Pumpkinvine Nature Trail

Volume 10 No. 3, September 2001

Coachmen donates Middlebury parcel

Coachmen Industries, Inc. has announced the donation of a section of the Pumpkinvine corridor to the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. The parcel of land, approximately 500-ft. long and 60-ft. wide, is located along Railroad Street, two blocks west of Main Street in Middlebury, Indiana. This portion of land is now part of the Friends group's proposed 16-mile greenway linking Goshen, Middlebury and Shipshewana.

In July 2000, Judge Steven H. David of the Boone County Circuit Court ruled that the tract located along Middlebury's Railroad Street belonged to Coachmen. The Friends group later approached officials at Coachmen to see if they would be interested in either selling or donating the land. Coachmen recently announced its decision to donate the parcel.

"We are proud to provide this important portion of the trail to the Friends of the Pumpkinvine. We are equally proud to support any effort to enhance the recreational opportunities in the communities in which we live and work," commented Jim Baxter, Vice President of Marketing and Communications at Coachmen Industries.

"We are extremely grateful to Coachmen for this generous donation," said Friends President John Yoder. "It is a key section of the greenway in Middlebury, linking the bike path on Wayne Street to the south with Krider Gardens and the Bristol Street sidewalk to the north. By making the land available to future generations as a recreational area, Coachmen has demonstrated its commitment to the health and well being of the people of Middlebury and Elkhart County, for generations to come."

Representatives of Coachmen, the town of Middlebury and the Friends stand on the Pumpkinvine corridor in Middlebury that Coachmen donated to the Friends. From left: Mark Salee, vice president of the Middlebury Park Board and liaison to Friend's board; Dana Snider, president of the Middlebury Tree Board; Lowell Miller, Middlebury Town Manager; C.J. Yoder, Friends treasurer; Chet Sanders, superintendent of Middlebury Schools; Rich Allen, Director of Corporate Communications for Coachmen Industries, Inc.; Gary O'Dell, president of the Middlebury Town Council; John Yoder, Friends president; and Kent Miller, Middlebury member of the Friends.

Recent months have seen a renewed interest in the possibility of the Pumpkinvine as a hiking and biking trail in Middlebury. Coachmen's donation has proved to be an added boost.

"I am very excited about the generosity of Coachmen and the potential it may provide the town of Middlebury to further expand the hiking and biking trails system within our parks and community," added Jeff Gatton, president of the Middlebury Park Board.

"It's heartening to see Coachmen Industries once again helping Middlebury with a project that will enhance the beauty and quality of life of our town," said Dana Snider, chair of the Middlebury Town Tree Board. "Corporate leadership like this donation can help stimulate others to think beyond their own self-interest and envision the corporate good that can benefit the wider community for years to come."

Founded in 1964, Coachmen Industries, Inc., is one of the nation's leading manufacturers of recreational vehicles with well-known names including Coachmen RV, Shasta, Viking and

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Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. are cyclists, hikers, equestrians and naturalists who, by education and fund raising, support the area park departments in their effort to create a linear park on the former Pumpkinvine corridor between Goshen, Middlebury and Shipshewana, Indiana.

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Learn more about the Pumpkinvine and Rails to Trails Issues by visiting the Pumpkinvine Website at:

www.pumpkinvine.org

From the president

Distinctions make a difference

An article by AP writer Mark Smith in the Goshen News July 4 about a settlement of the Penn Central class-action law suit is a classic example of how distinctions (or lack thereof) can make a huge difference in our understanding of legal issues like ownership of railroad corridors.

Smith gives the impression that adjacent landowners had won a tremendous, one-sided victory against Penn Central: "Thousands of landowners will get titles to the abandoned property," he says.

The central distortion is in this paragraph: "The lawsuit stemmed from the railroad's practice of selling or attempting to sell abandoned right of way to adjoining property owners. Attorneys for landowners argued that the railroad's control of most rail beds ended when it abandoned the railway."

The distortion occurs because the reporter never challenges the opinion of the attorneys for the landowners who said "railroad's control of most rail beds ended when it abandoned the railway." He should have asked them what percentage of the land in dispute did Penn Central in fact own. Instead, the article devotes 10 paragraphs to explaining "victory" and one paragraph to the possibility that the railroad might have owned some land. By devoting so much space to one side of the argument, the damage is done. The average reader comes away thinking rail corridors are almost always easements, despite the weak qualification.

Had he bothered to talk to someone from a rails-to-trails group or the railroad, he would have discovered that: 1) you can't generalize about the ownership of rail corridor property; 2) the railroad owned the vast majority of some corridors, like the Pumpkinvine. Each corridor is different.

But instead of investigating the facts of the case himself or seeking out the point of view of the other side, Smith regurgitates the one-sided interpretation of the case based on a press release from The Akerson Group — the lawyers for the adjacent landowners.

My advice to all Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail is to read such articles with extreme skepticism, particularly when the article quotes anyone associated with The Akerson Group or Indiana Farm Bureau. These lawyers are the same ones who claimed the Friends owned virtually nothing between Middlebury and Shipshewana. The courts said exactly the opposite.

If you have questions about the legal status of a section of the Pumpkinvine corridor, contact Galen Kauffmann, a Friends board member and attorney. So far the courts have agreed with our lawyers' interpretation of the Pumpkinvine's title 100 percent of the time. Bad reporting doesn't change that fact.

