

I. Fiddlers Green Park – The Vision

“The nation (community) behaves well if it treats its natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value.”

— Theodore Roosevelt

In spirit of President Roosevelt’s quote, a rare opportunity was seized to recapture a historic green space lost through time to private ownership and decades of neglect, to serve as a Park for visitors and folks of the Jamesville community forever more. This all happened in the early 2000’s when a grassroots effort supported by hundreds of residents created a pathway for a corporate landowner and a municipality to adopt a common vision and to create a community asset for future generations – this triad of collaboration enabled the birth of a new community greenspace – **Fiddlers Green Park** – Jamesville’s **‘Back to the Future’** moment.

In the 1800’s in the Hamlet of Jamesville, Fiddlers Green was once the destination of folks traveling from neighboring towns and the City of Syracuse for the chance to enjoy the natural splendor of a winding creek surrounded by forested and rock accented settings. As **Dr. Bradford Sherwood** once exclaimed:” ... even before the Civil War it was a favorite place, always with a fiddler to lead the dancing and so it got its name”. **In 2007 ‘Fiddlers Green Park’ was born in a new location just South of the original Fiddlers Green.**

Aptly situated near the heart of the community on one of the main streets into the Hamlet, Fiddlers Green Park since 2007 has slowly transformed from a barely penetrable quagmire of uncontrolled vinery, prickly bushes, and a 20th century repository of old car parts, broken bottles on an otherwise privately posted 12-acre plot, into an attractive community park accented with natural vistas for folks of all ages and abilities to enjoy. As a nascent park emerging as ‘a diamond in the rough’, the potential effect of the Park is beginning to become apparent as parking, trails, fishing access, scattered benches and tables have attracted the attention of folks seeking their re-connection with nature.

The Fiddlers Green Park footprint is growing as is its value as a community asset... Since 2016, the Town of DeWitt purchased adjacent properties to the Park. The addition of more than 5 acres of land including North Street frontage will be a key visual attention getter once development plans are formulated and work to create another entrance is underway. A new entrance on a main street into town is vital to augment limited access of the existing entrances. Development plans cover a range of objectives like landscape planning, signage, parking, new trails, a pedestrian bridge across the creek, and a venue for individuals and/or groups to convene. Fiddlers Green Park is growing/will grow as an attraction of the Hamlet and the greater Community. As one of the few communities in Central NY that has grown over the last several years, improvements to Fiddlers Green Park will have an immediate effect of attracting people and have associated economic benefit to businesses and prospective newcomers to the town. As we push forward with the integration of the new Park parcels, capturing the interest and imagination of visitors is a design goalpost for the Park.

If physical attributes as highlighted above represent a cornerstone, then the foundation they are supported by must align with the natural elements and essence of the Park... which from its inception have had to do with learning and awareness. **John Muir** once said, ***“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks”***. As a key overlay in planning, the design focus will be guided on how visitors (individuals and groups) can become more aware of the surrounding natural space and learn something they may not have known prior to their visit.

The continued help and support of local organizations, scout groups, business and especially park patrons have been key to successful development thus far and will be the key to the evolution of the Park. The longer-term view has public interest at heart – plans for Fiddlers Green Park include connecting to other parks and trails leading to other destination points within the greater community including Clark Reservation, the center of the Hamlet, Jamesville Reservoir, and to the trails and Park systems in other areas in the Town of DeWitt, and the City of Syracuse.

II. Fiddlers Green Park – The Creation

Fiddlers Green Park was conceived by a seed of idea that grew into being through concerted efforts of grassroots team vision, open-minded Town leadership, a good corporate neighbor, and the will of a community pulling together to make it happen.

It all started in 1998 with an idea of how a vacant parcel of land with Butternut Creek winding through it might one day be transformed into a gem for the Jamesville community to enjoy. Timing wise, the idea coincided with a planned community visioning event to be held in the Jamesville Elementary School (JES) gymnasium in January 1999. The event was primarily for the Town and County to display their future plans for community improvements... it was also open to individuals that had ideas of their own to share. At the event, various booths were set up to display ideas on how the community could grow and improve as the millennium approached. Jamesville resident, Gerald 'Jerry' Aloï had an idea that he wanted to share in order to gauge interest in a new community park, so he set up a booth that laid-out a mock-up map of an area near to where a place called Fiddlers Green (the original destination greenspace) in Jamesville use to be and presented the concept of creating a new park. The visioning event was well attended and yielded positive results – many folks at the event knew of the land area presented and supported the idea of reclaiming the space for the community... thus started the mission for “Fiddlers Green Park” of the 21st Century.

