



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Volume 24 Issue 1

January-February 2013

Phase 8E2/8 Update by Dave Oyler



Triphammer Ramp from the Piney Fork Bridge at the completion of asphalt paving 12/17/2012.

Our last update on construction of the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of trail from Triphammer Road in South Park Township east to Piney Fork Road (MP38.2 to MP39.0) was in the July-August Trail-letter. At that time, the ramp from Triphammer Road to the Piney Fork Bridge was half built, and Mingo Creek Construction was the low bidder of a contract to build the western wingwalls of the Piney Fork Bridge, complete the Triphammer Ramp and excavate a ramp from the existing trail right of way to Piney Fork Road. Volunteers had finished most of the clearing and grubbing of the Piney Fork Ramp and were in the process of grading the 0.6 mile of trail between the Piney Fork Bridge at MP38.3 and the concrete bridge at MP38.9.

Mingo Creek Construction began work in mid-September, starting with excavation of the Piney Fork Ramp. The excavation was slowed by the presence of up to 10 feet of sandstone which had to be broken up by a pick attachment on the excavator, a painfully slow process. At the same time, volunteers arranged for a trucking firm to deliver asphalt millings from Allegheny County to be used as trail sub base material.

By October 1, despite the slow excavation due to the sandstone, the Piney Fork Ramp construction was sufficiently advanced to begin hauling fill to the Triphammer Ramp site, and to allow construction of the Piney Fork Bridge wingwalls to be started. The rock used to construct the wingwalls had to be a specially selected material. The sandstone being excavated at the Piney Fork Ramp, which was not suitable for use in the wingwalls, had to be carefully fit into the slowly rising ramp. The construction was a carefully controlled ballet as materials had to be excavated at the right time, delivered to the right place and placed in the right manner. The wingwalls were completed by October 23, but excavation at the Piney Fork Ramp would continue until November 29, and final grading of the Triphammer Ramp would not be completed until November 30.

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In mid-October, Mingo Creek carpenters formed up the backwalls of the Piney Fork Bridge and the concrete backwalls were poured on October 15. On November 10 and 11, volunteers from the South Hills Friends installed 2x6 stringers and laid deck boards between the existing bridge deck installed in 2010 and the new backwalls. The installation of the remaining deck boards completed the Piney Fork Bridge except for the railings extending from the ends of the bridge to funnel trail traffic onto the bridge.

During the second half of October and the first half of November while Mingo Creek Construction was working on the ramps, volunteers, led by Bill Capp and John Kozak, were using the excess sandstone from the Piney Fork Ramp and soil donated by South Park Township to widen narrow areas of the trail. Volunteers placed 150 cubic yards of rock (including pieces weighing nearly 2 tons.) and an estimated 440 cubic yards of fill donated by South Park Township to widen the trail shoulders. By mid-November, the trail was wide enough to begin laying millings. Between November 19 and 21, volunteers using the Montour Trail Council grader and spreader box, two trail dump trucks, and a tracked loading machine, spread 650 cubic yards of millings over 2,900 feet of trail. The millings were rolled and compacted on November 21, and low spots were filled in and rolled during the period after Thanksgiving.

By the end of November, the weather became the primary factor controlling construction activities. Mingo Creek Construction finished final grading of the Piney Fork Ramp and the installation of a cross drain on December 3, and then had to wait for suitable weather to lay asphalt millings and asphalt paving on both ramps. Ideal weather never materialized, but the weather finally became acceptable on December 14, and Mingo Creek's subcontractor laid millings on both ramps. On December 17, a warm but rainy day, the asphalt trail surface was laid on the Triphammer parking area and ramp and on the Piney Fork Ramp.

Volunteers finished laying the last 200 feet of millings on December 18, a drier but cooler day. **Continue on page 3**



Triphammer Ramp and parking area being asphalt paved 12/17/2012 from Triphammer Road. Piney Fork Bridge in the background.

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www.montourtrail.org

To Converse, join the Yahoo Group at:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Montour-Trail/>



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THE MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

is published bi-monthly January through December. All correspondence should be addressed to:

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Into the Future

The beginning of a new year presents that time when we look forward, peering ahead in a spirit of optimism and hope for what the future may hold. For the Montour Trail, the indications are quite clear that it is moving ever more quickly into a period of significant transition. For the Trail itself, for the Montour organization, and for its relationship to the greater community it serves, the future, in a word, is change.

