



Friends of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, Inc.

Post Office Box 995, Morrisville, VT 05661

FEBRUARY 2008

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If you are receiving this newsletter by US Mail and you have an e-mail address, please send your name and e-mail address to info@FriendsLVRT.org so that in the future we can communicate with you via e-mail. This is much quicker and cheaper for us. Also please let us know what you'd like covered in our next Newsletter tentatively scheduled for June. Thank you.

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FLVRT Annual Meeting

On Saturday, October 20, 2007, the Friends of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail ("Friends") held their second annual meeting at the Charlmont Resturant in Morrisville, Vermont.

At the annual meeting, the chair of the "Friends", Heidi Krantz, reviewed the accomplishments of this fledgling organization during its first full year in operation. They obtained 501(c) 3 status, which means they are legally a non-profit organization so donations will be tax-deductible. They created a website www.friendslvrt.org, they have submitted an application for a Transportation Enhancements Grant to create a trail amenities plan focused on non-motorized users. The FLVRT goals for the upcoming year include:

- (1) increasing membership;
- (2) getting at least limited portions of the trail open for summer use in 2008;
- (3) working with VAST to develop a schedule for completing trail development; and
- (4) fundraising for completing trail development.

Following the business

portion of the meeting, Alan Robertson, the primary engineer hired to evaluate and oversee the LVRT, gave a report on his recently completed assessment of the 96 miles long trail (see Lamoille Valley Rail Trail – What Does It Have to Offer?) accompanied by a slide show. For the most part, all the rails and ties have been removed, and the 96-mile long trail, which passes through 17 towns by the way, is left with a gravely rail bed – no fun for horses, bikers or walkers! There are also 61 bridges, many of which are impassable, and hundreds of public, private and cattle crossings. Some of the trail is underwater (thanks usually to beavers) and some is totally overgrown or disappeared due to landslides. Additionally, there have been many "encroachments" on the trail, often by adjacent landowners. Some are nice, like a lovely pond; others are a major problem, like a private dump. This is clearly a big job!

Due to a landslide from the trail that was threatening a neighbor's back yard, the state asked VAST to restore about a half-mile of the trail in East

Hardwick near Route 16. This gave the engineer a good sense of what it will take to restore the entire trail, and also the chance to try the considered surfaces. The plan is to use "Stay-Mat" for most of the trail, which is what many of us have on our driveways. They are also considering re-used crushed asphalt for parts of the trail that will be very wet (Stay-Mat does not do well under water.) Both materials were used on this section of trail.

Any trail enthusiast should stay on top of this project by visiting the websites occasionally. Even better, become a member of "Friends". The more members this "non-motorized" group has, the stronger our voice will be. The Friends Board meetings are held in Morrisville every other month and are open to all members. Additionally if you'd like to be more involved there are a number of Committees focusing on specific issues such as Communications, fundraising, trail work and maintenance, etc. If you'd like to be more involved contact us at our website or at FLVRT, PO Box 995 Morrisville, VT 05661.

Lamoille Valley Rail Trail: What does it have to offer?



A prime example of a hidden gem along the LVRT, a cattle pass from long ago

"The railroad employees or contractors who performed this work knew what they were doing to complete the work they did and at the level of quality and craftsmanship that their work exhibits more than a century after it was completed."



Large stone arch in Walden

By Matt Tetreault, all photos by Alan Robertson PE & Matt Tetreault, VAST Trails Assistant.

Note: This article and photos first appeared in the VAST Newsletter in November 2007 and is reprinted in an edited form, due to space limitations, in the FLVRT Newsletter by permission.

