

History of the Finger Lakes Trail 1962–2002

The Early Years: Part 1 of 5 by Tom Reimers

“A Brief History of the Finger Lakes Trail” was written by Tom Reimers in 1992 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Finger Lakes Trail System. It was updated in 2002 for the 40th anniversary. The following article is the first of five based upon these documents.

In the summer of 1961 Wallace D. Wood of Rochester, New York, hiked portions of the Appalachian and Long Trails in Vermont. It occurred to him that a similar trail system might be possible in New York. He presented the idea to the Genesee Valley Hiking Club, and a committee was formed to investigate prospects for cooperation of regional outdoor clubs to build a long-distance trail in New York. A meeting of 12 people was held in Rochester in November 1961 to discuss the idea of a trail system.

The following year, approximately 100 people met in the auditorium of Keuka College near Penn Yan, New York, on Saturday, March 17, for the opening session of the first annual meeting of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC). The FLTC was organized at that meeting to promote and coordinate the building and maintenance of the Finger Lakes Trailway, as the system was called in those days. Participants discussed classes of membership, approved annual dues, voted for incorporation of the FLTC, and elected the first FLTC Board of Managers and officers. Wallace D. Wood was elected president. The name of the conference and name of the trail also were approved at this meeting. The new Board of Managers met for the first time after adjournment of the general meeting of the conference on Sunday.

The first issue of *Finger Lakes Trail News* was published in April 1962. It consisted of eight pages covering the first annual meeting, outings, the “Message from the President,” a report from the trails committee, and descriptions of two branch trails, among other items. It also included a request that readers write to their

representatives in Congress urging support for the Wilderness Bill, which eventually established the national policy for wilderness preservation.

The second annual meeting of the FLTC was held at Camp Duffield in western New York on May 18 and 19, 1963. The featured speaker was Mr. Owen Allen, one of only 25 people at the time who had hiked the entire Appalachian Trail in a single three-month hike. A substantial treasury balance of \$371.53 was reported. In its second year of existence, the conference already had over 100 adult and family memberships, 10 student memberships, 10 organizational memberships, and one commercial membership. The constitution and bylaws, which were approved at the second annual meeting, established the purpose of the conference as “promoting, planning, construction, and maintenance, directly or through other organizations and individuals, of a continuous footpath...across part of New York State in a generally east-west direction south of the Finger Lakes with or without lateral extensions north or south of the main east-west part.” Other purposes for the organization stipulated in the constitution included encouragement and promotion of educational uses of the FLT and the conservation of natural resources.

The FLTC Fall Campout is another annual event drawing many members and guests from all over New York State. It includes a Board of Managers meeting, hikes, and evening entertainment. The newly formed FLTC did not waste any time getting things organized. The first Fall Campout was hosted by the Cayuga Trails Club on September 7 to 9, 1962, at Buttermilk Falls State Park near Ithaca, New York. A hike on the FLT on Saturday went up Lick Brook gorge, still an unspoiled and undeveloped gorge owned and protected by the Finger Lakes Land Trust. To the disappoint-

ment of the approximately 100 meeting registrants, the swimming pool below Buttermilk Falls was closed because of the summer’s drought.

It was agreed at the meeting of trail organizers in 1961 that they would build a new trans-New York hiking trail across the scenic southern ends of the Finger Lakes to connect hiking trails in Allegany State Park with those in the Catskills. The precise route of the main FLT was left for the local clubs to decide. Spur trails to spots of similar interest not on line of the main trail also were to be built or included in the FLT System.

In 1962 the FLTC accepted sponsorships for 70 miles of the main FLT each from the Cayuga Trails Club and Foothills Trail Club. Soon after, sponsorships by the Genesee Valley Hiking Club, the Adirondack Mountain Club-Onondaga Chapter, and the Cornell University Outing Club were presented to the Board of Managers and approved.

