

Trippin' Down the MTC Milestones

Montour Trail History 1989 – 2019

by Stan Sattinger and Dennis Pfeiffer

What started as a dream of saving the old Montour Railroad right-of-way as a recreational trail has become a reality. No move forward would be complete without a look back at where we have been. While we would like to highlight all of the events of the past years, we will only be able to mention the first-of-a-kind happenings as they occurred. We thank everyone who has helped to make the decades memorable and exciting. The MTC could not have survived for this long without the help of hundreds of volunteers donating hundreds of thousands of hours. We hope that you will enjoy this look back in time!

1989

First public meeting to discuss formation of a group to create a rail-trail on the right-of-way of the abandoned Montour Railroad, Pittsburgh Garden Center, August 30. Only 15 people attended, but some of them are still with us!

The **first of a series of regional public meetings** to publicize the MTC's efforts to develop the Montour Trail, organized by then-Vice President Dino Angelici, was held at the Holy Trinity Church, Robinson Township, September. Dino wisely believed in taking our story to the districts where the Trail would pass through.

First presentation of the MTC's promotional slide show by the Group Contacts Committee (Bill Metzger and Tim Killmeyer), Pittsburgh Council, American Youth Hostels, October. The Montour Trail road-show caught people's fancy, eventually yielding 52 letters of support from endorsing organizations by September 1993!

Charter meeting of the Montour Trail Council, Mt. Lebanon Public Library, November 27. The featured speaker didn't show up, but with a discussion about all the unknowns that we were about to undertake, the evening flew by.

1990

First issue of the Montour Trail-Letter, Dennis Sims, editor, April. It consisted of two sides of a page at the beginning, later to grow substantially.

PA Public Utility Commission hearings regarding abolition of rail-highway crossings on the abandoned Montour Railroad, March 6-7 and April 16-17. The fledgling MTC, the "mouse that roared," tactfully expressed the need to preserve grade-separated crossings for trail-user safety reasons. The initial PUC reaction: "You want to do WHAT?"

Legislative breakfast to publicize plans for the Montour Trail, organized by then-Pennsylvania legislative representatives Tom Murphy and Huck Gamble as well as Senator Mike Fisher, Pittsburgh Airport Marriott, May. We had met with Tom earlier to describe our vision, and he had become super-enthused about it.

Concept plan for the Montour Trail, a feasibility study, issued to municipalities, agencies, and foundations by the founding MTC Board of Directors, June. Would you believe that we projected a three-year time frame to complete the Trail?

MTC's application submitted for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, June. Tax-exempt status granted to the MTC by the IRS, concluding "umbrella" status with Pittsburgh Council, American Youth Hostels, August. Rapid turn-around of the application was to the credit of then-U.S. Representative Doug Walgren.

First MTC Annual Meeting, Pittsburgh Airport Howard Johnson's, November 18. Membership size at time of meeting: 325. The Montour Trail concept had caught on!

Vira Heinz Foundation commits \$200,000 for Montour Railroad right-of-way acquisition; The Laurel Foundation and Pittsburgh National Bank contributes an additional \$47,500, November. First of numerous grants received through the efforts of initial MTC Fund Development Chairman Tom Dougherty.

1991

First-ever "rails to trails on rails" event anywhere. MTC membership meeting conducted in a trolley at the Arden Trolley Museum, July 29. Trolley operated by MTC civil engineer Dave Wright.

Signing ceremony for agreement to purchase 38 miles of Montour Railroad right-of-way from the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad for \$220,000, September 14. WE HAD BOUGHT IT; NOW WE HAD TO BUILD IT!

1992

Community meeting presented construction plans for the first Montour Trail section, Cecil Township #3 Fire Hall, January 27. We were relieved to discover that Cecil residents had no problem with what we were about to bring to their back yards; on the contrary, many volunteers stepped forward!

The first of many MTC volunteer "trail-blazing" work sessions was held in Cecil Township to clear brush, trash, and ties. Coordinated by Jack Swisher, March 28. It felt marvelous to lean into the tie tongs after having dealt with so much paperwork!

Low-bidder Sluciak Contracting Co. began **construction work on the Cecil section**, June 25, converting our cleaned-up right-of-way into finished Trail.

Opening ceremony for the 4.4-mile Cecil segment of the Trail, the first to be completed, at Cecil Park, October 10. Federal Highway Administration speaker Bob Hall described Transportation Enhancements funding of pedestrian and bicycle trails under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). By January of 1993, the Montour Trail project was approved for initial reimbursement of up to \$1,000,000 in construction costs under the ISTEA Act of 1991.

Nominated by then-Congressman Rick Santorum, the MTC received the **Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Award**, signed by President George H. W. Bush, October. Received by then-President Stan Sattinger.

1993

The First Montour 100K Road Race, Clairton to Coraopolis (62 miles), directed by Jerry Agin, March 6. Only three runners, including Jerry, finished!

2.6-mile section of Trail, Enlow Ballfield to Parkway West, opened in **Findlay Township** in a special ceremony at the ballfield, July 18. Findlay's supervisors were eager to get their section built and provided most of the services needed to complete it.

Another first-ever, anywhere, event: 16 MTC members and Cecil Township citizens spent 250 volunteer hours flagging traffic on Morganza Road while **PennDOT District 12 crews dismantled the west abutment of the former bridge crossing** for improved traffic visibility, July.

Duquesne Light Company donated a **1980 GMC stake truck** with elevator lift for use in Trail cleanups and bridge reconstruction, September.

