DRAFT

CHAPTER 1 LEGAL FEASIBILITY—how did the L&T railroad come into being, and who owns the railbed now?

An entire half century passed between the day the first meeting was held to discuss a railroad through Penns Valley and the day the first train rolled into the station in Lemont from its departure in Montandon in July of 1886. Plans to link the commerce and culture of Penns and Brush Valley with more populous regions of the country faced a multitude of challenges on the local, regional and national level. In its early days, the project was a local affair spearheaded and financed to the tune of $200,000 by men of proven accomplishment, including Centre Furnace ironmaster Moses Thompson, Boalsburg namesake and Christopher Columbus descendent George Boal, Centre Hall Grange Fair founder Leonard Rhone, and Aaronsburg attorney James Coburn, namesake of the railroad village formerly known as the Forks. But the project soon proved to be even beyond the vast resources and skills of the region's most accomplished leaders and, by the mid 1870's was taken over by the ***Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR)***, which was already well on its way to becoming the largest company in the world. A century later, they too would succumb to forces even beyond their resources and expertise, as the nation shifted its attention to what was thought of then as a more democratic form of transportation, the automobile. By the 1970's, the PRR was bankrupt to the tune of $2 billion (in current dollars), its rights of way abandoned and reverted back to the then current owners of the lands originally deeded over to the *Lewisburg, Centre and Spruce Creek Railroad, the* precursor to the *Lewisburg & Tyrone Railroad*, referred to most often in the community and in this study simply as "the *L&T*."

The key milestones in the development of the L&T are presented in the graphic timeline on the following pages of this report. The dates were compiled from John Blair Linn's 1883 History of Centre and Clinton Counties, Pennsylvania; the *Linden Hall Garden Club's* Sketches of Linden Hall, published in 1980; excerpts from Aaronsburg's paper, *The Centre Reporter,* (originally called *Der Berichter* and printed in German*),* printed in Centre Hall, Centre County, Pennsylvania, published in 1942 by the *Centre Hall Fire Company;* and rail historian Michael Bezilla's article, *The PRR's Lewisburg & Tyrone Railroad,* published in The Keystone*, Vol. 39, No.1, Spring 2006.* Mike Bezilla, a member of the study committee for this project, also provided key dates specifically related to the abandonment of the two segments in Centre County.

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April 1, 1836,

The earliest effort to establish a railroad through Penns Valley occurred in 1836, when, "*an act was passed authorizing the charter of the Lewisburg, Penn's Valley and Hollidaysburg Railroad. "Nothing further than a preliminary survey was accomplished. This [survey] was made by Charles de Haas in June, 1836."* (Linn)

December 18th, 1845

"The first meeting favorable to a railroad through Penn's valley was held." The meeting was presided over by George Boal, and "*committees were appointed to petition the Legislature for an act of incorporation." "The successful battle waged in Union County against municipal subscription deferred this enterprise, and nothing was done for many years except to keep the charter alive by legislative enactments …until the year 1853* …[when]… *there arose a rivalry between the people of Bald Eagle valley and those of Penn's valley in securing railroad facilities*." (Linn)

February 11, 1853

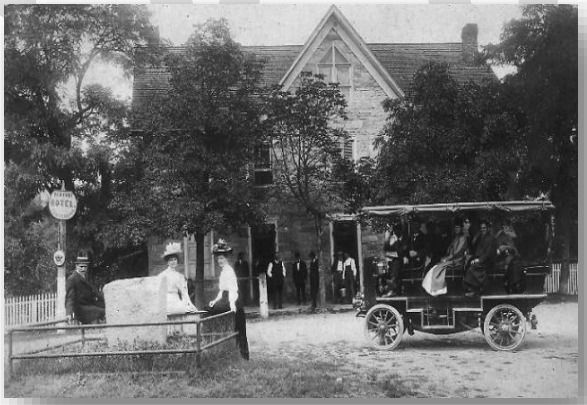
"A large meeting was held at Old Fort favorable to a railroad from Lewisburg through Penn's valley. Hon. George Boal, president; E. S. Gross, Dr. Charles Smith, vice-presidents ; Col. John Love and J. I. Gregg, secretaries. The meeting was addressed by Gen. James Irvin, Gen. George Buchanan, David Duncan, and Judge John Hasson. (Linn)

