

The MILEPOST

Mon/Yough Trail Council's Yough River Trail Newsletter

Editor: Terry Vota

May 2020

Volume 29, Issue 1

Due to the COVID-19 VIRUS both the Yough 'n' Roll and the Half Marathon/5K have been rescheduled.

New date for the Yough 'n' Roll – September 12, 2020

New date for Half Marathon/5K June 5, 2021

From the President

By Mark Place (412) 877-0050
mplace@johnplaceinc.com

Community Partners Needed:

Welcome to Spring and the start of the 2020 trail season. Trail users and volunteers know it is Spring as birds are singing, the trees are budding and landslides along the trail have started!

We finished 2019 strong thanks to solid financial support from our almost 500 members, corporate sponsors like PA American Water and the 4400 hours that just under 50 trail volunteers invested in trail operation and maintenance. We also give thanks to our foundation supporters like the Trail Volunteer Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation. We are grateful to **all**.

I would like to share an urgent request for more community and business partners to help maintain trail operations for our walkers, runners and bicyclists.

Do you belong to a youth, social, fraternal, church or service group that might be interested in providing a day of service on the trail this season? A group of 4, 6, 8-10 friends pitching in to help on the trail for four hours or all day can make a huge difference. We can supply the projects, supplies, tools and planning for projects of almost any size. We're able to execute these projects on a weekday or during our regular Saturday volunteer sessions. Thanks to our Eagle Scout service project last year we have a much better looking and more functional storage container at the campground. Thanks to support from the Elizabeth Township Rotary

Club and a group of vocational students, we have a great covered picnic bench near MM 124.5.



Does your employer support community service days?

We have wonderful support from PA American Water and the employees working out of the Elizabeth Distribution Center. For many years a group of dedicated volunteers has pitched in to assist with many

different projects. What is really big, is that many years they have been able to bring not only their construction experience but also a backhoe and a dump truck. These skilled professionals with modern equipment make short work of projects that would take our volunteers using our 40 year old 5 ton dump truck and our 50 year old backhoe much longer to complete. Wait.... did I really just read they are using 40-50 year old equipment? Yes, you did! Except for our beautiful 2017 Ford dump truck that was acquired with support from the Trail Volunteer Fund, all of our equipment is from the 60's to the early 90's.

If you work for a paving, mechanical, electrical, or pipeline contractor that might support a community service day and allow company resources to be used even one day can make a huge difference on the trail.

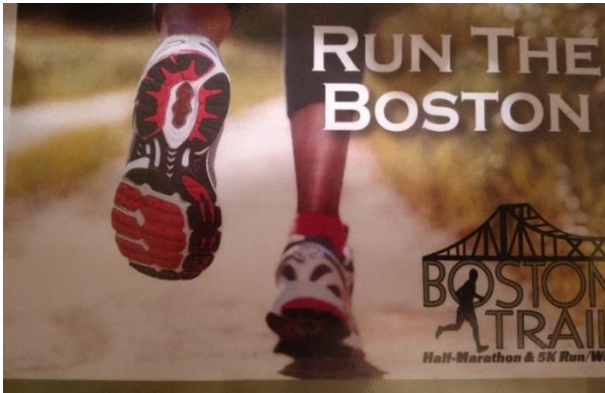
If you have an idea for a project or day of service, please contact me or any of us that you see along the trail. Again, thank you for your support.

Save the Date

By Kathie Fawcett

The new rescheduled date is:
Saturday, June 5, 2021

Boston Trail Half Marathon & 5K Run/Walk



We are always looking for volunteers to help with setting up, parking cars and cleaning up after the race.

100% of the proceeds help in the maintaining and improving the Boston trail. Staffed by volunteers who work to keep the trail looking its very best. Please come and help support this important fundraiser so that we can continue in making this trail the best it can be.

