

Land donated for Jamesville nature park

By Tami S. Zimmerman

Thanks to Hansen Aggregates, residents of the town of DeWitt will soon be able to enjoy a new public park. Fiddlers Green, set to open sometime in 2008, will be built on 11 acres donated to the town by Hansen. The park was dedicated on June 13.

"In a sense Fiddlers Green Park is Jamesville's "back to the future," said Gerald Aloï, executive director of FPGA. "This park will reclaim a piece of our history at a place where our predecessor's enjoyed family life."

In the 1800s, it was common for visitors to frequent the same area – to enjoy a day in the country by Butternut Creek for picnics, fishing and general recreation.

Long-time Jamesville resident Bob Reals said his family has lived in the area for more than 200 years. He remembers going to the "crick" as a child, and recalls spending most of his summers barefoot in the park.

"By giving [the land] to the park association, we hope it creates a great atmosphere going back in history," said Dan Mehan, general manager of Hansen Aggregates New York Inc. "Hansen does take great pride in doing this.



Pictured from left to right during the dedication of Fiddlers Green Park are FGPA Executive Director Gerald Aloï, DeWitt Town Supervisor Jim DiStefano and General Manager Dan Mehan of Hansen Aggregates.

We don't do it very often."

Hansen Aggregates, headquartered in London, acquired the Jamesville Quarry, which sits in the towns of DeWitt and LaFayette, in 1992. The company is the United States' third largest producer of aggregate – broken stone, gravel and sand used in road construction.

History of Fiddlers Green

Fiddlers Green is defined in the dictionary as "an imagined Elysian field for sailors and vagabond craftsmen, where one's credit is good and where always there is a lass, a glass and a song." It well lived up to the sailor's fantasy, people traveled from miles around to enjoy the pavilion and the refreshing view of the falls. Fiddlers Green was a favorite spot for picnics and summer social events of Jamesville residents, as well. Popularity of the picnic area was at its peak in 1916.

Robert Dunlop owned Fiddlers Green and it remained in the family until "Young Rob" Dunlop sold the resort to the Syracuse Suburban Railroad on May 1, 1903, as the railroad acquired its right of way. The popular picnic spot was renamed Dunlop Park when stairs were made into the gorge. The name, Fiddlers Green, however, had so long been used that the tribute was soon forgotten.

Note: The original Fiddlers Green was just north of the current park (across the road to Jamesville Quarry).

Source: fiddlersgreenpark.org

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Fiddler

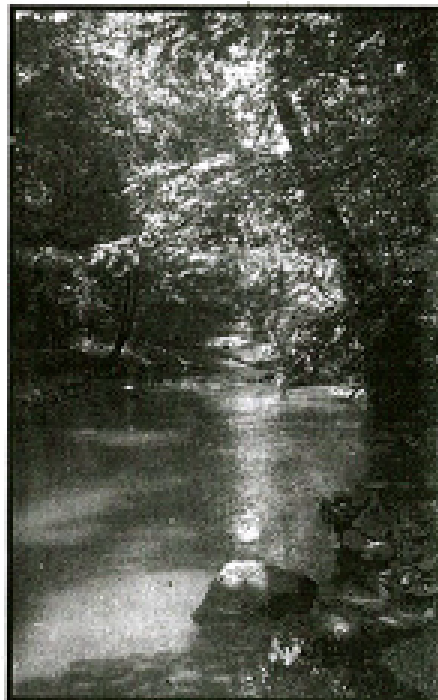
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The newly acquired parcel is located between North Street and Solvay Road in the hamlet of Jamesville.

While the town now owns the land, it is up to the Fiddlers Green Park Association to push the project forward through fundraising, park initiatives, development and sustainability of community spaces.

"The intention is to keep [the park] as natural as possible," Aloï said. "There's not going to be any enclosed structures. There may be pavilions, picnic tables, things of that sort, but it's going to be kept in its natural state."

Vince Sportelli, chairman of DeWitt Parks and Recreation Commission, said the long-term strategy is to build on the existing parcel by obtaining smaller ones as they become available. This plan would allow for more green space and recreational pursuits, Sportelli said.



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Butternut Creek

One of the challenges the FGPA faces; however, is accessibility. Butternut Creek forms a boundary on one side of the park, while a rather steep slope exists on the other end next to Solvay Road. The park association must find a way to jump this hurdle in order for people to gain safer entry. Obtaining other parcels should help make access easier to the general public, as well as create an area for public parking, said Kim Ball, director of DeWitt Parks and Recreation.

"Fiddlers Green Park will be possible only because of a company's goodwill, the foresight and support of the town of DeWitt, and the community's robust support of this initiative," Alois said.

The FGPA intends to accomplish its purpose – to lead efforts in preserving and creating natural areas and community park space within Jamesville – through community participation and volunteerism. For more information, visit its web site at fiddlersgreenpark.org or email mail@fiddlersgreenpark.org.