

History Along the Trail

A Brief History of the Mason-Dixon Line

Adapted by Pete McLaughlin from article by John Mackenzie

The Mason-Dixon Line was surveyed between 1763 and 1767 by two men that gave the line its name, Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon. The survey was commissioned to settle a long-running boundary dispute between the Maryland and Pennsylvania colonies. The Maryland colony resulted from a 1632 land grant from King Charles I to the Calvert family for territory north of the Virginia colony. This encompassed the area north of the Potomac to the 40th parallel and from the Atlantic west to the source of the Potomac. Pennsylvania was granted by King Charles II in 1681 to William Penn as repayment for a loan to his brother, the Duke of York, by Penn's father. The territory granted extended five degrees west from the Delaware River between the 40th and 43rd parallels, but excluded lands held by the Duke of York within a "twelve-mile circle" centered on New Castle. The next year, Penn leased the Duke of York's lands in this circle and those along the west shore of Delaware Bay to get better access to the Atlantic.

However, the exact location of the boundary between these colonial grants was unclear. A boundary agreement was reached between the Penns and Calverts in 1732. Boundary surveys were made in the 1750s and 1760s but were not very accurate. The British royal astronomer James Bradley was consulted for solutions, and

Bradley recommended astronomer Charles Mason and surveyor Jeremiah Dixon for the task of making an accurate boundary survey.

Mason and Dixon arrived in Philadelphia on November 15, 1763. Mason brought along state-of-the-art equipment, including special telescopes and a precision clock. The starting reference point for the survey was the north wall of a house on the south side of Cedar Street (now 30 South Street) near Second Street. Because a survey straight south from Philadelphia would take them through the Delaware River, they surveyed and measured an arbitrary distance (31 miles) west to a farm owned by John Harland in Embreeville, Pennsylvania, at the "Forks of the Brandywine." They negotiated to set up an observatory and set a reference stone nearby at the same latitude as the starting point in Philadelphia. This "Stargazer's Stone" is still present there today.

In the spring of 1764, the survey party ran a line due south from Harland's farm. As normal for the Mason-Dixon surveys, this line was measured with the survey chains and levels behind a team of axmen who cleared a line of sight eight or nine yards wide. Mason and Dixon arrived in April at a farm field owned by Alexander Bryan in what is now the Possum Hill section of Delaware's White Clay Creek State Park. They

placed an oak post called "Post mark'd West" at a point exactly 15 miles below the latitude they had determined in Philadelphia. The Post mark'd West would be the eastern origin and reference latitude point for the west line. It is now marked by a stone monument accessible from the park's Bryan's Field Trail, a modest (app. 2 mile) hike from the Mason-Dixon Trail.

Mason and Dixon then spent the rest of 1764 surveying the north-south boundary line between Maryland and the lower counties of Pennsylvania (now Delaware). Though this boundary appears to be a straight line on first glance at a map, the work actually involved surveying several segments. They also surveyed the twelve-mile circle from the New Castle courthouse to the north-south boundary. In the spring of 1765 they worked near the northeast corner of Maryland, starting the survey of the west line from the "Post mark'd West" in April. The west line became the colonial boundary west of where it crossed the twelve-mile arc. The intersection of the twelve-mile arc and west line is the location of the Arc Corner Monument, which stands alongside the Mason-Dixon Trail just off Hopkins Bridge Road in White Clay Creek State Park.

To be continued in the next issue!

Mason-Dixon Quarterly Hike and Meeting

Saturday, November 19, 2016 See page 2 for more details

Trail Update Fall 2016

Due to the heavier than usual Spring rains and the retirement of some Section Maintainers the trail was more overgrown than usual this summer, so a lot of hours were put in to clear away all the downed trees and overgrown brush. The rest of this article highlights the work performed on problem areas caused by storm damage or retirement of Section Maintainers.

WESTERN SECTION

Mike Calabrese with some help from Ron Gray re-blazed all the road sections of the trail from the western terminus to Codorus Furnace (30 hrs). Jim Hooper, Tom Morley, Mike Calabrese and Tim Schmidt joined the Friends of Pinchot Park and the park staff to get 200 yards of the trail out of the mud using geocell fabric and stone during the KTA "Code Orange" Trail Care event (20 hrs). Roxanne & Dave Strine

cleared the climb from Wrightsville to High Point of blowdowns & overgrown brush (44 hrs), followed by the new Section Maintainer, Bill Fassett, along with his son and 30 others cleaning up what was left (31 hrs). Roxanne & Dave also cleared 3 blowdowns between the campground and Urey Overlook (12 hrs). Jim Hooper, Tom Morley, Bernie Frick, Frank Kempf and Tim Schmidt cleared 14 blowdowns and overgrown brush along Sawmill and Furnace Runs (20 hrs); Scott Longnecker, the new Section Maintainer, cleared up what was left (3 hrs).

