



Photo by Jim Houck

Bill "Sweet Willie" Sadler installs a mile-marker on a tree along the old Plaster Bank Turnpike, reopened this year as part of the Appalachian Trail route over Walker Mountain. John Jaskolka pushes the measuring wheel. This was a highlight of Summerfest on the trail in June. See story and more photos inside.

PATHWAYS

of the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers

PATH Year 54, No. 3

Fall, 2018

This is a newsletter for the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers, a trail work group that maintains approximately 70 miles of the Appalachian Trail in Southwest Virginia. This newsletter is currently coming out two or three times a year with plans to increase to four times a year, given enough material and contributions. It is sent by email to the PATH List, or by U.S. Mail to members who don't have email. Feel free to print and post in your local outdoor store or elsewhere. HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: Dec 1, 2018. Web site: www.path-at.org.

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Photo by Jim Houck

David Atkinson, Dwight Levi and Paul Haag head the lineup for chow at the Tilson meadow campsite during Summerfest in June.

The Plaster Bank Turnpike Has Re-opened

“The whole line of said road shall be divided by the boards of directors into two divisions, the one within and through a portion of the county of Wythe, as now constructed, and the other to be a branch of the first, running from the Plaster banks or Chatham hill in the county of Smyth, to the Blue springs, crossing Walker’s Big mountain at Tilson’s gap, and passing by Mount Airy depot . . .

“Be it further enacted, that the branch road hereby authorized shall be constructed at a width of not less than twelve feet, and a grade not exceeding five degrees . . . “

– From an act amending the charter of the Black Lick and Plaster Bank Turnpike Company, passed March 15, 1861, by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia



PATH photo

Paul Haag and Jim Houck prepare to transport a privy shavings barrel during Summerfest.

The Black Lick and Plaster Bank Turnpike originally ran from the vicinity of Chatham Hill, Va., to the vicinity of Rural Retreat. It was an important transportation route particularly around the time of the Civil War, when the salt deposits around Saltville, Va., were so important to the military.

It may have lain disused in recent years, a forgotten piece of past Virginia transportation. But no more. This year, after several years of planning and work, part of the old turnpike took on new life as a section of the Appalachian Trail.

The two-mile stretch of trail is mostly on the north slope of Walker Mountain through Tilson Gap. It was formally opened in April, but not measured until this year's PATH Summerfest, held as usual over the third week of June with a base camp at the Tilson Meadow, near the North Fork of the Holston River outside Ceres, Va.

A total of 33 people showed up for this year's Summerfest, a week of warm and clear weather with overnight lows in the 50s, great weather for trail work. And while what we documented isn't quite 12 feet wide – see above – it's a nice hike. That five-degree grade seems to still apply.

The work added 460 feet to the Appalachian Trail. The old trail measured 10,083 feet and the new one 10,543 feet, according to Trail Master Jim Houck's measurements. The new route

replaces a stretch of trail with a lot of rock work and which was already getting grown over in June. However, Tina and Brett of the Quarter Way Inn have volunteered to take over and maintain it.

“Hikers often ask how they can help,” Jim wrote in his summary of the week. “Tina plans to put them to work on the old section.”

During Summerfest, crews also worked on rock cribbing on Garden Mountain, two blowdowns on Lynn Camp Mountain and other jobs primarily on the northern part of PATH’s 64 miles of the AT. They also scouted a possible relo on Garden Mountain, gathered trash and switched a moldering privy at Knot Maul Shelter. (This is a job you really should do, if you haven’t yet. More about that in future newsletters.)

Jim summed it up as follows: “Good people, good food, good time.”

What’s Cooking?

“It is always amazing to me how the food comes together for trail work weekends,” Craig Brock wrote in an e-mail earlier this year. He suggested including a recipe from potlucks in each newsletter, and he contributed this one for a Squash Casserole. Here it is, and we hope others will contribute some of their favorites:

Squash Casserole

3 cups cooked squash
1 can cream of chicken soup
2 eggs
1 cup milk
1 cup grated cheddar cheese
2 cups of cracker crumbs
¾ stick margarine
1 tsp salt
½ tsp celery salt

¼ tsp pepper
¾ cup chopped onion

Cook squash, drain and measure (3 cups), add butter, salt, and milk, mix well. Add beaten eggs, onion, cheese, cracker crumbs, pour into greased casserole dish. Bake 375 degrees for 40 minutes.

Letters to PATH: ‘The Duffbusters’

I love the new bricks that have been placed (in Damascus). What a wonderful way to honor those that have loved, served and worked the trail. I would also like to let you know that one was placed for John Locke, PATH maintainer, who passed August 2000. The brick was placed almost in front of the trail shop by a group of 1996 hikers called the Blue Blaze Hikers in 2001. John was doing a through hike in 1996 when he became ill in June. I can’t remember if his name is on the brick or if it is “Duff” or “Duffbuster.” John was a maintainer for several years. Paul Clayton can probably give you dates if needed.

David Blair (Wolf) lives in Damascus and can point you to the brick if anyone is interested in snapping a picture to add to PATH's collection. Most anyone in Damascus can point you to Wolf.

I continue to follow PATH and congratulate everyone on what is done each year to PATH's section of the AT. My memories of the trail will always live in my heart.

