



THE LIGGIE

A Publication of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association for Friends of The Ligonier Valley Rail Road

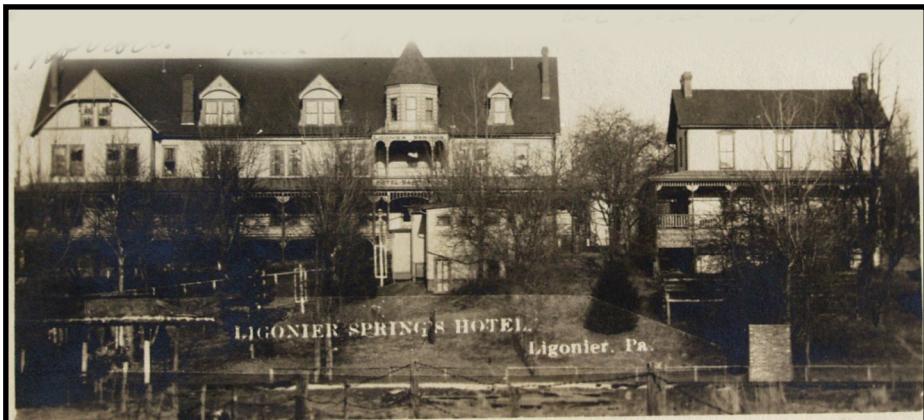
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Frank's Hotel and the LVRR Summer Station

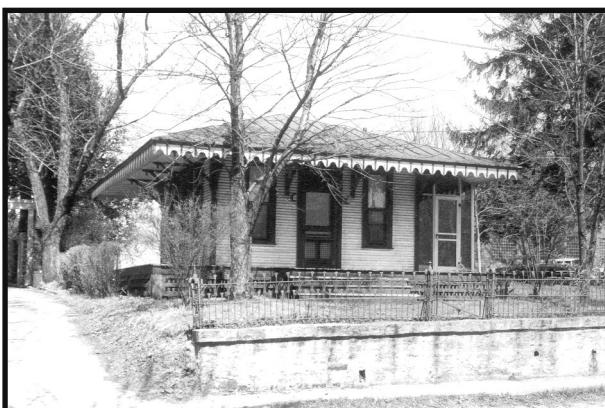
By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the influx of visitors to the Ligonier Valley via the Ligonier Valley Rail Road and Pennsylvania Railroad excursion trains sparked the beginning of a thriving summer tourist industry in the region. Frank's Hotel and Cottages was among five hotels and multiple boarding houses in Ligonier Borough that offered comfortable lodgings and amenities.

John H. and Nancy Frank first established the three-story Frank's House on Loyalhanna Street around 1870. By the 1890s, the couple expanded their enterprise into a complex called Frank's Hotel and Cottages. The sprawling Victorian resort – noted in the newspaper as the “largest frame building in Westmoreland County” – offered as many as 150 guests hot and cold water baths, broad and shady porches, an ice cream and soda water room, a billiard room and bowling alleys, a news and cigar stand, a barber shop, a telegraph office, and a livery. Frank's Hotel also had a ballroom where live orchestras delighted dancers during Saturday evening hops.

Frank's Hotel and Cottages on Loyalhanna Street in Ligonier was later renamed the Ligonier Springs Hotel. Courtesy of the Ligonier Valley Library Pennsylvania Room.



The Hotel is situated in the Allegheny Mountains at Ligonier, Pa. being but two hours ride over the Pennsylvania and Ligonier Valley Railroads. The Appointments and Cuisine [sic] are first-class, the rates are moderate, the air cool and invigorating, the water pure and soft, brought from mountain springs. There are no mosquitoes and on the whole a most charming and well known resort. - The Ligonier Echo, August 23, 1899.



The summer station ticket office. Courtesy of the Ligonier Valley Library Pennsylvania Room.

A summer station was established at Frank's Hotel where trains dropped off guests right at the resort grounds. Although the hotel was only about two blocks from the LVRR's grand Ligonier station, a small ticket office was built to serve the seasonal station for hotel and cottage guests' convenience.

