Pumpkinvine Nature Trail

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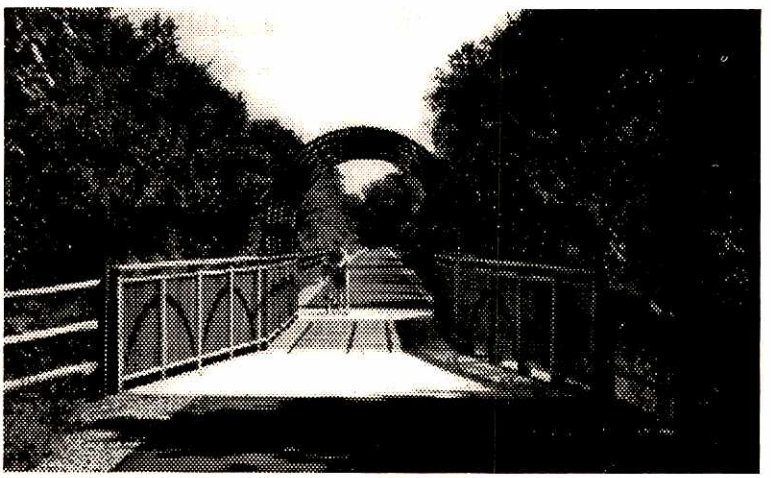
Indiana's longest rail trail opens

Cardinal Greenway is first-class rail-trail

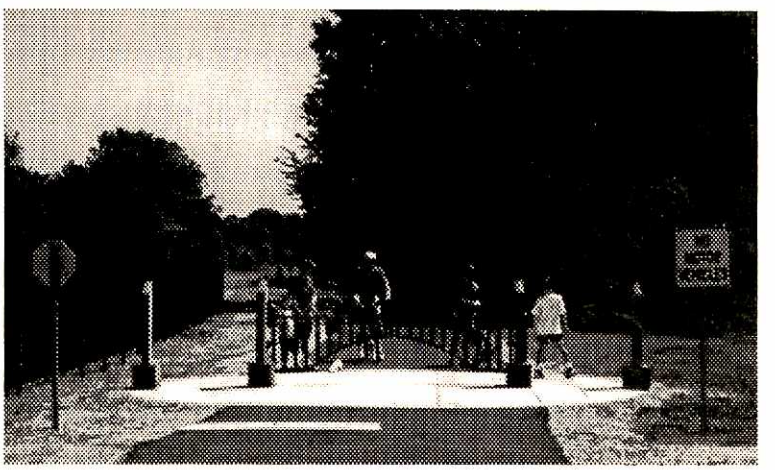
By John Yoder



On Saturday Aug. 29, I drove to Muncie to participate in the ribbon cutting of the Cardinal Greenway. I wanted to see what the state's longest rail-trail (at 10.6 miles) looked like and lend my personal support to a project that is similar in many ways to the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail. If the Cardinal Greenway–a primarily rural trail–can be successful, it can serve as an example of the benefits of greenways outside urban areas.

Think about it: while our neighboring states in the Midwest are racking up rural rail-trail mileage at a phenomenal rate, Indiana has had no operational rural rail trails. So far Indiana's rail-trail successes have been in urban areas–the Monon in Indianapolis and the Prairie-Duneland Trail in Portage. That's it. We've had nowhere to direct people when they raise questions about whether such a trail is possible in Indiana.

That fact places a heavy burden on developers of the Cardinal Greenway. If they created an inferior product, it would reflect badly on all of Indiana's proposed rural trails, including the Pumpkinvine. On the other hand, if they produced an attractive product, it could be a model for many other trails.



I arrived at the soon-to-be-restored Muncie depot in time for the complementary continental breakfast before the opening ceremony. The crowd of 200 plus was a mixture of adults and children, cyclists and walkers. In what I took as a good omen, I saw two political candidates there–one running for state representative and one for township trustee. They wanted to let people know they supported the trail. Trail advocates from Indianapolis that I knew, DNR staffers and Bob Carrico from our board and his wife Janice were also there.

After several rousing numbers from the Ball State pep band, Dave Ferguson, professor of landscape architecture at Ball State and chair of the Cardinal Greenway board began the ceremonies. He said this phase of the project "speaks to the power of volunteerism.... This volunteer-led effort has exhibited a can-do attitude and continued to believe that we can accomplish surprising things when we work together." I could only agree.