After two decades, primary construction is entering its final phases. In a few years - not a whole lot more than "three" - the Montour mainline really will be finished, with no gaps between Coraopolis and Clairton. From time to time major improvements will still be implemented, and of course we hope that branches will continue to be added, but, at least in the original sense of the word, the trail will be done.

We are entering the era wherein the big focus will be on administering and operating what we've built. Of course, for many years the various segments of the trail have been operated admirably well by the Friends Groups and the Council. However, with the Trail joined into a seamless whole, administering it as a unified facility will in many regards be not only much more complex, but a fundamentally different matter altogether. This will require significant changes from the ways in which lots of things currently are done.

I personally look forward to a time when the tremendous energy, enthusiasm, and resources of the Montour organization can better focus on our user community: providing them with the best information, excellent facilities, and world-class amenities to serve their recreational and transportation needs. This will be a big shift from our present outsized allocation of resources to heavy construction. Growing relationships with our neighborhoods and our business and municipal communities will take the form of ever more local trail tie-ins. On the regional scale, our links to the Panhandle and the Great Allegheny Passage will be followed by ones to trails leading to Pittsburgh, Ohio, West Virginia, and all points of the compass.

It will still take a strong bridge girder to hold up the trail. Even more important, will be the strong organization of committed individuals that'll keep it running well into the future. Getting people interested, and keeping them involved for long periods, will prove crucial. The Trail will only be able to be what its people make of it, so we'll need to do everything possible to keep the level of passion high. The good news is that there will be lots of completely new types of tasks and positions in the Montour organization that will attract people's attention and, if we do it right, capture their dedication. For the good of the Trail, we hope that at some point you, dear reader, decide you can lend a hand as well.

As with many organizations, there is never any shortage of good ideas, only of people who can carry them through. With the Montour, numerous potentially valuable initiatives have been started over the years, but struggle for the attention and resources to bring them to fruition. Recognizing this, your Board has committed to carrying through with the development of a long term strategic plan. No small undertaking, this will be a process that will entail considerable work to examine the how and why the Montour operates, finding the best practices among it all. With a diligent effort, the Montour organization should be able to be made more efficient, much stronger, and overall better suited to its central mission of being the guardian, caretaker, and champion of the Trail for generations to come.

It has been an honor to serve you as the president for the past three years. Again, it is not remotely possible to express sufficient thanks to everyone who gave - and continues to give - so generously of their time and talents to make the Montour such a great trail. The time has come for me to pass the torch to the new president, who will lead us into that bright new future. I encourage everyone to throw him their full support in heading the administration of this most interesting and challenging odyssey.

Looking forward to the best of New Years for you all! - Ned Williams

Friends' Meetings and Work Parties

MTC Board Meeting:

Every third Monday of the month - 6:00 p.m. at 304 Hickman St., Suite 3, Bridgeville, PA. Turn right off of the Bridgeville exit of I-79. Turn left at the next light, go straight at next light and make left turn onto Hickman St. just after the Post Office. Call Ned at 724-225-9856 for more information or to get on the agenda.

Cecil Friends:

Friends of the Trail meeting, every fourth Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. From May-August, meetings are held at the Kurnick Access area along the trail off Cecil Henderson Road; other months (with the exception of November and December) meet at the MTC Offices. Work and cleanup parties are scheduled as needed. Call 412-496-4308 for more information, or email densimwx@comcast.net

Airport Area Friends:

Friends of the Trail meet every second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Forest Grove Fire Hall, 2044 Ewings Mill Road, Coraopolis, PA 15108. Anyone from the Airport Area is encouraged to attend. Contact Phyllis McChesney at 412 264-6303 for more information. A "work party" is held the second Saturday of the month and more are scheduled when working on special projects. Please call 412 262-3748 to lend a hand.

Bethel Park Friends:

Friends of the Trail meeting, every first Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the Bethel Park Municipal Building Council Chambers. Anyone interested in the Bethel Park Trail segment is encouraged to come. Work and cleanup party, every second and fourth Saturday of the month - 8:30 a.m. Call Bob O'Connell at 412-833-6259 for location and information.

