

THE MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL

Work progresses in Robinson Township, Washington County

by Tim Killmeyer

Despite weather forecasts of every description for the weekends of April, each Saturday turned out to have just the right kind of weather for beginning a section of Trail. This newest section of Trail is in Robinson Township,

Washington County, just outside of McDonald. While the Robinson road crew began the installation of culverts (purchased by the MTC) to alleviate drainage problems, the Montour Trail Council volunteers began to gate off and post temporary signs at access points of the Trail. This will help prevent spurious use of the Trail by offroad vehicles and illegal dumpers.

The volunteers spent the remainder of the Saturdays removing any old railroad ties that were laying within ten feet of either side of the center line.

This will allow the Robinson road crew

to grade the right of way and to dig ditches without any complications. It will also allow us to mow grass and weeds for up to five feet on either side of the Trail when the section is completed. Other work to be done includes picking up trash, removing a couple of derelict vehicles, burning brush dumped near the right of way after it was abandoned, and installing more locust posts and split rail fence.



Craig (left) and Peter Casillo post a Trail sign in Robinson Twp. warning that motor vehicles and dumping will not be tolerated.

If you would like to help get the next five miles of Trail completed by the end of the summer, consider giving us one of your Saturdays this year. We have jobs for both men and women. We meet every Saturday at 9:00 am outside of McDonald under the trestle, about 3 miles down Rt. 980 from the McDonald exit of Rt. 22.

Call 262-3748 for more information

Donation by trail-guide editors provides porta-potties for Trail users

For the second year in a row, a donation Roy Weil and Mary Shaw has allowed the Montour Trail Council to supply the much requested Porta-potties at various points along the Trail.

As you may know, Roy Weil and Mary Shaw are the editors of the highly popular trail guide Freewheeling Easy in W. Pa. as well as the Canoeing Guide to Western Pennsylvania. Their donation of \$1,200, along with a price break from Mr. John Inc. (rent three, get one free), will allow the MTC to rent four porta-potties through October of this year. These are among the most requested amenities to the Trail.

The MTC is now deciding if it might make more sense (and cents) to start to purchase a few porta-potties each year and just have them serviced by Mr. John. The units cost over \$600 each and it would cost \$25 a month to have each one emptied and cleaned. It now costs \$300 a month to rent the ones we have, so if we purchased four of them we could recoup our money over two, six month seasons.

We would like to thank Roy and Mary for their generous donation. This is the type of item that we don't usually get grants for and the monies for them must come from the general operating fund, i.e., your dues.

For a copy of FreeWheeling Easy in W. Pa., send a check or money order for \$9.95 to: Shaw-Weil Associates, 414 S. Craig St., #307, Pgh, Pa, 15236

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**MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER
25 REGINA DR.**

MCKEES ROCKS, PA. 15136

Or E-mail to: 74144.103@compuserve.com

All other trail correspondence should be addressed:

**MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 11866
PITTSBURGH PA. 15228-0866**

MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL PHONE NUMBERS:

For information: 412-831-2030

**For administration and
business: 412-257-2328**

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The Montour Trail Council is an *all volunteer* organization founded in 1989 to convert the abandoned Montour Railroad right of way and the abandoned Peters Creek Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad into a fifty-five mile recreational trail for non-motorized activity regardless of physical ability or financial wherewithal.

EDITOR'S OBSERVATIONS

"Love thy neighbor"

How often have we heard that admonishment? The Montour Trail Council is very fortunate among local trail groups, in that, we are true, land owning neighbors to the people who live along the abandoned right of way of the old Montour Railroad. Recent news reports tell us about other groups that are meeting resistance to their trail plans because the adjacent landowners want the courts to uphold the reversionary rights that were written into their deeds. Federal "rail-banking" laws state that these right of ways can remain intact so that if the government or railroad companies ever want to use these corridors for transportation again, they won't have to put them together from scratch. In the interim, they can be used for rail-trails.

In many people's minds trail organizations are all one in the same. They hear the word rail-trail and they think the Montour Trail Council is the same group that is building trail in Armstrong, Butler and other counties. After every news report I always get a couple of people who ask me "What are you going to do about those people they showed on the news blocking your trail?" Then I have to explain to them that the Montour Trail is different.