Vanya Locke (AKA Mrs. Duff)

And Paul Clayton had this to add:



The picture, probably by John Locke, shows across the back, John Locke, Valerie Everette, Gene Greer and Trey Greer, and across the front Bill Medlin, Casey (Trey's girlfriend), Paul Clayton and Trey's dog.

"PATH hosted the Konnarock Crew for two weeks in 1993, June 24th through 28th (5 club members participating), and August 5th through 9th (10 club members participating). Work was done on relocating and rehabilitating trail in Crawfish Valley.

"This project will be remembered for the vitality and energy brought to it by a group of PATH members who collectively came to be known as the "Duffbusters." Mark Clayton, Steve Williams, John Locke, Bill Medlin and others caught on quickly to the technique of building trail, then went neck and neck with the work-hardened and experienced Konnarock Crew while leaving them far behind in the realm of late night partying. John Locke's enormous customized van penetrated deeper into Crawfish Valley than anyone believed possible. The "Duffbusters" formed an elite corps of trail builders and crew leaders in the club for several years afterward."

Bits and pieces

■ These are **fall hunting seasons** in our part of Virginia. Remember to **wear blaze orange**; our trail is largely on national forest land and open for hunting. Most small game seasons are after the end of trail-work season, but big game is different. **Bear season is Oct. 6-Jan. 5, deer season is Oct 6-Jan. 5, and turkey season is Oct. 6-Nov. 9** with other days in December and January and in the spring. Generally, the first weeks are for archers, latter weeks for muzzle-loaders and firearms. Check the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries for details.

■ Many thanks to **Paul Clayton** for his work re-scanning **Gordon Burgess'** PATH slides. Gordon was trail master and unofficial PATH photographer for many years in the 1980s and 90s. After he retired from maintaining, he and Paul converted many of his photos to digital; many of them are still on the Web site. This new effort produces much higher resolution photographs that will bring the past back for many PATH trail maintainers. You can find Paul's new archive at miscellany.neuseriversailors.com/Burgess_Scans/index.html.

■ A major order of business during the **PATH annual meeting** in November will be the updating of the **PATH web site**, located at www.path-at.org. The site has been a vital part of the club for years now, but it's being maintained by **Tony Roberts**, a club member who long ago moved out of the region and is continuing the work out of the goodness of his heart. Problems with it are illustrated by the fact that we currently can't upload pictures to it. We're hoping for a good report on the Web site's future.

■ Congratulations to **Ron Hudnell** for completing the Appalachian Trail in August of this year with a hike over the last part of the 100-mile wilderness and a climb up Mount Katahdin in Maine. Ron is among nearly 40 members of PATH who have completed the trail during our half-century of trail work. More on his hike will be in the December newsletter. (And any other completers, please let us know.)

■ There's been a lot of talk about how to reserve the cabin at **Stony Fork Campground** for PATH work weekends during the summer and fall. Here's how to do it: Go the Web site at www.recreation.gov and enter "Stony Fork Cabin" in the search line. Click availability, and you'll be able to put in your preferred dates. Costs are \$65 per night or \$410 weekly. You can also call (800) 628-7202.

■ If you don't have email and want this newsletter mailed to you, you'll have to get this information second-hand, of course, but please let someone know. You can contact the editor at the addresses at the top of the letter, or contact one of the officers through the PATH Web Page at www.path-at.org.

■ To send information to all members via the PATH List, send your email messages to path-list@path-at.org. To subscribe to the PATH List, see the directions on the Web page at Inside PATH, which will require an ID and password to enter. Subscribing to the list will increase the amount of email you receive, but it's a quick way to get informed and involved about PATH work. **It will pay you to sign up for the PATH List.**

2018 Calendar

September 15

September Volunteer Weekend

Stony Fork

Base camp at Stony Fork Campground. Karen Worthington has the cabin reserved and plans to reserve the campsite next to the cabin. Mowing scheduled in the I-81 valley. We're hoping for sawyers and swamper (helpers) to assist. (See Jim Houck's report on August work.)

October 20

October Volunteer Weekend

Stony Fork

One crew will report to Walker Gap to help Greg Weaver with Boundary maintenance between Walker Gap and Chestnut Knob shelter. Other work as needed to prepare the trail for winter.

November 17

PATH Annual Meeting

TBA

To revisit our year and what we've accomplished. The meeting will be held somewhere in the PATH membership area in Virginia or North Carolina. Expect an email soon about the location of this meeting.



The Motion is Tabled

Would you believe this picnic table weighs a thousand pounds? Those who backpacked the various parts of it to Knot Maul Shelter on Aug. 18 probably would. It took 20 or so of us to transport all the planks and bolts and tools the two miles from Virginia 42 to the shelter. That included a climb over Brushy Mountain. And it was all done in the rain!

Photo by Jim Houck

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Time to renew

It's fall, and time to renew your PATH membership for the coming year of 2019. You may join PATH (or renew) at our Web site, www.path-at.org, with PayPal, or print and mail this form with check or money order. You can also attend the annual meeting and renew there. Please, don't mail cash!

Name (s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

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Annual membership dues are \$20 for an individual _____, \$25 for a family _____ or \$15 for a student _____. Donations are also accepted. Donation total _____

Send payment to PATH Treasurer, P.O. Box 4423, Greensboro, North Carolina 27404. Total amount of money enclosed _____

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