South Hills Friends:

Meeting second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at South Park Township Community Room, located behind the Township Building at 2675 Brownsville Road, South Park, 15129. Work and cleanup parties scheduled and advertised as needed. For more information, contact David Oyler at 412-831-9288, davidoyler@verizon.net, or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, mckeownp@comcast.net

Fort Cherry Friends:

Friends of the Trail Meeting, second Wednesday of the month at McDonald Borough Building, Council chambers at 7:00 p.m. Work and cleanup parties, scheduled as needed. For more information, contact Ray Johnston at 724-356-2621.

Peters Township Friends:

Friends of the Trail Meeting, first non-holiday Monday of the month at Peters Township Parks and Recreation Center at 7:00 p.m. For more information on work and cleanup parties, please contact Jim Robbins at 724-941-6132, or for monthly meetings, Mark Imgrund at 724-941-6351 or by e-mail at markimgrund@comcast.net.

The Montour Railroad Historical Society:

The newest Friends group. For more information send email to mrhs@montourrr.com.

Montour Trail Events for 2013

April 7, 2013: Pittsburgh Cycling Expo: Circuit Center in the IBEW building on the south side of the Hot Metal Bridge.

April 21, 2013: 9:00 a.m. Burgh Pizza and Wings 5K-10K and 2 mile walk, Cecil Park.

May 11, 2013: Airport Friends Penny Day on the Montour Trail.

May/June: JR Taylor 5K in Bethel Park.

June 1, 2013: 9:00 a.m. Cecil Friends Tails for Trails 5K Fun Dog Walk. Kurnick Trail Head.

July 26, 2013: Twilight Trail Walk, Peters Township.

Sept. 7, 2013: UPMC Urgent Care ½ Marathon, 5K and Walk.

Sept. 21, 2013: Tour the Montour Bike Ride.

October 2013: South Hills Penny Day.

November 2013: Annual Meeting.

Phase 8 E Continues from page 1

December 18 was effectively the end of the 2012 construction season.

At the end of 2012, Phase 8E2/8 is nearly complete, but the trail is not yet safe for trail users. The trail still needs signage, fences for the steep banks of the Tripphammer Ramp and a steep section of the Piney Fork Ramp. Additionally, the bridge at MP38.9



The Piney Fork Ramp between the original Montour Railroad alignment and Piney Fork Road on 12/22/2012. Ramp slope is approximately 4%.

will be unsafe for trail users until railings have been installed on it. The Piney Fork Bridge also needs approach railings.

Finally, the 0.6 mile of trail between the bridges still needs to be surfaced in crushed limestone. The Montour Trail Council expects to complete the laying of the crushed limestone surface and installation of fences in time to officially open the section of trail in the late spring of 2013.

Milepost 39 returns by Bryan Seip

A piece of history returns to the Montour Trail as a replica of the original Montour Railroad Milepost 39 was installed by the Montour Railroad Historical Society on Saturday 11/17. MRHS member Tim Sposato provided the replacement post.



Tim Sposato, Bryan Seip and Pat Flood install the new MP39.



Milepost 39 is located near the east end of the Irishtown Road parking area on the Bethel Branch of the Montour Trail. The location was determined by comparing old photographs (left) and by using measurements from existing Montour Railroad

mileposts.

The mileposts measured the Montour's railroad mileage from the switch connection with the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie RR, in Coraopolis. The original railroad mileposts were installed a century ago and differ from current Trail mileposts due to a different starting point and to several realignment projects on the railroad which shortened the actual mileage of the right-of-way. Most mileposts were mounted on steel pipes, while some were welded to a piece of rail.

The Trail's Bethel Branch was originally the railroad's main line, heading to a connection with the Pittsburgh & West Virginia RR at Salida and then further to the Union RR yard at Mifflin Junction. The Trail's main path follows the railroad's Library Branch from Library Junction, through Library and toward the railroad's end at Snowden in South Park Township.

MRHS has restored several mileposts, with more on the docket for future projects. A restored MP7 can be found along Cliff Mine Road at Trail MP5.5, Railroad MP32 is at Trail MP30 in Peters Township and MP38 is west of the J. R. Taylor Memorial Bridge on the Bethel Branch.

