savoring Rob Hughes' Contributions*
- * *New End-to-Enders*
- * *Even Some More Alley Cats*

FINGER LAKES TRAIL CONFERENCE

Mission Statement

The mission of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference is to build, protect, enhance, and promote a continuous footpath across New York State for the enjoyment and health of residents and visitors.

Forever!



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Winter 2020



HIKES:

Inspiration Is Where You Find It	4
#485 Neil Yoder, Painted Post	6
Sigi's Third End-to-End #488	7
A Few Days Spent on the Finger Lakes Trail	10
Mercedes Springs and International Mine	13
End-to-End Update	16
#37 Reminisces	17
Triad Trail.....	17
Volunteers are the Heroes of the FLT.....	18
Friends of Hammondsport Area Trails and Parks, Inc .	19
Miles with Mark.....	28
Hiking Through History, Part II	30
Hiking Can Be a Howling Good Time	32
End-to-End #486	35
My Finger Lakes Trail Hike of 22 Years	36



TRAIL TOPICS:

Trail Maintenance / Jon Bowen.....	20
Trail Quality / Lynda Rummel	22
Alley Cat Update / Mike Schlicht.....	26
M20 Alley Cat Project - October 2020	34



TRAIL TOPICS:

Map Updates / Greg Farnham.....	24
Trail Preservation Report / David Newman.....	25



COLUMNS and NEWS:

President's Message	3
Executive Director Report.....	8
Name That Map!	38
Bug Bites	39



OUR LAND:

A Naturalist's View.....	14
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ABOUT THE COVER:

I learned a lot about typical old barn hardware after finding discarded examples tossed over the edge of a steep hillside, while tending "my" trail. Editor

Photo by Warren Johnsen

President's Message

Pat Monahan



I don't know where time goes sometimes. As I was reflecting on what to write for my column, my mind wandered to a moment nearly a year ago at a trailhead on the Crystal Hills Trail in Parkview Cemetery in Painted Post (Steuben County). It was February 2020. I was on my snow shoes ready to start my adventure when Lada Sycheva and Grigory Kolesov were finishing their trail run in the Erwin Hollow State Forest. They were interested in helping with trail maintenance. We exchanged contact information. Months passed, but I finally reached out to them in June to help rehabilitate the blazing through West Hill State Forest. I taught them the techniques to scrape a tree, paint a blaze and open up the sight line. We met once a week and completely re-worked the blazes in both directions for a total of 8.6 miles. Now that is quite an accomplishment when I suspect they thought that I had forgotten our first encounter.

These are the kinds of experiences I treasure, helping people connect with the FLT in meaningful ways.

Since the fall magazine, we have continued to maintain a good financial status, and have continued to note an increase in membership and map sales as well as an uptick in trail usage on the FLT. I encourage all trail users to support a local club and the FLT in order to maintain and protect New York's premier footpath and all of our outdoor spaces.

I notice that I did not acknowledge one new Board member in my fall column. I'd like to welcome Sharon Ray as a new Board member representing the western end of the trail and one of our landowners, the Seneca Nation of Indians. She brings two very different perspectives by representing landowners and the Seneca Nation of Indians. Welcome, Sharon.

Our Board fall retreat will have been held virtually on November 21, 2020, rather than the normal full weekend as a result of the pandemic. We will concentrate our efforts on the 2021 budget, the impact of marketing strategies to increase income and membership levels, review our 2020 strategic plan and its accompanying financial sustainability plan, determine our future leadership model for paid employees and identify strategies for succession planning for the upper level of volunteer leadership on the Board. The results of this retreat are an important "heavy lift" that will move the FLT forward. I will report on the outcomes of the retreat in my spring column.

Finally, I am sure you received your annual appeal letter from us by now. Your financial donations help the FLT fund its mission "to build, protect, enhance and promote a continuous footpath across New York State for the enjoyment and health of residents and visitors. Forever!" Each donation by a trail user or FLT supporter helps create a personal happy place for someone in the midst of this pandemic. There is a sense of personal pride in giving not only for yourself but also for the community. It is not too late to make a contribution to the annual appeal. We made an adjustment



Lada Sycheva

Pat, left, with Lada and Grigory as they worked on the Crystal Hills Trail.

to our mission statement to include "the enjoyment and health of residents and visitors" as a result of the membership's approval at the annual meeting in September 2020. I have been encouraging you to do that at the end of my column ever since my first column in the Fall of 2009. It is so important to say it again.

Bundle up. Get your gear out and "Go take a hike!!" 🍁

FOLLOW-UP FOR NEWS ITEMS FROM OUR LAST ISSUE

Remember reading about the Ellsworth family, Bullthistle members who have become very active, most recently cleaning up after abuse and trash at the Ludlow Lean-to? Since then, Christy Post, our Marketing and Communications Manager, has heard from father Steve that his son Richard has just beaten the record for the FKT (Fastest Known Time) on 10/3, running the Letchworth Branch of our trail system.

Here is a link with the details:

<https://fastestknowntime.com/fkt/richard-ellsworth-finger-lakes-trail-letchworth-branch-ny-2020-10-31>

Meanwhile, mother Karen, who had "caught" trail running from her son, has caught Lyme disease but is recovering and is back to running the trail. Cool family! 🍁

Inspiration Is Where You Find It

Rob Hughes



I introduced myself to the Bristol Hills Trail of the FLT during a protracted case of the “shack nasties” in the winter of 1998. I had become quite familiar with the section of that branch trail that runs through High Tor Wildlife Management Area and wanted to explore other sections. A little research led me to investigate the Huckleberry Bog loop near Prattsburgh on New Year’s Day 1999. I arrived at the trail junction on Bean Station Road and began the uphill climb in a drizzling rain. I passed through property generously shared by Bill and Ellen Garrison replete with lovely Robert Frost stanzas on signs approaching the trail shelter. Much to my surprise, I came upon the smoldering remains of the original Evangeline Shelter that had burned the night before due to a problem teenager campfire. I continued on, uneasy yet determined to find solace from the stress of the recent holiday season. As I neared the hilltop, I found the trail register and discovered a wonderful collection of nature trail guides inside. The guidebooks, created by Irene Szabo and fellow volunteers to highlight the unique microclimate of the bog, was cleverly keyed to numbered metal tags at numerous reference points along the trail. I remember being particularly struck by a stop called “The Hugging Trees,” an oak and hemlock wrapped around each other in woodland embrace. My first impulse was “how did I not know about this place till now” and my second was to bring my science students to the Bog and share this unique setting with them. Thus began a deepening personal partnership with the FLTC that is now in its third decade, a partnership that I hope will fulfill its ultimate purpose by inspiring others to share their time and talents with the organization in perpetuity.

Soon after my initial visit to Huckleberry Bog, I sent the first of many emails to Irene, whom I knew only as “treeweenie,” to see if it would be possible for my AP Biology students to update her wonderful guidebooks by adding computer generated mini-maps throughout and edit various stops to reflect current conditions. She was all-in and eager to guide us through the process. Pleased with the results, my students then built new trail registers to house the booklets at each end of the loop. Our first edition came out in 2000, with additional updated versions in 2005 and 2010.

Around the time of our trail guide project, the Garrisons had rebuilt the Evangeline shelter. It was a grand log structure and I was captivated by the thought of helping build one myself. I was able to procure a copy of the fabulous construction manual Ken Reek had created for FLT Log Lean-tos and studied every



Beales Pond

Rob Hughes

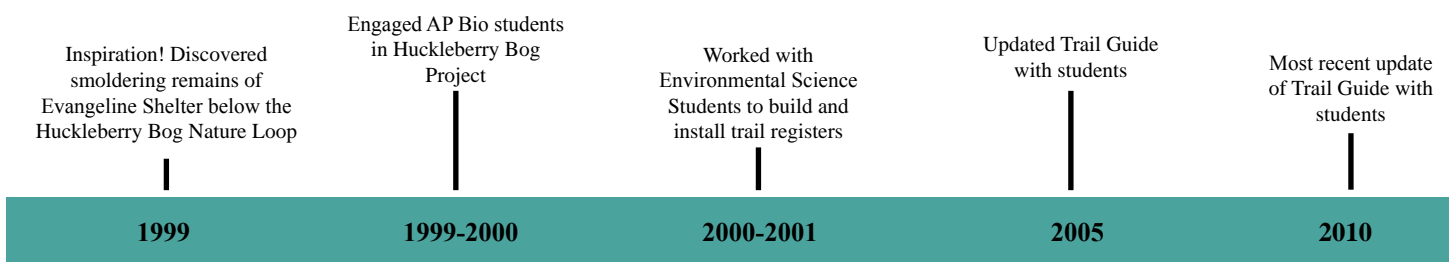
detail. Although the traditional log lean-to is iconic, I thought it might be a nice challenge to design a timber framed lean-to shelter that could be transported in pieces to remote sites more easily and installed in just a few days. I met with a handful of FLTC dignitaries to discuss the potential and all agreed it was worth a try.

I cut the first such frame in 2011 and worked with Matt Branneman and other Alley Cat Crew members to raise the Beals Pond Shelter that summer. Although I don’t remember all the names of that particular crew, I was clearly inspired by the comradery of those wonderful folks and the joyful feeling of contributing to the cause. I was hooked, and have since continued to modify the design over the years through five such shelters (Beals Pond (2011), Muller (2015), Finger Lakes Museum (2016), Little Rock City (2019),



Finger Lakes Museum

Rob Hughes



and Kanakada (2020). I have even been able to conscript students to help with several of these frames and I believe they are better citizens for having been involved in the service of others. The most recent shelter is perhaps the most graceful of all and I look forward to building more as the need arises. If I had one wish, I would love to be a fly on the wall when the first hiker spends the night in each of these lean-tos. I always imagine someone at the end of a long day, footsore and tired, happening upon a lovely shelter not to be found on even the most recent map. Our Little Rock City crew was able to raise that lean-to in a single day and I fanaticized about an out and back hiker passing the empty site at sunrise and wondering how the lean-to magically appeared on their return to their car.



Rob Hughes



Rob Hughes

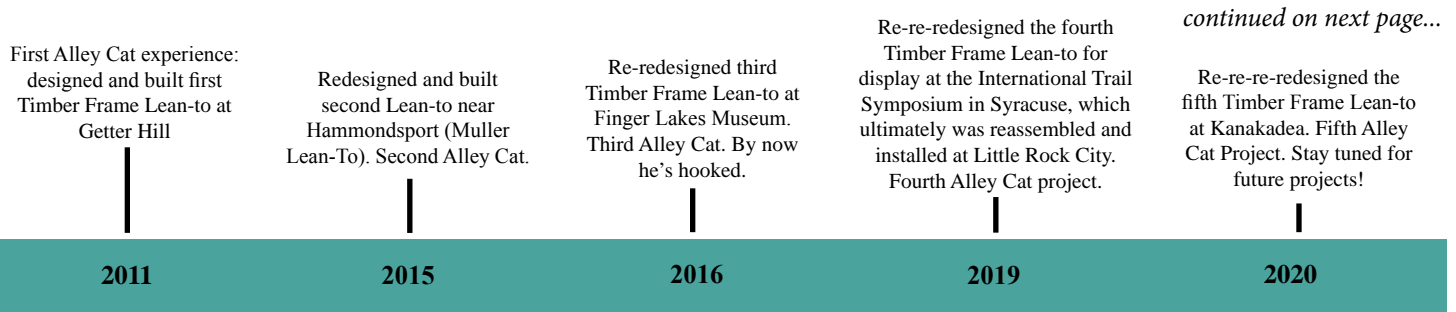
Looking back, it's interesting to trace the progression of personal inspiration that has kept me coming back and wanting to continue to refine each new shelter. Truthfully, it has really been an accumulation of FLTC personalities I've met along the way who have taught me the

value of service to something bigger than self. Although the jury is likely still out, I hope to have done my part to honor that legacy and perhaps inspire others to get involved and give back through volunteerism. Our membership is made of people with extraordinary talents and spirit and there are always opportunities for new volunteers so I urge you to consider how your skillset might lend itself to benefit our organization. For me it all started with an email to someone called "treeweenie." 🍁



Christy Post

Working on an Alley Cat project is a magical experience. The crew represents a wide array of talents and experience from absolute beginners to seasoned veterans and the food is both amazing and plentiful. It takes considerable planning and behind the scenes effort to organize a crew, plan meals, order materials, arrange for permission to locate each shelter, flagging new trail, digging holes for pit privies, and arranging for camping near the site. I always see familiar faces (Matt Branneman, Quinn Wright, Kenny Fellers, Roger Hopkins, Mike Ogden, Jacqui Wensich, Mike Schlicht, Mike Tenkate, etc) as well as friendly newbies who quickly fall under the spell. We all walk away feeling fulfilled and lucky to have spent several days in the company of this unique subculture of jovial friends old and new. Despite the labor, the experience feels more like a vacation, a sensation I have been unable to replicate elsewhere. It begins as a desire to be more involved and after a few projects you discover that a yearly Alley Cat experience has become oddly necessary for your own sanity, particularly in these grim times.



continued on next page...

We asked Rob Hughes to write something about how he became connected with the FLT and why he continues to give and to volunteer with us. He titled his piece. “Inspiration is where you find it.” We find it in Rob Hughes.

Rob is a teacher. It’s what he does for a living, and we think he must be really, really good at it. Rob has involved his students in projects on the FLT dating back to his very first project at Huckleberry Bog on Map B3, and has naturally stepped into a teacher role in every Alley Cat project he has done.

Mike Ogden has served as Project Manager or Construction Manager on a number of projects with Rob over the last few years. “As he’s building he’s teaching the crew how to put it together, and he’s teaching all of us these really cool traditions of Timber Frame Construction. That’s my favorite part,” Mike says. Describing his first project with Rob, Mike said he and the other “official” FLT project manager just stepped to the side and watched it go up, in total awe of how easy it was and how beautiful it was, and trusting completely in Rob’s ability to lead and instruct the crew. “It is always a pleasure to work with Rob. He is very generous in showing the work crew the skills and traditions and I admire him so much for keeping these alive in the modern world. We’re lucky to have Rob sharing this amazing gift with us.”

Rob has now designed and built five timber frame lean-tos on or near the Finger Lakes Trail. Each time, he has redesigned the structure, making it just a little more perfect. We don’t know the time it takes for him to do this, but we do know that he spends about 80 hours to cut and prep the timber before he even gets to the worksite—and then he spends 2-3 days working with the Alley Cat crews to actually construct the thing – sometimes camping with the crew, eating with the crew, getting to know them, and sharing his immense knowledge and passion with them, too. If you have the chance to be a part of an Alley Cat project with Rob, we highly recommend it. You will learn a lot and be a part of making a lasting contribution to the trail.