When the Montour Railroad originally got the property (in the 1890's through 1920's) it bought 99% of it outright (in fee simple). Only the other 1% (or less) was acquired through an easement that would revert back to the original property owner in the event the railroad folded. When the railroad sold us the right of way, we became the sole owner (along with Allegheny County in some areas). The other 1% where the railroad only had an easement, we paid the owner for the property (most often a very small piece of undevelopable land). So unlike other organizations, the Montour Trail Council owns its Trail lock, stock, and barrel.

But I digress. The "good neighbor" thing has always been important to the Montour Trail Council. In every section that we have developed so far, we have sent letters to the adjacent landowners introducing ourselves and giving them a contact person for any questions or concerns that they might have. Then we try to work with them if they do have any problems. The MTC has been fortunate that we have found many more supporters than opponents among the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Letters

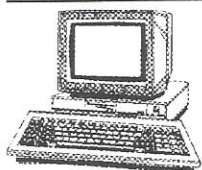
THE MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER welcomes all questions and comments. Please send all correspondence to the address on the left.

May						
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26	27	28	29	30	31	

Calendar

June						
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30						

- ♦ **MTC Board Meeting**, every **third Monday** of the month - Fifth floor of the Allegheny County Office Bldg. in the Engineering Dept., at **6:00pm**. All MTC members are welcome to attend. Call Marshall at 531-8628 for more information or to get on the agenda.
- ♦ **New Construction: Robinson, Washington County** - work crews will meet Saturdays, beginning in April, at the base of the McDonald Trestle near the intersection of Rt. 980 and Noblestown Rd. just outside of McDonald, at 9:00am. All are invited to join us as we add six more miles to the Trail! For imore inforemation call Dennis at 762-4857 or 262-3748. For information about a weekday workcrew, call Tim at 787-1472.
- ♦ **Cecil Friends of the Trail meeting**, every **first Tuesday** of the month - in the Boy Scout room at the Cecil American Legion, Rt. 50, 7:30. Call 221-6406
- ♦ **Work & Clean-up party**, Cecil segment, every **third Saturday** of the month - **9:00 am**. Meet at the Kernick Tract parking area. Call 221-6406 for more information. (No work in March)
- ♦ **Moon/Robinson Friends of the Trail meeting**, Every Wednesday before the second Saturday of the month at **7:00**. At the All Occasion Catering party room near the intersection of Silver Lane and Clever Rd.s in Robinson Twp. Anyone from the communities near Moon and Robinson are encouraged to attend. Call 859-3020 more information.
- ♦ **Work & Clean-up party**, Moon/Robinson segment, every **second Saturday** of the month - **9:00am**. Meet at North Star Petroleum (Formerly Robinson Petroleum). Call 262-3748 for more information. (No work in March)
- ♦ **Findlay/ North Fayette Friends of the Trail** Call Don at 899-3695 for more information.
- ♦ **Work & Clean-up party**, Findlay/North Fayette segment, every **forth Saturday** of the month - **9:00 am**. Meet at the Enlow Ballfield. Call 695-2354 for more information. (No work in March)
- ♦ **Pennies for your Trail - Saturday, May 18 from 10:00 am to 4:00pm**. Bring your pennies, nickles, dimes, quarters, half dollars, silver dollars and paper money to the intersection of Montour Run Rd. and Park Manor Blvd. or to the beginning of the Trail at Groveton, just off the Coraopolis Exit of I-79 to be eligible for a plethora of prizes.



Visit the Montour Trail web-site at: www.pitt.edu/~shnst4/montour1.html

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

adjacent landowners we have contacted so far. In fact, of the approximately 20 miles of Trail that we have developed so far, only three people have expressed concerns and two of those have been placated by signs and landscaping solutions. The third lives near an undeveloped section and is proving to be a much tougher case despite the fact that he has no claim to our property.

My point is that thus far we have been extraordinarily lucky regarding our neighbors. But something different is happening now. On March 18, Dick Quasey, two of his visiting relatives, and I hand delivered letters to each of the houses bordering the Trail in Robinson, Washington County, along Rt. 980 (near Quicksilver Golf Course outside of McDonald).