The original Fiddlers Green was located North of the Solvay Rd bridge that crosses Butternut Creek. The old Fiddlers Green was active in the 1800's but had been lost by the early 1930's because of private ownership of the area and accessibility to it became unsafe because dilapidated stairways and otherwise ravine-like geographic features made it extremely hard to get to.

The new “Fiddlers Green Park” would be located on a contiguous parcel South of the Solvay Road bridge. The vision was clear to Jerry that the land of approximately 12 acres South of the bridge presented opportunity and an ideal place for a new park: the land was vacant, it was traversed by a picturesque creek, and it was quite close to the center of the Jamesville Hamlet. The challenge was that it was owned by a multinational company (Hanson Aggregates), had no trespassing warnings, and so was overgrown that no one would want to try to walk through it... Although trout anglers would brave the briars and brambles each spring in search of elusive brown trout. In the early to mid-20th century, this area was used by local town folks (many that worked at the quarry at the time) for playing ball and family gardens... unfortunately access was eventually cut-off and the dumping of trash and other unwanted things started to appear (even an old car was left there to rot in-place)... eventually the unused land succumbed to neglect and wild overgrowth.

In an effort to sell the idea of a new community park to the Town and greater community (the land identified for Fiddlers Green Park was within the Town of DeWitt jurisdiction), Mr. Aloï had initiated conversations with Ken Andrews (then Jamesville resident and Town Board member) about the idea in the early 2000's. Yet it wasn't until February of 2005 and again in May of that year, that he had the chance to deliver slide presentations of the initial concept of Fiddlers Green Park at Town Board meetings. Mr. James DiStefano was the Town of DeWitt Supervisor at the time and members of the Board that were most receptive to the idea of Fiddlers Green Park were Ed Michalenko (eventually succeeded Mr. DiStefano as Town Supervisor and lead Park advocate for the Town), Ken Andrews, Irene Scruton as well as Mr. DiStefano – every member of the Board was leaning in favor of the concept. Original thoughts about a private community group owning the park were discounted early in the process due to the realization that resources needed to maintain the park area were beyond the reach of a grassroots entity.

On the other side of the Fiddlers Green Park equation was a private company (Hanson Aggregates – limestone quarry). In a similar fashion to how/when the Town was contacted, Mr. Dan Mehan (Hanson's Regional Operations Manager) was contacted by Aloï in the 2001 - 2003 timeframe to introduce the idea of the area in question of becoming a park. Mr. Mehan was not immediately receptive to the idea because matters of running an industrial complex sometimes generated tensions between the Town and greater community, namely due to issues like truck traffic, blasting effects, and citizen complaints. In 2004, after meetings with Mr. Mehan and presenting the benefits of donating the land such as the prospect of reduced liabilities and the public relations value of donating property to the Town/Community for a park outweighed the negatives. It became apparent that such a donation would generate corporate goodwill at the Town and within the Jamesville-DeWitt community. Once Mr. Mehan was onboard with the concept, he had to propose and sell the idea to corporate leadership in Houston Texas... eventually, the request was granted (2006).

To move the whole project forward, Mr. Aloï assembled a small group of folks that supported the vision of a park, so in 2004, a newly formed community team spearheading the initiative was the start-up of the **Fiddlers Green Park Association (FGPA)**. One of the first objectives of the group was to initiate grassroots outreach that would get the community excited/onboard about the idea. Charter FGPA Board members included: Gerald Aloï (Jamesville resident, Jamesville Community Museum JCM Board member, JCI Energy Consultant, FGPA President), Greg Titus (Jamesville resident, Jamesville Community Museum Board member/Historian, Hanson

employee), Bob Hopkins Jr. (Jamesville resident, Jamesville Community Museum JCM Board member/Treasurer, SU Case Center accounting manager), Jean Brown (Jamesville resident, Jamesville Community Museum Board member, retired JES teacher), Robert Catney Ph.D., (Jamesville resident, Principle JES, Jamesville Community Museum Board member/President), Ed Michalenko Ph.D., (DeWitt resident, Town Board member/Supervisor, Onondaga Environmental Institute President), and Theresa Lutoborski (DeWitt resident, Landscape Architect). In order to try to generate support from the community, the FGPA launched a petition drive. The drive resulted in hundreds of resident endorsements for the nascent concept of Fiddlers Green Park. These signatures made it clear to the Town and Hanson that the vision had merit and that the community wanted to see this happen.

