History of the Montour Trail in Bethel Park

by Peter Kohnke

The Montour Railroad stopped running trains through Bethel Park in about 1984 and formally abandoned the railroad in 1985. The last service to Bethel Park was to Broadside Lumber. The Montour ran from Library Junction in Peters Township to West Mifflin where it connected with the Union Railroad. It entered Bethel Park not far from McMurray Road, went past Washington School, over Logan Road at Clifton, next to the Municipal Building, just south of the new undeveloped park (the Guttmann Property), and on to Baldwin Borough.

It had been their main line for delivering coal from various mines in Allegheny and Washington counties to the steel making facilities along the Monongahela River. But most of the mines were shutting down and therefore the Railroad could no longer afford to stay in business.

Around 1986, the Railroad offered the entire right of way within Peters Township for $10,000 to the Township, and they accepted, building the Arrowhead Trail on part of it.

Ikea Race/Walk results

The second annual Ikea 5K Race/Walk and 1/2 Marathon was held on Saturday, September 13, 1997. It was rather cool and not the sunniest of days, but the enthusiasm of all those involved more than made up for the weather. At least it was rain-free.

In all, there was a total of 763 participants (not including walkers), which was down from last year’s total of 901. The number of those participating in the 5K race was 242 and the number of participants for the 1/2 marathon was 521.

Over 100 walkers were bused (in 4 buses) from Ikea’s parking lot to their start point at the Moon Township Water Treatment Plant on Hassam Road. Bottles of water, (donated by Tyler Water), were provided for each passenger on the bus. In addition to this, a very interesting narrative of the Trail, scripted by Nancy Reed, was read by each “Bus Ambassador” while en route to the start point. This made for a most enjoyable bus ride.

Following the events, a breakfast consisting of fruit, bagels, juice and Swedish coffee was provided by Ikea, and awards were bestowed upon the winners.

Presenting the awards again this year was MTC’s very own, Marshall Fausold. Marshall was also a participant in the 5K race and placed third in his age category. Another of MTC’s own, Aaron Murphy, (Moon/Rob friend, Bill Murphy’s son), took a fifth place ribbon in the 5K race in the 12 and under group."OUR BUTTONS
Montour Trail Council
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Newsletter Editor
Deborah Hoerster
Circulation Manager
Joan Schweiger

Most people using the Park Manor segment of the Trail in Moon Township know of the gazebo there. They know that it came to us rich in a history of its own, having originally been built as a float in a parade and later donated to the Trail by the Borough of Coraopolis. But is it known that besides being a respite for weary exercisers, it can be a tower of inspiration? Herein lies a true story to explain this.

My husband, Dave, and I were traveling on Montour Run Road. As we were passing the Park Manor intersection, my gaze, as usual, was on the Trail and then centered on the gazebo. This day there was a young woman standing in the center of the gazebo with a young man who seemed to be on bent knee beside her. (Was I really seeing what I thought I saw?) As my curiosity piqued, I turned in my seat to get a better view. Now I saw the young lady holding a small black box as she threw her arms around the young man’s neck. He lifted her off her feet and ardently returned her hug.

By this time, I was beside myself with joy as I related these gestures to my husband. Naturally, I wanted to go back for some pictures of the happy couple and get their names. Dave suggested that it might be in poor taste to spoil their moment, and I reluctantly agreed as we traveled on. So, in my heart, I wished the newly engaged Trail couple, “good health, much happiness, and many more tomorrows”.

Who would have thought that the unassuming gazebo with its colorful history would have inspired old-fashioned romance in such a heart-warming way?

Debby
Calendar of Events

- **MTC Board Meeting**, every third Monday of the month - second floor of Chartiers Valley High School, in the Library. Turn left off the Kirwan Heights exit of I-79. Turn left at the next light, go under the Interstate, and the school is on your left. Call Marshall at 531-8628 for more information or to get on the agenda.

- **Cecil Friends of the Trail meeting**, every first Tuesday of the month - in the Boy Scout room at the Cecil American Legion, Rt. 50, at 7:30 pm. Call 221-6406.

- **Work & Clean-up party**, Cecil segment, every third Saturday of the month - 9:00 am. Meet at the Kernick Tract parking area. Call 221-6406 for more information.

- **Moon/Robinson Friends of the Trail meeting**, every Thursday before the second Saturday of the month at 7:00 pm. At the All Occasion Catering party room near the intersection of Silver Lane and Clever Rd. in Robinson Twp. Anyone from the communities near Moon and Robinson are encouraged to attend. Call 859-3020 for more information.


- **Findlay/North Fayette Friends of the Trail**, call Don at 899-3695 for more information.

