



THE LIGGIE

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

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Exploring the South Wall Booth and Flinn Quarry



Bob Stutzman leading the way to the Booth & Flinn quarry.

Continuing to explore the remnants of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road and the industries it served, in early April, a small group of Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association (LVRRA) board directors and members hiked to the site of the former Booth and Flinn limestone quarry on the south wall of the Loyalhanna Gorge. Led by LVRRA co-founder Bob Stutzman, the excursion included Kerry Byers, Tom Hunter, Doug Kurtz, Dave Somerville, and Jennifer Sopko.

The quarry site is easily accessible, located along the Loyalhanna Gorge Greenway, a three-mile public corridor created when Westmoreland County purchased the land from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy in 2012.

Booth and Flinn began operations at this particular stone quarry in 1882, harvesting the famed bluestone by drilling and blasting it from the gorge wall.

The quarry was active until sometime in the 1920s; Booth and Flinn moved operations across the river when a more superior grade of bluestone was discovered on the north wall of the Loyalhanna Gorge.

Along the way, Stutzman pointed out the spot where wash from a landslide tumbled onto Route 30, plus the presumed location of a trestle that transported the blasted stone from the quarry down to the railroad cars, as well as the ruins of the steam engine house. Kurtz and Sopko climbed to the top of a small hill to check out World War II-era bore holes in the rock face, left there more than 70 years ago by Kennametal when the company was testing the endurance of its drill bits. The goal

was to drill two-inch-diameter holes about eight feet deep. The group was also able to glimpse the north wall quarry site on the other side of the gorge, now an active asphalt plant for the Latrobe-based Hanson Aggregates.



Evidence of Kennametal's WWII-era drill testing.



Heading west along the Loyalhanna Gorge Greenway.

The Loyalhanna Gorge Greenway stretches from Longbridge to the Kingston Dam. Limited trailhead parking can be found on Darlington Road just off Route 30. Head towards the highway to find the entrance to the greenway; the Booth and Flinn south wall quarry is a relatively short hike west.

Train Trivia: Surviving Stations of the LVRR



Last issue's question: **"How many stations of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road (LVRR) are still standing?"**

Answer: Once again, this is a bit of a tricky question. If one counts the number of stations used by the LVRR, then seven station buildings are still standing to this day. Of those seven, six were built by and for the LVRR specifically.

In Ligonier, there are two surviving station buildings. The most obvious is the grand passenger station, which served from 1910 until 1952 as the station and headquarter offices of the LVRR. This building was sold to the Pennsylvania Game Commission in 1955 and used as their Southwest Region Office until 2001 when the building was swapped with the Ligonier Valley School District for its closed Fairfield Elementary School. Since 2001, the former LVRR station has been used as the school district's administration building.



Across the parking lot from the administration building is a longer white building used by the school district's building and grounds department. This building was originally located on the other side of the tracks in the spot where the new station was built in 1910. But the original station was moved across the tracks to make room for the new station building. Later, the older station became the LVRR's freight station and was used as such until the railroad's closing in 1952.

Two stations are located at Idlewild and SoakZone. It's unknown exactly when the first station was built, but an enclosed depot certainly appeared within the first few years after the picnic grounds were established in 1878. Despite its tiny size, a ticket agent, freight office and waiting room were squeezed into the one-story building, which measured only 10.5 feet by 20 feet. This station has moved a few times during the park's history. It was originally located on the south side of the railroad tracks, closer to the Loyalhanna Creek. The station was later moved to the north side, rotated 180 degrees, and enhanced by a bay window, likely when the Darlington family allowed the LVRR to expand Idlewild Park to the north side of the tracks around 1891.



When the LVRR established the subsidiary Idlewild Management Company (IMC) in 1931 to develop the amusement park, the depot was moved slightly east and converted into a first aid station and a new two-story station was erected in its place. The second floor served as temporary residence and offices for the Macdonald family, who were instrumental in the IMC and would eventually own Idlewild, while the station operated on the ground floor.

At one point, the original station was rotated 180 degrees (again!) and a small addition was tacked on to one side. Last refurbished in summer 2019, this building has been used as a storage room, a committee room, and a park museum during its lifetime. The two-story

building was also used as a longtime souvenir stand and most recently converted into a rentable birthday party room.

Train Trivia: Surviving Stations of the LVRR

Heading westward, the next station still standing is the beautiful Darlington Station, just west of Idlewild. This station was built around 1896 and served as a LVRR station until the railroad's closing. The Darlington Station was one of three stations where the station agent (and his family) could live in the building. Kingston and Oakville were the other two. The Darlington Station was used by Idlewild Park for employee housing and storage but was in disrepair by the early 2000's. In 2006, the station was transferred to the Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association and was restored for use as the Association's museum. This beautiful structure is available to visit every Saturday and at other times by appointment.



Just 1.5 miles from the western terminus of the LVRR in Latrobe stands the former Oakville Station. This building was completed in 1899 and utilized by the railroad until 1926, when the building was sold (though LVRR stops continued as this location). The building quickly became a private residence and remains so to this day.

