



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Marking 33 Years

Volume 33 Issue 2

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Coming Soon to an Email Address Near You By Fran Hensler

The Montour Trail Council has seen a lot of growth in the past 30+ years – one of them being our many avid and loyal members, who now number beyond a thousand. An article in the last *Trail-Letter* introduced MTC's new customer relationship management (CRM) system, which will help our volunteers more-efficiently manage communications with members.



Members can log into MTC's online portal to create an online account.

You may recall that when you most recently became a member – or renewed your membership – you received a letter delivered by the U.S. Post Office that acknowledged your contribution and described how membership dollars were put to work. (If we failed to send you this acknowledgement, or the letter arrived long after it should have, we apologize. It was always our intent to thank you promptly.) Though MTC's original member database served us well, it required a lot of volunteer effort and frequent processing steps, such as slitting open the envelope that conveyed your check, hand-entering your information into the database, creating a mail-merge list for thank-you letters, and printing/delivering these letters to the post office next door. All this made it difficult to process memberships in a timely way and introduced opportunity for

error. Our new CRM system is a one-stop-shop, allowing transactions to be handled more quickly and accurately.

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I tell you all this because most MTC members' first interaction with Neon CRM will be related to becoming a member, renewing a membership, or receiving an acknowledgement. Neon CRM will help us automate processes – for you and us.

Perhaps the biggest change you'll see in the months ahead is how we'll encourage you to communicate with us via email and internet. There will still be a paper/snail mail option (including *Trail-Letter* subscriptions), but our goal is to conduct most business electronically. The "portal," called My MTC, will include easy-to-use tools for setting up your own account (which we strongly endorse) and keeping your email up-to-date, as well as submitting online payments, donating in honor of someone, and, eventually, registering for an event, enrolling as a sponsor, volunteering and more. As always, your information will be held in confidence and will never be provided to third parties. *See page 5 for example.*

Change is not always easy. During my career as a writer, I remember how I resisted the transition from typewriter to computer. Hindsight is 20/20: How did I manage to survive without a computer, ever? Now, my computer, smart phone and e-notebook are indispensable. You may have a similar experience with MTC's CRM, but in the end, it will be worth it. Trust me. Trust us.

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



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An Encore The Prez Sez.....

OK, let's try for a change of pace this time, and do something just for fun. Here's some Montour Trail trivia to impress your friends!

1. The Trail passes through two Robinson Townships, one in Washington County and one in Allegheny County.
2. The Montour Railroad Company, which would eventually be repurposed as the Montour Trail, was organized in September, 1877. The railroad was closed in 1984.
3. The unequivocally best anagram of Montour is "unmotor."
4. The first port-a-johns were placed on the Trail on May 5, 1995. We now have a toilet, on the average, every 2.22 miles.
5. The first section of Trail to open was a 4.4-mile stretch near Cecil Park, on October 10, 1992.
6. The first 9½ miles of trail surface and base were destroyed by Hurricane Ivan on September 17, 2004. Not to be kept down, volunteers had the Trail ready for a grand reopening on September 16, 2005.
7. There are currently 17 members on the Board of Directors.
8. Horses are permitted only in Cecil Township, between Morganza Road and Rt. 980.
9. Maintenance is performed by seven volunteer Friends Groups.
10. The first issue of this very newsletter was issued in April 1990. Dennis Sims was the editor, and still is today, though he took time off in the middle.
11. The Gazebo near mile 4 was donated to the trail by the Borough of Coraopolis in 1996, having originally been built as a parade float. It has been the setting for at least one marriage proposal, in 1997.
12. Out of the original 13 trail founders is 1989, four are still active volunteers.
13. The first Tour the Montour was held in 2003, when some 100 riders braved the rain to ride up to 44 miles. Expansion of the trail made a metric century an option for the first time in 2009.
14. The oldest Friends Group is Cecil. The newest is Westland.
15. There have been at least three weddings on the Trail.

There, now you get to feel smarter all day.

- Deb Thompson

Scheduled events for this year:

Saturday, April 30 - 10:00 a.m. blessing of bicycles and their owners.

Saturday, June 4 at 8:30 a.m. The JR Taylor Memorial 5k and Walk

Friday, July 28 at 8:30 p.m. Peters Twp. Twilight Trail walk.

Saturday, September 24 at 6:30 a.m., The 2022 Tour the Montour.