- **Work & Clean-up party**, Findlay/North Fayette segment, every fourth Saturday of the month - 9:00 am. Meet at the Enlow Ballfield. Call 695-2354 for more information.

- **Bethel Park Friends of the Trail**, call Peter Kohnke at 854-1835 for more information.

- **Work & Clean-up party**, Bethel Park segment, every second and fourth Saturday of the month (thru November until further notice) - 8:30 am at Limestone Drive. Call 854-1835 for more information.

- **Ikea X-mas trees** - MTC will be at Ikea, Dec. 4 thru 7 tagging & wrapping trees as a fundraiser for the Trail. Volunteers are needed. Please call Judy Thompson to volunteer or for more information at 922-1702.

- **“HAPPY HOLIDAYS, EVERYONE!” DRIVE SAFELY.**

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Bridgeville Rotary - Four-time donor to Montour Trail

_by John Hooton_

We are fortunate to have received, now four years running, most welcome annual contributions from the Bridgeville Rotary, and from a somewhat unusual source.

In addition to being a MTC board member, I have also been a Rotarian there for about five years. Each year the Bridgeville Rotary holds a “Hickory Wintery Golf Classic”. Wintery gives us the clue. The event is played the last Saturday in February. As you can imagine, any weather that is less than vile is ideal for the event, because it allows macho men (and women) to show that nothing will stop their pursuit of the little white or orange ball.

Raising money for charity is the idea, and this past event netted over $18,000 for the charities Bridgeville supports. The Montour Trail received a nice check for $750.00, and to boot, over this same four year period another nice win/win has presented itself: four successful Eagle Scout candidates have planted trees and blackberries, made and installed ten park benches and 30 bird houses on the Trail section between Hendersonville and Cecil.

My role has been to sell advertisements to support the golf event thereby enabling me to then suggest our Trail as one of the beneficiaries.

And so we say, "Thank you Bridgeville Rotary, and thank you Eagle Scout candidates!"
ARE BURSTING WITH PRIDE FOR YOU BOTH!!

The overall male first place winner of the 1/2 marathon was Andrew Herr with a winning time of 1:08:23, while the female first place winner was Christina Skarvelis with a winning time of 1:27:40.

The male participant coming in first in the 5K race was Martin Lyons with a winning time of 15:20, while his female counterpart was Sandra Fischer timed at 17:53.

Congratulations and hats off to all the winners and those who placed! It showed that long hard training certainly paid off. And to those of you who participated just to have a good time or maybe on a dare, we hope you enjoyed yourselves. Finally, to all our volunteers; the four towns (Moon, Robinson, North Fayette and Findlay) for their extensive grass cutting as well as Findlay’s resurfacing a portion of the Trail that was washed out, and to their Police Departments; the emergency services (Valley Ambulance, Robinson EMS, and Central Ambulance); Moon Twp. Water Treatment facility for the use of their road; Laidlaw West busses and drivers; PT Systems for the loan of Nextel Radios; to all the entertainers and all our donors and benefactors, especially Ikea and Ikea personnel, we say, “many thanks, with many hopes of seeing you again next year – for without you – it couldn’t be done!”

MTC WEB ADDRESS

Visit the Montour Trail web-site at: http://trfn.clpgh.org/orgs/mtc/

Allegheny County Rib Cook-Off “return”

After a notable absence, the 11th Annual Allegheny County/Iron City Beer Rib Cook-Off was held once again at the South Park Fairgrounds this year over the Labor Day weekend.

There was plenty to do and see, including craft booths and live band entertainment. And the hot, steamy weekend was perfect for sampling those spicy, succulent ribs and washing them down with plenty of icy cold Iron City beer.

MTC volunteers were kept mighty busy keeping the suds and fun flowing. Indeed, good times were had by all!

Proceeds from the Rib Cook-Off benefit the Mon-Yough Riverfront Entertainment and cultural Council (MYREC). This year MYREC again designated $4000 to the Montour Trail Council!

A hearty “thanks” goes to MYREC and all our volunteers and to all involved, for making this donation possible!!

That special Christmas gift

Do you have a special someone, who is impossible to buy for? Is this person an occasional or avid Trail-user? If so, consider fine scale models – representations of the Montour Railroad.

Longview Shops provides fine scale models of specific prototypes with the greatest possible level of accuracy and historic fidelity. Longview Shops is located at 941 Township Line Road, Phoenixville, PA 19460. They have incredible models of Montour Railroad hoppers to Montour RR locomotive decal sets.

