

COY MOUNTAIN TRAIL HISTORY

The existence of the Coy Mountain Preserve and its trails is one example of Reuben Coy's philanthropy. In 1885, he protected 11 acres of virgin hardwoods located behind his gristmill as a preserve. This untouched land was to be a reminder of the original landscape in an era of clear cutting lumber practices. It remained in the Coy family until August, 1958.

At that time, Mayme Young Coy, Reuben's daughter-in-law, deeded the property to her daughter, Marian Coy, Tom Wheeler, Alden's Town Representative, and their neighbor, Ralph Davidson. Her intent was "to preserve and protect the landscape in all its natural beauty. And to maintain the trees, shrubs, flowers and wild life indigenous to this area for the use and benefit of the Villagers of Alden and the surrounding communities".

The three trustees presented the preserve to Helena Township in October, 1985. Marian Coy Hart enlarged the preserve at that time by adding an additional 5.5 acres on the east end.

In January, 1993, Harry Swan donated two lots near the entrance of the trail he had purchased from a tax sale. Currently, the Coy Mountain Preserve encompasses 17 acres. The forest's last virgin trees were stolen about this time.

The Alden Run donated some of its 1999 proceeds to help finance an Eagle Scout project undertaken by Bob Pennington. His plan was to clear and mark the trail as well as provide benches for hikers to rest. The following summer, The Alden Volunteers helped him expand and complete the project.

The Coy Mountain Preserve trails are approximately 1.5 miles long with an elevation difference of 180 feet. The Alden Volunteers are committed to maintaining the trails so that it continues to be a place where people come to walk and to enjoy the natural beauty of a northern Michigan forest.

LAYERS of the FOREST

A deciduous forest is divided into four vertical zones: the canopy, the understory, the shrub layer and the herb layer. A forest is named for the dominant trees in the canopy layer. The forest at Coy Mountain Preserve is an American Beech, Sugar Maple and Hemlock Forest.

The **canopy** is the top layer. The upper region of the canopy is not suitable for most animals because the sun, wind and rain conditions are too severe. The intense sun light at this level maximizes photosynthesis, which produces the food made in the canopy.

Smaller trees and shrubs make up the **understory** and **shrub** layers. Many are saplings of the trees that make up the canopy. Some of the trees are shade tolerant species and always grow shorter than the canopy trees. In the middle two layers, songbirds and squirrels build their nests. These small animals are protected from weather conditions by the canopy above and from predators on the forest floor below. In the Coy Mountain Preserve, the shrub layer exists only minimally because of foraging by deer.

The **herb** layer, which is the closest to the forest floor, changes with the seasons. In the winter, only seedling trees can be found growing here. Snow usually blankets the area. IN the spring, however, the plants sprout leaves in a progression from the bottom layer to the top. This provides ample sunlight to produce a diverse show of spring wildflowers in the herb layer. By June, many of the herb layer species lose their leaves and become dormant in the deep shade created by the canopy and the understory. Mice, insects, snakes and other reptiles can be found in the area.

The forest floor is where leaves, twigs, seeds, tree trunks, and branches fall. More than 2,000 pounds of debris can accumulate on one acre of the forest floor in a single year. Decomposition of this matter provides basic substances like carbon dioxide, water and nitrogen that are essential for photosynthesis and the sustaining of life.

Legacy of the Coy Family

Ruben W. Coy was born in Livonia, New York on April 27, 1843. His boyhood was spent on a farm, with his parents. He graduated from schools in Livonia and later took a course in the classics at Lime (NY) College.

At the beginning of the Civil War, he enlisted as a bugler with the First New York Mounted Rifles and served with his regiment until the close of the war. In 1866, he came to Michigan and settled in Elk Rapids where he taught school for one year. He then entered the employ of Dexter and Noble, as a salesman in their store.

In 1870, he resigned his position, opened a general store in Helena Township and platted the village of Spencer Creek, now called Alden. A few years later, he built a gristmill at the site of the old gray building on the southeast side of Spencer Creek at Coy Street and subsequently a sawmill near the present location of Alden Lumber.

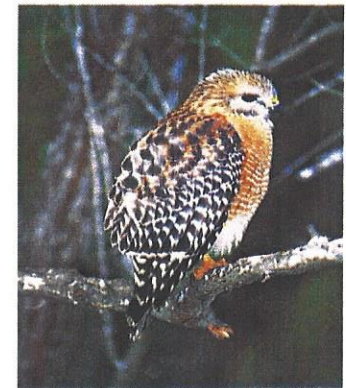
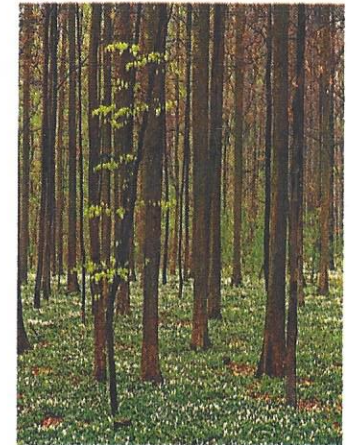
Three years later he married Helen M. Thayer, the daughter of Lucius and Helen Thayer of Clam River. Helena Township was named for Coy's mother-in-law Mrs. Thayer, the first woman pioneer in the area. The Coys had four children, two boys and two girls.

In 1890, Mr. Coy disposed of his mills and devoted his time entirely to his rapidly growing mercantile business, which operated for 53 years. Mr. Coy was postmaster of Alden for 25 years and served as township supervisor and clerk. He was a trustee of the Methodist Episcopal Church, a member of the Grand Army of the Republic and a member of the Masonic fraternity.

He died at home in Alden on January 12, 1896, at the age of 52.

His obituary in The Elk Rapids Progress read: "Death loves a shining mark and no truer exemplification can be found that in the statement that R. W. Coy is dead. He was an honest, energetic, intelligent, public-spirited Christian gentleman, who labored with and for the best interests of his fellow men. He was a born philanthropist and no hungry or needy person was ever turned away. As a public benefactor he excelled and always had the best interests of the community at heart."

COY MOUNTAIN PRESERVE



TAKE A HIKE !!

And Enjoy a Day In Alden!
Coy Mt. Preserve is located on valley St. two blocks south
of downtown. Wear comfortable walking shoes!