While many of the original mileposts have been lost due to weather or construction projects, several remain in place and will receive attention in the future. Faded numbers and rusted plates can be seen at railroad MP10, MP13, MP21, MP25 and MP30. (For Trail locations, subtract 2 from each number.)

For more information about the history of the Montour Railroad, go to: montourrr.com

Meet the Boggs Beautifier: Ken Gregory



Ken Gregory

"It seemed that Ken Gregory just kind of magically appeared at the Boggs trailhead at mile 11.4 one year and started to plant and maintain this beautiful garden," says Airport Area Friend, Dennis Pfeiffer. "I always was amazed that he decided to transform this trailhead that is so far from his home in Hopewell."

Well, it wasn't quite magic, but Ken Gregory is certainly a great example of how a trail volunteer with vision and dedication can have a powerful impact.

After retiring from his math teaching position in the Aliquippa School District 15 years ago, Ken got his grown daughter's bicycle out of the garage and started riding. For a more interesting ride than his own neighborhood offered, he drove to the Montour Trail and rode between Coraopolis and Boggs (where the trail ended at that time).

One day Ken saw Dennis Pfeiffer doing volunteer work, stopped to talk, and offered his services. Dennis referred him to Dick Quasey, who involved Ken in the installation of the Quicksilver Bridge at mile 15.

Seeing that the Boggs area could use beautification, Ken then asked around 2001 if he could clean it up and create a garden there. "I love gardening at home," he explained. "Boggs was a mess [partly due to illegal dumping in the area] and I thought it could look better."

Ken's work since then has exceeded anyone's expectations. He has constructed two garden plots, each about 60 by 20 feet, which he fills each year with irises, rose of Sharon, and other flowers and plants. In addition, he has constructed a picnic area with several benches, along with a shed to store his gardening equipment. See page 8 for a picture or two. During the spring and summer, Ken spends 12 to 15 hours a month maintaining the garden, emptying the garbage, and keeping the area clean. Chris Siak added a shelter last year as an Eagle Scout project.

In 2009, Ken assisted in the rerouting of the trail at the Boggs trailhead so that it no longer passes through the middle of the parking lot. "We had a lot of fun with the fencing between the trail and the parking lot," he recalled, "because we had to use jackhammers for just about every post."

Ken's most recent improvement at Boggs was his creation of the Montour Trail's second camping facility. For their 50th wedding anniversary last August, he and wife Trevis requested no gifts, so their friends and neighbors gave them two checks: one for their church and one for the trail. Ken used the latter check to purchase materials and install two campsites, with room for another if needed.

Along with the appreciation he receives from numerous passers-by, Ken has enjoyed the benefits of keeping himself in good condition. "Both riding and working on the trail has kept me in a lot better shape," he said. "When you're retired you look for things to do, and helping the trail is a good thing to do."

Memories of Montour Park by Tim Killmeyer

We often hear about the history of the railroad that existed on the right-of way of the Montour Trail, but we hear less often about some of the things that existed near or alongside that same right-of-way that we now walk and bicycle. We travel past places that go unnoticed because there are just weeds and trees or maybe an empty or rundown building or two but over the past hundred or hundred and fifty years in many of those places people lived or worked or spent time in recreation, just as we do today.. This is a story about one of those places between Mile 3 and Mile 4 of the trail, or more specifically, near the three bridges you cross after going under the Beaver Grade Road overpass near the Old Beaver Grade Road parking area (Brothers Grimm Lounge).

About 4 or 5 years ago my dad's first cousin, Vera Marshall - who was then about 90 years old, gave my dad some family pictures and a few of them were of her family when they would take little vacations from Elliott in Pittsburgh's West End "out to some cottages at Montour Park on Montour Creek." They would have been taken about 1937.

Montour Run Road did not exist until the early 1960s, so to get there, they would have taken Montour Park Road which began right behind the current Universal Specialties (behind the fence on the left after you pass under the Beaver Grade Road overpass) and then on to the Beaver Grade - Cliff Mine Connecting Road. Both of these



Playing cards in the cool waters of Montour Run Creek

roads are barely recognizable today despite having been abandoned for the new Montour Run Road only 50 years ago. There is still one visible reminder of them that can be seen from the trail, and that is the Montour Park Road truss bridge that can be seen upstream (beyond the abandoned bridge piers) as you cross the first of the three bridges along this stretch. Built prior to 1880, it is thought to be the oldest truss bridge in Allegheny County and one of the oldest in Western Pennsylvania. (http://www.bridgemapper.com/bridge_detail.php?ID=3453) Hopefully someone will take on this bridge as a preservation project.