It’s easy for a lot of people to conceptualize a \$10,000 gift to an organization. It’s \$10,000 and we all recognize that is a huge amount of money. It’s less easy to conceptualize the value of what Rob gives to the FLT. It is not a stretch at all to say that he has given well over \$10,000 in time and talent...that he probably gives well over \$10,000 in time and talent EACH YEAR. We can’t put a dollar amount on it, but we can express our gratitude. Thank you Rob, for all that you give to the Finger Lakes Trail, and for all that you are as a person. We are lucky to have you involved! 🍁

Christy Post

#485 Neil Yoder, Painted Post



Growing up in southwestern Pennsylvania, I was unfamiliar with the Finger Lakes Trail until I moved to Watson Homestead Retreat Center outside Corning in 2001. It was a couple years later when we added a hiking program to our Elderhostel or Road Scholar programs and I began leading groups out and about on sections of the Finger Lakes Trail, that I really fell in love with the trail itself. Since that time, I’ve stood up in front of probably 1000 people from all over the country and recited history and facts about the FLT, I’ve led hikes on the trail, and was even briefly on the FLT board, but I really didn’t get the magnitude or grandness of this nearly 600-mile footpath until I section hiked the entire main trail this year. I began in January close to home, having friends drop me off at an access point and I would hike back to my car at another access point. As the distance from home grew, I planned to utilize car spotters to help along the way, but the coronavirus quickly put an end to that. I then would park my car and hike out and back, basically doing the trail twice, which slowed my pace. Luckily the weather broke and moving forward, I would take my bike, park at one access point, bike to another and hike back. I found this much more enjoyable than repeating the same trail sections. Throughout the whole process I hiked by myself, except for one 18-mile day at the beginning of March, which gave me



Neil Yoder, selfie

plenty of opportunities to think, reflect, learn, and discover. I was always excited to see new sights each time out, and hiking in three seasons allowed me to watch the forest transition before my very eyes. I saw areas of the state that I probably would have never seen had it not been for hiking the trail. I am grateful I had the opportunity and ability to complete the Main Trail and I routinely say, “I can’t believe how far our legs and bodies can take us in a day”. Well, mine took me almost 600 miles across NY State, primarily immersed in the sounds, smells, and sights of the natural world, and provided an awesome experience and lifelong memory.

As I walked, I thought about what an extraordinary vision and what a tremendous amount of effort it must have been for the small group who began in the 60’s. I can’t imagine what that was like.

Equally, thanks for the talent, dedication, hard work, and effort you all give in keeping that vision alive today. To think that you all are managing over 1000 miles of trails, working to secure permanency, producing maps, promoting the trail, securing funding, etc. mainly through volunteers is truly an amazing accomplishment. Thanks for your work. It was only by experiencing the trail in its entirety that I realized just how special a continuous 600-mile trail is. 🍁

Sigi's Third End-to-End #488

Sigi Schwinge



John Andersson



John Andersson

Three's the charm, they say. Well, it worked and I finished my third e2e just in time before the cold and snow. Coronavirus rearranged my plans, I had been thinking of joining the county hikes for a few more years until I reached the Genesee River and Whiskey Bridge. I had already done the county hikes in Allegany, Cattaraugus, Ulster, Delaware and Chenango Counties. First I did the road walks on maps M21, and M20, then I finished M19 with my regular hiking buddies.

From Tompkins County and M18 to M7 at Whiskey Bridge, David Sadler was my hiking teammate with second car. Peter Knauerhase, Theresa and Jay, and a few others accompanied us a few times. We just went on the road almost every week for two, then three days on our "Quest to go West." Weather was not a problem (unlike some county hikes where you could swim) as we were still in the dry season, and picked the best days. Up I huffed and puffed, down hills I sang my German hiking songs, but not always loud. The yellow magic marker glided over my maps after each hike to show my progress, footbaths with Epsom Salt when I came home, and a massage more often than usual. We did a few more miles than necessary while finding those trail markers again, usually while talking or dodging around stuff on the ground and not looking up for markers. A few missing blazes replaced, a few blowdowns removed, or not being so tired would have helped, but we always found our way back to the trail.

Whenever we came close to a waterfall, we had to go see it: Robert H. Treman, Buttermilk Falls, and Watkins Glen State Park, but they were not roaring as usual. I can really recommend a side trip from Watkins Glen to Montour Falls which has several waterfalls; some you can see from the road, others, like Havana Glen Park with its Eagle Cliff Falls, are just a short walk away. Peter and I walked around Hammondsport and Bath (Tiffany glass windows on the church) and had some memorable meals in both. (I still dream about the eggplant parmesan with its long (cooking all day long) sauce at the Italian Bistro, eating *al fresco* at the town park in Hammondsport). I'll even hike the Bristol Hills Trail B3 again with the Huckleberry Bog this time to go to the Bistro again. Better yet, go camping as David and Peter did.

I stayed with my friend Mary, who lives near Swain just a couple of miles off the trail, the last two weekends, as when I worked on my second e2e. Horst and I visited also every time we had a FLT weekend in the area, like at the Ski Lodge in Swain.

I invited my family and everyone on the FLT egroup to join me on my last 5.6 miles on October 25. Sons Eric and Claus, granddaughter Caitlin, David, John Anderson who took lots of photos, and other hikers joined in and Mary waited at the end point to join in our celebration with bubbly and snacks.

.....just wished Horst could have been there. Maybe he was. 🍁

► ...overlooking Genesee River below and to the west, Sigi with her granddaughter Caitlin.

◄ Sigi finishes the last feet of her third end-to-end, where the Genesee Valley Greenway, the North Country and Finger Lakes Trails all converge on Map M7 for a peaceful level walk on an old railbed next to an even older canal prism.

Executive Director Report

Quinn Wright



Evolution and Transition

The key words of the mission of the FLTC are **build, protect, enhance and promote**

Early in 1960, perhaps earlier, Wally Wood envisioned a trail passing through the Southern Tier of New York from Allegany State Park, through the Finger Lakes Region and ending in the Catskills. He and some dedicated others undertook the task of making this vision a reality. In the period of time that the FLT was built our country's recreational and leisure options were more limited; TV was not yet a dominant leisure activity, the computer was in its infancy and there was no internet.



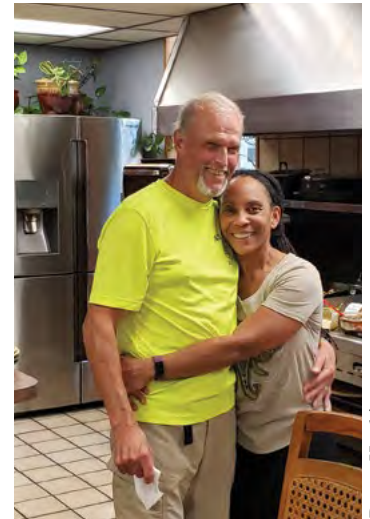
Wally Wood, Jean Doren, and Lawrence Grinnel, very early trail builders and leaders, during the 1960s. Photographer unknown.

By 1987 the Finger Lakes Trail was complete! What an amazing accomplishment. Building the trail was the single focus of the organization. There was cause for celebration and for several years the reason for the celebration resonated throughout the trail-using community. Over time the original builders moved on and were replaced by maintainers of the existing trail. This era essentially concluded the “**BUILD**” part of the mission.

The organization was beginning to evolve as it moved into the “**ENHANCE**” era in which it improved and maintained the trail. New leadership was always found, but one of the key people was David Marsh. Under his tenure as President the FLTC evolved and transitioned from a fully volunteer organization to adopting a more professional business model and the organization decided that it needed an Executive Director. Gene Bavis was hired in a part-time capacity to oversee the office staff and begin to market the trail. Under Gene's watch the organization began

recording membership and maintenance data in Filemaker which was an early data management program.

At the same time Howard Beye, a carryover from before David became President, continued as the excellent manager of the trail maintenance system. When Howard Beye died suddenly in 2007 the FLTC was ill-prepared to replace him. Management of the FLT evolved into five distinct functional areas: Maintenance, Quality, Trail Preservation, Crews and Construction, and Mapping. This structure has worked very well for quite a while; however, more recently, as people age out or move on it has become increasingly difficult to find replacements.



Quinn and Jewell

Roger Hopkins

In 2010 Pat Monahan became President and has been effectively guiding the FLTC during very challenging transitional times from both a societal perspective and an FLTC management perspective. In my time it has become increasingly clear that the Filemaker database became problematic from a marketing perspective, and that the old paper file system used to manage the trail maintenance system became very cumbersome. Several key strategic decisions were made by several brave and forward-thinking Boards of Directors.

1. When Gene retired, the Board determined that a full-time Executive Director was necessary and I was hired in 2015.
2. In 2017 the Board decided that the database needed to become more functional in support of marketing and trail management. After two years of evaluation and work we determined that Filemaker did not have that capability.
3. In 2018 the Board undertook the effort of developing a 7-year strategic plan complete with Financial Sustainability Plans (FSP).
4. In 2019 two key Board decisions occurred:
 - a. First the FLTC would pay for a custom designed database that would serve the needs of marketing and of trails. There are no available programs which could have been purchased to address these complex and specific needs. The Board decided the high expense required to upgrade our management tools was justifi-

fied. That project is on-going and has been an expensive proposition.

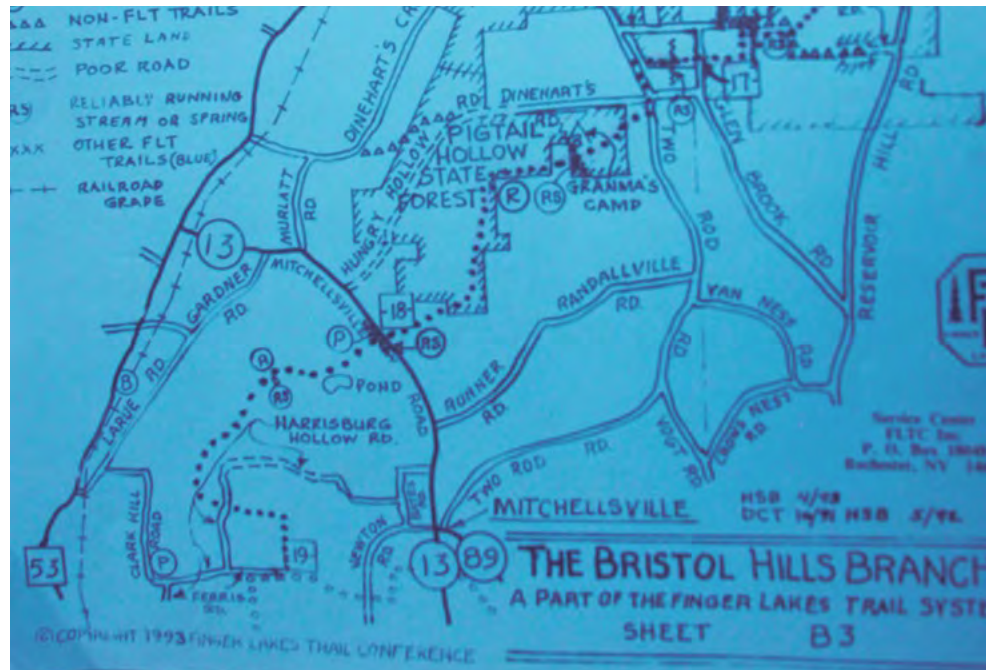
- b. Second, the Board adopted the FSP with the intent to hire a Director of Marketing and Communications. Christy Post was hired and began work on January 1, 2020. This year has been very trying because of the coronavirus and Christy will report on her efforts in other communications. So 2020 has seen the FLTC evolve once again and transition into an era in which it focuses on the **PROMOTE** part of the mission of the Finger Lakes Trail, with staff and resources dedicated to elevating the profile of the trail across the state to attract new members, donors and volunteers.

In addition to the influence of the coronavirus, the Board currently has the challenge of addressing my retirement in the near future, though I am sure that even with my departure, the organization will continue to be strong. It is apparent that the evolution and transition of managing the FLTC has been exponential over the last 10 years and I feel privileged to have been a part of that time. I have greatly enjoyed my experience with the Finger Lakes Trail for many years, both as a trails volunteer, Director of Crews and Construction, Treasurer, and finally as Executive Director. The FLTC could not have been such a success for 58 years without the outstanding parade of exceptional Board members and Trail Management people. The current Trail Management team led by Jon Bowen, Lynda Rummel, Dave Newman, Mike Schlicht, and Greg Farnham (just recently replaced by Jo Taylor), and Roger Hopkins have magnificently filled the enormous shoes of Wally Wood and his successors. They will be able to mentor whoever replaces them whenever each decides to step down and I am certain the FLT will remain the hiking trail jewel that it is.

I wonder if when I look back in ten years how the FLTC will have evolved once again? Just think how the organization has evolved:

1. From a line on the map the FLT has evolved from a concept to a reality.
2. From hand drawn black lines on blue paper maps to printed in color maps on waterproof paper, to accessing the map online on a cell phone.
3. From an office at Wally's desk, to an office in Howard's basement, to an office building donated by the Army Corps of Engineers

4. From communication through a hand printed newsletter to a color professionally edited and printed magazine and a website
5. From a Board of Managers to a Board with paid staff
6. From a part-time Executive Director to a Full time Executive Director
7. From paper records to a custom designed database
8. From a trail-building organization to a trail-building and trail-promoting organization
9. And now **PROTECTING** the trail is an ongoing overarching element of the mission no matter how it evolves or transitions.



A corner of an old blue paper map, from times past...

At the heart of this lengthy history of success are the many members and donors who have trusted the management of the organization over these many years as it has evolved and transitioned from each successive management model. I have every confidence that with the continued commitment of your time, energy, and money that the Finger Lakes Trail will thrive even more impressively. In ten years the FLTC will have evolved and transitioned yet again, and the question to be answered is “In what ways?”🍁

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A Few Days Spent on the Finger Lakes Trail

Story and Photos by John Rolfe



September 14-18 2020

Day 1

I had arranged with my next-door neighbor (thanks, Gail!) to have her drop me off on her way to work at the FLT trailhead nearest to our homes in Freeville (Tompkins County); this turns out to be the intersection of State Rte 38 and Star Stanton Hill Rd.

So it was that in the early pre-dawn gloom on Monday I found myself with pack in hand and a handful of chocolate chip cookies that Gail had baked for me the night before (thanks again, Gail!) on Star Stanton Hill Rd, watching the taillights of Gail's Jeep recede in the distance.

I will admit that for a second I asked myself what I thought I was getting myself into. Then I reminded myself that just a few minutes before, Gail's husband had commented to me as we climbed into our respective vehicles that he wished he was me, able to go off for a few days and do what I was doing. I said to myself, "well, I am me, so let's get going." So on went the pack, and up the hill we started.

I'll just point out now that during this trek I seemed to start every day by having to go up a hill. And often not just any hill, but the biggest hill in the immediate area.

I'll also point out that Tompkins County seems to like its bigger hills. A whole lot.

When I was getting ready for this trip, I asked Nancy H. what app she used in her phone to keep track of her daily walks. Based on her recommendation I had downloaded "Map My Walk," and I now had that app running as I climbed Star Stanton Hill Rd towards Hammond Hill State Forest. The Map My Walk app and I came to have a love hate relationship over the course of the week. The app verbally announces each completed mile, and after multiple miles it announces split times per mile, total time, total miles, and it seemed to take pleasure in announcing that I wasn't walking at all (even when I was). The program would audibly argue with itself about whether it was working or not. At one point the first day after several hours of not seeing another person, the voice of the app making a mileage announcement was enough to make me jump in my shoes.

That first morning I was extremely disappointed when the Walk app announced that it had taken me a whole hour to travel the first mile up the hill. I had expected that I could set a pace somewhat faster than that.

Fairly soon I found myself cresting the hill and walking the familiar Hammond Hill red and yellow trails that share the FLT for a short time. The sun seemed to break through for a bit, but I also got a good amount of wind on the hilltop. As I left the crest and descended on the other side of Hammond Hill, the gloom returned.

Around 11 AM I crossed Harford Rd., and the sun finally seemed to break free of its cloud cover and stay out. It never seemed to achieve the status of a "warm day" on Monday, however, always on the "crisp" side.

Around noon I reached the Kimmee Shelter area in the Robinson Hollow State Forest. On the FLT maps, Kimmee is noted for having a "reliable water source." There was no running water in the creek bed, unlike my previous visits to that shelter with Lucy G. and others. This, in fact, was the extent of the water available in the streambed:



Thankfully, I had brought two separate means of filtering and purifying water, not including the longer option of boiling.

