



Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
November—December 2014 • Vol. 18 No. 6

Happy Birthday Thacher Park!

On Saturday, September 13th, we celebrated Thacher Park 's 100th birthday. The centennial celebration was a joyous occasion and despite a very wet day, almost 1500 people turned out to enjoy the festivities. Vendors were very busy as early as 10:00 am with throngs of kids attempting the rock climbing wall, bounce house or getting air brush tattoos. Others enjoyed guided hikes, horse and wagon rides, birds of prey, unique crafts and much more.

The official re-dedication ceremony took place at 11:00 am at Thacher Point. Thacher Point was chosen specifically because it was the site of the original park dedication on September 14, 1914, when Emma Treadwell Thacher donated 350 acres to New York State to be

forever used by the general public as a state park. The site is also where the back doors of our proposed new visitor center will spill out to a spectacular view off of the escarpment. Alane Ball Chinian, Regional Director for Saratoga Region State Parks welcomed a crowd of about 60 people and introduced our speakers and guests. We were very happy to have Tom Thacher, great grand nephew of John Boyd Thacher, speak about the park and what it means to his family. Former NYS Assemblyman Jack McEneny, a longtime friend and supporter of the park was eloquent as usual in highlighting the significance of Thacher Park and sharing some of his own memories at the park. Jack also read aloud and presented to the park a handsome framed centennial proclamation from Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy. Heather Mabee, Regional Chair of the Saratoga – Capital Regional Park Commission also spoke. Heather was very complimentary of the Park and specifically recognized the tremendous work and continuing efforts of the Friends of Thacher Park.

The ceremony included an introduction to our new interpretive panel at Thacher Point; recognizing the



Adventurous centennial visitors on a tour of Helmes Crevice



New interpretive panel at Thacher Point

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historical significance of the site. At the conclusion of the ceremony, a new Historical Marker was unveiled. The marker, just above the western side of the Indian Ladder Trail, recognizes the site of the original "Indian Ladder", used to ascend or descend the Helderberg Escarpment. The marker was an idea introduced and funded by the Friends of Thacher Park.

The festivities, although slightly dampened by the rain (pun intended) didn't wrap up until 7:00 pm. The hearty souls who stuck it out were treated to short lines at the food and beverage vendors and great music from Hair of the Dog.

The staff of Thacher Park extends a sincere thank you to the Friends of Thacher Park and to all the volunteers who helped make this such a wonderful event.

We hope you will continue to support the park as we embark on our next 100 years of exciting things happening at the park.

-by Chris Fallon



New historic marker recognizing the site of the original Indian Ladder

Updates

2014 – Another Successful Nest Box Season



We have 17 nest boxes set up here at Thacher Nature Center. The boxes are set out in the various fields around the center and therefore are attractive to Tree Swallows, House Wrens and lovely Eastern Bluebirds.

Monitors check the nest boxes to determine: nesting material, number and color of eggs, number of hatchlings, and to conduct predator/parasite prevention and control measures. Monitors keep brief, detailed notes allowing us to monitor the health and progress of each nest.

Nest box monitoring for our boxes takes about 1½ hours during the busy part of the nesting season. As birds complete their nesting cycle, monitoring typically takes about 45 minutes.

Three of our boxes, one in each field, were occupied by Eastern Bluebirds. In an effort to increase the number of nest boxes for bluebirds we will be installing three new pairs of boxes in additional fields that are excellent habitat for bluebirds. Nest boxes are typically installed in pairs to allow one

for Tree Swallows and one for bluebirds. Tree Swallows and Eastern Bluebirds do not compete directly for food resources as swallows feed on the wing catching aerial insects while bluebirds eat insects from the ground.

We are also installing two brand new boxes in the area behind the school house in order to attract another cavity nesting species, the Black-capped Chickadee. The final installation is an exciting addition. The Screech Owl is a species that is in decline. We will be installing an appropriate box for them in the woods near the nature center.

Nest box monitoring is an exciting venture. If anyone is interested in signing up as a volunteer for next spring please contact the nature center so that we can get you set up for a short training before the upcoming nesting season.

A special thank you goes to this year's interns. Thanks to Ethan Duffany for construction of the boxes, box repairs and painting our new boxes as well as installation of this year's Yellow-shafted Flicker box. Thanks to Samantha Davis for season-long monitoring of all of our boxes and construction of some new boxes.

- by Laurel Tormey Cole

Check for updates at www.friendsofthacherpark.org

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As always, call 872-0800 or 872-1237 to verify activity times and dates.

Please feel free to call any board member with questions or suggestions.

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Many thanks to Chris Fallon, Laurel Tormey Cole, Bonnie Schaller, Anita Wahlen, Sigrin Newell, Bert Schou (photos) and Nancy Engel for their contributions to this newsletter, and to Rodger Fink, webmaster.



Friends of Thacher Park Member Form

Member benefits: Newsletter, Scheduled Events Calendar & 10% Discount at the Nature Center Gift Shop. Renewal date follows name on address label.

Name _____

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I'd like to become a member of the Friends of Thacher Park. Enclosed is my check for \$ _____.

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Individual \$20 Supporter \$40 Donation \$ _____

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Please make checks payable to the **Friends of Thacher Park** and send to Bonnie Schaller, 6324 Hawes Rd, Altamont, NY 12009. For more info: bschaller@nycap.rr.com

Garden Gang 2014 in Review



From left: Sue Fero, Leslie Hartnett, Jayne Maloney, Linda Hodges, Bonnie Schaller. Front: Anita Wahlen, Cary Patak (photo by James Holland)

“Thacher Garden Gang” started early 2012 when Chris Fallon asked Anita to take on the project of “sprucing up” the 18 planters along route 157. A flurry of activity ensued. Jim, Anita and I gutted the planters; Bill and staff brought in mulch; we re-stuffed the planters and quickly re-established the iris, daylilies, and sedum. We had cone flowers and bee balm ready for the volunteers to plant on May 5. (Hummingbirds and butterflies love them now!) **We were ready for the first “I Love My Park Day”.**

At lunch that day in May, the “Gang” just seemed to happen. Whether it was “, gee there should be a group to take care of these flowers now” or us just wanting to see all the work we had just done not go to waste, the “Gang” happened. Since then, the north and south park murals have been lovingly restored; a new planter at the park office built and the Overlook planter received a much needed thinning.

In 2014, with Laurel’s help, native shrubs were planted where once tired yews surrounded the park office flag pole and a neglected planter was brought back to life. We planted nearly 900 annual plants for the Centennial and took on more planters ... now, 23. Not bad for seven ladies carving time out of their busy lives to help Thacher Park look nice.

For now, the planters are resting and waiting for Spring.

2015? That’s where you can help! As any gardener knows, a garden is a work in progress. Keeping ahead of weeds, fickle weather and invasive plants are the ongoing challenge. We are looking to refresh the area around the park office, hopefully with hardy and deer proof perennials. Because of the help from the deer in sculpting our flowers, the bare spots in some of the planters will get some new plants too!

We would love to have you join us with your thoughts – a yellow T-shirt is waiting for you.

- by Bonnie Schaller and Anita Wahlen

Our thanks to: Chris Fallon and staff, Bill VonAtzingen and staff, and Nancy Engel and staff

Friends of Thacher Park
c/o Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center
87 Nature Center Way
Voorheesville, New York 12186-2601



Wednesday, November 12, 2014

Annual Meeting

Next:

“Conservation Landscapes in Your Backyard” with Ron Dodson
7:00 pm at the Thacher Nature Center

The presentation follows a brief business meeting of the Friends at 6:30. The public is welcome to attend both.

Walk in the Forest

A huge tree in the middle of the forest with lots of low horizontal branches is an anomaly. In fact, it indicates the history of those woods. It is a “pasture tree”. In times past, farmers left a few trees in the pasture to shade their animals. Abandoned pasture lots have grown up to forest, leaving these big old trees to tell of prior land use.

Ecologist Tom Wessels told us of these trees in a workshop funded by the National Environmental Education Foundation through the Toyota Corporation. Here are some more tidbits from his fascinating knowledge of the forest.

* Barbed wire fencing incorporated into a tree is also evidence of a pasture for cows or horses, but not sheep. It takes 25 to 30 years for the tree to encapsulate the wire. You can tell where the pasture was because the wire is always on the side facing the pasture. Leaning cattle would push the wire farther into the tree. On the other side, the wire could be popped off.

* Small fist sized rocks in a stone wall mean the land was used for crops.

* “Pillows and cradles” are left behind when a tree falls over and pulls up its roots. These can be visible in a forest for 1000 years. Lots of pillows and cradles could indicate hurricane damage.

* The white birch is adapted to live far north. The white bark reflects sunlight. It does not absorb heat during the day, thus preventing frost cracking in the frigid nights. Birch bark peels off to shed epiphytes, which darken the bark.

For more fascinating information, read Tom Wessels’ books, *Reading the Forest Landscape* and *Forest Forensics*. Signed copies are available at the Thacher Nature Center.

- by Sigrin Newell



As always, you can find a color version of the newsletter at www.friendsofthacherpark.org/pages/news.html