



HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF STATION PARK

According to the Story of Snyder County by George Dunkelberger, the beginning of the Pennsylvania Railroad, incorporated in 1846, began with the construction of a railroad as early as 1832 from Philadelphia to Columbia, Pennsylvania, by way of Lancaster. Great expansion of the railroad throughout the nation took place the decade following the close of the Civil War.

The appointment of a commission to organize the Middle Creek Valley Railroad Company was through an act of legislature passed on March 23, 1865, this provided for the proposed railroad to be extended "...from a point on the Pennsylvania Railroad, at or near Lewistown, through the heart of Mifflin and Snyder Counties eastward and terminate on the east bank of the Susquehanna River at or between Port Trevorton and Northumberland..." and the construction was to begin within three years and be completed within ten. The Middle Creek Railroad Company was organized October 2, 1866, to carry out the provisions of this act. Construction began at Northumberland on August 1, 1867, and connected with the Lackawanna and Bloomsburg Railroad, crossed the West Branch of the Susquehanna River, extended south of Selinsgrove, and continued west to the Beaver Furnace of the Shade Mountain Iron Company.

The railroad played a vital role in the development and expansion of McClure. Work of grading began in the summer of 1867. In 1870, the name was changed to Sunbury and Lewistown Railroad. For two years, 1874-1876 trains ceased to operate. Then in 1876, the Pennsylvania Railroad leased the road through McClure. Finally, it was purchased by the P. R. R. and became an integral part of its system. It was known as the Sunbury-Lewistown branch. In September of 1871 the first train, consisting of a locomotive, a passenger coach and six trucks (open railroad freight cars) passed through McClure and continued to Beaver Springs. This was a trial run.

On November 1, 1871, the first through passenger train, consisting of a locomotive and passenger coach of railroad officials and other notables passed through McClure. After that train, another one with three coaches followed it. The locomotives were beautifully decorated, and the coaches were filled with passengers. A large crowd had gathered in McClure to witness the great event. The Rev. L.C. Edmonds, Pastor of the Beaver Springs Charge of the Reformed Church at the

time, wrote of the occasion: "On the morning arrival of the first passenger train, people of all grades and shades came flocking to the station all along the line to see. Some of the hill and mountain folk had never seen a train of cars run before that event came to pass, hence there was some fun. One old lady at the McClure station, on seeing railroad wagons moved without horses, she exclaimed, in Snyder County Dutch, 'Eye wu sin don de gile?' (Where are the horses?) The answer by "dawdy" was: "Yaw, mommy, der shmoke moch selli redder rum ga;" (Yes, Mom, the smoke makes the wheels go around.) "Well! Sell beet worhoft ig der alt Bellseboop selver!" (Well! This beats truthfully the old devil himself.)"

A new form of transportation, far superior to the slow horse-drawn wagons was now available. And now, grain, farm produce, livestock, lumber, and huckleberries picked on the nearby mountains were funneled into McClure to be shipped to near and distant points, this also worked the other way, for all kinds of items, including automobiles were shipped to McClure by rail, At the peak of operations 24 freight and passenger trains ran daily. Three passenger trains ran daily carrying many passengers, some of which were residents of McClure.

The station attendants included a head agent, day and night operator, and clerk and warehouse boy. In 1899, the McClure station was the first one on the S & L line to become an around the clock telegraph office, and Charles Mumma was the first night operator. In 1902, John M. Rauch was transferred from Paintersville to McClure where he was head agent and remained until 1935, when the station was closed, and he retired. Keemer Stuck and C. F. Wagner learned telegraphy while Rauch was agent, working the night shift. Mr. Wagner worked in the mountain during the day and in the station at night, sleeping on the benches, so anxious was he to learn the trade, which he followed for 20 years. Other railroad employees were S. H. Kline, A. A. Kline, H. C. Dreese, Earl Snook, Jacob Kinney, Fred Specht, Adam Wagner, Lewis Kahley, John Hughes, Arthur Shirley, John Heeter, Charles Helfrick, Hurley Romig, Jerry Wetzels, Joseph Otto, John Howell, James Goss, Amos Klinger, Aaron Wagner, Wilson Kline, and Clair Kline.

In 1907, a section shaped somewhat like a Y was put in operation at the west end of town for the purpose of turning engines around so that they could go in the opposite direction. It led off the main railroad bed north to and against the ridge. An engine would back in on one side, a switch was thrown, and then it would pull out the other side, and be on its way. On March 9, 1900, the first successful experiment of transmitting telegraph and telephone messages over the same wire was made on the S & L line. From July 11, 1923, to January 17, 1926, an automatic train control was tested on this road. The system, first tried on any railroad, was used to control train traffic, and was mounted on tower-like structures along the line. Corresponding systems were also in the cab of the engine and in the station. Here at McClure the signal bridge, with its disc on which electric lights were mounted, was located about one-half mile west of the station. The automatic train control, although refined, is now used on all railroads in the country.

