Passage 1st in Trail Hall of Fame

National Honor Bestowed in Cumberland by RTC during Greenway Sojourn

The Great Allegheny Passage will always be first. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy in Washington, D.C. made sure of that this summer by naming the Passage as the first trail in their national Rails-to-Trails Hall of Fame.

"The Great Allegheny Passage is a perfect example of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s vision for communities across the country," said Rails-to-Trails Conservancy President Keith Laughlin.

"Our trail system has been in development for 30 years. It’s been an enormous effort of thousands of volunteers," said Linda McKenna Boxx, President of the Allegheny Trail Alliance. "The national recognition of their efforts is a fitting honor."

The presentation coincided with Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s sixth annual Greenway Sojourn, an eight-day ride for 500 cyclists billed as “The Ride of a Lifetime.” Sojourners gathered in Pittsburgh, rode the bus to Washington D.C., and rode the full length of the C&O Canal Towpath to Cumberland, MD where (Please see “The Ride of a Lifetime,” Page 3)

USS transfers Coke-Gas Line to ATA

A vital link in the completion of the last nine miles of the Great Allegheny Passage to Point State Park in Pittsburgh has been acquired.

United States Steel cleaned a former coke-gas pipeline in West Mifflin and Duquesne and transferred the 1.9 miles of property to the Regional Trail Corporation at substantially below market value.

Allegeny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato and United States Steel (USS) Chairman & Chief Executive Officer John Surma announced the transfer in April.

“A year ago, John Surma and I agreed to co-chair the ‘Closing the Gaps in the GAP’ initiative,” said Onorato.

“And now, thanks to U.S. Steel’s efforts, a former brownfield site will be opened to the public." (Please see “Coke-Gas,” Page 6)
Parked at the Marina in McKeesport before pushing on to Pittsburgh, Day 8.

Great Falls of the Potomac, Day 1.

Funders Sojourn crosses the Potomac at White's Ferry.

Harper's Ferry, Day 2.

Rehashing the day's ride, Day 7.

Sojourner Bill Grun, 87, and friends.

End of the C&O Canal, Day 5.

Along the C&O at Great Falls Tavern, Day 1.
it joins with the Passage, then on to Pittsburgh, camping every
night along the way.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is expected to add more first-
year inductees on merits such as scenic value, high use, trail and
trailside amenities, historical significance, excellence in
management and maintenance of facility, and geographic
distribution.

As part of the Cumberland festivities, ATA President Linda
McKenna Boxx presented a symbol of the Passage’s connection
to the C&O Canal, officially connected last December, to Bob
Hartman, representing the National Park Service, and the
descendent of a canal worker.

“Getting this far was no small feat,” Boxx said. “Volunteer
based non-profit groups have been working at this for over 30
ojourn 2007

A Lifetime

years. This moment is a credit to their spirited dedication.

"This connection was the driving vision, the goal that we
were striving for through all the ups and downs of building this
great trail system. We wanted to celebrate the connection in a
grand way, and bringing 500 riders up through from DC was
perfect," said Boxx. "Thank you to the Rails-to-Trails
Conservancy for organizing this ambitious outing, and thanks to
all you sojourners for being part of it.

"Our trail is not complete yet," she said. "We are working
hard to get everything finished by next year in time for the
celebration of the 250th anniversary of Pittsburgh. We have
nine miles to go and lots of challenges ahead.

"But the connection through the mountains, here to
Cumberland, and on to D.C. is a huge accomplishment to
celebrate, and thanks for being part of it."
Drying out at Cedar Creek from the rain in Confluence the night before, Day 7.

"You have to find just the right spot." Day 6.

RTC staff weathering the storm.

Massage tent flooded, Day 6.

"Y-M-C-A!" Sojourners in celebratory mood at the Palisades in McKeesport, Day 8.

In Connellsville, Day 7.

Crossing the Duquesne Bridge, Day 8.

Final arch, Southside Works, downtown Pittsburgh in background, Day 8.
Montour, Panhandle trails celebrate conjunction

The crossing of the Montour and Panhandle trails now offers users a choice.