Opening festivities for 5.2-mile Moon/Robinson trail section, Wickes Furniture parking lot, October 10. With the opening of this section, about one-third of the planned Montour Trail miles, albeit the easier ones, was completed.

Organizational meeting for Cecil Friends of the Montour Trail, a prototype for what would become a network of Friends groups, was held November 12. The Friends groups would fulfill the need to maintain and improve finished sections of the Trail while the Board focused on the development of new sections.

1994

The Incredible Inch Campaign was launched as a fundraiser by Board member Bill Metzger (Trail for “sale” at the flat rate of \$2 per inch of length), April. We could all now become “owners” of our own personal inches of the Trail.

MTC honored with a Three Rivers Environmental Award in the category of Community-Social Organization, April 14. The award is received by then-President Jack Swisher.

Montour Trailfest was held on September 25 to celebrate the opening of the **3.5-mile Findlay/North Fayette section**, extending from Enlow to Imperial. In-kind paving services of the township road departments were supplemented by 1,400 hours of volunteer effort for bridge rehab and trash removal.

MTC volunteers served beer to raise funds at the Allegheny County Rib Cook-Off. With overall coordination by John Hooton and then-President Marshall Fausold, each year for several years MTC supplied 16 volunteers through 40 hours of festival time and were rewarded with \$4,000+ in cash, used as matching funds for construction grants. Fun was had by all, and we didn't have to handle sales money!

Elizabeth Kurnick donated “Kurnick Tract,” a 1.5-acre parcel in Cecil Township, for Trail use, dedicating the property in the name of her late husband, Thomas E. Kurnick, in October. This site later became the home of MTC's pre-fab garage for its equipment, assembled and erected by Trail volunteers in October 2004.

1995

Newly formed Regional Asset District awarded MTC \$125,000, the first of many subsequent grants raised from the new Allegheny County-wide 1% sales tax addition. This first grant went toward the \$250,000 matching funds needed for a million-dollar federal grant for construction, already in hand.

First fleet of porta-potties leased by MTC in May for five initial locations along the Trail. Not surprisingly, this is one of the most-requested services asked for by Trail users!

First annual “Pennies for Your Trail” day was conducted by the Moon/Robinson Friends of the Trail group, May 20. The event netted nearly \$2,000 to be used for improvement and maintenance of the Moon/Robinson section of the Trail.

MTC joined other trail groups to explore fund-raising strategies for the Pittsburgh-to-Washington, DC, trail connection that would eventually become known as the **Great Allegheny Passage**. A summit conference was held and a steering committee assembled on September 29, leading to the formation of the **Allegheny Trail Alliance**.

1996

MTC battled the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission to save as many as possible of our 18 rail-over-highway bridges. The Pa. Supreme Court ordered additional PUC hearings. Then-Governor Tom Ridge ordered that PennDOT and DCNR work with PUC in state-wide efforts to preserve rail-trail bridge crossings, notably those on the Montour.

First MTC internet website was established via a link from a University of Pittsburgh home page.

First annual IKEA/Montour Trail Half-Marathon and 5K Run and Walk was held on the Airport area Trail section in September. Initially coordinated by Bill Morphy and Dennis Pfeiffer, this event netted proceeds that would grow from an initial \$4,000 to over \$20,000 in later years.

Three miles of new Trail in Robinson Township was completed at year-end by volunteers, assisted by Township crews in brush removal and surfacing. Also **1.2 miles were completed east of Hendersonville** by volunteers and Cecil Township crews. The surface material was recycled from the Meadow racetrack.

1997

Two 100-foot-long truss bridges were obtained from Wheeling-Pittsburgh steel mill in Monessen by engineer Dave Wright. These would replace Montour Railroad bridges lost to unwanted removals.

A gazebo was donated to Montour Trail by the Borough of Coraopolis and was installed at the lower entrance to Robinson Town Centre. Our gazebo would become the scene of at least one marriage proposal, witnessed by then-*Trail-Letter* editor Debby Hoerster!

City Council of Weirton, WV allocated \$15,000 toward the first leg of what would become the 29-mile Panhandle Trail, extending east to Carnegie, Pa. and connecting to the Montour Trail in McDonald, Pa.

The longest remaining trail gap. The right-of-way between Clairton and Large, Pa. was closed by the MTC's purchase of two miles of the former Peters Creek Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad from the Dick Corporation for \$24,000.

1998

The Montour Trail gained importance as a teaching tool, as Airport-area elementary students studied Trail history and wildlife and high-school students did manual-labor tasks under the supervision of then-Montour High School teacher John Wasco.

Coal strip-mining operations by Amerikohl were undertaken beneath the Trail corridor between Boggs Run and US Route 22. This would clear the way for the addition of two more miles of Trail.

First mile of Trail in Bethel Park opened in ceremonies held October 31, presided over by Bethel project leader and MTC President-to-be Peter Kohnke.

Trail Monitor Patrol Group held first meeting at Trail Blazers bike shop, Robinson Township, October 29, organizing volunteers who were frequent Trail users to enhance personal safety and instill the feeling of a safe atmosphere on the Trail.

1999

MTC acquired a new internet website address: www.montourtrail.org

Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission constructed 0.8-mile Trail section between Snowden Road and Gill Hall Road in South Park Township and Jefferson Hills Borough in conjunction with development of the Mon-Fayette Expressway.

2000

Quicksilver Bridge was installed, August 12. An incredible achievement undertaken by Trail volunteers, coordinated by Jack Peth and past-President Dick Quasey. Hired construction services were limited to concrete delivery and hoisting of the bridge span.

