



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

# MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Volume 22 Issue 3

May-June 2011

## Construction Updates:

### 1. J. R. Taylor Bridge

Story and photos by Tom Perzel

Great progress is being made on the J.R. Taylor Memorial Bridge in Bethel Park. The Montour Trail Council held the groundbreaking ceremony for the bridge on October 16, 2010. Mingo Creek Construction started bridge construction in February

2011 and the abutments have now been completed. They are currently finishing up the walls that approach the abutments. Construction of the steel structural members is progressing very well and delivery will start in June. Assembly of the bridge super-structure to the abutments is then expected to take place in July. Opening of the bridge is planned for September.

The bridge will complete the 2.7-mile Bethel Park branch of the Montour Trail, which has its northern terminus near Irishtown and Logan Roads, and connects with the Arrowhead Trail and the main line of the Montour Trail in Peters Township.



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### 2. Cliff Mine Road Parking

The Cliff Mine Road parking area was closed for several weeks recently for reconstruction while Steubenville Pike-Enlow Road is reconstructed. The work included clearing and grubbing to construct a new driveway entrance to Cliff Mine Road. It will be located on property acquired October, 2009 from the Jean M. Perun Living Trust. Being located 200 feet from the intersection, it will provide a safer location to replace the existing entrance that will be closed. The new driveway entrance includes a pipe culvert to continue drainage flow along Cliff Mine Road.



Cliff Mine Parking looking West.



Cliff Mine Parking looking East

The contractor stored the milled asphalt pavement material at the parking area to place the material as base for the new driveway entrance and additional parking spaces. Precast concrete wheel stops will be placed between the parking area and the Trail, which will be relocated to run around the parking area along the top of the Montour Run streambank Dave Wright contributed to this story and Janet Jackson provided the photos.

Visit the Montour Trail Web Site at:  
[www.montourtrail.org](http://www.montourtrail.org)

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



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### THE MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

is published bi-monthly January through December. All correspondence should be addressed to:

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## The Prez Sez

Took a walk the other evening and saw the western dusk lit by a razor thin slice of the new crescent moon. By good fortune, it was one of those rare moments, clear and still, that the entire round of the moon was highly visible. Quite striking, to see the whole full body integral to that brightly lit edge.

Rather like the band of nice white paper that you're holding, or the glowing phosphors on the screen you're reading right now. This newsletter is the thin, bright edge of the Trail, behind which rises the much larger idea: that the Montour Trail is so important that hundreds of people have labored for decades to bring it about. How can it be that this much larger story is so often hidden from view?

Trails sure appear to be quiet and simple; indeed, much of their appeal is as a refuge from the noise and complexity of modern life. We experience true re-creation in taking a path akin to our very first form of an overland transportation system. Inevitably, as most folks do when in the woods, we tend to reduce our scope of vision and see more of what lies closely around us. I think this is why many people are so astounded upon being told that the trail goes dozens of miles one way and hundreds in the other. Such a scale is beyond the scope of their immediate trailbound experience. This is particularly true of the very newcomers to the trail in whom we are trying to spark interest and enthusiasm.

It might seem easy to take an abandoned railroad corridor and make it into a trail. Just throw down some gravel and put up a sign: Simple! After all, we have the remnants of a well developed transportation system that served 20<sup>th</sup> century Pittsburgh quite well. It swept around the city and connected to other towns and cities throughout the region and beyond. However, transforming that system into one of trails that meet the needs of this present century has proven to be an enormously complex undertaking. We have to re-acquire missing sections, fix and replace bridges, construct and re-construct dozens of miles of trail, and work with and around a host of changing circumstances. And fund it all. And maintain it. And . . . The endeavor is large, and often not especially well lit.

Perhaps the largest hidden component of the Montour Trail is the organization that makes it all run. Trail users ride past volunteers mowing, rebuilding trail or performing other work; the public may come out to a Penny Day; athletes and cyclists may participate in one of our race or ride events. But it's hard to see the overall organization, comprised of seven local Friends Groups, a dozen-plus standing and ad-hoc committees, teams and managers for each of eight to ten major construction projects, event directors, people working on newsletters and maps and our website, groups working on raising funds, writing thank-you letters to contributors, working with a dozen host municipalities, overseeing the treasury, keeping in touch with elected officials, negotiating complex relationships with a variety of partners, keeping the trail safe, responding to all manner of crises, and generally making every effort to make the Montour the best trail it can be.