I recently assisted the engineer and project manager for the "LVRT Assessment" which began in the middle of May 2007. Our objective was to locate, photograph and make notes on the condition of all drainage structures along the trail. We also inspected and photographed bridges, washouts, problem areas, road and farm crossings, and encroachments. We had a GPS to collect data along the trail and mark all of the items mentioned above to complement the photos and notes taken by Alan. This turned out to be a huge task as there are more than 500 drainage structures along the LVRT, not to mention the farm crossings, road crossings and encroachments we discovered. It was during the process of locating all of the items listed above that I started gaining a sense of what the LVRT had to offer. I had an understanding of the charm the trail possessed for walking, running, biking, skiing, dog sledding and snowmobiling, but I came to realize there were other reasons why people may

want to utilize this trail.

One of the first things I noticed was the great variation in the terrain. I was amazed at the amount of work that must have gone into construction of this railroad. I couldn't help but wonder how it was possible to construct something of this magnitude during the late 1800's and early 1900's? The excavation and blasting of material and rocks in the cuts, the gargantuan amounts of material needed in the fill areas and the construction of the massive bridges, stone culverts and various cattle passes. How was it possible with nothing more than man or horsepower and possibly steam-powered equipment? The railroad employees or contractors who performed this work knew what they were doing to complete the work they did and at the level of quality and craftsmanship that their work exhibits more than a century after it was completed.

When I wasn't occupied looking at the terrain on either side of the railroad bed I was busy viewing the drainage structures and cattle passes scattered all along the trail. After viewing a few of them, I started to realize how wonderful these structures were, and how hidden they were from view while traveling along the trail.

The real gems are hidden below the ballast of the

railroad, sometimes by hundreds of feet of fill. They are constructed of materials you do not generally see in modern day drainage structures as the majority of them were built prior to the introduction of concrete into the construction trades. These gems are the stone arches, stone box culverts, and cattle passes that have been rarely viewed in the last 30 years. Many of these structures are easy to walk right over without even knowing there was anything there due to the large amounts of brush growing in on the sides of the trail. Despite this we took the time to find them all. I assure you that it was well worth the effort.

There are a couple of notable structures that come to mind. The first and I guess what I would consider the "1st wonder of the LVRT" is the stone arch located in a high fill area in Walden (see photos). You would never know it, but as you are traveling along the surface of the LVRT in this high fill area there is a stone arch below you that is approximately 22' x 24' x 200' long. The waters of the Morrill Brook run through it at a steady pace. This arch is impressive with cut pieces of ledge used for the bench of the arch and cut granite for the keystones. The arch looks as if it were just built. These stones have to weigh at least a few thousand pounds each if not more. This piece of art and

Snowshoe/Ski On the Trail on Saturday, March 8 at 2:00 PM

On Saturday, March 8 at 2:00 PM please join us for a snowshoe or cross country ski starting in Hyde Park Village. Discover the pleasures of walking or skiing so close to a village center but removed from the noise and dangers of traffic. Please meet at the Law Office of Polow Polow & Mahoney, Grant Building, 111 Main Street in the Village, two buildings to the east of the Hyde Park Opera House. We will have a short walk to the trail from the Village

and then tour the trail for approximately one hour. Hot chocolate and cookies after the tour. Depending on the snow conditions, it may be preferable to snowshoe on this date. Please email Dave Polow at polowlaw@aol.com if you have any questions are if you would like to borrow snowshoes.



To contact
 Friends of the Lamoille
 Valley
 Rail Trail, Inc. ...

MAIL:
 PO Box 995
 Morrisville, VT 05661

E-MAIL:
Info@FriendsLVRT.org

A special THANK YOU to Concept Two in Morrisville for their generous support for the Friends of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, both financially and in other ways. Their support has been very helpful and is much appreciated!!!

A Glimpse at the Future of the LVRT

When a large landslide washed out a section of the rail trail in East Hardwick last year, officials at VAST saw it as an opportunity to try out some clearing techniques they hope to use to on other sections of the trail. Described as a "prototype" section by VAST engineer Alan Robertson, the .6-mile section just off Route 16 is a glimpse at what the trail can be someday.

