

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.

LIFETIME MEMBERS

Brian & Melissa Kaufman, Throop, PA
 Kirk & Helen Newsom, Union Dale, PA

NEW MEMBERS

Mary Butler, Little Meadows, PA
 Karen & Robert Dinning, Clarks Summit, PA
 Steve & Linda Griffiths, Union Dale, PA
 Joanie & Bob Hall, Haverford, PA
 Adam Henning, Union Dale, PA
 Beth Holmes, Carbondale, PA
 James Kulp, Lancaster, PA
 David Lemon, Beacon, NY
 Kathleen Maier, Nicholson, PA
 Jim Salamas, Forest City, PA
 Sophie Urbas, Forest City, PA
 Eugene Zaverl, Browndale, PA

RENEWING MEMBERS

John Bauer, Rose Valley, PA
 Dorrance & Susan Belin, Waverly, PA
 Peter & Marian Borick, Herrick Center, PA
 Mel & Judy Borosky, Carbondale, PA
 Martha & James Bralla, Susquehanna, PA
 George Brown, Pittston, PA
 Keith & Theresa Buhl, Rahway, NJ
 John Burkhardt, Pottstown, PA
 Robert Burshnick, Forest City, PA
 David Buter, Vandling, PA
 Donna Caputo, Clifford, PA
 Ann & Joe Cherney, Starlight, PA
 Alphonse Chesnick, Kearny, NJ
 Thomas & Carol Chesnick, Vandling, PA
 Tom & Kathy Chesnick, Carbondale, PA
 William & Barbara Connor, Union Dale, PA
 Frank Currier, Keyport, NJ
 Ruth Davis, Susquehanna, PA
 John & Lisa Demark, Vandling, PA
 Mark Dorish, Simpson, PA
 Christopher Egolf, Wayne, PA
 Dennis Favello, Union Dale, PA
 Christina Fehlner, Moscow, PA
 Gerald & Kathy Francheski, Union Dale, PA
 Doug & Betsy Frey, Carbondale, PA
 Robert & Lynn Frink, Woodstock, CT
 Beth Gallagher, Scranton, PA
 Eugene Gallagher, Clarks Summit, PA
 Richard Giavendonni, Thompson, PA
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 Alan Gillick, MD, Dickson City, PA
 Edward Giombetti, Jessup, PA
 Sandra Guman, Archbald, PA
 Stan & Sharon Hadley, Lakewood, PA
 Ken & Joan Halbach, Forest City, PA
 Fritz & Joann Hall, Carbondale, PA
 Gunvor Handeland, Princeton, NJ

Pennsylvania's First Private Wild Plant Sanctuary Designated



Acting Secretary of Conservation and Natural Resources John Quigley announced that Pennsylvania designated its first Private Wild Plant Sanctuary. The Panther Creek Private Wild Plant Sanctuary, is located just off the O&W Rail-Trail, one mile north of Simpson on the Moosic Mountain. Panther Creek is a steep sloping, forested ravine stream which includes dramatic waterfalls. The dedication took place on June 19 on site with landowners, DCNR officials and Rail-Trail representatives. The property is owned by Michael and Barbara Yavorosky who are committed to preserving the site in perpetuity and welcome the public to visit the sanctuary.

"The program is meant to encourage the conservation of natural areas and native plants on private lands, and to recognize landowners who serve as good stewards of these special resources," Quigley said. "The Yavorosky's have been very enthusiastic, seeking this designation long before the program was developed. They serve as great conservationists and as models for other landowners."

The Private Wild Plant Sanctuary Program was established through the Wild Resource Conservation Act of 1982 to establish a voluntary statewide network of native plant sanctuaries on private lands. Landowners agree to protect the area and educate others about the importance of native and wild plants and habitats. In return, they receive assistance with a management plan if needed, and have access to technical assistance and ecological check ups.

Several botanists have documented a healthy and diverse plant community of native wildflowers and shrubs, including showy species such as pink lady-slipper, rosebay rhododendron and swamp azalea. The sanctuary also has been noted by the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program as a site of local conservation significance.

"The Private Plant Sanctuary Program presents an opportunity for people to make a positive contribution to conservation and our hope is that many landowners will take advantage of the program," said Michael and Barbara Yavorosky.