CENTRAL SECTION

Jim Hooper, Frank Kempf, Tom Morley, Roxanne Strine, Mike Campisi, Bernie Frick and Tim Schmidt cleared blowdowns and heavy brush from a completely overgrown section of trail just north of Lay Road (28 hrs). A

short section of the trail is still blocked because of angry insects wearing yellow jackets. This will be cleared when weather permits (i.e. after a hard freeze). This section and the two south of it are in need of maintainers.

EASTERN SECTION

Pete McLaughlin, Bob Gaston, the Trail Dawgs and the Trail Spinners cleared limbs and overgrown brush from the trail in Elk Neck State Forest (63 hrs). The 2 sections of the trail in the state forest are in need of Section Maintainers.

Check out the Trail Maintenance section of www.mason-dixontrail.org if you're interested in volunteering as a Section Maintainer.

Mason-Dixon Quarterly Hike and Meeting

Quarterly Hike and Meeting
Sat., Nov. 19, 2016
Hike: 9:00 am
Meeting: 1:00 pm

The next board meeting of the Mason-Dixon Trail System will be held on Saturday, November 19, 2016 at the York Hiking Club Cabin, 1134 Furnace Rd, Airville, PA at 1:00 pm. (This address works for Google Maps, it may be slightly different for other GPS systems). The carpool for the hike will leave at 9:00 am from the Lock 12 parking lot (Lat/Lon: 39.814553, -76.331322). The hike will be about 5.5 miles with 2 moderate climbs. There will also be optional shorter hikes. Bring snacks/lunch and water.

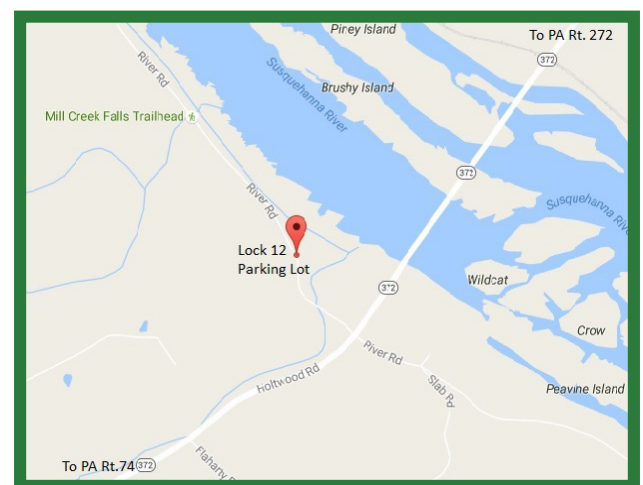
Directions to the hike:

From the west side of the Susquehanna River: Starting at the intersection of PA Rt. 74 and PA Rt.372, drive east on PA Rt. 372 for 2.2 miles, then turn left onto River Road and drive north for 1/4 of a mile to the Lock 12 parking lot on the right. The left turn onto River Road is easy to miss, so slow down after about 2 miles on PA Rt. 372.

From the east side of the Susquehanna River: Starting at the intersection of PA Rt. 272 and PA Rt. 372 in Buck, PA, drive west on PA Rt. 372 for 7.2 miles. Turn right 1/4 of a mile from the west end of the bridge onto River Road and drive north for 1/4 of a mile to the Lock 12 parking lot on the right.

Directions to the meeting:

From the intersection of PA Rt. 74 and PA Rt. 425 in Airville, PA, drive north on PA Rt. 425 for 4.6 miles. The York Hiking Club cabin is on the right 2/10 of a mile after crossing the bridge over Otter Creek.



President's Message

TRAIL REPORT

In the past, the Trail Report was discussed at the board meeting and included in the minutes but it was often shortened or even omitted because it was at the end of the agenda and we ran out of time. Starting with this newsletter, the Trail Report will be included in the newsletter separate from the minutes. Hopefully, this approach will provide more complete and timely information and allow you to keep up with the state of the trail. You should always check the "Current Trail Status" on our webpage before any long hike on a section of the M-DT that you're not familiar with.

