



Volume 25 Issue 1

Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

January 2020

PENNSYLVANIA SKILLS GRANT



At the December meeting, a check for \$2,500.00 was presented to Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc. from Pennsylvania Skill (PA Skill). Pennsylvania Skill is committed to supporting causes that improve communities and quality of life for the residents of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania Skill Charitable Gaming has donated over \$120,000 to local charities. For more information on PA Skills, you may visit their website at www.meilemfg.com. Rails to Trails would like to thank PA Skills for their generous donation to our trail.

(Accepting the check is left to right: Mary Emeigh, Ethan Imhoff, Jennifer Barefoot and Karl King)

CONNECTION TO CANOE CREEK COMPLETE:

If you are driving along Route 22 near the Canoe Creek State Park entrance, you will still see active road construction signs. We are very happy to announce that the underpass under Route 22 connecting the Lower Trail to the Canoe Creek State Park property is now complete. We will be holding a Formal Grand Opening of this underpass once the weather breaks for spring. We will keep you updated as to the date and time. We hope you will plan on coming out for this opening to show your support for the extension of the trail.

WHAT WILL THE NEXT DECADE BRING?

We have now entered another decade, so if we are measuring time in decades, Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc. is entering its 4th decade. We have been around for over 30 years now. We have

accomplished a lot, overcome a lot, learned a lot, made many friends and lost many friends. Many of our founding members that were the part of the backbone of our organization are gone, but most definitely not forgotten. Of our 15 members, when we became incorporated, there are 6 still living.

In looking back through the archives of articles I found one I had written a decade ago. I think it is one worth repeating for without the generosity and foresight of this man there would likely not be the Lower Trail as we know it today.

I had titled it: A LITTLE HISTORY:

Rails to Trails of Central Pennsylvania Inc. is now 20 years old. I know the history for I have been involved for over 20 years. But as time passes history sometimes gets forgotten. So here is a thumb-nail sketch. In October 1988, an article appeared in the Altoona Mirror about a new idea...converting abandon rail corridors into hiking/biking trails. The man that suggested this idea was not originally from this area and felt it would be greeted with open arms. That didn't happen. After several very "hot" public meetings, this man left the area. At that point there were a few (about 9 individuals) that thought the idea of converting abandon corridors into trails for all to use was a good idea. So, we started to meet but knew we would get no-where fast if we did not formally organize and become a 501(c)3 organization. Enter T. Dean Lower. We approached Attorney Lower to ask if he would be willing to help us out. We had no money and remember that rail trails were in their infancy in the United States. The closest one to central Pennsylvania was the 11 mile Ohiopyle Trail. Dean agreed to help us out, but he did want to find out about these so called rail trails. At that point our group had grown to about 15 individuals. We had researched abandon corridors in our area that were up for sale and found that the Frankstown Branch was up for sale by Penn Central Corporation. So we took Dean down to walk on the corridor and explained our future vision. (One must remember we walked a corridor that was fast becoming a linear dump, the bridges needed major repairs. One had no decking at all. In many places the corridor was extremely overgrown and there had been a great deal of bad press about rail trails. That did not deter Dean; he believed in our vision. He then worked to complete our incorporation as well as our 501(c)3. He then asked how we were going to raise the funds to purchase the property. We gave him some of our ideas: ask local companies for backing, fundraisers, etc... But we knew it was going to take quite some time to raise the asking amount Penn Central wanted for the property. Dean then said he had some ideas as well but would like to wait until we had a firm price from Penn Central.