Enlow Tunnel illuminated. A Findlay Township initiative involving installation of 11 150-watt sodium light fixtures, greatly increasing the safety of pedestrian and bicyclist Trail users alike. Completion ceremonies were held August 9 at the tunnel.

Bethel Park Trail section was completed with extension to 2.1 miles total length. Celebrated on June 3, the completion of the Bethel section would open the main gateway to the Montour Trail for thousands of South Hills residents.

2001

First Annual Burgh's Pizza & Wing Pub 10K Run was held on the Cecil section, April 22. Board member John Hooton introduced the Trail to pub proprietors Tom, Frank, and Dan Daily, who concluded: "We need to have a fundraiser to get it built!" Year after year, the Burgh Race succeeds in raising amounts as large as \$30,000 for the Trail.

Underpinnings of the Trail were stabilized against threatening erosion by the installation of 1,600 tons of rip-rap stone along Montour Run's stream banks, a DEP-funded project of the Montour Run Watershed Association.

At last!! Public Utility Commission proceedings governing the disposition of the abandoned Montour Railroad bridges in Washington County were concluded. Of a total of 18 rail-over-highway structures, 10 were permitted to remain in place for Trail use. The November decision removed a roadblock that had delayed start-up of major Trail development projects for years.

2002

Boggs-to-Quicksilver segment opening ceremonies were held April 12 at the Allegheny-Washington County border mark, the completion of a nearly 18-mile-long continuous stretch of trail from Moon Township to McDonald. Washington then-County Commissioner J. Bracken Burns summed up the event this way: "It's a great day in Allegheny County, it's a great day in Washington County, and it's a great day on the border!"

Large-to-Clairton segment of the Trail was completed in December, with 2.4 miles paralleling Peters Creek and skirting the park-and-ride lot at a Mon-Fayette Expressway interchange.

2003

Montour Trail TrestleFest dedicated the largest Trail segment completed to date. The five miles extend from McDonald to Venice, including the 970-foot-long McDonald Viaduct. A \$1,769,000 contract was completed by Atlas Construction in September. This addition would extend the Trail's longest continuous section to 22.3 miles of length.

First Annual Tour the Montour bike ride was held September 27. This event provided various options for organized rides and walks entirely on the Montour Trail, and it netted MTC increasing amounts of revenue approaching \$10,000 per year.

Farewell to past-President Dick Quasey. One of MTC's most esteemed leaders was lost with Dick's passing on September 4. He is greatly missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing and working with him. His leadership qualities were especially valued when leading the way on some very special construction projects involving bridges.

2004

Montour Trail was designated a National Recreational Trail by U.S. Secretary of Interior Gale Norton and National Park Service Director Fran Minella in June, an honor bestowed on existing trails that meet special requirements for connecting people to local resources and improving their quality of life.

The MTC Endowment Fund was launched through the efforts of Board members John Hooton, Dick Wilson and then-President Dennis Pfeiffer to finance future maintenance of the Trail.

Hurricane Ivan ravaged the Trail on September 17. Floodwater damage was estimated in excess of \$500,000, including numerous washouts several feet deep, forcing the closing of nine miles of the Airport-area section. Heavy machine operators, manual-labor volunteers, and generous donors would restore the Trail to normal operation within a one-year period.

MTC volunteers assembled a new garage in Hendersonville in October–November to house MTC's growing inventory of trail construction equipment. The building was assembled, rib-by-rib, from a pre-fab kit that included 8,500 bolts, each requiring individual installation and tightening.

2005

The inaugural Tails for the Montour Trail event, a 5K fun walk, was hosted by the Cecil Friends of the Montour Trail on June 4. Proceeds went to maintenance and improvements in the Cecil Township section.

New Muse-Bishop bridge was opened to Trail traffic in a ribbon-cutting ceremony held October 15. At this event, then-Congressman Tim Murphy announced a grant of \$1.8 million in TEA-21 federal funding for construction of the West Peters section.

2006

The South Hills Friends of the Montour Trail, a new Montour Trail Friends group for South Park, Jefferson Hills, and Clairton, held its first meeting on February 1.

Mile markers were relocated over much of the entire length of the Trail to improve accuracy of distances. The accomplishment was a combination of several Eagle Scout projects, a Deloitte & Touche employee day of caring, and other volunteer efforts, coordinated by MTC President-to-be Mark Imgrund.

The Montour–Panhandle Connector was completed by volunteers in November with installation of asphalt millings and crushed limestone layers, following rebuilding a rust-caked bridge over Robinson Run, extensive drainage work, and removal of old embedded railroad ties.

2007

Function at the Junction on June 9 celebrated the connection of two key recreational trails, Montour and Panhandle, which not just connect but literally cross each other just west of McDonald.

Fourth Annual Party on the Trail and 5K race was held on June 2 by Friends of the Montour Trail in Bethel Park as one of many fund-raisers for the J.R. Taylor Memorial Bridge, planned to carry the Trail over Clifton Road in the future.

New interactive map was added to the Trail's website by webmasters Deb Thompson and Dave Hajnik, enabling site visitors to pan and zoom, then switch to aerial photograph views.

2008

National Tunnel floor in Cecil section was paved with asphalt to eliminate erosion of the limestone surface by drippage from the ceiling. It was funded with a grant from the Washington County Tourism Promotion Agency and proceeds from the Tails to Trails Dog Walk.

