

= Walden ? Wallkill Rail Trail =

The Walden ? Wallkill Rail Trail , also known as the Jesse McHugh Rail Trail , is a 3 @. @ 22 @-@ mile (5 @. @ 18 km) rail trail between the village of Walden , New York and the neighboring hamlet of Wallkill . The two communities are located in Orange and Ulster counties , respectively , in upstate New York .

The trail , like the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail to the north , is part of the former Wallkill Valley Railroad 's rail corridor . The land was purchased by the towns of Montgomery and Shawangunk in 1985 and converted to a public trail . The portion of the trail in Shawangunk was formally opened in 1993 and named after former town supervisor Jesse McHugh . Plans to pave the trail between Walden and Wallkill were discussed since 2001 , and the route was finally paved between 2008 and 2009 . The trail includes an unofficial , unimproved section to the north of Wallkill , and is bounded by NY 52 and NY 208 .

= = History = =

Stretching 33 miles (53 km) from Montgomery to Kingston , the Wallkill Valley Railroad operated from 1866 until its last regular freight run on December 31 , 1977 . In the 1980s , Conrail , then the owner of the Wallkill Valley line , attempted to sell the former rail corridor . The towns of Montgomery and Shawangunk ? in Orange and Ulster counties , respectively ? purchased their sections of the rail line to allow " development of a commercial corridor [as well as] utility easements and access " to a local reservoir .

The Montgomery section consisted of 2 miles (3 @. @ 2 km) from the village of Walden to the town line with Shawangunk , and the Shawangunk section ran 2 @. @ 3 miles (3 @. @ 7 km) north from the town line to Birch Road . The purchases were completed in August and October 1985 , respectively . In November of that year , the New York State Department of Correctional Services bought 1 @. @ 4 miles (2 @. @ 3 km) of the former corridor in Shawangunk 's hamlet of Wallkill , near the Wallkill Correctional Facility . This portion extends from Birch Road to the town line with Gardiner . The Shawangunk Correctional Facility was built at that location . South of Walden , the corridor remains an active rail line operated by the Norfolk Southern Railway .

North of the prisons , the former corridor continues as the separate Wallkill Valley Rail Trail . Rail trail enthusiasts have been trying to find a way to combine the two rail trails since the 1990s , and in 2004 the town of Shawangunk commissioned an open space study that identified possible ways to accomplish such a connection . A 2008 Ulster County transportation plan included projects to connect the trails , and the town of Shawangunk is currently considering plans to connect the trails by diverting the corridor along Birch Road . The original route of the corridor is 40 feet (12 m) within the prisons ' perimeter fence .

The portion of the former corridor running through the center of Wallkill was converted to a road , Railroad Avenue . The southern part of the route , running from Wallkill to the Montgomery ? Shawangunk town line , was officially opened as the Jesse McHugh Rail Trail on June 5 , 1993 . Jesse McHugh was a former Shawangunk town supervisor . The northern portion of the Shawangunk section , which stretches to the border of the prison grounds , is maintained by the town but not officially part of the trail .

In 2001 , Shawangunk , Montgomery and the Walden began applying for over \$ 600 @, @ 000 in TEA @-@ 21 grants to create a paved , Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) -accessible trail between Walden and Wallkill . The total cost of paving the trail was expected to be \$ 750 @, @ 000 , though it eventually ballooned to \$ 1 @. @ 5 million . The decision to pave the trail was vehemently opposed by horseback riders who felt it would endanger them , and protested at several public meetings by the Mid @-@ Hudson Horse Trails Association . The decision was also opposed by nearby homeowners who believed an increase in trail use would threaten their privacy .

In October 2003 , Walden , Shawangunk and Montgomery acquired the \$ 600 @, @ 000 grant needed to begin paving the trail . Two months later , Bob and Doris Kimball , a couple in Montgomery , donated 20 acres (8 @. @ 1 ha) of their land to create a park by the trail near Lake

Osiris Road . The park is expected to be developed once funds are available to do so . Nearly \$ 200 @, @ 000 in funding to complete pavement of the trail was lost when the outgoing 109th Congress did not approve a 2006 budget bill . In February 2008 , Congressman Maurice Hinchey announced the appropriation of \$ 351 @, @ 000 to complete the project . Construction began on September 22 , 2008 , and the paved 3 @. @ 22 @-@ mile (5 @. @ 18 km) trail opened on May 2 , 2009 . Flooding from hurricanes in 2011 caused a cave @-@ in along the Montgomery section of the trail . The storms eroded much of the ground beneath the trail , causing the ground to sink . As of July 2012 , no repairs have been completed ; the cost of fully repairing the trail was estimated to be \$ 214 @, @ 000 .

= = Route = =

The trail begins at the 9 @. @ 4 @-@ acre (3 @. @ 8 ha) Wooster Grove Park in the village of Walden , near NY 52 . There is a visitor center for rail trail users at the park . The park also contains Walden 's former train station , which has since been renovated as a recreational facility .

The trail continues 1 mile (1 @. @ 6 km) north from the trailhead before reaching Lake Osiris Road , continuing another 1 1 ? 4 miles (2 @. @ 0 km) to the Montgomery ? Shawangunk town line . Once in Shawangunk , the trail passes by the Borden Estate , a mansion built in 1906 by the granddaughter of Gail Borden . In 1854 , Gail Borden patented the process for creating condensed milk ; the Borden family subsequently owned a series of milk companies . The mansion is now used by the School of Practical Philosophy for philosophy classes .

About 3 ? 4 mile (1 @. @ 2 km) from the town line , the trail reaches its Wallkill trailhead bordering NY 208 , directly across the street from the Shawangunk police station . The paved section between Walden and Wallkill is flat , with only a 3 % grade . A portion of the former corridor in central Wallkill has since been converted to a road .

An unimproved northern section in Wallkill extends 1 1 ? 2 miles (2 @. @ 4 km) from the intersection of Railroad Avenue and C. E. Penny Drive to Birch Road . Birch Road marks the border between the former corridor and two state prisons . This section passes through private hunting grounds and is " unmarked and has no signs " but is " arguably ... the most scenic " portion of the former Wallkill Valley rail corridor , featuring " splendid " views of the Shawangunk Ridge to the west .

While the total length of the trail is officially only about 3 miles (4 @. @ 8 km) , the inclusion of the northern section increases its length to about 4 1 ? 2 miles (7 @. @ 2 km) . The trail is used for walking , jogging , bicycling and dog walking .