

THREE RIVERS HERITAGE TRAIL • MONTOUR TRAIL • STEEL VALLEY TRAIL
 YOUGHIOGHENY RIVER TRAIL NORTH • YOUGHIOGHENY RIVER TRAIL SOUTH
 ALLEGHENY HIGHLANDS TRAIL (PA) • ALLEGHENY HIGHLANDS TRAIL of MD

Volume 1, Number 2

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LETTER FROM THE PREZ

Great Structures Make A Great Trail

Just as the C&O Canal Towpath is punctuated by locks, aqueducts and the Paw Paw Tunnel, our trail is enhanced by railroad tunnels, bridges and viaducts. Exploring an old railroad structure reminds visitors that our trail was once something other than a quiet greenway. Great trains ran here, carrying thousands of people and millions of tons of freight.

You can't help but marvel at the skill and ingenuity of the railroad engineers who dared to throw half-mile viaducts across valleys and punch even longer tunnels through mountains.

We are fortunate to have so many
 (Continued on Page 4)

"Linking Up" Guidebook

New Pgh - DC Planner Tells All

Roy Weil and Mary Shaw have done it again. The folks who have been bringing you the wonderful series, "Freewheeling Easy in Western Pennsylvania," are now out with "Linking Up - Planning Your Traffic-Free Bike Trip Between Pittsburgh and Washington, DC."

As our trail draws closer to completion, more and more people want to make the whole trip. This guide tells you everything you need to know and all the questions you should be asking before you leave. You'll find information here about food, lodging, bike shops, and other services, plus trail conditions and detours and suggested itineraries, with all the pertinent
 (Continued on Page 2)

New Ohiopyle Bridge Swings to Completion

The last section of the upper Yough River bridge at Ohiopyle swings into place on September 9, a move that will soon make the short and sometimes scary road ride between the trail visitors center and Ferncliff Peninsula a thing of the past.

Park Superintendent Doug Hoehn, who was the first to walk all the way across the new span, says the project should be finished by early November.

The short section from the current end of the trail to Confluence is also slated for November completion.

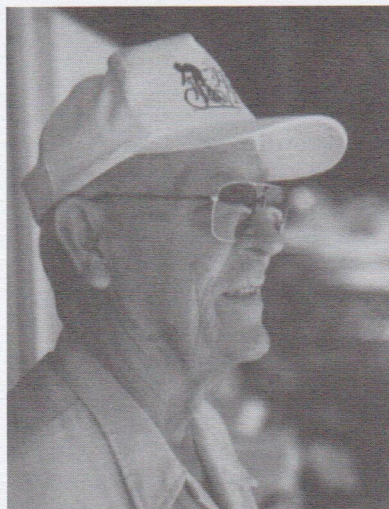


Photo by Doug Hoehn

Maynard Sembower Trail Volunteer of the Century

So you visit the Allegheny Highlands Trail at Rockwood and you're met by a tall, friendly gentleman in khakis who greets you and answers all your questions. He has you sign his guest book and maybe sells you a t-shirt. His name tag reads "Maynard R. Sembower, Rockwood, Penna." You figure the gentleman to be retired - he is - and guess his age to be late sixties, maybe early seventies. He certainly looks it.

But you would be off by a couple of decades. Mr. Sembower was born December 24, 1908. On Christmas Eve he'll be 91. Ninety one years old.



Maynard Sembower

Put into perspective, he was four years old when the Western Maryland Railway was finished. In his lifetime the railroad was built, grew and prospered, then abandoned and turned into a trail. And he has never lived more than a couple of hundred feet from it.

He was born in the lumbering town of Markleton, where his dad was a storekeeper. His family moved to Rockwood in 1924 and he graduated in the Rockwood High School Class of 1926.

His working life was spent on two jobs: as a bakery salesman for 20 years and with the Pennsylvania Game Commission for the next 30.

He retired in 1976 and for the next 10 years wintered in Florida. His wife Edna passed away in 1992. He was well into his eighties and still vigorous and energetic, but alone. He asked the
 (Continued on Page 3)

STEEL VALLEY

In Demo Project

Power Plant Byproducts Become Trail Surface

A short section of the **Steel Valley Trail** in Glassport is the site of a trail surface demonstration project using byproducts from coal burning power plants.

The material, known as CCBs (coal combustion byproducts), came from the nearby Duquesne Light Elrama Power Station. Elrama burns coal and the CCB material is what results from removing sulfur from the exhaust gas before it gets into the atmosphere.