Ribbon cutting for West Peters section (Route 19 to Chartiers Creek) on October 18. The project included rehabilitation of three major bridge structures by our contractor, Mingo Creek Construction, supplemented by high-energy volunteer tasks such as basket wall installations.

2009

Electronic newsletters. With the March/April issue of the Trail-Letter, Deb Thompson took the first steps toward delivering the newsletter in electronic format to save paper and costs. In the future, members have the option of receiving the newsletter in either mail or hard copy.

Shelter at Galati Road was constructed by Eagle Scout candidate John Hofrichter of Canonsburg. He also built a shelter and table for the neighboring access area.

Trail constructed north to routes 980/50 intersection. In June, MTC volunteers led by project manager Charley Beaumariage extended the existing trail 500 feet north. The new portion of Trail connected, via crosswalk at the intersection (commonly known as Mucks Lunch), with steps planned to the remaining bridge span, eliminating an on-road detour.

New hiker/biker campsites were completed for use by through-hikers and bikers. Three of the proposed five sites were finished and provide port-a-john, water, fire ring, picnic table, and several tent sites each.

7th annual Tour the Montour, held September 26, featured a metric century (62 miles) for the first time. Four other distances were offered.

Montour Railroad signal tower in Coraopolis refurbished by the Montour Railroad Friends Group. For 20 years, hikers and bikers passed by the rusty tower and yard-limit sign near MM 0.5. These relics have a fresh coat of paint and a new chance to convey some history to those passing by.

Eagle Scout candidate completed a **shelter along West Peters section**. Andrew Glaid, Boy Scout Troop 215 assistant patrol leader and a junior at Bethel Park High School, was sponsored by Bethel Presbyterian Church.

Routes 980/50 Venetian stairs reach the top. After months of work, Ned Williams and volunteers completed the stairs with bike ramp.

Boggs trailhead improvements completed, separating the Trail from the parking area. Work included grading, laying millings, rolling them in place, and laying a new path of crushed limestone at site's edge. The crew installed 25 parking stops, 340 feet of split rail fencing, rules sign, 20-foot gate, bollards and locust posts.

2010

Piney Fork Creek bridged. In March, a 250-ton crane and two low boys carried the bridge halves from the Quicksilver trailhead to the Triphammer Road site. The next day, the 115-foot-long steel-truss foot bridge was installed on abutments over Piney Fork Creek, just east of Triphammer Road. Volunteers completed installing the bridge deck in May.

Parking improvements at Old Beaver Grade Road. Lane Construction, which was completing a nearby construction project, gave a quote for paving the parking area near the trailhead. Since MTC allowed Lane to use some Trail facilities for their project, Lane donated half the paving cost.

Trail resurfacing MM 6.2 to 7.2. In May, the Findlay Township road crew, led by Public Works director John O'Neal, resurfaced the Trail from Cliff Mine Road to Enlow tunnel.

Trail rehab completed from **Panhandle Connector to Quicksilver** parking lot. Three miles of Trail were improved, brush and trees cut, ditches cleared, new drains installed, and 1,750+ tons of limestone used for resurfacing. The parking lot at Quicksilver was reconfigured similar to the layout at Boggs.

New picnic shelter at MM 1.0. Boy Scout Bracy Scott of Troop 358 in Coraopolis completed the covered picnic table.

Montour Railroad Historical Society **restored signal board.** MRHS restored and erected it as part of the historic display at Trail MM 30 in Peters Township.

Montour Trail received **Marcellus money** in October, the first check from a lease with Range Resources. Referred to as the bonus, it was really a five-year paid-up lease payment of \$511,000. If resulting wells are as productive as those already drilled, MTC stands to share in gas royalties.

Burnside Road bridge removed on Muse branch in Cecil, the last railroad bridge that MTC was ordered to raze as part of Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission's order from 2001.

Westland branch plans with MarkWest announced. On December 7, MTC announced the agreement with MarkWest Liberty Midstream & Resources to lease the Westland branch of the Montour Trail. The agreement allows MTC to build a trail adjacent to the railroad, a trail with rails!

J.R. Taylor bridge groundbreaking, October 16, Bethel Park.

2011

J.R. Taylor Bridge opened in Bethel Park, completing the 2.7-mile branch. At the September 4 ribbon-cutting, dignitaries included Taylor's mother Pat, his father Donn, and granddaughter Caidyn, who were the first to cross the bridge.

Cliff Mine Road trailhead rehab and parking expansion. Allegheny County public Works department relocated the entrance and paved the Trail parking area at the intersection of Steubenville Pike–Enlow Road. On September 1, Airport Friends held a corporate work party with Glaxo/Smith/Kline to add the final touch of landscaping.

New Boggs picnic shelter. The covered picnic shelter at MM 11.4 near the Boggs parking area was an Eagle Scout project for Chris Siak, Troop 301, Holy Trinity Church.

Groundbreaking for Hendersonville bridges, October 23, over Morganza and Georgetown roads.

An Eagle Scout completed **Kurnick's Adirondack shelter**. Jacob Volanski of Troop 2 in Bridgeville supervised a crew to complete work for Kurnick campground.

Trail improvements at MP 9.2 –17.4. Project manager Bill Capp and crew finished the volunteer work that spanned two summers, which involved cutting back brush, clearing ditches, installing approximately 600 feet of new drain pipe, improving Quicksilver parking lot, and resurfacing 8+ miles of trail.

2012

Two new bridges erected in Hendersonville. April 13 was a lucky Friday for the Montour Trail as two brand-spanking-new bridges were installed, crossing Morganza and Georgetown roads. These will allow all Trail users to avoid very hazardous and dangerous road crossings.