Check it out, and make your special someone REALLY smile on Christmas morning!
Welcome New Members

Membership Chairman       Jerry Agin

- Linda Acheson & Hank Pool
- David E. Ackerman
- James R. Barricella
- Joe Barron
- Douglas S. Beck
- David Eibling
- J. V. and Alan Fleckstein
- Keith Gregory
- Mark B. Imgrund
- Mark Kaplan and Pamela Kaplan
- Richard F. Kelly
- Mr. George N. Kovatch
- Mary Ellen & Tony Kura
- Ken Lewis

- W. T. Marshall
- Francisco Morillo
- Charles L. Neft
- Barbara Raffaele
- William A. and Adeline Rennekamp
- Jenny Rizzelli
- Harold Steiman
- Jim & Margie Vollmer

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

Yes, I want to help build the Montour Trail!

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

☐ STUDENT $5
☐ INDIVIDUAL $15
☐ FAMILY $25
☐ ORGANIZATION $50
☐ SUPPORTING $50
☐ SUSTAINING $100
☐ BENEFACCTOR $250 + up

(Membership is tax deductible)

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

(Make your check payable to the Montour Trail Council)

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY
STATE ZIP
PHONE (day time) (evening)

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

SIGNATURE

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

Please fill out this application and return it with your check to:
MONTOUR TRAIL COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 11866

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

Please be good neighbors!

by Marshall Fausold

The Montour Trail has provided easy access to many areas along Montour Run which were not so easy to get to before. Also, our Trail has made many more people familiar with the beauty of the Montour Run valley.

Unfortunately, some people are now using the Trail or Trail parking to take their all-terrain vehicles, (ATV's), and mountain bikes onto adjoining land. It is a great temptation, especially since there are some lovely woodlands there. But, this is private land, and not open for public recreation. Of course, ATVs are not allowed on the Trail at any time.

Owners have complained to the MTC that our existence has brought about a noticeable increase in trespassers, especially mountain bike riders.

PLEASE STAY ON THE TRAIL and respect the rights of our neighbors!
A similar offer was made to the Municipality of Bethel Park, but it was declined. So, the Railroad sold it off to any interested parties. The part north of Logan Road was sold off to many owners, some of whom have erected buildings on it. But fortunately for us, the 2.1 mile section south of Logan Road to the Peters Township line was purchased by only one buyer, West Penn Power (WPP), in order to run a power line along it.

I learned of the idea of the Montour Trail early in 1989 as I had recently joined the national Rails to Trails Conservancy. The initial focus was on the new mainline running from Coraopolis to Clairton (including a few hundred feet of trail in the corner of Bethel Park near Library), but that section will not be discussed here. I kept beating the drum that the Bethel Park spur (the section south of Logan Road) was also important, and finally the idea was accepted.

Soon, after the Montour Trail Council (MTC) was formed in November of 1989, three sections were identified as deserving priority in our development efforts, one of which was the Bethel Park section, selected largely because it had no major bridges or tunnels to contend with, and the area was relatively well populated.

Community relations and informal trail clearing efforts were started right away, and there was plenty of interest. However, a major piece was not in place: permission to use the property from its new owner, WPP.

While there were some distinct benefits for WPP to having an active trail on their property (goodwill, reduction of vandalism and dumping, and brush clearing, which allows easier accessibility to their power line), they did have some liability concerns.

In an effort to allay these concerns, Dick Wilson (an MTC attorney) and I made a trip to Harrisburg in 1995 to meet with lobbyists to see if we could insert something into some then pending related legislation. Our insertion was paired with one relating to lower standards for reclaimed industrial sites, so that all could vote for it. I gained an appreciation for the expression, “One should never watch sausage or legislation being made for fear of getting sick.” And in the end, this effort proved fruitless as the section of the bill that we were interested in was scuttled by the powerful lobby of the Pennsylvania Trial Lawyers Association. Their final position was to protect utilities from suit only if the plaintiff was under 10 years of age.

In the spring of 1996, we were pondering our next move. Rich Baker, then the planner for Bethel Park, suggested that we might try to have the Municipality condemn a recreational easement. This idea had appeal and the concept was approved by the Bethel Park Council. But it would cost a lot of money to pay for the easement as well as legal fees, and possibly leave some ill feelings.

Soon after, WPP came to realize that they felt they had sufficient protection under the existing law, and so we proceeded with negotiating an agreement. We mailed WPP a copy of the agreement that we have with Duquesne Light for the Montour Run area as a model. The process was still slow, with each draft needing up to six months turn-around time, as the Trail was understandably not on top of the power company’s priority list. During this time, WPP merged with two other power companies, and the new name is Allegheny Power (AP). In August and September of 1997, it all came together and we now have an excellent agreement. A few highlights of the agreement are:

1. The MTC has a recreational easement that covers into perpetuity the entire Bethel Park right-of-way that AP purchased from the Montour Railroad.
2. No money changes hands.
3. We need to inform AP of any construction plans.
4. We may do nothing that will compromise AP equipment (of course!). This includes not using heavy equipment near the poles, cranes near the conductors, and fireworks anywhere on the right of way.
5. We must carry liability insurance to protect AP.