As it comes from the power plant, it's soft and not much use as a trail surface, but GAI Consultants took it into their lab and mixed it with "cement, aggregate and polymer modifiers" to create a smooth, hard surface.

Unlike our traditional method of paving rail trails with crushed limestone, this stuff is "harder, smoother and more durable than crushed limestone at a cost that is less than asphalt or concrete paving," according to Duquesne Light.

And it's suitable for roller blading.
(Reprinted from *Steel Valley Trail News*)

TRAIL SECTION OPEN

A short section of the **Steel Valley Trail** is open in McKeesport (see map at right). This segment of the trail is a signed route through city streets.

MONTOUR

Low Bidder Loves Trails, Says it With \$

When a contractor enters a bid \$10,000 below the competition there has to be a pretty good reason and Rick Ellis has the best. He likes and uses trails.

Rick submitted the lowest bid for the latest **Montour Trail** project to surface the Bethel Branch from Logan Road to Clifton Road and to pave two parking lots. He also paved the first section of the Bethel Branch and did a great job.

The new section will be finished this fall.

We love contractors like Rick Ellis. Any more out there?

YOUGH RIVER NORTH

MISSING GAP BECOMES LOOP

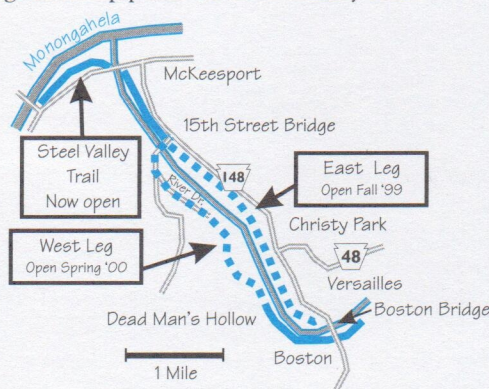
Boston Bridge to the 15th Street Bridge in McKeesport. Wait a minute! Isn't that the gap that's missing in the **Yough River Trail North**? Right you are, and, if Mayor Joe Bendel has his way about it (and he usually does), that gap will be closed this fall.

The City of McKeesport has purchased the three-mile right of way from CSX and will start construction "almost immediately," according to Bendel.

Good news for the in-line skaters: this section will be paved with asphalt.

Better news is that construction on the "Dura-Bond Bypass" on the other side of the river will also be asphalted because of the grade and will form a loop between Boston and 15th Street. It's in engineering now and should be finished in the spring.

Best news: According to **Yough Trail Manager Bob McKinley**, the East Leg of the trail will give users access to "all those great cheap places to eat in Christy Park."



TRAIL FACTOID

This summer's heat didn't deter trail users, said Bob McKinley. In fact, trail use for the summer increased by 20% over last year.

Linking Up

(Continued from Page 1)

addresses and phone numbers.

They do all the hard work; the easy part - the ride - is up to you.

Books can be purchased from any of the **ATA** member trail groups or by sending a contribution of \$10.00 or more to the **Allegheny Trail Alliance**. (See the membership ad on Page 4)

All proceeds from the book go toward building the trail.

THREE RIVERS HERITAGE

Interpretive signs a hit - Friends buy 2 more miles

The first 14 new interpretive signs have been placed along the trail at strategic locations and are playing to rave reviews. Eight more are in production to be placed this fall. The signs are a joint production of the Friends of the Riverfront and the City of Pittsburgh, and were funded jointly by the City, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Steel Industry Heritage Corporation.

The Friends also now own an approximately 2-mile-long corridor that runs along Carson Street from the site of the J&L South Side Works upriver to the former Amoco terminal. The deal was closed with CSX this summer and engineering will begin next year.

The City Public Works Department finished a half mile of trail on the South Side from the Birmingham Bridge to 26th Street this summer. This portion of the trail is now about a mile long.

ALLEGHENY HIGHLANDS of MD

FUNDING IN PLACE FOR CONSTRUCTION

Funding is in place to complete the first 6 miles of the **Allegheny Highlands Trail of Maryland** from New Hope Road to Woodcock Hollow.

According to Bill Atkinson from the Maryland Office of Planning, the needed \$1.75 million is "in the bank."

Engineering will be completed in March or April 2000 and construction is slated to begin in October. The costs and difficulties of this section of trail are aggravated by the fact that this is a rails-with-trails project and tracks have to be moved to accommodate both the railroad and the trail.

