

Allegheny Portage Railroad

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Allegheny Portage Railroad
National Historic Site



Volunteers-in-Parks Program



Very Important People

Americans have enjoyed a love affair with their national parks since Yellowstone, our first national park, was created in 1872. Now you can help the National Park Service care for your parks --by joining the 70,000 people yearly who volunteer their time and talents to help us safeguard this heritage.

Become a volunteer and put yourself at the heart of the park experience. Help pass on our priceless parklands legacy to coming generations. Join with the National Park Service as a Volunteer In Parks (VIP) this year. As a Volunteer In Parks, you can make a difference in your life and the lives of others as you help the national parks perpetuate their promise.

Telling The Portage Story

Canal systems, such as the Main Line, were important to Pennsylvania, quickening the trade between the western agricultural communities and the eastern manufacturing cities. The Allegheny Mountains, once thought an insurmountable obstacle to an east-west canal, were bypassed by an incline rail system.

The Allegheny Portage Railroad worked by hauling goods or canal boats out of the water, placing them on railroad cars, sending the cars over the mountains, and returning them to a canal. The railroad was a daring stroke of engineering that worked remarkably well during a time when railroads were still experimental.

Its role in the country's westward expansion was its greatest contribution. As locomotives grew more dependable, railroads provided stiffer competition for canals, finally putting most of them out of business. This too, was the end of the Allegheny Portage in 1857 after 23 years of service.

Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site preserves and explains the remains of the Portage Railroad. The visitor center for the park is located at the Gallitzin Exit of US Route 22. The visitor center contains a 20 minute film about the park as well as exhibits and publications to enhance the understanding of the park story.

Park staff and volunteers offer talks and demonstrations to the visiting public in the visitor center as well as in the historic Summit area. The Summit area includes the Engine House 6 Exhibit Shelter and the refurbished Lemon House Historic Tavern. Demonstrations of Log Hewing, Stone Cutting, Wool Spinning and the like are presented as staffing permits.

The park story is complex and relates to many changes of the timeperiod. From the Industrial Revolution to financing and the National Bank national events influenced and were influenced by the Portage. Volunteers are needed to uncover aspects of these chronicles as well as to tell the many known stories to the visiting public.

Who to Contact:

Diane Garcia, Volunteer Coordinator
Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site
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Current 2010-2011 Openings

Run/assist with Girl Scout Programs



January/February/March-Saturdays
Brownie: Listening to the Past
Hands on activities for girls in grades 1-3 including dressing scouts in costume and playing with reproduction toys of the period
Brownie: Building Arts
Hands on activities for girls in grades 1-3 to discuss accessibility, community planning, and dealing with handicaps
Junior: My Heritage
Hands on activities for girls in grades 4 to 6 to discuss history, preservation, conservation

Create and Present February Black Heritage celebrations for scouts and/or general public

Create and Present March Woman's History celebrations for scouts and/or general public

October/November weekend Junior Girl Scout Programs Local Lore tour in Hollidaysburg
Hands on activities for girls in grades 4 to 6 to discuss history, architecture, preservation, conservation, community planning

Girls Scouts ages 11 to 17
Heritage Hunt IPA- Tour similar to Local Lore but ending with development of display, Hands on activities in chores of time period, and general history

Run/assist with Visitor Contacts

Work with park staff to greet and orient park visitors at the park Visitor Center:

- usher visitors to theater for presentations
- explain visiting options and special programs
- assist families with children
- support individual visitors while staff is busy presenting school programs
- assist with sales at park bookstore

-Staff Lemon House, speak with park visitors about history of the Lemon House

-Rove historic area in costume to answer general questions and orient visitors

-Staff Engine House 6 Exhibit Shelter to explain displays and workings

Research Help Needed



Gather a photocopy of APRR documents
Transcribe documents from handwritten to typed records
Research names of Portage Railroad workers
Research participation of local men in the Mexican War
Dispell urban legends about the Portage or the Lemon House by locating maps and documentation
Discover the history of minorities associated with the Portage Railroad
Uncover stories of Portage Railroad travellers
Document clothing and lifestyles of timeperiod
Research common trades/tools of the 1840s



for park library through visits to:

- Blair County Historical Society
- Cambria County Historical Society
- Huntingdon County Historical Society
- Blair County Genealogical Society Library
- Other Public Libraries
- Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh
- State Historical Center in Harrisburg

General Park Help Needed

Rove Staple Bend trail, Mineral Point, on foot or by bicycle (provided) to greet visitors, report problems

Rove Summit level trails by foot to greet visitors, report problems, perform minor trail repairs

Care for herb garden at Lemon House: weed, feed, water, replant as needed

Create and care for flower garden at Lemon House: plant, weed, feed, water

Assist staff with presentations to the public. Guide visitors through the park. Present additional talks and demonstrations or assist staff member during a talk or presentation.



Special Events Help Needed



In all cases, costume or uniform and training provided, many props/tools available as well

Dress in costume to demonstrate work done in the 1840s

Dress in costume to tell the story of a Portage worker during a 'ghost' tour

Wear comfortable volunteer uniform to usher summer Evening on the Summit programs

Wear comfortable volunteer uniform while trailing hikes or bicycle tours lead by park rangers

Dress in Mexican War costume to fire black powder weapons (black powder training required and provided by park)