

TRAIL TRACKINGS

A Newsletter for Members of the Somerset County Rails-to-Trails Association
Trailblazing Through Somerset County

Vol. 3, No. 2

Summer 2006



DOUBLE HEADER DEDICATION

The Great Allegheny Passage in Somerset County enjoyed two days of celebration at the end of May.



On the 26th of May, a bevy of cyclists, local dignitaries, state officials – from both Pennsylvania and Maryland – and others gathered at the south end of the Big Savage Tunnel to officially dedicate the 3300 foot structure. While enjoying Great Allegheny Passage signature chocolate bars and trail snacks, the crowd heard about the financial and engineering complexity of the 12 million dollar project.



Roland Rhodomoyer, Project Mgr, Hank Parke, SCRTA Pres, Sec. Audrey Scott, MD Dept of Planning, Sec. Michael DiBerardini, PA DCNR, Deputy Sec. Lary Williamson, PA DCNR, Dan Acuedi, PennDot, Linda Boxx, Pres ATA, Rep Rick Geist, Chair PA House Trans Committee, Jim Epply, DCNR, Jim Marker, Smt Co Commissioner, Back Row - Bob Bastian, State Rep, Brad Cober, Smt Co Commissioner

A common theme was the absolute necessity of the Big Savage Tunnel as a critical link in the whole of the Great Allegheny Passage from Pittsburgh, PA to Cumberland, MD. Although less than a mile of trail, alternatives over or

around Big Savage Mountain would have been difficult and a formative barrier to completing a unified trail linking Pennsylvania and Maryland. Maryland officials drew applause on their empathic promise to complete the last nine miles of trail from Woodcock Hollow to Cumberland, MD by the fall of this year.

After all was said, and the Big Savage Trail Mix consumed,

a pair of railroad crossing gates positioned across the trail lifted and cyclists streamed into



the dim cool of the tunnel consummating years of planning, fund raising, problem solutions, construction and anticipation. The Big Savage Tunnel was open for business.

The following day, the 27th of May, an even larger crowd gathered at the Meyersdale Train Station to officially dedicate the final section of the Great Allegheny Passage in Somerset County. The

trail from Meyersdale, Pa to the Mason Dixon Line was complete and ready for excited cyclists.



People involved in over thirty years of hard work since the first visions of a trail following the route of the former Western Maryland Railroad gathered on the podium. They

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Inn Along the Trail

The Parker House Country Inn

In 1999 there was a bright new change at 213 Yough Street in Confluence, PA, when, what had formerly housed a colorful bike and kayak rental shop opened its doors as a lovely country inn. The Parker House, a Federal style structure which has for 105 years overlooked the Youghiogheny River, serving both as a home and a shop, opened its doors! Since then, in 2003, an addition was added with 4 new bedrooms and a large, airy Sunshine Room, offering even more choices for its guests!



And, the person behind this transformation? Mary Price Aukerman whose family has owned the building for over fifty years. Mary's father, Dr. Edwin Price, who operated the only hospital in Confluence for many years, originally bought the house in the 1940's as a home for his parents. Many of the furnishings, including oak washstands and beds are from the nurses' living quarters in Dr. Price's hospital.

Upon entering the front door of the inn, one's eye is drawn immediately to the beautifully restored oak floors and the living room's magnificent fieldstone fireplace constructed by local stone mason Greg Nicholson who has incorporated several fossils into his stonework. To the right of the living room is the library where one can curl up and enjoy some quiet reading.

Since the Parker House is an inn and NOT a B & B, guests are encouraged to use the custom-built kitchen and dining room to prepare and enjoy any or all of their meals. They might also wish to take advantage of the lovely porch right outside the kitchen door for a cup of coffee or glass of iced tea.

Unique to the Parker House is the Sunshine Room, a large airy room surrounded with windows that capture views of the lovely patio and flowers, the river and bike trail, and the River's Edge Café next door. It can comfortably hold 30-40 people at a time and is ideal for weddings and conferences.

The inn, which offers seven bedrooms with queen-sized beds to its guests, has recently been made handicapped accessible. The Oak Room on the first floor has a private bath with a sit-down shower, allowing any guest with handicapped needs to enjoy all the amenities on this floor.

Going up the oak staircases, one discovers six more bedrooms and a common lounge area. The River Room, named for its view of the Yough River, and the Old White Room, named for a dog in a painting, both share a bath with a Jacuzzi tub. The Sycamore Room-- the original master bedroom of the Price home—is named for the large sycamore tree outside its window. Its bath has a claw-foot tub and a corner shower. The Twin Pines Room, which has two queen-sized beds, a corner shower, and a pedestal sink, is ideal for a family or two adults who prefer separate beds. Finally, the room known as Mary's Tree House offers a queen bed and a day bed, large bath, and six windows with views of the river and Sugarloaf Mountain.