Cecil Park ramp surfaced. Frank Ludwin, aka Mr. Fixit, Cecil township supervisor and roadmaster as well as a Montour Trail Board member, oversaw the asphalt paving of the ramp that connects the Trail to Cecil Park.

"Cecil Trail Ambassador" Hoyt G. Hall passed (1926–2012). Shortly after Hoyt retired in 1989, he bought a bicycle at a garage sale, then started riding the Trail with a passion. For the first few years, he logged over 2,000 miles per year. He used up five bicycles during retirement. Hoyt was a former employee of the Montour Railroad.

The first **Pittsburgh Cycling Expo** was held March 25, at the Airport Marriott, with all proceedings benefiting the Montour Trail.

The **light at the end of the National tunnel**. Actually, it's the light in the tunnel at MM 25, which now has lights.

The **Airport connector officially opened**. The long-awaited official opening of Montour Trail Airport connector was a huge success. The featured speaker, County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, opined that it was a big link in making Pittsburgh the bicycling hope of the east coast. Pittsburgh can now take its place among big cities that have a direct connection between their airport and regional trail system.

Hendersonville and Georgetown bridges opened. On a cloudy July 28, the bridges were officially opened by lifting a ceremonial toll gate at the Morganza rope bridge.

Tandem Connection opened in Hendersonville. MTC gave a warm welcome to the newest Trail-side business, now located in the company store at the intersection of Morganza and Georgetown roads.

Westland Branch opened to Trail users, running 4.1 miles from Gilmore Junction (MM 21.6) to Westland. The first MarkWest train ran parallel to the Trail on August 10.

Montour Railroad MM 39 returned. A piece of history returned to the Montour Trail on November 17 as Brian Seip installed a replica of the original Montour Railroad milepost, courtesy the Montour Railroad Historical Society.

Marshall Fausold passed away. On November 25, MTC past-President and founding board member Marshall passed at his Silver Spring, Md., home. Marshall was MTC president 1995–1997.

2013

Safety improvements at Park Manor Boulevard crossing. At MM 4.1, nine safety improvements were made, the most significant being installation of a “blank-out no-turn-on-red” sign on span wire at the northbound Park Manor vehicle approach.

Airport Corridor Transportation Association award. On February 6, ACTA presented the improving mobility award to MTC, Moon Township, and their engineering firm L.R. Kimpball for the Park Manor safety improvement project.

Montour Railroad Historical Society commemorated 100th anniversary of railroad extension. The largest construction project of the Montour Railroad began a century ago with the 32-mile extension of the main line from North Star Junction, near Imperial, to Bethel Park, ending near Baptist Road. Construction began in 1913, with a railroad becoming operational in 1914.

Trail alert news on webpage. In late February, a new trail alert section was added to the Montour Trail’s home page.

Triphammer Trail section completed. Volunteers completed installing the remaining high-tensile wire fencing (the two long runs up the Triphammer ramp). The chain was removed at Triphammer Road on May 4.

PennDOT unveiled 980/50 plans. On March 28, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation District 12 held a public meeting in Cecil Township to unveil plans to reconstruct this intersection and to erect a trail bridge over the recreated intersection.

Valley Brook bridge #1 soft opening was held at the end of June.

Bridge completed at Sugar Camp Road. The new bridge in Peters township (MM 33.5) was opened to both Trail and road traffic.

South Park ribbon cutting. On July 13, there was a gathering at the Triphammer Road trailhead in South Park Township to open the newest 0.8 miles of Montour Trail, which includes the bridge over Piney Fork Creek.

Interpretive signs installed. Two new historical interpretive signs were installed by the Montour Railroad Historical Society, at Venice and rest area/shelter (MM 17.2) near McDonald viaduct.

Valley Brook bridge #1 ribbon cutting marked the grand opening of this structure on September 14.

Boggs trailhead hammock time. Users can swing themselves to sleep at the Boggs campsite. All you need is a hammock. Because of Ken Gregory’s effort, there are now three sets of posts to attach a hammock, then peacefully fall asleep.

2014

Adirondack shelter at Boggs. Through the efforts of Scout Jacob Welch, age 15, and members of Troop 486 out of Hopewell Township, a shelter was constructed at the Boggs campsite.

Cecil Friends Tails for Trails #10. Cecil Friends held its annual 5K fun dog walk on National Trails day, June 7.

Trail easement through Consol Research Facility. A significant Trail gap can be eliminated due to the generosity of Consol Energy, Inc. The easement agreement between Consol and MTC, signed on April 4, will allow construction of a 0.7-mile pathway through Consol’s facility.

Library viaduct ceremonial groundbreaking. On May 18, a ceremonial groundbreaking was held in the Rite Aid parking lot in the shadows of the Library viaduct. The project extends the Trail to Pleasant Street.

MM 0.0 trailhead closed for extended period. A superfund cleanup project began on May 3, at MM 0.3. This was a federally mandated project under jurisdiction of The Environmental Protection Agency.

Work on Library viaduct started. Restoring the Library viaduct began on June 23 by Thornbury, Inc.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Greenway Sojourn. The Montour Trail/MTC were proud to host 315 participants for two days on the RTC's 2014 Greenway Sojourn.

Capital campaign for Library viaduct. A capital campaign to raise funds for the Library viaduct was very successful. Donations from Colcom Foundation, Hillman Foundation, and Richard King Mellon Foundation totaled \$475,000.

