

# Rail-Trail News

The Rail-Trail Council of Northeast Pennsylvania is dedicated to renewing Northeast Pennsylvania's historic pathways as recreational trails for all to enjoy.

## NEW MEMBERS—WELCOME!

John G. Thomas, Dickson City, PA  
 Debbie & Mike Barkley, Dunmore, PA  
 Ray Zrebiec, Browndale, PA  
 Vincent Pepe, Exeter, PA  
 Herb Grayek, Olyphant, PA  
 David L. Baker, Montrose, PA  
 Gene Long, Clarks Summit, PA  
 Jerry Schwarztrauber, Archbald, PA  
 Tim Holleran, Dunmore, PA  
 Annette Brown, Pleasant Mount, PA  
 Vic & Sharon Milani, Dickson City, PA  
 Bob Wywoda, Dupont, PA  
 Judith Arrison, Lake Ariel, PA  
 Lou Rosetti, Archbald, PA  
 Jose R. Gonzalez, Leonia, NJ  
 David L. Hunt, Union Dale, PA

## RENEWING MEMBERS

Paul & Pauline Kozik, Roaring Brook Twp., PA  
 William & Barbara Connor, Union Dale, PA  
 Fell Township Renaissance, Simpson, PA  
 William Polney, Wapwallopen, PA  
 Torunn Rhodes, Hanover, NH  
 Audrey Kase, Nicholson, PA  
 Peter Macheska, Simpson, PA  
 Marge & George Balunas, Herrick Center, PA  
 Jack Fries, Vandling, PA  
 David Heim, Hawley, PA  
 Beth Gallagher, Scranton, PA  
 Fran & Deb Barrett, Chester Springs, PA  
 Bruce & Faye Reed, Muir, PA  
 Dennis Stedenfeld, Thompson, PA  
 Ken & Anne Swartz, Union Dale, PA  
 Richard & Ann Marie Utegg, Vandling, PA  
 Mary Jo Hart, Brackney, PA  
 Steve & Meg Suraci, Union Dale, PA  
 Tom DeMatteo, Moscow, PA  
 Jacqueline & Raymond Thiem, Union Dale, PA  
 Ben Terry, Pleasant Mount, PA  
 Gail Mardfin, Bernardsville, NJ  
 Fritz & JoAnn Hall, Carbondale, PA  
 John Bruns, Susquehanna, PA  
 Jim Kasten, Hallstead, PA  
 Richard H. Lane, Woodbridge, NJ  
 Lenore Tonkin, Carbondale, PA  
 Frank & Marney Roia, Thompson, PA  
 Robert Dietz, Forest City, PA  
 Lyle & Marge Cunningham, South Gibson, PA



## D&H Distance Run a Great Success

The first benefit run on the D&H brought 227 runners and walkers to the starting line in Forest City...many more than expected for the 13.1 mile distance. AND 92 volunteers! The overwhelming support of the community was a major part of the event's over-whelming success. They included Fire, Police and Emergency Medical personnel from four municipalities; in addition, there were local people handling registration and timing, directing traffic, manning water stops, handling results, and many, many other tasks.

As you know, this was the first running event organized by the Council. Our goals were to raise awareness of the trail's existence and its easy access, and to raise money for resurfacing another 10 miles of trail from Union Dale to Thompson.

The combined efforts of all these people resulted in an event that left participants feeling that they were genuinely welcome, treated cordially and were part of a well-organized, professionally run event. Without the support of the residents and businesses of the Greater Forest City area, none of this could have happened. For that support, we are deeply grateful.

We have received a great deal of encouragement to hold another half marathon. Based on this year's success, we hope to do that.

Thanks to our sponsors: Chesapeake Energy, Leeward Construction, Adams Cable, United Way of Susquehanna County, Endless Mountain Visitors Bureau, Comprehensive Physical Therapy, Vitamin Water, Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority, Brophy Marketing Solutions, Flying Chickens Graphic Design, and Hill View, Inc.