April 12, 1853

"*The act incorporating the Lewisburg, Centre and Spruce Creek Railroad became law."* Although The Centre Democrat opined, *"It's very doubtful whether it will ever be opened," a survey of the route was ordered up by the road's directors within a month.* (Linn)

May 13, 1853

"*The Penn's valley survey was commenced at Lewisburg by John M. Sheafer, assistant engineer. In a report thereof he says from the head of Penn's Creek Narrows to Spring Mills the line is a good one. Near Spring Mills the line strikes Sinking Creek, and follows it to near Centre Hill, which is the summit between Penn's Creek and Spring Creek, and the first summit of any consequence which is encountered from Lewisburg, a distance of forty-seven and a half miles. The heaviest grades necessary to overcome this summit will be fifty-two and eight-tenths per mile ; ascending from Sinking Creek for about two and a half miles, and thirty-three feet per mile; descending to Spring Creek, at or near Boalsburg, for three miles. From Boalsburg to Pine Grove, which is on the summit between Spring Creek and Spruce Creek, the steepest grade will be thirty-three feet per mile, and from Pine Grove to the mouth of Spruce Creek need not exceed thirty-three feet per mile.*



Old Fort Hotel, from Potter Township Photo Archives

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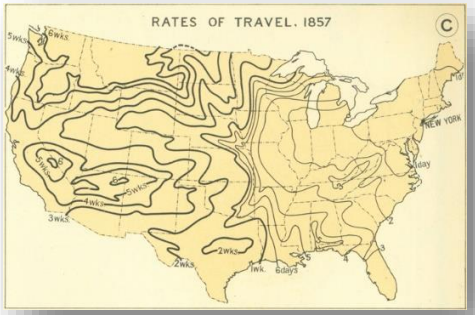
June 1, 1857

Another survey was ordered by a new board of directors of the railroad. Chief Engineer A. B. Warford's report to the President and Directors of the **Lewisburg, Centre and Spruce Creek Railroad Company** considered several possible routes for connecting Lewisburg, on the West Branch of the Susquehanna River, to the Pennsylvania Central Railroad, on the Juniata River, including two main lines out of Lewisburg; *"one to establish the distance and elevation of the summit at the head of Rapid Run, with a view of securing a location through Brush valley; the other by way of Penn's creek."* In the end, Warford recommended the Penns Creek route due to the steep grades and tight curves required to navigate through the *Brush valley narrows* along Rapid Run.

Warford's survey includes what would soon become obvious as a generous if not unrealistic estimate of the business the railroad would secure in its first year of operations, including $311,112.50 of net profit after expenses for hauling:

50,000 tons of wheat;
500 tons of beef, pork, etc.;
600 tons of butter;
400 tons of eggs;
200 tons of poultry;
1,000 tons of vegetables;
1,000 tons of fruits;
2,000 tons of merchandise;
2,000 tons of plaster;
100 tons of wool;
250 tons of clover seed;
100,000 tons of bituminous coal;
150,000 tons of anthracite coal;
50,000 tons of lumber;
10,000 tons of limestone & iron ore;
13,000 tons of metal from furnaces;
100 passengers per day for 313 days a year; and
$10,000 for express mail service.