The Cayuga Trails Club used an airplane in 1962 to scout for trail route. Cruising at 80 mph, Fred L. Hiltz reported to the club that he had flown “at 500 feet or a bit higher, because I don’t like to be too low in narrow spaces like Michigan Hollow.” Hiltz explained, “Visibility at that altitude is good enough to see animal tracks in the snow. Even at higher altitudes, you can see whether trail clearings will be brush-whip work or power saw work.” Hiltz was a graduate student in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University and one of several members of the Cornell Outing Club who assisted the Cayuga Trails Club in routing trail. A 10-minute flight over Connecticut Hill in Tompkins County, with the fold-down door of his Piper PA-11 open for better viewing, did the work of walking for several days. Fred also piloted a Tripacer on June 6, 1964, for the FLTC to scout 350 miles of possible trail route in the area of the Catskill Mountains. □

History of the Finger Lakes Trail 1962–2002 Early Trail Building: Part 2 of 5 by Tom Reimers

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The origins of two major branch trails, the Interloken and Conservation Trails, go back to the late 1950s and early 60s. The Interloken Trail runs down the “Hector Backbone” between Cayuga and Seneca Lakes from Butcher Hill near Interlaken (spelled with an “a,” not an “o”) through the Finger Lakes National Forest to Bennettsburg. Alec Proskine of Trumansburg, New York, got the idea for the Interloken Trail while climbing the west side of Butcher Hill. On January 2, 1960, 72 Boy Scouts and leaders and members of the Trumansburg Rotary Club started work on the trail. After only one month all 12 miles of the trail had been completed! The Interloken Trail follows a north-south direction off the main FLT through forests, open fields, and wetlands.

Planning for the Conservation Trail, another north-south foot trail to connect the Buffalo, New York, area with Allegany State Park, began in January 1961 with actual work starting in November of that year. A six-mile portion of the Conservation Trail was dedicated on May 5, 1962, in a ceremony sponsored by the Foothills Trail Club and the Buffalo Museum of Science. On May 24, 1964, dedication ceremonies at the southern end of the Niagara Escarpment Trail were held at the international bridge over the Niagara River between Lewiston, New York, and Queenston, Ontario, with erection of a large sign stating that this trail was a connecting link between the Bruce Trail of Canada and the Conservation Trail of western New York. After extensive rerouting in 1995, the Conservation Trail now

extends 175 miles north from the Pennsylvania-New York border to its current northern destination, the Rainbow Bridge on the U.S.-Canada border. Its southern portion, dedicated on September 18, 1965, serves as the western section of the main FLT.

The third branch trail—the Bristol Hills Branch—was officially accepted into the FLT System on June 9, 1962. This 55-mile trail was planned initially by Wallace Wood and representatives from the Otetiana Council of Boy Scouts, Seven Lakes Council of Girl Scouts, and Penn Yan Senior Girl Scouts.

In the fall of 1965 the Cayuga Trails Club and the Adirondack Mountain Club-Onondaga Chapter acquired two trail shelters from the New York State Conservation Department (now called NYS Department of Environmental Conservation). The Tamarack and Hemlock Glen lean-tos were dismantled and moved piece-by-piece from near Lapeer, New York, in Cortland County to their present locations on the FLT south of Danby in Tompkins County and on Morgan Hill near Truxton, Cortland County. The cornerstone of Tamarack Lean-to was laid on October 10, 1965, in a ceremony described by a local radio station as “perhaps the first time in the history of the world that a cornerstone was laid for a lean-to.” The cornerstone contained a Cayuga Trails Club emblem, an FLTC emblem, the October issue of the club’s newsletter Cayuga Trails, two 1964 pennies, some trading stamps, and orange and white flags used to mark the trail. Soon-to-follow shelters in the area were Shindagin Lean-to (fall of 1966) and Chestnut Lean-to (fall of 1967). From September 21, 1967, to July 21, 1968, almost 200 people had signed the register at Chestnut.

