



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Celebrating 31 Years

Volume 31 Issue 4

July-August 2020

18th Tour the Montour is Virtual and Real, August 1 – September 30



By the Tour the Montour Committee

The coronavirus pandemic has forced us to apply outside-the-box thinking to many everyday activities. Because many local bicyclists look forward to the end-of-summer Tour the Montour bike event, the planning committee has created a Tour that you can participate in whenever you like, wherever you like, however you like. The most important rule is to stay safe by practicing social distancing.

How the 2020 Ride Works

Between August 1 and September 30, ride the mileage that you would normally ride for the Tour the Montour. Any mileage. Any time. As many stages as you want, or all in one bike ride. Anywhere — this year's Tour is not restricted to just the Trail. Ride alone, or ride with friends, six feet apart. Use a stationary bike if you choose. Just celebrate the fact that in the midst of a pandemic, we can still be outdoors!

When you officially register and pay the very-reasonable entry fee, you get a commemorative T-shirt and a chance at winning a premium prize.

Finally, when your ride is done, feel free to post your photos and ride description on the Montour Trail Enthusiasts [Facebook group](#).

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Ride Details

To register, go to bikereg.com/tour-the-montour-trail-ride.

As in the past, you can ride one of the recommended mileages on the Trail, or custom-design your own route:

- 62 miles (metric century)
- 44 miles
- 15–24 miles
- 12 miles
- 6 miles (family fun ride)

The week of the scheduled ride (September 13–19), out-and-back turnaround signs will be posted along the Trail that mark official distances.

For safety reasons, no headphones allowed, and helmets are mandatory.

If you choose to do your mileage on a stationary bike, you can search the internet for virtual tours of Paris or Hawaii and pedal along that route. Or you can play a virtual Montour Trail video posted by MTC member/volunteer Tim Killmeyer. You can find these on the MTC [map](#) page.

The entry fee for adults is \$25; each child 12 and under is \$15. The fee includes a performance-fabric T-shirt (designed to keep you cool, comfortable and dry) and 1 chance ticket. You must register before midnight on August 31 to be guaranteed a T-shirt (sizes small to XXXL). Several pick-up dates for T-shirts will be held in mid-September; check the webpage (https://montourtrail.org/event/tour-the-montour-3-2/?instance_id=2508) for updates. There is an additional \$7 shipping fee if you need us to mail your T-shirt to you. **Continues on page 4**

Visit the Montour Trail Web Site at:
www.montourtrail.org
To converse go to:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/43518292159>



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The Prez Sez - State of Trails

We are most fortunate to be living in the state of Pennsylvania, still 'Penn's Woods' with large areas of forests and woodlands, the most miles of rivers and streams of any lower US state, and lots of former railroad corridors. The perfect elements are right in place for a fine system of rail trails, to provide us a network of level pathways across this hilly state! We are also fortunate to have a truly remarkable and first class PA state agency, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) that from the very beginning has recognized the great value of the statewide trail system and strongly supported it over the years.

DCNR defines a Major Greenway as "... an existing or planned long distance corridor (at least 50 miles long) that passes through two or more counties, and is recognized in official planning documents by [those] counties." DCNR identifies and maintains a map of these, posting it on their website. Specifically stated is that "The purpose of identifying and mapping these corridors is to inform and guide greenway and open space planners, as well as focus trail development efforts in these corridors." DCNR is currently finalizing their 2020-2024 PA Land and Water Trail Network Strategic Plan, and will include a status report on each of PA's major greenways in the Plan.

Being one of those major greenways, the Montour Trail was contacted and asked to write up and submit a short report, consisting of a brief description and trail status; our top challenges and opportunities; and what we hope to accomplish by 2024. There's nothing like being thrown into a two minute elevator conversation with your biggest long term supporter to bring the high points of the whole of the Montour Trail into clear focus. Basics are that we were founded in 1989, sweep west and south of Pittsburgh as the longest suburban rail trail in the US, and host 500,000 visitors a year. We connect with the GAP to DC, the Panhandle to WV, the planned Ohio River Trail to Ohio, and are a key in the Industrial Heartlands trail network. And we're still an all-volunteer organization.