It took 6 weeks to travel across the country by horse in 1857; map from 1932 **Atlas of Historical Geography of the United States**

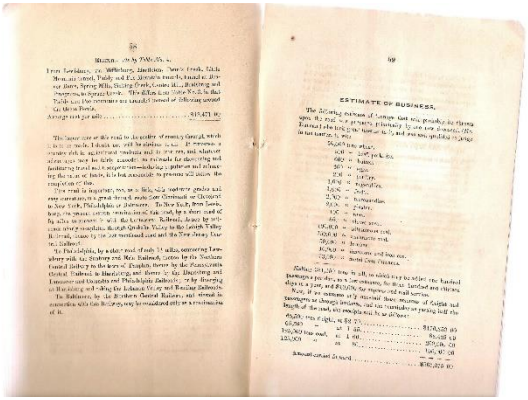
1861

Civil War begins

1865

Civil War ends

Civil War Photo from …



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1868

"The railroad bridge was built across the river at Lewisburg by subscription of citizens."
Bezilla

Friday, July 23, 1869

"The first train arrived in Lewisburg ...prompting one of the town's newspapers to explain that the LC&SC 'will wake us up from our Rip Van Winkle slumber and place us right on the thoroughfare to prosperity!"
Bezilla

1871

Construction of the Railroad continued through Buffalo Valley as far as Mifflinburg.
Bezilla

September 15, 1871

"Last Tuesday well deserves to be a memorable day for on that day ground was broken for the roadbed of our long wished-for railroad. Messrs. VanDyke & Moore, contractors for that portion of the road from three miles east of Centre Hal to Oak Hall arrived at Spring Mills with a portion of their force." Centre Reporter

December 15 1871

"Mr. John Hoffer, on Tuesday, had surveyor Trczulny over here to open a new street. It will extend from Mr. Alexander Shannon's corner, on Church Street, southward to the railroad. These lots will be very desirable and are already very much in demand."
Centre Reporter

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Isometric panorama engraving of Lewisburgh (the "h" was later dropped from most towns in Pennsylvania)

These two photos archived at the *Aaronsburg Historical Museum* were labeled Tunnel No. 2 and Tunnel No. 3 in handwritten notes on the back. Since only two tunnels were built, we can surmise that the men worked from both faces of the mountain until they met in between, hence, initially 4 tunnels, then 2 after each pair worked their way through the mountain and finally met.

Judging from the photo of Tunnel No. 3, work appears to have begun by excavating rock at the roof of the tunnel, which would have eliminated the need for scaffolding. Presumably, the men then worked their way down until they reached the appropriate elevation of the floor of the tunnel. The man in the vest may have been the foreman or chief engineer.

Some of the men working at the lower level are holding sledge hammers. Their job might have been to break the rock into small enough pieces to serve as ballast along the railbed. The men holding shovels at the lowest level loaded the stone into carts driven by mules.

The excavated rock was loaded into carts by hand and hauled away by teams of mules. Notice the young boy holding the reins on the cart on the far right.

The men standing at the entrance to the East End Tunnel No. 2 in the photo at the right below appear to be holding a surveyors rod. Mike Bezilla's article on the L&T published in *The Keystone*, lists the Paddy Mountain Tunnel at 320 feet,, and the Beaver Dam (Coburn) Tunnel at 260 feet, suggesting that the tunnel noted below as the West End Tunnel #3 is the Poe Paddy Tunnel.

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West End Tunnel #3, 8 Degree Curve, Full Length 380', 1.68% Grade, McLaughlin Bros. Contractors
Photo coutesy Aaronsburg Historical Museum

East End Tunnel #2, before timbers were erected.
Photo coutesy Aaronsburg Historical Museum

1873

A nationwide economic panic, brought on to a large extent by the overbuilding and shaky financing of railroads, ultimately led to a series of disastrous bank failures in Europe and North America.
Wikipedia/Panic of 1873

September 28, 1874

"FIRST CENTRE COUNTY GRANGERS' PIC-NIC Held in Leech's Woods, Near Centre Hall, it was a great success. Enjoyed by all of the nearly 3000 who attended. …At noon eight or ten acres of the woodland were dotted with many hundreds of tablecloths and a feast was enjoyed by all. **Centre Reporter**

June 8, 1875

President G.F. Miller's *Annual Report* to the stockholders of the Company described *"the completion of your road"* 16 months after portions of it were opened for business. Meanwhile, other sections, including the two tunnels in Centre County, were still under construction.
Aaronsburg Museum archives

1876

A group of men led by Grange Fair founder Leonard Rhone signed leases for rights of way between Centre Hall and Linden Hall. The terms of the lease generally gave the railroad rights of way through their land in exchange for a dollar and the benefits that would accrue from the building of a railroad through their land.