To register, go to [RUNSIGNUP.COM](https://runsignup.com) and for more information, go to [THEBOSTONTRAIL.COM](https://thebostontrail.com)

Save the Date

By Kathy Banfield

Saturday, September 12, 2020
Yough 'n' Roll / Trail Appreciation Day

[Please check our website for any schedule updates!](#)

The twenty-eighth annual Yough 'n' Roll will be held on the morning of September 12th, 2020. The ride at your own pace event will take place along the Youghiogheny River Trail portion of the Great Allegheny Passage from Boston, PA to Smithton, PA. Come and join us to support your trail volunteers and enjoy a ride on the trail! This ride continues to be one of Mon/Yough Trail Council's most successful fundraising events to support our mission of sustaining operation of the trail.

The event consists of a choice of a 40-mile ride to Smithton and return or a 20-mile ride to Sutersville and return. Rest stops are manned by MYTC volunteers. Pre-register to receive an event T-shirt.

Registration brochures will be mailed to past participants. Brochures will also be available on the website. Walk-ups are welcome but are not guaranteed an event T-shirt. So please come join us on September 12th and enjoy a morning on our beautiful trail.

We will also be celebrating Trail Appreciation Day on September 12 from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Free hot dogs, snacks and refreshments will be served at the Boston Trailhead. Volunteers will staff the Visitor Center which is stocked with a variety of shirts and trail information.



We are planning some activities for children and their families. There will be a "Wheel of Fortune" bicycle wheel with prizes, balloon animals, free coloring pages and information

booklets, crafts, information on bike safety and more.

Everyone is welcome.

Boston Visitor Center

By Marei Burnfield

Visitor Center Chatter!

We are anxious to get the 2020 trail season underway.

Due to the COVID-19 Virus, opening day for the Visitor Center has not been set!

Opening day and hours will be announced via our Facebook page and on our website.

Keep in mind we are staffed by a generous group of volunteers. If you are interested in meeting, greeting and assisting folks from all over the world, consider volunteering with us for a few hours a week or month. We are excited to announce that we will again be collecting old, used, or new children's bikes this season. They will, in turn, be donated to the Red Lantern Bike Shop in Braddock, PA. The bikes will be refurbished by the volunteers at the bike shop and redistributed back into the community.

Please contact Marei Burnfield at 724.972.2278 if you are interested in volunteering at the center. Also, please contact Marei to make arrangements before dropping off a bike donation.

If you have any questions, feel free to call.

See you along the trail!

Trail riders continue to report that the Boston Visitor Center has the "best variety of shirts on the trail".

Help Wanted-Pick your own hours

By Jeff Pavetti

As you may know, MYTC proudly maintains 15 miles of the Great Allegheny Passage on a 100% Volunteer basis. This Spring, my wife Dianne and I will begin our 4th year of volunteering at the Visitor's Center in Boston. We can't begin to tell you how many riders from across the USA and around the world comment about the fine condition of our Trail. Most visitors are amazed (and inspired) to learn that our Trail organization is 100 % volunteer.

This season, the MYTC is recruiting new volunteers to adopt a mile or two of the Trail for litter pickup and removal. You can set your own schedule---we only ask

that you commit to walk your designated area at least once a month (from April to October) to remove litter at your convenience.

Would you like to learn more or sign up for this project? If so, please contact us at jeffpavetti@gmail.com or call 724-527-1866.

When we volunteer, we not only **give**, but we also **gain**.

We promise that you will gain the satisfaction of a job well done in maintaining our world class Trail in world class condition.

MYTC Acquires Utility Vehicle

By Tim Banfield

MYTC is benefiting again from another donation by the Trail Volunteer Fund of the Pittsburgh Foundation in 2020. In January, the fund awarded a grant of \$4,500 to cover the purchase of a utility vehicle for use by MYTC volunteers on the trail.

Thanks to a referral by Malcom Sias of Westmoreland County Parks & Recreation and the Regional Trail Corp., MYTC had opportunity to acquire a used utility vehicle coming off a lease. A quick inquiry to the Trail Volunteer Fund of the Pittsburgh Foundation resulted in a favorable response to facilitate taking advantage of this opportunity on short notice.