Managing all these and numerous other tasks is a volunteer board that's been at it for over twenty years and counting. The level of commitment of all these folks makes me proud to be able to lead such a fine organization. I can say that all of them enjoy a great sense of accomplishment for what's been achieved.

There's a moon-size effort that has been put forth, by Montour's volunteers and many other supporters, a commitment that will need to continue well into the future. Yet all you see of it is a thin crescent of bright white limestone from Clairton to Coraopolis. We're working to bring about that special clear air, so that we ourselves can see and bring others to see the idea that is the Montour Trail in its entirety.

*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 Ned at 724-225-9856 for more information or to get on the agenda.

### Cecil Friends:

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](mailto:densimwx@comcast.net)

### Airport Area Friends:

Friends of the Trail meeting, the Wednesday before the second Saturday of the month at 7:00 p.m., at the Forest Grove Fire Department. Anyone from the Airport Area is encouraged to attend. Call 412 264-6303 for more information. Work and cleanup party, every second Saturday of the month - 9:00 a.m. Call 412 262-3748 for more information and location.

### Bethel Park Friends:

Friends of the Trail meeting, every first Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the Bethel Park Municipal Building Council Chambers. Anyone interested in the Bethel Park Trail segment is encouraged to come. Work and cleanup party, every second and fourth Saturday of the month - 8:30 a.m. Call Bob O'Connell at 412-833-6259 for location and information.

### South Hills Friends:

Meeting second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at South Park Township Community Room, located behind the Township Building at 2675 Brownsville Road, South Park, 15129. Work and cleanup parties scheduled and advertised as needed. For more information, contact David Oyler at 412-831-9288, [davidoyler@verizon.net](mailto:davidoyler@verizon.net), or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, [mckeownp@comcast.net](mailto:mckeownp@comcast.net)

### Fort Cherry Friends:

Friends of the Trail Meeting, second Wednesday of the month at McDonald Borough Bldg., Council chambers at 7:00 p.m. Work and cleanup parties, scheduled as needed. For more information, contact Ray Johnston at 724-356-2621.

### Peters Township Friends:

Friends of the Trail Meeting, first non-holiday Monday of the month at Peters Township Parks and Recreation Center at 7:00 p.m. For more information on work and cleanup parties, please contact Jim Robbins at 724-941-6132, or for monthly meetings, Mark Imgrund at 724-941-6351 or by e-mail at [markimgrund@comcast.net](mailto:markimgrund@comcast.net).

### The Montour Railroad Historical Society:

The newest Friends group. For more information send email to [mrhs@montourrr.com](mailto:mrhs@montourrr.com).

## Twilight Trail Walk

On Friday, July 29 from 8:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., The Friends of the Montour Trail in Peters Township will be hosting a Twilight Trail Walk along Arrowhead Trail. Once again this year we will have 2 starting locations: Farmhouse Coffee/My Big Fat Greek Gyro located at 502 Valleybrook Road, and St. Petersburg Center located at 210 Valleybrook Road, McMurray, PA 15317. For a \$5.00 donation, participants can walk along the luminaria-lit trail. Participants will also receive a glow necklace to light their way, and an entry into a raffle for great prizes from local businesses. Participants are encouraged to bring a chair and stay for the refreshments and entertainment that is planned. Children under 5 and pets are free. **Registration will be at the event only.** In the event of a downpour, the walk will be rescheduled to Saturday July 30. All proceeds will benefit maintenance and expansion of the Montour Trail in Peters Township. Contact [sueheadley@comcast.net](mailto:sueheadley@comcast.net), or call 412-835-3011 for additional information.

## Help Wanted

**Membership Chair** - Do you have ideas for attracting new members? Suggestions on retaining and recognizing our current members? Helping us move forward and utilizing a social network. If so - we want to hear from you! A Membership Chairperson is needed to lead this integral part of the organization.

**Volunteer Coordinator** - We are seeking a coordinator to help us identify volunteer interests, skills, and talents in order to help with the many ongoing projects and events of the Montour Trail Council.

If you are interested in learning more about the positions, please contact Phyllis McChesney at 412 264-6303 or at [phyll45283@aol.com](mailto:phyll45283@aol.com).

## Enjoy the Moment from Dennis Pfeiffer

Phyllis McChesney and I belong to a quaint old (1927) church in Coraopolis. Our pastor Fr. Richard Jones was an avid runner on the Montour Trail even before he became our pastor. Father Rich is a terrific speaker and loves to relate his life stories in his sermons. Every month or so he will mention an experience on the trail. In the first paragraph of Sunday's bulletin he discusses the importance of water and how water fountains on the Montour Trail "spring up to quench his thirst". (See Bulletin paragraph below)

It makes me ponder and "just enjoy the moment". Maybe our efforts on the Montour Trail sometime enable others to reach a much higher plateau than we realize.