The project, completed during the summer of 2007, encompassed what Robertson calls the big cost items of preparing the trail: clearing, ditching, and grading. VAST used

a hydraulic tree mulcher to blast through densely overgrown areas along the sides of the trail. Excavation equipment was used to dig ditches to facilitate better drainage. The existing ballast was graded in an attempt to pull out vegetation from the bed of the trail by the roots. Time will tell if this method will deter re-growth.

Three trail surfaces are featured along the prototype. Walking along the section heading west, you first encounter a surface of ¾ inch crusher run, followed by a short section of recycled

crushed asphalt. The rest of the surface is the re-graded existing ballast.

While the current conditions along the almost 100 mile Lamoille Valley Rail Trail vary greatly, the .6 mile section in East Hardwick gives us a vision of the potential of the trail, and brings us a step closer to making it a year round trail for all to enjoy.



"...the .6 mile section in East Hardwick gives us a vision of the potential of the trail..."



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Dated box culvert on the LVRT

history is well worth the hike down over the embankment, however it is just one of many structures to look at. There are a couple of other stone arches along the LVRT that are worth a look as well. There are two located in Franklin County (see photo) and another near Morrisville in Lamoille County.

In addition to the stone arch drainage structures there are also numerous truss style bridges to look at. These are pretty obvious as their rusted surfaces tower above the trees and protrude from the landscape in multiple directions. It appears that the American Bridge Company constructed many of them circa 1917. A few of the bridges did not survive the 1927 flood and were replaced in the years following. Unfortunately many of the plates marking the dates on the bridges have been taken as souvenirs. Even so, the massive bridges are still great to look at. The one spanning the Missisquoi River in Sheldon is probably one of the largest with three spans at approximately 135' each for a total of around 400+ feet in length (see photo).

Another interesting piece of history that caught my eye was the fact that you could see the old wood pilings from the trestles that used to span many of the streams, and rivers. Over time these wooden trestles were replaced with the steel truss style bridges, which exist today. The old wooden pilings sticking just a few inches above the water and

are all that remains of an era in history that is now gone for good. Other structures along the LVRT with historical value are the abundant cattle passes that dot the landscape. Some are constructed of a ledge like stone or a mixture of railroad ties and irons, and are fairly small and simple while others are much larger and more noticeable, and are constructed of cut granite. When the railroad was built Vermont was mostly comprised of fields and farming operations and these cattle passes were probably used daily by the farmers who owned land along the railroad. Now in place of the pastures there is thick forest that has been growing for many years. Many of the cattle passes were difficult to pick out due to the canopy that had grown over, around and even on top of them. Interestingly enough we did find one cattle pass in East Hardwick with a date etched into it by the craftsman who built it.

Last but certainly not least, I must make mention of the numerous stone box culverts. There are many of these to view along the way and they all have unique personalities, as they are each a bit different in some way, either in their size or the type of stone used to construct them. Some are 1' x 1' right up through to double 5'x6' stone boxes. These are all works of art that are worth looking at (see photo). I also included an impressive stonewall in my list of gems (see photo). This wall was built along the Lamoille River

in Hardwick. It was discovered accidentally one day while searching for the outlet to a culvert nearby. It appears that the railroad constructed this wall in an effort to protect the railroad from being scoured by the flow of the water in the river. I know there are other structures and sites similar to this one to be re-discovered. I am certain that many of these structures have not been looked at in some time, and this to me is a shame. On a little side note I have to say that there were a number of days I wished I had a fishing pole and an afternoon to fish some of the fishing holes we passed by while traveling along the trail. Some of these holes are what anglers dream about.

So, I encourage you to get out and enjoy all that the LVRT has to offer. The LVRT is a great thing that is going to take time to fully complete. I can guarantee you that the reward will be worth the effort. The photos and descriptions in this article are just a small sampling of what is out there to see. Observing the hidden gems I have discussed requires getting off the trail and down over the embankments into the brush, but I assure you it is well worth it. I will leave you with one last closing remark, and that is the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail is like many other things in life in the sense that there is more to it than meets the eye!

