

The Bulletin

The Railroad Station Historical Society

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2022 RSHS CONVENTION EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA - Part 1

After a two year lapse in annual meetings due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Society's business manager Jim Dent co-chaired with Bill Sosnowski to present from August 18th to the 20th a three day tour of eastern Pennsylvania and western New Jersey. Based just outside of Easton, PA, this part of the state and adjoining areas of New Jersey offers a treasure trove of historic railway lines and a large number of still standing stations and other railroad related structures. The scenic areas on both sides of the beautiful Delaware River valley where much of early American history took place was a most fitting backdrop for a wonderful convention. We were blessed with three days of outstanding sunny summer weather which made photography a real pleasure. The number of historic structures visited was complimented by the fascinating architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries found in so many of the cities, towns and villages which our tour route followed.



Eastbound Norfolk Southern is on trackage of the former Central Railroad of New Jersey at Philipsburg, NJ, a union station with the old Delaware, Lackawanna & Western, August 18, 2022

A Brief Historic Sketch of the Area around Easton, Pennsylvania

The following is based on information in the Introduction to "Railroads in the Lehigh River Valley, Lehigh Valley Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, June 1996 Revised Edition. This wonderful publication resource was provided to all tour participants. All photos used in this Bulletin, unless otherwise noted, were taken by John C. Dahl.

The Delaware River Valley forms a historic and scenic natural corridor into the North American interior. It was only 'natural' then, that railroads would become a large part of that ongoing history when they began to be constructed in the early decades of the 19th century. Many were directly involved in the anthracite coal business, the fuel that propelled America into the industrial age. As early as 1797 rafts carried coal down the Lehigh and Delaware Rivers. Starting with the canal era in 1819, railroads soon overtook them and obsoleted their technology. The need to move large quantities of hard coal to the eastern seaboard became the impetus for the construction of gravity railroads to move the coal from mountain top mine sources to water level for shipment to market. The railroad could offer all season availability and reliability to consumers of this fuel. Discoveries of iron ore, limestone and slate added additional impetus for railroad transportation and the days of canal transportation gradually faded.

The early railways were constructed under a large array of company names and this short sketch will not attempt to sort out the often complex and intricate financial arrangements and details by which it was accomplished. Our notes will reflect the names of the railroad lines as they are at present where applicable and to the traditional names by which the locations were identified around the mid 20th century. Thus, our list of railroad names includes the Reading Railroad; Central Railroad of New Jersey; the Pennsylvania Railroad; the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western; Lehigh Valley; Lehigh & New England; and the New York, Susquehanna & Western. We also will see a few structures on the tour from trolley lines which were once so common in just about every city and town of any importance 100 years and more ago.

A glance at a map locates Easton, PA as a logical epicenter and hub for railroad lines in the Delaware and Lehigh River Valleys. Located where the Lehigh River joins the Delaware, the city would directly prosper from the several railway companies which routed their tracks thru it. Directly across the river in New Jersey is the city of Philipsburg where several routes from the east converge to cross the river. To this day several railway bridges can still be seen, although not all are in active railroad usage.

The era of intense speculation, overbuilding and competition yielded to that of consolidation and infrastructure building that culminated in the peak years of railroad traffic from about 1900 to the World War I era, through the Roaring 1920s and the slump of the Great Depression. The World War II era saw Easton's railroads at their ultimate. Within a decade after the war, enormous changes would come to all the lines with the move away from anthracite to cheaper and cleaner fuels, the transition of the railroads themselves from steam locomotives to that of the diesel engine, the decline in passenger trains due mainly to the automobile on publicly financed improved roadways, and the gradual decline of all railway companies with loss of both passenger and freight as industry declined. The reasons for all of this are a lot more involved and complex than we can discuss here. The era of station building and the railway as the ultimate transportation means was over. But, Easton remains a hub for today's much more streamlined and consolidated operations. It is still a place to see and hear trains. - JCD



Philipsburg, NJ – designed by Frank J. Nies in 1914, this was a joint two level union station for the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western and Central RR of New Jersey. It operated as a passenger and freight depot until 1961. August 18, 2022.



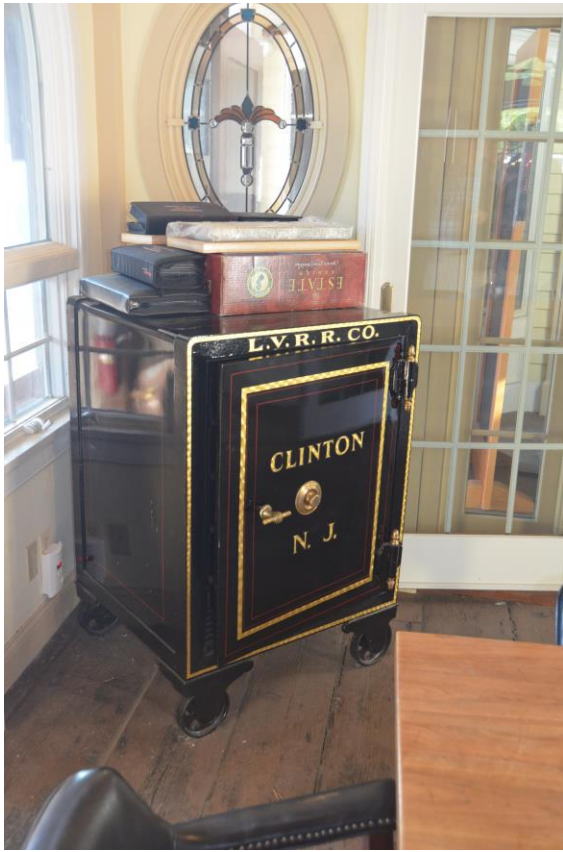
Philipsburg, NJ – “PU” tower of the Central RR of New Jersey opened in October 1921. A modern interlocking, it served during some of the CNJ’s best years. The former DL&W ‘Old Road’ tracks are located just beyond the trees behind the tower.