Reporting on the status of the trail was an opportunity to look with a fresh perspective at the Coraopolis to Clairton mainline of the Montour. After only 30 years, we really are mostly done building the trail! We are running two trail building projects this year, Coraopolis and Piney Fork. Next year should see completion of the Summit Station and the Wood St. to Steward Rd. sections. After that, only two un-built sections remain: the on-road stretch in South Park and the bridge needed to get the trail over Route 51 at Large. When those are done, the Montour mainline will finally be able to be described - without reservation - as continuous and unbroken from end to end.

Clearly our biggest challenge is the major gap posed by Route 51 in Jefferson Hills. The current at grade patchwork route is, to say the least, highly unsatisfactory. Only our hardest trail users navigate it; most just turn around. Montour has begun the process of building a bridge as a long term solution, by starting discussions with variety of partners and engaging an engineering firm to produce a conceptual design. We are not alone in PA; other longtime trails are in the same situation, mostly complete except for one difficult gap in their trail system. Fortunately for us all, in their role as supporters of the trail networks, PA DCNR has recognized this and conducts a highly targeted and aggressive program to identify and prioritize trail gaps. They maintain a list of 'Top Ten Trail Gaps in PA', as well as additional trail gaps, and work through a variety of means to help get such gaps completed, and so make the trails continuous. This report was an opportunity to bring Montour's Route 51 crossing into focus as a major trail gap.

Other challenges include finding volunteers, addressing a plethora of maintenance issues, raising the funding, mentoring future leaders, and managing the whole of MTC as effectively and fruitfully as possible into the future. Many other challenges could be mentioned as well; some may prove in time to be even more pressing than these.

The greatest opportunities may arise from the burgeoning number of new Montour Trail users as a result of the pandemic. In the micro, MTC would like to bring them in as volunteers and donors, and eventually as committee chairs and board members. In the macro, we need to prepare - as DCNR is with their Strategic Plan - for a new world which places a much higher value on healthy outdoor recreation and non-motorized transportation, and is willing to allocate scarce resources accordingly. Opportunities abound in the network of relationships with individuals, municipalities, public agencies, and private entities. Past examples of such highly fruitful MTC

continues on page 3

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 the Montour Trail Office for more information or to get on the agenda.

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 "work parties" are held during the season. Please call 412-262-3748 to lend a hand at the work parties.

Fort Cherry Friends: (MP 12.6 to MP 20.7)

Friends of the Trail meeting: Second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 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.

Cecil Friends: (MP 22.0 to MP 28.5)

Friends of the Trail meeting, every fourth Wednesday 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

Peters Township Friends: (MP 28.5 to 30.4, Library 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 Community Recreation

Center and varying locations during warmer weather at 7:00 p.m. Work and cleanup parties on the first Friday and third Saturday of every month at 8:30 a.m. For more information, please call Jim Robbins at 724-941-6132. For monthly meetings contact Wayne Pfrimmer at 724-747-9766 or by email at waynepfrimmer@gmail.com

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 Caucus Room behind the 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 46.6)

Meeting second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at South Park Township Community Room or the Township Library located at the Township Building at 2675 Brownsville Road, South Park, 15129. Work and cleanup parties on the second Saturday of the month. For more information, contact David Oyler at 412-831-9288, davidoyler1950@gmail.com, or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, mckeownp@comcast.net

The Montour Railroad Historical Society:

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

The Westland Friends: (MP 21.0 to 21.9, and Westland

Branch) Standard meeting schedule is third Thursday of the month at 1:30 PM at MTC Office in Bridgeville. During Pandemic, meetings have been moved outside to Galatit trailhead pavilion. For more information contact Dave Hajnik at 412-498-3854 (text enabled) or dave@theneonweb.com

Note: Many of these meetings are being held virtually these days due to the pandemic. Please contact the appropriate individual to verify physical or on-line meeting specifics!

The Prez Sez continues from Page 2

collaborations over the past thirty years are numerous, and we aim to nurture and grow these sorts of relationships going forward.