In the accompanying photo, MYTC volunteers welcome the delivery of the utility vehicle by Mark Dargay of E. H. Griffith Inc. Mark also provided a quick orientation and overview of the utility vehicle features. The utility vehicle has already been prepped and is in use for quick response on the trail to perform maintenance duties and plans are to use it at fundraising events as well.



Trail Maintenance Update

By Tim Banfield

AmerICANs in Action on Trail thanks to PA-American Water Co.

On Friday, October 18, seven employees from Pennsylvania American Water Company (PAWC), based out of their Operations Center in Elizabeth, continued what has become an annual event, by assisting Mon/Yough Trail Council with a maintenance project on the trail for AmerICANs in Action month.

With the help of the PAWC crew of seven and use of a PAWC back hoe and dump truck, a slide was cleared from the drainage ditch near Sutersville and numerous fallen trees were also removed from along the trail.

Employees that participated from PAWC were Conor Murphy, Ryan Mock, Rich Boyles, Tom Yeager, Jason Yowonske, Heather Dubose, and Marei Burnfield. Marei Burnfield, who serves on MYTC's Board of Directors and works for Pennsylvania American Water Company coordinated the day's activities with MYTC's Trail Maintenance volunteers, including Greg Farrar, Rich Kundman and Tim Banfield, who also helped.



MYTC really appreciates the effort put forth by the group from the water company in assisting with this important maintenance needed on the trail. Altogether, nearly 50 volunteer hours were spent on the project. We want to thank Marei Burnfield in particular, MYTC member and volunteer, for initiating this project.

Regular Work Sessions



MYTC holds regular work sessions during good weather on **Saturday, meeting at 8:00 AM**, at the end of Locust Grove Road along the trail in Greenock, about 2 miles upriver from the Boston Bridge.

Volunteers are also needed to help with the newsletter, serve on committees and monitor the trails.

Membership News

New Members

Charles Blenko, pay pal
Jo Anne and Richard Carl
John and Christine Considine, Poland, Ohio
Frank and Virginia Daube, Elizabeth
Ms. Mary Denison, Pittsburgh
Barbara Furgiuele, Monongahela
Bill and Bev Harchelroad, Elizabeth
Andrew Hromoko, Pittsburgh
Lorraine Hrubovcak and Richard McCauley, Greenock
Ann D. Kelton and Jeffrey A. Hritz, Pittsburgh
Cheryl Kocsis, Duquesne
Gerard Maryak, North Huntingdon
Allison McGaughey, North Huntingdon
Patty L. Miller and Brian D. Chester, McKeesport
William Noonan, Pittsburgh
Mary Ann Petersen, McKeesport
Connie Petras, North Huntingdon
Tom and Virginai Popovic, Belle Vernon
Charles and Carol Reitmeyer, Pittsburgh
Darren Sabo, Elizabeth
Thomas Trout, Glassport
Patricia Zupanc, Elizabeth

We are so glad to have you on board. Rich and I are the new co-chairs of the Membership Committee. Rich has done this before, but I am new to it by marriage! We have been busy organizing new members and renewals- so grateful for all of your trail support.

Every contribution makes a difference.

Big thanks to our predecessor, Eileen Lenart. We really appreciate the wonderful job you did!

Looking ahead, please be sure that we have **both** your home address and email address so that we can get the Milepost newsletter to you. We are hoping to email the newsletter to folks who are interested in this format. See you on the trail!!

Candace and Rich



Ghost Town: Stringtown

Submitted by Bob Cupp

Reprinted and edited from the April 1, 1938 Charleroi Mail Newspaper, this article provides a glimpse of life in a remote town that has long since passed into history along the Yough River Trail in Elizabeth Township near Dravo Cemetery (between YRT Mileposts 122 and 123).

In the steep sided valley of the Youghiogheny River near Buena Vista rests a little village of five houses, one practically fallen down, that the world has forgotten. You can't get to it by automobile. It lies hidden from view over a hill from a recently improved, but unnamed, WPA road that leads from the Buena Vista-Lovedale Hollow Road, near Buena Vista, to the P&LE Railroad tracks that run up the Youghiogheny River.

