



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

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Library Viaduct Work to Start Soon

Montour Trail building efforts in South Park Township are really looking up. This Spring, the long-awaited construction work to convert the Library Viaduct for trail use will begin. Many of you may not realize that the old steel bridge over Route 88 in Library, PA (next to the Rite Aid) is part of a 506 foot-long Montour Trail structure spanning the entire valley.



Loaded hoppers being shoved west from the Library mine.

A Gene P. Schaeffer Photo

Federal Transportation Enhancement funds administered by PennDOT were awarded for this project many years ago. Some of you had donated time way back then, clearing trees on the eastern bridge approach from Pleasant Street, above the old Library School. A lot of volunteer work had also been done to clear brush and rough in the trail on the western side, near the LindenBrooke Apartments. Various complications had then set in, which delayed the project, for a number of years. Meanwhile, volunteers kept on going, in a series of annual winter brush clearing parties under and around the structure's legs, led by the South Hills Friends.

Work on the viaduct restarted in earnest in 2012 when the Montour Trail Council engaged Parsons-Brinkerhoff to perform a structural inspection and analysis of the viaduct to determine the scope of repairs. This is very important, as the Viaduct is nearly 100 years old, and has had no maintenance done on it since the Montour Railroad stopped running over thirty years ago. With this up-to-date inspection data in hand, we then hired

WEC Engineers of Bridgeville, PA to perform detailed engineering and design of the necessary steel repairs, design the deck and railings, secure the necessary permits and approvals, and create the bid documents that we need to solicit construction bids

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Project Managers Tom Prezel and Paul McKeown, and the MTC Engineering and Construction Committee, report that the engineering work from WEC and reviews from PennDOT have been relatively fast-paced, as these things go. MTC expects to receive final approvals fairly soon – possibly by the time you read this. We would then be able to put the project out for construction bids before this Spring.



A view from PA 88 looking southeast.

Photo courtesy of Bryan Seup

Rehabilitating old railroad structures is a tricky business that can turn up unforeseen complications. Nonetheless, we are optimistic that the construction phase will go reasonably well; if so, we just may have a completed bridge deck for you all by the end of the year.

At the eastern end of the Viaduct, a short (about 900-foot) section of trail is needed to connect on through to Pleasant Street. This will be started as a rough construction road, in order to provide access to the Viaduct project. Although the earthwork will be done by a contractor, the eventual finished trail there will be constructed separately using a sizable volunteer component. Let us know if you would like to be part of

this effort. No experience is required! The Montour Trail Council this past year partnered with South Park Township to obtain a grant of \$243,000 from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The award was announced on December 6th by PA State Senator Matt Smith.

Needless to say, completion of the Library Viaduct project will close a big gap – arguably the biggest -in the entire Montour Trail System. Appropriately, it'll be a big story, so stay tuned!

Visit the Montour Trail Web Site at:
www.montourtrail.org

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

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/43518292159/>



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Prez says:

I extend greetings to the members, friends and supporters of the Montour Trail in this upcoming very busy year of 2014.

The Montour Trail Council (MTC) is very fortunate to welcome three new board members in January. The new board members are Dino Angelici, Bill Capp and Eric Chipps. Also, two members (Dave Oyler and Tom Prezel) were elected to serve their second three year terms.

Dino is a practicing dentist and was one of original board members in 1989. Dino and Stan Sattinger, as many of you know, were the founding fathers of the MTC in 1989. Bill Capp is a retired school teacher, a former board member, a key member of the MTC construction crew and a very active Bethel Park Friend of the trail. Eric Chipps is the Chief Financial Officer with a local company and we hope he will be able to help with the MTC's growing financial complexities. Eric was introduced to the board by Sue Headley who is a former board member and the current secretary for the Peters Twp Friends group.

The MTC would also like to thank our three departing board members. They are Ned Williams, Bruce Barron and Dennis Sims. Bruce Barron had expertly performed the MTC secretary function the last two years. Dennis Sims will continue to be the MTC's newsletter editor and the president of the Cecil Friends. Ned Williams is our former president and will still continue to be fully involved with the E&C committee and continue to serve as the MTC government envoy. Ned continues to serve the MTC very well in that last capacity. A very informative meeting was held with State Senator Matt Smith in October.