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 Mark Modispacher at 412-266-1544 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 Bill Capp at 412-833-5928 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: Some of these meetings are still being held virtually these days due to the pandemic. Please contact the appropriate individual to verify physical or on-line meeting specifics!

Remember When:

30 years ago, 1992: The first of many MTC-volunteer trail-blazing work sessions were held in Cecil Township to clear brush, trash and ties.

25 years ago, 1997: The Ribbon is cut at the Noblestown Road opening the trail to QuickSilver Gulf Clib in Robinson Two, Washington County

20 years ago, 2002: Astrid Cook becomes editor of the Trail Newsletter.

15 years ago, 2007: Planning for the Function at the Junction in June is underway.

10 years ago, 2012: The bridges at Hendersonville were placed Morganza and Georgetown Roads

5 years ago, 2017: Updated trail brochures were placed on the trail.

Montour Trail Patrol by Kevin McGoun

The Montour Trail Patrol is looking to add more trail users to their roster. Those who serve as Trail Patrol members assist trail users in many ways. Patrol members carry bike tools to assist with minor trailside repairs, a tire pump and patch kit, and a first-aid kit. They also carry mobile phones if medical assistance is needed, or to contact law enforcement for something reportable such as vandalism; and they have trail maps should they come across a trail user who requests one. Trail Patrol members are recognizable since they wear yellow t-shirts identifying themselves.

Trail Patrol receive training in CPR and First-Aid. Currently, there are 14 who serve on the Trail Patrol, so we are hoping to add more to ensure that all stretches of the trail are patrolled. There are no female patrol members at this time, so women are encouraged to join. If you are interested in learning more about the Trail Patrol, please contact Kevin McGoun, Trail Security. Kevin can be reached at 412-443-5317.

Montour Run Bridge Completed

A 200-foot bridge over Montour Run that connects a 10-mile woodland trail system to the Montour Trail has been completed by the Hollow Oak Land Trust.

The bridge, near mile 1.4 of the Montour Trail and near Hassam Road, is the largest construction project in the 30-year history of the Hollow Oak. It will link Montour Woods, owned by the land trust, to the Montour Trail via a quarter-mile connector trail that is still



under construction.

The bridge project kicked off in August 2021 and was completed in February. Nehemiah Construction was the bridge contractor.

"It is an honor for Hollow Oak to partner with the Montour Trail in this transformational multi-municipal project," says Sean Brady, executive director of the land trust that owns more than 400 acres of woodlands and wetlands in the airport corridor.

"Please stay tuned for a ribbon-cutting this May as a joint celebration of the Hollow Oak Land Trust and Montour Trail Council."

Continues on page 5

Trail Beautification by Maryann Hoffman

We CAN use your help.

Are you looking for ways to help on The Trail but don't have a lot of time? Do you have creative ideas you would like to share?

There are three main areas where Airport Area Friends currently tend flower beds: Old Beaver Grade (3.1 mile), the Gazebo (4.1 mile the corner of Park Manner and Montour Run Road) and Cliff Mine Trail Head (5.9 mile).

A variety of greenery was planted at Old Beaver Grade Trail Head in 2021 but the planters were relatively bare. Do you have ideas for improvement?

At Cliff Mine Trail Head, we planted wild flower seeds for plants that attract butterflies and bees. They grew to be absolutely beautiful and to attract butterflies, bees and grasshoppers. Would you like to help create that again?

Tulips, and daffodils have been planted at the Gazebo at Park Manor and Montour Run. Do you have other ideas to add to its beauty?

We need people willing to weed flowers, plant flowers, and those who have ideas for improving/creating flower beds. Do you want to help or have ideas for improving any areas of the trail in the Airport section?

If so, please send an email to maryannhoffman90@yahoo.com.

Butterfly Garden – Cliff Mine Road Trailhead below



Sample Acknowledgment Email from page one article

MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL

CONSTRUCTING, MAINTAINING, MANAGING AND PROMOTING THE MONTOUR TRAIL

Dear Jo,

This is to inform you that a generous gift has been made to the Montour Trail Council by Tom Smith in honor or memory of John Q. Person.

As a result of tributes like this, the Montour Trail Council can continue its work of constructing, maintaining, managing and promoting this great recreational resource.

Sincerely,
Montour Trail Council
MontourTrail.org



Montour Run Bridge, continues from page 4

State and local officials, community members, and trail volunteers are expected to participate in the ribbon-cutting.

