

TRAIL TRACKINGS

A Newsletter for Members of the Somerset County Rails-to-Trails Association
The Best 42 Miles on the Great Allegheny Passage!

Vol. 4, No. 2

Summer 2007

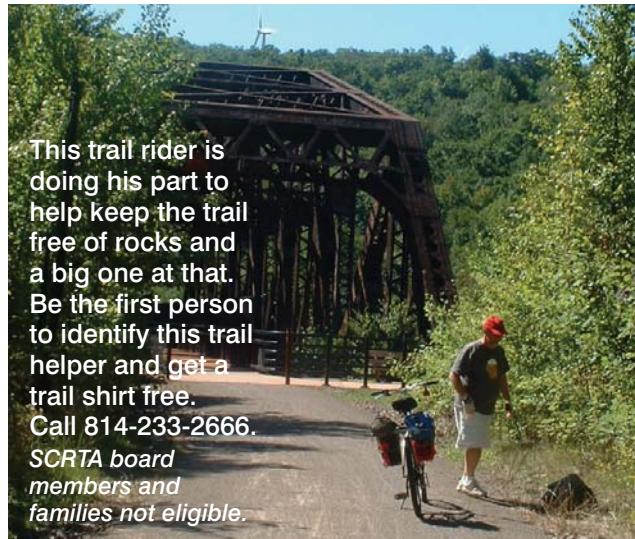


Summer Draws to a Close on the Passage . . . Signaling the Arrival of Another Beautiful Autumn

Physical Help Needed!

If you already belong to one of our groups, "Adopt-a-Trail" or "Trail Ambassador" or you're just interested in helping with the trail, please call our *24 hour trail care voice mail* at 814-445-1573 to join a "Trail Care Crew" work detail. Just leave your e-mail (preferred) or your phone number and we'll contact you when a project is in the works. You can then let us know if and how you can help.

Besides work projects, you can help the trail by removing some of the many rocks that are



This trail rider is doing his part to help keep the trail free of rocks and a big one at that. Be the first person to identify this trail helper and get a trail shirt free. Call 814-233-2666. SCRTA board members and families not eligible.

surfacing from the old railroad bed, fallen branches and other debris that are hindering mowing. Mowing the trail is a monumental task in itself, mowing down one side and up the other, let alone stopping to pick up rocks, limbs and other debris that hinder mowing. It's an 84 mile round trip and at an average speed of 2 miles per hour, not counting the time to pick up and move debris, it takes a week down and back, then it's time to start over.

Also, please call the *trail care voice mail* at 814-445-1573 to report any vandalism you see in progress or that has recently happened. It's costing membership dollars to keep up with destroyed plaques, benches, gates, etc.

A special "Thank You" to the unknown man who mows the grass along a section of trail before the Meyersdale station.



A beautiful view with the sun setting over the newly mounted Bollman Bridge, now open through the help of a Trail Care Crew.



A view seen approaching the Bollman bridge. The CSX coming down the tracks with the Meyersdale wind farm showing on the mountain.

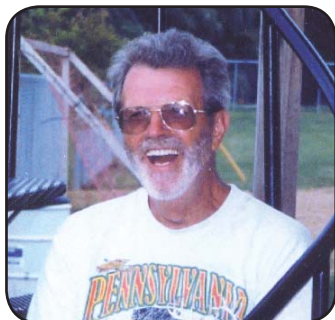
Remembering Jim Clay

Trail Enthusiast

The death of James D. Clay on June 13, 2007, stunned those who knew him as an active, physically fit, 71-year old. For weeks he had been training for a bike ride from West Newton, PA, to Washington, D.C. He was to ride with his daughter Lisa, her husband Dennis, and their 9-year-old son Clay, residents of Florida. Instead, Jim suffered cardiac arrest on June 8, a few weeks before they were to make the 300-mile journey. Passionately devoted to the trail, Jim had served as a volunteer in many capacities: Somerset County Rails-to-Trails board member and treasurer; trail liaison to the Somerset County Parks and Recreation board; avid Trail Ambassador; and hands-on worker who painted and mounted trail signs, participated on clean-up and repair crews, and watched for fallen trees or weather damage.