Our city travelers would have gone another quarter mile or so beyond that bridge to where the Connecting Road crossed the tracks just before the second of the three bridges (referred to as the "Volunteer Bridge" because it was constructed by MTC volunteers as opposed to the other two "Duquesne Light" bridges, so named because Duquesne Light needed them to place the poles that exist along that stretch of trail and built them to our specs, knowing that the trail would be built when they were finished.)



Montour Park- a Shangri La for city dwellers. Note the railroad crossing sign situated just before the Volunteer Bridge.

But what a Shangri-La for them when they arrived! Eleven cottages - some built out of old railroad cars - a snack bar, a dance hall, and a nice cool creek in which to while-away the afternoon. Horses could be hired at one of the near-by farms.



But in the early 1960s when the Montour Run "Expressway" was built the roads leading to the cottages were abandoned and they were left to decay.

Looking east from the Volunteer Bridge circa 1984.

An interesting side-note as you walk or ride along the trail is that the long, straight creek to your right as you go upstream after passing under the high overpass was not there 50 years ago. Prior to about 1962, the original path of Montour Creek took it behind the current YMCA building cutting back across to go under the railroad at the first Duquesne Light Bridge. After it went behind the cottages and under the Volunteer Bridge, it went straight out from there across to the other side of what is now Montour Run Road until it came to Hookstown Grade Road where it curved back around and went straight under the second Duquesne Light Bridge. The whole creek was moved to its current location keeping it all on the east side of Montour Run Road when the road was built in the early '60s.

MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

The Shops at Montour Junction (Bob Ciminel ©2013)

Although the title may sound like an upscale shopping center, the shops at Montour Junction were anything but boutiques. However, there is no doubt that they were specialty shops. In 2012, it was announced that the land at Montour Junction would be used to construct a state-of-the-art sports complex, and it seems appropriate to begin the first article of 2013 with a short history of Montour Junction and what was there.

The financial backers of the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad recognized the potential wealth in the coal deposits located on the eastern slopes of Montour Run and the profits that could be made by bringing that coal down to the P&LE and shipping it to the Great Lakes. Little additional prodding was needed to find other investors and organizing the Imperial Coal Company and the Montour Railroad in 1877. The original four-mile route to Guys Mills was quickly extended another 8 miles to Valley Church and building the railroad community of Montour City (today's Imperial). By 1879, two mines, the Cliff Mine and the Montour Mine, were in operation and trainloads of coal were rolling into Montour Junction to be interchanged with the P&LE. A wye and an engine house were constructed at Imperial for turning and servicing the locomotives, and a second engine house and turntable were built at Montour Junction for the same purpose.

With the Pittsburgh Coal Company's takeover of the Imperial Coal Company and the Montour Railroad in 1899, Montour Junction provided an ideal spot to construct shops for building and repairing both railroad cars and mine cars, including the electric locomotives used inside the mines. By 1901, the Coal Company had constructed two long buildings for building/repairing cars and maintaining the electric locomotives. Apply named the *Car Shop* and the *Motor Shop*, the brick buildings were still there when the Montour Railroad was abandoned in the early 1980s. The shops were "sold" to the Montour Railroad in 1914 when the Mifflin Extension was completed. To say the shops were prodigious places would be an understatement: In one year alone the men at the shops built 238 forty-ton coal cars and 2,110 mine cars.