The new website for the trail is:
www.ahtmtrail.org

Trail Wins Award

The **Allegheny Trail Alliance** has won the prestigious **Kodak American Greenways Award** for 1999 from the Conservation Fund, one of the preeminent conservation organizations in America.

Linda Boxx, who accepted the award, called it "an incredible honor for the **ATA**."

Sembower

(Continued from Page 1)

question countless widows and widowers have asked: "What in the world am I going to do with myself?"

As luck would have it, the first section of the **Allegheny Highlands Trail** was built in 1993 from Rockwood to Markleton and Maynard lives about 100 yards from the trail head.

He went to Hank Parke, Executive Director of the Somerset Chamber of Commerce and one of early supporters of the trail, and asked if he could help out. He could. Maynard and his card table became a fixture at the Rockwood trail head.

"He watched us build the first section of the trail and when we were done, he'd go down to the trailhead and talk to the visitors," remembers Parke, "He said they all asked for information about the trail and the area. He asked if I had anything. I gave him tons of stuff."

"One thing led to another and the next thing you know he was selling t-shirts."

During the summer, he's on duty seven days a week, noon to five

After three years with the card table, he and his son-in-law, Roger Romesburg, designed his current building and had it built by the trail council. No more carrying the shirts back and forth and worrying about the weather. Add a large porta potty, a couple of picnic tables and a great trail head was born.

During the summer, he's there every day, noon to five. And his phone number is on the door in case a group comes through during his off hours. He'll come down if you call.

Mr. Sembower has welcomed visitors from all over the world, most notably Australia, Germany, and Holland, and all sorts of through bikers. Typically 200-300 people a day use the trail on weekends and each gets duly counted and reported to Hank Parke.

Repeat visitors get remembered and welcomed as old friends. "We only get good people out here," he beams with pride, and "no rowdys. Our good people are the same as security."

So how's it feel to be 91? "I feel wonderful, no aches and pains," he tells the visitor, "and I enjoy looking at the girls. Girls keep you young."

Ninety one years old.

CONNECTIONS

An occasional series on the trails and facilities that connect to our network.

The Panhandle Trail

If ever a trail corridor was saved through the sheer determination of one individual, it's the Panhandle Trail.

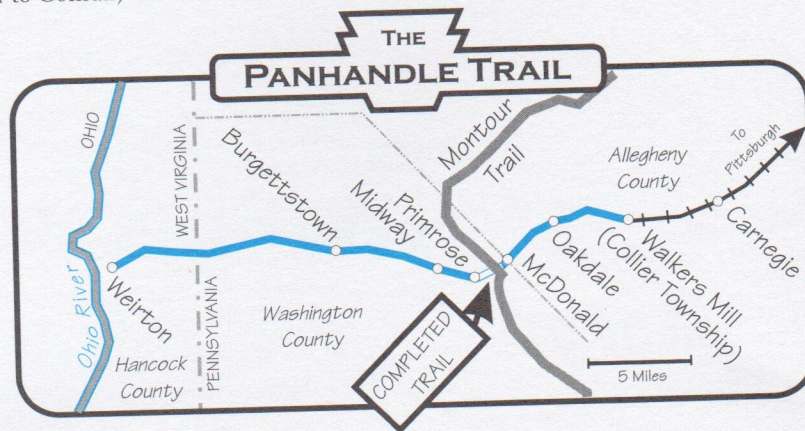
The railroad was abandoned in two sections in 1992 and 1994. John McCreight, an attorney from Washington, PA, and one of the founders of the National Pike Trail Council, saw the trail potential of the Panhandle and, on his own, began railbanking proceedings.

The 29-mile-long right of way runs through small towns and countryside in a westerly direction from Pittsburgh to Weirton. It was abandoned west of Walker's Mill, near Carnegie. Its namesake is the Panhandle Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Conrail, the owner of the line, agreed to letting the line be railbanked. McCreight began five years of filing railbanking applications for each of the two sections every six months with the Surface Transportation Board. McCreight not only never missed a deadline, but his efforts singlehandedly saved the trail.

Dave Wright and the **Montour Trail Council** joined the project. Dave made presentations to each municipality along the corridor. The Harmon Creek Trail Council was formed in West Virginia to promote their section.