At the annual banquet, a special award was given to both Ned and another former president Mark Imgrund. Details on those awards will follow. The annual MTC banquet, which was very well attended, was held on November 17 at St. Joan of Arc Hall in South Park Township. Senator Matt Smith gave a very informative update on various subjects and was very well received. Our featured speaker was Andy Baechle, Director of Allegheny County Parks Department. Andy enlightened us with some words of wisdom and it was good to hear about the new connection from South Park to the Montour Trail. The Peters Friends group celebrating their 10th year gave awards to their active volunteers. I would like to thank Dave Oyler for securing the venue and for Karen Robbins in making all of the arrangements with the caterer.

Ned Williams, as previously mentioned, was our outstanding leader in 2010, 2011 and 2012. Both Ned and Mark Imgrund, who was our leader in 2007, 2008 and 2009, were presented "Leadership Awards". The two awards read "The Montour Trail Leadership Award; Presented to (Ned Williams & Mark Imgrund); In Grateful Appreciation for Your Outstanding Leadership ; Montour Trail Council".

Keeping the focus on South Park Township, we were glad to hear that DCNR awarded South Park Township a grant to assist the MTC in building an extension of the main line from the Eastern end of the Library Viaduct to Pleasant Street. With the Library Viaduct going out for bids shortly, this award was critical in giving trail users a completed trail after crossing the Library Viaduct.

Finally, we have one more piece of exciting news in South Park Township. South Park Township is donating to MTC, a portion of the old railroad "right of way" along Piney Fork Road. This property will enable the main line trail to be extended safely up to the road tunnel near Snowden Road. We all would like to thank South Park Township for their generous donation! We will put it to good use.

Happy Trails

Dennis Pfeiffer, President

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 Dennis at 412-262-3748 for more information or to get on the agenda.

Cecil Friends: (MP 20.7 to MP 28.5)

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: (MP 0 to MP 12.6 and the 6.3 mile

Airport Connector) The Airport Area 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, Robinson Township, PA 15108. New volunteers are always welcomed. Contact Phyllis McChesney at 412-264-6303 for more information. Numerous Saturday "work parties" are held during the season. Please call 412-262-3748 to lend a hand at the work parties.

Bethel Park Friends: (The 2.75 mile Bethel Branch and a short piece of main line trail around MP 35). 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: (MP 35.4 to 46.3)

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: (MP 12.6 to MP 20.7)

Friends of the Trail meeting: Second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the McDonald Trail Station, 160 S. McDonald Street, McDonald, PA 15057 (adjacent to the Panhandle Trail). Work and cleanup parties will be scheduled as needed. For more information contact Tim Thomassy, 724-926-4617 or Chuck Hughey, 724-926-9436.

Peters Township Friends: (MP 28.5 to 30.4, Libray Jct to near MP 35 and part of the Bethel Branch)

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 markingrund@comcast.net.

The Montour Railroad Historical Society:

For more information send email to mrhs@montourrr.com.

Volunteer feature: John Becker

Once upon a time, when the Montour Trail Council had only 1.5 miles of trail in South Park Township, the thin crew of volunteers covering that area got help from a mysterious source. Grass was cut and



John is leading a work party to put railings on the Catfish Run Bridge by the sewage treatment plant in South Park Township.

brush was removed, but the volunteers didn't know how it happened. After Hurricane Ivan pummeled the trail 10 years ago, potholes were filled anonymously.

Finally the helper made contact with the South Hills Friends of the Trail and identified himself as John Becker, a do-it-yourself specialist who lived half a mile away and enjoyed walking on the trail.

"I had a truck, a shovel, and some money in my pocket," John said of his one-man post-Ivan repair job. "So I got some materials and filled the worst holes on the trail."

Once John, who works as a machinist at Hall Industries in Ellwood City, got connected to the trail organization, he became even more productive. He had been coaching girls softball for 17 years, and with his daughters growing up he was looking for a new community activity.

Since then, John has put his skills to excellent use for the Montour Trail. Among his significant achievements, he has managed installation of railings on three bridges over Piney Fork Creek—at Brownsville Road, near the trailhead at South Park's sewage treatment plant, and at the east end of the new trail segment that opened last year. "I use my manufacturing connections to get steel, I get some friends to do welding and painting, and we have a work party," John explained.

John also guided fabrication and installation of a donated bench at the sewage treatment plant trailhead, with no exposed fasteners so that no part of the bench would be removable. And since the Montour Trail has no garage near South Park, he stores a donated tractor at his home along with his ample personal equipment.

John looks forward to completion of the last missing trail segments in South Park (from the Library Viaduct to Stewart Road) so that he won't have to interrupt his mowing as often. "Long-range bikers having trouble following the detours and stop for instructions," he said. "Others just stop to thank me." John uses the trail for fishing as well as walking, although he declined to disclose his preferred fishing spots.