After a leisurely lunch and filling my water bladder from the water source above, I clawed my way up the hill from the shelter area to continue westward on the FLT.

Soon enough I came to the edge of Robinson Hollow State Forest, and I had to consider a problem that would nag me throughout the week. When I was planning this trip, Jack V. gave me two pieces of advice from his own FLT through-hike.

Jack said that you had to consider water availability, and having public land to camp on, versus private land which is often off limits to camping. I had brought the ability to carry more water; I couldn't create public land upon which to camp. So on the very first day, with multiple hours still available for hiking, I found myself looking at my map and estimating that if I continued forward, the next public land on which I could camp would be Potato Hill State Forest, still potentially several hours of walking ahead of me if I were to continue. If I pushed ahead that far on day one it would entail getting to Potato Hill and setting up camp in the dark, not something I was looking forward to the first day. So I set up camp on the edge of Robinson Hollow State Forest, with the intention of getting an early start towards Potato Hill in the morning.

Total mileage for day one, according to the Map app, was around 6.5 miles

I had not seen a single other person on the trail the entire day.

Day 2

I woke up, broke camp, and left Robinson Hollow SF. A short road walk on State Rte 79 brings you to the edge of Mallow Marsh, which until recently was flooded due to beaver activity. Thanks to the efforts of Cayuga Trails Club's Dave Priester, that's no longer the case.

Beyond Mallow Marsh lies a hill. I don't care what the US Geological Survey people have as the official name for that hill; I have my own name for it. I call it the Hesse Hill from Hell. You see, the first time I climbed this hill with the group, the hill went up. And up. Up. Up. The gazelles of the hiking group seemed to run ahead, the leaders eventually returning to the rest of us laboring up the hill to announce that there was a wonderful view at the top, and we could turn around now and return to our cars. I never did get to the top of the hill that day.

So on day 2 I found myself starting up from the marsh, recalling that earlier experience. The first tenth of a mile or so seemed fairly level, so I began to question the accuracy of my own memory. Then the real grades started to appear, and I realized that my memory hadn't been wrong after all.

After a couple of hours of climbing I broke out onto the meadows that form the recent re-route of the trail in the Blackman Hill area. I quickly crossed the crest of Blackman Hill. Once past Level Green Rd. I encountered the first water source since Kimmee shelter:



This was perfect timing, as I was down to the last few sips of water. Perfect spot for lunch and to refill my Camelbak. As you can see, there was a little more water in the stream this time. Standing water, but still, it was water.

I continued westerly towards 76 Rd.



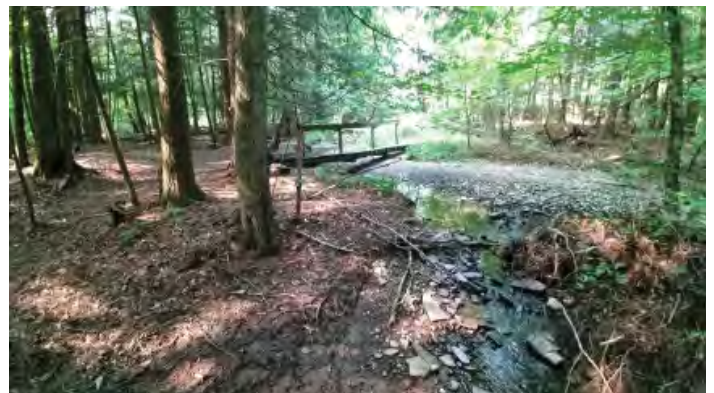
After crossing over 76 Rd, I had my one and only bee encounter of the entire trip.

Throughout the trip as I would come upon an area where I knew the hiking group members had reported recent bee activity, I would be concerned. It turned out that at none of those places did I encounter bees.

But here I suddenly heard that familiar thrummmmm. I stopped, looked around, and realized that I was literally standing next to the quintessential Berenstain Bears Bee Tree. In case you didn't read that book series as a child, you missed a true literary classic. As I stood there and watched, the winged demons from hell started to depart from the tree. I didn't stick around. I didn't bother taking any pictures for posterity.

I managed to escape, unscathed.

Shortly thereafter I came upon Boyer Creek. This creek was the first water source I had encountered on my hike that had actual running water:



I was soon climbing the hill towards South Rd.

It was here, close to the end of day two, that I encountered my first person on the trail, a man running with his dog from the direction of South Rd.

I crossed South Rd, intending to spend the night at the Shindagin Shelter. I'd never approached the shelter from this direction.

It was well into dusk and I was in the hollow expecting to see the shelter any second, when I suddenly realized that I was going uphill and away from the water. I retraced my steps to find the shelter. Somehow in the darkness I'd missed the side trail to the shelter. Because I was concerned about water I chose to sleep in the near-by bivouac area, which was situated closer to the stream. The privy, on the other hand, was a welcome accommodation, not to mention, a real picnic table to sit at and eat. Total miles for the day was 10.76.

Day 3

I climbed up and out of Shindagin.

I had lunch at the bivouac site just east of Braley Hill Rd. with more "barely running" water in the stream.

I crossed Braley Hill Rd. and had another human encounter, a woman running her dog.

As I continued westerly, I came down across White Church Rd. and through the area the hikers had recently pruned back. Good job, all of you, from a hiker who appreciated the cleared path ;) I stopped at the Ridgeway Rd. parking area and ate at the picnic table where we usually park when doing group hikes. I had a dilemma. I had seen no water that was useable in some time. The duck pond water had a green slime on it so thick that I knew it would clog my filters immediately. I knew there would be no water on top of Eastman Hill, and no place to camp before the DEC land on Eastman Hill either. So, I put out a call for help to Cian, who lives nearby. Cian picked me up, took me to his place, gave me water and a place to pitch my tent for the night. Thanks again, Cian.

Per the phone app, 6.5 miles completed. Not great, and a lot of hiking hours lost.

Day 4

Cian dropped me off at the base of Eastman Hill. Many of you know just how much I dislike this particular hill as the trail worms its way up the hill. I got up and over Eastman Hill, and road-walked Heisey Rd to State Rte 96B. A short road-walk up 96B puts you at the base of whatever the next hill is.

I sat at the Tamarack shelter and started to plan out the rest of the week. It was clear that I wasn't making the miles I had thought I would. I doubted that I would even make it out of the county in the remaining days I had planned to hike, let alone most or all of the way to Watkins. So I started making alternate plans about where to end the hike, and where to get picked up and by whom. I now planned on hiking two more days, and having Katharine pick me up at Layen Rd at the end of Saturday.

As I sat at the shelter, a group of four backpackers arrived from the other direction, two father and adult sons from Rochester who were nearing the end of their own multi-day backpacking section hike of the FLT. We were all somewhat worried about the forecast of rain, which eventually did materialize in the form of minor precipitation.

It turned out that one of the dads had helped to build that particular shelter ten years ago, so it was interesting hearing some of the stories he had to tell.

All of us chose to stay at the shelter for the night.

Mileage for the day was around 6 miles. I forgot to log the exact mileage by the time we all decided to spend the night at the shelter.

Day 5

Everyone took his time getting up and around, packing up and saying our good-byes.

My plan at this point was to walk the few miles to the Chestnut Lean-to, spend the night there, and then hike Saturday to the corner of Townline and Layen Rd where Katharine would pick me up. It would have been a full six days of hiking by that point. Had I tried to attempt to continue past Layen Rd., I believe that I wouldn't have made the next available public camping area in R.H. Treman State Park within a single hiking day. So once again, the lack of available camping areas really dictated where I could plan to stop for a day, or even to end the hike.


I arrived at the Chestnut Lean-to to find it deserted. I laid out my stuff to prepare for the night.

Unfortunately, that didn't work out. The lead element of one group of partiers from Binghamton arrived at the shelter. The guy basically walked up, threw a load of wood down, threw down an uninflated sleeping mat in the shelter and started asking distances to various places down trail. When I asked what his hiking pace was, he said that depended on how much he had to drink the night before. That's when he popped the top on his first can. After a bit more conversation with the advance element guy, I had the small voice in my head saying that I needed to get out of there as soon as possible. I managed to get in touch with Nancy L. to get me a ride from the road, re-packed my gear and literally bushwhacked my way to the road. Standing by the road waiting for my ride yet another group of partiers loaded down with party supplies started down the trail; they were unassociated with the first group (I asked), and so I warned them that these other guys were already staking out the shelter for themselves.

Normally I don't care if people want to have a good time. But now it was clear that this particular shelter so close to the road turns into a not-so-backcountry party place on weekends; it was more than I wanted to deal with. This will be something I should take into consideration when planning for any future section hikes.

Total miles for the day was around 4.

So that's it folks. Seven or eight days as originally planned, that shrank to 6 and then to 5.

I hope that all of this verbiage can help any of you who may want to consider a similar effort of your own in the future. 

Mercedes Springs and International Mine

Alex Gonzalez



Gorgeous Moss and a Mine

This hike follows the route of the orange-blazed Spanish Loop Trail east of Ithaca, south of Cortland (map SpL) and takes hikers first to the beautiful area known as Mercedes Springs and then, by following the main Finger Lakes Trail, to the very old and long-closed International Mine.

The shortest way to reach these interesting places is to park at the small roadside parking area on Owego Hill Road, about two-tenths of a mile from the junction of Owego Hill Road and Adams Hill Road. From there, one will hike gently downhill through an attractive tamarack forest until one reaches the very scenic Enrique Creek at 0.3 miles. After the creek is crossed, the trail follows alongside the creek among large white pines for another 0.2 miles and enters a lovely, mossy area known as Mercedes Springs. The largest spring, which is semivertical, is attractive enough that the state has permitted the installation of two Adirondack chairs for hikers who would like to linger and admire the flowing water that mixes in with the thick moss, creating a beautiful sight of dappled green and white. This effect is greatest in the spring and early summer, since late summer brings a quick growth of small plants that act to obscure the moss, and, of course, the flow of water is then usually considerably less.



Michele Gonzalez

The Tamarack trees in this state forest are especially lovely at this time of year, when all of their short needles turn gold. The Tamarack is an odd coniferous tree whose needles don't stay green, but turn gold before eventually dropping, resulting in lovely orange patches of forest.

seasonal stream, then swings gently uphill on an old logging skid road, passing an old home foundation and entering a stretch of white pines. At 1.5 miles the trail reaches the main Finger Lakes Trail and a trail register. Please sign the register.

Turn right, following white blazes now and heading toward the International Mine. In one-tenth of a mile, look for a white blaze that uniquely has a red square painted into the middle of it. Look to the left to find the rounded remains of the mine's waste rock, most of which is covered by forest debris. A small cairn also helps to identify the spot. To reach the mine opening, hikers must scramble off trail a very short distance uphill; the mine's main shaft was filled in a very long time ago, probably for safety reasons, so the mine area is totally safe to explore. Those who have hiked to any of the many ancient iron mines downstate will easily recognize this mine's location. No one seems to know what was ever mined here, but someone went to an awful lot of trouble to extract something, especially given the site's remoteness near the top of Owego Hill! A local historian has noted that long ago, gold was mined as far north as Binghamton, N.Y., so gold is a slim possibility. To complete the hike, hikers should hike out the same way they came in for a grand total of 3.2 miles.



Michele Gonzalez

Mercedes Springs at a milder time of year.

Other possibilities exist for reaching the mine. One could, for example, hike the International Loop (map InL), which yields a hike of 7.2 miles, or one could hike the entire Spanish Loop Trail and along the way take a quick out-and-back to the mine for a total of 6.3 miles, or one could hike the whole Swedish Loop Trail (map SwL), which would yield a total of 5.2 miles. Hikers have quite an array of choices for how to get to the International Mine, but only the Spanish Loop Trail and the International Loop go past Mercedes Springs. Bring a camera!

DISTANCE: 3.2 miles

HIKING TIME: Two hours, including time spent at Mercedes Springs and at the International Mine.

DIFFICULTY: Moderate, including two climbs, neither of which is very long.

ACCESS: From the southern end of Owego Hill Road. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO DRIVE OWEGO HILL ROAD FROM ITS NORTHERN END, AS THE ROAD IS TOO ROUGH FROM THERE. INSTEAD, APPROACH OWEGO HILL ROAD FROM ITS SOUTHERN JUNCTION WITH ADAMS HILL ROAD; THAT APPROACH GETS YOU TO THE PARKING SPOT ON A GOOD-GRAVEL SECTION OF OWEGO HILL ROAD.** 🍁

A Naturalist's View

Story and Photos by D. Randy Weidner



Through most of its length, our Finger Lakes Trail traverses woodland. Although now quite expansive, we should realize much of this is a second or even third growth forest, grown up from land originally cleared as a timber resource or for farming by European colonists. How often before that the forest may have been cut or burned by aboriginal people is unknown. But given that history, and the expanse of woodland now present in the Finger Lakes region of New York State, you would have to conclude these trees are rather resilient organisms.

Hiking the trail, especially in winter, when tree trunks stand starkly against a snowy backdrop, it is easy to just take these trees for granted. No longer do they provide sheltering shade as in summer. Gone are the beautiful colored leaves of autumn, and limbs and branches do not yet bear opening buds that attract insects and birds. You walk past thousands of trees, the dominant primary producers of this ecosystem, and hardly notice them. Surely you would notice passing that many hikers. But that is the point. We Finger Lakes Trail hikers are mobile beings. Our lifestyle is remarkably different from that of the trees, stuck in one place for a lifetime.

And what a long lifetime it might be. Probably the majority of trees we pass would be senior citizens on our time scale, but certainly not on theirs. Owing to the way they grow, as each year passes, a tree adds a little bit more to itself in mass. Each year, through cell division in the cambium layer, a little more biomass is added to trunks and limbs on top of that which existed before. A handy visualization of the process is the stacking of highway cones, one over another, repeatedly. In favorable years, more tissue is added than in difficult years. This growth pattern readily explains why limbs remain at the same height above the ground year after year, and why when a limb or tree trunk is cut transversely, there are growth rings. The new-growing tissue, when mature, becomes rigid, modular tubules of the tree's vascular system. This growth and maturation as vascular structures proceeds annually without our even taking much notice.

But living rooted in one place for many seasons, every tree will likely be subject to some kind of assault. Physical damage to trunks and branches is common from strong winds and ice. Other insults may be man-made, or due to the actions of other falling trees or gnawing animals. Any of these instigating factors could produce a wound in a tree trunk or limb. Such a wound presents a threat to the tree if it denudes the protective bark and exposes the cambium, because then there is a possibility of invasive bacteria and fungi entering the tree and attacking it from within, resulting in illness, decay, loss of limbs, or even death.

Not surprisingly, trees have evolved mechanisms to deal with these insults. Trees heal their wounds in a two-step process, but one quite different from what you might expect. If you are familiar with how animals heal a wound, by replacing the damaged tissue with a reconstruction of what was injured, and some degree of additional "scar" tissue, forget about that process as applicable to trees. First, trees rapidly produce a reactive zone which chemically alters the exposed area, making it inhospitable for potentially invasive bacteria and fungi. Secondly, because tree growth only proceeds by cambium cell division and maturation into potential



Callus is smooth growth flanking a lost limb.



Note the smooth edge of callus on a tree trunk damaged by a dozer.



A large burl on a Black Cherry trunk.



A huge wound, not fully closed, but supported well enough by callus to allow continued growth.

vascular tubules, the tree cannot restore tissue as it was, but must depend on overgrowing the defect, compartmentalizing and ultimately sealing the wound over several seasons of growth. These areas of trunk or branch repair are referred to as “callus” or “wound wood.” This callus growth, unimpeded by external bark, grows freely into elongated rolls of wood, which can be seen on healing trees.