Open 7 days a week year round, the Parker House is a jewel of a country inn offering its charm to overnight or longer term visitors, weddings, or conferences. Its website –www.theparkerhousecountryinn.com— provides a photo tour of the lovely inn along with other helpful information. For phone information one can call 814 395 9616 or 814 395 5921. Its proximity to the bike trail, the Yough River, Fallingwater, Kentuck Knob, and the many hiking trails in the area make it a prime choice for visitors!

- Carol Famariss

DOUBLE HEADER DEDICATION - Continued from page 1 took turns piecing together a story beginning with the vision of a trail conceived when the Western Maryland Railway announced abandonment in the early 1970's, to assembling major pieces, including four major bridges and two viaducts.

A highlight of the sunny warm afternoon was a presentation to Maynard Sembower, Great Allegheny



Linda Boxx, ATA, Maynard Sembower and Jim Clay, SCRTA

Passage Ambassador par excellence, with a sign naming the visitor center at Rockwood, PA after this iconic volunteer who to many is the welcoming face of the Great Allegheny Passage.

After the speeches the same pair of railroad crossing gates, this time raised



Center - Bill Hajel, SCRTA and wife Fay ride through opened gates on a tandem. in time with a song from the Berlin Fife and Drum Corps, opened and cyclists streamed onto the new trail headed in the direction of Cumberland.

- Paul g Wiegman

Photo Credits - Paul g Wiegman and TrailBook

Training On The Trail

The late afternoon sun angles through the trees, casting shifting shadows along the Great Allegheny Passage. A cooling breeze invites the biker or hiker to spend a pleasant hour on the trail. For competitive runners, however, the trail's forgiving surface, its solitude, beauty, and safety make it an ideal training ground for competitive runners.

On Fridays during the summer, Tom Deakins of Meyersdale, a serious runner since 1992, often dons workout clothing immediately after work, stopping at the Rockwood trailhead to spend time training on the trail. He says, "It's great to run on a summer evening--a nice way to unwind from the work week and to start the weekend!"



Tom Deakins

Tom has run in the Boston, Richmond, and Pittsburgh marathons and Pittsburgh's Great Race as well as in the Somerset Daily American's annual 10K.

Marathon training, Tom says, involves a rigorous 14-week schedule, with 65-70 miles run during the final week. To stave off boredom, he reports constantly reinventing his running loops, using both roads and the trail. Tom cites the physical and mental benefits as his reason for running.



Chris Keiser

Chris Keiser, a resident of Indian Lake, is new to competitive running, having begun training in January 2005 and competing last year in both the Daily American 10K and the Richmond Marathon. Chris's '06 running plans include entry in the Cincinnati Flying Pig Marathon in May and the Tulsa Route 66 Marathon in November.

He usually starts his training run at the trailhead in Meyersdale early in the morning. "The trail is absolutely gorgeous then, with the fog lifting and the sun coming through the trees," Chris says.

With the birth of his first child a year ago, Chris quit smoking and began running as a healthier alternative. Now he finds running addictive.

"The trail is a fantastic feature to have in our 'backyard,'" Chris comments. "Why not take advantage of it?"

- P. Stahl

- NOTICE -

We recently mailed our 1st Annual Membership and Fund Drive packets to all members on our member list, expired or current. If you are paid up, your donation to this drive will be appreciated. SCRTA is a non-profit organization run by volunteers and is always in need of your support. If you're not sure of your expiration date, it's above your address on this newsletter. If you have just renewed, the new date will be on the fall issue. A big *Thank You* to all who renewed or sent a donation!

Trail Maintenance



You may have seen a familiar face on the trail this summer. Larry Adams was recently hired by Somerset County as an independent contractor to conduct mowing and other maintenance duties on the trail on a part-time basis. A former superintendent at

Ohiopyle State Park, Larry was responsible for overseeing the construction of the very first section of the Great Allegheny Passage. Larry has since retired to Somerset County and remains active on the trail in his new duties as well as serving as a member of the Somerset County Parks and Recreation Board and as a regular trail volunteer. "Having someone with Larry's experience, knowledge and dedication to the trail has been a blessing for us," said Brett Hollern, Somerset County Trail Coordinator. Along with his primary task of mowing, Larry has sprayed encroaching vegetation on the trail and is doing surface improvements.