During the 2004 and 2006 timeframe, discussions between the FGPA, the Town and Hanson ensued. At some point within this time span a major issue identified by the Dewitt Town Board surfaced that threatened to end negotiations between the Town and Hanson and subsequently spell the end of the vision of the new Fiddlers Green Park – the issue centered around an old Lime Kiln wall boarding Solvay Road that was part of the proposed park footprint. Over the years the wall had begun to lean towards Solvay Road and was a potential liability to the Town if it ever collapsed, after much negotiation the Town agreed that it would accept the land contingent on the wall being made safer. At that point Mr. Mehan needed to address the Town's demand in order for things to move forward and was requested that Hanson do what it can to reduce the likelihood of the wall collapsing... thus reducing the liability associated with the wall that the Town was concerned about. Without much resistance and within months, Mr. Mehan used the equipment, material, and labor resources of Hanson to significantly reduce the height of the wall (approx. by 10-15 feet) and backfill the slope above the wall with large stones at no cost to the Town. After the work was completed in the Fall of 2006, the land transfer was approved by the Town and administrative work relative to the transaction was completed in early 2007.

After seven years of persistent effort, multilateral support, good faith negotiations... and much good fortune, Fiddlers Green Park was officially dedicated in April 2007.

As seen in the explanation written on the petition that was placed in businesses within the Hamlet, there were two initial primary hurdles that needed to be addressed: 1) convince the private corporate landowner (Hanson) to donate the land to the Town, and 2) build support within the Town Board and Departments to embrace the idea of a park in the Hamlet and having the Town accept the donation if it was offered.

As documented above, after seven years of presentations to the Town, meetings with the Corporate landowner, numerous FGPA planning meetings, and a petition validating the Community's interest – Fiddlers Green Park officially came into being in the Spring of 2007. An organic grassroots effort came to fruition thanks to the cooperation and collaboration of the new Park's triad of stakeholders: **The Community/FGPA, Town of DeWitt leadership, and Hanson Aggregates.**

Fiddler's Green
Your Help is needed to Preserve a 150+ year old
Community Treasure





"...even before the civil war it was a favorite place, always with a fiddler to lead the dancing..."
Dr. Bradford Sherwood

By signing below, you agree with Hanson Aggregates intention to donate the parcels of land they own between North St and Solvay Rd (just south of the Lime Kiln wall and the bridge spanning Butternut Creek on Solvay Rd), to the Town of DeWitt. And that the Town preserve this historical space for the community, so that one day the community can restore the Fiddler's Green area to its original use as a space for residents and visitors to enjoy.

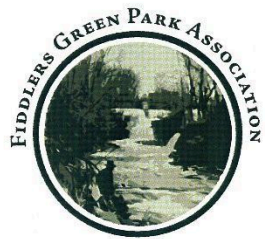
The attached signatures will be presented to the Town of DeWitt and Hanson Aggregates

Name (print)	Signature	Address	Phone
Gerald Alor	<i>Gerald Alor</i>		
Nicky Runions	<i>Nicky Runions</i>		
Logella Kremsner	<i>Logella Kremsner</i>		
Jaffin Miller	<i>Jaffin Miller</i>		
Taylor Bracke	<i>Taylor Bracke</i>		
Karen Graham	<i>Karen Graham</i>		
Nancy P...	<i>Nancy P...</i>		
Debra T...	<i>Debra T...</i>		
Seth D...	<i>Seth D...</i>		
Ernestine M...	<i>Ernestine M...</i>		
Telfrey Gordon	<i>Telfrey Gordon</i>		
...	<i>...</i>		

Since then, the Park has evolved from a quagmire of brush into a young attractive natural recreational space that has been accented and improved through joint community work efforts. Several Eagle Scout projects, church group outings, sports team clean-up days, Park events, and ongoing efforts and investment by the Town, local businesses, and the FGPA has served to grow and improve the Park – making it inviting to residents and visitors. The following are a few photos that document some of the moments and efforts put forth by these groups in making the Park more welcoming.







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