Annual meeting hears about present and future rail trails

Carl Fisher, superintendent of the Portage Park & Recreation Dept., spoke to the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail annual meeting April 22. Fisher spoke of his experience in creating the Prairie Duneland Trail and Iron Horse Heritage trails. "It takes perseverance and tenacity to make it happen," Fisher said, reflecting on the 12 years it took to make the Prairie Duneland Trail a reality. The 12-foot wide asphalt trail has had an important economic impact in the area. Builders provide access to the trail in their plans and lots along the trail sell first. A BMX track has been built next to the Iron Horse trail. Now the push is on to connect the trails with those in other communities like Chesterton and the Indiana Dunes.

Approximately 50 members attended the meeting to hear board members report on membership, legal issues and plans for the coming year. "The major focus for the coming year is to put in place the political and public support for developing the Pumpkinvine between Middlebury and Shipshewana," said John Yoder, Friends president. "We also need to resolve some legal issues in Middlebury. That agenda makes support from our Middlebury members vital in the coming year."

After the meeting, many members enjoyed a walk on the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail.

Carl Fisher points to the route of the Prairie Duneland Trail in Portage.

Coachmen donates Middlebury parcel

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Georgie Boy. Coachmen Industries is also the largest modular home producer in the nation with its All American Homes and Mod-U-Kraf subsidiaries. Modular commercial and telecommunication structures are manufactured by the Company's Miller Building Systems subsidiary. Coachmen is a publicly held company with stock listed on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) under the COA ticker symbol.

Second Pumpkinvine Ride draws bicyclists from near and far

Some rode their bikes to Abshire Park, while others came by auto from Chicago, Detroit and Windsor, Ont. In all, 245 cyclists participated in the second Pumpkinvine Bike Ride June 16.

A majority live nearby: 106 from Elkhart Co. and 31 from St. Joseph Co. In addition, there were 16 from northwest Indiana, Lake, Porter and LaPort Counties., 30 from Michigan, 8 from Illinois, 2 from Ohio and 1 from Ontario.

"The ride is a great way to showcase the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail and the unique area it will eventually run through," said ride organizer, Danny Graber.

The route was changed from last year to bypass roads with heavy traffic. Many bicyclists remarked on the scenic countryside and were looking forward to participating next year. When riders returned to Abshire Park they were treated to ice cream and a choice of three kinds of pie as well as live music by Re-Issued.

Dan and Midge Anderson, Glen Ellynn, Ill., are two of the 41 riders from outside Indiana who enjoyed the Pumpkinvine Bike Ride.

The ride would not have been possible without the help of 35 volunteers. They were: Registration—Kathryn Aschilman, Angie Barrett, Bill Schmidt, Janice Carrico, Cosette Torrance, Sara Miller; Traffic—D. Fish, Gesa Csapo, Darrell Sommers, Roy Valencourt, Dale Stutzman, Don Hyde; Food —Dierra Lehman, Lois Longenecker, Mike Landis (donated DQ drinking cups); Drinking water—Hawkins Water Tech; Middlebury sag —Jim & Sherry Smith, Tim & Judy Weldy; Shipshewana sag—Bill & Rosenlene Long and family; LaGrange sag—Larry Neff & family, Susie Miller; County line sag —Cynthia Kauffman; Radio —Thane Kauffmann, Kellie Edwards, Myron Yoder; Maps —John Nafziger; Bike Ride Committee — Danny Graber, Bob Hatch, Merritt Lehman, Al Longenecker, Bob Carrico. Mahlon Slabaugh—allowed us to use his yard for the county line sag.

Friends join Elkhart County Community Foundation

The Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail Inc., are here to stay.

That's the underlying message in the recent action of the Friends board in joining the Elkhart County Community Foundation, according to Friends' treasurer C. J. Yoder.

The account the Friends established with the foundation is an endowment. Income from the endowment will be paid to the Friends to use as they see fit. The principle use will be for trail expenses.

"As the principle grows, we can use the income to help pay for the on-going maintenance of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail," Yoder said. "We want the community to know that we intend to stay involved with the trail even after it is developed and that we will help with the on-going expenses."

Anyone interested in giving to the endowment should send their contribution to Elkhart County Community Foundation, 301 South Main St., Box 279, Elkhart, IN 46515. Designate the contribution for the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. Contributions are tax deductible.

The Elkhart County Community Foundation, with assets of over $18 million, manages endowment funds for numerous area non-profit organizations and also makes grants to local non-profits.

Trail Walk 2001

2-4 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 30, 2001

The Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail are sponsoring a walk on the Pumpkinvine railroad corridor east of SR 13 in Middlebury. The walk will give the public a chance to see the site of proposed trail development in the Middlebury area.

Trail Walk 2001 will cover two-miles of the corridor so the distance will be four miles if you choose to do the entire length. During the past year trees and brush have been cleared from this portion of the corridor. The walking surface is relatively even. Light walking shoes are adequate.

Park at the Middlebury Town Hall located on SR 13 on the north side of Middlebury. You will be directed to the Pumpkinvine nearby. If you have questions call 266-1362. Refreshments will be served.

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Don't Forget Your Membership Dues

If the date on the label of this newsletter has passed, it's time to renew your membership in the Friends. Membership Levels are:

___ Individual $20 ___ Family $30 ___ Sustaining $50
___ Contributing $100 ___ Patron $250 ___ Benefactor $500

Send your membership payments to:
Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, P.O. Box 392, Goshen, IN 46527.

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Please take note of the expiration date of your membership on the address label. Thanks.

All funds go toward paying the day-to-day expenses of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail. No officers receive remuneration.

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