Another interesting abnormal growth on trees is a “burl.” This uniquely American term means the same as “burr” in other English-speaking regions. Burls are hard, rounded, deformed outgrowths on a tree trunk or branch. Burls also occur on tree roots but are only discovered upon uprooting the tree. Burls can occur on a variety of hardwood and conifer trees, sometimes reaching massive proportions. The origin of burls is a bit mysterious. Often a physical insult, a virus, or a fungus, is thought to initiate the growth of a burl, which may well occur in a developing bud, and actually be some sort of tumorous growth. Yet no infectious agent can be found in a burl, and attempts to create burls artificially have been unsuccessful. Tree genetics might well be an important factor. Generally, the presence of a burl does not affect the vigor of a tree, and may be yet another testimony to the hardiness of trees.



Heavy in-rolled callus flanking both sides and nearly closing a large tree wound.

Large burls can be valuable as *objects d’arte*. Woodworkers using a lathe are fond of turning decorative wooden bowls from burls. Typically, the edge of such a bowl is irregular, but the beauty lies in the exquisite pattern of the wood grain that has developed inside the burl. The burl wood, with its eyed grain and swirling patterns, is somewhat fragile and requires expertise to turn neatly. For this reason, burls are in demand, and trees are sometimes poached by unscrupulous woodworkers, just to get the burl. Almost any craft show featuring a woodworker will have some burl bowls for sale. European emperors and kings had prized burl-wood furniture, and there has been a market for burl wood veneer at times. Burl wood from France was once thought to have introduced the Dutch Elm Disease fungus (*Ceratocystis ulmi*) to North America, ultimately nearly eradicating our American elms.

It is easier to see individual tree trunks while hiking along the Trail in winter. Keep a sharp eye out for burls, calluses, and other features on our magnificent and resilient trees. While I am usually in favor of considering the big picture, seeing the “forest for the trees,” sometimes it is necessary to focus more on individuals. This too will increase your appreciation of the natural world. 🍁



An multi-lobed burl six feet up a Red Oak.



Send **address changes** to
 Finger Lakes Trail Conference
 6111 Visitor Center Rd.
 Mt. Morris, NY 14510
 or FLTinfo@FingerLakesTrail.org

End-to-End Update

Jacqui Wensich, End-to-End Coordinator



Main Trail:

- #482 Kimery Levering: continuous hiked two days to eastern terminus from her home in Poughkeepsie and hiked two days from the western terminus to Erie (This is a first.)
- #483 David DeVito, Ithaca
- #484 Tina Utter, Mt. Upton
- #485 Neil Yoder, Painted Post
- #486 Tom Markel, Arkport
- #487 Grant C. Seaman, Canistota
- #488 Sigi Schwinge 3rd (#392, #230)
- #489 Jon Bowen 2nd (#352)

Branch Trail:

- #128 Jeffrey Sargent (#409) Lafayette
- #129 Wendy Stevenson (#328), Springwater
- #130 (2nd) (#103) Joe Baldino (#405) Rochester

Updates:

You can follow other main trail hikers on www.facebook.com/FingerLakesTrailGroup. Max Wallace continues his main trail hike. Mathew Nuesell, SUNY Cortland, has returned to his main trail hike this fall. David Sadler is progressing on his hike after assisting Sigi Schwinge. Sarah Stackhouse and Barb Bailey are closing in on their main trail hike while Jennifer Yates is at the beginning of her hike this fall. Amy and Dan Lopada are over 300 miles completed on their main trail quest. Follow them on www.facebook.com/groups/FingerLakesTrailGroup for wonderful and interesting photos.

Comments

Remember to keep trail notes when you hike. I used to jot down stuff on my maps either while on a break or right after hiking. Photos also help. If you are logging many miles, they can blend together. Why keep notes? Your main/branch trail end to end article is highly prized by readers and other hikers for information and perspective. It can be a few hundred words or a thousand or so. A high-resolution photo is also needed.

Here is another reason for Informing me about your plans to finish your main or branch trail hikes and letting me know ASAP when you do. Sigi Schwinge completed her 3rd at 12:30 and Jon Bowen completed his 2nd at 1:55 both on October 25, 2020. (Ed rests easier when the numbers work out correctly.)

Car Spotter News

Unfortunately, one of our best spotters in an isolated area has asked to be taken off the list. "I've given lots of rides over the years, but as of late I am finding that people who ask for rides are becoming more inconsiderate and sometimes demanding and in a few cases have unreasonable expectations." VERY SAD.

On a brighter note, Jeffrey Sargent wants to thank Jeanne Moog and Wendy and Jim Palys for their assistance on the Conservation Trail. Peg Fuller has been busy car spotting. She assisted Amy

and Dan Lopada for two days and rescued several other gentlemen after a phone call from a lady walking her dog. There was no cell service which makes things more difficult for stranded hikers. Peg took the hikers back to their car which was two days away and convinced them to stay overnight at the Perkins Shelter.

The car spotter list changes. Have your map in hand when you call to make arrangements. Offer to pay for gas after your ride. Take the spotters' photo so we can recognize them in the magazine.

To repeat:

THERE ARE NO SHUTTLES ON THE FLT. I have had several requests for long distance rides. Our car spotter list is for short distances. Long rides are up to the hiker to arrange. Joining the list serve is usually helpful for local information and assistance. We need more car spotters for the Branch Trails and **M1-5, M27-34**. Please consider signing on as a car spotter. Just email me at jwensich@rochester.rr.com for the application. You are a vital part of hiking our trails.

TIPS for aspiring end-to-enders:

1. Review the End-to-End Hiking section on the FLT website.
2. Join the FLT egroup, hiking@fingerlakestrail.org (often find more spotters and specific location hints.)
3. Purchase new MAPS (remember FLT members receive a 20% discount for all purchases). Waypoints are also available.
4. Check trail conditions online frequently.
5. If you are not already a member, join the FLTC. Membership supports this wonderful trail.
6. Let me know about when you plan to complete the main/branch trails to receive the correct number.
7. Email captioned photos in high resolution as you hike and keep trail notes, so you can write your end-to-end article. 🍁



#487 Grant Seaman, Canistota, with his grandsons, on Slide Mountain.

Contact: Jacqui Wensich
jwensich@rochester.rr.com
585/385-2265

#37 REMINISCES

Dear Jacqui,

Your updates on people's end-to-end adventures are something I look forward to every quarter. For me, it brings back many wonderful memories. The best of these is of a hike across Tompkins County when we came to the end of the last hike, and I finally got up the nerve to ask an elderly, but in great shape man, what the patch on his pack was about.

Ed Sidote told me in no uncertain terms that it was a patch that one earned by walking the trail end to end. He told me he did it at his age. "Do you think you could do it at yours?" With his challenge, I was on my way. Two years later, after many wonderful section hikes and some backpacking, I collected my patch at the end of the journey in the Catskills from my closest friends who had accompanied me along the way.

A typical hike was 8-12 miles and I reported my progress to my father each time I finished. He died shortly before I completed the hike, but the memories of my brief discussions with him are ones I return to many times.

So potential end to enders, take the time to enjoy your hike and establish friendships on the trail. They indeed will last a lifetime!

Mark ONeil
End-to-ender #37



#37 Mark ONeil with #81 Pat Hengstler; he had been Pat's boss in an earlier time. Pat is infamous for shouting "I can't do this!" on her very first hike with neighbor Phyllis Younghans #32. Both women are deceased.

November 22, 2020 Triad Trail

The Triad Trail was built by Hammondsport Eagle Scout candidate David Ridge about 9 years ago, under the guidance of the late Tom Noteware, Regional Trail Coordinator of the Bristol Hills Trail. Donna Noteware and some informal volunteers have maintained it since then and it has been shown on our maps as a "non-FLT" trail. Donna recommended its formal inclusion in the FLT System, the Board approved at their Nov. 21 meeting, and an assigned Sponsor other than Donna has been identified.

A challenging loop hike with plenty of elevation change can be made by climbing the June Bug Trail, going east on the FLT and descending the Triad Trail. The June Bug Trail is named for an early airplane designed and built by Glenn Curtiss in 1908, with which he won the first aeronautical prize ever awarded in the USA. The Triad Trail is named for a 1911 airplane also built by Curtiss that was the first seaplane and amphibious aircraft ever made, and the first U.S. Naval plane. After your hike consider a visit to the Glenn H. Curtiss Museum for a fascinating glimpse into aviation and motorcycle history. 🍁



Join the FLT Googlegroup E-Mail List

The Finger Lakes Trail Conference's e-mail list is a discussion group hosted by Googlegroups.com. Its purpose is to allow the subscribers (approximately 850 people) to communicate information to each other pertaining to FLT hikes and other FLT activities, and to also allow subscribers to post general hiking-camping-backpacking and/or FLT-related questions that can be answered by any of the other participants.

The co-moderators who oversee the use of this electronic mailing list and offer help with questions are: Larry Blumberg (lblumberg@stny.rr.com) and Scott Geiger, (scott.geiger@gmail.com).

To join the group, send a note to lblumberg@stny.rr.com requesting that you be added to the FLT HIKING Googlegroup. If you have any problems or questions, contact one of the co-moderators.

Volunteers are the Heroes of the FLT



Peg Fuller

As we hike along the trails many of us enjoy seeing signs. They help us to know where we are, how far we have to go, maybe a little history about a spot, or just the name of something. Over the years I have seen handmade signs, some written on cardboard even, some misspelled, some with an artist's touch, many other varieties. Larry Chesebro is a Bullthistle Hiking Club member, an FLTC trained sawyer, and trail maintainer. He takes great pride in his work and is always looking to do something to improve the trail and ensure people have a positive experience while hiking. For a few years now he has put "tick kits" together for our club to hand out to people because of the increase in ticks in our area.

He has also become our sign guy. He bought a router to make nice signs. He has not disappointed us, as you can see from the pictures. He also added bench type seating on the Bullthistle Bridge off Rt. 23 (Map 23) that is part of the bridge, a very cool design. He made another bench to put at the top of Truman Hill (Map 22).

He will do anything to help with the trail. Here are some random pictures of Larry's work. Hopefully you can see the signs while enjoying hiking in Chenango County. Do our readers know of other unsung heroes who contribute such useful and visible features along our trail? 🍁



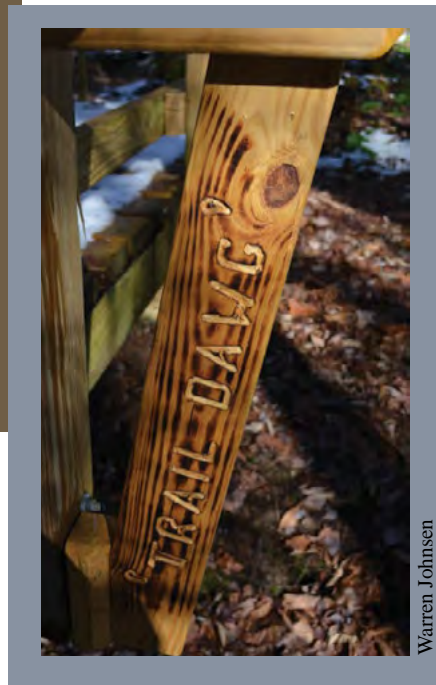
Peg Fuller



Warren Johnsen



Warren Johnsen



Warren Johnsen



Warren Johnsen

Larry Chesebro, left, and Tom Bryden, right.

Friends of Hammondsport Area Trails and Parks, Inc.

A 501 c (3) Non-profit Organization

Raffle for a framed Scott Graham Print

The raffle will be held at the Hammondsport Fire Department on Feb. 6, 2021, at 2 PM, for a limited edition of a framed print of a Scott Graham painting. The painting is a scene in the Mitchellsville Glen, right below the Finger lakes Trail, showing the beauty of the local area.



All proceeds of this raffle will go towards assisting the Town of Urbana to complete the current grant to improve the Keuka Lake waterfront. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all previous bids came in above the anticipated completion price.

This is the "Bridge and Boardwalk" grant which will connect Champlin Beach, Curtiss Park and Depot Park with an ADA compliant trail.

Tickets are available from members of "Friends", www.friendsofhammondsport.org, or at the Hammondsport of Chamber of Commerce on 47 Shelton Street across from Pulleney Park.

"Ground Hog Day"
Chicken B-B-Q
2-6-2021



Trail Topics: Trail Maintenance



Jon Bowen, VP of Trail Maintenance

The Trail Management Team has been working on the FLTC's Strategic Plan dated May 11, 2019. We have been having discussions on implementing the plan which includes 18 pages of plans for the trail, trail maintenance and other items. One of the problems identified is the lack of a succession plan.

---In the case of the VP Trail Maintenance, the position hadn't been filled in the recent past and various people have had to fill in pieces for the past few years. FLTC hasn't had many volunteers willing to step up to fill leadership positions. During the past few months we've contacted several people about filling Marty Howden's Regional Coordinator position because he wishes to retire.

We are still looking for someone to fill this position!

---Many of us are "getting older" and there doesn't appear to be many younger people willing to step into positions. Both Quinn and Lynda Rummel are talking about "retirement" and there isn't a succession plan for Lynda's position.

---We also have regions that need help. I happen to live near Syracuse and our ADK Onondaga Chapter has numerous volunteers. We have a Landowner committee which sends thank you cards through the mail and does in person visits to landowners. We have people who work on easements and reroutes. We have a "roving trail maintenance crew" which is out frequently, almost once a week. At the other end of the spectrum, some of our regions have a Regional Trail Coordinator and some maintainers but could use more help. So...

NEEDED: volunteers for a roving trail maintenance crew. No special skills needed. Type of work—Benching, weed whacking, rerouting trail, laying puncheons, etc. These will be one day events. If you are willing to help out along the trail, please contact me, jkbowen@gmail.com

Looking to the future, FLTC plans to add a paid staff position for trails per the Strategic Plan. We are currently meeting and developing a job description for this position. We hope to have the new staff person fill in some of the holes in the trails area. Maintenance items will be part of the job as well as other trail matters. Another item from the Strategic Plan was the idea of a paid roving trail maintenance crew. That idea has been put on hold. Personally, I don't think that's needed at this time. I do hope to put together a list of volunteers willing to drive to various parts of the state to help out on one day projects like benching, minor reroute clearing, weed whacking, placing puncheons etc.

Marty Howden RTC M4-6 (Franklinville area)

NEEDED: M4, Maintainer for short section of trail from Fancy Tract Road to Cobb property, about 0.6 miles

NEEDED:

A new RTC, so Marty can retire. Contact Jon Bowen, jkbowen@gmail.com or Marty Howden, howser51@yahoo.com.

Peter Wybron RTC M7-11 (Portageville, Swain, Alfred, Hornell area)

Peter reports three new trail maintainers. Michele McCall from Rochester answered the ad in the Summer issue of the FLT



Kathy Bowen

Jon's 2nd End-to-End ends at Claryville.

News and has volunteered to maintain the Robinson Blue Loop on Map M-8 in Swain. Scott Wilkerson, from Hemlock, has volunteered to help maintain through Slader Creek State Forest on Map M-9. This is one of many sections of trail that are maintained by the NYS Association of Transportation Engineers out of Hornell. Lynelle Thelen, from Livonia, is the new trail maintainer on Map M-10 Access 8 to Map M-11 Access 2. This section has been maintained by Joe Monaco for many years. Thank you, Joe, and welcome to all the new trail maintainers.