The Hemlock Glen Lean-to was properly dedicated on May 7, 1967, at

the close of the sixth annual meeting of the FLTC. The original lean-to was replaced in 1997. Also on May 7, 1967, the Adirondack Mountain Club-Onondaga Chapter celebrated the gala opening of the Onondaga Trail. The trail then was only 3.5 miles long. Today this branch trail is 46 miles long heading north from the main FLT near Cuyler, New York, through Morgan Hill State Forest, Labrador Hollow Unique Area, Highland Forest County Park, DeRuyter State Forest, and Tioughnioga State Wildlife Management Area to northeast of New Woodstock.

A ceremony in December 1970 attended by state park officials, private landowners, and Cayuga Trails Club members highlighted the opening of a spur trail connecting the FLT in Robert H. Treman State Park with the upper section of Buttermilk Falls State Park near Ithaca. The Letchworth Trail, another branch of the main FLT, was dedicated in November 1980. This trail is 25 miles long and runs along the east bank of the Genesee River gorge in Letchworth State Park. The fairly level trail passes through an ever-changing variety of woodlands. It provides spectacular views of the “Grand Canyon of the East.” In 1985, the Queen Catherine Marsh Trail near Watkins Glen south of Seneca Lake was added to the FLT System. It is a 8-mile loop trail around and through the Queen Catharine Marsh which is owned by New York State and managed by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation as a fish and wildlife management area. The trail is maintained by MarshFellows of the FLT.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony on November 1, 1992, marked the official opening of a new loop trail of the FLT System, the orange-blazed Abbott Loop located in Danby State

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Forest in Tompkins County. After the ceremony, the 8.5-mile-long loop was hiked by about 30 people. The loop trail is named after Cliff and Doris Abbott who started scouting and flagging the trail in November 1988. The Abbotts were assisted in development of the trail by many members of the Cayuga Trails Club and students enrolled in the Cornell University Outdoor Education Program.

The first detailed map of a portion of the main FLT appeared as an enclosure in the October 1963 issue of Cayuga Trails, the newsletter of the Cayuga Trails Club. It showed the route of the trail from the crossing of Cayuta Creek just south of Cayuta Lake, over Connecticut Hill to Willowood Camp (now Pinecreek Campground), west of Robert H. Treman State Park. Local geographic and cultural features, trail access points, and landmarks along the route were included. In 1996 the FLTC

began accurately mapping the route of the FLT using Global Positioning System equipment with the aid of satellite and computer technologies. At present the FLTC offers 52 maps of the FLT System and 10 detailed trail guides with maps. □

Next: The Finger Lakes Trail and North Country Trail

History of the Finger Lakes Trail 1962–2002

Part 3 of 5: The Finger Lakes Trail and North Country Trail by Tom Reimers

“A Brief History of the Finger Lakes Trail” was written by Tom Reimers in 1992 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Finger Lakes Trail System. It was updated in 2002 for the 40th anniversary. The following article with minor 2009 updates is the third of five based upon these documents.

On February 8, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson sent to Congress a message on conservation of natural beauty. In the message the president said, “The forgotten outdoorsmen of today are those who like to walk, hike, ride horseback, or bicycle. For them, we must have trails as well as highways. Nor should motor vehicles be permitted to tyrannize the more leisurely human traffic.” The president then asked the secretary of the interior and his colleagues in federal, state, and local governments to recommend to him a cooperative program “to encourage a national system of trails, building up the more than a hundred thousand miles of trails in our National Forests and Parks.”

In President Johnson’s second message to Congress on February 23, 1966, he said he would submit legislation “to foster development...of a nationwide system of trails.” The North Country National Scenic Trail (NCT) was first mentioned by specific name in the summer 1966 issue of *Finger Lakes Trail News* in reference to a Senate bill to provide immediate protection for the Appalachian Trail and to create at least nine other long-distance foot trails within the continental United States. On October 2, 1968, Public Law 90-543 established the National Trails System.