John particularly appreciates the diversity of volunteers whose faithful work makes the Montour Trail successful. "We have everything from mowers to engineers to people doing paperwork," he noted. "Someone comes through and sprays over graffiti on the benches. I've never met that person and I don't even know who it is."

Apparently we have another anonymous helper lurking along the trail in South Park Township!

Announcing New Bi-Monthly Photo Contest

Between the ubiquitous cell phone cameras, as well as the great new digital point and shoot cameras and the terrific SLRs out there, it seems that everyone is a photographer nowadays. And what better place to capture beautiful and interesting images than our Montour Trail, right? So, to that end the Montour Trail Council will be sponsoring a bi-monthly photo contest on its web site. People will



be able to view all the submitted pictures on the Photo Contest page in the link provided at <http://www.montourtrail.org/>. All photos submitted before the next newsletter deadline will be given careful consideration

by the Montour Trail's crack photo judges. (No, the judges do not smoke crack, but they "might" conduct their deliberations from a local pub that has WiFi.) The winner of each bi-monthly contest will receive Montour Trail accoutrements worth thousands of pennies and selected just for them. But of course, what are a few baubles compared to the inestimable feeling of accomplishment you will receive from knowing that your photographic skills have finally received the recognition they deserve? Winners will also have their photo published (with their name) in the Montour Trail Newsletter for all to adore and admire! *What could be better than that?*



Everyone is invited to submit ONE photo between each newsletter for contest consideration. Content, composition, and artistic expression will be taken into account. Subjects might include, but are not limited to, trail users, flora and fauna,

exercise equipment, pets, trail structures and the like. (The judges are especially enamored with baby raccoons.) The trail "should" be included in the shot but is not absolutely necessary. Just send your photo to mtcphotocontest@montourtrail.org. Your email should include a brief description of where on the trail the picture was taken. Only one photograph per person will be accepted every two months. Selfies are welcome, but will not be considered contest material unless there is a black bear photo-bombing the picture or similar.

We are now accepting pictures for the March/April contest, So charge those batteries, clean those lenses and empty those SD cards and send your best trail picture to mtcphotocontest@montourtrail.org so YOU can go down in infamy as an MTC BI-MONTHLY PHOTO CONTEST WINNER!

The Montour Trail Council's Annual Member Picnic By Dennis Pfeiffer

On Saturday October 5, 2013 the Montour Trail Council (MTC) had it's annual "wrap up the season" member picnic. The picnic, which was free to all members, is the MTC's way of saying thank you to all of our members.



Left to right: Montour Trail Council's chief griller, Frank Ludwin, (left) explains the fine art of cooking hot dogs, hamburgers and kielbassi to former MTC President Mark Imgrund.

Last year the picnic was held in Cecil Township and hosted by the Cecil Friends of the trail. It also was a celebration honoring the Cecil section on being opened for twenty years. This year the picnic was held at Mile "0" in the Moon Township section of the trail. This was the 20th anniversary of the Moon Section being opened.

A plaque was presented to Moon Township Manager Jeanne Creese honoring Moon Township's twenty years of support for the



Left to right: Airport Area Friends President Phyllis McChesney, Moon Township Manager Jeanne Creese and MTC President Dennis Pfeiffer at the plaque presentation.

Montour Trail. A great time was had by all of those in attendance. Please plan on joining us for next year's picnic. The site will be determined at a later date.

Thanks again to all of you members for your generous support. It is greatly appreciated.

Moon Township Recognizes Montour Trail Council

The Moon Township Board of Supervisors presents a proclamation to Montour Trail Council President Dennis Pfeiffer in recognition of the volunteer efforts of the MTC members and in celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Montour Trail being opened in Moon Township on November 6, 2013

Pictured from Left to Right:

Moon Township Supervisor Jim Vitale, MTC President Dennis Pfeiffer, Moon Township Chairman Marvin Eicher, and Vice Chairman John Hertzer.



Remembering 2013



It was another year of bridging gaps on the Montour Trail system with the Piney Fork Bridge finally going somewhere. Peters Township completes the replacement of the structure over Sugar Camp Road. The first of two bridges along Valley Brook Road is dedicated.



The Montour Railroad Historical Society began replacing historical signs to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Mifflin Extension. The Dick Quasey plaque gets returned to its monument at the McDonald Viaduct after a mysterious absence and the Cecil Friends have another great Dog Walk.



The runners had a good year with another great Burgh Pizza and Wings 10K and 5K and 2 mile fun walk and the UPMC Urgent Care 1/2 Marathon and 5K.

MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

Montour Junction Car Shop**By Bryan Seip – President - Montour Railroad Historical Society**

Hundreds of coal hoppers were used by the Montour Railroad to move coal from the mines to the Champion Preparation Plant for cleaning and processing.

These coal hoppers took a lot of abuse while being loaded and unloaded. The constant use wore them out, while rust ate away at the steel sides of the cars. At Champion, the cars were unloaded by a rotary dumper that turned them completely upside down. In the winters, coal would freeze in the cars and need to be chipped out or heated to unload it. The occasional derailment or accident dented and bent up the cars.

At Montour Junction, the car shop repaired and rebuilt the hoppers to give them new life and additional years of service on the railroad. If a car was too badly damaged to be repaired, it was cut up and scrapped.

The car shop was an outdoor facility, using several tracks adjacent to the engine house, machine shop, carpentry shop and warehouse. Parts and materials were also stored in sheds along the shop tracks so the workers would have materials they needed close at hand. Bolts, rivets, couplers, air brake lines and many other parts were constantly being replaced.

At times, hoppers would be rebuilt by replacing the entire steel side or end of the car. A crane would be used to hold a large shaped steel panel in place against the car's frame while corners, braces, top rims, ladders and grab bars were riveted or bolted into place. Broken drop doors and brake rigging were repaired or replaced. Wheel sets could be replaced if needed.

The cars were mostly black or a dark red primer color and covered in dirt and coal dust. Rusty rails and creosoted ties made up the shop area. The ground was black with coal, grease and oil. A dark smog often hung over the yard as coal smoke was held down by the wintry skies. Even falling snow soon acquired a dirty gray color. Welder's torches showered white hot sparks as they cut away damaged parts or welded patches into place. Several forges heated rivets to be used on the cars and their glowing red fires supplied the only color in this world of white, black and gray. Red hot rivets being tossed up to a waiting hopper would provide an arc of color. The constant chatter of rivet guns and steel plates being slammed into place made this a noisy place to work. Communication was mostly by hand signals instead of talking.

The men who worked here were known as hard men. They worked out-of-doors in the hot summers and in the cold winters. It was a dirty and sweaty job using large, heavy tools. Covered with coal dust, dirt, rust, oil and grease, often only their white eyes would break up these dark silhouettes. Many of these men were immigrants and they did not take kindly to outsiders. New employees had to earn their way into the ranks of the shop gang and that wasn't easy to do. These neophytes might find their lunch bucket full of grease or perhaps welded to the washroom bench as a prank, but that was actually a sign that you were being accepted. If the shop gang didn't like you or your work ethic, they would simply run you off.

After cars were repaired and were again ready for service, they were pulled out of the shop tracks and sent back into revenue service on the main line, once again hauling the black diamonds that were the lifeblood of the Montour Railroad.



Coal hoppers being repaired or rebuilt occupy the Car Shop tracks at Montour Junction in Coraopolis. Fred Diebert photo



The X1 crane unloads wheel sets at the Car Shop. Charles A. Ross photo

You can contact the Montour Railroad Yahoo group at http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour_rr/ There are currently 329 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

Christopher Basar
James Benanti
Elaine Davis
Rob De Cortie
Joan Ewing
Paul Fackler

Jessica Knapp & Mark Mendelsohn
Irene & Keith McAllister
Richard J. Munsch
Siddharth & Andrea Pant
Kristina Watts

Leaders

Jonathan Hart
Joseph Howell
Ron Kachuriak
David L. Koeberlein
Larry Lupori

Gini Chandler
Kenneth Christman
Laura & Gary Graf
Anton Knaus
Louis Komer
Wayne & Cindy Pfrimmer
Robert Purdy
Robert & Amelia Shillingsburg
Roy Weil & Mary Shaw
Richard R. Wilson

Benefactors

Christopher Basar
Mr. & Mrs. Leslie J. Broglie
Dick & Annette Bryant
Don & Shelly Fink

Montour Trail Events in 2014

April 27, 2014: The Burgh Pizza and Wings 10K, 5K and 2 mile family walk at Cecil Park.

June 7, 2014: The Cecil Friends 10th Annual Tails for Trails 5K Fun Dog Walk at the Kurnick Plot

June 7, 2014: The JR Taylor 5K Run on the Bethel Branch

July 25, 2014: The Twilight Trail Walk on Arrowhead Trail in Peters Township.

September 6, 2014: The UPMC Urgent Care ½ Marathon and 5K

September 20, 2014: The Tour the Montour

October 11, 2014: Bethel Park, Peters Township and South Hills Penny Day

Annual Meeting in November

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