Enjoy the moment !

### Bulletin Article 3/27/2011 - (First Paragraph)

Recently I went to Dick's Sporting Goods to buy a new pair of running shoes for my Montour Trail jogs. As a life-long runner I always enjoy this time of reflection, meditation and prayer and I thank God for the gift of running. Every so often along the trail there are water fountains that spring up to quench my thirst. Without water, there is no life. Dr. Ralph Herro of the Herro Allergy Clinic in Phoenix, AZ said, "If we each drank twice as much water, doctors would be seeing half as many patients." Imagine if we applied this principle to our spiritual lives! Time spent in prayer is time well-spent.

**Fr. Richard S. Jones, Pastor**

**St. Josephs, Coraopolis**

## The Cecil Friends of the Montour Trail by Dennis Sims

The newsletter continues its journey eastward on the Trail meeting the Friends Groups who help publicize and maintain the Trail on the local level. The Cecil Friends jurisdiction begins at MP 21 on the Mount Pleasant-Cecil Twp border near Antil Street in Southview. You exit Cecil Township at MP 28.5 on the Chartiers Creek Bridge entering Peters Township.



The Montour Trail Council completed the first section of the Trail in Cecil Township during the fall of 1992. Upon completion of trail sections, the MTC Board determined that as each section of trail gets completed, there would be a local group of people who would see to the day-to-day maintenance and promotion of their Trail section allowing the MTC to continue to construct other sections of the Trail.

On March 1, 1994, the Cecil Friends of the Montour Trail became official with the adoption of their by-laws. Dennis Sims and Don Berty (above with Niles Douglas, right, at the Cecil Opening in October, 1992) would share the presidency. Many of the original Cecil Friends were recruited from the Cecil American Legion where the Friends Group met for the first few years.



To cut grass, a 1950 8N Ford tractor was purchased to power a flail mower. This piece of machinery was lovingly maintained and operated by Dan Jones (above, right) until two years ago when his health no longer permitted him to remain active. The Ford was rather stubborn and Dan was the only one who could make it run routinely. Dan had the assistance of The Ambassador, Hoyt Hall (above, left) who spent just about every free moment he had on the Trail until his health prevented him from participating.

During 1995, the Friends group extended the trail from the old Company store at Hendersonville eastward towards Chartiers Creek under the supervision of Dan. The Friends provided the manpower and the surface material was donated by The Meadows. The next big project would occur at the turn of the century when the bridge over Glass Hill Road was modified for Trail use and the trail completed from Cecil Park to 980 under the guidance of Frank Ludwin. The Cecil Friends hope to in the future to connect the coal patch of Muse with the mainline Trail via the Muse Branch.

## 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Pennies For Your Trail Campaign by Phyllis McChesney



An early morning rain did not dampen the enthusiasm of the Airport Area Friends of the Montour Trail during their annual **Pennies For Your Trail Campaign** held on Saturday, May 7 at the intersection of Park Manor Boulevard and Montour Run Road.

This is the fifteenth year for the local event that raises the funds necessary to help maintain the Airport Area sections of the trail.

At press time the official tally had not been confirmed but it was estimated the event raised close to \$4,800 thanks to the generosity of the many trail supporters who dropped in their loose change and bills into the collection buckets to make this day a success. Gary Bosket of Coraopolis



won first prize for bringing in a hefty seventy-six pounds of pennies! A complete list of prize winners, prizes and supporters will be provided in the next newsletter.

Our thanks to Janet Jackson, a member of the Airport Area Friends Group, who arranged for nine scouts from Boy Scout Troop #301 as well as six adult supervisors to help throughout the day.

Airport Area Friends volunteers included Carolyn Lake, Karl Waldner, Gerry Bates, Frank Keppel, Jonathon Keppel, Pete Merther, Jim Stauber, Allen Prevendoski, James Prevendoski, Alex Prevendoski, Dennis Pfeiffer, Janet Jackson, Nadeem Mirza and Jack Peth. Thanks again to our many trail supporters for their donations and kind words!

In between projects, the group maintains the trail by keeping fallen trees cleared and the grass mowed. Several times, they resurfaced sections of the trail with the help of Cecil Twp. Public Works. They raised operating funds by holding tag days on the Trail and attending the Cecil Fall Festival. Six years ago, they commenced the Tails for Trails 5K Fun Walk. The event has raised over \$10,000 allowing the Friends to buy heavy duty power equipment for maintenance and to pave the National Tunnel with the help of MTC.



The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Burgh's Pizza and Wings 5K/10K Run and 2 mile Fun Walk was held under cloudy skies and sprinkles on Sunday, May 1. There were over 600 participants in the three events which is a record number. Proceeds from this year's event are expected to push the Burgh's total contributions to the Montour Trail Council from the event to over \$200,000.

As always the Montour Trail Council provides the venue; the Trail from Cecil Park to the Kurnick (National) Trailhead for the runs and from Cecil Park to Gilmore Junction for the Walk. Volunteers from the Trail Council, Burgh's and community members man the water stations and road crossings for the protection of the runners. A special thanks to Frank Ludwin who donates his welder to power the lights in the National Tunnel and with the assistance of Dennis Sims, prepared the Trail surface less than 24 hours before race time.

Here is a list of the overall finishers, courtesy of Runners High who provided the timing services. For complete results go to [www.runhigh.com](http://www.runhigh.com). Photos by Dennis Sims

### The 5K Results

PLACE	FINISHER	TIME
Open Men		
1	Stephen Heisey, 25 Pittsburgh, PA	17:41
2	David Spell, 32 Pittsburgh, PA	18:04
3	will Cusick, 16 McDonald, PA	18:52
Open Women		
1	Tammy Williams, 36 McMurray, PA	21:10
2	Debbie Conner, 40 Dunbar, PA	21:15
3	Keri Spell, 31 Pittsburgh, PA	22:18

### The 10 K Results

PLACE	FINISHER	TIME
Open Men		
1	Jeff Weiss, 24 Avella, PA	31:14
2	Josh Simpson, 26 Blowing Rock, NC	31:46
3	Justin Simpson, 27 Morgantown, WV	32:06
Open Women		
1	Michelle Corkum, 26 McMurray, PA	37:47
2	Jessica Gangjee, 32 Pittsburgh, PA	38:57
3	Jocelyn Cornman, 31 Leetsdale, PA	39:06



Frank smooths the ruts to the Park.



10K Men's winner finishes.



Tom Dailey starts the walkers.



5K Men's winner comes home.



5K Women's winner finishes.

## MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

**The DISCO Smokeless Fuel Plant at Champion by Bob Ciminell (©2011)**

At the end of World War II, after merging with the Consolidation Coal Company of Maryland and divesting itself of the Montour and Youngstown & Southern railroads, the Pittsburgh Consolidation Coal Company began feeling the pinch of the drastic reduction in coal consumption as the Nation and the World settled into a period of relative peace.

When first organized as the Pittsburgh Coal Company in 1900, the company produced 17.8 million tons of coal; by 1913 it hit the 25 million ton mark. During the decade of the 1930s, production was up to 35 million tons and soared during World War II. However, after the War ended, sales dropped precipitously to a dismal 16.5 million tons. Something had to be done to "save" the coal industry in Western Pennsylvania. With help from the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, the Coal Company found the answer.

In the late 1920s the Pittsburgh Coal Company began researching and developing a new smokeless fuel produced by low-temperature carbonization of coal. The new product was similar to coke but contained enough volatile material to produce a flame and could be used in residential furnaces and fireplaces. The coke used in the area steel mills was produced at temperatures near 3,600°F and was essentially pure carbon, which was great for producing iron but could not be used in any other applications, particularly residential furnaces and fireplaces. The low-temperature coke the Coal Company was working on was produced at approximately 1,000°F and contained a small percentage of the volatile products in coal that made it burn, but not the ones that made it produce smoke. The Coal Company named the product DISCO, an abbreviation for "distilled coal," and constructed a pilot plant near its Champion No. 1 coal washer (Trail Milepost 12.5) sometime between 1931 and 1933.

The DISCO process used fine coal waste, which was readily available from the Champion cleaning plant, and converted it into a conveniently sized product that could be sold through retail coal dealers. Anyone who grew up in Pittsburgh in the 1950s probably remembers the coal trucks that came into residential neighborhoods delivering coal to basements and coal cellars. One of the largest coal retailers was Champion Coal, a subsidiary of the Pittsburgh Consolidation Coal Company who owned the DISCO plant.

DISCO was made in a five-step process. Wet coal fines from the cleaning plant were sent by conveyor belt across the Montour Railroad tracks to the DISCO plant on the east side of the coal washer. There, the coal was pre-dried and sent to roasters where it was heated to 600°F, partially oxidizing the coal to prevent it from caking and clumping together. From the roasters, the heated coal went into carbonizers, which were similar to the long rotating kilns seen in cement plants. The rotation of the carbonizers and the 1,000-degree temperature continued the coking process and formed the product into balls of DISCO.