Jim traveled the trail with his camera, always appreciative of the trail's beauty and the flowers and wildlife that seemed to pose especially for him. He enjoyed his role as a Trail Ambassador because it gave him pause, not only to assist riders with bike trouble or offer instant mileage calculations to their destinations, but also to talk with those who came to walk or ride the trail from local neighborhoods and distant origins. Their words of appreciation for the SCRTA section of the Great Allegheny Passage, the thanks they expressed for the construction and maintenance of the trail, and the sheer pleasure showing on their faces exhilarated the man whose efforts had helped to provide their positive trail experience.

In August Jim's Florida family made the trek to D.C. in his memory. They felt his presence along the way, sensing that, in spirit, Jim did complete the ride he had anticipated. While the familiar figure on his sporty recumbent bike is gone, his legacy lives on, reflected by those who will continue to support the trail for future generations to enjoy.



Jim and his Grandson, Clay Park, at the finish of an M & M Ride in Mckeesport.

Wildflowers Along the Trail

The Great Allegheny Passage is, of course, a cycling trail. However, with its variety of native plants, some abundant, some rare, it's a great nature trail as well.

Jewelweed is probably the most common wildflower along the trail. Two species, one with thumb-sized pale yellow to nearly white flowers, the other with a smaller, bright orange flower, line the sides of the path. Both flowers have tiny hollow tubes on the back of the bloom. That little tail holds a dollop of nectar. Butterflies, humming birds and other creatures looking for a sweet energy drink are attracted to both jewelweeds. The chest-high jewelweeds grow in ubiquitous colonies that line the trail where soils are moist and neutral from the abundance of old limestone railroad ballast and now limestone trail surface.



At the other end of the wildflower abundance spectrum are a hand full of plants that

can be found only in a few places.

As the Passage winds through the Laurel Highlands it passes through different types of forest with varying geology, moisture, and light. Mountain bugbane (*Smilicina americana*) can be found in deep shaded woods at a few spots near Rockwood and sparsely populated colonies are at Fort Hill and Harnedsville.



Mountain Bugbane

Long fairy-wand spikes sparkle in early September making it easy to identify on time of the year alone. Its bloom occurs almost two months after its far more abundant cousin, common bugbane (*S. racemosa*), flowers. Other plant rarities along the Great Allegheny Passage in Somerset County include wild ageratum, buffalo-nut, and umbrella magnolia, a small tree with large out-sized leaves.

Since there are so many common wildflowers and the possibility of finding some of the Appalachian Mountains rarer wildflowers, there should be a good wildflower guide beside the water bottle and tool kit in your cycling daypack.

Paul g. Wiegman

Trail Amenities

The Rockwood Trail House and Bike Shop

Nestled right beside the Great Allegheny Passage, the Rockwood Trail House is a welcome sight to bikers and visitors who are ready for a good night's rest and a hot shower! Opened in 2000 by Debbie and Lynn Sanner, the Trail House offers an extra advantage of having Lynn's large, fully equipped bike shop next door.

Upon entering the Trail House, one can appreciate the meticulous restoration that the family has done on the 107 year old house which at one time was a bakery and then a store. The wide-open dining and living room area

is filled with antiques and quilts. An old cookstove in the dining area is connected to one of the house's most unique features — a 3-cornered chimney which is exposed throughout the 3 floors of the home. The hand-hewn beams throughout the house are from the Sanner family's barn.

The first floor of the B and B consists of the living-dining room area, separated by an Amish swing, the kitchen, one bedroom and bath, and a bright sun porch with wicker furniture. In the kitchen, with



its temperature-controlled wine refrigerator, the famous country breakfasts are prepared, focusing on locally-made country sausage, bacon, and, Somerset County maple syrup. Lynn assures his guests that the pancakes are the best around!

One unique feature of the Rockwood Trail house is its 3-tier nightly rate system: \$85 for a room with a full country breakfast; \$75 for a continental breakfast; and, \$65 for a room with no breakfast included. Another feature is the washer and dryer available for cyclists who may wish to

wash some of their clothes before continuing their trip.

Next door, through the lovely flower gardens, is Lynn's bike shop, which is open 7 days a week and is a fully-stocked shop where one can find a vast array of bike accessories, Trek rentals, snacks, and where one can have repair work done if needed.