Ed. C. Price and Dr. E. M. Clifford purchased the resort in late 1902, reopening it as the Ligonier Springs Hotel and Sanitarium. The new name was a nod to local mineral springs touted for their healthful and medicinal properties. Featuring the famed spring water and Turkish baths, the resort was promoted as the “Suburban Summerland of Greater Pittsburg.” In January 1909, the nine parcels surrounding the main hotel were sold at a sheriff's sale, but the hotel continued in operation for another half century as the Hoffman Hotel (1919) and Fort Ligonier Hotel (1923). The original Victorian building was eventually sold

and demolished in 1965 after a pair of fires and replaced by an early American-style lodging that currently operates as the Ramada Ligonier.

The Twin Cities of Long Bridge and McCance

One of the enduring little mysteries of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road's (LVRR) associated stations and communities is the villages of Long Bridge and McCance. To the extent these are truly separate "cities," they are adjacent to each other at the point where the current eastbound Route 30 crosses the Loyalhanna Creek west of Idlewild Park.

Long Bridge is also sometimes spelled as one word, Longbridge, depending on the time and context of its usage. When considering these villages, it is important to remember that the main line of the LVRR stayed exclusively on the northern side of the Loyalhanna Creek. There was a LVRR crossing of the Loyalhanna just west of Long Bridge/McCance but it was used solely as an industrial dead-end spur to service the Booth & Flinn quarry location on the southern side of the Loyalhanna.

The nature and path of Route 30 and its predecessors are also important to the history of these villages. When the LVRR was founded, the road was known as the Greensburg & Stoystown Turnpike. The LVRR crossed this pike with an at-grade crossing located just west of a spot underneath the east end of the current eastbound Route 30 Long Bridge. The LVRR Long Bridge stop and station were located just west of this at-grade crossing on the north side of the LVRR mainline tracks. The station building is long gone, but this location is currently a small cluster of homes accessible from a road located between the current eastbound and westbound lanes of Route 30 near the Road Toad restaurant. This access road heads both beside and under the current Long Bridge and terminates at the spot of the original Long Bridge that crossed the Loyalhanna. The support piers of this earlier bridge are still clearly visible. In addition to being the original Long Bridge, this bridge could also be considered the low Long Bridge as compared the high Long Bridge that was built in 1925 and fully operational by 1926. The modern bridge was sometimes called a viaduct due to the nature of its construction and the fact that it connected two points of similar elevation over a lower valley or waterway. Both versions of Long Bridge carried two-way traffic until after the LVRR closed in 1952. The construction of the high Long Bridge eliminated the at-grade LVRR crossing that had existed below it.



This 1926 image shows the original "low" Long Bridge and the newly-constructed "high" Long Bridge, along with the front of the LVRR Long Bridge station located to the left of the tracks, between the house on the left and the high bridge.

Source: The University of Michigan Special Collections Research Center, Lincoln Highway Digital Image Collection.

It is therefore clear that this area was first known as Long Bridge before McCance came into being. Long Bridge is a stop on the earliest obtainable LVRR timetables. Timetables referred to the stop as Long Bridge or sometimes Longbridge throughout the existence of the LVRR. This stop became a very busy one shortly after the founding of the LVRR in 1877. In 1882, Booth & Flinn began operations at the quarry location on the south side of the Loyalhanna. This is the same year the LVRR converted from narrow gauge to standard gauge. The first superintendent of the quarry was Michael Murray of Latrobe. In 1884, the Ligonier Stone Block Company began quarry operations on the north side of the Loyalhanna. At some point after this, Booth & Flinn assumed control of this operation as well. The easily visible tipple on current Route 30 westbound serviced this north side quarry. Latrobe Construction took ownership of the north quarry after Booth & Flinn ended their operations there. The location is still an active industrial site, the Latrobe Asphalt plant of the Hanson Company, part of the Heidelberg Cement Group conglomerate.

The Twin Cities (continued)

By 1889, Alexander McCance became superintendent of the Booth & Flinn quarry operations. McCance performed well from the start and by later 1889, he was made general superintendent of multiple Booth & Flinn operations, including, in addition to the Long Bridge quarries, the Ligonier Ice Company at Mill Bank and quarries near Blairsville. Due to the thriving nature of the area, a post office was opened in August of 1890. It was named McCance, in honor of the quarry superintendent and the most prominent citizen of the village. The McCance post office was located in the vicinity of the LVRR Long Bridge station. The post office remained in operation until 1932.

One year after the establishment of the McCance post office, in 1891, a one-room Ligonier Township school was established for the village. The new school building was paid for by William Flinn of the Booth & Flinn quarries. At that point, Flinn was also a Pennsylvania state senator. In addition to the schoolhouse, Senator Flinn also paid the teacher's salary for the first three years of the school's operation. In the earliest known references, the school was sometimes called the Blue Rock School due to its proximity to the product being harvested from the quarry. But by no later than 1893, the school became known as the McCance School, again honoring Alexander McCance. The school was located on the north side of the Loyalhanna and east of the Long Bridge very near the spot of the current Road Toad restaurant. The school remained in continuous operation until the 1952-53 school year, when all Ligonier Township schools were closed and operations consolidated at the brand new elementary school on the hill above Ligonier.

This building is the current Ligonier Valley Middle School.

During the era of both the post office and school, the area was referred to as both McCance and Long Bridge. In the early 1900's the village even had its own football team. A documented game from 1903 shows Ligonier High School beating McCance by a score of 5-0. (A touchdown was valued at 5 points in those days.) But the football team was also called Long Bridge in other accounts. There is some indication that, to the extent that the villages of McCance and Long Bridge were considered separate communities, they were divided by the bridge. McCance was considered to be on the west side of the bridge, with Long Bridge on the east side of the bridge. Ironically, if this is accurate, then McCance School was in the village of Long Bridge.

There was a swinging-style foot bridge that crossed the Loyalhanna shortly to the west of McCance on the west side of the bridge. The principal purpose of this bridge was so that residents living on the south side of the Loyalhanna could reach the Long Bridge station of the LVRR by foot. In addition, the bridge was often used by children to cross the Loyalhanna and then walk along the tracks of the LVRR and up to the Lincoln Highway/Route 30 to reach the McCance School. To further complicate matters, the recently closed Amish furniture and bait & tackle shop, the Longbridge Station, would have been located in McCance. The current short road behind this closed store is Longbridge Road –

and therefore in McCance, based on the most commonly-cited version of how the communities were divided.

However, it is just as clear that the name McCance faded from use after the school closed in 1952. Its usage after that point seemed generally limited to references to a recently deceased person's birthplace in obituaries. Therefore what started as Long Bridge has ended as Long Bridge, the name most often used today to refer to the village, which is probably now most famous for its lone remaining consumer business, the Road Toad. The fill behind this restaurant has obliterated the path of the LVRR.



The McCance School with its four windows can be seen to the left of the Long Beach Hotel, a predecessor to today's Road Toad.



A support pier for the original Long Bridge over the Loyalhanna Creek.

Bridges Over the Loyalhanna



A support pier for a railroad bridge leading to two Darlington-area coal mines.

In the February issue of the Liggie, we talked about Ligonier Valley Rail Road (LVRR) bridges that crossed the Loyalhanna Creek. We noted, correctly, that the main line of the LVRR never crossed the Loyalhanna Creek. The main line did cross Mill Creek on the eastward approach to Ligonier and the Wilpen Branch recrossed Mill Creek heading out of town to the north. An industrial spur off the main line did cross the Loyalhanna to service the Booth & Flinn quarry on the south side of the creek. The bridge supports are still clearly visible as is the track support of the spur's termination near Longbridge.

However, the answer summarized above is incomplete. There was another spur off the main line that crossed the Loyalhanna. There were two coal mines located a little less than a quarter-mile west of the Darlington Station, one on the north side of the creek (along with the main line of the LVRRR) and one on the south side of the creek, up the hillside south of what is now Darlington Road. These locations are about 330 yards east of Buttermilk Falls.