Thanks to Supporters and Volunteers: NEP Sno-Trails, Greater Forest City Industries, Barnes-Kasson Hospital, Mountain View Garden Club, St. Pius Youth Group, Forest City Girls Basketball, Forest City Police, Ambulance and Fire Departments, Clifford Township Fire and Emergency personnel, Union Dale Fire and Police, Pleasant Mount Emergency Services, Cottage Hose Ambulance, Elk Mountain Ski Patrol, Hubbard Bike Group, Elk Mountain Ski Resort, NEPA Runner.com, Forest City Cross County Team and coaches Gene Corey and Don Teague AND all the volunteers!

For results see NEPA Runner.com or nepa-rail-trails.org. Pictures can be seen at elkmtarea.com in the photo gallery or cliffordfire.com on the home page.

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OCTOBER 23

Rail-Trail Dinner/Meeting,  
 6/7 PM. The Beacon, Route  
 171 Union Dale

NOVEMBER 20

Rail-Trail Dinner/Meeting,  
 6/7 PM. Frank's Place,  
 Jefferson Street, Simpson

NOVEMBER 22

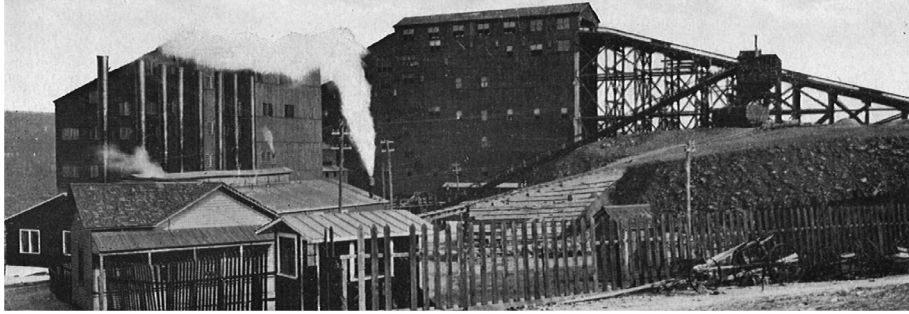
Trail Tender Kick-off Program  
 2 PM. Union Dale Methodist  
 Church Hall, just off Route 171.  
 (See article on page 3.)

DECEMBER 18

Rail-Trail Christmas Dinner  
 Party 6 PM. Stonebridge Inn.  
 Reservations required through  
 RT office.

# The Case of the Missing Breakers

**Forest City's Erie Breaker:** Foundation ruins of this giant lie alongside the D&H Trail just north of the Forest City trail access parking area. This photo, probably taken in the 1920's, was shot from what is now Higgins Street just north of its intersection with South Street.



By Mark C. Walsh

The Rail-Trail Council is looking for a few good archaeologists. Recently, in this space, we ventured (lightly) into of geology. Nobody complained, so this time, archaeology! And you can help! Here's how: First, get yourself a leather jacket and one of those Indiana Jones hats. Both are available online. If you like, you can style yourself as Northeast Pennsylvania Rail-Trail Jones, or perhaps just Pennsylvania Jones. Then, set out along our trails to help us find some coal breakers.

Two of the railroads that gave birth to our trail system were primarily coal carriers; these were the D&H and the NYO&W. The other of our trio of rail lines, the Erie, was primarily a general freight hauler, but it, like its smaller cousins, also got in on the anthracite act. The business of hard coal was a multimillion-dollar industry having three equally important parts. The first of these was, of course, the mines. The third was the railroads that hauled the coal to market. In between came the linchpins of the industry, the breakers. In the heyday of hard coal, there were hundreds of them in coal country, almost always located alongside the rail routes.

The breakers were coal-processing plants. To see and hear one at work was an experience never to be forgotten. The breakers were huge; in the towns along our trails, they always dwarfed the next-largest structures. The central processing buildings were typically ten or more stories high; coal came to them in small mine cars on narrow-gauge rails, in early days hauled by mules, then later by small steam engines called "lokies."