MTC's current 2019-2021 Strategic Plan, combined with reasonable extrapolations into the upcoming 2022-2024 Plan, provide detailed tactics and strategies to accomplish, among other goals, the following objectives:

- Complete the four trail sections which are currently in construction and in design.
- Advance the Route 51 Bridge project and the South Park on-road sections to the construction phase.
- Assess feasibility of hiring a paid staff person to better handle the burgeoning MTC administrative workload.
- Develop and implement a volunteer management system as an enabling aid to trail managers.
- Develop and implement a GIS-based real estate management system for MTC managed real estate.
- Keep the trail in pristine shape with careful investments in equipment, facilities, and projects.

OK, the elevator has stopped, the doors have opened, and out we step. That was a summary of the report to DCNR.

Above all, we hope to continue to maintain an overall culture that encourages, supports and feeds volunteers at all positions throughout the entire Montour Trail organization. We need to thank them for being willing in the first place, be organized and equipped for tasks so they can enjoy what they have undertaken, keep a positive and forward spirit throughout, so that everybody has a good time, and not forget to thank everyone again when it's done.

Thank you all. My sincere wishes are that you and yours continue to stay well.

Ned Williams

The Tour the Montour continues from Page 1



Prizes

Two of our valued sponsors have offered these prizes:

- Seven Springs: 2-night stay for 2 people, includes breakfast and use of gym and pool facilities (black-out days of Christmas week, MLK weekend and President's weekend)
- Aero Tech Designs Cycle Wear: Pittsburgh biking jersey, shorts, gloves and socks (male or female custom size)

When registering, you have the opportunity to purchase additional chances for \$5 each. If you're not already a Montour Trail Council supporting member, you can add in an annual membership when you register for the Tour.

Have a wonderful ride, be safe, and be healthy!



July 2020

What's New on the Website

Policy references and definitions at a glance

- Updated [event planning](#)
- Recently revised event policy and fillable-form application. Also mobility-impaired, camping, rules, and sign/literature box policies

<https://montourtrail.org/about/privacy-policy/>

New frequently asked questions

<https://montourtrail.org/about/faqs/>

Event details: Tour the Montour

https://montourtrail.org/event/tour-the-montour-3-2/?instance_id=2508

Friends Groups update

<https://montourtrail.org/help-us/friends-groups/>



Bill Capp leads his volunteers as they resurface the trail between Muse Bishop Bridge and the National Tunnel. The trail surface had been torn up from vehicles using the trail during the preliminary phase of constructing the McConnell Trails housing plan and some rainy weather.

Become a They

This year has been a year that has altered so much for so many. Because of the closure of entertainment and gym facilities, the trail has been a destination point for us all. We have seen so many enjoying the wonders of spring on the Montour Trail. We, of the Membership and Community Outreach Committee, would like to extend an invitation to you to become a part of the Trail - become a member or renew your membership and help us remain there for you. If you are able, become a volunteer. The Trail is 100% run and maintained by volunteers. Persons are needed for actual trail maintenance and can choose the area of trail in which they are interested. For those who would rather do administrative or committee work, there are many committees from which to choose. Help the Montour Trail stay the great Southwestern Pennsylvania asset that it is. Go to montourtrail.org or fill out the map flyer membership form and become part of the legacy. Published in this newsletter are the dates of the Friends' meetings. Also, checkout the calendar for work party times and dates.

The Originals: Tom Dougherty

By Fran Hensler

Outdoor enthusiast Tom Dougherty was in his mid-20s when he joined the local Sierra Club, hoping to find a meaningful way to get involved in home-grown conservation efforts. The club's president told Tom about another local guy's idea to transform an abandoned railroad into something more valuable. Would Tom be willing to check it out on behalf of the Sierra Club? That guy happened to be Stan Sattinger.

Tom and his bride of one year were living in Aspinwall at the time, but they had just purchased a house in Mt. Lebanon.



During Tom's first phone conversation with Stan, he learned that the home he was about to move into was five doors down the street from Stan's! It was an early stroke of trail magic.