For more information about the Private Wild Plant Sanctuary Program, contact DCNR's Bureau of Forestry at (717) 787-3444 or email RA-PAPlandSanctuary@state.pa.us. Details also are available on the DCNR Web site at www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/wildplant.

C A L E N D A R

JULY 23
 Rail-Trail Dinner Meeting. All welcome.
 Waters Edge Restaurant at Lake Lorain. 6
 PM dinner, 7 PM meeting

JULY 30, 31 AND AUGUST 1,
 Forest City Old Home Week. Rail-Trail
 booth on Main Street—Blueberries & Ice
 Cream, RT info and merchandise.

NO AUGUST MEETING

James & Darlene Hanson, Thompson, PA
 David Heim, Hawley, PA
 Bill & Barbara Heller, Union Dale, PA
 Mary Henrie, Danville, PA
 Roy Hicks, Spring Brook Twp, PA
 Thomas Howells, Mayfield, PA
 Pegram Johnson, Wayne, PA
 Walter & Carol Kaufman, Union Dale, PA
 Thomas Kavanagh, King of Prussia, PA
 William & Romayne Kerl, Simpson, PA
 John Kessler, Afton, PA
 Dan & Diane Kimberley, Susquehanna, PA
 Father John King, Starrucca, PA
 Ken Kirschner, Wilmington, DE
 Dave Kline, Scranton, PA
 Delores Kownaski, Dickson City, PA
 Bob Kramer, Equinunk, PA
 John & Sandra Kugler, Springtown, PA
 Beverly & Frank Kulikowski, Lakewood, PA
 Julia Laird, Dunmore, PA
 Micky & Judy Langsfeld, Meadowbrook, PA
 Donna Ludwig, Forest City, PA
 Richard & Marilyn Macdowall, Kingsley, PA
 Peter Macheska, Simpson, PA
 Gail Mardfin, Bernardsville, Nj
 Ken & Leslie Mass, Dalton, PA
 John Mcglinchey, Levittown, PA
 James & Lucille Mckane, Archbald, PA
 Jim & Mt Mckane, Archbald, PA
 Elwood Merring, Lake Ariel, PA
 Ed Michalski, Archbald, PA
 Sheryl Mills, Jefferson Twp, PA
 John Morris, Simpson, PA
 Lawrence Mowrer, Poyntelle, PA
 Dorothy Notchick, Simpson, PA
 Carolyn O'Reilly, Union Dale, PA
 Roy & Vee Pauli, Scranton, PA
 Frank & Barbara Piotrowski, Forest City, PA
 William Polny, Wapwallopen, PA
 Valerie Pratt, Carbondale, PA
 James & Nancy Prawdzik, Deptford, Nj
 Felix & Mary Prezelski, Forest City, PA
 Timothy Proctor, Union Dale, PA
 John Quinn, Randolph, Nj
 Beverly Rainforth, Binghamton, Ny
 Kieth Raser, Shohola, PA
 Thomas Rasimas, Avoca, PA
 Lou Rosetti, Archbald, PA
 Rich Schnur, Afton, PA
 Jerry Schwarztrauber, Archbald, PA
 Sue & Wayne Shontz, Thompson, PA
 Paul & Barbara Smith, Vandling, PA
 Frank & Judy Sokloski, Colonia, Nj
 Dr. Patricia Sperling, Spring Brook Twp, PA
 Mr And Mrs Michael Stanton, Simpson, PA
 Cathy Stevens, Doylestown, PA
 Bill & Randa Sutch, Lower Gwynedd, PA
 Matthew & Rachel Swierzewski, Sellersville, PA
 Don & Cheron Swody, Mainesburg, PA
 Claribel Todd, Carbondale, PA
 David Wagner, Spring Brook Twp, PA
 Michael & Sharron Wallace, Scranton, PA
 Richard Watson, Lakewood, PA
 William Wellman, Great Bend, PA
 Fred Wenz, Ambler, PA
 Peter & Viktoria Wood, Forest City, PA
 Michael Yavorsky, Hop Bottom, PA
 Edward Zindell, Jermyn, PA
 Karen Zingermann, Jefferson Twp, PA

DONATIONS

In Honor of Ann Jumell, Nancy Ross
 In Memory of Peter Kuhn, Nancy Ross
 In Memory of Joe Treen, Nancy Ross
 Wayne/Susquehanna R.E.S.C.U.E.