For more information on the Rockwood Trail House or to make reservations, one may call 1-888-916-2453 or visit their web site at www.rockwoodtrailhouse.com

Trailhead News

Confluence:

Summer was in full swing in Confluence; Fall's just around the corner! Alas, the last of Confluence's summer concerts took place on July 28th as West Virginia's Déjà Vu entertained visitors with two hours of 60s and 70s hits. We hope you were able to join us. If not, October 5-7 is PumpkinFest weekend, always a big hit with its carnival food, classic car cruise, parade, games and rubber duck race down the Casselman River. The weather's still nice at the beginning of October, so hop on the bike and pay us a visit.

Fort Hill:

Brett and a Trail Care Crew have replaced the farm gates on both sides of the Fort Hill Road with a removable post in the middle, providing more room for trail users to pass through. The same is planned for both sides of the Markleton Road. Both sites were considered pinch points for cyclists.

Meyersdale:

GIFT OF LAND

ENHANCES TRAIL EXPERIENCE

The directors of SCRТА gratefully acknowledge the gift of 15.8 acres paralleling the Great Allegheny Passage in Greenville and Larimer Townships, given by Jacqueline O. Sung, New York City. Lovely Flougherty Creek flows through this wooded glen. As stated in the transfer agreement, the land will remain for perpetuity in its pristine, natural state.

According to Dennis Stahl, SCRТА vice president, "This gracious gift goes far to enhance and ensure the aesthetic quality of the trail experience in Somerset County. We especially thank Ms. Sung, and we thank others who have donated land or permitted its sale for trail construction and enjoyment."

Rockwood:

The Rockwood trailhead parking lot has been full almost every weekend this summer. Maynard Sembower, volunteer at the booth there, says he has talked to people from all parts of the country this year.

Somerset County Rails-to-Trails Association

P.O. Box 413
Somerset, PA 15501

Address Service Requested

STD. PRSRT.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Somerset, PA 15501
Permit No. 76



Did You Ride, Run, or Walk Today...It's There for You!

Rails-to-Trails Hall of Fame

Great Allegheny Passage 1st Inductee

The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy based in Washington, D.C. has honored the Great Allegheny Passage by

naming it as the first trail inducted into their national Rails-to-Trails Hall of Fame. The Great Allegheny Passage, now connected to the C & O Canal Towpath, creates a 335 mile unbroken bicycle trail

making it the longest continuous rail-trail in the country. This accomplishment is one of the factors attributing to the Hall of Fame Honor. Forty-two of these beautiful miles run through Somerset County.



SCRTA president Hank Park pictured third from left and ATA president Linda McKenna Box holding the Hall of Fame plaque.

Buy a Shirt - Support the Trail

Our trail ambassador extraordinaire, Maynard Sembower, age 98 believe it or not, volunteers most of his time, except in the winter months, in his little office located at the Rockwood trailhead. Packed with shirts for sale and a wealth of information about the trail and the railroad that used to run over it, he talks to dozens of trail visitors every weekend. He gives information, directions, advice and if they're interested, he sells them a shirt or two. This summer alone he has sold over 12 dozen.

A big "*Thank You Maynard*" for all the time, talent and hard work you have given for the good of the trail over the years. Enjoy your winter vacation, but don't forget to come back next spring!

Trail Calendar

BIG SAVAGE TUNNEL closes for winter the Friday before the third Saturday in December. This year it will be the 14th of December.

PUMPKIN FEST - October 5-7, Confluence
info@confluencepumpkinfest.org

IN MEMORIAL TO JIM CLAY

*Sadly missed by all at
Somerset County Rails-to-Trails Assoc. and
Somerset County Parks & Recreation*

Jim was a hard-working hands-on board member who believed in getting the job done and doing it right.

His family requested, at his funeral, that in lieu of flowers, a donation be made to the Somerset County Rails-to-Trails Assoc. in Jim's name. The donations will be used to build a pavilion/rest stop in the Rockwood Trailhead area. It will be very appreciated at that very busy trailhead and Jim is also a native of Rockwood.

You may send memorial donations in Jim's memory to: SCRTA, Box 413, Somerset, PA 15501

Photo by Jim Clay, 2006