WEBSITE COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

In my first message back in March, I talked about improving communications with our members using the M-DTS website. There have been positive results in that effort. We've successfully recruited maintainers through the "Trail Maintenance" pages on the website. Some of them followed up on a "Section Maintainer Needed" sign that they saw on the trail and others volunteered for an available trail section that they saw on the spreadsheet in the "Trail Maintenance" pages. In either case, the communication was handled by the "Contact Us" page on the website. Of course, the "Contact

Us" page can also be used for general inquiries or comments about the trail, the organization, the newsletter or the website.

Another feature of the website with positive results is the "Report Trail Issues" page. Many of the Section Maintainers live more than 30 minutes from their section and may only visit it a couple of times a year. Also, some sections don't have maintainers. Without trail users reporting the issues/problems they encounter, overgrown or blocked sections may stay that way for months before the appropriate person learns of the problem and schedules a work trip. The trail issue reports we have received this year have allowed the maintainers to resolve these issues more quickly. Keep those reports coming!

However, not all of the issues can be resolved quickly which leads me to another function of the website, the "Current Trail Status" page. So far, we have only used this page to report long-term or permanent relocations of the trail. In the future, we will also post the location of blockages that might last a month or more before a trail crew can get to it. The post will be removed from the website when the issue is resolved.

The trail users, section maintainers and board members all need to work together for these processes to work well. Please help improve the Mason-Dixon Trail.

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**Reserve April 1
to help clean-up
the dump above
Fishing Creek.**

**(4) 2-wheel drive trucks
are needed.**



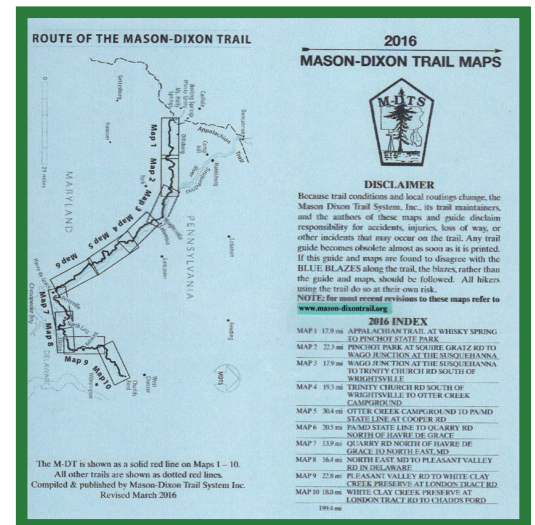
MASON-DIXON TRAIL SYSTEM

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Order Your 2016 M-DT Map Set

The quickest way to order a 2016 Mason-Dixon Trail Map Set is to go to the website www.mason-dixontrail.org and click on Maps /Membership at the top of the page. Scroll down the page to the image of 2016 map set cover sheet. Click the “Buy Now” button. You will then have the option to purchase the maps with PayPal or a credit card. Either login to your PayPal account or click the “Pay with Debit or Credit Card” button.

If you would prefer, you can pay by check. Just like above, go to the website www.mason-dixontrail.org, click on Maps/Membership at the top of the page. Scroll down the page to the image of 2016 map set cover sheet. Below the “Buy Now” button there are instructions about making out your check and mailing it to the M-DTS Treasurer.



The M-DTS Newsletter is published about four weeks in advance of each of the four M-DTS board meetings held annually. Submissions are welcomed.

The Mason-Dixon Trail System, Inc. is a non-profit all-volunteer, service-oriented association of trail clubs and individual hikers that has as its purpose the use and conservation of the backcountry through the development of new trails in the mid-Atlantic states. The nucleus of M-DTS is the 199-mile Mason-Dixon Trail which passes through historic and scenic areas of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware.

New members are welcome. To join, send \$20 (which covers initial membership as well as the M-DT maps) to:

Mason-Dixon Trail System, Frank Kempf, 2174 Esbenshade Road, York, PA 17408

Thereafter, the annual fee is \$7. Life membership is available for \$250.

Visit the Mason-Dixon Trail web site at: www.mason-dixontrail.org

Visit the Mason-Dixon Trail Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/theMDTS