

Spring, 2010

April Fools' Issue



Untangle Your Boots And...Work!

Special points to ponder:

- What should you do if you suspect something you find along the trail could have historic value?
- What does 'moldering' mean?
- What are the two key percentages to remember when building (or rebuilding) a sidehilled section of trail?

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TRAIL TENDERS' NEWS

A publication from Trail Quality's Travelin' Training Team

Finger Lakes Trail Conference

Warning: This issue contains *some* stories that are written *as if* they are true. Although the stories themselves are not true, *some* of the information in them is. The questions raised by these jokes, fabrications and hoaxes are important; the points made are valid; and the standards and policies mentioned are legitimate. See if you can sort the wheat from the chaff; please allow yourself to laugh, or at least chuckle, once or twice; and please forgive everything that's in questionable taste.

"Archeology for Trail Builders" Workshop Leads to Amazing Find

After attending an "Archeology for Trail Builders" workshop last spring, Mary Coffin and Lynda Rummel chanced upon what may be "the find" of a lifetime. Their story follows, told in their own words. (Please note: The analysis of "the find," by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, has not been concluded, yet.)

Mary and Lynda were checking the condition of the Van Zandt Lean-to in Sugar Hill State Forest (M14), because Joe Dabes' sidekick, Don McClimans, who was GPS'ing the old route of the FLT, had reported that the shelter and the trail south from it were in disrepair. (The FLTC stopped maintaining the Van Zandt Lean-to and the trail in 2006 when the FLT was rerouted away from it.)

Among several problems Don reported was a hole in the shelter's floor. While inspecting the condition of the boards around the hole, Mary observed a rectangular object in the dirt under the floorboards. Thinking that this was just an old shelter register, Mary bravely reached into the small abyss and lifted the object up to the shelter's dim daylight. It looked to be just an old, somewhat decayed diary or notebook. They removed a couple of loose floorboards, to get a closer look. In the dark of the shelter, they were unable to see much, so they dug out their headlamps and lay down on the floor and peered into the enlarged hole and saw...absolutely nothing except the detritus of decades of use, animal droppings, spider nests, and the book's outline in the dust.

Knowing that Ed Sidote would get a huge kick out of this old journal, Lynda and Mary studied "their find." They were surprised to see that the tattered and somewhat mildewed cover was made of leather and the handwriting inside was in the fine penmanship of bygone times. With a shock,

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New Outhouse Designs

The saga of finding just the right privy for different locations and financial conditions along the Finger Lakes Trail continues. First, we found plans for an affordable and ADA-compliant wooden "open aire" back country pit toilet (also called a wilderness toilet, Wallowa toilet, or chum toilet) that can be built by a small crew in a day with a minimal amount of labor and expense. A very affordable fiberglass model is also available, and we are exploring the possibility of pre-cutting the necessary materials for the wooden one. Secondly, we found plans for both *non-ADA-* and ADA-compliant moldering toilets, but moldering toilets cost roughly **10 times more** than the chum (\$250 or less vs. \$2500 or more), and it takes a skilled crew *days* to haul in the materials and construct the cribs, shed and ramp. Third, we received a number of excellent ideas for alternative toilets, two of which are family-friendly enough to share with you on the following page.

[Please see p. 2 for photos and designs.](#) 1

Toilet Designs...Continued from p. 1

No Joke Moldering Toilets

First, **Just What is a Moldering Toilet Anyway?** A moldering toilet is simply a waterless toilet that is built to allow for very long term slow decomposition in place – the waste molders, rather than composts, much as leaves and plant debris "molder" on the surface of soil through the action of bacteria, fungi, and microorganisms. With moldering, the "technology" applied for waste treatment is mainly isolation, and simply time itself! All that is required is a temperature and humidity stable aerated vault that can support enhanced growth of fungus.

--The Sunny John Papers, www.sunnyjohn.com



Moldering toilet at Spence Fields, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, c. 1992. Photo by gcw, at www.molderingprivy.com. Below: ADA-compliant moldering toilet at Goddard. Photo from the National Forest Service.