This excerpt (left) from a 1915 blueprint shows the shops as they existed shortly after their ownership was transferred from the Coal Company to the Montour Railroad. The engine house, or *Engine Repair Shop* as shown on the blueprint, was the shorter building on the left, followed by the *Car Repair Shop* and the *Motor Shop*. (Blueprint courtesy of Gene P. Schaeffer ©2012)

This aerial photo (right) shows the shops as they existed in 1946 when the Pittsburgh Coal Company merged with the Consolidation Coal Company and sold the Montour Railroad to the P&LE and Pennsylvania Railroad. The



building in front the former *Motor Shop* contained the offices and other support facilities for the railroad. (Photo courtesy of the Historic Pittsburgh web site)



Dave Seymore - Bob T. - Rich Magga - Harold Sizer - Bob Gorley
© Chuck Ross Collection

Lastly (left), we have a photograph of some of the maintenance personnel who worked at Montour Junction in the 1970s. They provide a perfect illustration of the dirty environment associated with running a coal railroad, even in the modern days of diesel locomotives and "clean" coal. (Photo courtesy of the montourrr.com web site)

Bob Ciminel is the founder of the Montour Railroad Yahoo group http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour_rr/. There are currently 324 members from across the country. You are encouraged to join. There is a wealth of information about the Montour Railroad at this location and you can pose questions of its membership, from whom you are sure to get an answer.

Welcome New Members

The Montour Trail Council welcomes these new members and thanks them for their support. We would also like to thank all our members who have recently renewed their membership and to remind all that a growing membership is one of the criteria foundations look for when we apply for grants.

New Members

Gemma Abraham
Barry Brewer
James & Maureen Brink
Scott Caldwell
Andrew Durbin
David Eynon Jr.
Anthony Fiorollo
Richard Hollein
Michael Hurley & Family
Zachary Ordo
Jon & Elizabeth Pavlakovich
Karen Perry
Paul Powers
David A. Smith
Ken Stock
Gary & Ellen Urbanek
Steve Wesmiller
Benefactors
James & Maureen Brink
Dick & Annette Bryant
Gay Canough

Gini Chandler
David Hall
Andrew & Kathryn Klaber
Larry Laude
C.E. Marstiller
Irene & Keith McAllister
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Siddharth & Andrea Pant
Barb Senatore

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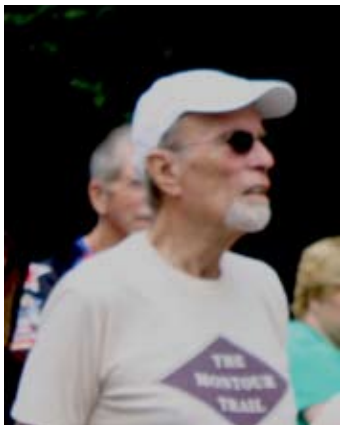
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In Memory of Jean Daily

Richard McNally

Donations were received for the **Marshall Fausold Memorial Fund** from:

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Allegheny Trail Alliance



Marshall Fausold, a past president of the Montour Trail Council and a founding board member passed away on November 25, 2012, at his Silver Spring, Maryland home with family at bed-side. He graduated from Georgia Tech and served with the Army Corps of Engineers, retiring after 35 years of service. An active member of the National Speleological Society and the MTC, he was instrumental in the mapping of many caves and the development of Rail-Trails in Pennsylvania. Until his activities were

recently curtailed by illness, he was an active traveler, volunteered with the C&O bike trail patrol, and hiking with the local hiking group. He is survived by his loving companion, Sharon Newman of Silver Spring; also by his sons, Laurence Fausold and Roger Fausold, both of Pittsburgh; and his daughter, Zoe Peek; and granddaughter, Olivia of San Diego. A memorial fund has been created in his name for further development of the Trail.

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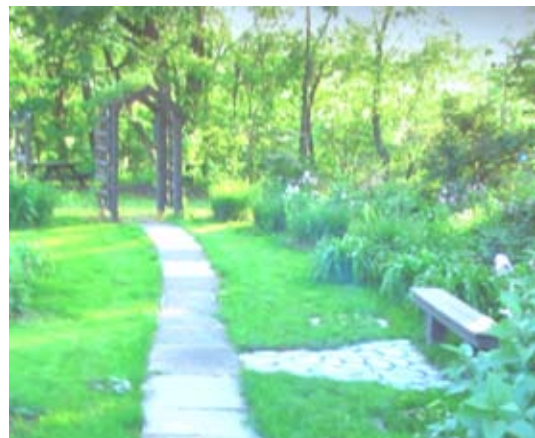
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Do you know where these
scenes were photographed?



See page 4 and learn about this
issue's Trail Volunteer.