The only entrance to Stringtown is the last side road off a WPA Road, about one half mile above an old cemetery near the river. You have to stop your car and walk a narrow, rutted country lane into the village. As you walk down the lane and around the curve, a weather worn railroad sign, in big letters, reads "Stringtown."

Only One Street

Once this little village was strung out about one-half a mile toward Buena Vista. It got its name Stringtown because the houses were extended in a line and there was only one street. It bordered the tracks of the P&LE Railroad. That was during the time when coal was the undisputed King in the valley, and riverboats and barges navigated the Youghiogheny. It was before, as the old timers say, "the dams went out." The dams that made the river navigable were allowed to fall into disrepair, and finally, they were closed and allowed to decay.

Today, among the residents in Stringtown, is Dominic Boves-72, and his wife, Catherine-74. They were among the hundreds who came when coal mining boomed.

Was "rich" Then

Mr. Boves knew what it meant to earn \$7 a day, working 10 and 12 hours a day in the deep, cold pits of the district. He didn't mind then. He was "rich." He had plenty to eat and plenty of work to keep him busy.

"Those days are done," he said simply. "Today I got five chickens, three rabbits and a little garden. I try to keep going. Sometimes it is hard. Everything is dead now, even the houses. It is hard to keep them together."

"But times weren't always that way in Stringtown," he added. Once he and his wife, Catherine, even kept boarders and Mr. Boves ran a ferry across the river to Shaner to the two nearest saloons.

Stringtown was established before 1850 when a number of farms were started in the district. During the Civil War, coal mining began. But it wasn't until the dams were put in the Youghiogheny and the railroads sent spur lines, that mining began in earnest.

Awaited High Water

"The coal would be loaded into barges and if it was in the summer, it would have to remain there until the river rose before being shipped," Mr. Boves recalled. Life in Stringtown was geared to the long hours of work in the district mines. Stringtown was different from the average mining town. There were no company houses. The miners homes had belonged to the residents, who homesteaded in the district before the mining boom.



The mining companies built their domino-like houses across the river at Shaner or up the Youghiogheny near the mines.

Burned Down

"The old brick Presbyterian Church burned down about 16 or 17 years ago," he recalled. "I don't think they had enough money to rebuild it because they didn't even talk about it. Any way it was just left a pile of ruins. The Catholics always went to the church at Buena Vista or Industry, he added.

The high bluffs of the Youghiogheny River Valley tower over this forgotten "ghost" town of the district. Not far from the town, the steel towers of cross-country high tension power lines pass; they mark the world of power and speed that has left Stringtown behind, forgotten.

The worn railroad sign is the last vestige of the town's existence. When it falls, only the four unpainted blackened houses will remain. They too, in time, will decay, and the trees, grass and shrubs of the valley will leave no trace of the village that once prospered.

Note: Be careful exploring this area; there can be unstable old wells and mine entrances.

Coke Ovens along MYTC Yough River Trail?

This is a quiz for local history buffs.

By Terry Vota

Most people are aware of coke ovens in Western Pennsylvania. The large, modern US Steel Clairton Coke Works is in the news regularly. Historically, many coal mines in the area led to the development of coke ovens (typically the “beehive” type) that would take the coal, heat and purify it to make coke. Coke was used as cleaner fuel for hot air blast furnaces. The 1st blast furnace thought to be built west of the Alleghenies was Alliance Blast Furnace, near Perryopolis. Supplying this furnace, large batteries of coke ovens were along the Youghiogheny River basin in Connellsville and Star Junction. Remnants can be seen along Route 51 just South of Perryopolis.

Others are along the GAP near Vanderbilt and Dawson. Locals report that during the Depression, out-of-work miners made homes out of these abandoned structures and later they were used as animal “pens”.

Now; back to the quiz – there was a small battery of



“beehive” coke ovens along **our** MYTC Section of the trail between McKeesport and Smithdale!



But where?

There are some remnants remaining



between the trail and the river but you really have to know where to look! It has been almost 100 years and since

the ovens were in a flood plain, the “beehive” roofs have all collapsed.

