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and tell a friend!

TRAIL IS 12 MILES

REMEMBER: USE OF THE TRAIL IS FREE!



The Browns Run Trail



The Browns Run Trail History

In 1990 two dedicated individuals, Russ Riffle and Bob Croushore, met with David Gratz, general manager of the Monongahela Railway Company, and purchased for one dollar what had been the Moser Run Branch of the Mon Railroad Line. This track had been laid in the early twentieth century as a means of transporting coal and coke to various steel mills located in Pittsburgh; it had been unused for a number of years. At the time of the purchase it had been stated, "The land could possibly be used for a biking and hiking trail." The tract of land was 80 to 100 feet wide and approximately 1.9 miles (10,000 feet) in length. The purchased land extended from the Wilson-Lardin Mansion near the Shop n' Save market on Route 21 to the mouth of Browns Run near the former Huron Water Purification Plant. Fellow township supervisor Bob Arnold was quoted at that time as stating, "We knew there was nothing they could do with it. [Gratz] was really cooperative and he's been putting it into place for the last couple of years." Arnold went on to say, "We'll just start to plan things, but these things take time to put in place." Many individuals had ideas such as a Bed and Breakfast at the mansion or the Fayette County Historical Society taking advantage of the historic sites such as the Rabb House but nothing of a concrete nature had been discussed. For eight years the land and ideas sat idle but in 1998 the German Township Recreation Parks and Trail Commission was created and meetings began to be held but progress continued to be almost nonexistent.

"A diamond in the rough" was the way the trail was described by those hardy individuals who walked the trail before the first dinner and auction held in October of 1998. The original plans called for the trail to include several points of interest along its tract to the river: the Lardin House and accompanying spring house, the Rabb House and the fabulous stonework used on the trestles that had been built by the railroad. Both of the houses had already been named to the National Historic Registry. Plans called for the base of the trail to be packed and rolled stone to a width of 18 to 20 feet. It was to have four bridges over Browns Run and benches were to be located periodically along the path. It was to function as a walking, biking and equestrian trail. Money, emergency access, volunteers, leaders and community input were all issues that had to be dealt with in those early stages of the development of the trail. Many people were invaluable in the early stages, foremost among them was State Representative William DeWeese and his legislative aide Jo Lofstead. Township Supervisors Croushore and Riffle were instrumental in getting grant monies with the help of DeWeese's office. Bernie Glad, Bob Croushore and Martha Babic worked tirelessly in organizing the early meetings and creating a commission of interested persons. The first members appointed were: Albert Ream, Frank Ozanich, Pat Stunja and Laurey Podolinski. Other early organizers of the trail were Bill and Nancy Ross, Vince Serra, Earl Deaton, Dan and Stefanie Coffman, John Kormanik and Dennis Ballas. Businessmen such as Alan Brown, Russ Skiles and Kevin Pike had not only made their equipment available at no cost but also their time.

As time continued, many felt the trail was just a dream that would never come to be. However, in 1999 an art contest was held in the Albert Gallatin School District for the purpose of creating a logo for the proposed trail. The contest illustrated to the public that the trail would become a reality; the logo that was designed is the one used today for the trail. Any organization has its share of doubters but they were proven to be wrong for once Darell Hicks came aboard as the president of the commission nothing could stop the momentum that this young man, in conjunction with Supervisor Bob Croushore and Rich Tate, brought to the organization. These individuals, including Supervisors Dan Shimshock and Floyd (Buster) Gladman, have brought the trail to fruition. At this time the trail extends seven-tenths of a mile from the Wilson-Lardin Mansion to the vicinity of the Rabb (Pavlovich) House near the Ronco-Gates Road. There are four completed foot bridges with a fifth being readied for renovation. It has a walking/riding surface of pressed stone - ten feet wide with three feet of cut lawn on either side for the safety of the user, this makes it perfect for the viewing of the many wildflowers that grow along the trail. Benches made of metal and recycled trestle stones have been placed for resting or sitting and taking in the scenic beauty that is unsurpassed in the township. Garbage cans for collection of trash and animal wastes have been conveniently located to help keep the trail in top sanitary condition.

If you have not taken advantage of this township treasure you don't know what you're missing. The cover of this tri-fold illustrates the pride that the commission possesses for this important project. Join the commission members the second Tuesday of every month for their meetings. **And we'll see you at the river!!**

Written and Researched by Dennis Ballas