The reason for the height of the breakers was that the mine cars discharged their loads onto conveyors, which in turn hauled their cargo up, up and up, so that after the climb, gravity did some of the work of breaking, sorting and cleaning the coal as it shook, rattled and rolled downward to be loaded, at the bottom, into railroad cars.

The breakers were assembled in Tinkertoy fashion, but on a giant scale. Using 12 inch by 12 inch creosote-treated posts and beams bolted at the joints with steel plates, they could be built in weeks rather than the months it took to erect conventional stone and steel structures. Clad in wooden planking (in later years, corrugated sheet metal) they invariably had many windows to let in a bit of light, although once installed, the windows were never washed. To do so would have been pointless. The inside of a breaker was dusty, grimy, smoky (black lung disease, anyone?) and downright dangerous. Steam engines (later, large direct current electric motors, usually drawing power from on-campus steam-fired powerhouses), ran the assortment of crushers and separators that individually were loud enough to loosen one's dental work and collectively produced a din not unlike that of cannonade. Written descriptions of the breakers often use the word "looming." Only on Halloween did the breakers look right, for they were, in a sense, right out of Frankenstein.

Coal came to the breakers in large chunks weighing, typically, twenty pounds and up. Although miners took care to avoid putting anything other than anthracite into the cars (most detritus was simply left in the

mines), some rock, slate, and plain old dirt invariably made it to the breakers and had to be separated from the coal. Earlier breakers were so-called dry processors, but in time the wet breaker evolved. In it, water was used not only in cleaning but also in sorting. Coal is a lot lighter than rock, and the system "floated" coal off. The process was a crude one; much actual coal went out with the bathwater. This process gave Forest City, to use just one example, the eyesore that has been inaccurately dubbed "Yucca Flats;" the culm in Yucca Flats got there by being floated into place. (The real Yucca Flats is in the Nevada desert, and as such is a rather clean place.)

The breakers are gone now, their ghostly groans forever silent. Their simple construction made them easy to dismantle. However, some concrete foundation walls or pillars usually remain.

Thanks to Curator John Fielding of the Anthracite Heritage Museum in Scranton, we gained access to archival records published by the Commonwealth. They show the following breakers, from north to south, along the D&H trail: *North Railroad Street* (Forest City), *Clifford* (Forest City), *Forest City culm washer*, *Forest City breaker* (a/k/a Erie Breaker), and *Clinton* (Vandling, or, more properly, Clinton Township). Additionally, these breakers were sited on the O&W trace: *Northeast* (Clinton Twp.) *Northwest* (Fell Twp.) The Northwest Breaker, although serviced by the O&W, was actually located west of the D&H, and was reached by a spur line that crossed the Lackawanna and appears to have served the Richmondale Breaker and several smaller collieries. To this list we must add two breakers of uncertain locations: *Stillwater* and *Clinton Falls*.

Archaeologists wanted! We invite you to e-mail us ([tccrail@epix.net](mailto:tccrail@epix.net)) with any information you may have on the whereabouts of these breakers. We'll be happy to supply exactly what we know about the possible locations of our missing breakers. Then, put on your Pennsylvania Jones hats and head for the trail. Help us find these important bits of our history!

## High School Senior Completes Trail Project

Jackie Smith, of Forest City Regional High School, a trail enthusiast, chose to restore some of the signage along the trail in Forest City, as her senior project. All high school students must complete a community service project before graduation. Signs that interpreted the coal mining and railroad's influence on the area where damaged by vandalism. So, Jackie made and sold Welsh cookies to raise money to repair, restore and replace the signage along the D&H. Signs pedestals were repaired and painted; new signs were attached if needed. Signs were installed so that trail visitors know when they are crossing the Lackawanna River on each of the three decked railroad bridges in the Forest City area. Other signs alert trail users about acid mine drainage and see the outfalls along the trail. An old railroad drainage flume, which most trail users pass by, is now signed. You can also read about the bridge abutments on the trail, which held a bridge connecting a mine to a breaker. A riverbank restoration project is also interpreted on a freshly painted and restored platform. Thanks to Jackie, the history of the Forest City area is revisited.



