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Gunpowder Falls State Park

Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail History

Organized in 1828 as the Baltimore &



Susquehanna Railroad, the Northern Central Railway (NCR) operated what is now the Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail until it was damaged by Tropical Storm Agnes in 1972. At its peak, the railway's mainline extended from Canton in Baltimore to Sodus Point in Upstate New York. The railroad provided passenger and freight service to the online communities, connecting them with the cities of Baltimore, York and Harrisburg, and beyond.

As part of the massive Pennsylvania Railroad system, the railroad included 22 stops in Maryland and shipped freight and passengers between New York City, Washington, D.C. and Chicago.

Recognizing the abandoned rail line's potential as a recreational trail, the department purchased the abandoned line between Cockeysville and the Pennsylvania Line in the early 1980s. Thanks to volunteers and a great believer and advocate for the trail, Dr. Torrey C. Brown, then secretary of the

department, the first section of the Northern Central Railroad Trail opened to the public in 1984.

This is one of the oldest rail trails in the United States and is a popular recreational destination. In honor of Dr. Brown's overwhelming support for the trail, in 2007, it was renamed the Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail.

In 2015, the Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail was inducted into the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy [Rail Trail Hall of Fame](#).

Historic Railroad Signs and Markers

Evidence of the Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail's railroad heritage is still visible today:

Whistle Posts: These white posts with the large black "W's" were installed to instruct train engineers to repeatedly sound a whistle (on steam locomotives) or air horn (on diesel-electric locomotives) as they approached a road crossing. The whistle pattern was typically two long notes, followed by a short and another long.

Mileage Markers: These white posts with black numbers painted on each side facing the trail were used to tell the engineer or other railroad workers where they were on the railroad. Facing the marker, the mileage on the right side indicates the distance to Sunbury, Pennsylvania and on the left side, the distance to the former site of the railroad's Calvert Street Station in Baltimore.

Position Light Signals: Unique to the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Norfolk & Western Railway, these 16-foot poles topped with large disks once directed railroad traffic. Similar to modern traffic lights, these signals were controlled electronically from towers and stations. The signals notified engineers of recommended speeds or instructed them stop. Reproduction signals have been installed in several locations.

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580 Taylor Ave., Annapolis MD 21401

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