Celebrated in June at “The Function at the Junction,” the final, 0.7-mile segment of the Montour-Panhandle trail connection in Mount Pleasant, on Noblestown Road, a mile west of McDonald, is complete, as is, less than a quarter-mile away, the six-mile Primrose-to-Joffre stretch of the Panhandle Trail, which now allows use of 26 miles of the eventual 29-mile trail from Collier nearly to Weirton, W.Va., and some 40 miles of the 47-mile Montour Trail from Moon to Clairton.

“You come to McDonald and you now have a choice,” said Stan Sattinger, founding president and co-founder of the Montour Trail Council. “At mile 18, you can now say, Hmm, do I want to go east to Carnegie today, or do I want to go west to Weirton?”

Clog dancers and a rock band enlivened the event that also featured bike rides, trail walks, a petting zoo, face painters and a half-dozen food booths.

The organizers of the event demonstrated the scope of the private-public partnerships in Allegheny and Washington counties. They include: The Fox Cherry Friends of the Montour Trail, the McDonald Area Redevelopment Association, the McDonald Borough Council, the Montour Trail Council, the Panhandle Trail Council, the Washington County Board of Commissioners, and the Washington County Tourism Promotion Agency. Sponsors who helped to underwrite the event include Coca-Cola Bottling, Pepsi-Cola Roadhouse, Allied Waste Imperial Landfill, Alex E. Paris Contracting Co., Quicksilver Golf Club, Hi-View True Value Hardware, and Green’s Taxi Service.

Voice of the ATA Hotline

Growing up in Maryland, just a few miles from the C&O Canal, Ann Nemanic is well-suited to serve as Trail Concierge for the Great Allegheny Passage.

From her Ligonier office at the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, Ann fields telephone and e-mail inquiries on a daily basis. Knowledgeable and efficient, she answers and records all contacts as to subject, name, and residence (no small task with the increasing number of queries). Her contributions to the trail effort have proven invaluable.

Prior to joining the LHVB team, Ann had 14 years in the hospitality industry as Director of Sales & Marketing for one of the Laurel Highlands’ premiere facilities, Mountain View Inn. During that time she served on the LHVB Board of Directors, two years as chair of the board. Ann currently serves on the board for Westmoreland Chamber of Commerce and as a trustee for the Southwestern Pennsylvania Sign Trust. As Tourism Services Manager for LHVB she works with membership development, retention and hospitality training.

Ann lives in Greensburg with her husband Joe, daughter Hannah, and puppy Cooper – all avid fans of the trail!

Coke-Gas Line Transferred

(Continued from Page 1)

USS has become an important supporter of the Passage’s completion. In clearing the former coke-gas pipeline property, USS removed an obsolete double-stacked pipeline and cleaned up the corridor. For this work USS received the Pennsylvania Environmental Council’s Western Pennsylvania Environmental Award in the business category. The $5,000 award was donated to the ATA.

“United States Steel Corporation and its employees place a high value on the ideal of good corporate citizenship, and we’re proud to be a partner in a project that will have numerous benefits for the region we’ve called home for more than 105 years,” said Surma.

“We look forward to partnering with Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato and the Allegheny Trail Alliance in the effort to bridge the remaining gaps in the Passage.”

Completion of the Great Allegheny Passage is a signature project of the Pittsburgh 250 Commission to celebrate the region’s 250th Anniversary in 2008.

“Allegheny County is taking a real leadership role,” said Steel Valley Trail Council President Hannah Hardy.

“We can move quickly into design and construction, and we hope to make progress on several sections of what we call ‘the gaps in the GAP’ this year. Without the commitment and focus of Dan Onorato and the leadership of John Surma, we could not possibly achieve this in time for the 250th.”
Map has new look thanks to National Park Service

Our map brochure has a brand new look, thanks to a team that included staff of the National Park Service. With financial assistance from the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail Office, we were able to use the expertise at the NPS Interpretive Design Center in Harpers Ferry to redesign this important publication in a style reflecting high-quality NPS standards.

The most dramatic difference is that the map now shows the topography that the trail passes through. The ruggedness of the ancient mountains flanking the Eastern Continental Divide shows why building a canal past Cumberland proved to be impractical.

Grade Not as Daunting as It Appears

We hope the map helps our trail users understand the elevation table we show on our website. The trail does make a good climb from Cumberland, but it is not as daunting as the chart appears. Even as it meanders through the Alleghenies, a gentle grade is maintained. When we say nearly level, we mean it!

