



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Celebrating 30 Years

Volume 30 Issue 6

November-December 2019

The Originals: Dave Wright by Bruce Barron



When I joined the Montour Trail Council board in 1997 as recording secretary, one portion of each board meeting tested my capacities. An Allegheny County staff member would deliver a report on real estate and engineering activities, referring to locations and properties in a way that evidenced his encyclopedic knowledge of the trail corridor. Usually I had no idea what he was talking about, but he gave me his detailed written notes after delivering his report and patiently answered my questions.

That walking encyclopedia, Dave Wright, is still with us, and he has almost certainly given more time to the Montour Trail than any other human being.

Some of Dave's enormous productivity has been on paid time, through his work as a civil engineer for the Allegheny County Department of Public Works. But he has also volunteered thousands of hours beyond his professional role.

Dave joined Allegheny County (initially in the Planning Department) in 1970 and has been a county employee for 44 of the 49 years since then. He worked briefly in the private sector, including 11 months as executive director of the Washington County Historical Society, but found that public service gave him greater satisfaction. "You also get more opportunities for creativity when working for county government," he said.

One opportunity to apply that creativity opened up in 1988 when Dino Angelici, who would become a Montour Trail Council co-founder the following year, called to ask if Allegheny County had any plans for trails. Dave took the call and explained that the county's trail planning was limited to county parks, but that he had a personal interest in supporting additional trail development. *Continues on page 4.*

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www.montourtrail.org
 To converse go to:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/43518292159>

or

<http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Montour-Trail/info>

30th Anniversary Meeting a Celebration of Accomplishments by Dave Borrebach and Fran Hensler



The honorees: From left to right: Front row, Bill Metzger and Paul McKeown. Back Row: Peter Kohnke, Tom Dougherty, Jerry Agin, Dennis Sims, Tim Killmeyer, Dennis Pfeiffer, Jerry and Stan Sattinger, and Ned Williams. Photo by Dave Oyler

The Montour Trail Council honored the MTC's key trail founders at its 30th anniversary celebration and annual member meeting on November 17 at St. Joan of Arc Church in Library.

In his opening remarks, MTC President Ned Williams summarized the state of the organization as solid. He noted that Trail building continues in South Park Township and Coraopolis. The value of this resource to local communities is becoming even more obvious, with two major housing developments along the Trail emphasizing the its proximity in their marketing materials.

MTC's co-founder and first president, Stan Sattinger, described how early volunteers (many in attendance, and most of them outdoors enthusiasts) willed the Trail into existence. He identified each founding father's strengths, interests, and collective impact. "We had a vision. At a time when transforming abandoned rail beds into usable trails was unheard of, these people appeared from out of the blue," *continues on page 3*



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The Prez Sez: Upon the Occasion of Our 30th Birthday

How could the tale of thirty years of the Montour Trail be told, other than by filling many, many pages with stories of the people, partnerships, trail building, what it represents to the region, and so much else? Actually, this has already been done in the many fine articles in this newsletter over the years! Now, at thirty, how to sum it all up?

Like everything of consequence, the Montour Trail started with people who had an idea, and the determination to bring it to fruition. Recreational trails are familiar entities these days. But back in the 1980s, with few of rail trails yet on the ground, Montour founders Stan Sattinger and Dino Angelici, with many others, had to do a lot of work to get agencies, funders, and the public in general to grasp the concept that the old Montour Railroad right-of-way could be reborn as a long, skinny park – and much more – for public use. Key people who listened, and who really saw the large scale potential, became the founding board members of the Montour Trail Council. In 1989 they set in place the structure of the organization that has been highly successful in developing the trail as a well-known and greatly beloved regional amenity.

The story of building the actual trail is well documented. Peters Township built the Arrowhead in 1986. MTC's first piece of trail was in Cecil in 1992, followed by the western portion in the mid-1990s. We then built and opened short separate sections in Robinson, Cecil, Bethel, Peters, and Jefferson Hills. In 2000 Montour began a fifteen-year march to completion of the Washington County stretch. Now the frontier is in the South Hills, with five sections of new trail underway, in planning or actual construction. The western connection to Coraopolis is also in the building process.

Municipalities played a crucial role from the first. Peters led with the Arrowhead, and has been highly cooperative with MTC, as we built the remaining portions in Peters. The townships of Findlay, Moon, North Fayette and Robinson actually built the trail for us in that area. Cecil and Bethel have been helpful and effective long time enablers. Large scale Montour trail building has begun much more recently in South Park, but already they have donated a parcel of right of way to us, on which a new trail section is in current construction. The strong working relationships we enjoy with all our municipalities will help to ensure their strong future support.