Inclusion of part of the Finger Lakes Trail into the NCT became a topic for lively discussion among FLTC members and within the board of managers during the 1970s and 80s. From the beginning, the FLTC insisted that it have the right to keep the same rela-

tionships with landowners that it always had. At the FLTC board of managers meeting of June 10, 1973, President Laura McGuire established an ad hoc committee to recommend to the board a formal position regarding the NCT. At a special board meeting on October 14, 1973, the committee presented its report. After long and heated debate, the following motion was offered to the board: “That the FLTC endorse the idea of the North Country Trail and of the NCT making use of sections of the FLT; further, that insofar as is consistent with NCT participation, the FLTC maintain its present relationships with private landowners and its present arrangements for decision-making; further, however, that the FLTC make clear now to its members and its private property owners the immediate and long-range implications of the decision to join the NCT.” The motion was passed in a mail ballot of the board by a vote of 14 to 3.

Concern and discussion about landowner relations and autonomy of the FLTC continued despite the vote. Many FLTC members felt that after years of planning and building the FLT, it should not be turned over to any other persons, groups, or governments who could become managers or administrators of the trail without having contributed to its development. Debate intensified when the Green Mountain Club of Vermont went on record in 1975 as being opposed to the NCT or any other trail that would draw more hikers to its heavily used trails. Fortunately, experience has shown that none of these worries had any validity.

On January 16, 1982, the FLTC board of managers decided to join the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) as an organizational member. The NCTA is the organization of volunteers promoting development of the NCT and fostering cooperation

among the chapters, individuals, clubs, and other groups associated with the NCT. The board also appointed Bill Ehling of Syracuse, New York, as its representative on the NCTA board of directors and decided to send Mr. Ehling to the NCTA meeting in Pennsylvania in 1982. Also in 1982, Secretary of the Interior James Watt appointed FLTC Trails Chairman Ervin Markert to be one of the four private-sector members of the new NCT Advisory Council. The council consisted of 14 members, one each nominated by the governors of the seven states through which the NCT would pass, three from cooperating federal agencies, and four private-sector members. The council was to consult with the secretary of the interior on matters such as trail routes, standards for trail markers, and administration of the trail.

In 1983 the FLTC finally signed a memorandum of agreement with the National Park Service to operate, develop, and maintain those portions of the FLT that become official segments of the NCT. The first section of the FLT certified by the National Park Service is located near Virgil Mountain in Cortland County. It received certification in November 1985 and was officially dedicated in a ceremony on December 12. Certification of the FLT in Birdseye Hollow Park in Steuben County in 1992 broke the 1000-mile mark for officially certified NCT. As of December 2008, there were 277 miles of certified NCT and 249 NCTA members in New York. Former FLTC President Tom Reimers was elected president of the NCTA in 1987, 1988, and 1989. Besides Bill Ehling and Tom Reimers, FLTC members Doris Abbott, Cliff Abbott, Howard Beye, Mary Coffin, Joe Dabes, Al Larmann, Laura McGuire, Ed Sidote, Harmon

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Strong, and Irene Szabo have served on the NCTA board of directors.

Four NCTA national conferences have been held in New York. The first was in Ithaca in 1988. The second FLTC-sponsored NCTA conference was held in August 1995 at the Watson Homestead Conference Center, Coopers Plains, New York. Special events for that conference included evening

presentations by Steven M. Newman and Bill Irwin with his Seeing Eye® dog Orient. Steve Newman, author of *Worldwalk*, was the first person to walk around the world alone. Bill Irwin, author of *Blind Courage*, was the only blind person to have completed the 2,168-mile-long Appalachian Trail.

The most recent NCTA national conferences held in New York were at

Cazenovia College in 2001 and 2008. Both were organized and sponsored by the FLTC and co-sponsored by the Central New York NCTA chapter and the Adirondack Mountain Club-Onondaga Chapter. The FLTC's own Howard Beye was awarded the NCTA's highest honor, its Lifetime Achievement Award during the 2001 conference. □

History of the Finger Lakes Trail 1962–2002 Assorted Historical Highlights: Part 4 of 5 by Tom Reimers

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The familiar FLT shoulder patch was introduced in the fall of 1964. Designed by William H. Davis of Rochester, New York, the patch is octagonal in shape with a beige background. The border and large “FLT” and the words “Finger Lakes Trail” are orange. The pine trees are dark green.