With the help of Representative Rick Geist, we were able to negotiate the price down to \$80,000.00. (That was still going to be a lot of car washes and bake sales) It was then that Dean approached us and said he would donate the funds to purchase the property. All he asked was that at the trailheads there would be a plaque stating that the funds donated for the trail were in memory of his late wife Jane Y. Lower and his son Rodger. He did not ask that the trail be called the Lower Trail; he did not ask for any big fanfare, just the plaques. That was not the end of the work but only the beginning. For then there was the legal work. Not only was there the deed recording, but we had a number of land disputes. In some areas, adjacent land owners felt that when the railroad abandoned the corridor the land became theirs. We did find that we did not own one of the bridges but did own the land up to the bridge, so there was legal work to be done there. One of the property disputes had to be settled in court. Dean took on each and every one of these challenges donating all his time and talents, never once complaining or grumbling. Dean also served on our Board of Directors helping to guide the organization as we grew. His generosity did not stop there. In 2004 when the trail was severely damaged by hurricane Ivan, he again came to our aid. We were first blessed by the generosity of Grannas Brothers Construction. They stepped in and repaired the trail donating the material and labor. That is when it was recommended that the trail be paved from Williamsburg to the first bridge, for we found that the paved section of the trail had held through the flood. The problem was that we did not have the funds at that moment when the equipment was there. We would eventually get the funds through a state grant for the flood repair. But we needed the funds right away. Dean very generously loaned us the funds. Had he not done that, most likely the trail would not be paved.

About Deans life

Dean was born and raised in Williamsburg. He graduated from Williamsburg High School in 1935. He then graduated from Dickinson College and Yale Law School in 1947. His summer employment during his college year was working as a part time ranger for the National Parks in the west. It was there that he met his first wife Jane Young. She was a strolling violinist for the park. He married Jane in 1942. He was a U.S. Army Air Corps veteran of World War II. Following his service to our country, he worked as an attorney for 53 years until his retirement in 2002. Dean and Jane had two children Rodger and Janna Lower. Rodger was killed in an automobile accident in 1977. Janna is a world renowned violinist residing in Florida with her husband Mark. Throughout his life Dean had an avid passion for hiking. He along with his family had hiked many world-famous mountains. He truly loved the outdoors. In March of 1987 Jane, Dean's first wife passed away. He then married Jane (Patterson) Kazmaier. She had also been born and raised in Williamsburg, she and Dean had gone to grade school together. They were married for 20 years continuing to travel and hike until Jane's death in May of 2008. Dean lived his entire life enriching everything around him; his family, his community, and his friends. He not only gave the gift of the rail trail, but he donated a fitness center to Williamsburg and the funds to develop Chimney Rock Park Overlook. He gave generously to the arts. Dean always told me every individual has an obligation to give back to the communities in which they were raised and lived, for that will only make those areas better for the future generations. For these beliefs and values, Dean was awarded the first Philanthropy award in 2000 by the Central

Pennsylvania Community Foundation. This award has been given each year since to a person who 'has given generously of their time and money for the betterment of Blair County'. Dean set the standards for this award. Dean lived his final year at the Hollidaysburg Presbyterian Home in Hollidaysburg. One other quick note about Dean: if he was not hiking he was playing Bridge. He was a very avid (and good) bridge player.

A note from me, Jennifer Barefoot

I cannot write this article without a personal note. I have known Dean for 43 of my 50 years. I can honestly say I have only known a very few individuals with the integrity, values, intelligence and morals as T. Dean Lower. He was a man that challenged your intellect. If he believed in something, he would back it 100%. He never compromised his beliefs and was a true friend. I only hope that I can be half the person he was. He has left Central Pennsylvania with several legacies. It should be our goal, in his memory, to continue to maintain, improve and grow upon these legacies for the future generations.

So, as we start into our 4th decade, who will be those individuals with a vision to make our community/region a better place to live and raise their families?

VANDALISM UPDATE: GOOD NEWS/BAD NEWS

Good News:

We would like to thank everyone who has sent in donations to cover our losses from the vandalism this past summer. As we head into one of our busiest seasons we will lose a fair amount of revenue that these donation boxes generated for us. Hopefully, by spring we will have new boxes up and ready to go.



Bad News:



Photos above courtesy of: Derek Flaig

Over the New Year's Day Holiday, we apparently had individuals who felt the need to go out "joy riding". They broke out the fencing and sign along Route 866 heading into Williamsburg then drove up the trail damaging its surface. If anyone has any information on this vandalism, please call. This is senseless damage caused by individuals with no regard for anyone or anything and costing use in repairs. We feel someone has to have some knowledge of this damage.