Map M-10 Update: The bridge on Webbs Crossing Rd. (CR66) has just reopened. The mapping team is working to update Maps M-9 and M-10 to reroute the trail back across the bridge. The City of Hornell Water Treatment Plant project will not be completed until 2021. So, there will be an updated route to continue to bypass this project. Stand by!

NEEDED: in the Hornell area someone who is willing to learn to use the DR Mower that is stored in the shed at Kanakadea Park. They would cover maps M-11 thru M-9. They would mow each area 2 or 3 times per year. Would need a hitch to haul the trailer or a pickup. I know of at least 7 or 8 areas (maybe more) that need mowing throughout the year, but the DR Mower is a delight to use, well balanced and very fierce at mowing weeds and bush wannabes. Contact Peter Wybron, prwybron@rochester.rr.com

Larry Blumberg RTC M24-26 (Bowman Lake to Bainbridge area)

The Triple Cities Hiking Club sponsors and maintains approximately 32 miles of Finger Lakes Trail in eastern Chenango County, from Bowman Lake State Park to Bainbridge. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our ten trail stewards along with our many, many friends of the trail who continually provide valuable assistance to our stewards with chain sawing, weed whacking, and blazing. A good number of those friends are also associated with the Bullthistle Hiking Club. We are very grateful for your help!

Besides our regular, routine trail maintenance, the past six months saw a couple of short reroutes and trail clean-ups necessitated by logging operations, as well as a couple of other reroutes at the request of landowners. One of those reroute requests involved an update for the trail easement across her property; this was shepherded by Mike Reiss and Dave Newman.

Additionally, please see the photo of a new bridge at the Ludlow Creek Lean-to trailhead on Tucker Rd (Map M24), designed and built by Steve Ellsworth who lives near the lean-to and helps us “keep an eye” on the lean-to, even cleaning up from weekend parties which unfortunately do get out of hand from time to time. Yes, we have been working with the NY DEC to help address that problem.

Irene Szabo Huckleberry Bog Nature Trail Volunteer Request, Map B3

Trail work was the most fun I’ve ever had that was legal, too! After 30 years, I miss it terribly. It was SO satisfying! Irene Szabo

For once, an embarrassment of riches, when THREE people volunteered to tend the nature trail booklet part of this popular loop. Asha Schroeder, Christine DeGolyer, and Aaron Havill have formed an enthused group aiming to re-do the bog loop booklet, which some aware hikers have reported as having slid out of currency. A featured tree died or some small populations of special ferns or seasonal flowers have either moved or died off, for instance. So the wonderful booklet done by Rob Hughes and his Wayland-Cohocton science students needs to be re-written.

Aaron is going to scan Joan Young’s notes and render them and her pictures as useful material for each of the three to work on. The whole group will walk the loop together just before guns begin in mid-November. They want to replace the current booklets before spring hiking begins, but may have to wait until later in May if they want to verify that several very special spring flowers remain where we expected them to be. This is good news! Irene Szabo 🍁



Steve Ellsworth

Steve Ellsworth’s new Ludlow Creek trailhead footbridge in the Bullthistle neighborhood.

**Contact: Jon Bowen
325/638-8749
jkbowen@gmail.com**

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Trail Topics: Trail Quality Confronts Coronavirus



Lynda Rummel, VP for Trail Quality

Sometimes it takes more than one solution—and a whole team of people—to fix a trail problem. Recently I started work on a small stretch of the Bristol Hills Trail (B3, east side of Glen Brook Rd.) that has become persistently wet and muddy. I was told that sometime in the past, the trail crossed a field; but now it runs through the edge of a pine plantation and scrub forest with many tall trees. The field grew up! Tree roots sprawl across the clay soil that hardens and cracks in the heat and becomes extremely muddy in the rain. In the winter, the tread fails to absorb water, creating ice or pools of water over the ice. There are also several stretches composed of sedges, another indicator that the tread never fully drains. As you can imagine, these conditions can make for poor quality hiking year-round.



Lynda Rummel

Thin patio stones will crack if set on something hard, like a big tree root.

As the first fix in the attempt to make the stretch hike-able again, the trail sponsors, Larry Telle and Mike Goodwin, had done a heroic job of digging ditches and water-bars to drain off as much water as possible. They had also worked on the tread, so when the Senior DEC Forester, Gretchen Cicora, the trails specialist who oversees and approves the improvements we want to make to the trail, and I walked this stretch in late July, we were amazed to see a line of stepping stones, created from salvaged patio stones, snaking through the woods. A few of the patio stones had been placed against the sides of a ditch, as preliminary armoring to reduce erosion. Pieces of downed limbs had also been used to armor the sides of ditches and reduce erosion. Finally, patio stones had been placed across those ditches that bisected the tread.

This seemed like a really good idea. But by the time Forester Cicora and I walked the stretch, the top of the mud had dried fairly hard and the thin (3/4" thick) flat patio stones were beginning to wobble, crack and flake. These stones, while a solution to an immediate problem, wouldn't stand up to long term use. The stones had been placed over the ditches primarily to allow a wheel barrow

and possibly a mower to cross over, but we knew that in the long run, the stones would have to be moved to the edges of the ditches, so that hikers would step over the ditch and the ditch would remain open and could be cleared.

So, how could we now improve this stretch of trail? There are several options; here are two: (1) Where limbs had been placed against the tread-side of a drainage ditch, replace the limbs with exterior pressure-treated (PT) wood and build up the tread with bank gravel and/or found stones from the edges of fields nearby, creating "rock boxes" that could be topped with smaller stones and dirt to make causeways. Small drainage ditches could be created under the causeways, as needed. (2) Where the patio stones were placed on more-or-less level tread, replace them with sections of puncheon; where the patio stones were placed on downhill-sloping tread, leave them in place. The puncheon (low wooden "bridges" of various lengths) would be set atop the tread and separated by 6" or so, which would allow the tread to drain and dry out, and if topped with some pieces of asphalt shingle or paint with grit, would provide a good non-slip surface for hiking and trail running. Sections of puncheon could be placed between obstacles such as large roots. On the sloping trail, the remaining patio stones would provide a reasonably stable stepping-stone pathway that allows drainage.

It seemed to me that the *easiest* solution would be to build puncheon on the level stretches and keep the patio stones for the sloping sections. Theoretically, exterior pressure treated (PT) wood would be easy to find and could be transported to the sites and built



Lynda Rummel

A section of trail near Glen Brook Rd. (B3) awaits rebuilding. Libby watches for squirrels from a stack of lumber that will be used to make puncheons.

into puncheon quickly and easily. Forester Cicora agreed, so Donna Noteware (Bristol Hills Trail Regional Coordinator) and I conveyed the plan to Scott McGee and Jeff Darling, who together organize and manage the Twisted Branch UltraMarathon and Frozen 50k, two enormously popular races that run on the Bristol Hills Branch. Scott and Jeff often go above and beyond with their support of the FLT and with trail work. They have been mowing the entire branch and have vastly improved the main trail on Mt. Washington. They assessed the situation, reviewed my crude plans, and proposed elevating some puncheon sections slightly in order to make a string of them really level. I thought their plan was great, but since they would have to sink wood posts into the tread, it looked too hard and ambitious for me.

And as it turns out, it was...and is. At this point in the process, I went looking for wood, only to discover that it was almost impossible to find 2x12x10 ft. or 12 ft. long exterior PT boards. Perhaps you folks working on home projects during this time of coronavirus experienced the same problem? Apparently all the contractors who had projects going bought up every board they could find; the mills were shut down so weren't producing more lumber, and forest fires had interrupted tree harvesting so trees weren't being shipped to the mills to be turned into lumber. A perfect storm, indeed. So, I snagged everything that I could find at my local lumber yard and took it to the trailhead at Glen Brook Rd. Donna and I widened the trail slightly so that I could take in the lumber on my Mule utility vehicle, and I was able to get in about half of it by the end of the day. I explained my difficulties to Jeff and Scott, so they could understand that the wood I had secured would be about all we could get for quite some time. After a short time, they spent a day hauling in the rest of the wood (a project in itself!) and began rethinking the solution.

Of course, the limitation on available wood changed everything. Not only was it scarce, it was costing twice as much as last year. And the start of the school year meant that Jeff, a teacher by profession, no longer had spare time to give to trail (re)building. So Donna and I flagged a bypass route and closed off the section that is to be rebuilt, and that's how things stand now. Since we anticipate continuing shortages of wood and high prices, it looks like the plan will be to use the wood I was able to get to make sections of puncheon for the level parts of the tread and keep the patio stones in place on the sloping stretches of the trail. It won't be a smooth run, but it should work...for a while at least. These projects are not easy, and it takes a whole team working together to make the trail usable for all. We are very grateful to Larry and Mike, to Forester Cicora, and to Scott and Jeff for all you are doing to make this happen. 🍁

Contact: Lynda Rummel
 315/536-9484
 315/679-2906 (Jan-Mar)
 ljrsoc@roadrunner.com

Trail Quality Position Opens in the Spring

Our current and longstanding Vice President of Trail Quality, Lynda Rummel, will be "retiring" from this leadership position in Spring 2021 after many years of volunteer service. This creates an opportunity for someone with a love of being outside and teaching others to learn about the role and responsibilities of the position and work side by side (remotely) with Lynda. This is a Board officer position and an integral part of the Trail Management Team. Responsibilities include organizing and overseeing training in trail design, building, and maintenance; managing trail tread, corridor, signage, marking and use standards, policies, practices and protocols; monitoring and facilitating responses to trail condition reports; and managing data sharing Memoranda of Agreements. It requires an average of 10 hours of service per week over the course of a year. This is an excellent way to dive deeply into the FLT. Please see Lynda's contact information in box below.

FLT MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____
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 County _____ Phone (____) _____
 Email _____

Make check payable to the Finger Lakes Trail Conference
 Mail to 6111 Visitor Center Rd., Mt. Morris, NY 14510 along with this form.
 Annual dues (Membership year runs from April 1 to March 31. Dues paid after Dec. 31 will be applied to the next membership year.)

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Trail Topics: Map Updates



Greg Farnham, Director of Mapping Cartographer Emeritus?

Once again, many maps were updated since the last issue.

In August, there was a reroute on map O1 near the Irish Hollow Spur. M21 was also updated to show this reroute. Map B3 was updated to reflect a change in campground ownership. Map O1 was updated a second time in August to show a reroute near Morgan Hill Rd. Map M18 was updated with a hunting closure change and miscellaneous minor changes.

In September, only administrative changes were made.

In October, maps M09 and M10 were updated for a number of reasons, including re-opening of part of the road construction reroute showing on both M09 and M10, and addition of a new hunting closure on M10, which also required M11 to be updated. M26 was updated for a reroute near Newton Brook. Map M20 was updated, and Map O1 was again updated, to show a reroute in Baker Schoolhouse State Forest. Maps B1 and B2 were also updated for changes in hunting closures, and two reroutes on B2. Map CT8 was updated for a reroute.

After 10 years of mapping volunteer work for FLTC, I decided to “retire” from being the “Director of Mapping.” Six of those years involved volunteering after I had moved out of New York State, and without access to the trail. Thanks to the help of many other volunteers, especially Jo Taylor, this arrangement worked out. Our map maintenance process is well documented and keeps us all on the same page. At this time, I choose to discontinue being responsible for the position of “Director of Mapping.” Jo Taylor will continue to work on maps, and I will continue to assist her in the mapping function.



If you have any interest in helping with the mapping work, or in taking on the role of Director of Mapping, please contact either me, Greg, or Jo, to ask questions: FLTCMapping@outlook.com or jhtaylor@frontiernet.net. The work requires extensive computer familiarity on a Windows platform, using some very sophisticated and complex software. FLTC provides the software licenses and the process is documented in extreme detail. Expect to spend about 10 hours per week in this role.

We should all be grateful that our Finger Lakes Trail is open, and **MUST** read the notices posted on our website at <https://fingerlakestrail.org/> before each activity. Please follow the rules, keep safe, and help save lives. 🍁

Contact: Greg Farnham
FLTCmapping@outlook.com

INTRODUCING SHARON RAY

New FLT Board Member

I am the acting DOT Director for the Seneca Nation of Indians, Department of Transportation. I was the Project Manager for the construction of the Pennsy Trail project on the Seneca Allegany Territory in Salamanca, N.Y. I do volunteer with our local youth box lacrosse teams as I have sat as the President for the last 10 years and have been on Allegany Arrows Board and the North American Minor Lacrosse Association Board for 20+ years. I enjoy hiking in the Allegany State Park, boating on the Alleghany Reservoir, kayaking on the Alleghany River, and watching my boys and grandson play lacrosse. I would like to see our trails expand to the State Park and beyond.

Nya:wéh



Trail Topics: Trail Preservation Report



David Newman, VP of Trail Preservation

While there are a lot people using the trail, and our maintainers have been out working to keep it in good shape, it's been very slow protecting the trail with any new easements, land donations or key parcel purchases since the coronavirus shutdowns began.

Resale of the two parcels we've funded purchasing, one for addition to Danby State Forest and one for Shindagin Hollow State Forest, is also moving slowly. DEC has committed to purchase them, but the State's acquisition program is stalled, mostly it would seem a matter of staffing in the land acquisition corner of DEC. The funds are supposedly already set aside in dedicated buckets. We have no way of knowing with the State's fiscal woes if these will actually close anytime soon. It isn't a major problem for FLTC, but we do have the better part of \$200,000 of our Sidote Trail Preservation funds tied up in these projects. When ownership finally does transfer to DEC this money will recycle back to us for use on future projects. The really good news is that even as we wait, these two key link parcels are permanently protected.

FLTC is wrapping up a yearlong transition to a new database system. It's a pretty big deal, as the old one did not have the functionality we need going forward. Our Regional Trail Coordinators (RTCs), Trail Sponsors and Trail Maintainers report in to Jon Bowen as our VP of Trails, but as your VP of Trail Preservation I'm dependent on that same crew of volunteers to be our main interface with landowners. As part of the database project, I've been working with our RTCs; each has double checked and updated their Region's list of maintainers. It's been a difficult task for our 14 Regional Trail Coordinators who between them have 330 individual Sponsors and Maintainers maintaining 474 identified sections of our trail. Now that all of the RTCs have scrubbed their lists, our master list is certainly more accurate than it has been in many years. The database will enable us to give the RTCs some modern web-based tools so that they can more easily keep things accurate.

While we're at it, the RTCs are cross checking that we have all of the properties the trail crosses listed in the database, along with their correct owners. Today's count: 1,524 individual tax parcels, 663 different landowners (many owners own multiple parcels, and NYS owns hundreds). Spread out across 1,000 miles, it's a difficult task to keep the list accurate

FLT News doesn't often report on these "behind the scenes" aspects of keeping the trail running, but there is a lot that goes on behind the scenes. The new database, online now with these features being deployed through the end of 2020, will give our hardworking office team and our Regional Trail Coordinators modern tools to help in the task. 🍁



Bodhi Rogers

Welcome - Gary Buchanan

The Finger Lakes Trail Conference is happy to welcome Gary Buchanan as the newest member of our office staff!

Gary joined the FLTC in September as the Office Assistant, working closely with Debbie Hunt to support the day-to-day operations of the office. Gary is responsible for accepting and processing map orders and for entering donation and membership information into the database.

Gary spent the bulk of his career as a timber cutter, working all over New York and into Pennsylvania. But home is and always has been Mt. Morris, and he's happy to be working close to home now. A recent retiree, Gary has been married to the best thing that ever happened to him for 34 years, and has two kids who live in the area. In addition to his career as a timber cutter, Gary spent some time playing professional baseball and still works part-time as a scout for the Pittsburgh Pirates. He also competes annually in the Highland Games, is skilled in three kinds of martial arts, and plays golf and fishes in his spare time.