The FLTC Library began operation in March 1966. The first librarian, Susan Tucker, began accepting contributions of books on hiking, camping, climbing, and other outdoor activities. One of the first donations was an autographed copy of *My Wilderness, East to Katahdin* by William O. Douglas, former associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. The FLTC was declared tax exempt by the U.S. Treasury Department and the State of New York in 1966. This designation allowed for federal tax deductions for contributions, bequests, legacies, transfers, and gifts to the FLTC. In addition, state, county, and community sales taxes did not have to be paid on purchases by the conference.

The first statewide hike sponsored by the FLTC was held on October 19, 1968, on the Mt. Roderick section of the FLT near Cortland. The section was built by the Adirondack Mountain Club -Onondaga Chapter. Constant rain accounted for a poor turnout. Today, there are three regular FLTC-sponsored hikes each year: the Wallace Wood Founder’s Hike in the spring, the Ed Sidote Hike (originally called the FLTC President’s Hike) in the summer, and the Erv Markert Memorial Hike in the fall.

The FLTC board of managers formally established the FLTC Service Center on January 19, 1975, to do routine business and to guide conference officials in carrying out their duties. The first service center was in Wallace Wood’s home in Rochester. From Wally’s home, the Service Center moved to Ervin Markert’s ranch in Pittsford in the summer of 1976. It moved again to the home of Howard and Dorothy Beye in Rochester in 1984. Finally, in April 2001 the FLTC Service Center moved into a new office at the Mt. Morris Dam within Letchworth State Park. The FLTC Service Center distributes maps and guide books, answers the many inquiries about the FLT System, and provides a home base for many other diverse functions for the trail and the conference.

In the spring of 1978, The Nature Conservancy deeded the beautiful Riemen Woods in Tompkins County to the Cayuga Trails Club. The FLT runs through the woods. This tract of land was originally purchased by The Nature Conservancy in 1969 with money raised by the conservancy, Cayuga Trails Club, and interested individuals. Henry and Marie Forbes of Irving, New York, donated to the FLTC a 1.3-acre parcel of land located along Sixtown Creek in the Town of Centerville in 1997. John Cobb from Snyder, New York, donated 45 acres of land northeast of Ellicottville to the FLTC in 1998.

The Wallace D. Wood Distinguished Service Award was established in 1984 to recognize annually a member or members of the FLTC who had made outstanding contributions to the FLTC. Mr. Wood, whose idea in 1961 became the FLT System, was the first recipient of the award in May 1984. Two additional FLTC awards were created by the board of managers in 1997. The Clar-Willis Distinguished Trail Volunteer Award is presented to

an individual or pair of individuals who have made a significant contribution over a period of time as trail workers. Harry Clar and Edward Willis, for whom the award is named, were two outstanding examples of great dedication and longtime service in the building and maintenance of many miles of the FLT System. The first recipient of the Clar-Willis Award was Ed Frank for all the work he had done on the Conservation Trail on behalf of Foothills Trail Club.

The Ervin Markert Distinguished Contribution Award is given to an individual, group, or organization in the public or private sector that has made a significant contribution toward improvement of hiking and/or hiking trails in New York State. Ervin Markert served as chairman of the FLTC trails committee for nearly 20 years. The first recipient of the Erv Markert Award was George Fraley of Naples, New York, for his extraordinary efforts to improve hiking and skiing access to Hi Tor Wildlife Management Area.