The costs of planning, permitting, engineering, and bridge construction totaled nearly \$700,000, with funding from the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; Allegheny County Gaming Economic Development Tourism Fund; Regional Asset District; S. Kent Rockwell Foundation; Colcom Foundation; and Hollow Oak.

This keystone bridge project is part of the larger Montour Woods Greenway initiative by Hollow Oak to establish a 10-mile hiking and biking loop linking the Montour Trail to two conservation areas and to Moon Township Park. This Greenway includes three miles of the Montour Trail between Hassam Road in Moon Township and the Costco store in Robinson, then following the Meeks Run and Trout Run valleys up to Moon Park, completing the loop.

Meeks Run and Trout Run are the cleanest tributaries of the Montour Run watershed, supporting dozens of species of fish and hundreds of species of flora and fauna. The Montour Woods Greenway includes woodland corridors benefitting wildlife and people alike, providing free access to nature for thousands of residents and visitors each year.

Bill Capp and his volunteers hit the trail in early March cleaning up ditches near Muse Junction and the P&OC Railroad Bridge.



MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

The Rock Slide

By Tim Sposato – former Montour RR employee & Montour Railroad Historical Society member

[This story was related by long-time Montour engineer Jim Lane to Tim Sposato as he was riding along on a Montour train in the early-1970's.]

I recall a story Jim Lane related to me that happened in 1962 or '63. Jim was engineer on a short train eastbound to Mifflin Junction. The consist was 2 diesels, 2 boxcars for Brookside Lumber and about 18 loads of Bessemer & Lake Erie coal, with a wooden caboose bringing up the rear.

The train drifted downgrade in the late afternoon, over the open deck bridge spanning Chartiers Creek, passing into Greers tunnel and emerging into the evening shadows. As the engines started around the curve east of the thru-truss bridge over the PRR, the fireman called a warning to Jim to "Big Hole Her"! Jim quickly "wiped the clock" and the train, with squealing brake shoes and emergency sanding creating a small dust cloud, came to a halt.

[Ed. - A couple of railroading terms: "Big Hole" meant to send a train into emergency stop. "Wiping the Clock" was the action of moving the air brake controls from its running position to full stop and adding emergency braking, thus causing the pressure gauge indicator to swing completely around the dial to zero, like the circular motion of wiping an analog clock face]

There directly ahead was a massive boulder, along with several smaller boulders lying on the rails and shoulder. The large rock Jim estimated at 50 tons and was of solid sandstone. Several smaller ones were equally impressive.

The conductor came forward from the caboose and took in the scene and then proceeded on foot to West End of Hills to report the problem to the dispatcher.

[Ed. – Before radio communications were started in the early 1970's, Montour train crews would contact the dispatcher using trackside telephones placed at various locations. The closest phone booth to this site was at Montour Mine #4 along Valley Brook Road, about a mile away.]

Seeing that clean-up crews were needed, and the train could not pass, it shoved back west the 5 miles to Cowden where the cars were dropped into the siding, and then the engines and caboose returned to Champion.



This is the site at trail mile 28.8 where the boulders came down onto the tracks. Rockslides still occur along this section and must be dealt with as part of Trail maintenance.

The Montour Railroad was shut down for two days at the slide site, and dynamite was used to reduce the boulder into smaller pieces for bulldozers to shove over the hill toward the pond below. The excess dirt was also shoved over and grooming of the loose material still above the tracks formed a flat area between the tracks and bank.

Today you can walk from Greers crossing [Trail Mile 29] a few hundred yards or so to the west and look up to see where this boulder had broken loose. It has been a few years since I last viewed the rock out-cropping, but in the early 70's, as Jim pointed it out to me, it was very evident.

I hope to visit this place soon, now that I'm thinking about Jim's story and I still recall the day he told it to me, as we drifted downgrade with yet another train, Jim pointing out the window, talking over his right shoulder to me as I sat on the engine isolation cabinet behind his seat.

After this section of roadbed was opened as a trail, the pedestrians now pass the site of another of a thousand stories that could fill volumes. Unfortunately, most of those stories have passed on, forgotten, never repeated to those of us that can still retell them.

Thanks, Jim, for taking the time out of your workday to share your memory for those of us who care years later.

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>

We're Moving...



from paper to electronic!

A new Montour Trail Council database will help us to conduct business electronically. The membership portal, called My MTC, is coming soon to a screen near you.

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.

Due to the changeover to our new membership database management system, new members and memorials did not make the printer deadline. Look for a much larger list in the next issue.

For more map details, see www.montourtrail.org