*"We must preserve what the past has said for itself,  
and say for ourselves what shall be true for the future"*  
—John Ruskin

## Trail Tenders Workshop Set for November

A Trail Tenders workshop will be held Saturday November 22nd from 2-4 PM at the Union Dale Methodist Church Hall. All are invited to attend and learn what is needed of volunteers on D&H Rail-Trail. "Trail Tenders" will inspect a chosen trail section at least four times a year, filling out a simple chart. Volunteers will perform simple maintenance work, as branch cleanup, ditch and culvert inspection and cleanout, overhanging branch trimming, raking around the access gates, posting signs, etc. If a larger project needs to be done, the office or appropriate person will be called, as for the removal of a fallen tree or a project that requires large equipment. Trail tenders will also be asked to be ambassadors for the trail—giving out trail maps, answering trail related questions, giving directions, etc. Volunteers for the same trail area can share duties and decide on a schedule that works for the group. The group can also plan more involved projects if needed or hold activities on their section of trail. All Trail Tenders will receive a shirt indicating their position as a trail volunteer. They will also be instructed on a computer program to keep the work and projects documented and as a way to keep in touch with all the Trail Tenders.

## Visit the Tree Trail

A tree trail has been completed in the area of the Forest City Trailhead and north on the trail. Trees planted include 42 bareroot, 28 balled & burlaped and 28 shrubs. The tree-planting project was made possible by a grant from the Northeast Pennsylvania Urban and Community Forestry program. The Lackawanna Sewer Basin Authority assisted with providing matching funds for trees, as many trees along the trail were removed with the installation of a new sewerline. The project began with a memorial oaks planting honoring our fallen servicemen from the area. The oaks are planted along Commerce Boulevard leading into the Greater Forest City Industrial Park and the D&H trailhead. Volunteers from the Hubbard Bicycle Group and local rail-trail members assisted with the planting and also gave donations. Much assistance was received from the Mountain View Garden Club, and a special thanks go to Bob Breuche who made the wooden posts, attaching the tree ID tags.

Trees are labeled with their common and scientific name on wooden posts in the ground. Labels can be seen on 53 different species of trees (existing and newly planted), and a few shrubs. Even the only patch of poison ivy found is labeled. An additional 12 trees have only numbers, so that tree enthusiasts can identify the trees, then go to the rail-trail website for confirmation of their ID. Teachers are encouraged to bring their students out to the trail for an educational walk. A map of the tree trail is being developed that will also include more trees species information. All tree trail materials will be found at [nepa-rail-trails.org](http://nepa-rail-trails.org)

### Membership Renewal Form

Please renew! The date on the mailing label on the reverse indicates when your membership expires.

- |                                                  |                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime/Founding \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> I am available for trail cleanups.                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron/Sponsor \$250    | <input type="checkbox"/> Call me to discuss a corporate donation.                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Club/Organization \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Send me a <b>new</b> RTC brochure.                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25             |                                                                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15         |                                                                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior/Student \$10     | <input type="checkbox"/> I am interested in finding out more about the 'Trail Tender' program. |

NAME _____	PHONE NUMBER _____
STREET ADDRESS _____	E-MAIL ADDRESS _____
CITY _____	STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please update your address here if necessary. Make checks payable to **Rail-Trail Council of Northeast PA**  
P.O. Box 123, Forest City, PA 18421-0123 Phone: 570-785-7245 E mail: [tccrail@epix.net](mailto:tccrail@epix.net)