It was your typical "Hello Neighbor" letter explaining who we are and what our project is all about. At the end of the letter I explained, as nicely as I could, that behind their houses our property extends 50 feet on both sides of the centerline of the old right of way. I wrote that we intended to clean it up over the next couple of months so if they had anything on the property that they didn't want to lose, they should remove it as soon as possible. At the end I put my voice-mail number with the Trail Council if they had any questions.

I should tell you that some of the present owners and many of the previous owners used the area next to the railroad as a burn area for their trash and a dump for their brush and other hard to dispose of items. There is even an abandoned

pickup truck and pop-up camper back there.

Well nobody called to complain but a month later, next to the Trail, there was another junk car and a HUGE pile of brush from a tree someone had cut down in their yard. Apparently they like the idea of a Trail behind their house but since we are going to clean up the area anyway, they might as well get rid of what they can so we can haul it out.

We plan on getting rid of the new stuff along with everything else back there without complaint (to them), and I realize that it is only one or two bad apples, but people like that sure do make it hard to "Love your Neighbor."

Tim

South Park Township plans inch forward

The proposed mile and a half of Trail to be built in South Park Township has cleared another major hurdle. The Township Planning Commission has given final approval to a new stretch of Trail between Stewart Rd. and Triphammer Rd. in South Park. Given the recommendation of the Planning Commission, we expect approval by the township supervisors who have already given their preliminary approval.

The bad news is that the bridge that carries the Trail over Brownsville/Library Rd. needs to be removed and replaced with either another bridge or (less preferably) an at grade crossing.

Now we have to wait for the Allegheny County Commissioners to approve a funding agreement with the MTC. This will allow MTC to provide \$145,000 to the county for a construction contract. Regional Asset District is providing \$40,000, Allegheny Land Trust - \$45,000, and a private source - \$10,000. The Pennsylvania Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources is expected to reimburse \$50,000.

This section of Trail is different from other sections because the township does not have the equipment to help with construction. Bidding for the project by county contractors will commence as soon as the funding agreement is in place. ♦

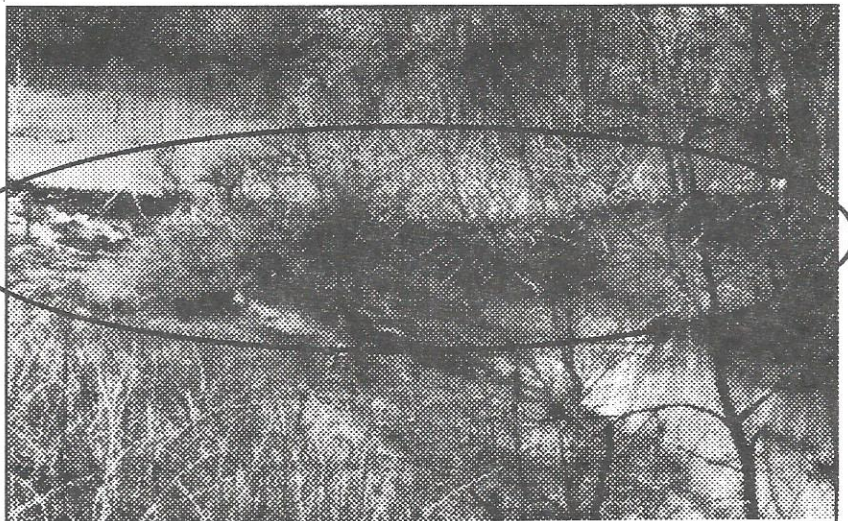


photo by Tim Killmeyer

Some of our neighbors along the new section of Trail under construction are real eager beavers. We mean REAL eager beavers. About 7 or 8 beaver dams are located in a valley below the right of way, about a half mile south of Rt. 22's McDonald exit. Great Blue Herons have also been spotted feeding in the area.

Dick property purchase up in the air

The purchase by Allegheny County from the Dick Corp. of a portion of the abandoned Peters Creek Branch of the Pennsylvania R.R. has been put on the back burner. The County's new austerity program is considered partly to blame. MTC is looking for alternative ways to acquire the property, appraised at \$24,000. The corridor in question will carry the Trail from near SR. 51 at Large, Pa. to its terminus at SR. 837 near Clairton Park. Do you think it is time to remind our County Commissioners what this project means to us and to Allegheny County? ♦

If you would like to help prepare the South Park section for construction (saving extra contractor costs) call Dave Carlson at 831-8304. He will be planning volunteer work parties in the near future.

An open letter from Stan Siranovich, new MTC volunteer coordinator

Hello,

As Tim pointed out in the last newsletter, 1995 was a big year for the Montour Trail. We now have 21 miles of the Trail on the ground, representing a lot of work by a lot of people. In addition to the actual construction, a lot of other less apparent work was necessary to make it all happen. This included buying and maintaining equipment, purchasing supplies, writing grant proposals, and finally, working with Allegheny County and the various townships that the Trail passes through. All this has been done on an ad hoc basis, one section at a time, one project at a time.

With 1996 promising to be an even bigger year with even more activity, the "old way" of doing things will no longer be adequate. There is a need not only for more volunteers, but also for volunteers with specialized skills for particular projects. That is why I have agreed to accept the post of volunteer coordinator.

The Montour Trail has been extremely successful over the past several years, but it is now at a critical point. It is facing many challenges: the construction of two new sections this year, the need for rehabilitation of several bridges, maintenance of the completed sections, and, of course, the continual need to find the funding for all these activities.

If you returned a volunteer form and haven't heard from us or if you had to decline a previous request, you might be hearing from us soon. There are many volunteer opportunities ranging from those of shorter duration and lower commitment such as trailblazer, to those of longer duration and higher commitment such as project coordinator or committee chair. so the appropriate question is not "Do I have the time?" It is "What can I do in the time available?" Say yes, if you can, when another volunteer calls to ask for your help.

Thank you,
Stan

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| ☆ Carol Adams | ☆ Timothy J. Ruff |
| ☆ William L. Atkinson | ☆ Michon T. Sentner |
| ☆ Peter Casillo | ☆ Gale L. Seymour |
| ☆ Charles Conners | ☆ Robin Shoup |
| ☆ Mary Ellen Cook | ☆ Charlie S. Smithers |
| ☆ Harry & Judy Corwin | ☆ Patricia Stanley |
| ☆ Clint Cottrell | ☆ David T. Stoebe |
| ☆ Trent G. Denison | ☆ Bob & Diane Unetich |
| ☆ Bill Ehler | ☆ Thomas R. Warren |
| ☆ Rosemary P. Foster | ☆ Craig Whipkey |
| ☆ Bob Gambone | ☆ Sharon Wynkoop |
| ☆ Richard C. Gibson | |
| ☆ Andrew Gland | |
| ☆ Richard C. Guzel | |
| ☆ Vladimir W. Hanczar | |
| ☆ Ronald L. Henry | |
| ☆ Carl R. Lippert | |
| ☆ Robert J. Meier | |
| ☆ Roy & Tammy Price | |