In 1991 Edward J. Sidote from Norwich, New York, started an annual cross-county hike series in Chenango County near the eastern end of the FLT. This series helped beginning and veteran hikers alike overcome logistical obstacles to hiking in remote areas. Transportation, hike leaders and sweeps, and greeters at road crossings were provided by series organizers. Early transportation consisted of volunteers’ automobiles. By the time the series ended in western New York in Cattaraugus County in 1997, school busses were used routinely. These cross-county hike series were enjoyed by nearly 1,000 participants. Many of them became new FLTC and local hiking club members, trail stewards, and FLT end-to-end hikers. This series started again in 2002 in Chenango County.

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In the fall of 1992, Ed Sidote, the third person to hike the whole FLT, began writing the "End-to-End Update" for the *Finger Lakes Trail News*. His updates continue today in each issue of the *News* and are anticipated by end-to-enders and other *News* readers. In that same year, J. Robert Muller, FLT end-to-end hiker #5, established the FLT end-to-end badges. To this day, each FLT end-to-ender is presented with a custom-made "walnut" Formica name badge with an enamel FLT pin attached. The hiker's name, mileage, date of completion, and sequence number are engraved on the badges.

The first 11 badges were awarded on September 12, 1992, during the FLTC Fall Campout. By the end of 2009, more than 270 end-to-end hikers had completed their goals of hiking the whole FLT and had received their badges. Ed Sidote reported in the spring 2000 *Finger Lakes Trail News* that John Kubinski was the oldest male end-to-ender at age 77, Mary Years was the oldest female at 75, Jed Bloom was the youngest male at 12, and Nicole Sweeney was the youngest female at age 10. In 1995 the FLTC Board of Managers authorized the awarding of patches for people who

hike all of the branch trails of the FLT System.

The American Hiking Society launched its first National Trails Day on June 5, 1993. The purpose of NTD, which has continued on the first Saturday in June since then, is to raise public awareness of hiking and hiking trails. For the first National Trails Day the FLTC cosponsored a series of hikes on the FLT System to foster a spirit of unity among the different hiking organizations in New York State and to demonstrate the FLTC's commitment to trails systems throughout the state and nation. □

History of the Finger Lakes Trail 1962–2002

A Few Loose Ends: Part 5 of 5 by Tom Reimers

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Wallace Wood, Father of the Finger Lakes Trail, passed away on August 19, 1996. In an article published in the March 1974 issue of *Finger Lakes Trail News*, he wrote, “It was August of 1961 and the bus was on its Sunday night run from Boston to Rochester. Suddenly there welled up from my subconscious the thought: Why not a hiking trail across New York State, south of the Finger Lakes.” Erv Markert wrote in the *News* in 1976 on Wally Wood’s retirement from FLTC activities, “Wally stands among the very few who have had the dream of creating a beautiful experience for others and the courage to guide volunteers into starting the Finger Lakes Trail.”

Ravens (*Corvus corax*) were forced into secluded woodland habitats in the late 1800s. But in 1994, Cornell University ornithologist Kevin McGowan found a raven nest in a cliffside nook above a waterfall in Lick Brook gorge in Tompkins County. Its nest, made of sticks and sheep’s wool, was clearly visible from the Finger Lakes Trail on the other side of the gorge. McGowan found the nest in March and later counted five young ravens in the nest. However, he believes only two survived through fledging.

Governor George Pataki announced acquisition by New York State of the 90-mile Genesee Valley Greenway in September 1996. The greenway will connect the city of Rochester’s trail system to Letchworth State Park and ultimately to the Olean, New York, area. The Letchworth Trail, a branch

trail of the FLT System, begins its northern end where the Genesee Valley Greenway passes through Mt. Morris. The Letchworth Trail again meets the greenway on River Road east of the state park. The two trails are coincident for 5.1 miles south from there to Whiskey Bridge over the Genesee River.