1877

The map of railroads in Pennsylvania in 1880 published in Randall Miller & Richard Pencak's book, **Pennsylvania, A History of the Commonwealth,** indicates that the Lewisburg and Tyrone Railroad was the last railroad built in the Commonwealth up to that time.

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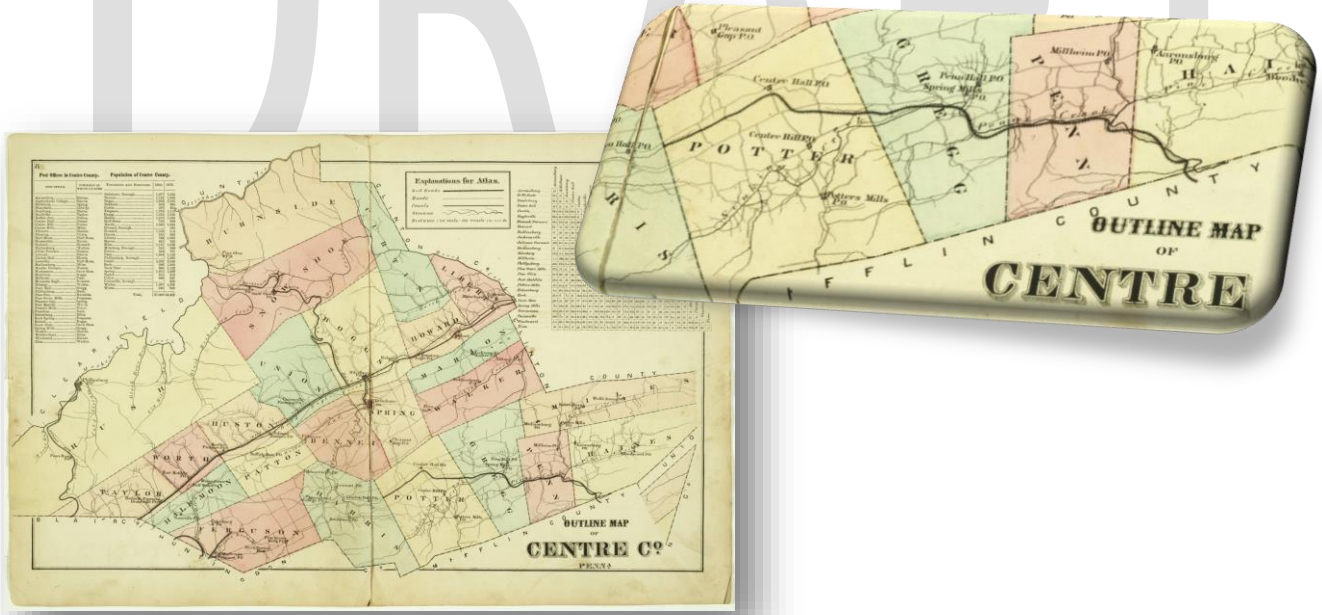


1874 Pomeroy Atlas of Centre County showing detail of route of the eastern section of the L&T

1877

"The line was surveyed, rights-of-way were obtained by farmers trading land for railroad stock, and $200,000 was invested by people of the valley. Progress was made for a brief time. The line was extended to Spring Mills in 1877, grading was completed to Centre Hall." (Sketches from Linden Hall)