These boys were in the bo



The full text reads: "These boys were in the boiler room at noon sitting down when three boilers exploded, killing Bert Ross and Richard Whirthington and injuring John Ross and John Thomas so that they died the next day." The date was March 15th, 1890. The place was Simpson breaker of the Northwest Coal Company.

The event has the distinction of being the worst accident in the history of the many collieries along what is now our Rail-Trail. The words come from a 1891 printing of an official document, the *Record of the Inspectors of Coal Mines of Pennsylvania*.

"These boys" were fifteen years old. They were 'breaker boys,' paid to pick slate and other impurities from coal. By law, they had to be fourteen. We surmise that they had finished formal schooling in June of '89, and had worked in the breaker for eight or nine months prior to the explosion that killed them. What were they doing in the boiler room at noon? In probability, they were eating the lunches packed for them by their mothers in the pre-dawn hours of that same March day. Breakers were unheated, and we know from other accounts that breaker boys and other colliery workers often sought, during their lunch period, the warmth of what was sometimes called the steam house. The boilers were, of course, coal-fired, and made the high-pressure steam that ran the breaker. We may also surmise that they lacked safety valves. It is hard to otherwise explain the simultaneous bursting of three boilers, and we have no reason to doubt the account of a state-appointed mine inspector. In 1890, worker safety was not a priority.

This article goes to press in the summer of 2009, but its seeds were planted in January, at a discussion of the historical markers your Rail-Trail Council has placed from time to time. We retell the tragic story of the Simpson breaker boys because of questions we asked of ourselves then. The first: *Among the events of history that have taken place along our trails, what was the most important?*

This has but one answer: the discovery of anthracite. Absent the coal deposits, the fat-cat Wall Street crowd would not have launched the Erie Railroad's Jefferson Branch or the New York Ontario & Western's Scranton Branch. Then as now, investors were in it for the money. And so fell the dominoes: the coal, the money, the railroads, the collieries, the towns. Even towns north of the coal field came to be because of the railroads. Hard coal was what today's press likes to call the driver. We concluded that the part of history we must recognize on any markers we place must be part played by anthracite. This means collieries.

"Colliery" is, of course, the dictionary word for the entire coal-producing system. It is a three-part system: mines, breakers, railways. The mines, of course, were underground and out of sight. The railways, once prominent but now long gone, were the above-ground tendrils of the system, but they were not site-specific. That left the breakers. It was easy for us to conclude, as we did at first, that the best way to place relevant historical markers was mark breaker sites. After all, the breakers were usually the largest structures in their towns. Generations grew up in their economic and social shadows.

We began research. We found evidence of more than twenty colliery sites between Simpson at the southern end of our trail-trail system and Stillwater at the northern. We found evidence of a three-mile rail spur that was all but forgotten. And we found what we think is the best way to recognize the history of the collieries.

Our research led us to the tale of the Simpson breaker boys *and to the names of the nearly four hundred men and boys who gave their lives*

Boiler room. . .

at collieries along our rail-trails. We came to realize that the true centers of anthracite history were not mines, or breakers, or bridges, but people. It hits you like a Three Stooges pie.

People are commonly recognized in the building of monuments, and there are many wonderful miners' monuments in 'Coal Country.' We occasionally drive through Forest City, and always pause at the exquisite bas-relief memorial there. And yet, monuments tend to mythicize. As the anthracite era recedes into the past, the mists of history seem to enshroud the coal miner and make him, in the manner of the American cowboy, a figure more mythic than real. But real he was. The men and boys who died at the collieries, real people who led real lives, are at once our history, our heritage and, for many of us, our genealogy. How best to recognize their reality? Might we recognize our miners without building monuments?

We think so. Work (in the form of more research) is now going on. We are developing colliery-by-colliery lists of miners and other colliery workers who gave their lives in their work. We hope to record the name of every man and boy killed at each colliery on a system of trailside markers, starting in 2010. Anyone who would like more information on this work may contact the Rail-Trail office.