Above: In the traditional moldering toilet, a roofed shed sits on a platform atop a ~3'x3'x3' crib (an above-ground "vault") that allows air to circulate around the waste. When the waste pile reaches capacity (1-3 years, depending on usage), maintainers move the shed onto a second crib built immediately alongside. Inside the shed are a benched toilet seat and a bucket kept filled with leaves and other organic matter, a handful of which the user adds to the pile when done. A shallow depression in the crib's dirt floor collects liquids, and hardware cloth is secured around the inside of the crib to keep animals out. Steps and a shed with no turning space make this toilet inaccessible.

Below: In the ADA-compliant moldering toilet, the crib sits half-way down in a dug-out space, to reduce the length of the access ramp that must be kept at < ~5% grade. 2 of the 4 sides are open to the air and several inches of open space are left between the pit's 2 sides and the crib so air can circulate. The shed must be large enough to allow a wheel-chaired user to turn around; the ramp must



be wide and level enough for the wheel-chaired user to swing the door open while maneuvering. The ADA-compliant moldering toilet has a large footprint overall and a materials bill of roughly \$2500.

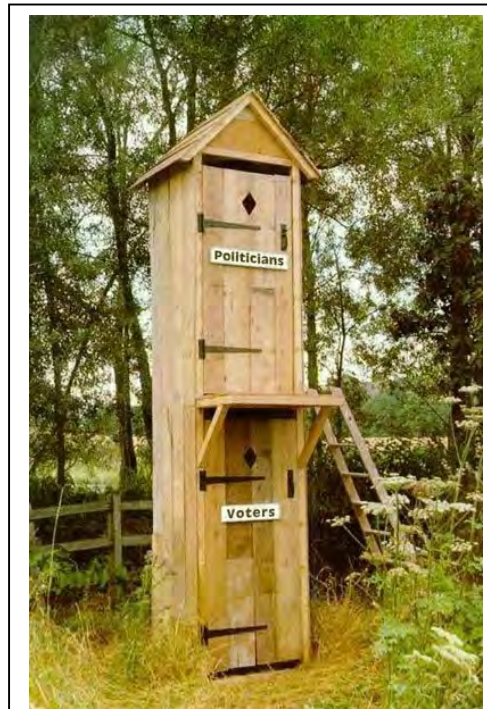
Just Kidding! Composting Toilets enclose the waste and through the addition of chemicals or other means generate moist heat that speeds up the process considerably. "Waterless, self-contained" non-electrical options are available from Envirolet (Sancor) and other companies; some are as simple as a 5 gal. bucket with a seat on top, while others require two stories. Below L: Envirolet's waterless remote toilet. Hot color and nice green surroundings, but not a realistic option (for many reasons) for a permanent trail toilet.



Seriously Simple Pit Toilets

The waste in pit toilets eventually goes away, but it can take a long time. However, if not heavily used, that's usually not much of a problem. Remember the spooky old outhouse building with the half-moon door? Today's pit toilet does away with both spiders and smell by omitting the walls and roof, which makes it also ADA-compliant. Both wooden and fiberglass models of these affordable (< \$250) and quick-to-assemble wilderness toilets were discussed in earlier issues of the TTN. Above R: Wooden model.

The Reality Pit Toilet begins with the premises that gravity should be used to accelerate the decomposition process, and hikers approximate voters in the lobbying pecking order.



Amazing Find! continued from p. 1...

they realized the writing was in French! Mary, who picked up French while leading many trips abroad, gently turned the pages. "It's not modern French," she said, picking up the pace at which she turned the pages. Suddenly, she began to read names out aloud...first, Le Moyne, then Dablon and Chaumonot, then Jean de Quen, in succession as she turned the pages more rapidly. At the end of the journal, the signature was only partially legible...it seemed to be... Le Mercier! The starting date was February 5th, the ending date was October 25th, but the years were smudged. Holding the smudged dates up to the light, Mary said, "Wow. It looks like 1654 and 1656."

OMG. Could this be the "lost" journal, penned by Le Mercier, the mission's superior, of Ste. Marie Among the Iroquois? For a few moments, they sat at the edge of the shelter in silence. The names meant almost nothing to Lynda, who had studied Washington State's history, not New York's; but Mary was clearly in near-shock. "It must be a prank," Mary the scientist said quietly, "some very bright kid's sophisticated hoax. The old language, the historic names from New France, and the smudged dates could be just clever ways to suck us into to this fake mystery."

But intrigued despite herself, Mary read on, slowly digging out the gist of each passage from the old language. Long entries detailed the Jesuit's response to the Onondaga's request for a French colony, Christian teaching, and protection against the Eries, but finally Mary came to a plan to protect the Onondagas that seemed so modern that it was almost plausible. The plan, she paraphrased, was to capitalize on a widespread Indian belief that giants had walked the earth by pairing it with a biblical teaching that said the same thing. The Great Spirit had turned the giants to stone, creating the stone quarries in the region; now the French would turn the quarries back into giants by carving out huge stone guardian figures to keep the Eries at bay!

OMG. OMG. At this point, both Lynda and Mary burst out laughing. "This sounds like the origin of the Cardiff Giant!" Mary said. Yes,

Lynda agreed – remembering that in 1869, not everyone had believed that the Cardiff Giant was a hoax perpetrated by James Hull. At that time, others had speculated that the giant was a petrified man, an ancient figure created by an earlier people, or a statue carved by the Jesuits to impress the Indians.

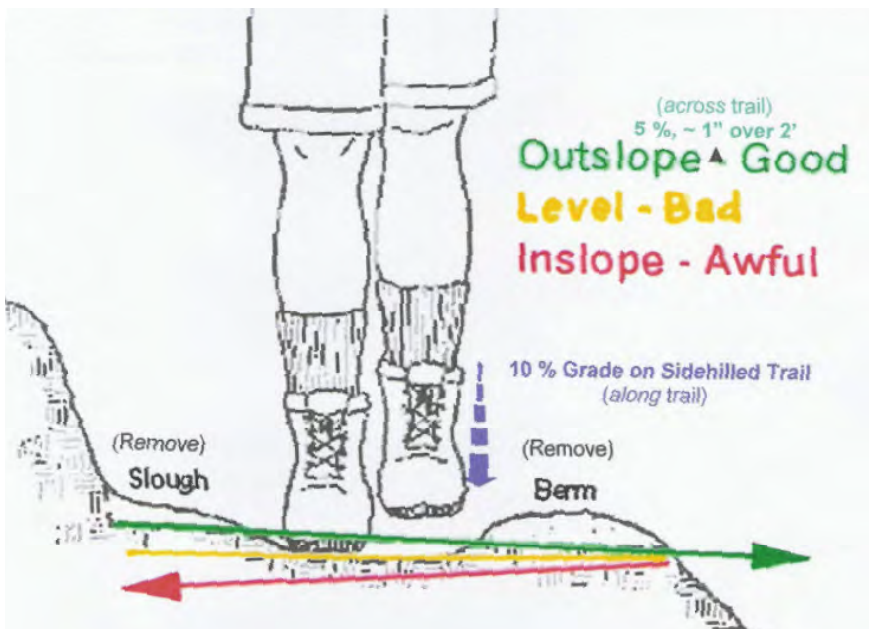
They sat in silence again. Then Lynda said that the pages looked old. "What if this journal is real? I read a while ago that Le Mercier's journal from early 1654 to late 1656 has disappeared. And if it's a hoax, it's a pretty darn good one that should find its way to the Farmers' Museum someday anyway!" Lynda continued: "It's incredible to think that a real diary by the Jesuits in Syracuse would come to light from beneath the floor of the Van Zandt Lean-to! This is miles from Syracuse and 350 years later! How would it even get here?! And it's even more incredible to think that Hull's Cardiff Giant was a fake of real gigantic stones that were most likely Jesuit-carved statues of something that never existed at all!"

"I guess we've got to get this to the state archeologists," Mary said, meaning the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. "Unfortunately, we've handled this without gloves and we removed it from its original location. But fortunately we know exactly where it was. Let's replace the boards and hope nobody else disturbs anything. We'd better bag the book and take it out – we're not going to be back here anytime soon." And that's just what they did.

Below: See all of the Cardiff Giant's 10' 4" length at the Farmers' Museum, Cooperstown, NY.



Trail Basics – Sidehilling



It's No Joke! Water is a trail's worst enemy. Two strategies that work together can help prevent your sidehilled trail from eroding away:

#1 Imagine this headless hiker coming down trail that's been cut (benched) into the side of a hill, and behind the hiker, the trail rises at a grade of about 10%, and in front, the trail descends at about the same grade (blue arrow in drawing.)

#2 Now imagine that both the slough (the debris from the hillside that gravity has dumped on the inside of the trail) and the berm (the outer raised edge in this drawing) have been removed and the plane of the trail's surface has been sloped outward by ~5%, away from the hillside (green line in the drawing).

#1+#2 The 10% grade, easily determined by clinometers borrowed from the FLTC's tool crib, moves the hiker up and down the hill efficiently without any great strain but does not force hillside run-off to turn and flow down the trail. The 5% out-slope, which is about 3/4ths inch over an 18" wide tread, is just enough to move the run-off **across** the trail and off the outer edge. Congratulations -- you did a great job!

Presentation/Discussion and Hands-On, In-the-Field Trail Workshop

Tom Bryden, Trail Chair for the Bullthistles, has planned a trail maintenance/trail building workshop that will be held Saturday, April 24th, at the Nature Center at Bowman Lake State Park, from 9 a.m. to about 3 p.m. Bill and Mary Coffin, Irene Szabo, and Lynda Rummel will be there to provide the training. The workshop will focus on trail and corridor maintenance and on building trail tread that lasts. (Chainsawing will not be covered.) **The workshop is open to anyone interested in helping to maintain the Finger Lakes Trail as a premier hiking trail.** Coffee & donuts provided. Bring your own lunch and water; dress for outside work and weather conditions; bring work gloves. **Please sign-up with Tom at [snbdodger@yahoo.com](mailto:snbododger@yahoo.com) if you want to attend.** (Note: The workshop will end early enough for Ed Sidote's many friends to attend the banquet and Ed's induction into the New York State Outdoorsmen Hall of Fame, at Canasota, that evening. For information about this event and to make reservations, call (315) 363-3896 by April 17th.)

Serious Work But Lots of Fun! 2010 Alley Cat Crew Opportunities!!! #1 Build a shelter to replace the Tamarack Lean-to in Danby State Forest (near Ithaca, M17), **June 25th-July 2nd**. Construction mgr. – Ken Reek; “apprentices” -- Dave Potzler, Melanie Okoniewski. Camp at the worksite or stay at Lions Club Camp Badger (\$15 a night for cabin with water, shower, and toilet) where the meals will be served. Contact Gary Mallow at garymallow2004@yahoo.com or Quinn Wright at wrightquinn@hotmail.com for further info and to sign-up. (To help demolish the old shelter, please contact Gary.) #2 Continue the project to improve the NCT/Onondaga Branch trail section at Tinker Falls, Morgan Hills State Forest (east of Tully, O1), **August 2nd – August 6th**. Build stairs (Holland Ravines styles) and switchbacks. Camping area with portable hot water shower and portapotty available; better accommodations being sought. Contact Tony Rodriguez at boricua1037@verizon.net or Quinn Wright at wrightquinn@hotmail.com for more info and to sign-up. #3 Build a new lean-to in Beales Pond State Forest (near Masonville, M27), **Sept. 12th – 17th**. Construction mgr. – Dave Potzler; “coach” – Ken Reek. Camp on private property 10 min. from shelter site; water available; meals provided. Contact Mike Gebhard at mvgebhard@hughes.net or Quinn Wright at wrightquinn@hotmail.com if you want more info and to sign-up. Volunteers also needed to help with site prep and access, beginning in April; contact Mike for the exact dates and times.

Please send questions, comments, complaints, corrections, suggestions, new info or tips about trail building or tending, plus grocery coupons, to any member of the “Traveling Training Team”: Editor/writer -- Lynda “Mom Always Said I Had Poor Taste” Rummel (ljrassoc@roadrunner.com); Bill Coffin (wmscoffin@twcny.rr.com); Mary Coffin (mcoffin1@twcny.rr.com) and Irene Szabo (Treeweenie@aol.com).

WOW! April Fools' Issue
...plus Some Serious Stuff!
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