1878

LC&SC RR President Slifer reports expenditures of $2,345,975 against gross earnings of $30,881 for the previous year. *"If we had means to rapidly complete the work, we might hope for some reasonable return from the investment. As it is, the unpaid interest on the cost of our work is accumulating and the delay in completion is destructive."* (Bezilla)

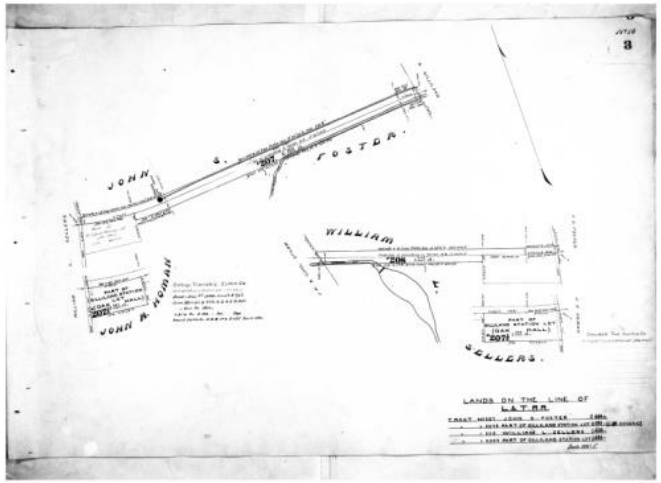
1879

"The Millheim Turnpike Road Company was chartered… under the general corporation act of April 29, 1874, and built its road, about two miles and one-half in length, from Millheim to the Lewisburg, Centre and Spruce Creek Railroad at Coburn Station during that year. (Linn)

January 1, 1880

"The LC&SC defaulted on its bonds and was sold at sheriff's sale. The PRR [Pennsylvania Railroad] gained a majority of stock ownership, organized the Lewisburg and Tyrone Railroad as its successor, and leased the L&T … for 99 years. …The new name reflected a change in the road's western terminus. The Middle Division town of Tyrone offered more industrial potential than the rural Spruce Creek and greater possibilities to lure investors." (Bezilla)

By the time the LC&SC was reorganized [as the L&T], it had already graded 17 miles of right-of-way from Tyrone east through the Nittany Valley to the iron works at Pennsylvania Furnace. …The plan had been to keep building eastward until meeting the line coming from Spring Mills in the vicinity of State College. However, the PRR extended the line eastward only as far as Fairbook. It then built a 5.3 mile branch northward to Scotia, where the Carnegie Steel Company had extensive ore deposits. (Bezilla)



1877 Railroad Survey Drawing for Lands on the line of the L&T RR, microfiche copy from the Pennsylvania State Archives (page 3 of 18 pgs.). The consulting team used these surveys from the State Archives in Harrisburg to trace the ownership of the railroad rights of way to its present owners between Lemont and Spring Mills.

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1880

"In 1880, the name of the company was changed to the Lewisburg and Tyrone and a section of track was opened between Tyrone and Pennsylvania Furnace. But there the project bogged down. Years passed with non progress. The people could only look at the graded right-of-way, no longer useful for farming or any other purpose, and fret over the fate of their $200,000. Sketches from Linden Hall

Autumn 1881

"Trains began hauling as much as 4,000 tons of ore monthly [from Carnegie's Scotia mines]… destined for Pittsburgh-area mills. Bezilla

1883

"Evidence of work on other rail lines and occasional reports of engineers working along the proposed L&T roadbed caused an uprising of public opinion in the spring of 1883, Daniel Hess of Linden Hall made a spirited appeal in the Centre Reporter of June 14, 1883. He felt the law should be called upon to force the railroad to either finish the line or to refund the investor's money and pay for the land deeded over to the railroad company." Sketches from Linden Hall