Mark C. Walsh

Discover the D&H Tours

SUNDAY, JULY 26

9 AM. **Bike Ride**, Forest City Trailhead, all levels. Sponsored by Cedar Bike

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1

8 AM. **Coal Cracker Run**, Forest City Old Home Week, 2 or 5 mile. Benefits Forest City High School Cross Country Team.

THURSDAY, JULY 30, FRIDAY JULY 31, AND SATURDAY AUGUST 1

Noon – 8 PM, **Rail-Trail Booth**, Main Street Old Home Week, Forest City. Blueberry & Ice Cream Sundaes, Rail-Trail information and merchandise.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 2

9 AM. **Hike to Stillwater Cliffs** and special places around Forest City. Meet on O&W (yellow gate), Route 171 north of Forest City, lower Stillwater.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 16

5/10K Run Walk, Forest City Trailhead. Senior Project, benefits New Milford Iraq War Memorial & George Puglisli Family

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

9 AM. **D&H Long Distance Run**—a half-marathon from Forest City Trailhead. Registration required.

D&H Distance Run



September 13, 2009

Registrations for the D&H Distance Run, a ½ marathon on the rail-trail September 13, 2009 are arriving at a steady pace. Around 50 have been received and we will be limiting the field to 275 runners or walkers. The application form is available on our website www.nepa-rail-trails.org or on NEPARunner.com. You can also call the office for a form to be mailed. Sponsors to date are Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority, Leeward Construction, Brennan & Brennan Funeral Home, The Honesdale National Bank, Adams CATV, Inc., Comprehensive Physical Therapy, H&R Block Carbondale, and the Ben-Mar Restaurant. Additional sponsors are still being sought!



Spring Trash Pickup

Thanks to the many volunteers who helped clean up the trail areas of Forest City, and the Union Dale – Herrick area on April 25th. One full pickup truck was filled. Thanks to Susquehanna County PennDOT for assistance with trash disposal.

Membership Renewal Form

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

- Lifetime/Founding \$500
- Patron/Sponsor \$250
- Club/Organization \$100
- Family \$25
- Individual \$15
- Senior/Student \$10
- I am available for trail cleanups.
- Call me to discuss a corporate donation.
- Send me a **new** RTC brochure.
- 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: trails@nep.net



Senior Projects on Trail

Several high school students have used the trail as a venue or as the focus of their senior project. Last year, we had new interpretive signage purchased and installed, following a money-raising Welsh Cookie sale. (Thanks & good luck to Jackie Smith, Forest City Regional HS.) New mileage posts were designed, engraved, painted and installed from Forest City to the NY State border (left photo). Now all 38 miles have mileage posts. (Thanks to Dave Albert, Montrose Area HS.)

The 'Paws for a Cause' dog walk (right photo) was a great success, raising money for the Dessin Animal Shelter in Honesdale. (Great job, Ali Coolican & Chelsea Jubinsky, FCRHS.) And, we are expecting a 5 or 10K Benefit Run to be organized and publicized later this summer. Any student thinking about using the trail for a project should contact the office and we'll get it on our calendar. We also have a list of suggested projects that may be of interest.

Rail-Trail Council of Northeast PA
P.O. Box 123
Forest City PA 18421-0123
trails@nep.net
www.nepa-rail-trails.org

How I Spent My Summer Vacation

By Deb McNamara

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy spoke of a domestic volunteer program modeled after a newly established Peace Corps. The next year, President Lyndon B. Johnson declared a "War on Poverty" and signed the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The Act created Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) and fulfilled President Kennedy's dream. Today, nearly 6,000 VISTA members serve in hundreds of non-profit organizations and public agencies.

After a week of training in Philadelphia, I was sworn in as a VISTA Volunteer. Volunteer assignments can last anywhere from one to three years. My job will consist of assisting Rail-Trail with office duties as well as projects on the trail. We also have great ideas for community outreach programs we hope to implement in the next year. I will keep you up to date as the year progresses.

After four years on the Board of Directors of Rail-Trail, I hope I'm a familiar face to many of you. I'm also excited for the chance to meet and get to know many new members and trail users. Please stop by to say hello or share your ideas. See you on the trail.

"Service is the rent we pay for being. It is the very purpose of life, and not something you do in your spare time"

—Marion Wright Edelman

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