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

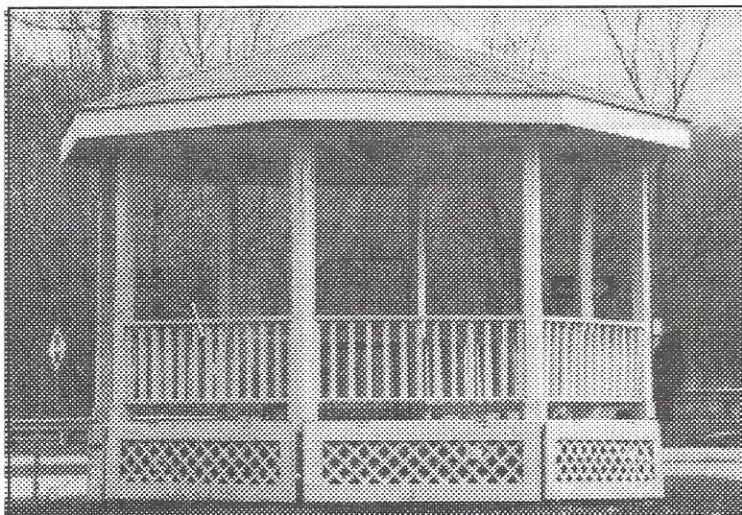


photo by Tim Killmeyer

Coraopolis doesn't have space for this gazebo anymore, so they are donating it to the Montour Trail Council for use on the Trail. It is able to be transported on its own trailer. Boardmember Bill Morphy is investigating zoning regulations and acquiring PennDot permits for the move. Tentative plans call for it to be located near the water fountain at the intersection of Park Manor Blvd. and Montour Run Rd. It will make a nice shelter for those who find themselves on the Trail in the middle of a downpour. If you would like to help with the installation, please call 787-1182.

Political Action Committee

volunteers are needed to help make sure the concerns of the Montour Trail are heard in Harrisburg and Washington D.C. Please call 922-1702 if you would like to help.

Yes, I want to help build the Montour Trail!

- ☐ I want to spread the word. Please send me additional flyers.
- ☐ I have written my Legislator and County Commissioners asking them to support the trail.
- ☐ My organization would like to provide a letter of endorsement.
- ☐ I know a group interested in a presentation.
- ☐ I wish to become a member of the Montour Trail Council.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> STUDENT | \$5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> INDIVIDUAL | \$15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAMILY | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ORGANIZATION | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SUPPORTING | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SUSTAINING | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BENEFACTOR | \$250 + up |

(Membership is tax deductible)

- ☐ I wish to make an additional tax deductible contribution of \$_____ to the Montour Trail Council to help make the Montour Trail a reality.

(Make your check payable to the Montour Trail Council)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE (day time) _____ (evening) _____

By applying for membership in the Montour Trail Council, I indicate my support of its goals.

SIGNATURE _____

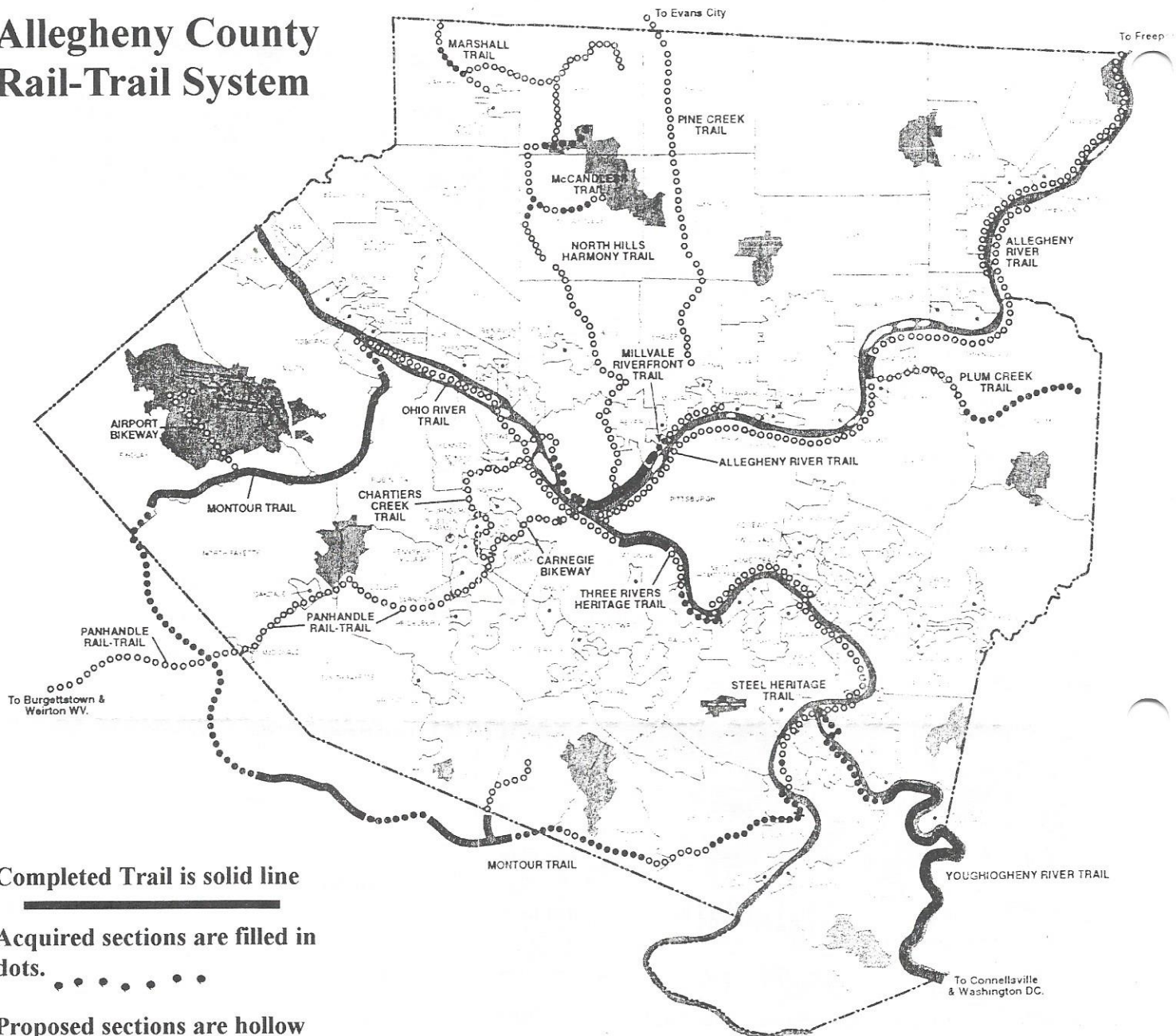
A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling tollfree, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Please fill out this application and return it with your check to:

MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 11866
PITTSBURGH PA. 15228-0866

DON'T FORGET! The Montour Trail Council may be designated as your United Way Contributor Choice option #3308 where you work.

Allegheny County Rail-Trail System



Completed Trail is solid line

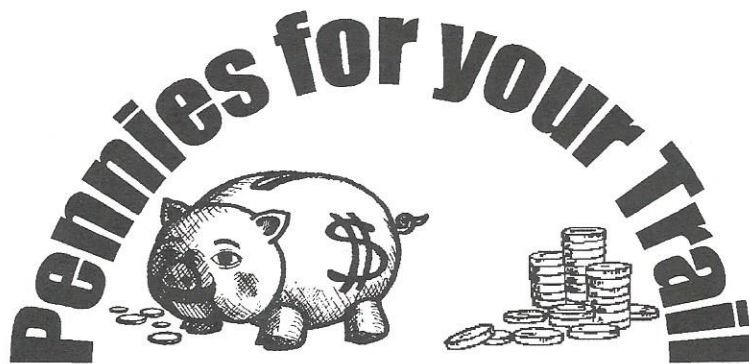
Acquired sections are filled in dots.

Proposed sections are hollow dots.

Shown above is the recently published map of the Allegheny Rail-Trail System. Because of the developing austerity program promulgated by Allegheny County, the drive to complete these trails in a timely fashion might be sacrificed. It is incumbent upon us as trail users, MTC members and citizens to remind our government officials how much these trails mean to the health, economy, and livability of our community. Please call or write our Board of County Commissioners and thank them for what they have done in the past and remind them that the job is not finished. Tell them how much these trails mean to you and your friends and families.

You can mail your letters to:

Chairman Larry Dunn
c/o Board of County Commissioners
Room 119
436 Grant St.
Pittsburgh, Pa., 15219-2499



Those crazy guys and gals in the Moon/Robinson Friends of the Trail group are at it again. Just when they have finish counting up all those pennies that they collected last year, they decide that they will do it again. The prizes this year include a getaway weekend at the Airport Marriot, dinners at local restaurants, running shoes and more.

The format will remain the same as last year. Just bring all those pennies (and other coins) that have been lying around your house for the last decade or so down to the Trail on Saturday, May 18. The volunteers will have collection stations set up between 10:00am and 4:00pm at the beginning of the Trail at Groveton and at the intersection of Park Manor Blvd. and Montour Run Rd.

(below Robinson Town Centre). There, they will put the coins into canvas bank bags and weigh them on an electronic scale. The people who donate the most coins by weight will win.