The eastbound rise, or grade, from Pittsburgh to the Eastern Continental Divide near Deal averages 0.25% over 126 miles, with the steepest section the last 10 miles from Meyersdale to the Divide, averaging 0.65%. To relate to a 0.25% change in elevation, it is equivalent to the rise of one stair step over nearly the length of a football field.

The westbound grade is steeper, but still gentle. Trains hauling heavy freight loads did it, so can you! The westbound climb over the 24 miles from Cumberland to the Divide averages 1.44%. That is one stair step every 45 feet. The steepest section is between Cumberland and Frostburg and rises 1.5% over those 15 miles. That climb can also be accomplished by buying a ticket for the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad and letting the train give you a lift.

Look for the new map along the trail or contact us at atamail@atatrail.org and we’ll be glad to send you one.

—Linda McKenna Boxx

JOIN A TRAIL GROUP
HELP COMPLETE THE CONNECTION
$25 for one year

We invite you to become a trail group member and volunteer.
$25 for one year.
Includes trail group newsletter, ATA newsletter, and Great Allegheny Passage donor tag.

Name: __________________________ Date: ________________

Address: ____________________________________________

City: __________________________ State: ______ Zip: ______

☐ I’d like to support the Passage! Please make your check/money order payable to RTC/ATA for a general donation.

☐ Enclosed please find my $25 check or money order made payable to the trail group for my membership in the ________ Trail Group.

(please fill in your choice: see map above)

Please mail to ATA, P.O. Box 501, Latrobe, PA 15650

PASSENGES

Butterfly Alley

In late summer the green world achieves stasis, a calm that comes with maturity. We feel it, too, a sense of completion born of fruition.

These are the days of ripe fields, goldenrod opening with the beginning of August, Joe-Pye weed tall and at its mauve peak, ironweed showing purple, and asters about to burst forth in their pale blue constellations. And in the open stretches along the Passage, we ride through a conservancy of butterflies.

One such area is the relatively sun-struck trail east of Meyersdale from Warren Mill Road to the Continental Divide, about a two-mile stretch that has come to be known as Butterfly Alley.

The blooms of what some call weeds attract them. This is one good argument against mowing any more than necessary.

Here this time of year you will find monarchs and tiger swallowtails (the males are big, yellow and black, and the females smaller, blue and black) in abundance. And that’s just the beginning.

Stop awhile with a field guide, and your list will quickly grow.

As always, nature reveals itself when we are still.

—Jeff O’Brien, editor
Historic Bollman Bridge in place; Deck finished soon

The Bollman Bridge, a 30-ton cast and wrought iron truss bridge serving the Passage in southern Somerset County, was lifted into place in July and should be open to trail users by September.

Two cranes lifted the span into place on July 18. The 24-foot-high, 100-foot-long bridge last year was moved from its former site, about two miles northwest of Meyersdale. It was disassembled because it couldn't be transported in one piece to its new location about two miles southeast of Meyersdale. It was reassembled on the trail near the pile-driven abutments that now support it over Scratch Hill Road.

The bridge was built in 1871 by a construction company owned by Wendell Bollman. It carried B&O Railroad traffic over Wills Creek in Hyndman, Bedford County. It was moved to the Meyersdale area in 1896 to serve road and farm traffic over what are now CSX and Amtrak railroad tracks. When PennDOT notified the Somerset County Rails-to-Trails Association that the well-preserved bridge was to be demolished, the association and the Allegheny Trail Alliance worked hard to save it.

"It was well worth it," said Linda McKenna Boxx, president of the Allegheny Trail Alliance. "It's a beautiful bridge, and it fits perfectly here."

The bridge will eliminate a bumpy dirt, gravel and rock detour down to, across and up from Scratch Hill Road. Overshadowed at its old site by the nearby 1,908-foot-long Salisbury Viaduct, the bridge once again finds itself with a bigger neighbor. It's about a quarter-mile from the imposing Keystone Viaduct, a 910-foot-long span with a curved concrete deck that sits about 100 feet above Flaugherly Creek.

(Thanks to Larry Walsh of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette)