

Brush Run Road Memories

RJ Lane tells some stories of the "Hooligans" who hung items off the Brush Run Bridge about cab window height. He said you had to keep a watchful eye when going through that cut - especially at night.

Not the only place that type of activity occurred, of course. Any place with a secluded overhead where someone can hang things. RJ told me of things as big as an engine block hanging under bridges.

Bryan Seip

While hearing of items hung from the overpass is new to me, I can confirm the area under the overpass was littered with old engine parts. Having a buddy on Brookwood Rd, we used to walk up that way from time to time. Being car nuts, we would look over the bridge and try to identify what was down there. At one point, almost a complete, but disassembled small block Chevy engine was down there. Never thought of the parts being used to harm the trainmen, just figured some shop dumped a blown up engine.

Brian Budeit

Dave, were you there when a few of us were rappelling off the closed Brush Run Road bridge in Peters Township? I thought You, Ed, Eric and Brent were there a few times?

We were all in the Civil Air Patrol and this was a perfect spot close by to free fall rappell. I remember that the bridge deck was asphalt covered over wooden planks and both ends were blocked off from traffic permanently. This was around the 1985-1986 time frame.

I remember all the garbage lying on the right of way just below the bridge.

Glen Blum

Yeah, I was there with you guys, Glen. Lots of fun rappelling off that bridge at night. That and the BB gun battles we had with each other was about the worst we did. Never saw any trains while on the tracks. I think they had stopped running by then.

Dave Layman

(ed. - [The last train over this section ran December 26, 1980](#))

This overhead bridge was located just around the curve, east of Library Jct. I first discovered this aging structure when I was in 7th grade, making the trek on foot from Jewell to Library Jct with a classmate, John Young.

Several personal stories come to mind I'd like to share.

This bridge used to have a bull rope tied under it where the young and daring could swing from side to side, clearing the rails by about 5 feet. It was scary.

The roadbed under the bridge was constantly littered with, you name it, washing machines, chairs, a couch, shattered TV's, broken beer and wine bottles, tin cans, rugs, old toys..... shall I continue?

As you enter the cut for the bridge, westbound, the left side had some rock outcroppings. We were hi-railling west with RH-2 one hot summer day and stopped briefly due to a Mother Nature call for a few of us. I crossed around the back of the truck and spotted a rather large black snake coiled on the rocks. With a quick grasp, I caught him and circled back around the truck. Foreman Schmidt grinned broadly as I motioned that I would scare Bob Beck and Mark Broskey still seated in the rear seat.

As I opened the door, snake first, Mark screamed and frantically climbed over Bob's lap and fell head first out the truck window. Bob couldn't open the door on account of Mark's body passing by, so he threw his hands up in fear and hollered very loudly.

I got worried after Mark disappeared and I retreated with the snake. Those two guys were extremely sore with me, as Pete Williams and John roared with laughter.

The first curve east of the bridge had a few homes next to the tracks. An elderly lady would occasionally appear on daylight runs with a homemade pie in her hands to hand up to the crew in the caboose as it rattled past. Crews would watch for her, and the engine crew might call back to the rear if they saw her coming. I rode a few trips when this occurred, apple or cherry pies, I recall.

The cherry was the best.

The Monastery was located above the bridge on Rocky Ridge, and this was a great source of curiosity for us youngsters as we would sneak around the place looking for the Holy Ghost Fathers. Once we got caught and the kindly Father took us in for a visit and cold lemonade.

I was lucky to view many trains pass under this bridge, east and west bounds to & from Mifflin, not to mention all those Library trains with empties and loads running by and back in at Library Jct. The trains were generally long enough to reach the bridge and slightly beyond.

As mentioned, the bridge was rickety, the boards always loose. Bicycles would bounce wildly across them, the structure shivered as cars or trucks crossed. Lotsa rust, little paint left, as she weathered out those last twenty years of her life.

This structure was identical to the bridge just west of Brookside next to Irishtown road. I remember seeing the Irishtown bridge in a condemned state in the 60's.

The road planking boards were missing or curled upward behind the end barricades.

The bridge at Alleco was of the same construction, as is the bridge still existing on the Westland Branch.