He went on to list ways the Cardinal Greenway improves the quality of life for

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How to get to Cardinal Greenway

To reach the Cardinal Greenway from Elkhart County, take SR 15 to Marion. South of Marion, turn east on SR 18 to I-69. Follow I-69 south to exit 41 (SR 332). Follow SR 332 east into Muncie. Turn right on Wheeling and follow it south to Wysor. Turn left (or east) on Wysor and look for the trail head on the north side of the street at 700 E. Wysor.

Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail are cyclists, hikers, equestrians, and naturalists who, by education and fund raising, support the area parks departments in their effort to create a linear park on the former Pumpkinvine corridor between Goshen and Shipshewana, Indiana.

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Larry Hout, who grew up in Middlebury, displays photos of some of the buildings that comprised the Pumpkinvine Rail Road. Hout is a descendant of engineers on the now-defunct railroad. He spoke at the annual meeting.
Photo by John D. Yoder

Hit the trail-Oct. 18, 1998

Join the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail on a fall walk along the Pumpkinvine Oct. 18 at 2 p.m. The walk will begin at Abshire Park on S.R. 4, one mile east of S.R. 15 in Goshen.

Come prepared to enjoy the fall colors and meet old friends of the trail.

Elizabeth Jacobs joins Friends' board

The newest member of the board of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc. is Elizabeth Jacobs. Liz has been an active member of the Friends for several years. "I don't think there's anyone in our membership who has contributed more hours to this cause than Liz Jacobs," said John Yoder, Friends president. Liz has helped the Friends through her videotaping of events, planing wildflowers, doing research and helping with mailings. "It is very fitting that Liz joins the board," Yoder said. "She is a dedicated and willing worker."

Discussions with Goshen on land transfer continue

Progress continues on plans to incorporate the first 1.75 miles of the Pumpkinvine north of SR 4 into the City of Goshen trail system. The city has surveyed the corridor and design work has begun on that section. When the city is sure it has enough money to develop that section of the Pumpkinvine, the Friends will give that 1.75 miles to the city.

Fifth Annual Indiana Bicycle Coalition set

The fifth annual Indiana Bicycle Coalition conference will be Feb. 12-13, 1999 in Indianapolis. For information call (317) 327-8356.

Friends set up legal expense fund

By John Yoder

Many people ask me, "How is the trail progressing?" What are the obstacles to making the trail a reality? The answer is that the trail is captive to a legal process, and in order to move it forward, it will require a lot of money.

In the next several weeks, you will have the opportunity to move the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail forward in a very tangible way. The Friends board will be sending you a letter asking for contributions toward a legal expense fund to be used in defraying the cost of defending our title in the class action lawsuit.

The letter will explain the need in more detail. Suffice it to say at this point that funds are need to counteract the hundreds of thousands of dollars that the opposition is spending to defeat the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail.

If you would like to help in this fundraising campaign, contact John Yoder at (219) 534-0779.

(Continued from page 1)

Muncie and builds a sense of community. He called it "a new kind of Main Street where people are friendly and caring, families can spend time together in a beautiful setting, where people from across the community, from all different backgrounds can enjoy their community together..."

Not only that, but as a part of the American Discovery Trail, a planned 6,000-mile route from Delaware to California, it will be a point of destination for people from across the nation. It would create economic opportunities for east central Indiana, he said, i.e., those people would be spending money in local motels and restaurants. Dave was on the money in more ways than one.

Other speakers at the ceremony were Bruce Moore, executive director of Cardinal Greenway and Reese Lukei, national coordinator of the American Discovery Trail.
(See www.discoverytrail.org.)

After their comments, a jogger, a cyclist, kids and a person in a wheelchair lined up on the trail and on cue broke through the ceremonial ribbon together. The trail was officially open, and I and the masses headed south to see what the trail looked like.

I'm happy to report that the Cardinal Greenway is first class. The surface is asphalt and at least 10 feet wide with a gravel shoulder. The trail travels through several industrial areas in Muncie and then some residential areas before opening onto the countryside.

The designers gave particular attention to road crossings. In the city, a gate blocks the trail, but openings on both sides of the gate permit cyclists to go around the gate. In the country, a single bollard in the center of the trail discourages motorists from getting on the trail.

Traveling south we passed a variety of features. There is one section with a highway on the west side and farms on the east, and quite a bit is a green vegetation tunnel where I couldn't tell what was on the other side. In several locations there is a split-rail fence to keep people from going down the steep sides of the corridor or to mark boundaries between the trail and private land, but I'd say 80 percent had no visible fences. In several places, the trail passes under a highway and there are a number of curves to give the trail visual variety.

One of the nicest features are the rest areas. One is at the old depot in Muncie, another 6.3 miles south and the third at 10 miles. They have benches, excellent inverted-U bike racks and port-a-potties inside a wooden barriers. All have a parking lot for cars. The one in Muncie is paved; the others are gravel. There also is an equestrian trail to the side of the cycling-walking trail for part of the way.