The LVRR had its own station building at its Latrobe terminus for a little over ten years beginning around 1890. That station building was located next to the track near Alexandria Street. From the beginning of the LVRR in 1877 until the early 1900's both the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) and the LVRR had at-grade crossings in the borough of Latrobe. But in the early 1900's the tracks of both railroads were elevated and bridges were built over Ligonier and Alexandria Streets. With the newly elevated tracks, the PRR built a brand new Latrobe Station between these streets, fronting on McKinley Avenue. This station opened in 1903. At that point the former independent LVRR station was no longer used and LVRR passenger and freight service was handled out of the PRR Latrobe Station. Thus from 1903 until 1952, the Latrobe Station was a "union" station, meaning that it was shared by two or more railroads. The Latrobe Station ceased functioning as a full-service depot in 1971, with Amtrak assuming ownership of the now-closed building until it was sold in 1985 to become the Latrobe Station restaurant. In 1989, it was sold again, and one year later became DiSalvo's Station restaurant. In addition to remaining open for dining and events as DiSalvo's Station, daily Amtrak passenger service is still available at the platform and shelter above the station. From left to right, the photos below show the current building at the site of the first LVRR-only station in Latrobe then the new PRR station and platform used when the LVRR transferred its Latrobe operations to that depot in 1903.



2021 Friends of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road

We would like to thank the members listed below who have renewed their support as Friends of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road (LVRR) for 2021. Your support is vital to preserve the legacy of the LVRR through our crown jewel, the museum at the old Darlington Station. To all of our readers: if you do not see your name listed below, please consider becoming a Friend of the LVRR for 2021. The contributions of Friends are tax-deductible and Friends receive the following benefits: exclusive first look at each newly-published *Liggie* newsletter, a 10% discount on all museum purchases, an invitation to the annual dinner, and free admission to the LVRR Museum. If you believe your name should be listed below or your name is listed in error, please contact us at info@lvrra.org or leave a message at 724-238-7819. Thank you so much for your support!

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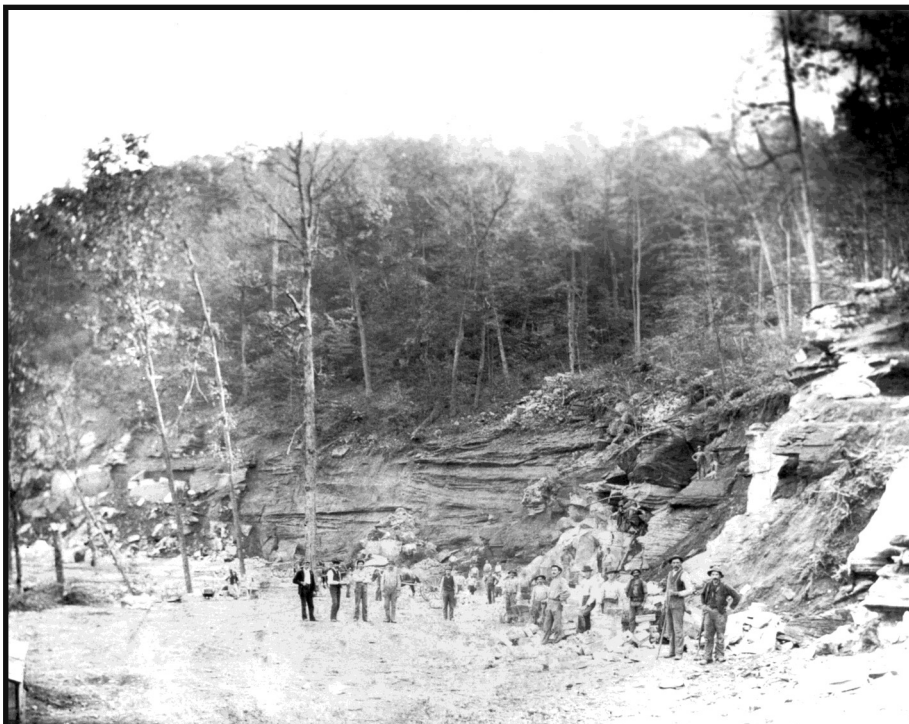
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From the LVRR Museum Archives

Here's a vintage view of the
Booth and Flinn south wall stone quarry
during its heyday of operations.

From the Ray Kinsey Collection,
Ligonier Valley Rail Road Museum Archives

Next Issue's Train Trivia

Our next Train Trivia question is more of a challenge:

Can you identify what is pictured in the photo below? This building is still standing today (barely!). Hint: Consider not just the LVRR but also its various connections.



From *The Liggie* Archives

As *The Liggie* has been in print for more than 15 years, we would like to periodically share some previously published articles with our newer members. In our inaugural issue, Volume 1, Number 1 (June 2005), we explained the genesis of our newsletter's name:

What's in a Name? There are several accounts where writers referred to the LVRR as the Liggie. It was a catchall term to include both the doodlebugs and the freight trains. Since the Ligonier Valley Rail Road did not readily convert to an acronym, writers simply coined the word Liggie to use as an abbreviation when referring to the LVRR. Over time, it became a term of endearment rather than disdain. Therefore, as we strive to preserve the legacy of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road, this term of appreciation, *The Liggie*, will serve as the name of our newsletter.

LVRRA Seeks Volunteers

The LVRRA continues to seek volunteers to serve as docents at the Ligonier Valley Rail Road Museum. Docents give educational tours and handle gift shop sales during the museum's operating hours. If you are interested in railroad operations and history or Ligonier Valley history, this is a great way to serve your community. No prior experience is required. Training will be provided. Anyone interested in becoming a museum docent, please contact the LVRRA by email at info@lvrra.org.

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

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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