Of course, people throughout entities within Allegheny and Washington counties, the state of Pennsylvania, and at the federal level have also been extremely responsive and helpful. We have engaged countless staff people at all levels in a variety of agencies, as well as elected officials. Montour's focus on bettering the health and quality of life for the people of the region closely aligns with the goals of the county parks departments, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and many others. These are great partnerships, as MTC accomplishes the agencies' goals by strongly leveraging grant funding to get trail sections built and open to the public. Each side contributes to realizing a shared vision of the common good, for the lasting benefit of all who love the outdoors.

Securing adequate funding for acquisition, construction and maintenance is always a challenge. Montour has been fortunate in that it has become well known and respected. Support has been strong from local foundations, many other organizations, and especially from private donors. That's good, as we still have some big projects before us. Also, going into the future we will have more miles of trail, more amenities, and higher usage. This is great for trail users, but will require us to have continued success in attracting funding and managing the whole enterprise. ***Continues on Page 7***

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.

30th Anniversary continues from page 1

Stan said. "We just all came forward enthusiastically. We just did it." The early to-do list included lobbying for funding, garnering public support, developing a concept plan and articles of incorporation — and that was all before purchasing any land. The physical work of clearing the land and building the Trail followed, and continues today.

Ned unveiled a large bronze plaque honoring the founding members of the board. "It's humbling to stand in the shadows of these giants," Ned remarked. "I hope we can live up to their legacy and keep the Trail going!" This spring, the plaque will be mounted on a sandstone block along the first section of the Montour Trail opened for public use in Cecil Township.



Tim Killmeyer, one of the MTC's founding board members, debuted a trailer for his video of *The Montour Trail Then and Now*. The full video can be seen at <https://tinyurl.com/MTC1989to2019>.

Congratulations to newly elected members of the MTC Board of Directors for the 2020-2022 term: Jen Mosesso, Jim Richter, Dave Tetrick, Don Thobaben and Deb Thompson.

Left, President Ned Williams unveils the founders plaque to be mounted on a rock and displayed in Cecil Twp.

Dave Wright continues from Page 1

Dave already knew the Montour rail line quite well. A resident of South Fayette, he had seen trains traveling on the Montour Railroad before it stopped running. "I purchased a bicycle when the railroad was abandoned," he recalled. "I wanted to go out there and bounce over the ballast before the right of way got blocked off."

Dave became the Montour Trail Council's property acquisition expert, reviewing deeds along the rail line to determine where the railroad fully owned the property in fee and helping to acquire fee title where the railroad had only an easement and the adjacent owners could reclaim the land.

Dave's superior work ethic was invaluable to trail development, because he found time for trails work on top of his other county responsibilities. "I went to my boss and asked, 'Can I work on these trail projects if I get everything else done too?' The answer was 'Yes, just keep up with your work,'" Dave explained. "When a deputy director questioned my trails activity, I asked if there was a problem with my other work. The answer was no, so I kept doing it."

Dave estimates that during the early 1990s he was spending up to half his work hours on trail development, while still getting everything else done.

Dave worked closely with Bob Lucas, the county's right-of-way expert for road and bridge projects, so when Lucas retired in 1996, Dave moved into that job. His motto of "Be persistent and respectful" served him well as he managed property issues throughout Allegheny County's trail mileage. For example, the trail from Triphammer to Piney Fork Road in South Park Township, which leaves the original rail right of way, exists thanks to Dave's negotiation of a mutually beneficial land swap with neighboring businessman Jack Duncan.

One of Dave's most innovative contributions to trail development was the recycling of old bridges. When a steel plant in Monessen was dismantled, Dave arranged to acquire a bridge that had carried pipes to and from the plant's boiler-house. Now, that bridge carries the trail over Piney Fork Creek southeast of Triphammer Road. Similarly, when a tubular steel structure intended to carry pedestrians to the Johnstown Incline was rejected because the fabricator used Canadian steel, Dave got it at a steep discount, and it became the Quicksilver Bridge at trail mile 15.

Dave even obtained the bridge used in downtown Pittsburgh for scenes of the movie "Desperate Measures" before it was scrapped. When he couldn't find a use for it on the trail, it was instead repurposed for a trail neighbor, the Forest Grove Sportsmen's Club.

In addition to walking the Montour Trail frequently with wife Susie and their dogs, Dave has biked on trails all over the eastern United States, both enjoying the scenery and picking up ideas from how other trail organizations handle issues like signage and access. He said his favorite ride outside Pittsburgh is the Prairie Grass Trail, which passes through a combination of forested areas and cornfields in southwest Ohio.