Maintenance Shed

You may have noticed a new building at the Rockwood Trailhead recently. Somerset County, with help from the Somerset County Hotel Tax, constructed the maintenance building in 2005 to house machinery, tools and supplies. The building became a necessity after the County purchased a tractor for the trail. The centralized



location of the building in relation to the rest of the trail makes it an ideal spot to stage maintenance work for volunteers, allowing easy access to tools and equipment in one location.

"The construction of this building is a major step in transitioning from the major focus of completing the construction of the trail to maintaining it to a high level for the benefit of the users," stated Brett Hollern, Trail Coordinator, who went on to add, "I think County Commissioner Marker summed it up well when he said we don't just want to be known as a section of the Great Allegheny Passage, we want to be known as the nicest section."

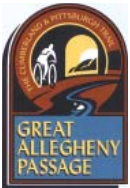
Somerset County Rails-to-Trails Association (SCRTA) is a non-profit organization. We depend upon your donations and help to maintain the trail. The SCRTA Board of Directors is comprised of volunteers dedicated to developing and maintaining the Great Allegheny Passage in Somerset County for the use of all who enjoy the Great Outdoors.

Somerset County Rails-to-Trails Association

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Trailhead News

From Meyersdale . . .

MEYERSDALE OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS

Bikers looking for basic overnight accommodations might want to try Meyersdale's Community Center Hostel located two blocks down Main Street from the restored train station at the Meyersdale trailhead. For a minimal fee the hostel provides bunks and pillows (provide your own sleeping bag), showers, a microwave, and a coffee maker. Close to a supermarket, restaurants, a car wash, and area attractions, the hostel can accommodate 10 persons. For reservations, phone 814/634/8478; 814/634/9100; or 814/634/5335.

STREETSCAPE PROJECT

Meyersdale Renaissance, Inc., in partnership with Meyersdale Borough, has been selected to receive an \$850,000 grant from PennDot's Hometown Streets program. This funding will allow major improvements to Main Street including new sidewalks from the center of town to the train station and trailhead. In addition, a dedicated bike lane, new signage, benches, bicycle racks, and streetlights are planned. Construction is expected to begin in spring of 2007.

From Rockwood . . .

TRAILHEAD DESIGNATION HONORS VOLUNTEER

The west trailhead at Rockwood is now officially known as Maynard Sembower Trailhead, a designation honoring the Great Allegheny Passage's 97-year-old ambassador. Since the trail's inception in 1993, Maynard has welcomed visitors and kept an eye on trail conditions. Operating from a frame building constructed by the Somerset County Rails-To-Trails Association, Maynard sells T-shirts, answers questions and maintains a register of trail users. His love of the trail is obvious. Linda Boxx, Allegheny Trail Alliance President, surprised Mr. Sembower with the honor at the May 27th "Light at the End of the Tunnel" trail dedication ceremony in Meyersdale.

From Confluence . . .

THAT DAM RIDE/ TOUR DE CONFLUENCE

Celebrate summer's end with an overnight bike ride to Confluence with camping at the Youghiogheny River Dam Corps of Engineers Campground. The ride follows the packed limestone Great Allegheny Passage along the beautiful river valley, through small towns, historic sites, and stretches of unpopulated wooded areas. Start September 9 from either Boston (PA!) or Connellsville. Register by August 24. The \$60 registration fee includes an event T-shirt, gear transport, rest stops with energy drinks and snacks, lunch in Confluence, dinner, camping, coffee, juice, and a light snack in the morning. Entertainment and prize drawings are also planned. Or if you want a more leisurely ride, register for Tour de Confluence August 9. Post-Gazette staff writer Larry Walsh serves as ride leader. This 12-mile tour begins in Confluence at 1:30 p.m. and ends in Confluence and includes historic sites and a 4-mile round trip to nearby Harnedsville. The \$35 registration fee includes a T-shirt, rest stop, dinner, camping, coffee, juice, and a snack in the morning. Both events are sponsored by the Mon-Yough Youth Council; proceeds benefit trail support services. Info@thatdamride.org or 412/754/1100

Trail Calendar

Somerset County Fair - August 20-27, Meyersdale, www.somersetpa.net

Ohiopyle Over the Falls Festival - August 26-27, Ohiopyle, www.fallsrace.com

Music in the Mountains - September 9-10, Ohiopyle State Park, 724-329-8591

That Dam Ride/ Tour de Confluence - September 9-10, Confluence, www.thatdamride.org, (See Trailhead News for details)

Pumpkin Fest - October 6, 7, and 8, Confluence, www.visitconfluence.org