"I was 26 when I first heard of this 'brand new idea' to convert the old rail line from Coraopolis to Clairton into a walking/biking trail. After talking with Stan for just a few minutes, I knew

immediately that I wanted to get involved. I was thrilled that Stan invited me to a meeting," Tom said.

He and his wife didn't have any children at that time. "Sara thought it was a really cool idea and was very excited that I might be able to help in some way. She too loved outdoor activities and was intrigued by the idea."

Tom observed that Stan was especially good at building a board with the right skill sets. "I was the youngest (some might say most-inexperienced) member of the group, but I had a lot of energy," Tom said about his being recruited to raise funds for the Trail. "Professionally I was working in public relations. I liked to sell, and my enthusiasm for the project was apparent. It was great to have the opportunity to promote something I really believed in! In retrospect, our rail-trail vision was a meaningful idea, launched at exactly the right time, with a receptive audience."

Early board meetings often focused on huge problems that seemed like deal-breakers. But the people who rubbed elbows on the board always found a workable solution through divide and conquer: "It was an amazing thing to see it all gel and come together. I never saw any group function with such passion and dedication. We had a dream and nothing was going to get in the way."

Tom made presentations and submitted proposals to countless foundations and corporations to secure funding to acquire the abandoned railroad right-of-way, and later to build short sections of the Trail. "Building low-mileage segments where possible was our

way of generating widespread support in different communities — and making constant progress, because it would inspire us to keep working to get the next connecting section done," Tom added.

The young fund-raiser remained on the Montour Trail Council board for about seven years. He had two young sons when deciding to retire from the board, so he could dedicate all of his spare time to raising his growing family. Tom and Sara were often seen hiking or biking along the Trail with sons Danny and Billy, and later daughter Claire, in tow, strapped into a backpack or a bike seat. The couple had lots of happy rail-trail adventures with their kids, all as their family and the Montour Trail grew together — and they continue to do so to this day.

Though he long ago passed the Montour stewardship baton to others, Tom still believes that we all have a role to play in the Montour Trail's future. "People need to understand the fact that there is no 'they.' We, you, me, and everyone who uses the trail is the 'they,'" he said. "It's not run by a government entity. When people begin to understand this, they're more likely to contribute — their time, their money, their passion."

Many years of corporate marketing experience later, he has redirected his professional career to non-profit Allegheny Land Trust (ALT), which he chose "based on a deeply held belief that the organization's mission of 'helping local people save local land' was vital to the long-term sustainability of the Pittsburgh Region." A recent project even involved the Montour Trail when ALT, with support from the Montour Trail Council and Hollow Oak Land Trust, acquired 40 wooded, trail-front, stream-front acres in the Montour Run Valley near Milepost 0.0 so that tract will remain as woodlands forever.

Thirty years after grabbing the Montour Trail bull by the horns, the youngest original board member board is older and wiser, but still in love with the Trail. "Sara and I use the Montour Trail (and other pathways) several days a week. "Every time I'm out there, I see hundreds of people of all walks of life enjoying themselves and think of Stan and the other dedicated people he pulled together and patiently led to make the Trail a reality," Tom noted. "It's an amazing story, and I am honored to have played a small role, way back at the beginning. I am extremely appreciative for all of the volunteers who made it happen over the last 30 years and thankful for those who continue to expand, improve, and maintain the Trail today."



The Cecil Friends again say thanks to Bedners Greenhouse for the donation of flowers at the Kurnick Plot as well as mulch for the area between the Trail and the parking area at Tandem Connection.

MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

Sidings along the Main Line**By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society**

The Montour Railroad had a single track main line throughout its 42 mile length looping around the South Hills area. With multiple trains working in both directions to and from the various mines and businesses, meeting and passing locations had to be established to allow trains to pass each other.



Caboose 35 trails a coal train on the main line as it passes engine 80, which is on the McDonald Siding. The diverging track on the right is the McDonald Transfer Track (now the Montour-Panhandle Connector) leading to the PRR Panhandle Line. Gene P. Schaeffer photo.

Passing sidings were constructed every three or four miles to provide multiple places for trains to pass, thus keeping traffic flowing. Each had to be long enough to contain a complete train so that another could pass along the main line. Most were 3000 to 3500 feet long with a switch at each end and held approximately 60 to 70 cars, while train lengths were typically 45 to 50 cars. Locations of the sidings can sometimes be seen as a wider area along the trail as the sidings meant there were two tracks side by side.

The sidings could also be used to temporarily store cars, either full or empty, when tracks at nearby mines were already filled. Non-coal freight cars might be spotted on a siding until a local crew could pick them up for delivery to nearby businesses. A "local" train would take care of servicing non-coal industries with a few cars at a time so the full length "road" trains would not be delayed getting coal hoppers to or from the mines.

As years went by and the needs of the mines and businesses changed, some of the sidings were modified or shortened or eliminated.

Various employee timetables list 12 to 15 sidings. Eastbound from Montour Junction, sidings were located at:

Scott – Trail mile 4.5 – along Montour Run Road. It held 70 cars serving Scott Mine and later Nelson Industries.

Lotus – Mile 5.5 – along Cliff Mine Road – 35 cars.

Cliff Mine – Mile 6 – along Cliff Mine Road in the trailhead parking area – 30 cars - serving the Dickson Mine.

Boggs – Mile 11 – at the Boggs trailhead area – 50 cars as well as additional yard tracks serving several nearby mines and the Champion Preparation Plant.

Champion – Mile 12 – at the processing plant location near Routes. 22 & 980 – Separate from the plant's operating tracks, this siding for 65 cars could hold an entire unit train. Unit trains are made up of all one type of cars, in this case coal hoppers, which are kept together and shipped to one customer, such as a power plant or steel mill.

McAdams – Mile 15.5 – along Rt. 980 – 38 cars - serving Montour Mine #9 operations.

McDonald – Mile 17 – near the McDonald viaduct – 66 cars – plus it included the connection to the McDonald Transfer Track (now the Montour-Panhandle Connector).

Peacock – Mile 19.3 – along Primrose Road – 66 cars - mostly temporary storage for empty hoppers headed to Westland Mine.

Cowden – Mile 23 – crossing Cowden Road in Cecil Township – 70 cars - also serving Montour Mine #2 during its operation.

Henderson – Mile 26.5 – along Cecil-Henderson Road – 65 cars - including the lead track into the Henderson Mine

Thompsonville – Mile 30.5 – along Valley Brook Road in Peters Township - 68 cars - used as storage to keep Montour Mine #4 tracks available for additional hoppers.

Library Junction – Mile 33.8 – at the wye track behind the current horse farm - 70 cars later shortened to 40 – mainly cars to or from Montour Mine #10 in Library.

Jewell – Mile 1 on the trail Bethel Park Branch – along East McMurray Road and crossing Clifton Road – originally 80 cars later shortened to a 20 car spur near the George Washington Elementary School.

Salida – In Bethel Park near Baptist Church Road, not on the trail – 65 cars later shortened to 16 - used as staging for cars going to or from Mifflin Junction.

In later years, several of the sidings were used by the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad (the Montour's owner) to store surplus rail cars as traffic was declining on the Montour. These cars were removed as sections of the Montour were officially abandoned and the rails were pulled up.

You can contact the Montour Railroad Historical Society through Facebook by searching for the Montour Railroad Historical Society. There are currently 425 members from across the country. 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. There is also much information at <http://www.montourrr.com>



A short local train is seen passing Cowden Siding in Cecil Township, 1980. (Ridgewood Drive) Gene P. Schaeffer photo.



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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. Not all new members have been entered as of print deadline and will be listed in the next issue of the newsletter.

New Members

Derek Ausk
 Heather Banks
 Thomas Bellino
 Marianne Bertelsen
 Joan Blasinsky
 Russell Block
 Jill Bodnar
 Jo. Baily Brown
 Geoff Burch
 Cindy Cingel
 Thomas Conaboy
 Josh Cordle
 Hayley Cratty
 Rowland Cromwell
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