January 2, 1884

"The Railroad is coming!—After many years' delay and a recent demand on the part of the P.R.R. for an additional $25,000 from the citizens of Pennsvalley, to which the local committee … flatly refused, the P.R.R. this week agreed to advance the sum of $145,000 to the Lewisburg & Tyrone Railroad Co. for completion of the line from Spring Mills to Lemont. Governor Curtin is credited with having brought pressure against the terms of the P.R.R., to which he referred as being d-----outrage." Centre Reporter

November 3, 1884

"Today the first train passed over the rails from Montandon to Oak Hall. The train, composed of six passenger cars, was chuck full of people from Coburn, Spring Mills, Centre Hall and Linden Hall. Centre Hall was almost depopulated. …The excursion train added some 600 to the already immense crowd and the Linden Hall Band was on hand discoursing excellent music. … A similar grand celebration was held about seven years ago at Spring Mills when the railroad had been brought to that point." Centre Reporter

July 22, 1885

"The entire 67 miles of track between Bellefonte and Montandon were opened for service. The first car through the connection at Lemont that day carried a load of coal from Philipsburg, on the Pennsylvania's Tyrone & Clearfield Railway, consigned to a new steam-powered flourmill at Centre Hall." ***Bezilla***

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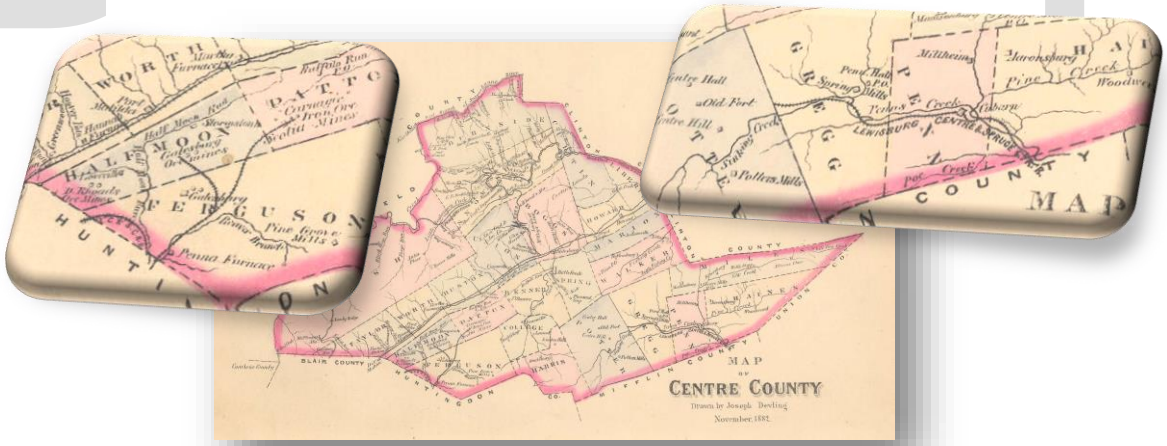

Joseph Devlin's Centre County Map of November 1882 with blow-ups showing the west and east routes of the Lewisburg, Centre and Spruce Creek Railroad

1913

"In an effort to reduce expenses and streamline its corporate structure, the PRR foreclosed on the L&T's bonds. It reorganized the company as the Lewsiburg & Tyrone Railway and purchased all its stock. **Bezilla**

April 30, 1915

"The 'new' L&T was absorbed into the PRR. The eastern half became the Bellefonte Branch, which extended from Milesburg (junction with the Bald Eagle Branch, formerly the Bald Eagle Valley Railroad) all the way to Montandon. The western half became the Fairbrook Branch." **Bezilla**

1920's

PRR operates 10,515 miles of rail line; and carries nearly three times the traffic as other railroads of comparable length, such as the Union Pacific or Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroads. Its only formidable rival was the New York Central (NYC), which carried around three-quarters of PRR's ton-miles. **Wikipedia**

1945

During World War II PRR's traffic doubled and passenger traffic quadrupled, much of it on the eastern portion of the system **Wikipedia**