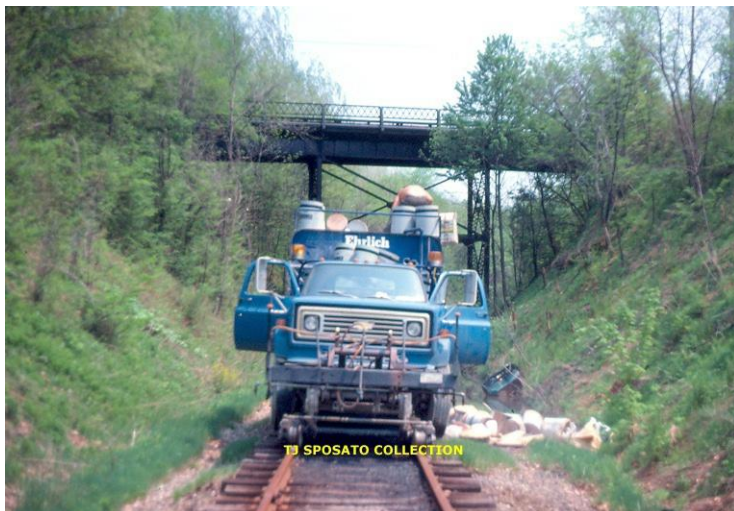
(ed. - The Johnston Road bridge on the Westland Branch has since been removed after this posting)

My first visit to the bridge with classmate Young was on a Saturday morning. We were just starting to walk east to Jewell when a westbound rounded the curve at the 'pie lady's' house. It had 4 units, a passle of B&LE hoppers and sandwiched between the hoppers and caboose was the X-1 crane and X-3 idler.

What a sight!

The caboose rear door was open and a crewman sitting on the bunk, just inside, cried out a greeting.

Wonderful...just wonderful.....



Finally, the attached image was the last time a weed sprayer killed vegetation between Library Jct and Coverdale. I worked as the pilot on the truck, as I had done a few times before. We stopped at the bridge to dispose (burn) the chemical bags and felt it was the time to memorialize the scene. I managed to get the operator to spray a little heavier at a slower speed to be sure the kill would take good effect between this point and Coverdale.

We got off the rail at South Park Road crossing and headed for Montour Jct.

Tim Sposato

My family moved from Philadelphia to a home near Rocky Ridge in 1957.

At the time I thought it couldn't get any better for a 12 year old kid to live so close to a railroad. Met a kid my age, who loved trains as much as I, and he became my best friend. We spent a good deal of our time exploring the Montour and walked the tracks to Mifflin, Southview, and Library.

Anytime we heard a train we would run up to the tracks to get a closer look. As time went by we started "camping out" in the summer on Friday nights around Rocky Ridge or Library Junction and we would hear the SW-9's straining with a string of loaded hoppers as they slowly worked the grade at McMurray, I think it was about 9:00 or 10:00 pm. The fact that we heard that from so far away and it would grow louder only heightened our anticipation.

Eventually, we started to hop on and ride to Mifflin where we would get off, use the bathroom at Eat n Park to clean up and get back up to the tracks in time for the ride back with the empties.

We had a spot near a cut at Library Junction where we would jump off. We had "groomed" this area of anything harmful to us as they would be going at a pretty good speed and our exit off the train was more of an awkward stumble followed by a long roll.

Between mileposts 33 and 34 (just east of the McMurray road bridge) there was a Montour work shed along with a hand pump car. One moonlit summer night after the train of empties had passed, we got it on to the tracks and pumped all the way up to Jewell.

We commented that we now knew why we never saw it being used because it was hard work getting up that grade. We started coasting back down and by the time we crossed over Sugarcamp road I believed it was the fastest I had gone at that point in my life. There was a mine ventilation blower west of Library Junction where there was a wheel flange lubricator and it was a blur as we sped by.

Convinced that we would not make the curve ahead I put my Keds on the brake pedal and pressed with all I had. My heart was still pounding as we returned the car and walked the tracks back home.

That was a one-time only adventure that we never did again.

After high school I went into the service and subsequently moved to New Jersey.

Later on, business would take me to Pittsburgh and I would always make time to take a drive from Hill Station and #4 to McMurray and #10 at Library.

There is a point on McMurray road near the county line where you would be perpendicular with the track and you could see the Brush Run bridge.

I always looked whenever I drove by hoping to see some activity on the track. Even after the tracks were removed, I would still look; go figure!

A few years ago I was in the area and drove up Brush Run road to a parking area they have on the Montour Trail. I walked down the trail to Library Jct and was shocked to see all the homes in areas where I used to camp near the tracks.

I walked around the wye remembering where sidings and tool sheds had been.

The next time I'm in the area, I will go by #4 to see what it looks like now although I prefer to remember it as it was.

I will always remember the nightly drone of a Montour eastbound, looking out my bedroom window and seeing the headlight with the background of a reddish sky caused by the hearths at the mills.

Carl Timm