



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Marking 33 Years

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New Digs for the Trail Council by Phillip Torrez

After more than 22 years in Bridgeville, the Montour Trail Council will be moving its office to 2589 Boyce Plaza Road in Upper St. Clair this Spring.

"The MTC's success and growth over these past few years means that we need more space," says MTC President Deb Thompson. "Our present conference room is packed to maximum capacity during board meetings, with attendees sometimes spilling out into the hallway. This new space will allow us to be more comfortable and better organized."

The trail council signed a five-year lease for the 1,100-square-foot office space that includes three enclosed rooms and a reception area. The lease also includes a 368-square-foot space that the MTC will improve (including the installation of lighting, drywall, flooring and a telecommunications system) with volunteer labor to make a comfortable boardroom and social area.

The new office will be accessible for disabled persons since it is on the ground floor, and the building includes ample free parking. The space will also be well appointed thanks to a generous donation of furniture and fixtures from GNC. The MTC phone number (412-257-3011) will remain the same.

The trail council expects to remain in the current office on Hickman Street in Bridgeville until at least March. An open house for volunteers and the public will be staged once the move has been completed.

The Southpointe Connector by Dennis Sims

A ground breaking ceremony was held in early summer for the connector construction. Joe Stewart Contracting was low bidder and began construction in late summer and stopped in late autumn when weather conditions became unsettled. They at least got the path graded and paved with asphalt by then. Paving was required due the steepness of the connector. The trail is built on switchbacks from the Montour mainline to just below the Southpointe Fieldhouse where it levels off a bit to where it connects with the fieldhouse driveway. Look for a ribbon cutting in the spring. Below are some images of the trail. To the left is the bottom at the trail and to the right are the switchbacks below the Fieldhouse. The Connector was built for Cecil Township in what will be Klinger Park

Inside this issue:

New Trail Office Digs	1
Southpointe Connector	
The Prez Sez	2
Friends Meetings	3
Remember When	
Tour T-shirts	
McDonald VFD Rescue Drill	4
Some 2022 Highlights	5
Montour Railroad: Coke Ovens	6
New Members Memorials	7
Trail Map	8

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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/43518292159>





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The Prez sez...

Looking Back at 2022

The world was starting to look a little more normal in 2022, after two years of COVID and assorted other disruptions, and the MTC was able to seize the moment to bank plenty of achievements. The diversity of these accomplishments underscores the breadth of skills needed to build a successful trail and trail organization. We owe this success to our varied and dedicated volunteer base.

Here, in no particular order, are some of the year's key achievements:

- **More Trail Building:** The Southpointe Connector construction began during autumn. Planning and negotiations toward a safer crossing of Rt. 51 continued in earnest. Property was secured to allow construction of a crossing at Stewart Road.
- **Trail Connections:** McConnell Trails connectors were completed. Connectors to Coraopolis and Muse are well underway.
- **Trail Rebuilding:** With newly purchased construction equipment, we were able to resurface seven miles of trail. Streambank protection projects were undertaken in multiple locations to prevent erosion damage to the trail.
- **Big Data comes to the Montour Trail:** We implemented a new database that allows us to track memberships, event signups, donations, and more in one system. This allows us to be more responsive to our members, and will make it easier to coordinate all of our information. Also, you can now renew your membership online using MyMTC. Meanwhile, we continued to expand implementation of a cloud-based document-management system, helping to tame the paper monster consuming our office.
- **Dollars from Heaven:** We received a quite unexpected \$100,000 bequest from a local resident.
- **Tour the Montour:** This year's Tour set a record take, at \$64,000, in its 20th year.
- **Trail Patrol:** With new leadership, the Patrol has increased its numbers by 50%, added their first female members, and strengthened relationships with local law-enforcement and EMT organizations.
- **We Have Techies, Too:** A complete update of our website, www.montourtrail.org, was completed. The GIS working group teamed with the Technology Committee to form a new IT/GIS Committee, taking better advantage of those overlapping skill sets.
- **Office Space (not the movie):** As the year came to a close, we signed a lease on a new, larger office. This will give us plenty of storage space and more spacious meeting areas.
- **More Connections:** Hollow Oak Land Trust constructed a bridge between their Montour Woods Conservation Area and the Montour Trail. And recent developments are leading to stronger bonds between MTC and local government, and other local trail groups.

As I mentioned earlier, volunteers transformed all these great ideas into reality. Consider helping Montour Trail Council build the 2023 list of accomplishments: Volunteer, Become a member, Make a donation.

Deb Thompson

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 6:30 p.m. From April to October, 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, the first non-holiday Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at various locations depending

on weather and time of year.. Work and clean-up parties on the first Friday and third Saturday of every month at 8:30 am. For more information on meetings or work parties please email us at petersfriends@montourtrail.org

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

Remember When

2018: 5 years ago: Tim Killmeyer, one of the Trail founders, announces: his retirement.

2013: 10 years ago: Airport Corridor Transportation Association awards their "Improving Mobility" award to the Montour Trail Council, Moon Township and their engineering firm L. R Kimball for the Park Manor Safety Improvement Project.