Last year this successful campaign raised over \$2,000. The Friends hope to do at least as well this year. All of the money will go toward improving and maintaining the Moon/Robinson section of the trail. Some suggestions have been to help pay for improvements to the Park Manor intersection or a side mounted brush hog for the tractor so it is easier to cut the grass and weeds next to the Trail. Others want a bridge to connect the Trail to the park and facilities in Groveton. Other smaller items that are needed include gasoline, paint, tools, lumber, etc.

If you would like to help with the Pennies Campaign, volunteers are always needed and welcome. The Friends would like to get as many as possible this year to help canvass autos at the intersection for spare change. Call Dean at 921-4921 to schedule a time. ♦

Order form for the Incredible Inch Campaign

Disclaimer: You won't actually own a piece of the Montour Trail, but we appreciate your donation.

The whole Montour Trail is now "for sale". All 3,484,800 inches of it. Buy it by the inch, foot, yard, rod, meter, furlong, mile or league. It is all the same reasonable price; a buck an inch. That's right, **a buck an inch!** And your inches run the whole ten foot width of the trail (that's 120 inches wide).

You can be creative: add up the

height of your entire family and buy that many inches of trail, or measure the length of your whole family's feet. How long is your dog? Buy his length in inches of trail. Or, if your a little short, just buy the length of his tail. And they make great gifts for that active friend. If we "sold" every inch of trail, it would pay for the whole thing.

For your money, you will receive a genuine, simulated hand-lettered, faux-embossed, 8 1/2 x 11 inch official looking "deed" (suitable for framing), that will proudly proclaim your ownership of the trail (with the requisite fingerprint). This beautiful document will show the total number of inches you "own" and the township in which they are located.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

NUMBER OF INCHES _____

CIRCLE THE COMMUNITY THAT YOU WOULD LIKE NAMED ON YOUR "DEED":

Please fill out this form and return it with your check to:
MTC INCREDIBLE INCH CAMPAIGN
1060 STANFORD RD.
PITTSBURGH PA. 15205

USE
the
COUPON

MOON TOWNSHIP

ROBINSON TWP. (ALLEG.)

FINDLAY TOWNSHIP

NORTH PATETTE TWP.

ROBINSON TWP. (WASH.)

MT. PLEASANT TWP.

CECIL TOWNSHIP

PETERS TOWNSHIP

SOUTH PARK TWP.

JEFFERSON BORO

CLAIRTON

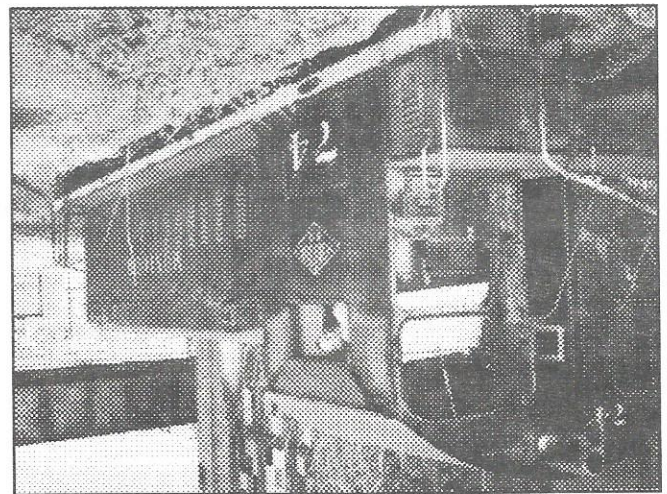
BETHEL PARK



MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 11866
PITTSBURGH PA 15228-0866

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I wonder if I'm spending too much
time on this Montour Trail?
— NAAAAHH!



The photo on top (by Bill Nixon) was featured in our July 1994 newsletter announcing the building of the Findlay Township Community Museum. The building was to have showcased the railroad and mining industries that built Imperial and other local communities. Because of changes in the political wind out in Findlay, the museum has been scaled back from original projections.

Ray Chodor, a Trail user who works for Pepsi Cola in the Rocks near the P&LE yards, took one of the last pictures ever of the only Montour locomotive that was never sold to another railroad. He tells us that the old engine was cut up for scrap sometime in early April.