The carbonization process also produced gases and coal tar. The gas was recycled into the DISCO plant furnaces as a fuel and the coal tar was stored in large tanks and sold to the Koppers Chemical Company, a major producer of chemicals made from coal tar. A ton of coal could produce 1,440 pounds of DISCO, 3,400 cubic feet of fuel gas, and 15 gallons of coal tar.

The original DISCO pilot plant at Champion produced about 70,000 tons of product a year, which sold for about \$17 a ton. DISCO was more expensive than low-volatile soft coal (\$13.75 per ton), a 50/50 soft coal/hard coal mix (\$15 per ton), and treated stoker coal (\$11 per ton), so it was not an affordable fuel for Pittsburgh's working classes. However, by 1946 local politics soon sent the demand for DISCO skyrocketing and the Coal Company scrambling to meet the demand.



In 1941, the City of Pittsburgh passed an all-encompassing ordinance called the Smoke Control Ordinance that required all residential furnaces and fireplaces to use smokeless fuels. It also put strict requirements on industries and the railroads, but World War II intervened and enforcement of the law was delayed until six months after the end of hostilities. The law became fully effective in 1946-47 and the rush to buy DISCO was on.

In 1948, the DISCO Company, another subsidiary of Pittsburgh Consolidation Coal Company, began building a new \$3 million facility at Champion, one that could produce 250,000 tons of DISCO a year. The new plant would have seven carbonizers rated at 800 tons per day for a combined output of over 200,000 tons per year. The carbonizers were huge, nine feet in diameter and 126 feet long, and were ready for operation by 1949. The Coal Company announced its new plant by dropping the price of DISCO from \$17.10 to \$14.75 per ton, a 15% reduction.

The DISCO plant hummed along nicely until the 1950s when North Fayette Township began complaining about the dust the plant produced. By 1953, the township had lost patience and filed suit against the DISCO Company, but the County Smoke Control Bureau said its hands were tied because the plant was removing 93% of the fly ash and the regulations only required them to remove 85%. Fortunately, the Gulf Oil Company came up with a solution by spraying the coal with a fine mist of light oil. The dust problem was solved and the plant operated into the 1960s. With the DISCO plant consuming over 400,000 tons of coal a year, the Montour Railroad was kept busy hauling coal from the mines to the plant and moving DISCO from the plant to both industry and consumers.

*Bob Ciminell is the founder of the Montour Railroad Yahoo group [http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour\\_rr/](http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour_rr/). There are currently 317 members from across the country. You are encouraged to join. There is a wealth of information about the Montour Railroad at this location and you can pose questions of its membership, from whom you are sure to get an answer.*

## Welcome New Members

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

### New Members

Michael Aiken  
Jason Anderson  
Jason Firewicz  
Jim & Mary Lou Ford  
Karol Galik  
Linda Kademenos

Bonnie Kelly  
Michael Powers  
Nancy Sofis  
Eugene Vittone II, Esq.  
Nic Weirick  
**Benefactors**  
Art McSorley  
Janice & Joseph Miknevich

## Montour Trail Patrol Gains Member With Legal Clout



*Judge Anthony W. Saveikis, an avid trail user, has become our newest Volunteer Montour Trail Patrol. Judge Saveikis' judicial districts include North Fayette and Findlay. The Judge is being presented with a Patrol shirt by Jesse Forquer the Director of Montour Trail Security.*

### Patrol Mission Statement:

*In 1998 the Montour Trail Council (MTC) recruited and organized a group of civilian patrols to patrol the Montour Trail. The clear mission of the volunteers engaged in the "Trail Monitor Patrol Program" then and now has been to provide help to trail users in case of emergencies. The trail monitors also serve to provide surveillance of the Montour Trail and its parking areas. Another part of the mission of trail monitor patrols is to establish a presence on the trail.*

If you are interested in becoming part of the Volunteer Trail Patrol contact Jesse Forquer at [jjforquer@comcast.net](mailto:jjforquer@comcast.net)

## I want to help complete the Montour Trail!

### I want to join the Montour Trail Council at this level:

<input type="checkbox"/> Student/Senior	\$15
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$25
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$35
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$250
<input type="checkbox"/> Leader's Circle	\$500+

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Don't Forget

The Montour Trail Council may be designated as your United Way Contributor Choice as option #3308.



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