Eagle Scout project added history signage. Four new interpretive signs depicting aspects of Montour Railroad history were erected along the Trail in Peters Township. Troop 1313 Eagle Scout candidate Ian Sopko created, built, and, with help from fellow scouts, installed signs between MM 29.6–30.1.

Valley Brook bridge #2 construction. The ceremonial groundbreaking for Valley Brook bridge #2 was held Trail-side on October 12. The **real** groundbreaking took place October 31 with few people in attendance, other than a handful of Marricco Construction employees and only one "shovel," an 18-ton Caterpillar 315C excavator.

25th Annual MTC Board Meeting. More than 100 MTC supporters and friends celebrated the 25th anniversary on November 16 in Library. In testament to a quarter century of tenacious, collaborative effort, MTC cofounder Dino Angelico spoke about the original organizing meeting in August 1928 and how far MTC had come since then.

Mr. Fixit, Frank Ludwin passed (1933–2014). Montour Trail lost a giant on December 20. Frank "Skip" Ludwin was an active volunteer with the Trail who had vast knowledge of construction and its related equipment; he also had many connections with local officials. He was willing to share that knowledge with MTC members, and those results are visible to the Trail community every day.

Property donation in Jefferson Hills Borough. On December 29, MTC closed on a 2.7-acre Dowling-property donation along the Trail in Jefferson Hills. The real estate fronts along 600 feet of existing Trail near MM 40.5. Originally a parcel owned by Marton Dowling, the property was donated by the current owner, Patricia Dowling Shaffer. It will serve to provide green space along Peters Creek. MTC may develop the property as a campsite.

Construction of 980/50 intersection. Construction commenced on the long-awaited realignment of PA routes 980–50 intersection at Venice, Cecil Township, near MM 22. The project includes a three-span overpass that will take the Trail over the dangerous intersection. When completed, the junction will be a conventional vehicular crossroad controlled by a four-way stop, with the Trail transporting users safely over and apart from traffic.

Library viaduct construction. Thornbury Inc. continued to make progress on the rehabilitation project. MTC was supported by Mackin Engineering for construction engineering, WEC Engineering for engineering consultation, and PennDOT District 11-0 for contract support.

Montour Trail & social media. MTC made significant strides in the use of social media in 2014, a trend that will be expanded in 2015. The most expansive growth was in the non-official Montour Trail Enthusiasts Facebook group, which had 1,325+members as of mid-March. MTC volunteers monitor the Facebook group for alerts such as downed trees.

Burgh's Pizza & Wing Pub 5K/10K. In October, Burgh's Pizza and Wing Pub presented a \$30,000 check to MTC, proceeds of the annual 5K/10K runs and 2-mile fun walk held in April 2014. The donation brought the 14-year total toward ongoing MTC development and maintenance to \$300,000.

2015

Trail Blazer award given to Sam Hvitfelt. In February, Tour the Montour leader Sam Hvitfelt was honored for her volunteer work over the last eight years.

Library viaduct soft opening. Thornbury Inc. completed the rehabilitation project on April 30. Unfortunately, there were a few delays in surfacing the Trail leading up to the viaduct from the west and completing the connecting trail to Pleasant Street to the east.

11th Annual Cecil Tails for Trails. The dog walk was special as attendees remembered the event's hot dog chef Frank Ludwin, who passed away in December 2014. Congressman Tim Murphy presented a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol building to Rose Ludwin and members of his family, in memory of Frank.

Montour Trail mainline extension to Coraopolis. On April 9, a meeting was held with Allegheny County Economic Development staff, Allegheny County Public Works, and DCNR. ACED Director Bob Hurley stated that they had received DEP approval for the Sports Legacy development and adjacent Montour Trail.

Two new railroad interpretive signs were installed by the Montour Railroad Historical Society, at Galati trailhead near MM 21.3 and in Cecil Township at MM 23.1, the location of the former Montour #2 Mine.

36 continuous miles of Trail completed. By completing the 980/50 flyover in Cecil Township and Valley Brook #2 bridge, Trail users can travel uninterrupted from PA Route 51 in Coraopolis to PA Route 88 in Library.

2016

National Tunnel doors installed to prevent ice buildup. On December 7, volunteers installed doors in the tunnel opening to retain heat during winter, and temperature inside consistently remained around 48 degrees. The experiment was a success, as no ice built up. The plan is to repeat the procedure next winter using a doorway that will retain heat yet allow transit.

Imperial Five Points intersection safety improvement. Using an RBI grant, a safety improvement was made at MM 7.8 near the Five Point intersection in Imperial. Green Acres Contracting installed 160 feet of guide rail to serve as a buffer between busy Main Street and Trail users.

Clearview FCU award. In October 2015, Clearview Federal Credit Union selected MTC as its Community Champion of Pitt Football for game #1. MTC accepted the award on November 27, 2016, in conjunction with Pitt Athletics on Heinz Field, at halftime during the Pitt–Miami football game.

Coraopolis extension phase 1 completed. MTC's contractor completed the first phase, a 190-foot concrete land bridge between the CSX Railroad main line and the Fourth Avenue Coraopolis properties. The rest of the 0.8-mile extension is at ground level on an old Montour Railroad right of way.

New Trail brochure published. May marked the publication of the newly revised Trail brochure designed to help bring new users to the Trail and encourage them to become members.

All vehicle-access gates moved off the airport area Trail. On June 18, Airport Friends volunteers moved gates, which were in the center of the Trail, to the side at California Hollow Road, MM 79.

The **Regional Industrial Development Corporation** donated a **12-acre property** to MTC. For 11 years, since the central maintenance garage in Cecil was built, MTC had been looking to buy properties for eastern- and western-corridor maintenance facilities. The generous RIDC donation was slated for the western corridor.

Pleasant Street construction completed. A spring 2017 ribbon-cutting event was planned for the Library viaduct and Pleasant Street trail opening.

2017

Montour Trail named 2017 Pennsylvania Trail of the Year by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The award has been presented annually since 2014, and MTC was successful on its first application attempt. DCNR officials recognized MTC for implementing best practices to provide a consistently high-quality experience for users while relying fully on volunteer leadership.

Allegheny County Council congratulated MTC on Montour Trail's being named Pennsylvania Trail of the Year. County Council representatives Sue Means and John Palmiere co-sponsored the resolution, and the entire governing body joined in.

Trail of the Year event. MTC and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources teamed up on June 1 to hold a combined Trail of the Year award celebration, official ribbon cuttings for the Library viaduct and Pleasant Street Trail sections, and groundbreaking for Pleasant Street East. DCNR secretary Cindy Adams Dunn was the keynote speaker.

Westland Friends of the Montour Trail formed in August, responsible for maintaining the path that runs predominantly through rural farmlands. Most of this branch lacked heavy vegetation near the Trail, offering users great views of the surrounding area.

2018

2018 Montour Trail user survey. During January and February, 975 trail users completed the on-line user survey. Detailed data analysis, led by MTC volunteer John Dorman, would be used to help monitor progress and plan the next steps.

Piney Fork Creek flooding. June rains caused major Trail flooding and erosion along the southeast Trail area, necessitating extensive repairs to the Clairton-to-Large section. In addition to raising funds, Dave Oyler managed the contract, which restored and greatly improved the trail surface. He also oversaw streambank stabilization and safety railing installation on the South Park trail section.

Montour Trail Council supported **Allegheny Land Trust's** efforts to acquire and permanently **protect 38.5 wooded, trail- and stream-front acres** in the Montour Run Valley. The Hollow Oak Land Trust abuts the Trail near MM 0.0–2.5. In August, MTC voted to pledge \$5,000 toward the \$20,000 shortfall for the ALT purchase. Protecting this land will help to mitigate Trail and downstream flooding, maintain air and water quality, and preserve contiguous wildlife habitat, in addition to providing scenic and recreational benefits.

Updated web site. www.montourtrail.org got a facelift with the addition of enticing Trail images, news-you-can-use, and improved navigation.

Tour the Montour. September 26 was a perfect day for the 16th annual Montour Tour the Montour, the MTC's signature fund-raising event.

User survey input resulted in new Montour Trail initiatives. In late summer, MTC developed new safety and etiquette guidelines to enable all users to have an enjoyable experience. Washington County Tourism dollars funded production and installation of on-Trail courtesy signs as well as on-road directional sign and new large trail maps. MTC planned to investigate costs and locations for additional year-round portable toilets and water fountains.

To celebrate the **MTC's 30th anniversary**, the Montour *Trail-Letter* honored its "originals" (founders) with a series of articles that stretched throughout 2019–2020.

2019

McConnell Trails development begun. The summer brought big landscape changes to the Trail' Cecil section. NVR purchased the McConnell farm southeast of McConnell Road to construct a new housing community. MTC worked with NVR to ensure that there was minimal impact to the Trail and that both Trail and community would benefit from the project. A tunnel was constructed for the Trail to pass under the road at MM 24.5.

The last takedown. On March 25, Bill Capp and his ageless crew took down (for the final time) the wood panels on the west portal of the **National tunnel**. Volunteers installed permanent metal doors on the east and west portals.

Western corridor maintenance garage. After 15 years of searching and five years of planning, construction commenced on the western garage pole building. Located at MM 5.9, it more or less matches the Cecil facility, with a 60 by 40 feet the layout. Completion was targeted for late fall.

30th anniversary celebration and annual meeting. In December, MTC President Ned Williams summarized the state of the organization as solid, with Trail building continuing in South Park Township and Coraopolis. Co-founder and first President Stan Sattinger was keynote speaker, who recounted how early volunteers willed the Trail into existence. "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," Sattinger said.

2020

Pandemic. Volunteers posted signs reminding trail users to practice social distancing rules. The Board voted to close portable toilets, as well as any drinking fountains that we controlled, in March; by late May, the toilets re-opened, with increased cleaning.

Tour the Montour: Our biggest event could go on as a "virtual" event. Users were encouraged to ride on their own and share photos on Facebook. Even without lunch or rest stops, nearly 300 people signed up and a number of our sponsors continued to support us.

Outdoors was safe: With most forms of entertainment closed, thousands of **people went outside in search of exercise**. The trail was busy, and parking lots were packed. This led to an unexpected upside, a real increase in memberships and donations.

MTC's in-person **meetings** were converted to **teleconferences**. Even our Annual Meeting was conducted on Zoom, drawing around 50 participants.

Opening **0.4 miles of new trail along Piney Fork**, including a new bridge. This area will be one of the most beautiful and peaceful sections of the trail.

Work at **Summit Station with improved** Trail surface, and an impressive new bridge was installed over the entrance way, donated by the developer.

Work on the new **Western Corridor Garage** was essentially completed.

Trail-wide maintenance program: Bill Capp and his team undertook a this massive effort to resurface sections of trail and clear ditches. Erosion controls measures were needed along Piney Fork Creek. Scaffolding was installed in Greer Tunnel for safety while repairs were made.