Philipsburg, NJ – the operator’s chair has been vacant since the last controlled movement thru ‘PU’ when New Jersey Transit ended commuter service to the city in 1983. In 2007 the tower was acquired by Ron and Jeane Titus and has been undergoing restoration as a landmark. August 18, 2022.



Clinton, NJ – Lehigh Valley built this freight station and a passenger depot at the end of the 1.8 mile Clinton branch. August 18, 2022



Clinton, NJ – inside the station, the LV company depot safe is still present and prominently displayed. The Fox Lumber Company utilizes the former station as a showroom and customer design center for its line of replacement doors and windows. In 1993 the abandoned branch line right of way became a rail trail. The building is in its original location, although the property is now part of the lumber company. August 18, 2022



Clinton, NJ –the original LV freight scale was of great interest for tour participants. August 18, 2022

This issue of The Bulletin was prepared by assistant Editor, John Dahl, with the assistance of Ted Xakellis. PDF copies of the Bulletin are available by contacting Jim Dent.

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High Bridge, NJ – The Central Railroad of New Jersey constructed this replacement station in 1913. NJ Transit Commuter service from New York and Newark terminates at this station. While the building is intact, it is not open and only the platforms for commuters are in use. A compact parking lot for commuters is about a block away. August 18, 2022.



Califon, NJ – This beautiful compact 1893 stone station was provided by townspeople. It was located on CNJ's High Bridge branch. August 18, 2022.



Califon, NJ – Legend has it that the name of the town was shortened from “California” when it was discovered that the name would not fit the depot sign. Passenger service here ended in 1932. August 18, 2022



Whitehouse Station, NJ – Another CNJ station, this was built in 1892 to replace an earlier structure destroyed in a fire, by prolific railroad architect Bradford Lee Gilbert (1853-1911) . August 18, 2022



Whitehouse Station, NJ – The building is today utilized as the town’s library but still includes original features such as the stone fireplace. August 18, 2022



Whitehouse Station, NJ – Although books have replaced CNJ passengers inside, commuter trains still stop at the adjacent platforms. August 18, 2022



Lebanon, NJ – Another Bradford Lee Gilbert Central RR of New Jersey station is this Victorian gem completed in 1900. The building was once home to the High Iron Company of Ross Rowland, operator of numerous early railfan steam excursions; today NJ Transit still stops at the station now owned by the town. August 18, 2022.



Lebanon, NJ – CNJ ended its passenger service here in 1964. A westbound NJ Transit train slows for a brief station stop. August 18, 2022



Clinton, NJ – The Clinton Station diner (which is just a name, not a real station) was our lunch stop. However, it does have an authentic former CNJ dining car, now converted for use as part of the restaurant and Jim and Bill arranged for our group to be seated in it. August 18, 2022





Milford, NJ – The Pennsylvania RR acquired the Belvidere Delaware Railroad, which ran from Trenton alongside the Delaware River and Delaware & Raritan Canal. This is the freight house. August 18, 2022.



Milford, NJ – Built in 1874, the second story annex was added in 1909 on account of increased business of the Riegel Paper Corp. mill. The building now houses Canal House Station, a small restaurant. August 18, 2022.



Milford, NJ – Pennsylvania RR heritage is evident with this sign along the former Bel-Del trackage, adjacent to the beautiful Delaware River. August 18, 2022





Frenchtown, NJ – Likely built in the 1870’s, this PRR building has been much modified over its long history. It is now housing a small restaurant, the Bridge Café. The rail line is now a hiking trail on the far side of the building. August 18, 2022.



Stocktown, NJ – Although heavily modified, some aspects of railroad architecture still remain in this station on the PRR’s “Bel-Del”, August 18, 2022.



Ringoes, NJ – Built in 1873 by the Flemington Railroad on what became a branch of the Bel-Del, PRR acquired this with the rest of the Bel-Del. A tourist operation, Black River & Western started operations on weekends out of this station and eventually took over freight operations. August 18, 2022.





Lambertville, NJ – This 1874 stone station is the work of Philadelphia architect Thomas U. Walter, who is more famous for his design of the cast iron United States Capitol dome in Washington, DC. Lambertville was the location of the Bel-Del's shops. These were closed and the work relocated between 1905 and 1907 after Pennsy took over the line. August 18, 2022



New Hope, PA – We have crossed the Delaware River to the Reading Railroad and its branch line here. Tourist railroad New Hope & Ivyland operates out of this 1891 Victorian era confection. A large freight station is located just behind this station. August 18, 2022.



New Hope, PA – The former Reading Railroad freight station is now utilized by the tourist railroad. Alas, it was not operating the day we visited. August 18, 2022



Wycomb, PA – The Reading Railroad is known for its Victorian era classic stations, and this circa 1890 station is well maintained by the tourist train line. August 18, 2022.

We will continue our coverage of the Society’s 2022 Easton, PA convention in the next Bulletin.