The heavy passenger traffic continued until shortly after World War I when the wider use of the automobile and better roads planted the "kiss of death" on this type of travel. Finally on Saturday,

January 16, 1932, the last regularly scheduled passenger train passed through McClure. It was made up of engine No. 5386, a mail and express car and a passenger coach. Charles A. Fisher was the engineer, Charles Laird the fireman, U. Howard Stock the conductor, and Harry Howell the brakeman. None were residents of McClure, Joe Henry Kline, a local model railroad enthusiast, vividly recalls that train as he watched it move through McClure.

To revive memories for many, and again relive those moments of history, a two section, 14-car Snyder County Centennial Passenger train brought many merry-makers to McClure Sunday, August 14, 1955. Originating in Selinsgrove, this was the very last passenger train to use the Sand L railroad and closed out an era that to this day lingers in the minds of many. This S & L Special Day was held in connection with Snyder County's Centennial celebration. For the ride it was a first for the S & L line with a diesel electric passenger unit ever operated over this line, pulled by Engine 9547. The diesel engine showed locals the newest units of modern railroading.

After many years of flourishing freight service, and with the coming of trucks and other difficulties the line was closed. The final curtain dropped on this type of service to McClure in April of 1963, when a box carload of hay was brought to McClure. The last crew to work on the tracks was composed of: Charles Kline, Harry Kline, Charles Hoffman, and Jesse Spigelmyer, who was the foreman. In the summer of 1966, the tracks were removed from town.

In the summer of 1964, the contract was awarded to Luria Brothers Company, Incorporated of Reading to remove 6.18 miles of track from Beaver Springs to McClure. The section from McClure to Lewistown was removed eight years prior to this section being removed.

In January of the Centennial year, 1967, the McClure Borough Council started negotiations with the P. R. R. for the purchase of the railroad property, most of which is in the center of town. The agreed purchase price was \$3000. Included in the real estate is that plot deeded to the railroad in 1871 by George Stuck, A most fitting climax to a great moment in McClure history.

DEDICATING THE PARK AND IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH THE YEARS

The Dedication Service for the new park climaxed the week-long celebration for the Bicentennial of the United State of America. Nick Reed of Radio Station WSEW at Selinsgrove served as the Master of Ceremonies for the program. Joseph Dodd, the Rev. A. John Perna, and Mayor Wilson K. Dodd participated. A group known as the Milton Brass provided music for the dedication. The program consisted of a prayer, the tree planting, a flag presentation ceremony, the singing of the local Bicentennial Song, and the park dedication.

Later in the summer, a fifty-year time capsule specially manufactured by Hallmark Industries of McClure containing mementos, letter, and photographs was sealed and buried near the flagpole in the center of the new park.

This playground equipment was installed by the McClure Borough in 2004. Funding assistance from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program and was administered by the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resource.

In addition to the playground equipment there was a picnic pavilion erected east of the playground. At the February 9, 2006, borough council meeting the borough council approved the building of the park pavilion. The pavilion was completed July 12, 2006.

Two pairs of swings were donated in 2013 by Gerald and Harriet Botdorf from Playword Systems in Lewisburg to be placed in the park in addition to the playground equipment. Mr. & Mrs. Botdorf were sad to see West Beaver Elementary school close and with it went the playground equipment. They stated, what is a playground without swings? So, Gerald came to the McClure Borough Council and asked permission to go ahead with the project. In the fall of 2013, the toddler "T" swings were installed by the Borough employees and in the spring of 2014 the larger swing set was installed.

In 2014, the McClure Borough Council decided to cut down 18 trees in the park due to poor shape of the trees and for the safety of everyone using the park. In the fall of 2014, a new Christmas tree was donated and placed in the park.

In the spring of 2015, the council approved the planting of 10 new trees the work was completed by the community and the borough employees who were Art Baumgardner, Harold Flood Jr. and Dave Weader - Borough Manager. In addition to the trees new park benches were installed around the park near the sidewalks close to the center of the park.

2019 brought a new sign for Station Park in front of the Playground equipment at the west end of the park. The funding for the sign came from the McClure Borough Council through the Borough taxpayers. It was designed and made by Middlecreek Signs of Beaver Springs, Pennsylvania.

The sign helped to continue with the theme of honoring the days of railroading.

In spring of 2020, the McClure Borough Council voted and approved the south side of the park to have a concrete sidewalk (including an ADA ramp in the center of the park) and coax installed for future lighting. See below for location of new concrete sidewalk.

History is still being written for this great community park, come and be apart of it!