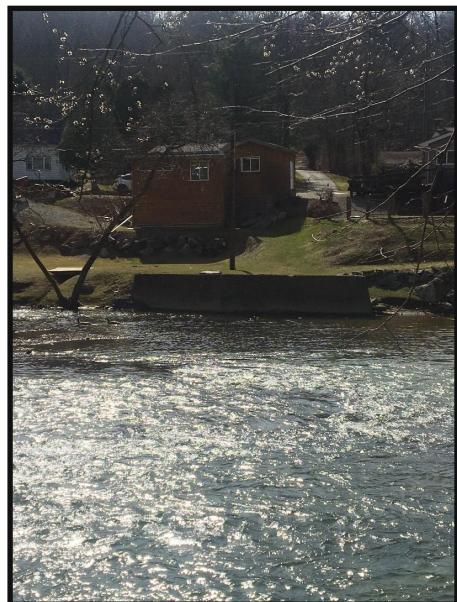
The mine on the north side of the Loyalhanna was owned by Frank E. Shirey and was known as the Darlington Mine. This mine's portal was almost directly adjacent to the main line of the LVRR. As such, coal from the mine was either loaded onto LVRR cars while on the main line itself or while the cars were on a siding in this area. There was a siding to the north of the mainline that extended westward from the Darlington Station, but it is not

known if the siding reached the Darlington Mine. The tunnels of this mine extended underneath the Lincoln Highway (now Route 30) in a general direction that parallels and is about 200 yards to the west of Clark Hollow Road. In the late 1920's, this area of the highway was reconstructed and raised such that the hill from Idlewild down to the current location of the Road Toad restaurant was made to be a more consistent downhill grade. This necessitated large amounts of fill over the old highway and therefore over the Shirey-owned Darlington mine, by this time already played out and closed. In 1930, a cave-in of over a foot occurred on Lincoln Highway in this area, believed due to the collapse of the mine underneath.

The mine on the south side of the Loyalhanna, directly across from the Shirey-owned Darlington Mine, was a Seger Brothers Mine, known as its Darlington location. However, the entrance to this mine was located approximately one-half mile from the Loyalhanna, up the hillside of the Chestnut Ridge. To transport this coal from the mine to the LVRR, a spur was built perpendicular to the creek. The location of this spur coincides with the current Shelby Lane, a short dead-end road connecting to the current Darlington Road, just west of the current Darlington Inn restaurant.

As this spur line ran from the mine down the hill toward the creek, it crossed the Loyalhanna heading north and terminated just short of the LVRR. Though it cannot be determined for certain, it is not likely this mine spur connected directly with the LVRR as there would have been very little room for a proper radius into the main line. Thus the coal from this mine was probably loaded onto LVRR cars directly on the main line or a siding, if one existed in this area. Support piers for the mine spur bridge in this location are still clearly visible, one on the south side and one on the north side. Residents in this area state that there was also a middle support pier in the middle of the Loyalhanna that existed until well into the late 20th century. This pier was removed because debris and ice gathered around it and aggravated flooding and other dangerous conditions during periods of heavy rain or snow melt.

The timeline of both the Seger Brothers Darlington mine and the Shirey Darlington mine is not clear. But it is believed both mines began operations around 1910 and were depleted by the 1920s.



A support pier for a railroad bridge leading to two Darlington-area coal mines. Shelby Lane is in the background.

Bridges Over the Loyalhanna (continued)



Idlewild Park's Loyalhanna Limited miniature railroad.
Courtesy of Mark Clemens.

Express, which was built around Lake Bouquet in 1939. The 24-inch-gauge locomotive pulled five canopied steel passenger coaches along the north side of the Loyalhanna Creek between the two parks during that first season. The route roughly followed the former roadbed of the LVRR, which had been defunct for more than a dozen years at the time. By mid-summer, however, park management decided to extend the Loyalhanna Limited across the Loyalhanna Creek and past Frontier Safariland, a zoo that also debuted that season on the south side of the park. Two railroad bridges were subsequently installed over the creek; a truss for one bridge was transported to Idlewild by the W.J. Dillner Transfer Company of Pittsburgh.

After operating for 25 years, in 1991 Idlewild replaced the Loyalhanna Limited's original steam engine with a Chance Manufacturing Company gasoline-powered engine (a C.P. Huntington Train No. 253). The park purchased a second C.P. Huntington engine (No. 192) with coordinating passenger cars. By that time, the Loyalhanna Limited was integrated with the Hootin' Holler wild west-themed area. The attraction remains Idlewild's only miniature railroad today and still transports passengers across the Loyalhanna Creek.