In all, parties involved included a dozen local governments, three counties, two states, the West Virginia Rail Authority, the West Virginia Attorney General, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, the Surface Transportation Board, Conrail, Norfolk Southern (the successor to Conrail) and three trail councils.



But it was worth it. Conrail not only agreed to donate the line, but to also contribute \$100,000 toward the trail's construction.

The sales agreement with the Pennsylvania counties, the West Virginia Rail Authority and Conrail was signed May 5 and the first section of the trail, a half mile from Primrose to McDonald Trestle in Washington County, was opened June 5.

Collier Township in Allegheny County was next to jump on the bandwagon. After hearing Dave Wright's presentation, Commissioner Doreen Ducsay started the ball rolling with volunteers and promises to have "a mile done by Halloween." And a developer has agreed to donate 100 acres next to the trail.

The bulk of the Panhandle is in Washington County and bids for engineering are currently being let. Andy Baechle (pronounced Beckley), Director of Parks for Washington County, expects construction on his 17-mile section to begin in 2000.

The Panhandle will connect with the **Montour Trail** directly under the McDonald Trestle. "McDonald is the place to be," said Baechle. "You'll be able to ride your bike in four directions out of here." Not to mention from Weirton to Washington, DC.

John McCreight filed two railbanking petitions every six months for five years. On time. On his own. Quietly. With no recognition. And because of his work, McDonald - and the Panhandle Trail - will indeed be the place to be.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

In this issue of the **ATA TRAIL NEWS** you've read about people who **made a difference** by donating their time and money to help build our trails.

You, too can **make a difference** by joining one (or more) of the following trail groups. Just check the appropriate box(es) and we'll send you the information you need to join.


- ☐ **Friends of the Riverfront**
(Three Rivers Heritage Trail)
- ☐ **Montour Trail Council**
(Moutour Trail)
- ☐ **Steel Valley Trail Council**
(Steel Valley Trail)
- ☐ **Regional Trail Corporation**
(Yough River Trail)
- ☐ **Somerset Rails to Trails**
(Allegheny Highlands Trail in PA)
- ☐ **Allegheny Highlands Trail of MD**

AND/OR

☐ **I want to help build the Pittsburgh to Cumberland Trail.** My tax-deductible donation of _____ is enclosed. (Please make checks payable to **RTC/ATA**). We'll send a copy of **Linking Up** to anyone donating \$10 or more.

Name _____

Address _____

 **Clip and send to:**

Allegheny Trail Alliance
419 College Avenue
Greensburg, PA 15601

GREAT STRUCTURES

(Continued from Page 1)

of these structures, more or less intact. Rehabbing them, however, is the most expensive part of building this trail system. Two very significant projects in Somerset County are on the horizon: the Keystone Viaduct and the Big Savage Tunnel. While these are costly, their reconstruction is a relatively small commitment compared to the enormous effort that was needed to build this level pathway through the rugged Allegheny Mountains nearly a century ago.

I'm saddened every time I learn of great structures that have been torn down or filled in, as is happening elsewhere in the state. Here on our trails, the great viaducts at Salisbury and Keystone, the graceful trestles in Library and McDonald, and the new bridge at Ohiopyle will continue to carry travelers over our rivers and deep valleys, well into the next millennium. They're still here for trail users to explore and historians to study and to lend a touch of man-made elegance to our beautiful natural landscape.

Another group of railroad structures that have been saved as a direct result of the trail are stations. The Western Maryland station at Cumberland was saved as a visitors center for the C&O Canal Towpath; Meyersdale station sat derelict for years until it was rescued by the local historical society to serve as a trailhead and interpretive center; Ohiopyle station was saved by the state park and is now a visitors center and Connellsville station became a profitable stained glass studio because of traffic generated by the trail.

Each station is an historically

irreplaceable part of our trail heritage. We're lucky to still have them - thousands of stations across the country have been destroyed - and we're proud that trails have played a role in their rescue.

These attractions are just one more component that makes our trail great - along, of course, with our spectacular scenery, friendly and willing volunteers, quaint small towns and happy users.

Linda McKenna Boxx

THE FINE PRINT

The ATA Trail News is produced and distributed quarterly by the Allegheny Trail Alliance for the members and friends of its supporting organizations.

The Allegheny Trail Alliance is a coalition of seven trail-building organizations whose purpose is to assure the construction, maintenance and use of the multi-purpose trail from Pittsburgh, PA to Cumberland, MD, where the trail joins the C&O Canal Towpath to Washington, DC.

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