Photos from coalandcoke.blogspot.com

“Hint”; Youghiogheny Coke Works, founded by Carnegie Brothers, ran this Coke Oven Battery from the 1890’s to the 1920’s. In the photo above, the brick is molded with BFB Co; thought to be Boston Fire Brick Company of Boston, MA.

But, in this time era, the Boston Brick Company, down river only a few miles, in Boston, PA, was in full production!

Another “hint”; one of the largest coal mines in the area was Warden Mine, in the Douglas Run area between Smithdale and Blythedale, with direct access to these ovens.

Ok, Ok - the answer – the remnants are about 100 yards North of MP 118 between the Sutersville Bridge and Blythedale; about 50 feet off the trail toward the river.

The Allegheny County Website shows this property is owned by US Steel.

The remnants are best discovered in the very early Spring or Winter. In the Summer and Fall, the bricks and any remaining roof arch sections are covered with vegetation.



Social media sites for Mon/Yough Trail.



Facebook

WebPage-www.thebostontrail.com

Council Directory

Mission Statement

In 1991, the Mon/Yough Trail Council (MYTC) was founded to promote the rail corridor conversion to public access trails along the Youghiogheny River. Today, MYTC remains a non-profit, 501(c)3, all volunteer Pennsylvania corporation dedicated to sustaining trail maintenance and operations in order to encourage multi-purpose recreational use.

2020 Officers

President

Mark Place

Vice President

John Eisenbarth

Treasurer

Adrian Marini

Secretary

Mary Reid

Directors

2018 - 2020

Cathy Bartley
Marei Burnfield
Mary Reid
Charlie Smith

2019 - 2021

Sarah Helzlsouer
Mark Place
Linda Vota
Terry Vota

2020-2022

Tim Banfield
John Eisenbarth
Kathie Fawcett
Rich Kundman
Adrian Marini

Meetings

You are welcome to attend informative monthly meetings, held **6:30 pm, the second Thursday** of each month at the **Greenock Fire Hall**, Elizabeth Township.

Contact us:

MYTC

P.O. Box 14
McKeesport, PA 15135

www.TheBostonTrail.com

Mission

To do our part to enhance the enjoyment of all who are, and will, have the experience of traveling the Rails-to-Trails journey by promoting and performing the maintenance, repairs, restoration and beautification of our portion of the Great Allegheny Passage.

The Milepost is published by the Mon/Yough Trail Council with the support of the RTC. Articles published include Council activities, trail development, local and regional information, and other items of related interest. The opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the authors and may not represent the official positions of the Council. Reprint of the publication prohibited without express consent of the originating author and/or the Milepost. Copyright 2005. All rights reserved.

Membership Application

Yes, I want to be a member of the
Mon/Yough Trail Council

Membership Level	Contribution
------------------	--------------

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> General | \$20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associate | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate | \$250 |

☐ Please check here if renewal

In addition, I would like to contribute
\$_____ to the MYTC.

Please print:

Name_____

Address_____

Home Phone _____

Cell Phone _____

Email _____

Age ____ Occupation_____

Signature_____

Required

____I would like to be contacted to volunteer.

____I would like to receive a membership card.

Please make checks payable to and
mail to:

MYTC Membership

P.O. Box 14

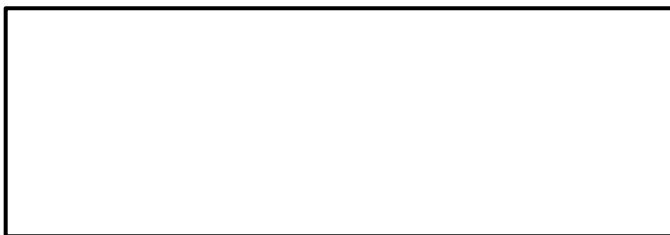
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 Yough River Trail Newsletter*

*The following businesses have generously supported the Mon/Yough Trail Council.
 Please show them your thanks by patronizing their businesses.*

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