Now we can proceed! Aggressive clearing has already begun. The local people as well as the authorities are Trail-friendly. Now we just have to find the money....

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**Car Cruise**

On October 5, 1997 (from 1-5 PM), the West Ridge Community Church of North Fayette held a Fall Car Cruise at the Enlow Baseball Field. Through a call to Bill Mor-
Cecil Twp. celebrates Indian Summer and 5 year birthday

The last weekend in September was a big one in Cecil Township. It was the 11th annual Indian Summer Festival. Cecil Friends of the Trail had an MTC informational booth set up with picture boards on display.

There was plenty of sunshine and plenty of people enjoying the day, the crafts, the food, and the entertainment. And as always, our Cecil Friends of the Trail were there to meet, greet and treat the folks, who stopped by the booth, to new Trail maps, newsletters, canes (for a $10 donation), banks (for a $40 donation), and lively conversation!

Not only did the Cecil Friends celebrate Indian Summer in September, they also celebrated the 5th birthday of the Cecil Trail on October 11, 1997. This 4.5 mile segment of the Montour Trail was born 5 years ago on October 10, 1992 and extends from Cecil Township Park to Hendersonville. Cake and refreshments, (even biscuits for your favorite canine), were served under a tent lined with balloons in the little “park” area between miles 27 and 28. Trail users were more than ready to abandon their exercise regimen to help celebrate the birthday with a piece of cake and best wishes.

And so, on behalf of the MTC, we also extend best wishes and birthday salutations to the Cecil Trail. May you have many happy growing years to come!

Progress in South Park

The MTC has been working diligently this fall to remove obstacles in the way of trail construction in South Park—one of the most anxiously awaited segments because of its proximity to the South Hills, but also one of the most complex.

A public information meeting on September 25 drew over 40 trail supporters to the South Park municipal building and gave MTC representatives an opportunity to resolve some prior misunderstandings with township supervisors, all three of whom attended.

The next segment slated for construction runs for one mile west from route 88 to the boundary with Peters Township. The MTC has an agreement in principle with Peters Creek Baptist Church to build parking and trail access on church property—a key condition for township approval.

The strong turnout of trail backers at the public meeting included State Rep. David Levdansky, who came—even though his legislative district no longer includes South Park—to speak on behalf of the trail and how it would benefit the community.

The MTC has resolved most of the concerns of neighboring landowners in South Park and hopes to clear the way for construction next spring. Public opinion does make a difference, so all South Park trail enthusiasts are encouraged to let township officials know of their interest in seeing trail development move forward.

WEST OPINION LETTER TO THE EDITOR
from the Pittsburgh Post Gazette 10/16/97

We at the (U.S. Air Force) 911th Airlift Wing want to thank several people who helped in an emergency along the Montour Trail at about 4:15 to 4:30 p.m. Oct. 4.

A 911th reservist collapsed on the trail during a required three mile walk for fitness. The civilians helped alert medical assistance personnel stationed along the trail and the reservist was rushed to Ohio Valley General Hospital and later transported by helicopter to Presbyterian University Hospital.

The reservist suffered an apparent heart attack.

We’re happy to report that he survived and remains in the hospital for medical care.

In the rush, we didn’t get the names of the people who helped. We would like to thank them personally for their outstanding efforts.

If they read this letter, please call Ed Walsh at the 911th Airlift Wing at 474-8199.

Many people have helped the 911th over the years. The actions of those people on Oct. 4 were most appreciated. Bless you and we hope to hear from you.

ED WALSH
911th Airlift Wing
Pittsburgh International Airport
Trail opening in Ford City - a “big” event

Ford City’s Mayor John Zanetti cuts the ribbon to the entrance of the Armstrong Trail.

Anytime a new Trail opens, it’s a happy occasion. When it’s the first segment in Armstrong County, it’s more than a happy occasion. It’s a “big” event.

Despite some vocal opposition to the building of the Trail, it proceeded as planned - a 1.4 mile section, which is 10 feet wide and has an asphalt surface. Its total cost was $184,000. Of that total, $18,000 was from local funding, while the majority was federally funded. The Borough of Ford City will provide its maintenance.

The local residents, as well as representatives from the Montour, Youghiogheny, and Ghost Town Trails, gathered in Ford City’s Park to show their support for the small, yet very significant segment of Trail.

After several short speeches from various dignitaries, Mayor John Zanetti (also Master of Ceremonies for the day), cut the ribbon to the entrance of the Trail. The crowd was delighted! They waited a long time for this day to come. Some thought it would never happen, but it did. And, it was worth the wait!