2008: 15 years ago: Mingo Creek Construction begins construction of Phase 16, Chartiers Creek to Georgetown Road in Peters Township.

2003: 20 years ago: Deb Thompson and Dave Hajnik are welcomed onboard as webmasters.

1998: 25 years ago: Hollow Oak Land Trust buys another parcel of land in Moon Twp. bringing their land total to nearly 170 acres.

1993: 30 years ago: MTC is awarded a \$1.3 million ISTEA grant.

Tim's Tees



Tim Killmeyer is one of the "founding fathers" of the Montour Trail. Since the founding of the trail in 1989, he has served in myriad capacities: as a pitchman for the trail, making presentations to municipalities and community groups, as an MTC board member, as project manager for trail construction, as newsletter coordinator, and as Tour the Montour t-shirt designer. With the 2023 Tour set for Sept. 23, Tim is prepping the collectible tee. He shared

some thoughts about his graphic creations.

How did you get started designing the Tour shirt?

I was the editor of the Montour TrailLetter at the time and had been honing my skills in Microsoft Publisher and later Photoshop. I was just kind of the person with the right skill at the right time.

How many t-shirt designs have you produced?

I've done 17 of 20. I begged off a couple of years due to other responsibilities, but I came back to do 19 and 20. I am currently researching designs for the 2023 event.

How do you come up with an idea for the shirt? What is your source of inspiration?

When we started, before Photoshop, the easiest thing was to play with woodcuts and clip art of antique printing flourishes because they were one color. It was also cheaper for us to print one color, especially black. It wasn't until the tenth-anniversary shirt that we tried multiple colors. The simplest woodcuts were most often antique bicycles, and I liked having that continuity with a hobby that is over a century old. I would look through hundreds of pictures – and still do – to find that "one" that would look good on a shirt. When we started using color, I began to look through vintage bicycling posters.

Do you have a favorite design among all those that you have done?

That's a tough question. Every time I finish one, it becomes my favorite. I think 11, 12, and 13 are my favorites, with 5, 6, and 8 close behind.

What's the most surprising or unexpected place you've seen a Tour t-shirt?

That's the best thing about designing the shirts, being out somewhere, maybe at the zoo or in some store and seeing someone walking past wearing one. Probably the place I didn't expect to see one, because it is so far from here, was on a bicycle trip to Washington D.C. Someone rode past me on the C&O Canal Towpath wearing one. They're everywhere.

[To see Tim's Tour designs: zazzle.com/store/timkillmeyer/products]

VOLUNTEER!

The 21st annual Tour the Montour, to be held Saturday, Sept. 23, is seeking volunteers. There's lots to do! If interested in helping, please call Phillip Torrez at (412) 257-3011 or email: thetour@montourtrail.org

Montour Trail Patrol Cooperates With McDonald VFD For A Training Exercise by Jim Lapenta

On November 1, McDonald Volunteer Fire Dept, led by Assistant Chief Philip Boggs, conducted a rope rescue training exercise on the Trail. I, Jim Lapenta, of the Montour Trail Patrol, attended as a representative of the Montour Trail. In addition, he offered his services as a photographer for the exercise. The training took place at mile marker 19 using the Primrose Road parking area as the access point. Fourteen members of the department took part.

The training involved placing a "victim" (one of the volunteer firefighters) about one hundred feet down over a very steep hill. This was through thick brush and very dark conditions, where the "victim" was then "recovered" using a rope system and stokes basket. It was



an impressive sight to see everyone working as a team. It was not an easy task they set for themselves. The conditions made it as realistic as possible with no small risk to the team. The ground was wet and slippery. Using only handheld lights and headlamps, they successfully made the recovery. They did this twice.

I enjoyed participating in this and was invited to attend further training sessions as a photographer. Usually, the Training Officer has to do the shooting, and I was glad to free him up to do other things. It is also comforting to know that we have this resource for Trail emergencies. I'd like to see other departments along the Trail do this. I'd happily offer them my photography services as my schedule permits! Be sure to thank a first responder when you can.



Highlights of 2022



The Blessing of the bikes.



Summit Station Bridge.



The GNC Crew gathering donations



Summit Station Ribbon Cutting



The Dedication of the Founding Father Monument



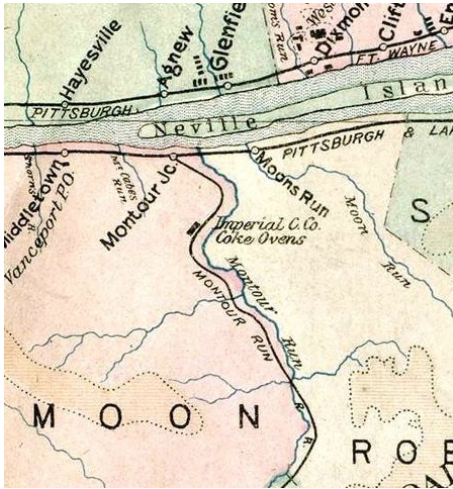
Holt Bridge ribbon cutting at Montour Run near Hassam Road.

MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

Coke Ovens on the Montour Railroad

By Bryan Seip - Montour Railroad Historical Society

One of the first industries to be serviced by the Montour Railroad was a coke works operated by the Imperial Coal Company, who also owned the railroad. The coke works ran along the railroad just outside of Montour Junction. It was located at Trail Mile 0.3. The accompanying map from 1881 shows the Montour main line running along Montour Run. Trail Mile 0 is at the left in the A. N. Dunlap property. The original main line ran in a loop along Montour Run around the M. Byrne property. Later, the marked "through cut" was made in the hillside to eliminate the sharp curves along the creek. This is the current trail right of way. Where the railroad Mile 1 is marked in the A. K. Joy property is the current trailhead parking area and road leading to Harry Snyder Steel. Coming out of the cut, where the fenced-in remediation area is now located, was the site of the coke ovens.



A newspaper article from The Telegraph of June 25, 1879 stated: "The Montour Coal Co. commenced shipping coal from its new mines over the Pittsburg & Lake Erie road last week. They are making extensive preparations for mining and shipping coal west from these works. They have two banks open, which are reached by a branch road running from Montour station, nine miles to the first and eleven miles to the second. They expect to mine from five to six hundred tons of coal daily. Houses for the accommodation of their men are being erected as speedily as possible, averaging one completed every four days. The vein of coal averages about five feet, and is said to be a kind of block coal. The company will also build a number of coke ovens on the lower end of the branch, near the river, which they will coke the bottom coal and slack. The work is in charge of an experienced and energetic management, and will doubtless soon give steady employment to quite a number of men."

The coal used to manufacture coke was supplied mainly from the Dickson/Cliff Mine and the Partridge Mine, both in the Imperial area. It could be delivered directly from the mines to the coke works by the Montour Railroad. The finished coke was then shipped through the Montour's connection with the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad at Montour Junction.

From the Colliery Engineer, August 1887:

"The Imperial Coal Company, whose works are on the Montour railroad, will this week complete 42 more coke ovens. This will make the entire number of ovens at that place 102. The firm makes coke from slack or refuse from the mines. The bulk of the coke goes to the mills operated by Chauncy Andrews, who is interested in several mills at Youngstown, Ohio, and who is also a stockholder in the Imperial Coal Company."

In a coke oven battery, a number of ovens are built in a row with common walls between neighboring ovens. Sometimes there were hundreds in a row. A fire brick chamber is typically 12 ft wide and 8 ft high. The roof has a hole for charging the coal from the top. The discharging hole is provided in the lower part of the side wall. The number of beehive ovens in the Pittsburgh coal seam peaked in 1910 at almost 48,000.

After 1900, the serious environmental damage of beehive coking attracted national notice. The advent of by-product coke ovens in the early 1900s brought the dominance of beehive ovens to an end. By-product ovens captured and recycled the chemical by products expelled during coking. Those by-products became the foundation of the chemical and plastics industries in the twentieth century.

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>

I want to support the Montour Trail Council!



Become a member now!

Go to MontourTrail.org/help-us/join
or scan the Q-R code with a smartphone



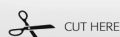
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Welcome New Members

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. Not all new members have been entered as of print deadline and will be listed in the next issue of the newsletter.

New Members

Patricia Bennett
Stephen Colodny
Brittany Fink
Daniel Gabriel
Robert Good
Timothy Green
David Greenwald
Mary Carroll Grimes
Sarah Kohl
Louis Komer
Hans Lessmann
Timothy McCoy
Lynn McLaughlin Smith
Michael McParlane
Michael Robinson
William Rohe
Gerrie Saunders Farrell
Patricia Shetler
Dennis Wehn
Xiaolin Zang

Benefactor

Richard Allwes
Joanna Boutillier
Stephen Bowles
Michael Brocks
Greg Brzozowski
James Collopy
Mark Imgrund
Kent James
Murray Johnson

Iris Liberatore
Denny Long
David Mattson
Joseph F. McDonough
Thomas McIntyre
Steven Nance
Art Peternel
John Shortridge
Donald and Jackie Thobaben
Tim Valachovic

Leader's Circle

Tim Baker
Kenneth Christman
Lisa Citron
Elizabeth Eelkema
Kenneth Forbrich
Janet Huddleston
David Jackel
Timothy Knavish
Peter Kozlowski
Kelli Kuhleman
Thomas Levine
Donald Niemann
Siddharth Pant
Wayne Pfrimmer
Robert Purdy
Stanley Sbei
Jeffrey Sorbara
Robert Voas
Bruce Wiegand

IN HONOR

In Honor of Ray Cox
Heather Weiler

In Honor of Robert O'Connell
Daniel O'Connell

In Honor of Jennifer Sinatra
Jill Sinatra

In Honor of John Wider
Katherine Wider

IN MEMORY

In Memory of Ronald A. Fiehrer
Shanna Weagle

In Memory of Terry Folk
Laura Siefer

In Memory of Jan Miknevich
Paul Rey

In Memory of William Rose
Leslie Neighbors
Alice Schmidt
Top Gun Workout Group

In Memory of Cody Stickley
Aaron Kyluck

For more map details, see www.montourtrail.org