Please join us as we welcome Gary to the FLTC!



Debbie Hunt

Contact: Dave Newman
danewman@rochester.rr.com
585/582-2725

Trail Topics: Mini Cats and Alley Cats 2021



Mike Schlicht, Director of Crews and Construction

Mini Cats

Over the last few years I have received requests for work crews that turned out to be something smaller than what the average person may perceive as an Alley Cat. One such request last year was for the repair of the Mariposa bridge in Mariposa State Forest that is about to take place as of this writing. The bridge is in a damp area and the pressure treated wood didn't hold up very well since it was built a little over ten years ago. When I saw photos of the bridge, this project wasn't something that warranted a large work crew over several days so in working with Mike Ogden who took on the construction manager portion of the project, he and Tony Rodriguez are lining up a handful of folks to take what is left of the railings and decking off and install a Trex deck and use marine pressure treated wood #2 for the railings that I hope will hold up better.

A few weeks ago another such event came to my attention while hiking a part of Allegany State Park with a friend of mine. We encountered a number of blowdowns, some that took a lot of effort to bypass and relocate the trail. At this same time, I started receiving reports that the situation was much worse than we had encountered and that was confirmed the following weekend when we hiked and climbed over the Tuscarora ridge. Over the next few days, I was able to identify Dick Swank and Dave Potzler who were available on October 23 to clear the trees on the trail along the ridge on a bright and sunny seventy-degree day. This got me thinking that maybe I should coin the term "Mini Cats" for these projects that may only be a day or two long and are specialized in nature. By using such a term, folks can consider volunteering for these events and not need to take as much time off from work or just drive down to the site the night before, spend the day on the trail and return home that night. In addition to Dave and Dick who volunteered on October 23rd, on October 31st, John Burnham, Pat Connolly, Dave Priester and Dick Swank (again) cleared the trail from ASP1 to Bay State and a small section from ASP 1 to the horse trail. I would also like to thank Mark and Lisa Barret who will be volunteering on November 7th to tackle more of the work to be done, again with Dick Swank.

Alley Cats for 2021

I submitted a budget to Quinn several weeks ago for the following projects to take place next year:

- Bean Station Retaining Wall
- Building a new lean-to (site yet to be determined)
- Holland Ravines
- Letchworth State Park (American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacation)
- Solon Bridge
- Repairing and replacing a number of privies on the trail

The Bean Station Retaining Wall is one I have mentioned in the past. It will involve felling between 4-8 trees, debarking them and

putting them in place with hardware to secure the largest of the Bean Station bridges built in 2010 from being washed out. Bath Soil and Water created detailed blueprints of the project so if you are someone looking for a new challenge and a unique project, here is your chance.

The latest on the Ludlow Lean-to project is that there isn't a location within the state forest where a new lean-to could be placed that the locals who have marred the inside of the existing lean-to couldn't do the same to the new one. I am looking at a number of possible locations for the new structure and am seriously considering a Catskills site that is in need of more places for hikers to overnight in. The existing Ludlow lean-to will become a "Mini Cat" project in that we will be sanding down the insides and staining the wood to clean it up and make it more presentable for hikers.

The Holland Ravines are in need of some TLC after what will be 14 years since the original project took place there. This year a group raising money for charity determined a series of thirty-two hikes of which only twenty had to be completed to earn a patch and selected Becker Pond as one of several sites along the Conservation Trail and Main FLT that were utilized. The group had over 800 participants and this took a toll on various sections of these trails. The Marshall stairs that were created and named in 2007 will either be repaired using a different type of step bracing system or taken down and switchbacks created in their place. Another huge problem on the trail is that the hills are pushing on the ladder stairs used in places and the shale that builds up in these locations has to be removed and a slide system may be used to prevent this from occurring in the future. Finally, there is a number of culverts where many attempts have been made over the years to stop the sides of the trail from caving; they will be redone and stone put on both sides (pending landowner and DEC approval) to resolve this from occurring ever again.

I am hoping that 2021 will be the year I finally get the American Hiking Society volunteer vacation going on the FLT but I am not very optimistic about its chances. The trail has been beaten up over the years and was yet another site that the charity mentioned above used the FLT as a location to get to. Based on what transpired this year with the pandemic, I am looking for a July/August date while the infection rate is subdued due to the warm weather. This project as well as all those mentioned in this article are going to be subject to the conditions and recommendations of experts to determine if it will be safe for volunteers to be in an enclosed environment for any period of time like the conference center in Letchworth State Park, cabins or AirBnB's. Based on what I have read about a vaccine, some experts are stating it may be the third quarter of 2021 before the healthiest of us have an opportunity to get one.

While participating in the Solon Alley Cat trail building project earlier this month, I made arrangements for an engineer from Binghamton to see the bridge site and fill in Mary Coffin and me in on the abutment process. The news wasn't very positive in terms of the costs to hire the firm to design the abutments and the need for a survey to determine land boundaries among other details. Recently I was informed by the DEC in this particular situation, we wouldn't need a bridge and abutment design to be stamped by a Professional Engineer (PE) because this location is on private land with an existing easement. Should I get the designs stamped, we would thereby get this design certified in other situations, like public land where we'll need it anyway. The current bridge is not ADA compliant, but with some simple modifications to the approach it could easily be adapted to be compliant. My hope is that I can locate a PE who may be more affordable to determine the specifics we need for the DEC to approve such a design for use on public lands and do this the right way from the get-go.

Finally, I received a number of requests for privies to be replaced or repaired. Some of these I have visited in recent weeks like those in Allegany State Park and have determined repairs would be the better option, but I was made aware of a state law earlier in the year about roofing shingles used on state lands have to be tested for asbestos. A few weeks ago I took a class to be certified in asbestos inspection that will allow me to take samples of shingles, felt/tar paper and anything else that I may encounter on structures along the trail that will need to be tested before repair or replacement. The type of sampling required on privies and lean-tos are simple to perform and have little to no risk to me, especially when using a respirator which is required. Look for an article in the next issue of the magazine about the FLTC asbestos policy on roofing shingles and how we are going to manage this development going forward. In the interim, if you know of a structure that uses roofing shingles and is in need of repair/replacement, please let me know so I can get an inventory of what needs to be tested. Please do not remove any shingles or related items even if you suspect it does not contain asbestos. State law asserts that all materials are presumed to contain asbestos until tested. 🍁

Contact: Mike Schlicht
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pageazi@yahoo.com



Mike Schlicht

Dave Potzler was among those who came to several of the MiniCats to clean up fallen trees at Allegany State Park. Those black cherry trees are huge!



Mike Schlicht

THANKS TO OUR TRAIL LANDOWNERS

Please accept the appreciation of the Board of Managers of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference and hundreds of hikers for your continuing permission to route the path through your property. Even if your trail's caretaker didn't say so directly yet this year, know that we all are grateful for the privilege of enjoying your back woods, streams, and fields. On behalf of all hikers and FLTC members, we acknowledge that, without your generosity, we would simply never have a continuous trail across upstate New York.

If you would like a copy of our trail map in your property's neighborhood, please ask the FLTC Service Center: info@fingerlakestrail.org or 585/658-9320.

Also, the trail is CLOSED on private land on the first Monday in February, just to reassure you that we do not establish a permanent right-of-way on your land by walking there every single day of the year.

Miles with Mark

Mark Valites



In 2005, a friend and I followed the directions from William Ehling's *Fifty Hikes in Western New York* from the end of Stone Chimney Road and made our way up to Little Rock City (our FLT map M2). I remember it being a bit of an adventure, but wasn't aware at the time that I was stepping foot onto the FLT for my very first time. My second time on the trail was to run the 2013 Sehghahunda trail marathon (which covers most of the Letchworth branch), but again: I was unaware I was on the FLT. It wasn't until a trail run with some friends along the Conservation Trail through Hunter's Creek Park in 2015 that I began to realize what the FLT was and how much was easily accessible via a short drive from my home just south of Buffalo.

Having run over a dozen road marathons at the time, I was starting to get bored with the road running scene. I was finding the FLT offered both more adventure and a transition to the trail running I'd begun to enjoy. Later in 2015, I ran my first significant ultra marathon, the Twisted Branch 100K, which takes place along the entire Bristol Hills Trail. (It was hard; I threw up!) With a number of branch trails miles complete, an idea came to me to start 2016 with a new goal: I'd try to see more of the FLT and start section-running the Conservation Trail. I began that in April and chipped away at it until September of 2017, most frequently covering ten miles out and the same ten miles back. By then, I'd regularly been running long distances and was really enjoying exploring trails I hadn't been on previously. I was disappointed that a plan to show off part of the Cranberry Lake 50 to some friends in June of 2016 fell apart last minute, but fortunate that it instead resulted in running the Interloken branch one day, followed by incomplete ends of the Letchworth Trail not covered by Sehghahunda the next. The miles from these first branch trails were intermixed amongst themselves, but after that weekend, I suddenly found myself only having the Onondaga and Crystal Hills branches remaining in their entirety (40.4 and 49.4 miles, respectively) to complete a branch trail end to end. Both looked like ideal distances for the longer distances I was starting to enjoy. I suckered some friends into joining me to run the Onondaga Trail in a single day in July 2017 (my favorite branch) and found two friends to run the Crystal Hills Trail in a day with me in August of 2018.



Mark Valites

42 miles of Onondaga Branch Trail at end.

Fast forward a couple years and I'm still running bits of the FLT: I frequently find myself on the Holland Ravines, Erie County Forest, Allegany State Park and McCarty/Little Rock City sections shared by the Conservation Trail and the main trail and have become the trail maintainer for the section through Elkdale State Forest. The #flt50 challenge this spring gave me even more of a reason to put in miles on the trail and I've since completed the main trail eastward to Hornell.



Jon Podaszek

Mark on a bench on the Onadaga Trail.

While I enjoy the running aspect of the time I spend on trail, it's far from my sole focus. I enjoy the solitude afforded by the frequent lack of other people (particularly given how crowded many places have become this year), being surrounded by nature, taking photos and having plenty of linear miles available without needing to repeat any I've already covered. All the unknowns offer adventure and have made for fond memories, some of which I'll share here.

On the Conservation Trail I remember a particularly "directionally challenged" friend analyzing the map at the Bay State trailhead outside of Allegany State Park. He located our starting point and even identified some of the points of interest along the intended route. For a moment, I was impressed, but then he took the lead and... ran 180 degrees in the wrong direction.

Another time I ran with a couple I'd connected with through an online running group, but never met before. We ran from the Holland Willows to the southern end of the Erie County Forest. It put a smile on my face to see them realize how much trail was available in their backyard and re-live when I discovered this section. They learned how to read blazes. They asked about fauna and flora. I turned around at one point to answer a question on what one particular odd looking plant was and was happy to see it was one of my favorites, Doll's Eyes (White Baneberry).

In September 2016, I rounded up a crew of five others to join me for a point to point ~20 miles from just north of Holimont to outside of West Valley. Most of this section is unfortunately now closed to public access, but it was stellar: incredible singletrack,

a ton of climbing, some great views and plenty of adventure. It was almost 90 degrees the day we ran it. After baking in the sun on a road section, we stopped at a random house to beg for water. We asked no more than to use the spigot outside, but the owner's response at seeing this beat down crew was bewilderment and simply "that's for the cats." We paused at the response, but didn't care and would have fought off a lion if that's what they owned. Fortunately they were more than happy to help and their family made trip after trip after trip to the faucet inside to refill each of our two bottles just as fast as we could drink from them. The crew from that day still talks about that one: most curse it, but a couple occasionally actually compliment me for it.

A July day found another group out for a run through the middle of the fairly remote Holland ravines section of the Conservation Trail. While in the middle of a heavily wooded section, we began to hear what sounded like a dragon chasing us and roaring periodically. None of us could place the sound, but shortly after we came into a clearing in the canopy and finally spotted our pursuer, a hot air balloon hovering above the trees!

One evening the Buffalo area experienced ~70 MPH winds. The weekly group run I planned to attend was cancelled because of it, but a couple friends and I still needed to get our miles in, so I convinced them into dropping a car off at one of the Clarence area access points, drive another to Ellicott Creek Park then run with the wind at our back the entire way. We've never logged such effortless miles as that night!

The Crystal Hills Trail run offered several distinct memories as well: as we inevitably became slower and it became obvious we'd still be running after nightfall, one of the crew started to deliver a pep talk and reminded us to concentrate on continuing to move, but as if by magic and right as he finished, a peach tree appeared on the side of the road. By this point, we were starving from having run 40 miles. All focus completely disappeared and the temptation was too much to resist. We all enjoyed a peach. Without question, it was the best I've ever tasted, but I'm still not sure it was real.



Mark Valites

Picking peaches on the Crystal Hills Trail.

Shortly after, we came upon some roadside horses and I encouraged one of my friends to pose with them. That photo can be found on the back of the spring 2019 *FLT News*, but it's probably not obvious he's terrified of them! We camped at the Tompkins campground at the southern terminus end of the trail after finishing and were all looking forward to a solid sleep, but had no such luck, as we were wakened several times by murderous screaming nearby. Eventually I got out of the tent with a headlamp to investigate, only to discover a porcupine on the ground, screaming up at another in the tree above.



Mark Valites

A stop to fill water on the Onondaga branch with another group found us at a creek with good flow, so we decided to take a break and eat lunch. After we finished, we headed 50 yards downstream and were shocked to find we'd been refilling from atop the stunning Tinker's Falls, made even more beautiful than normal from the record amount of rain the area had recently received.

Further along the branch, we discovered by chance that two of us were familiar with the lyrics to *If I Were a Rich Man* from *Fiddler on the Roof*, which we promptly belted out along the DeRuyter Reservoir. And as anyone who's spent time on the FLT knows, the trail's not always smooth. We'd slogged through a lot of water from the heavy rains just prior and pushed plenty of briars along the way. Afterwards, we were treated to pruned feet and one friend's legs looked as if she'd tried to baptize a cat.

The drives are getting longer, but I plan to keep running east, likely ten miles or more out and the same ten miles or more back. I anticipate plenty more adventures and hope to share those via story and photo here! Follow along at <https://www.instagram.com/buffalotrailandultrarunners/> for more. 🍁

Thank You

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Donor of land boundary research and property information for the Finger Lakes Trail and the North Country National Scenic Trail

Hiking Through History...Near Hammondsport (Part II)



Kirk House

We recently looked at a half-mile “history hike” on the Finger Lakes Trail (Map M12) in Pleasant Valley, northwest of State Route 54. We can extend that hike by another four or five miles after carefully crossing 54, still on the floor of Pleasant Valley, which already bore that name back in the 1790s. We can still see why.

Making our way up the slope of Mount Washington, pausing now and then to look backward... and depending on the foliage, on our elevation, and on the foliage below... we get a sense of the length and breadth of the valley. Even with a fair amount of acreage devoted to the cemetery, and more to a small airplane landing strip, we can see that much of it is still in cultivation or pasturage, just as it has been for at least 225 years.

The hamlet of Pleasant Valley is on our left below. Swinging to our right, on the far slope we can see the large buildings of what used to be the Columbia and Germania wineries, in the hamlet of Rheims. During the Great War Germania changed its name to Jermania, trying to dodge anti-teutonic rage. The Taylor family bought Columbia during Prohibition. Since much of their sales lay in non-alcoholic juices, they were shielded somewhat from the Volstead Act and the 18th amendment.

In the 1960s Taylor bought the nearby Pleasant Valley Wine Company, makers of Great Western champagne. Founded a hundred years earlier, “P.V.” remains U. S. Bonded Winery # 1 for its state and federal district.

