

## HISTORY OF MCM TRAIL SECTIONS IN PENNSYLVANIA

June 15, 2024

For many decades, the Mountain Club has maintained a fixed section of the A.T. in Pennsylvania (PA) from Pine Grove Furnace State Park north to Center Point Knob, a few miles south of Boiling Springs, PA (a distance of 12.5 miles). Then our assigned trail section picks up again on the north side of the Cumberland Valley--beginning at the intersection of the A.T. and the Tuscarora Trail (at the top of Blue Mountain) -- and runs north to the Susquehanna River (16.5 miles). Many of our newer club members may assume that this was always our assigned territory, but in fact our assigned Trail section evolved over a period of nearly 60 years.

Even before the club was officially established 1934, our founders--who were members of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC)--made arrangements to take over PATC's northernmost section of the Trail. The Mountain Club Bulletin for January-February 1935, the first newsletter published after the official establishment of the club, stated that "the club has been officially assigned the 29 miles from Long Mountain fire tower to the Susquehanna River." The Long Mountain fire tower was located north of Whiskey Springs Road (a few miles south of Boiling Springs, PA).

That assigned section of the A.T. included the Cumberland Valley between Center Point Knob and Blue Mountain—in those early years, the Trail followed roads through the Cumberland Valley so there was limited maintenance work to be done in the Valley section. (Decades later, the newly formed Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Club took over responsibility for the Cumberland Valley section.)

Afterward, MCM moved quickly to begin taking care of its new section. The MCM Bulletin, for March-April 1935, stated that after work trips visit to the site, plans were underway for a Center Point Knob marker and a dedication gathering in the Fall." (At that time, Center Point Knob was the halfway point of the A.T. Today, the current center point of the Trail is further south, near Toms Run in Michaux State Forest.) Several work trips took place in the spring of 1935. Here are several photos from the first club scrapbooks showing the Long Mountain fire tower--the southern end of our Trail section at that time--in the background.

# WORK

ON NORTH MOUNTAIN  
PENNSYLVANIA  
MARCH 24, 1935

TO QUOTE FROM THE BULLETIN:  
ON MARCH 24 A LARGE GROUP ON AN  
INDEPENDENT WORK TRIP CLEARED AND  
REPAINTED THE MARYLAND SECTION  
OF THE TRAIL ON NORTH MOUNTAIN.

THE GROUP



# WORK ON THE

MARCH 17, 1935



THE OLD "CENTER POINT" OF THE TRAIL -  
ON THE LONG MOUNTAIN FIRE TOWER



APRIL 14TH  
AND STILL  
WORKING



WELL - WE KNOW THESE PEOPLE -



CUTTING THE NEW ROUTE UP  
AND OVER LONG MOUNTAIN



Later that year, MCM moved to implement its plan for a monument at Center Point Knob to mark the center point of the Trail. Photos in the MCM scrapbook show our volunteers dragging a boulder in place where the Trail passes Center Point Knob. They attached a bronze plaque to the boulder to commemorate the significance of the location.



FC

AND THEN CAME THE MEMORABLE DAY OF THE  
DEDICATION OF THIS MONUMENT WITH ITS  
CROWDS FROM FAR AND WIDE - AND WITH  
THE RAINS THAT PREVENTED BETTER PICTURES -

Here is a close-up picture of the plaque. (Note: the story of how that plaque vanished and then was found again decades later, will be the subject of another story.)



You can see more photos of those first work trips in our scrapbook at the Maryland State Archives site: [mdsa\\_sc5171\\_18\\_1\\_2.pdf \(maryland.gov\)](https://www.mdsa.sc5171.18.1.2.pdf).

At later points in time, PATC transferred responsibility to MCM for 15 additional miles of the Trail, going south from the Long Mountain Fire Tower to Pine Grove Furnace State Park entrance at Route PA-233. This expansion seems to have occurred in two increments, with the first one apparently taking place around 1936—that's when our documents started to state that Route PA-94 was the southern of our assigned territory. (The A.T. crossing of PA-94 was about three miles south of the Long Mountain fire tower site.)

Two years later, in the October-December 1938 Bulletin, the MCM Trail Supervisor (Os Heard) expressed hope that PATC might agree to additional territory “since we are up in that territory quite frequently.” However, the December 1940 Council minutes presented a pessimistic view, when Heard informed the Council that the Piney Mt. Section of AT would continue to be maintained by PATC. But something changed shortly after that report, because the July-September 1941 Bulletin included a report of a work trip to Piney Mountain, PA, on June 8<sup>th</sup>. The report starts with the following sentences: “Seven members turned out to do more work on Piney Mountain. What a gift from PATC!” This is the first indication in MCM’s newsletters of this reassignment, but it meant that MCM had gained responsibility for maintaining the Trail from the Susquehanna River all the way south to Pine Grove Furnace State Park, which is still the southern end of our assigned Trail section in PA.

Today, most of the lands through which the A.T. passes are publicly owned. Our assigned section of the Trail in PA now passes through property owned by Pine Grove Furnace State Park, Michaux State Forest, PA Gamelands, and the National Park Service (NPS). But in the past, much of the Trail crossed privately owned land. As a result, sometimes Trail relocations were needed as ownership changed. For example, the owner of a large track of land north of Whiskey

Spring Road gave land to the York YMCA, and, as a result, that section of the Trail (which included MCM's first hiking shelter at Dark Hollow) had to be moved. In later years, land purchases by NPS and the PA Game Commission eventually stabilized the Trail's route in that area.

In particular, in the 1980s NPS and its Trail partners purchased land through the Cumberland Valley to permit the Trail to be taken off roads. After long, sometimes contentious debates about optional routes, NPS settled on a route through woodlots and farm fields approximately halfway between Carlisle and Mechanicsburg. As the reroute was being designed and laid out, it was decided that it would be best for a local organization to maintain this 17-mile section. In 1991, the Cumberland Valley Appalachian Trail Club took over responsibility from MCM for the Cumberland Valley section of the A.T.—leaving MCM with our current Trail assignment: from the Susquehanna River south to the top of Blue Mountain (Tuscarora Trail intersection), and from Center Point Knob south to Pine Grove Furnace State Park.

The map below shows the various Trail sections assigned to MCM and the years of these assignments.