1956

The Federal Highway Act is signed into law, allocates more than $30 billion toward construction of 41,000 miles of interstate highways; rail traffic enters period of steep decline as trucking industry takes off. **www.history.com/.../congress-approves-federal-highway-act**

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1911 Sanborn Insurance Map of Centre Hall; with blowup of rail line passing through town, note buildings clustered around railroad right of way

November 1957

Former arch rivals PRR and NYC announce plans to merge
PRR/Wikipedia

May 8, 1962

Stockholders approve the merger
PRR/Wikipedia

November 1963

The 47 mile segment between Lemont and Mifflinburg received only 13 cars and originated only 1
Bezilla

1964

Only 5 stations remain in service along the Mifflinburg Branch: Bellefonte, Lemont, Centre Hall, Mifflinburg and Lewisburg
PRR/Bezilla

1966

ICC approves the merger of the PRR and NYC as Penn Central
PRR/Wikipedia

February 1, 1968

Penn Central formed
PRR/Wikipedia

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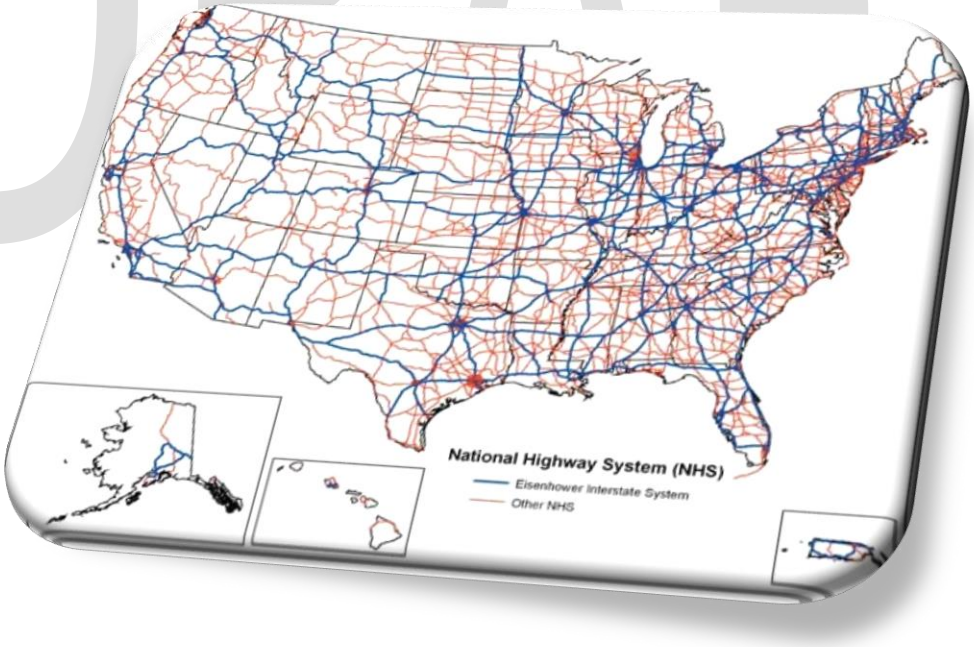

May 9, 1968

A GP9 locomotive hauls 4 covered hopper cars to Coburn. It will be the last run on the L&T's Montandon Secondary between Coburn and Mifflinburg,
Bezilla

June 21, 1970

Penn Central registers a deficit of $325.8 million ($2 billion in current dollars), declares bankruptcy.
PRR/Wikipedia

June 8, 1971

ICC grants Penn Central permission to abandon the 24.7 mile *Montandon Secondary* between Mifflinburg and Coburn, effective July 14, 1970, per USRA Preliminary System Plan of 1975.
Bezilla

June 1972

Hurricane Agnes washes out numerous sections of trackage along the 21.7 mile segment between Lemont and Coburn; Penn Central requests permission to abandon the segment known as the Belllefonte Secondary.
Bezilla

May 8 1973

ICC grants Penn Central permission to abandon the 21.7 mile *Bellefonte Secondar*y rail segment between Lemont and Coburn,
ICC Certificate and Order No. AB-5, Sub no. 40.