Taylor grew to be second only to Corning Glass Works as an employer in Steuben County. Distant corporate owners closed it in the 1990s, though local investors retrieved Pleasant Valley from

the wreckage, operating from more modern facilities across from the old Columbia site, which is now home to the Finger Lakes Boating Museum.

Adjoining P.V. is the Mercury Aircraft campus, joining the hamlet of Rheims to the hamlet of Pleasant Valley. Founded in 1920 as the Aerial Service Corporation, Mercury is a historic institution all on its own. Before World War II they built and serviced airplanes, and during the war... then at their facilities in the Village of Hammondsport... they made mountains of components for Curtiss-Wright in Buffalo. That experience taught them to handle those precious rare materials plastic and aluminum, which would serve them excellently in the postwar world.

Finally reaching the top of the slope, we walk roughly eastward along the crest to the blue-blazed June Bug Trail, leading down to the Glenn Curtiss Museum. Photos from February of 1908 show that somewhere along this slope, then snow-covered, Glenn Curtiss and his colleagues experimented with hang gliders as research for their first airplane.

June Bug was the name of their third airplane, for which Curtiss was lead designer. Their flying field was off to our left, next to a barn that still stands as Building 88 on the Mercury campus. There a thousand people gathered on the Fourth of July, 1908, to watch Curtiss fly the first exhibition flight in America, winging a mile across the valley. Besides garnering a large ostentatious trophy from Scientific American, that flight marked the first time an airplane was filmed in America. It was the start of an aeronautical career that would turn Curtiss into a historical figure and a multimillionaire.



This shot of the Bath and Hammondsport station at the very south end of Keuka Lake at Hammondsport is from the twenties or thirties, judging by the cars nearby. Notice how the hillside behind is covered with grape vines. Source: Steuben County Historical Society.



Erik House

Now the railroad station has been repurposed and very nicely repainted, with great grounds. This picture is from November 2020. It had been a photography studio until recently, but now appears to be a visitor center. Background hillside is now tree-covered.

Drawings of Building 88 (the Stony Brook Farm barn) go back to the 1860s, but the Curtiss Museum, originally a wine warehouse, is far newer. The C-46 Curtiss Commando (R5C in Navy lingo) cargo/troop carrier out front was one of thousands of such work-horses in World War II; once again, Mercury made components.

Continuing easterly on the Main Trail, we should recognize that much of this land was cleared for farm or pasture in the 19th century. In the 1790s, farmers here on Mount Washington spent weeks each winter hauling their grain to Naples by sledge, since there was no place closer to mill it.

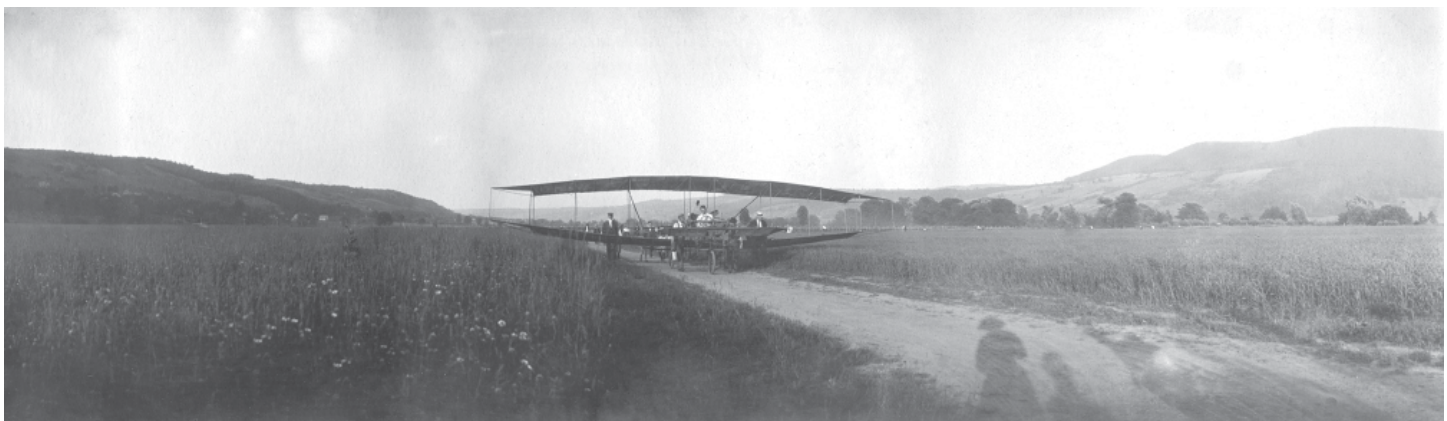
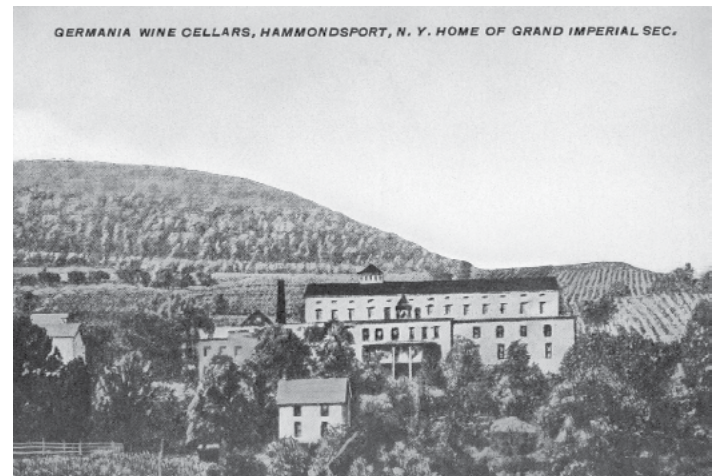
We come out on the Winding Stair Road, and the trail moves southward. Go far enough to the northward, though, and you may get a feel for how steep the road becomes. Glenn Curtiss and winemaker Lynn Masson made local history in 1903, when they drove a one-cylinder Orient Buckboard all the way from bottom to top nonstop, ushering in the motor age. (Curtiss had the local Orient sales agency, and there's a Buckboard in the museum.)

After a short northward walk (AWAY from the Main Trail) we can leave the road on the east side to take up the Triad Trail, a two-mile spur. The Triad was a 1911 Curtiss model, the first practical amphibious float plane, which could go in the air, on the water, and onto the land. The Trail leads to a height from which (at low-foliage times of year) we can see the village of Hammondsport, with the cleft of the Glen rising above it, and a good view of Keuka Lake, including the "railroad gothic" depot that the train chugged up to on the village waterfront, where passengers and cargo interchanged onto or off of steamboats making their way up to Penn Yan. (An 1803 schooner preceded the steamboats, which ran until 1922.)

Following the trail downward by switchbacks, we cross the route of another Indian trail, running up the East Shore of the lake, just as Route 54 does now. Kingsley Flats across 54, bounded by the Inlet, the school and the public beach, was the Curtiss flying field from 1909 to 1918 – wheeled airplanes on the land side, seaplanes on the lake side. The first woman pilot in America made her first flight down there as did the men who created the air arms for the American and Japanese navies. Curtiss created the flying boat seaplane here. On a typical day before World War I there were more airplanes on the Flats than in most entire countries.

The Indian trail that came along our Fish Hatchery Road reached the head of the lake at today's Hammondsport, where it divided, just as Routes 54 and 54A do now, into a path hugging the east shore of the lake and another hugging the west.

So our walk along this stretch of the FLT embraces two native footpaths, the horse-and-wagon Fish Hatchery Road, the steamboats, the B&H Railroad, the old bicycle sidepath, the birth of motorcycling, the pioneer days of aviation, the new auto age, which made a road up "hospital hill" desirable, and, returning to the earliest days even before the Iroquois, the newer footpath of the Finger Lakes Trail. 🍁



Hiking Can Be A Howling Good Time



Peg Fuller

I think a lot of hikers have a love of nature in common. Whether we hike slow or fast, stop to take pictures, or camp overnight, we like being outside, we like being in the woods. Some of us are even bird watchers and occasionally we are lucky to see other wildlife, like deer, porcupines, bald eagles and other local animals.



Wolf

Peg Fuller

Living in central New York, I have the luxury of being close to the Finger Lakes Trail, really close; a trailhead is on my road. As often as possible I enjoy hiking and also doing trail maintenance along the FLT. The area I live in may not be known to many people, but in addition to awesome trails along FLT maps M22 and 23, we have a place to go see wolves. Not exactly local wildlife!



Kia Riccio

Peg on the new trail.

property. Fellow FLTC member, Lisa Barrett, helped me build the trail. We had time to finish a half mile loop with plans to work on more. By next summer, I anticipate having about 2 miles of hiking trails. That may not sound like a lot, but when you combine the day with seeing wolves, eastern coyotes and arctic foxes, it is a wonderful adventure.

The Wolf Mountain Nature Center is located in Smyrna, N.Y. Combining my love of animals with my love of nature, I became a volunteer there. During the coronavirus lockdown, I helped complete a small hiking trail in the woods on the

In 2006, Will Pryor saw his dream come true. He opened Wolf Mountain Nature Center, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization situated atop a hill encompassing 64+ acres of forests, meadows, and ponds located in Chenango County in central New York State. In 14 years the center has grown and continues to grow. The appreciation Will and all the other volunteers have for nature and animals is evident. The center's mission is threefold: 1. to observe animal behaviors and present objective educational programs about Gray Wolves, Eastern Coyotes, and Arctic Fox; 2. to foster appreciation and understanding of the intrinsic value of wolves, coyote, and Arctic Fox and the natural environment and their relationship with natural systems, and

3. to develop unique and interesting environmental educational programs and deliver them to a diverse audience.



Arctic Fox

Peg Fuller



Coyote

Peg Fuller

When you visit Wolf Mountain Nature Center, you will also see teepees and the memorial garden. The center is off the grid, so spending time at a location that is run on solar and wind power can give you a better understanding of our resources. The gift shop is a great place to pick up souvenirs or gifts for family and friends. A special treat while visiting is when the



Peg Fuller

*Wolf Mountain Nature Center entrance
562 Hopkins Crandall Rd., Smyrna N.Y. 13464*

coyotes and wolves all start howling. The center has special events, one of which is a Wolf Communications Program. They are held periodically throughout the year and include a tour of the wolves and coyotes focusing on the why and how behind the howl of the wolf. There are also photography programs for those people interested in getting great pictures without the fence obstructing the view. During the summer there is camping on a limited basis. The website (www.thewolfmountainnaturecenter.org) has all the details including restrictions, admissions, and special events. You can also sit and just watch the animals. Currently there are 15 Grey Wolves, four Eastern Coyotes, and four Arctic Foxes. The volunteers will gladly answer any questions about the animals and the center.

While hiking in central N.Y., I don't anticipate seeing or hearing wolves, but I have seen an eastern coyote while hiking. While hiking on the trail at Wolf Mountain Nature Center hearing the wolves howling is an experience that is unique. I highly recommend visiting the center and also looking at your own community for opportunities to give back and help with nature. 🍁

Just Sit on It - or, The Eleventh Essential

Dave Newman

OK, you know the drill. Map, compass, headlamp, sun protection, first aid, knife and repair kit, shelter from wind or precipitation, extra food for when you run late or get lost, extra water, extra clothes... it's recommended you have all of these for longer hikes away from the trailhead.

I'm here to recommend an ELEVENTH ESSENTIAL: the basic sit-upon. They come in various varieties. Quite effective is a piece of old sleeping pad material. These are closed cell foam, an excellent insulator, and waterproof. They are also very light and easy to cut to shape to fit in your day pack. (If it acts like a sponge then it's open cell foam and not what you want.) There are some nice folding pads, same idea. Insulating and waterproof. And there are even "Therm a Rest" style self inflating air mattresses in a sit-upon size.



Dave Newman

Why do you need one? Most of the time, the sit-upon's role is just nice to have to put on a log or the ground for a lunch break. But answer this question: what happens if someone gets hurt and can't walk themselves out? In the summer you sit on a log or the ground, miserable and perhaps chilly, but alive, until help comes. In winter... you are in deep snow indeed if you don't have some way of insulating an injured hiker from the ground. Even if you have extra clothing along, sitting on frozen ground is going to suck out body heat quickly. Other than using your day pack itself, what are you going to do if insulation is needed?

Take the hint – get yourself a sit-upon. They are super handy for taking a sit break... and just might make a huge difference in an emergency situation. (The foam ones also make good splints or neck collars.)

M20 Alley Cat Project - October 2020

Mary Coffin



The FLTC Alley Cats combined with NCTA and ADK-Onondaga volunteers to construct new trail on the Bickford Easement and Baker Schoolhouse State Forest near Solon in Cortland County. Volunteer FLTC Regional Coordinator, Pete Dady, Alley Cat Crew Leader, Mike Schlicht, and I wearing my ADK-ON NCT Team hat organized and executed this project.

This trail was the third attempt to connect Rt. 41 with Baker Schoolhouse SF. We twice lost landowner permission and had to abandon the other two trails we built. So as not to waste any more effort, this time we obtained a Trail Access Easement (TAE) or special right of way (ROW). Luck was on our side this time as FLT end to ender, Thane Bilodeau, introduced us to his former neighbor, the Bickfords, whose property we had been observing on the tax map as a possible connection.



Mary Coffin



Mary Coffin

Benching is the chiseling effort designed to create a flat surface for our feet, even when the trail is slanting up a hillside. We hate walking with our feet at the hill's angle, so appreciate a well-made benched trail that has dug out the slope just enough to give us a comfortable place to plant our feet.

Check out the back cover, too, which shows another piece of this well-made trail.

The Bickford Family was most willing and signed the TAE in 2019. So, Pete, Thane I went exploring, found it most suitable, but had time only to roughly flag the route in 2019 and planned the Alley Cat project for May 2020. Due to coronavirus restrictions in May we rescheduled it for October 5-9 with all the proper PPE supplied by HQ and tool and hard hat sanitizer, etc. It was a bit different from many AC projects as we could not safely provide food and camping so we may have lost a bit of the usual camaraderie, campfires etc. But all were safe. Most people commuted daily and a few had RVs at nearby Cortland County 4H Camp Owatha.

We had 24 volunteers for 1-4 days who put in 206+ hours benching up the hill to produce two miles of quality trail, about one mile on private easement and one mile in DEC State Forest. Some grew to really like benching and learned to do it quite effectively. We presented a 10 minute "Benching 101" on the first day and guided from the side as volunteers worked. We were lucky as newly hired NCTA RTC (Regional Trail Coordinator for NY and VT) Stephanie Campbell was available to assist on day 1.

The result is that these two new miles of concurrent Finger Lakes Trail and North Country National Scenic Trail reduce a seven mile road walk to 1.5 miles on less busy Telephone Rd. Check out revised Map M20. 🍁

End-to-End #486

Tom Markel



Hiking the entire length of the Finger Lakes Trail was a concept that I came around to slowly. I generally have more of a “let’s go climb a mountain” mindset. At some point my brother, Steve, and I started using the trail to keep in shape for climbing in the Adirondacks. We talked about doing the entire trail and began to string hikes together. There was no looking back by the time we completed Allegany through Schuyler Counties.

