



### LEHIGH VALLEY TRAIL

#### A NEW FUTURE LIES AHEAD

In the dark days after bankruptcy, and abandonment of its right-of-ways, few could see any future for the Lehigh Valley, other than a rapid slide into obscurity. Fortunately for the generations to come, Monroe County took a forward looking view and after the demise of the main line in 1976, sought and acquired the old Lehigh Valley right-of-way.



Laying & Compacting the Cinder Trail Base

#### PARTNERSHIP FOR SUCCESS

Late in 1993 the Mendon Foundation approached Monroe County with a proposal to develop and maintain the

Lehigh Valley rail-trail. A formal agreement was signed in February 1995. In the subsequent years, with the County and the Foundation working together, \$1,300,000 of Federal, County and Private funds were secured. The Trail reached substantial completion in the fall of 2004. In fact, it is an unusual dual trail system, consisting of a 10'+ wide, multi-use trail with a stone dust surface, and a parallel 5' wide equestrian trail.

This 15+ mile trail, is an outstanding facility for walking, hiking, jogging, biking, cross-country skiing and equestrian use. It is also a vital link in the area's expanding regional trail network, connecting the Genesee Valley Greenway Trail to the west with Victor's Auburn Trail, to the east. In addition, the northern extension of the Lehigh Valley Trail from Rochester Junction through the Towns of Henrietta and Brighton is under development and will result in a connection with the Erie Canalway Trail System at Genesee Valley Park.

#### INTEREST POINTS ON THE TRAIL

**Wadsworth (Genesee River) Bridge:** Once 3,000 ft. long, until scrapped in the late



An Afternoon ride on the new Lehigh Valley Trail

1970;s, the river span was preserved and today allows trail users to cross the river to the Genesee Greenway on the western side.

**Rush hamlet;**\* Its depot removed in 1950, the mill dam (made obsolete when the T.K.T. Mill burned in 1941) and the Bock-Kinsey buildings remain the prominent features of the railroad era.

**Rochester Junction:** With the Honeoye Creek valley (the pre-Ice Age course of the Genesee River); with the Seneca lore of Totiakton village on the plain above; and with the Hemlock water mains running beneath; Rochester Junction is not just a railroad place, it is a crossroads of history.

**Mendon hamlet:**\* Sunday church services were forever being interrupted and its twin railroad crossing were a dangerous combination. After the depot was removed in 1952 and the LVRR quit running in 1976, this quaint little town became a far different place. Today it serves as the trailhead, and provides trail-side parking for over 100 cars.

\*Food & Beverages Available

| Trail Distances Between Roads       | Miles |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Old Dutch - Mile Square             | 0.6   |
| Mile Square - Route 64              | 0.6   |
| Route 64 - Route 251                | 0.2   |
| Route 251 - West Bloomfield         | 0.9   |
| West Bloomfield - Chamberlain       | 1.0   |
| Chamberlain - Quaker Meeting House  | 1.6   |
| Quaker Meeting House - Clover       | 0.5   |
| Clover - Plains                     | 0.8   |
| Plains - Route 15A                  | 2.7   |
| Route 15A - Fishell                 | 1.3   |
| Fishell - East River                | 1.9   |
| East River - Genesee Greenway Trail | 1.8   |

**In case of a Trail Emergency  
Call 911**

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### MENDON FOUNDATION

The Mendon Foundation Inc. is a Mendon based, tax-exempt, charitable, corporation. Initially established in 1992 as a Land Trust, we are actively engaged in the further development and day-to-day maintenance of the Lehigh Valley Trail.

Being an all volunteer organization, we rely heavily on community involvement to promote our preservation, education and recreational activities.

If you are interested in learning more about railroad history, heart-healthy activities, becoming a member, or making a financial contribution to help us with maintenance and improvements to this Historic Rail-Trail, please contact us at:

P.O. Box 231, Mendon, NY 14506



PRESERVATION • RECREATION • EDUCATION

[www.mendonfoundationinc.org](http://www.mendonfoundationinc.org)



## Welcome to the Historic Lehigh Valley Trail

A Monroe County  
Linear Park



Maggie Brooks  
County Executive

### The Route of the Black Diamond

By Paul S. Worboys

Today, with the great railroad era in our past, recreation enthusiasts can experience a portion of transportation history on the Lehigh Valley Trail, a right-of-way that witnessed about 500,000 trains serving the company and its successors from 1892 to 1981. The story of the *Lehigh Valley Railroad*, however, goes back another half century, to the early days of coal mining and our nation's booming demand for mountains of clean burning anthracite coal ("Black Diamonds") to feed industrial furnaces and home stoves.

By the late 1880's the Lehigh had expanded into New York State, but its only access to western markets was via Buffalo and over a competitor's line (the *Erie*) out of Waverly, New York. With the acquisition of the *Geneva, Ithaca and Sayre Railroad* in 1889, the Lehigh was able to construct its own line over 100 miles between Geneva and Buffalo. Opening via **Victor, Mendon, and Rush** on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September, 1892, the Lehigh mainline covered a 435-mile route from Buffalo to New York City.

The same day, a quiet spot known as Surrine (sic) Hollow became a busy railroad hub of fascinating proportions. Because the city of Rochester was not on the Lehigh's New York-Buffalo route, a junction was created that utilized branches northward to **Henrietta** and **Rochester** and southward to Honeoye Falls, Lima, Livonia Center and Hemlock Lake. The new site, located on Plains Road, was called "**Rochester Junction**" and has survived in name long after the railroad disappeared from the landscape.

A basic country station was built at Rochester Junction, but it was soon replaced with a two-story Victorian depot that stood as a landmark until its destruction by fire on Easter Sunday, 1972. The location of a post office, produce, freight and watering facilities, the storied Terry Hotel and even a baseball team, the setting was one of the most photographed and painted railroad places in our region.

Running over a scenic route through the Finger Lakes and the mountains of Pennsylvania, the Lehigh's most famous name train, the "Black Diamond Express", was created with great fanfare in 1896 and made its last runs on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1959. Station stops at Mendon, Rush and down to Hemlock ended in the 1930's, while Rochester trains connected to the mainline until 1950 and buses made the runs until 1957. Following the closure of the depot in 1959, two late night expresses blasted through Rochester Junction until February, 1961, when the Lehigh became the first major railroad designated "freight only."

On April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1976, the U.S. Government-sponsored *Conrail* took over several bankrupt eastern rail lines, including the Lehigh Valley. The mainline tracks were immediately abandoned, while the branches between Rochester and Lima survived until August, 1981, leaving the "Route of the Black Diamond" to the whims of the future.