PennDOT's Southern Beltway construction: This caused inconvenience to trail users, but allowed MTC to reap the benefit of a **promised new parking area** near McDonald.

Development of a **trail-wide geographic information system (GIS)** neared completion. This cloud-based system allows volunteers to check out property lines and other property information from their home computers.

2021

Deb Thompson as President: The first female leader of our 32-year-old organization. She was joined on the Executive Committee by Fran Hensler, Secretary, and by returning VP Phillip Torrez and Treasurer Braden Ditch.

Efficient and effective governance: **Friends groups and MTC committees** developed **annual plans** in January, which guided our actions for the ensuing 12 months and shortened the time we spent deliberating in board meetings.

The MTC **user survey** was rescheduled to line up with our three-year strategic planning cycle. 1,015 Trail users participated in 2021, 73% of whom are MTC financial contributors.

The strategic plan serves to focus volunteers on projects that support both the Trail as a valuable community resource and MTC's continuity and efficiency of operations. One of the goals of the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan was to assess the need for a **paid staff position** to provide continuity in our fully volunteer organization. The discovery and hiring processes included input from over 20 MTC volunteers in leadership positions. The result: We hired Sarah Fetterman as our part-time Business Operations Manager.

New Trail in South Park Township: At **Summit Station**, we added 500 feet of asphalt with safety fencing. The section to the east received a base layer to shorten the Brownsville Road detour. Engineering design work continued on the section from Wood Street to Stewart Road, including a small but crucial real-estate transfer.

Route 51 crossing: Volunteers collaborated with Jefferson Hills Borough to plan a **sidewalk** along the east side of Route 51. Once completed, this temporary solution will enable users to safely cross Route 51 and connect to the Trail at the Large Park & Ride.

Hollow Oak Land Trust connected its Montour Woods Conservation area to the Montour Trail with a **bridge over Montour Run** near Hassam Road. MTC volunteers worked side-by-side with the HOLT team as they installed it.

Trail resurfacing: Volunteers Bill Capp and crew resurfaced the Panhandle Connector and two miles of trail in Cecil Township. Both projects required cleaning drainage ditches. The resurfacing operation used #10 (1/4") limestone, laying a new surface 10' wide and 2"- 3" thick. Resurfacing the 2 miles in Cecil alone required 989 tons of limestone.

Stream-bank and bridge-abutment scour protection: We made an emergency allocation in support of volunteers in the Airport area where Montour Run had started to undercut the Trail.

Greer tunnel renovation planning grew difficult due to supply chain issues. Temporary scaffolding was put in place while we looked for supplies and a contractor able to do the work.

Food insecurity: This impact of the long-term Covid pandemic was prevalent in southwestern Pennsylvania. MTC volunteers collected Trail-user donations of over 2 tons of nonperishable food items, paper products, and household/hygiene items, delivered to food banks in Allegheny and Washington counties.

A special committee was created to make it easier for **handicapped individuals** to use the Trail.

New volunteer convenience: Over the years, **Eagle Scout candidates and others** have developed benches, kiosks, and signage along the Trail. We created a trail-wide liaison and targeted email address (**Scouts@MontourTrail.org**) for scouts looking to advance their program. To make it easier for **potential volunteers** to connect with MTC, we created a new email address (**Volunteer@MontourTrail.org**). MTC volunteers personally reply to align the prospective volunteer's interests with MTC needs.

Gateway Engineers stepped up to be the **title sponsor of Tour the Montour** in 2021, with 520 riders participating.

Mid-year, MTC welcomed new **Treasurer Shurley Ulaky** to the board and **Tina Zottola to the Finance committee** as chair. They subsequently produced a rapid and clean audit of 2021 financial results.

2022

Equipment upgrades: MTC added some new heavy machinery — excavator, roller, additional dump truck and trailer — and made substantial repairs to our vintage grader. As a result, volunteers increased their daily placement of trail surface from 1,200 feet to 1,600 feet. Crews laid down seven miles of trail surface during the year.

New Trail Patrol leadership: This re-energized group experienced a 50 percent surge in growth in 2022. The patrol comprises men and women who work to ensure that the experience of using the trail is enjoyable and safe. The group's second agenda item was to strengthen relationships with local law enforcement and EMTs.

Tech improvements: Not all MTC volunteers can be found trailside. Some can be found within wi-fi distance of a router. Our techies completely rebuilt our website, goaded on by a particularly invasive hack. We implemented a new membership database, allowing integration with our website, online event signups and integrated bulk email. The Technology Committee merged with the GIS (geographic information systems) working group to take better advantage of the overlap in skill sets.

Moving on up: After 22 years the Bridgeville office, Montour Trail Council outgrew its digs. Volunteers evaluated new available space based on three primary criteria: no stairs, a conference room big enough to hold 25 people, and enough parking for a board meeting. We signed a lease for space on Boyce Plaza Road in Upper St. Clair in December and immediately started packing.

Trail additions: The newest section of trail opened in South Park, adding 0.7 miles to the mainline. Work continued on other improvements, including completion of the crossing at Stewart Road, connectors at Muse and Coraopolis, long-term planning for crossing Rt. 51 in Large, and streambank protection projects at multiple locations.

Volunteer projects were undertaken by EQT, Ansys, Boy Scouts, Girl Scout Gold Award candidate, and Eagle Scout candidate.

The **Gateway Engineers Tour the Montour** family-fun ride in September celebrated its 20th year with a record take of \$64,000.

We received a quite unexpected \$100,000 **bequest** from a local resident.