In 1997 Frank Bianco of Lisle, New York, set a record by thru-hiking the FLT in a mere 24 days. This speed record is even more amazing when you consider that Frank was legally blind at the time of his hike. In a report written by Debra Barnell for the *Finger Lakes Trail News*, Frank said, “I was never scared. I made some stupid mistakes. Once I almost suffered hypothermia. Another time I was lost in the Catskills for 4 to 5 hours because I had wandered off the trail. I can’t see to read a compass, so unless the sun’s out it’s hard to orient myself once I’m lost. I walked downhill until I came to a road where I flagged down a motorist and learned exactly where I was. I believe that if you keep your head and don’t panic, you’ll be fine.” Frank has completed three end-to-end hikes of the FLT. Hot on Frank Bianco’s heels was Joe Dabes from Dryden, New York. In 2001, Joe completed backpacking the FLT in a record 23 days, averaging 24.4 miles per day.

Ten years of planning, months of scouting, and weeks of brushcutting and marking carried the FLT to new heights in the Catskill Mountains. Nine miles of road walk for the FLT were eliminated in 1997 with a new trail route through the heart of the Balsam Lake Mountain Wild Forest. The new route climbs steadily to the summit of Balsam Lake Mountain. At 3,720 feet it is the highest point along the FLT’s 555-mile route. The project, including construction of the Beaver Meadows Lean-to, was

completed by early November thanks to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and volunteers from the Mid-Hudson Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club and the Finger Lakes Trail Conference.

The first “Trail Medicine” article appeared in the *Finger Lakes Trail News* in summer of 1998. It was written by Bob Michiel, M.D. Bob has recruited other writers in the medical professions to write articles for this popular column in every issue of the *Finger Lakes Trail News* since then.

The first year of the new millennium (2001) was a banner year for the FLTC. On April 27 the FLTC Service Center was moved from the home of Howard and Dorothy Beye in Rochester to a new office at the Mt. Morris Dam north of Letchworth State Park. The trail operations office remained at the Beyes’ home. The grand opening of the new service center was celebrated on June 2, National Trails Day, with over 100 people from the FLTC and Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway enjoying barbecued chicken, a live reptile show, brief speeches, and guided tours of the office. To staff the new service center, the FLTC hired its first paid employees: Executive Director Gene Bavis and Office Manager Gert Hauck.

The FLTC commemorated its 25th anniversary during a weekend celebration at Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York, on May 22 to 25, 1987. A variety of hikes, workshops, tours, and lectures were on the program. The featured speaker of the weekend, Anne LaBastille, drew hundreds of members and non-members to the college auditorium.

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Anne is a noted lecturer and the author of *Woodswoman*, *Beyond Black Bear Lake*, *Mama Poc: An Ecologist's Account of the Extinction of a Species*, and *Women and Wilderness*, among others. She is a strong supporter of the "forever wild" concept for the Adirondack Park. Henry Williams, commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, presented several awards to trail sponsors and a special volunteer award—the first ever given by the department—to Ervin Markert.

The 30th anniversary also was celebrated at Ithaca College during a special weekend gathering in June 1992. This 4-day event included hikes,

speakers, workshops, and tours. Featured speakers included Cindy Ross, a thru-hiker of the 2,100-mile Appalachian Trail and the 2,500-mile Pacific Crest Trail. She has written two books on her experiences: *A Woman's Journey* and *Journey to the Crest*. Other speakers included Bill Ehling, author of the well-known *Fifty Hikes in Central New York* and *Fifty Hikes in Western New York*, and Rick Marsi, noted outdoor writer. A special ceremony near Hoxie Gorge in Cortland County commemorated the completion of the main FLT and the realization of Wallace Wood's dream of a continuous hiking trail across New York State.

The 40th anniversary was held at Mt. Morris, New York, from April 26 to 28, 2002. Besides the 40th anniversary of the FLTC, the weekend celebration also commemorated the 1st anniversary of the new FLTC Service Center at the Mt. Morris Dam. Fran Gotcsik, director of Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway, and Joe Dabes were featured evening speakers. A special "Old Timers' Fireside Chat" enchanted listeners as early FLT builders and FLTC members told how they scouted and built the FLT and its fledgling organization. □