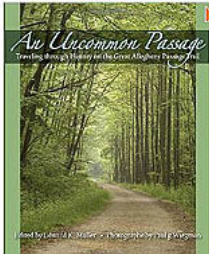


## Bicycling: A book for Great Allegheny Passage history

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By Larry Walsh, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



'An Uncommon Passage'

What was to become the largest segment of the Great Allegheny Passage got off to a less-than-auspicious start.

When the management of the Western Maryland Railway suggested in the early 1970s that its 90-mile right-of-way between Connellsville and Cumberland, Md., become a narrow, linear national park, Paul Wiegman said the National Park Service's response was "lukewarm."

The idea also didn't appeal to conservation groups the railway contacted.

"Group after group declined the offer," said Wiegman, one of the authors of "[An Uncommon Passage](#): Traveling Through History on the Great Allegheny Passage Trail."

But the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, then led by Joshua Whetzel Jr., jumped at the chance to help develop a public trail along an old railroad bed. The plan was to acquire the right-of-way and hold it until the state found the money to buy it.

The conservancy ultimately decided in June 1978 to acquire only a portion of the right-of-way -- a 15-mile section that runs through Ohio State Park, a park the conservancy helped to create.

By 1986, thanks to the efforts of Park Superintendent Larry Adams and his multitalented maintenance staff, the first nine miles of a non-motorized, multipurpose trail opened between Ohio State and Ramcat Hollow near Confluence.

"An Uncommon Passage," edited by Edward K. Muller, a professor of history at the University of Pittsburgh, includes chapters written by Wiegman on the passage's geology, flora and fauna in addition to the community effort that made the trail a reality. Wiegman, a naturalist and gifted writer and photographer, also contributed dozens of photographs.

Martin West, a director of Fort Ligonier, describes the passage's role in the epic struggle between France and England for control of the Ohio River Valley. Historian Jennifer Ford traces the history of settlements in the region. Robert Gangewere, a retired editor of Carnegie Magazine, relates the impact of industrialization and Kevin Patrick, a geographer at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, evokes: "The Spirit of the Passage: Where Past and Future Meet."

The book, published by the University of Pittsburgh Press ([www.upress.pitt.edu](http://www.upress.pitt.edu)), should be a must-read for anyone biking or hiking along any section of the Great Allegheny Passage. It will enrich their experience many times over.

For more information, call 412-383-2456.

### Stefan's trail

The new 2.4-mile mountain bike trail in North Park is named for Stefan Pfundstein, an avid mountain biker who died of an allergy attack last year.

Pfundstein's family, friends and co-workers at Siemens Water Technologies in Marshall collected more than \$2,200 to donate to the Friends of North Park to have a trail built in his honor. The money was given to the Pittsburgh Trails Advocacy Group to do the work.

### Tour du District

The Tour du District, the first bike tour of the Woodland Hills School District, had a solid turnout of riders, volunteers and

community participants.

Steve Gough of Forest Hills, president of the Woodland Hills Foundation that sponsored the Oct. 2 ride, said 104 adults and children participated. They had their choice of four distances -- 2.5 miles, 5 miles, 25 miles and 30 miles. The last five miles of the latter ride "were all hills," Gough said.

He said students, teachers and administrators, and police officers and firefighters from each of the 12 communities in the district, "helped to make the tour a success."

Tour proceeds fund two of the foundation's premier programs -- Educator Mini-Grants and Senior Scholarships. Since 2002, almost \$45,000 in grants has been awarded to 90 teachers, and 16 scholarships valued at \$11,500 have been presented to graduating seniors.

For more information, go to [www.woodlandhillsfoundation.org](http://www.woodlandhillsfoundation.org).

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Larry Walsh writes about recreational bicycling for the Post-Gazette.

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