Board of Directors

Heidi Krantz, *President*
Morrisville, 888-1731
trg@pshift.com

David Polow, *Vice President*
Morrisville, 888-7707
polowlaw@aol.com

Bill Bartlett, *Treasurer*
Hyde Park, 888-5591
pairfarmbb@aol.com

Laural Ruggles, *Secretary*
Glover, 748-7590
l.ruggles@nvrh.org

Roger Damon, St. Johnsbury
748-3630 rogdoris@sover.net

Red Goodman, Waitsfield
224-6514
president@vtmushers.org

Leon Whitcomb, Morrisville
888-7716 lawhitcomb@aol.com

Sharon Ahern, Morrisville,
888-6805 vtahern@comcast.net

Dan Noyes, Wolcott
888-6983 dan@streambanks.org

If you're not currently a member, please join us

Current members of the FLVRT, as well as legislators and local selectboards representing towns along the LVRT to whom we sent copies of our Newsletter free, are indicated by an asterisk (*) after their name.

If there is not an asterisk (*) after your name, or you have received this Newsletter via email from "FLVRTListB" that means you are not a current member and we would ask you to please join the FLVRT right now! You can do this either by using the form with this newsletter or by going to our website at www.friendslvrt.org. Your support will help us be an effective voice for developing the LVRT to its full economic potential and in a manner

that meets the needs of non-motorized users for biking, hiking, walking, equestrian, bird watching, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, mushing, etc.

While some progress is being made slowly, we are the only organization whose sole purpose is to advocate for the interests of non-motorized users and economic development related to the LVRT. Please take a minute to help us expand the FLVRT Membership to make the voice of non-motorized users, adjoining landowners and businesses stronger as critical decisions are being made regarding the Trail's development. The FLVRT is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Help us expand the FLVRT Membership

Whether you're currently a member or not, please help us recruit additional members by sharing the attached membership form with your friends and those whom you think will be interested in being kept informed as the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail is developed. This is important, the more members we can recruit, the stronger the voice the non-motorized users of this Trail will be as important decisions are made. Please take the few minutes it will take to encourage new members to join.



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POST OFFICE BOX 995
MORRISVILLE, VT 05661**



Friends of the Lamolle Valley Rail Trail, Inc.

"To support the development, maintenance, and promotion of the Lamolle Valley Rail Trail as a public resource offering a tranquil and scenic year-round multi-use recreation and transportation corridor; and especially to represent the interests of non-motorized trail users."

POST OFFICE BOX 995, MORRISVILLE, VT 05661

Become a member! (or renew your membership)

Our membership year runs from July 1st to June 30th.

\$10 Individual \$20 Family/Household

\$25 Business/Organization

Additional Donation:
 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500

Thank you for your support!

- I am interested in using the LVRT for:
- biking birding equestrian fishing
 - hiking jogging mushing commuting
 - walking xc skiing
 - other _____

I am interested in management involvement such as being on the board of directors, standing committees, trail work groups.

You may publish my contact information with other Friends. Yes No

Name _____

Affiliation (if any)
Such as recreation group, town, business. _____

Mailing Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Email _____

(Providing your email address will allow us to send you our newsletter electronically and save valuable dollars. We may also occasionally send news alerts or other communications.)

Please write any messages or concerns on the back of this form.

Thank You!



Your membership dollars and donation will be used to:

- match grants for the trail's planning & construction,
- build the constituency for non-motorized uses,
- educate the public and decision-makers about the trail.

This mailing has been sponsored by a contribution from Polow, Polow and Mahoney, attorneys in the Grant Building in Hyde Park, Vermont. ***Their support and sponsorship is much appreciated!!!***

If you, your organization or business would like to be a sponsor for future Newsletters or other FLVRT sponsored events, please contact us via our website at www.friendsLVRT.org or by mail at FLVRT, PO Box 995, Morrisville, VT 05661.



"A box culvert along the LVRT"