I was amused to see that young entrepreneurs were already grasped the economic possibilities Dave Ferguson had talked about. About five miles into the ride, I stopped at a makeshift trailside lemonade stand to get a drink. The young salesperson was a little rattled because I got the last of his prepared supply, and he could see that the trail was still full of riders coming his way. The hot sun was guaranteed to bring him more business. He quickly told his eight-year-old assistant to go home (about 30 yards away) and get more lemonade.

I highly recommend the Cardinal Greenway for a pleasant fall outing, whether on foot or bicycle. Our thanks to the many volunteers who took the time to do it right and give Indiana a model of what a rail trail can be.

John Yoder, president of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, Inc., receives a check for $500 from Jody and Bruce Weldy of the Indiana Trail Riders Association at the Friends annual meeting. The gift shows the support of ITRA for equestrian use of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail because there are so few public lands on which to ride horses in Indiana. "Many rail-trails, like the Kal-Haven in Michigan, have a parallel equestrian trail beside the walking-cycling trail," Yoder said.

Indiana Greenways Conference

Make plans now to attend the second Indiana Greenways Conference, Feb. 21-23, 1999 in Indianapolis. The theme of the conference is "The Dollars and Sense of Trails and Greenways."

The purpose of the conference is to share information about the economic, social and environmental benefits of greenways. Speakers include numerous people who have seen the economic benefits of having greenways in their community.

For information contact: The Indiana Trails Fund, P.O. Box 402, Indianapolis, IN 46202-0402. (317) 237-9348. E-mail trails@kiva.net.

National Trails Symposium in Tuscon

The 14th biennial National Trails Symposium will be held Nov. 13-17, 1998 in Tuscon, Arizona. The theme of the conference is "Trails and the American Spirit." Tuscon is surrounded by trails and the weather in November is glorious. National Trails Smyposia celebrate trails of all kinds: rail trails, backcountry paths and water trails. For information on registration, visit the American Trails Web site: www.outdoorlink.com/amtrails, call the Smyposium Hotline at (520) 632-1140 or e-mail the organizers at amtrails@lankaster.com.

Thanks to out-going Board members

Four board members completed their terms or resigned from the Friends' board of directors in the past year. The Friends want to thank each of them for the support they have given the trail project.

Although we mentioned Norm Kauffmann's departure from the board in an earlier newsletter, space did not permit a full statement of appreciation for his nine years of service on the board. Norm was a member of the interest group that began discussing the Pumpkinvine as a linear park in Dec. 1989. He became a board member when the Friends incorporated in 1993. During the past three years he served as board secretary. He resigned last year in order to avoid conflict of interest when he took the job as town manager of Shipshewana. "Norm was one of the original six people who began the long process of saving the Pumpkinvine for future generations," said Friends President John Yoder. "He's seen all the hostility and through it all kept the faith in the trail's possibility."

Brent Cummings served on the board of the Friends for four years (1993-97). Brent was also the liaison between the board and the Middlebury Park Board from 1993-96. One of his most notable contributions was to revised Friends' Web site, which he continues to maintain since leaving the board. "As a member of the Elkhart County Sheriff's Dept., he was invaluable to the board when we had practical questions about law enforcement," said Yoder. "We greatly appreciated the professional way he handled the hostile people who tried to stop our first trail walk in March 1994."

Eric Amt served on the board for three years (1994-97). "Eric brought a wonderful knowledge of landscaping to our board," said Yoder. "He was a great help in planting trees and wildflowers in Middlebury in 1996 and in the landscaping of the trailhead in 1996. We value his connection in the Elkhart business community and the fact that he will continue to be a member of our trail committee."

Steve Herendeen served on the board one year. "Steve's short tenure on the board is misleading," Yoder said. "He has been an active member of the Friends association for many years but behind the scenes, and he will continue to help us in less official ways."

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Don't Forget Your Membership Dues

If the date on the label of this newsletter has passed, it's time to renew your membership in the Friends. Membership Levels are:

___ Individual $15 ___ Family $25 ___ Sustaining $50
___ Contributing $100 ___ Patron $250 ___ Founder $500

Send your membership payments to:
Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, P.O. Box 392, Goshen, IN 46527.

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Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Please take note of the expiration date of your membership on the address label. Thanks.

All funds go toward paying the day-to-day expenses of the Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail: printing, postage, letterhead, envelopes, copying and transportation. No officers receive remuneration. Founding members will receive special recognition at the trailhead in Goshen.

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