

## Bicycle The New Section Of The Rail-Trail

By David Kagan

The newest section of northcentral Pennsylvania's rail-trail is now open to bicycling and hiking enthusiasts! Just under eight miles long, it lies in Tioga County and stretches between Route 6 at Ansonia and Route 287 just three miles above Wellsboro, passing through very scenic wetlands, farm fields and a small village.

Marsh Creek meanders along the entire trail, with a number of short, wooden bridges over runs and washes that empty into it. Narrow, country roads also parallel and intersect with the trail, with an attractive, arched wooden bridge providing passage over one of them. Route 6 also roughly parallels the rail-trail, off to the south never more than a half-mile away.

From the access parking lot at the Ansonia end, trail users will pass their first eye-catching sight only about 50 yards down the path—a stand of beautiful, white birch trees just off to the right. Next of interest, on the left, is an old New York Central Railroad stone mile-marker, with “L113” carved into it, the “L” standing for the town of Lyons, New York, 113 miles away, where the north-south branch of the railway started.

Then, about a mile from the parking area, a huge, old willow tree down to the right by the side of a home off an intersecting country road waves its drooping branches at passing trail users. Other vegetation, just about all along the eight miles, offers color and an excuse to stop often to rest and enjoy the sights or to take photographs—now in September, the extensive goldenrod, delicate Queen Anne's lace, purple and pink asters, white-and-yellow fleabane, tickseed sunflowers in front of a cornfield, and other Pennsylvania wildflowers.

A gate and a crossroad just past a cornfield at 1.6 miles mark one's arrival at the country village of Asaph. The only non-residential structures in the community are the side-by-side Asaph Methodist Church and the Shippen Township Municipal Building (both visible up the road from the rail-trail). The only option for thirsty rail-trailers is the soda machine in front of the latter.

Francis Williams, who has lived in Asaph for over 20 years, said about the newly opened rail-trail: “I don't see any harm in it. I expect to ride it quite often up and down myself.”

Back down the trail east of Asaph at about the 2-mile mark is an 8-foot-high, about 60-yard-long, solid wood “privacy barrier” on the left side. Although an unfortunate eyesore to rail-trail users, at least it provides passersby with a very pleasant scent!

Another gate and crossroad come just a little farther on. Viewable down that road to the left is a large U. S. Geological Survey Research Laboratory building.

Edgar Wong and Maria Cruz, married physicians who live in Wellsboro, out near this crossroad enjoying the newest section of the trail on a rare day off from work (he as an emergency room physician for the Laurel Health System at Wellsboro's Soldiers' and Sailors' Hospital, she in a practice in Mansfield), said that they hope the trail eventually is completed all

the way into Wellsboro. They've made extensive use of the rail-trail, including cross-country skiing in the wintertime. Dr. Wong noted, "When our kids were young, I would pull them on a poke, attached to my hips with a harness, as I skied; that's probably the best shape I was ever in!"

A modern, stone restroom built by DCNR is at about the 3-mile-mark on the trail. Visible east of there a quarter-mile farther on is a beautifully constructed, arched, wooden bridge over another crossroad.

Past the bridge comes old stone mile-marker L110, almost hidden behind thick vegetation; another growth of thin, young, white-trunked birch trees at about 4 miles; and then a wide, open-field view off to the right towards Route 6, perhaps 500 yards away to the south.

Fields with hay-bales and major wetlands to the right (south) of the trail dominate from miles 4 to 5. Geese and ducks can be seen and heard squawking from the waters. Fortunate travelers may even see a blue heron.

Much of miles 5 to 6.5 also have wire fencing installed behind the three-runged wooden fence that borders most of the new 8-mile path. Apparently, some of the farmers deemed this desirable for added privacy or security reasons.

The final mile or so to Route 287 is very straight, ending at another access parking area, with two portable potties to accommodate trail-users. The actual trail ends at an old railroad bridge, with a sign, "Road Closed," hanging from it. Perhaps another should also be nailed up, for bicyclists and walkers, saying, "To Be Continued"?

Katrinka Westendorf, who lives in Frederick, Maryland, has vacationed in the Wellsboro area the past 4 or 5 Septembers, bicycling sections of the rail-trail each time. Of the newest section, she said, "I like it. It's nice and quiet, rural, flat. I like the marshland on the side. I saw a heron and some ducks. It's different than the other parts, although I've seen more animals around Blackwell."

At the eastern terminus just off Route 287 is Oliver Butler's farm. Just 100 yards from the trail's end is his Pag-Omar Farms Market, offering fruit and vegetables, groceries and snacks, drinks and ice cream. Pag-Omar Farms is well-known in the area, a Century Farm (in the family for over 100 years) that has offered sweet corn for 25 years, and whose produce offerings all come from local growers (in the immediate valley) or from other nearby Pennsylvania farmers.

This newest 8-mile-long section of the rail-trail beckons to all to come and enjoy its beauty in northcentral Pennsylvania, where the trains of the past used to chug and hoot through the valley.

Notes: To get to the "eastern end" parking area of this new rail-trail section, go west on Route 6 out of Wellsboro for about 3 miles (passing an Acorn/Exxon gasoline/convenience store at about 2 miles—last chance for gas or food), turn right onto Route 287 north, then after only about a third of a mile, left at Marsh Creek Road, then about 100 yards and left again onto Butler Road at the houses, finally proceeding about 100 yards more to the parking area.

To get to the “western end” parking areas, don’t turn at Route 287. Instead, continue west on Route 6 for about 8 miles towards Ansonia. Once at the Route 362 intersection, two parking area choices exist: (1) turn left up 362 and proceed just under a mile to the sign on the right for the “Pine Creek Trail and Darling Run” parking areas (modern, permanent restrooms there and well water); or (2) cross the Route 6 bridge over Marsh Creek and take an immediate right (SR 3002, Victory Baptist Church and cemetery there also), with the parking area just under a half mile down on the right. Nearest food is just a third of a mile farther west on the left side of Route 6— either the Burnin’ Barrel Bar (with soda machines out front) or the adjacent Ansonia Country Store, with gasoline and advertising hand-dipped ice cream, hoagies, baked goods, and Pennsylvania maple syrup!