



Friends of Thatcher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
January-February 2016 • Vol. 20 No. 1

The President's Corner

***"Happiness is not having what you want,
it's wanting what you have."***

This quote is attributed to Rabbi Hyman Schachtel and I first came across it while watching a TED talk on the subject of happiness. If I recall, the talk was delivered by Dan Gilbert who has done extensive research on this subject. I'm currently midway through his book, Stumbling On Happiness, which is not an instruction manual on how to be happy but, rather, an interesting treatise on human behavior and offers some scientific research into what make people happy. Is reading Dr. Gilbert's book making me any happier? Well, no. However, I'm learning that there is a scientific basis for what makes me happy today and how that has changed from what made me happy ten years ago (or will ten years from now).

The reason for my "happy talk" here has something to do with this time of year. We're at the tail end of the holiday season and there's an awful lot of things we're told that can make us happy during the run up to Christmas. One of these activities is shopping a.k.a. the relentless pursuit of stuff. What stuff? Any stuff? I'll be very honest. I don't like shopping. I'll go out and buy groceries for the week, sure enough, but to actually plan to go shopping for an extended time period? Oh, no! Spend time in a mall? Not if I can help it. Increasingly, there is less emphasis on Thanksgiving and more on Black Friday. The news includes more stories on what hours malls and stores are open than on what Thanksgiving means to many people. At one of the local warehouse stores, I saw Christmas decorations on display at the end of August. I'm fairly confident that the motive behind these early

decorations was to get people to think about who was on their shopping list as soon as possible. It's easy to see why many people have become cynical about Christmas. Despite my rant here, I really do enjoy Christmas...in December, not the day after Halloween.

So what makes me happy? Time spent with family, friends and loved ones is very wonderful. This can be time spent over the dinner table or out doing something. Depending on who you ask, we've been lucky or unlucky with the weather during this autumn. It's been warm enough to spend more time outdoors and stay a bit more active this fall than in past ones. As I sit and write this, the temperature has dropped to something more seasonable and the snow is expected to fly shortly. When these conditions arise many folks go into hibernation mode until spring. I understand why, but winter offers a lot of opportunities in the outdoors. These opportunities make me happy too. Thatcher is a four season park! Pretty soon you'll be able to dig out your cross country skis, ice fishing gear or snowshoes for some winter fun in the park. Don't have any of these things? Well, you can rent snowshoes at the Nature Center. Ice fishermen/women are pretty friendly (I'm one of them). If you ask what you need to get started, they can tell you and, while there, may even offer you something to eat or drink.

Not the outdoors type? Not a problem! There is a great lecture series presented at the Nature Center during the cold months. They're free and it's guaranteed that you'll learn something new! The point is, come on over to the park and create some lasting memories with some of the other great people

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who enjoy the park during the winter. You can even look through the fence at how the new Visitor Center construction is progressing.

So turn off the TV or computer for a while, put down that electronic gadget and come on over. Bring a thermos filled with hot chocolate and make 2016 a year to remember starting in January! You'll enjoy yourself without having to go shopping. I'll leave you with a quote from the ancient Greek philosopher Democritus: "Happiness resides not in possessions and not in gold. The feeling of happiness dwells in the soul."

- by John Kilroy

Updates from the Park

If you've been to the Park recently, you'll have noticed that construction on the new Thacher Visitor Center has progressed a great deal, thanks in part to our delayed winter. Although construction is now on hold for a couple months, planning for the exhibits continues through the winter, and construction will pick up in the spring. The official building opening may just happen in time for the Park's 102nd birthday in September of 2016. We'll keep you posted!

-by Laure-Jeanne Davignon



Artist's Rendering of the front terrace from the ground level



Rendering of the planned geology exhibit inside the Visitor's Center



Rendering of the planned hearth area inside the Visitor's Center

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.

Many thanks to John Kilroy, Laure-Jeanne Davignon, Nancy Engel and Maureen Curry for their contributions to this newsletter.

Want to contribute? Please email me at cgervasi@albany.edu
Christine Gervasi—Editor

North End Beaver Comeback!

When the Nature Center opened in 2001, we had a live interpretive exhibit already in place. The big beaver lodge at the north end of the lake had been established years before, and was easily viewed from our lakeside gazebo. For several years we enjoyed observing beaver activity and presenting programs about beavers. There was always lots of sign around; freshly cut tree stumps, sticks with all the bark chewed off, paths where beavers dragged cut tree limbs down to the shore. But beaver lodges are not permanent, and by the fall of 2006, after over 10 years of use, the lodge had been abandoned. Beavers take down a lot of trees, feeding on the bark and building dams and lodges with the wood. Over time they can deplete their preferred food supplies and move on in search of richer habitat. Within a few years, high lake levels caused the abandoned lodge to come apart. All that

remained were the dug channels on the lake bottom that once led to the underwater entrance. That was the end of our beaver programming – or so we thought.

Early this October I went down to the lakeshore to collect leaves for a fall display. Much to my surprise I found a new beaver lodge under construction! I couldn't wait to share the exciting news with Megan and Laurel. Okay, we are totally nature geeks, but it really is awesome to have a live wildlife exhibit right here at the Nature Center. In the weeks that followed we watched the lodge grow larger, as fresh mud and sticks were added. In early November we started seeing lots of freshly cut sapling stumps along the path to the lake and on the lakeshore. These saplings were cut for a winter food cache that can be seen in the water out in front of the lodge. Beavers stick the branches in the muddy bottom so they can access them under the ice in the winter. The visitors who came to our beaver program in November saw all this and even got a look at the beaver that emerged from the lodge at dusk.

So, we are back in the beaver business, with a new lodge and fresh beaver sign all around. When you come by for a visit, be sure to take a walk down to the shore or over to the gazebo and check out our new live exhibit!

- by Nancy Engel



Friends of Thacher Park
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87 Nature Center Way
Voorheesville, New York 12186-2601



Next:

Wednesday, January 13, 2016
Board Meeting
7:00 pm at Thacher Nature Center



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.

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- | | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior (62) \$5 |
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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

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