TREE OF THE MONTH: SYCAMORE

By Dave Despot

This winter, as I looked around for inspiration for a tree article, I couldn't help but notice the sycamore trees along the river. Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) is a large deciduous tree (typically 75 to 100 feet, can reach 150 feet) that is often found in bottomlands and along the banks of rivers. The unmistakable feature of sycamore trees is the exfoliating bark on the upper trunk and limbs which exposes light colored (white to cream colored) underbark. Bark on the lower trunk is reddish brown and scaly. Sometimes when approaching a sycamore tree, the dark scaly bark on the lower trunk can make identification problematic because the familiar bright exfoliating upper portion of the tree is less visible at ground level. Sycamore trees are native to the eastern United States.



Leaves are simple, alternate, up to 9 inches wide, often wider than long, and 3 or 5 lobed with shallow sinuses. At first glance, the leaves look similar to maple leaves. Twigs do not have a terminal bud which tends to produce a zig-zag growth pattern. Lateral buds are 1/4 to 3/8 inch long with blunt points and a single visible scale. The fruit appear as round balls born singly on long stems, but the balls are actually a cluster of achenes (dry indehiscent one seeded fruit).



One of the common names of the sycamore tree is buttonwood. This refers to the quality of the wood which allows it to be finely milled without cracking to make products such as long lasting clothing buttons. You can also find references to buttonwood in the names of financial and brokerage institutions. That is because the New York Stock Exchange was founded in an agreement signed under a sycamore tree that stood at 68 Wall Street in New York City on May 17, 1792. The agreement is known as the buttonwood agreement.

On your next outing, look for some sycamore trees. They are an impressive part of our forest landscape.

2020 ELECTIONS:

At the January 14th meeting, elections were held for the 5 individuals whose 3 year term had ended. Elected this year for a 3 year term were: George Foster, Sarah Gonsman, Karl King, Joe Landsberry and Bruce Sheehe. Elections were also held for the officers for the 2020 year. Not much changes, President: Ethan Imhoff, Vice President; Mike Panek, Treasurer: Sarah Gonsman, Secretary; Mary Emeigh and Assistant Sec/Treas; Jennifer Barefoot. We would like to thank Fred Ciocca for serving on the board for the past 9 years. Fred elected not to serve another term but will continue to volunteer his time and expertise to the organization. We welcome George Foster to the board. George has been a longtime supporter of Rails to Trails and is focused on helping to make the extension/connection to the 6 thru 10 Trail a reality. Karl King remains on the board but elected not to throw

his name in to be Vice President, (he felt over 20 years was long enough). We welcome Board member Mike Panek to the position of Vice President.

SUPPORTING RAILS TO TRAILS IS AS EASY AS; SHOPPING AMAZON.COM.

Please consider using **Amazon Smiles** and **designating Rails To Trails of Central Pennsylvania Inc.** when you make a purchase through Amazon. This will provide our trail organization with a percentage of the purchase at no cost to you. Thanks to all those who have already used this feature.

You can use this quick link <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/25-1605920> to access Amazon Smiles using RTTCPA as donor recipient.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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Address: _____

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Phone: (____)-_____

E-mail _____

_____ New Membership _____ Renewal

_____ Individual	\$15.00
_____ Family	\$20.00
_____ Supporting	\$50.00
_____ Group	\$75.00

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_____ Heritage	_____ Bicycling
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_____ Other	

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*From the Sept. 6th Altoona Mirror
Did you know:*

Tuesday February 11th
Tuesday March 10th
Tuesday April 14th

Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station
Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station
Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM at the Grannas Station

KEEP YOUR ADDRESS CURRENT

This newsletter is mailed 3rd Class Bulk Mail. The Post Office will not forward 3rd Class Bulk Mail. If anything about your address changes, Route Number, Street Numbers, or Zip code, the Trail Trekker will not be forwarded to you. Please keep Rails-to-Trails informed of any address changes by using a post office change of address card or dropping us a note at the following address. **Remember, if your mailing address is Highlighted, your membership is about to expire. Please renew quickly and continue to support Rails-to-Trails. Thank You!**

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