



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

# MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

*Celebrating 31 Years*

Volume 31 Issue 2

March-April 2020

## Steel Erection has Commenced at the Connection

Beginning March 3rd and extending through June, there will be intermittent closures of the Montour Trail at milepost ~17.8, a point located between the McDonald Viaduct and Penny Lane west of McDonald PA. Trumbull Construction crews will be erecting steel girders for the Southern Beltway over the trail. Their workdays are planned for daylight hours, Monday through Friday. The trail will be open for most of that time, but at times there will be closures during which trail users will not be able to go through the construction area.

The duration of trail closures could be as short as twenty minutes, but in some cases could extend to several hours. Trail users are advised to plan accordingly. Note: closures can also be expected on the Panhandle Trail and the Connector between the Panhandle and the Montour. The photograph to the right is taken from the Connector looking southward where the first girders have been erected



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

## Central Bethel Park Trail

**TRUE or FALSE question:** Did the Montour Railroad tracks ended at Logan Road, where the trail now ends?

**Answer: FALSE!** The tracks crossed all of Bethel Park and connected with the Norfolk and Western Railway and prior to that the Pittsburgh and West Virginia Railway behind the now Spoonwood Brewery on Baptist Road. The new Central Bethel Park Trail end point will be the near Millenium Park.

It is quite difficult to extend the trail north from Logan Road, so the Friends of the Montour Trail are jumping to the middle of Bethel Park and starting there, calling it the Central Bethel Park Trail. This section will come in small pieces, a quarter of a mile here, a third of a mile there. Every piece has its story and its challenges; we did it before and we can do it again!

Recently, the Montour Trail acquired its first new piece of the former Montour Railroad right of way in the middle of Bethel Park; from Brightwood Road to Library Road. The Friends group, with help from volunteers, will start by removing what does not belong there. After that, they will make a path through it for a trail.

The same process will continue for more pieces and long term, pedestrian overpasses and underpasses (not unlike those the railroad had), will be needed, but for a trail, not a railroad.

Help is needed. If you would like to volunteer, please contact:  
Peter Kohnke 724-518-9251  
Bill Volbers 724-544-5991



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## The Prez Sez -Managing the Trail in a New Era

This year's Ides of March, March 15 is likely to stand for some time as the day everything shut down. All large gatherings of people, particularly schools, sporting events and entertainment venues, have been shuttered in the effort to control the spread of the corona virus. Unlike the two foot snow on this day in 1993, however, the effects of this storm will not be soon melting away. By the time you read this, we will see if the proposed short term closings of some facilities got extended further into the spring.

The normal behaviors of basic human interaction have quickly become constrained; even the millennia-old handshake is suddenly viewed as a risk. We are pretty unaccustomed to keeping ourselves a full body length apart in tight public spaces; it is a good thing we can speak and hear over that distance. We are being encouraged to stay home and only go out for things that are necessary, a term that's tough to define if there ever was one.

But that's where the trail comes in, supplying a need that's a necessity for a lot of people. It's springtime. It's finally warm and beautiful out, everything is flowering and greening up, and the outdoors smells fresh and clean. People who live for the outdoors are not going to want to remain cooped up at home for too long. They will want to get out on the trail, where they can engage in healthy recreation away from crowds. As we have seen over the years, most trail users, whether on foot or bicycle, are out there traveling along by themselves, or perhaps with one or two friends. With larger scale sporting events and other entertainments unavailable, the trail is still something they can go do. Maintaining some distance from other trail users is more or less an already established protocol, as it gives everyone the space they may want for their own personal experience, be it exercising, focused training, just toddling along, enjoying nature, or re-creating ourselves in 'simple' recreation.

So, I think it is possible that these extraordinary times may actually bring us an increase in trail usership, as that may be one of few things left that people who are interested in their health and well-being can still go do. The trails in this respect may be in common to utilities, groceries, health care, and the other services which will remain in place to supply all of the other needs of life. I have heard people out on the trail say they're out on the trail because it's the only thing left. Some of you may have heard similar comments.

Of course, being springtime, many of the Friends groups and other trail workers would like to get out and do some trail cleanup and begin their routines of clearing tree limbs and other sprucing up for the year. This may actually be a time when smaller work parties are a good thing. Trailside work tends to be spread out over some distances by its nature, and parties of three or four people, each taking a different part of an overall task, can get a lot done. Even some of the larger trail re-surfacing projects don't involve a lot of people working in close proximity.

As of this writing, we still plan to go ahead with finishing the interior of the western garage. Also planned is to set the bridge over Piney Fork Creek, and then continue building that trail section, begun last year. It is hoped to resume work on the Coraopolis trail section a little later. There are also two new sections of trail now in design in South Park Township; we may see one or possibly both start construction this year.

Perhaps the greatest challenge will be maintaining all the strong personal interactions that it takes to keep the Montour Trail going in a scenario of limited face-to-face gatherings. The Board, the Friends Groups, all the committees may have to "work from home" for a little while. The goal will be to make the most of these interactions, so that decisions get made and the work moves forward as effectively as possible given the extraordinary circumstances.

My best wishes that all of you get through this time in good health!

**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 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 20.7 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.

## Tour the Montour Early Announcement

Announcing the Tour the Montour Raffle with great prizes donated by our great friends of the Montour Trail! Registration opens April 15. Once again Seven Springs has provided a 2-night stay for 2 people with use of pool and workout facility. Breakfasts are included.

Aerotech Designs has a new Pittsburgh Jersey design and has again donated a cycle outfit.

Tandem Connection has donated a bicycle with make and model to be announced.

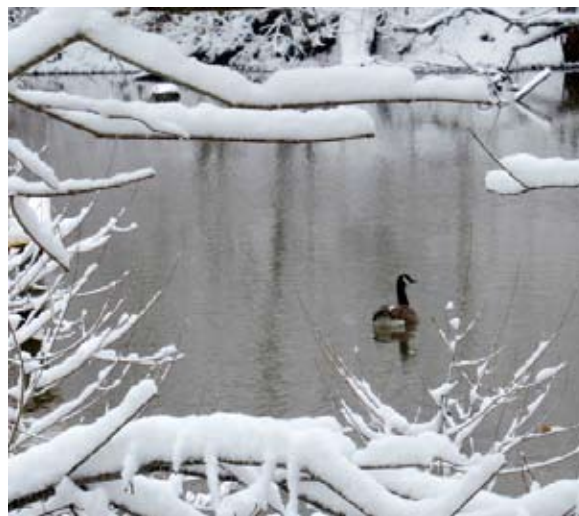
Trek has joined us this year and are donating a hybrid bike. Raffle tickets are \$5.00 apiece or 3 for \$10.00 and are available from any Tour planning committee members or at Trailside. Opening date for registration is yet to be determined.

Help support the trail and win a great prize!

## Events Announcement!

National Tunnel 5 and 10K Race and 2K Fun Walk.	April 19, 2020
J.R. Taylor Race. (Bethel Friends)	June 6, 2020
Twilight Trail Walk. (Peters Friends)	July 31, 2020
Tour the Montour.	Sept. 19, 2020

## Photo Contest Winner!



Goose in South Park trail pond (MP38.7) framed by February 7 snow covered tree branches. Photo by Dave Oyler. See page 4 for more details about the photo contest.



## Original Board Member Larry Ridenour Regrets for Annual Dinner

On Saturday, November 16, 2019, we received a telephone call from Larry Ridenour expressing his regrets that he and his wife Barb could not make the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner. For those who may have not heard his message at the dinner or could not attend, here is Larry's fine and inspiring words.



10/12/2018 Dave Wright, Larry Ridenour and Tom Dougherty at MTC Office

"I am calling from our home in Lexington, Kentucky. We regret that we cannot make the 30<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the Montour Trail Council. Barb just had a spine operation and cannot travel. We wish we could be there and regret we cannot make it. Give all of the attendees my regards and especially to those attending from the "Original Twelve". My understanding is that the Montour Trail Council is in really good hands. Again, we really wish we could attend and send my regards to all. Good luck."

## What's New at [www.montourtrail.com](http://www.montourtrail.com)

We regularly add new information to the website. You might want to check in from time to time to learn what you've been missing.

- 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration:
  - Keynote speaker Stan Sattinger's presentation
  - Video: Montour Trail Then and Now
  - Founding Fathers list and accomplishments
- Virtual Trail tours from Tim Killmeyer, by ~6-mile sections
- Events: Online registration for Tour the Montour will be announced when it opens.
- Friends groups descriptions
- Coming soon: features section, revised photo album, online policy references

## Alfred Benesch & Company Corporate Work Party, July 26, 2019 By Dennis Pfeiffer



Left to Right: Tyler Blonski, Amelia Harris, Matt Pierce, Carson Pierce, Lance Andrews, Robbie Wilston, Dean Morrison

On Friday July 26, we held a corporate work party in the Airport Area with seven volunteers from the Alfred Benesch & Company. They completed grass trimming along the trail at intersections and trailheads. They were a hard-working crew indeed. We have been very fortunate to work with employees of Alfred Benesch & Company in this their fourth year of donating time. A big thanks to Tyler Blonski who again set up this work party with the employees.

Note: Alfred Benesch & Company is an engineering firm with 600 employees. In addition to it's Pittsburgh, Cranberry Office they have 33 other offices nationwide.

## The Montour Trail Photo Contest

The Montour Trail Council conducts a bi-monthly photo contest. Entered photos get displayed in our photo album. All photos submitted before the next newsletter deadline will be given careful consideration by the Trail's crack photo judges.

The winner of each bi-monthly contest receives Montour Trail accoutrements worth thousands of pennies, selected specifically 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 photos are 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 for each newsletter. Judges take into account content, composition and artistic expression. Subjects might include, but are not limited to, Trail users, flora and fauna, exercise equipment, pets, trail structures, and the like. You should include the Trail in your entry shot but is not absolutely necessary.

So email your photo to [mtcphotocontest@montourtrail.org](mailto:mtcphotocontest@montourtrail.org). Include your name and a brief description of why and where the picture was taken along the Trail.

## J. R. Taylor 5K Continues to Involve Families and Younger Runners by Mike McClaine



The annual J. R. Taylor 5K Race and Walk, scheduled for Saturday, June 6 at 8:30 a.m., continues to involve families and younger runners. This is an easier race for beginning runners because the surface is generally smooth and flat. In addition, to encourage participation, younger runners receive special discounts! Interested in walking with your family instead of running? Then this is also a good event for you, as there will be plenty of walkers out to get some exercise and support the trail.

As usual, the race will start alongside Washington Elementary School and cross the JR Taylor Memorial Bridge as part of a relaxing out and back route. There will be plenty of support along the race, and there will be refreshments for participants when they return.

The event has a new race director, Mike McClaine, a resident of Bethel Park, who has taken over for Bruce Barron following Bruce's move to Colorado. Mike was happy to be involved and commented "The JR Taylor 5K is a really fun local event and connection to the community, and I can see it continuing to grow over the years. My family always enjoys using the trail, and this 5K is a terrific chance to help keep the trail in good maintenance for everyone."

This race is excited to announce our Gold Sponsors:

- Aspirant, a global management consulting and technology firm, with headquarters in Pittsburgh, and
- KOB Solutions, a provider of recruiting solutions for the pharmaceutical and biomedical industries.

The race is also happy to return our Silver Sponsors:

- Brentwood Bank, our local community bank, providing business and personal banking services,
- Highfield Crossing Apartments, located near the race starting point, and
- John A. Biedrzycki, the Steel City Lawyer.

If you are interested in signing up or making a donation, go to [www.JRTaylor5K.com](http://www.JRTaylor5K.com). As in the past, race packet pickup will be at Fleet Feet, the Race Day Sponsor.

## The National Tunnel 5K and 10K Race and 2K Walk



Come and join us for the National Tunnel 5K and 10K races and the 2K fun walk on April 19! Tandem Connection is again presenting this annual event which benefits the Montour Trail. Start location is at The Tandem Connection- 5 Georgetown Rd., Hendersonville. Chip timing and results are provided by Miles of Smiles. Water stations will be available.

Registration is at [runsignup.com/Race/PA/Hendersonville/NationalTunnel5k10k](http://runsignup.com/Race/PA/Hendersonville/NationalTunnel5k10k). Packet pickup and late registration on April 17 and 18 at Tandem Connection between 1 and 7 pm.

Or on race day, you may register at Tandem Connection starting at 7:30 a.m. 5K race time is 9:15 a.m., 10K race time is 10:00 a.m., 2K fun walk start time is 9:15 a.m.

After the races, food will be provided.

Race fee includes a short sleeve t shirt with race logo for those pre-registered before April 4 as long as supplies last.

## Montour Trail Patrols

We are looking for a few good men and women to join our Montour Trail Patrol group. Our current Patrol group is made up of people from all walks of life. Our Patrols assist trail users who need help. Our people have gone through CPR and First Aid Training and can assist bikers with mechanical problems. They also keep an eye out for illegal vehicles on the Trail. In addition, we assist with "The Tour the Montour" bike ride event in the Fall.



Montour" bike ride event in the Fall.

In the photo (left), John F. Kun on the right has been with us since May 24, 2017. John is a Certified Public Accountant and is a Partner in an accounting firm. He now serves on the MTC Board of Directors and chairs

the Finance Committee. If you are interested in participating in our Patrol Group, contact Jesse Forquer, the Director of Trail Security (on the left in the photo) at [jjforquer@comcast.net](mailto:jjforquer@comcast.net).



## MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

**Montour Memories - Jim Lane & the Widow's House****By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society**

Jim Lane was a long-time engineer on the Montour Railroad, signing on as a fireman in 1936, moving up to engineer and working until his retirement in 1976. He was one of four Lane men who worked on the Montour. His brother, son and nephew all became Montour engineers. They all lived in the area at the bottom of the hill at Lawrence, known as Hills Station – or simply Hills – to the railroaders. “Big Jim” loved the Montour and had plenty of stories to tell about his time on the railroad. He told this story about helping a neighbor who lived next to the railroad. It is called The Widow's House.

Jim was working as a fireman in the late 1930's on a run late one winter evening out of Montour Junction. He thought it might have been locomotive #33. As they headed east, they passed through Greers Tunnel, over the Pennsylvania Railroad on the through truss bridge and around several curves in that area. Here they exploded a track torpedo used for signaling an obstruction ahead.



*Jim Lane working at Champion on his last day before retirement, December 28, 1976. Nick Jarina photo.*

Jim, living near-by in Hills Station and knowing all his neighbors, decided to toss some coal out from the tender into her front yard. He said he had tossed coal as he passed by on moving trains before, usually a shovel full or two if he was quick enough. After he supplied her yard that night, he climbed down into the cab and was confronted by the Montour's trainmaster. It seems the trainmaster had been lurking around the train stopped in front of them and walked back for a visit. He asked Jim what he had been doing on the tender and Jim replied he was shoving coal closer to the bunker doors and trimming the loose coal so it would not fall from the top of the tender. Well, the trainmaster knew the real story and wondered why he saw coal landing in the widow's yard. No reply from Jim would have changed the verdict.

The trainmaster reported Jim's conduct and disciplinary actions were given in terms of more “brownies” to Jim's record, (brownies were days without work or pay) but the coal remained on the ground for the widow. I guess the trainmaster may have had a soft spot himself.

Standing at the site, you can easily imagine the scene of locomotive #33 sitting there, shrouded in steam on a cold evening with its headlight illuminating a wooden caboose, and the silhouette of Jim Lane against the night sky making sure the old widow woman would be warm for another night.

They slowed down and caught sight of a flagman giving them a stop signal with a red lantern. The flagman climbed aboard as the engineer eased down to a stop behind the flagman's caboose. After Jim's train stopped, the flagman said that his train ahead of them was having air trouble with a pick up off the PRR transfer at Hills, but expected they would be moving east shortly.

At this point they had stopped on a short straight stretch east of Greers Crossing above what later became the water purification plant for #4 mine along Chartiers Creek. (This is at trail mile 29.2, east of Linwood Road where the wide grassy patch sits along the trail.) This was also next to an old frame and log dwelling belonging to an old widow woman. Her husband had been a miner all his life, but had passed away.

Jim said that every day the miner used to walk to work, using either the Montour or the PRR that crossed the creek at this same point, depending if he worked at the tippie or entered the mine at the supply yard along the PRR.



*Jim Lane in the engineer's seat of a Montour steam locomotive. Photo courtesy Nick Jarina.*

*You can contact the Montour Railroad Historical Society through Facebook by searching for the Montour Railroad Historical Society. There are currently 347 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*



## I want to support the Montour Trail Council!

### Membership Level

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☐ Benefactor \$250 - \$499  
☐ Sustaining \$100 - \$249  
☐ Supporting \$50 - \$99  
☐ Family \$35  
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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.*

### New Members

Jaime Creson  
 Robert Kean  
 Bill McNally  
 Paul Thoms

### Benefactors

Donna Hoffman & Richard Dum  
 Sgawn McClintock  
 Donald Mysliwec  
 Bert Olah

### Leaders

Thomas Levine  
 Donald & Anna Marie Niemann

## In Memoriam

Frank Rogel, 68, passed away on February 19th. He was a member of the Peters Friends group and was a regular at many of the monthly work parties and Peters Township Trail events. A frequent contributor to the monthly friend meetings, he always had fresh ideas to solve some of the trail maintenance challenges. He was an inaugural member of the Montour Trail Council's Friends Group Engagement and Enhancement Committee.

Jack Peth, 85, passed away on February 25. He was an active volunteer not only with the Trail, but with Bike MS and Ski for Life. He was instrumental in placement of the Quicksilver Bridge as well as many other projects.

We thank them for their selflessness.