Dave served only one term on the Montour Trail Council board, to avoid any conflict of interest with his county work, but he had a hand in virtually every Montour Trail project in Allegheny County. He vividly recalls the early challenges involved in selling the idea of recreational trails to community members and politicians—one of whom, he says, thought the best repurposing of the former Panhandle rail line in western Allegheny County would be a long line of mobile homes.

It's almost hard to imagine that Dave had time for anything else, but in addition to raising three children adopted from Honduras, with Susie, he has also sung with the Mendelssohn Choir for 24 years.

After 50 years as a professional engineer, Dave is thinking about retiring. He says that he'd like to write a book on the history of the Montour Trail. Let's hope he does, because no one will ever know the trail as exhaustively as he does.

Photo Contest Returns

This photo was taken on Sunday, October 27, 2019 at 1:30 p.m., on the Bethel Park Branch heading towards Library Viaduct.

The leaves were giving off such a beautiful golden glow and they seemed to even cushion the sound! Everything was still, quiet and very peaceful. It gave the feeling of being blanketed in Autumn.

The winner: Gina Luisi



The 17th Tour the Montour Wrap-up by Pat Friedsam

Wow, again! Mother Nature gave the 17th Annual Tour the Montour another beautiful day!

Parking went off without a hitch thanks to our volunteers and the parking lots of the Friends of Pittsburgh Professional Soccer Association. Cyclists started the ride at mile 0 with Starbucks coffee, bagels and muffins. Mechanical support was provided by REI and Sweetwater Bicycles.

PB&J sandwiches, granola bars, fruit and Pepsi-donated Gatorade and water were provided at each of the 4 rest stops manned by enthusiastic volunteers.



Cooked Goose prepared pulled pork, halushki, hot dogs, pasta and salad. Mediterra kindly provided their great bread. Some of the spread can be seen above. This year sandwich bread and hot dog buns were donated by Ernest Delgado and were much appreciated. Again, the table loaded with cookies, (baked by Bobby, Three Saints, Sam's Club, and Washington Shop n Save) was a favorite.

We again thank Mike and Forest Grove Sportsmen's Club for their wonderful venue. You probably saw Mike doling out the pulled pork.

UPMC physical therapy was on hand again with stretching pre and post event. (pictured below). They had some great healthy



recipes for snacks. New, this year, were 2 breweries whose samples were appreciated by our "of age" cyclists. Thank you to Headley' Brewing Company in Heidelberg and to 180 and Tapped in Coraopolis. Adam from ASR was on hand with his e-bikes for test rides.

Aerotech showed its newest designs in clothing.

Our naming sponsor this year was Budd Baer Subaru of Washington, Pennsylvania. There were 2 "loaded" (with sports accessories) Subarus to examine and the rep from Budd Baer said she had a lot of fun. FedEx, has supported us for years, and again was a naming sponsor this year, for which we are very grateful.

Again, we raffled a Fuji hybrid bike from Tandem Connection in Hendersonville. Pro Bike and Run helped us with a Giant Escape hybrid bike. The Seven Springs' 2-night stay for 2 people was again a hit. Aerotech Designs of Coraopolis donated a much sought-after great cycling outfit. New this year were basket auctions and silent auctions. Thanks to donations of a bike from Trek, a fire pit from Home Depot, a bike jersey from Teresa Gallagher, as well as a sauté pan from All Clad, the auctions were a great success. There were hotel stays at Tanger and the Meadows and individual baskets provided by Beef Jerky, Yankee Candle and Harry & David - just to name a few. And we plan to do this again next year. Please remember to use the Aerotech Design and Trek coupons in your Eaton bag

Thank you to all who cycled at the event. We are so happy when you enjoy the Montour Trail. Thank you to all who stopped at trailside and shared your stories and pics. Thank you to our wonderful volunteers, without whom there would not have been an event. Planning starts in February every year. Meetings occur monthly for anyone interested. We need long term and same day volunteers. Volunteers help with everything from planning, to bag packing, to obtaining sponsors, raffle items, basket items and donations, ordering food, website updates, ordering outhouses, printing, and mailing. On event day they are there for patrol, SAG



Scouts man the rest stop at Galati Road.

support, rest stops, registrations, lunch, prizes, parking, set up and cleanup. The Tour the Montour Planning Committee and I give our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all who volunteered. A special thanks to Noel (in charge of door prizes in past) for coming and lending her support on the event day

The 18th Annual Tour the Montour will be held September 19, 2020. Put it in your calendar. We hope to see you there!!!

MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

The Partridge Mine**By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society**

A scene at Santiago shows loaded coal hoppers on the railroad spur serving the Partridge Mine. The power house can be seen in the background on the right. Photo courtesy West Allegheny Historical Society

At Trail Mile 9.8, where the trail crosses over Santiago Road near Imperial, is an interpretive sign designating the location of North Star Junction. At this point, the Montour Railroad split, with one line bearing to the left along the hillside parallel to Santiago Road for about a mile to North Star or Santiago. That original line toward Santiago was built in 1879 as a two-mile extension of the Montour Railroad from the terminus then at Imperial, to service the newly opened Imperial Coal Company's Partridge Mine. This right-of-way is no longer in existence. Bearing to the right at the junction, the trail follows the railroad's 1914 extension toward West Mifflin.

A wye track arrangement (basically a triangle with tail tracks at each point) was installed at North Star Junction during that 1914 extension. This allowed locomotives to be turned to increase their working efficiency. Although the original track toward Santiago was abandoned and removed after the Partridge Mine closed, the wye track section remained in use until railroad operations ended in 1984. The right-of-way including some track ties can still be found in the woods along the trail.

In June, 1813, Thomas Partridge took title to 206 acres in North Fayette Township, and called the parcel Partridge Nest, in accordance with land ownership requirements existing at that time. Partridge's land contained an outcrop of the Pittsburgh coal seam.

Although the Partridge Mine was originally opened by the Imperial Coal Company in 1879, by 1898 it was owned by the Morgan, Moore & Baine Company, headquartered in Cleveland, OH, which also owned the nearby Margerum Mine. Ownership by MM&B seemed to be a prelude to the organization of the Pittsburgh Coal Company, which took over the Imperial Coal Company, its mines and the Montour Railroad in 1899 and 1900. A major impetus in creating the Pittsburgh Coal Company was to bring the hundreds of marginal mining operations under one roof and eliminate the smaller independent mines that were driving down the price of coal. Once the mine was taken over by the PCCo, colloquially known as "The Coal Company," production and efficiency improvements began almost immediately.

The Partridge Mine would eventually extend northward and southward and become one of the largest underground mines on the Allegheny/Washington County border.

In the late 1800's, the town was called North Star, but the local post office was called Tyre. After the Spanish-American War, the town renamed itself Santiago, although locals pronounced it as rhyming with San Diego. The miners who worked at Partridge Mine called the town "Hell's Half Acre" because of the violence that went on during the great coal strike in 1928.

In the early 1900s, Partridge miners made about \$13 a week for a six-day week and about 22 cents per yard for non-production work, such as cutting breakthroughs between the rooms where coal was mined.

In 1903, the Coal Company installed an 18-foot diameter fan at Partridge to improve ventilation, and in 1913 ran a power line from the Partridge Mine to the Margerum Mine. Production in 1913 was 572,295 tons of coal, which was mined for about \$1 per ton. By 1914, the main entries extended over 9,000 feet, or nearly two miles. By 1915, Partridge Mine had four electric locomotives, 29 electric mining machines and 10 pumps to remove water from the mine. Its power house had seven boilers and generated enough electricity to supply its own power and also provide power to the Margerum Mine.

The Partridge Mine was closed sometime in the 1930's. A WPA mine map from the '30's shows the mine still in production, but aerial photos of the area taken in 1939 show the loading tipple had been torn down and the railroad spur abandoned.

Thanks to Bob Ciminell for much of the information presented about the Partridge Mine. More info can be found at Montourrr.com.

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 much information at <http://www.montourrr.com>



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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

Diane Greco Allen
 Lori Bartrug
 Nick Blodis
 Tim Byce
 John & Martha Campbell
 Jeffrey Cramer
 Terry Dezort
 Robert Dunn
 Patricia & John Ferentz
 Nick Galli
 Kim Germain
 Aki & Kiko Giho
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In memory of Roger McElhaney
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In memory of Justin Broglie
from the Broglie Family

In memory of Gabriel Paul
 from Dennis & Kathy McDonough
 from Richard Diffenbach
 from John & Donna Valdiserri
 from Donna & Jeffrey Leonhardt

The Prez Sez continues from Page 2

Which brings us to the most remarkable thing of all: At age thirty, we are still an all-volunteer organization, with no paid staff. So far our volunteers have been able to handle the ever-increasing workload. But, for some types of tasks, it's clear that the Montour Trail and its users would be better served if we volunteers had a little paid help.

Volunteers will always remain central to every aspect of the trail and its operation. Considering that we are all thirty years older than we were when the trail was founded, the key volunteer task may be the recruitment of the next generation of volunteers. Let's keep the Montour Trail going for another thirty years, and well beyond that.

Have a great Holiday season!

Ned Williams