Train Trivia: PW&S Somerset Station

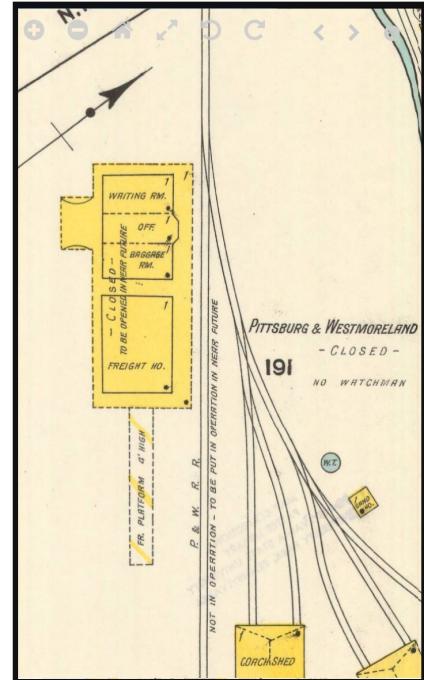
In our last issue, we presented a mystery photo asking our readers to identify a rather dilapidated structure. The building is what remains of the Somerset Station at the southeastern terminus of the Pittsburg, Westmoreland, and Somerset Railroad (PW&S). The northeastern terminus of the PW&S was at Ligonier. The 1917 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map image shows the Somerset building contained a waiting room, office and baggage room, along with a separate freight house.

The old Somerset Station is located just south of the Pennsylvania Turnpike off of North Center Avenue behind a Wendy's restaurant and a carwash. It is not long for this world, so visit it soon if you want to see a remnant of the short-lived PW&S logging railroad.

Next Issue's Train Trivia Question: Did the LVRR or the PW&S ever cross Route 30, the Lincoln Highway, or their predecessors? If so, where?

In the same issue where we noted that though the LVRR main line never crossed the Loyalhanna, the main line of the Pittsburg, Westmoreland, and Somerset did cross the Loyalhanna twice. To be truly complete though, there is yet another railroad that crossed the Loyalhanna, also traversing it twice. This is the Loyalhanna Limited, a narrow gauge miniature railroad attraction operating at Idlewild and Soak Zone today.

Manufactured by Crown Metal Products, based in Wyano, Pennsylvania, the Loyalhanna Limited miniature steam-powered train ride was added at Idlewild for the 1965 season and connected the park to the neighboring Story Book Forest. This was Idlewild's second miniature railroad, following the Idlewild



New Friends of the LVRRA

Thank you to the following new Friends of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association who have joined since the last issue of *The Liggie*. Your kind donations will help us fulfill our mission!

Guy Calkins	Robert Mellon
Steve Furin	Ken Norris
Todd Griffith	Michele Sandoe

Meet Our New Docent: Carol Lennon

The Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association would like to welcome Carol Lennon as our new museum docent and gift shop volunteer! Carol, who lives in Latrobe, enjoyed a 45-year career in the health care field and has an impressive background in social work, fundraising, public speaking, management, board development, community relations and program development.

Prior to retirement, Carol served as executive director for Our Clubhouse (formerly Gilda's Club Western Pennsylvania), a nonprofit cancer support organization. She was also a longtime director for the Healthy Communities Institute, Pittsburgh, Mercy Health System, executive director for the Westmoreland County chapter of the March of Dimes, field representative for the Westmoreland County chapter of the American Cancer Society, and a social worker for Latrobe Area Hospital specializing in oncology and geriatrics. She also volunteers at St. Vincent Gristmill.

Carol will be greeting visitors, taking admissions, selling merchandise and giving tours at the Ligonier Valley Rail Road Museum during our Saturday operating hours. We are thrilled she will be helping to share the history of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road. Welcome Carol!

Upcoming Events

**Save the Date for the
Annual Creepy Caboose!**

Saturday, October 23, 2021

Time to be announced

Ligonier Valley Rail Road Museum

At the Restored Darlington Station
3032 Idlewild Hill Road
P.O. Box 21
Ligonier, PA 15658

Hours of Operation
Saturdays Year-Round
11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Contact Information
Phone: 724-238-7819
Email: info@lvrra.org
Web: www.lvrra.org and 

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Mission of the LVRRA

Established in 2004 as a 501c(3) nonprofit organization, the Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association's mission is to:

- Preserve the legacy of the LVRR
- Conserve vestiges of the LVRR
- Collect memorabilia of the LVRR
- Educate the public about the history of railroading in the Ligonier Valley