



Dick Blume / Staff photographer

GERALD ALOI (*right*) president of the Fiddlers Green Park Association, talks with Ken Andrews and Irene Scruton, DeWitt Town Board members, by Butternut Creek, where the park will be.

## Planned Park Has History

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By Frederic Pierce

**Staff writer**

As a young boy, Gerald Aloï used to haul buckets of water from Butternut Creek to his grandfather's tomato patch off Solvay Road in DeWitt.

It was one of many garden plots that Solvay Process, the former owner of the Jamesville Rock Quarry, let recent immigrants plant on property that couldn't be used for mining stone. Families turned it into an unofficial park area, holding picnics under the trees and playing ball in the clearings.

Those memories stayed with Aloï, now 50, and inspired a vision that took a ceremonial step forward last week, as members of the community, town officials and an executive for the quarry's current owner formally recognized the creation of Fiddlers Green park.

"Fiddlers Green is Jamesville's 'Back to the Future,' " Aloï said Wednesday during a ceremony to mark the transfer of 12 acres of land from quarry owner Hanson Aggregates to the town of DeWitt. "This area and adjacent land just north of this site was a place for families, picnics and recreation as far back as the 1800s."

The wooded area now owned by the town is roughly bounded by Solvay Road, North Street and the Glen Loch restaurant. Butternut Creek flows through both it and the site of

the original Fiddlers Green picnic area that was popular early in the last century. That site is just north of the planned park.

DeWitt officials have already spent a little less than \$5,000 on legal costs and surveying related to the land transfer, but responsibility for raising money to develop the site with trails, picnic tables and other public amenities rests with the Fiddlers Green Park Association, which Alois heads.

One of the ways the association hopes to do that is by selling symbolic "shares" of the park to community supporters. Both DeWitt Supervisor Jim DiStefano and Dan Meehan, Hanson's general manager for New York state, received stock certificates granting them ceremonial "ownership" in the park.

The town hopes to open the area to the public next spring, said Kim Ball, DeWitt's director of parks and recreation.

Much needs to be done by then. Trails must be carved along the creek and through the woods. Access from Solvay Road must be built. Some growth must be cleared, and some debris must be pulled from the water.

Association members and town officials see Fiddlers Green primarily as a historic natural area that needed to be preserved.

"There will be picnic tables, and maybe a pavilion, but you won't see any buildings here," Alois said.

Other volunteer officials in the non-profit association include Sue Eiholzer, who created a slick brochure about the park; her husband, Paul, who created a Fiddlers Green Website at [www.fiddlersgreenpark.org](http://www.fiddlersgreenpark.org); Bob Hopkins, Jean Brown, Bob Catney, Greg Titus, Teresa Lutoborski and town Councilor Ed Michalenko.

Eventually, the group hopes to buy additional parcels of adjacent land to add to the green space. Ideally, a corridor of parkland would connect Fiddlers Green with other green areas in DeWitt such as Jamesville Beach and Clark Reservation, Michalenko said.

"This is so beautiful," said Irene Scruton, who joined fellow town board members Michalenko, DiStefano and Ken Andrews in the sun-dappled clearing where the ceremony was held. "I don't want to leave. You really just want to take out a book and sit."



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**IRENE SCRUTON**, a member of the DeWitt Town Board, talks with Gerald Aloï, president of the Fiddlers Green Park Association, by Butternut Creek in Jamesville, where the park will be.