## RENEWING MEMBERS, CONTINUED

Irene Jankowski, Scranton, PA  
James & Gloria Ross, Clarks Summit, PA  
William & Romayne Kerl, Simpson, PA  
Thomas J Mizianty, Waymart, PA  
James Hill, Waymart, PA  
William Culnane, Susquehanna, PA  
Alfred & Rose DeFeo, Starlight, PA  
Ed Michalski, Archbald, PA  
Ed Taylor, Westbrook, ME  
Ken & Lyn Potts, Fort Washington, PA  
Gerry Beck, Southampton, PA  
Carl & Mary Pucul, Vandling, PA  
Donna Caputo, Clifford, PA  
Mickey & Judy Langsfeld, Meadowbrook, PA  
Ellie & Pete Axford, Scranton, PA  
Mike & Paula Freundlich, Staten Island, NY  
John, Melissa, & Susan Short, Waymart, PA  
Kathy Perry, Hop Bottom, PA  
Charles Culnane, Wilmington, DE  
Mike & Janet Bischak, Nutley, NJ  
John J. Quinn, Randolph, NJ  
Bill & Barb Feduchak, Blakely, PA  
Matthew & Rachel Swierzewski, Sellersville, PA  
M/M Robert Jacoby, Philadelphia, PA  
Frank Currier, Keyport, NJ  
Carole Motsko, Thompson, PA  
Steven & Cindy Detwiler, Susquehanna, PA  
Raymond & Marjory Brown, Thompson, PA  
Tri-County Sportman's Association, Simpson/  
Forest City, PA  
Richard & Marie Cochrane, Clarks Summit, PA  
Bob & Angel Marx, Union Dale, PA  
Anne Holmes, Shavertown, PA  
Jon Villaume, Narbeth, PA  
Kathy & Bob Shostek, Union Dale, PA  
K. David & Heather Elgena, Landenberg, PA  
Todd Malkin, Fair Lawn, NJ  
Bonnie & Joe Lundy, Union Dale, PA

## DONATIONS

*In honor of the wedding of L.P. Frieder, III and  
Amanda Grace VonRudenburg:*  
Gentex Direct Reports  
Elaine Malsch

Rail-Trail Council of Northeast PA  
P.O. Box 123  
Forest City PA 18421-0123  
tccrail@epix.net  
[www.nepa-rail-trails.org](http://www.nepa-rail-trails.org)

# Trail Construction Update

- We are finally 'back on track' after having to wait for the reissuing of our environmental clearance—needed for any state or federally funded project. The construction documents for the next ten miles from Herrick Center to Thompson are again under revision by our engineers. We hope they will be reviewed over the winter by PADOT and then go to the bid process.
- Trail and riverbank restoration in the northern section of trail in Brandt along the Starrucca Creek has begun. A huge washout that closed down the trail is being addressed with a small grant from the Northeast Rails to Trails Conservancy, Harrisburg. The Council is again partnering with the NEP Sno-Trails to complete this project before winter.
- Trail mowing along the resurfaced section of trail from Forest City to Herrick Center was greatly appreciated by trail users. Other sections of trail were also brush-hogged and mowed for a more spacious look.

## Attention Snowmobilers

Send in your snowmobile registration form before November 1 for a pre-season discount. See [www.nepsnotrails.org](http://www.nepsnotrails.org)



## Ultramarathon Held on Trail

A 100-mile run called the Viaduct Ultra was held in August on the northern section of the D&H Rail-Trail. The free event for long distance runners, now in its second year, started in Lanesboro at the Starrucca Viaduct. Runners ran south to Thompson and back for the first 25-mile leg. Some runners completed 25, 50 and the ultra 100! Results and more information can be found at [http://www.geocities.com/viaduct\\_trail\\_ultramarathon/](http://www.geocities.com/viaduct_trail_ultramarathon/)

## GPS Data Collected on Trail

The National Rails to Trails Conservancy spent the summer biking on all the local rail-trails gathering GPS data. The D&H, the O&W, the Endless Mountains Trail and the rail-trails through the valley into Scranton now all have the data needed to put together concise maps. See [traillink.com](http://traillink.com) and pledge 'to burn calories not carbon.'

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