

MY RIDE ON THE LEWISBURG AND TYRONE RAILROAD

Written in 2006 by Judy S. Wagner (1938-2012)

Edited and submitted by Matthew Wagner

I love trains. After reading accounts in the *Millmont Times*, and in Emilie Jansma's compilation of Louise Scott's oral tradition interviews (c. 1994), I found it fascinating that trains would stop here and there for one person to get on or off, particularly at cabins or other non-station stops. What a great time it must have been, especially for train lovers.

The first train rides I ever took were from Montandon to Philadelphia with a friend of mine – Lucy Zimmerman – and her mother, Lucille. Lucy's dad, Lester "Dick" Zimmerman worked for the railroad and received free passes for his family. It seems to me that we either went to shop or to go to a Phillies game, but it was only once or twice. There was no station at Montandon. We just waited in the car until we heard the train coming, and then boarded it.

In the late 1950's, I had the opportunity to ride the trains from Harrisburg to Sunbury, from Harrisburg to Philadelphia and New York, and the ultimate train trip – at least for me – from Lewistown to Pittsburgh. On the latter route, the conductor went through the cars notifying everyone to look out the windows because we would soon be rounding the Horseshoe Curve. The first time this happened, the windows were so dirty we couldn't see much but, on subsequent trips, we were able to see through clean windows and it was some sight.

In the late 1960's, Jack and I put our two oldest boys on the train at Harrisburg to travel to Philadelphia to visit their aunts. They were only nine or ten years old. People are horrified now when we tell this. But times were different then, and there was someone waiting for them at their destination. We certainly didn't think there was anything unusual about it.

What was unusual was my own trip on the Lewisburg and Tyrone Railroad and I have never forgotten it. The exact year had escaped me until I recently found some photos I had. On the back of one, I had written: "Buffalo Valley Scenic Railway – Summer, 1955". (he date for this event was June 19, 1955.) It was my understanding at the time that this was one of the last passenger trains to traverse the Lewisburg and Tyrone. Since it was, unbelievably, over 50 years ago, I only remember a little bit about the trip.

Early one Sunday morning (June 19, 1955), my parents, a friend and I, drove to Milton in my dad's 1948 Buick Special where we boarded the train.¹ The train was pulled by a diesel locomotive. I had always believed it was a steam engine until I discovered the photos because I remember the dress I wore was speckled with cinders by the end of the trip. The only reason I can think to account for that was that the windows were open and cinders from the railroad bed must have been stirred up by the train.

From Milton, we went south to the Northumberland Yards where the train stopped for us to tour the roundhouse. We then backtracked through Montandon, crossing the railroad bridge over the Susquehanna to Lewisburg. We did not stop anywhere to take on additional passengers as everyone had boarded at Milton.

¹ See photos of poster for this event.

As we passed through Mifflinburg, people were out looking and waving. Our next stop was at the Paddy Mountain Tunnel where everyone got off to walk through the tunnel and take pictures. When we came to Centre Hall, we stopped to eat lunch. I can't remember going to a restaurant, so I am thinking we took our own bag lunch and drinks with us.

The trip resumed with the train going around Nittany Mountain passing by Linden Hall, Oak Hall, Lemont, and Rockview State Prison to Pleasant Gap, where we stopped to tour the State Fish Hatchery. From there, the railroad paralleled Route 144 and a winding stream known as Logan Branch, passing through Bellefonte to Milesburg. Here, the Lewisburg and Tyrone Railroad joined the Pennsylvania Railroad to Lock Haven, Williamsport, Watsontown and returned to Milton.

If you can picture a big oval, that was our route. I don't recall stopping anywhere else or stopping to eat dinner, although we may have. If not, we probably made good time after we left Milesburg as it seems it was early evening when we reached Milton. I would love to know if any readers may have taken the trip I did, and their memories of it.

NOTE: A poster advertising this event was discovered in my mother's files. According to the poster, the "Buffalo Valley Scenic Rail Ramble" occurred on Sunday, June 19, 1955. The excursion was sponsored by the Williamsport Exchange Club and originated in Williamsport. The route is outlined on the advertisement. A similar excursion, sponsored by the Bellefonte Sesquicentennial Committee, occurred on Sunday, August 5, 1956.



Close Up of Diesel Engine
(All photos courtesy of M. Wagner)

Another Wonderful Trip . . .

Sponsored by

The Williamsport, Pa. Exchange Club



BUFFALO VALLEY SCENIC RAIL RAMBLE

SEE — PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD EARLY TRAIN EQUIPMENT
at Northumberland, Pennsylvania.

SEE — BEAUTIFUL BUFFALO VALLEY
on the Bellefonte Branch of the PRR in territory not accessible by
motor car or regular passenger service.

SEE — TWO NATURAL TUNNELS
in use for over 80 years.

SEE — FISH HATCHERY
near Bellefonte.

SEE — BEAUTIFUL POE VALLEY

EAT — AT CENTRE HALL GRANGE PICNIC GROUNDS

Bring your own picnic lunch for the entire family.

A turkey dinner (**all you can eat**) will be served by the Centre Hall
Grange for those who do not wish to take their lunch. (Cost—
\$1.75 per person. Children 90¢).

Train will stop at Paddy Mountain Tunnel for 15 minutes for
those who wish to take pictures.

Sunday, June 19, 1955

Advertisement for Excursion

(photo courtesy of M. Wagner)

SPECIAL TRAIN — via PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD

TRAIN LEAVES	Eastern Daylight Time	ADULT FARE
Williamsport	8:50 a.m.	\$5.00
Muncy	9:09 a.m.	All Points
Montgomery	9:14 a.m.	CHILDREN'S FARE
Watsonstown	9:25 a.m.	(5 to 12)
Milton	9:33 a.m.	\$3.00
Montandon	9:40 a.m.	Under 5 years—free.
Train Arrives		
Northumberland	9:47 a.m.	

Sunbury and Northumberland passengers will board train at PRR Enginehouse in Northumberland, using 4th Street entrance to Yards. PRR personnel will direct those persons to parking lot.


Trip limited to 500 persons.

Candy, Ice Cream, Soft Drinks, Milk on sale in the refreshment car on train.

**Arrangements for Coaches for Special Parties
may be made upon request.**

RESPONSIBILITY: The Williamsport Exchange Club gives notice that in the conduct of this excursion, all arrangements are made by it solely as agent for the tourist, and as such holds itself free of all responsibility for any loss, injury or damage to the person or property of the tourist arising from any cause whatsoever. The right is reserved to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the trip.

For Information and Tickets — Write or Call
TOMPKINS MODEL RAILROAD SHOP
 7 West Fourth Street, Williamsport, Pennsylvania
 PHONE WILLIAMSPORT 3-6707



Advertisement for Excursion
(photo courtesy of M. Wagner)



View of Lewisburg Bridge from the Train as we crossed the Susquehanna River



Passengers Unloading from Train and Walking Toward the Paddy Mountain Tunnel



East End of Paddy Mountain Tunnel



Judy's Mother, Mildred Shively, photographed at the Pleasant Gap Fish Hatchery