I organized a hiking group with some of my co-workers at NYS DOT and with some friends at the NYS DEC. We planned monthly hikes in Cattaraugus County beginning in January 2019. That spring I was also able to fit in three days of solo hiking in the Catskills. It made perfect sense to me that the eastern terminus should be the summit of Slide Mountain, so I climbed

it even though it wasn’t required at the time. I used a car spotter on this trip and enjoyed riding the back roads with someone who knew them well. Summer brought other diversions although we were able to complete the county. I looked forward to starting up again in January 2020. Who knew what the year would bring! Of the original group, only Gail Mortimer aspired to complete the entire trail. We both had retired from state service by this time, so we planned more frequent hikes beginning with some day hikes in Tompkins County. We then took a trip to Ulster County in March. The ground was bare in the lower elevations, but there was a good amount of snow between Alder Lake and Balsam Mountain. After this trip I was confident I could finish in 2020, but we took a break as the pandemic became more widespread.

Fast-forward to June we were back on the trail day hiking! It wasn’t until August that we ventured to the Catskills again where I found myself “breaking trail” through the spider webs that seemed to be everywhere. I repeated the hikes I did solo in 2019 including a second climb of Slide Mountain because Gail needed those sections. We got an early start on Slide to avoid the afternoon crowds and enjoyed a nice break on Burroughs Rock sharing the sense of accomplishment with other hikers as they arrived. All together we made three more trips to the Catskills while continuing with day hikes from the other direction to close



Tom on a bridge over Dry Brook on Map M27. It was built by Eagle Scout Andrew Schaefer in 2004.

the gap. I had decided that I would like to finish somewhere on Map 27, so we planned our hikes accordingly. Soon only three hikes remained.

Naturally I began to reflect on the experience. Generally we had the trail to ourselves which is okay. Other hikers and landowners encountered were always friendly and accommodating. Deer, squirrels, chipmunks, and the red eft salamander were ever-present. Other notables were fisher, owls, eagles, many hawks, and countless other woodland birds. There were mountains, valleys, streams, lakes, forests, and fields, but the trail is also a journey through time along old farmsteads, stonewalls, and rusted horse-drawn farm equipment.

In mid-October Gail and I met at the Campbell rest area on I-86 at 6:30 am, drove to Bainbridge, and hiked from the Cooper School House Road to the Bainbridge railway station to finish Map 26. We were done before noon, so we decided to “seize the day” by also hiking from Masonville to Shear Road on Map 27 finishing by 4:00 pm. I was able to complete the FLT End-to-End the next day, October 14, by hiking the final section from Shear Road to County Route 27. It was a beautiful hike through the Arctic China and Barbour Brook State Forests. It was a chilly morning with fog in the valleys, but the skies cleared as the day warmed to sunny blue skies. It promised to be a great day to finish, and I was excited. We had the trail to ourselves except for the couple we encountered at the Dry Brook Lean-to. When they realized I was finishing, they asked, “What was your favorite view?” Both Gail and I went blank. After some discussion we declared they were all good and that you can’t compare one to the other. That is what makes the trail special. It changes every mile, and I enjoyed every step.

I would like to thank Kathy, Joe and Brian for their support and encouragement, Steve for getting me started, and Gail for putting up with me on the trail. Also, thanks to John McCumiskey, Marty Butler, and Matt Griffiths for lots of laughs and joining me on some of the hikes. Jacqui Wensich’s encouragement and help was invaluable. 🍁

My Finger Lakes Trail Hike of 22 Years

Tina Utter #484



In 1998 I reluctantly began hiking with a group called The Tri-Town Hikers whose members were based in Chenango and Delaware Counties. I say reluctantly because although I had been asked many times to join in I always seemed to have an excuse. Finally, one of its more outspoken members, Dot, came to the veterinary office where I worked and loudly exclaimed “Just when do you plan on coming with us ? You are coming TOMORROW!” So tomorrow it was and every Tuesday after that for several years. Although in my 40’s, I was one of only a couple of younger members. There were usually 6-8 really devoted hikers of mostly women and sometimes we had as many as a dozen. We had a couple of men get involved as well. One woman’s dedication stood out. Alice would come up from Pennsylvania when she could. She was a hard working dairy farmer and thoroughly enjoyed her time away from her constant work load.

I started out green by walking in sneakers with no special hiking gear. I soon graduated to a \$25 pair of hiking boots and a cheap pack, both from K- Mart. Those two items, believe it or not, would see me through for many years. A good friend, Russ, made me a hiking stick and I cherish it to this day. Our group averaged 5-6 miles at each outing and our trips were recorded appropriately enough, in the *Tri-Town News*. It was fun to see the women wrangle among themselves for the right to lead the hike or car spot, both positions of “power.”

In the Catskills, several of the hikes were quite rugged, at least to me. I found myself pacing and measuring my steps behind a woman named Marge. She was probably 30 years my senior at the time, but her steady pace both up and down hills really impressed me. I remarked on the Appalachian Trail (AT) one day after lunchtime while Marge was setting up her hammock for some relaxation. She said “What do you want to know?” It was then I learned Marge had section hiked the whole AT in her 70’s and told me about it in her humble way. She was also number 18 to walk the whole main FLT.

I learned a lot on these hikes. Eva knew her edible plants, Joyce mushrooms, Marge bird calls, and all could identify wildflowers, trees and shrubs. I hiked one time with Vi who knew all the different kinds of ferns. We often saw hepatica, trillium, bloodroot, trout lily, and spring beauties just to name a few of the early spring flowers. While learning so much I was also gathering many good memories. Sometimes we would do trail maintenance. I went on about 25 hikes before the group started to disband due



Tina Utter, with a timer

to deaths and disability. We lost two key people in 2007, both Marge and Eva. Both funerals were the same day and both obituaries mentioned their participation in Tri-Town Hikers. At Marge’s funeral, several of us hiked into the cemetery from the road in our boots and old clothes and gathered for a brief ceremony.

We had yearly picnics which were fun affairs. Ed Sidote would attend and one year our local end-to-end author Jim DeWan attended. They were usually held at Lee’s house which was built in the late 1700s and had wonderful fireplaces and plenty of room for us to spread out, both inside and out. We had

as many as 25 people and we talked about hiking and nature non-stop. A strong memory is how much those Tri-Town Hikers loved ice cream! The Penguin in Masonville was a favorite spot.

All of this gradually led me to believe that I could one day complete the entire trail. I kept a diary and as the maps ticked off one by one, I started to keep track of miles completed and miles to go. In late 2002 I had replaced the group’s company with that of a wonderful border collie named Twoey who loved to go with me. I was venturing further and further from my home near Guilford, and doing more miles than the group cared to. Getting back to our car proved problematic at times but we managed via car spotters and trail angels. When I would tell Ed Sidote about my planned end-to-end he would say if you want me to present you with that patch you better pick up the pace, AND, by the way, never hike alone ! That proved to be so true when I got lost in Hoxie Gorge.

It was getting late and I had run out of water and energy. I lost blazes but thought I knew what I was doing. I stumbled out on the road after going through head high weeds. A couple were out of their car arguing by the side of the road. I asked then how far is it to Hoxie Gorge and they said 5 miles. No offer came to help us. I went down the road and up Clock Road and turned into a trailer park and did what no one should do. I went to the first trailer and asked for help. Lo and behold the guy who came to the door was a hiker and a cruelty investigator for Cortland County; he gave us water and immediately took us back to the car. We lucked out. When Twoey got real tired she would go into a deep sleep and snore. She snored all the way home, and that night we both slept for 12 hours.

My longest hike was with my dog. I went from Alder Lake up to the fire tower which was a distance of 7 miles and the highest point on the trail and then turned around and came back out. I came out late and the forest ranger happened to be there when I came off


the trail. He said I wondered when I would see you because he had been checking the register. Ed helped me immensely one Sunday in August of 2004 when I followed him in his station wagon over to Claryville. He was a fast driver! He got me spotted for the Ulster County hike which was no mean feat and involved driving a good many miles. I wanted to see a bear on the four mile stretch of Black Bear Road but no luck.

After a hiatus, my dog and I completed Cortland and Tompkins Counties. Then the maps slowly got completed one by one. Going to three FLT weekend conferences was a real help. In 2008 it was Montour Falls. I was alone but never felt that way as everyone was so welcoming and nice. Then in 2010 it was Bath. Years passed and Twoey did too. But life has a habit of getting in the way, like going through a divorce.

In 2012 I met a great guy. One of our first “dates” involved hiking to the Getter Lean-to in Delaware County. In 2015 Dale and I got married and in 2017 we attended the FLT conference in Chautauqua. I had gone to that gated historic community back in the ‘70s with a great aunt. I remembered the old homes, the music and the cultural activities. We knocked off Map 1 that weekend. It was a real effort! Then we started doing cemetery work which we love and is all consuming. More time went by. I told Dale I really wanted to finish the trail and he made it a project. We started in the spring of 2020 making round trip drives of 300 miles to the Hornell area and slowly time after time more miles were completed. Dale would drop me off and then start in at the other end of the trail and we would meet in the middle. Social distancing at its best by not involving any car spotters! Hiking seemed the perfect option to get through this difficult time. By now we were both retired so we could carefully choose nice weather days. Before I knew it only 100 miles remained.

It’s funny how there are memorable places but so much of the trail could be anywhere. Woods in Delaware County could be in Steuben or Allegany Counties. Woods are woods. But there were many beautiful scenes, cricks and overlooks, waterfalls, fire towers, boulders, pine tree corridors, old foundations and cellar holes, old horse-drawn farm equipment, stone walls, huge trees, hillsides of leeks, my first porcupine and lady’s slippers, and every once in a while ... A CEMETERY!

I found Little Rock City wonderful with its big boulders, hanging ferns, crevices and overlooks. By the time we were on the last map I knew I could succeed. Finally it was the last day. It was cool and overcast and late September. I was dropped off on East Bucktooth Road and slowly hiked up a steep grade. At the top I met Dale and we came down to the Bucktooth State Forest lean-to which was immaculate. After a few celebratory photos and a sign in at the register it was .2 miles to the car where a bouquet of goldenrod and asters was waiting for me on the seat of the car. It felt good to be done!

It is still amazing to me that this 586 mile footpath even exists. So many work so hard for it. Securing landowners’ permission and continuing trail maintenance seems overwhelming. My hat is off to everyone who has made this journey possible for me and all my fellow End-to-Enders! 

Fall Erv Markert Hike Recap

The **FLT 2020 Fall Erv Markert Hike** took place Sunday, September 20th on the FLT Onondaga Branch Trail and started at Shackham Pond. We chose loop hikes this year to avoid shuttling.

The hike leaders were *Sigi Schwing* for the moderate paced, almost 8 mile hike, all in the woods. Seven of us hiked up to Spruce Pond, got excited at seeing a great blue heron enjoying the sunshine in the middle of the pond. We rarely see a heron on Spruce Pond. Then we started the Fellows Hill Loop, but were sad that the usually sparkling little waterfalls on the creeks we followed for a while were mostly dry. A short but a bit steep uphill followed to the top of Fellows Hill which is wooded and has no view. Then it was downhill most of the way, but whom did we encounter among the few hikers out there? *Mike Ogden*’s fast-paced group of four adding the Fellows Hill Loop to their Shackham Pond full circle loop to surprise us turtles along the way. When we returned to Spruce Pond after our loop and had lunch on the 12-seater long log bench, which no doubt was put right in the middle of the dam for us contemplative types, the great blue heron was still in the same spot, still soaking up the sun, sitting quite still. We returned the remaining 2 miles the same way we came up, quite satisfied that we got to our cars before Mike’s group, doing the 11+ miles they walked. Could not let that happen, no way.

Sigi

Mike Ogden’s group of four decided that the advertised 7.5 mile hike was not long enough, so at the Shackham Pond trailhead we agreed to add the 3.5 mile Fellows Hill loop to our hike. It was a beautiful, warm, clear day for hiking, no bugs. We started with the 1.5 mile road walk to get that out of the way first. Into the woods we started the climb up to the barely flowing Tinker Falls. Next climb was up to the never disappointing view from the Hang Glider launch site. From there we began our descent down to Spruce Pond. This is where we started the Fellows Hill loop. Usually this is hiked in a clockwise direction to get the best view of the beautiful flowing streams. But since it was so dry we went for the counterclockwise direction for something different. About a mile in we surprised Sigi’s group coming from the other direction. They didn’t know we were going to do this loop. We took a lunch break on the “summit” of the hill. On the way back down to Spruce Pond we all commented on how dry the stream beds were. From there it’s a nice woods walk back to the cars. We were disappointed that Sigi’s group had already left the trailhead. I bet they didn’t beat us by much.

Mike

See picture of Labrador Hollow on page 38...



Answers to the Fall 2020 “Name That Map!” Quiz

So, you hiked the FLT or parts of it. Let's see how observant you were!
Send your guess to: Jacqui at jwensich@rochester.rr.com

Previous Location:



Janet Brooks

Solar Charger, M16 Locust Shelter

Correctly Identified:

Andrew Sciarabba

New Picture:



Jacqui Wensich



Peg Fuller

Labrador Hollow at the viewpoint from the hang glider spot.



Annual **Honor Award** From NCTA For Finger Lakes Trail

Our logical candidate this year is Dave Priestler, who, as Trail Chair for the Cayuga Trails Club centered around Ithaca, has a large territory with lots of responsibilities, plus he is the Regional Trail Coordinator for that area. His territory and worries cover all the way from our only National Forest in N.Y. through many miles of the FLT main trail (and therefore also North Country Trail). When we read our Trail Reports, problem reports to the Regional Trail Coordinators from hikers, it seems as if Dave has received a disproportionate number this year!



If a tree is going to fall, or logging take place, or a stream bank erode, it seems to be in his territory this year. Best of all, Dave himself is often out there fixing the problem himself, within the same week. We appreciate his frequent and speedy attentions to trail problems, all while making sure his area's trails are well-tended anyway. Dave is also very attentive to both landowner and agency relations. We'd love to run him through the copier! 🍁

FLT NEWS Deadline: February 1, 2021

Stephanie Campbell Regional Trail Coordinator for New York and Vermont

We welcome our first regional staffer from the North Country Trail Association.

Stephanie is responsible for trail management and Chapter and Affiliate support.



Michael Campbell

She has a B.A. from Purdue University in Communications and a M.S. from the University of Michigan in Environmental Policy and Planning, as well as Conservation Ecology. Pursuing her passion for conservation and stewardship, Stephanie has worked in trails since 2010, beginning with the Great Allegheny Passage in Pennsylvania and continuing with the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia, and the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail in Montana and Idaho. Stephanie is currently based out of Ithaca, N.Y., where she enjoys hiking, yoga, painting, and gardening.

“Assisting in the development of trail skills trainings is an important part of the role of a NCTA Regional Trail Coordinator. I’m excited about the opportunities NCTA and FLTC have to partner in creating and coordinating volunteer training in topics which could include trail standards, construction and maintenance, crew leadership, trail protection, and landowner negotiations.

I look forward to finding additional areas where my skills and expertise can be put to use to meet both NCTA and FLTC missions.”

scampbell@northcountrytrail.org 🍁

Check out our online store for more new items this month! We've added some customizable campfire mugs, stainless steel tumblers, holiday ornaments and more just in time for your holiday shopping! Add your own pictures or choose from FLTC graphics to design the perfect gift for that special someone who loves the FLT (or for yourself!).

We've also got new FLT Masks! Special limited edition blaze orange hoodies and other gear are still available, and you can still get 2020 FLT50 gear through the end of the year.

Each gift you buy for someone else benefits the FLTC as a portion of all sales comes to us. Happy shopping and thank you!

New Store Items



Finger Lakes Trail Conference, Inc.
6111 Visitor Center Road
Mt. Morris, NY 14510

**Mike Schlicht benching new trail into hillside during an Alley Cat trail construction project
on the Bickford easement in Cortland County.**

Photo by Mary Coffin