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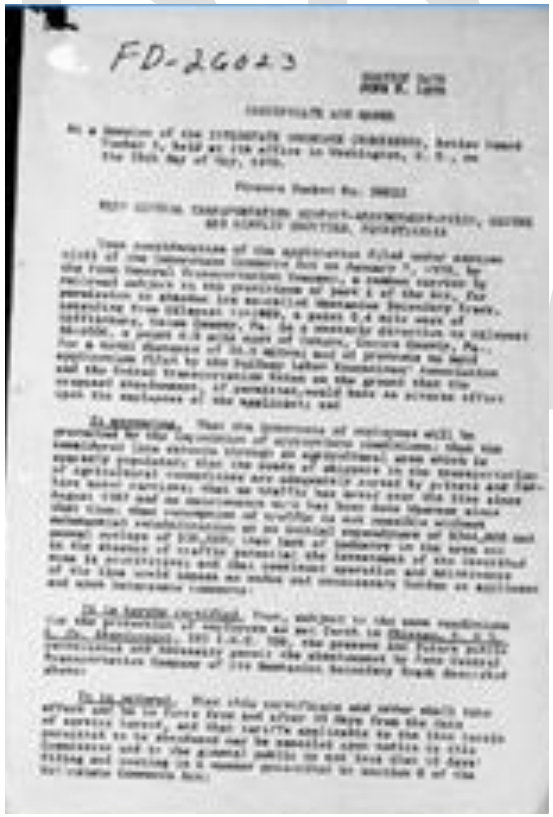
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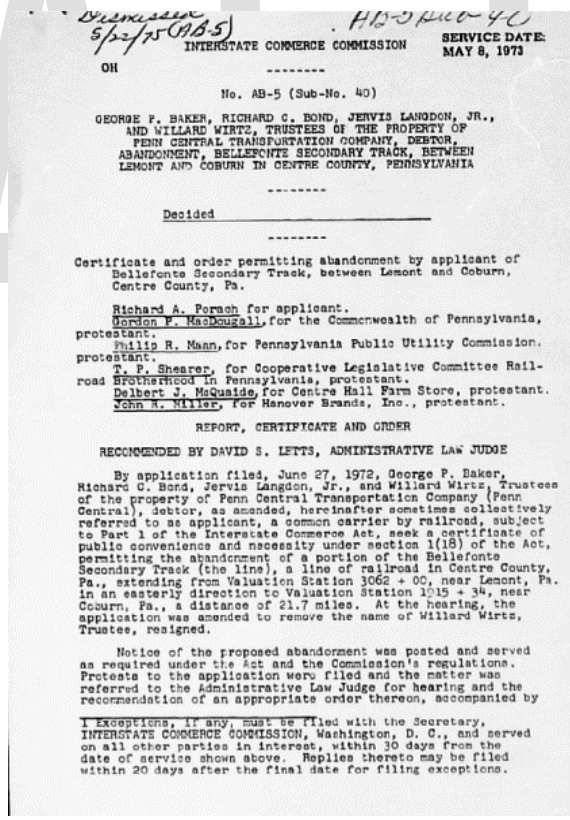
INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

SERVICE DATE: MAY 8, 1973

OH

No. AB-5 (Sub-No. 40)

GEORGE P. BAKER, RICHARD C. BOND, JERVIS LANGDON, JR., AND WILLARD WIRTZ, TRUSTEES OF THE PROPERTY OF PENN CENTRAL TRANSPORTATION COMPANY, DEBTOR, ABANDONMENT, BELLEFONTE SECONDARY TRACK, BETWEEN LEMONT AND COBURN IN CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Decided

Certificate and order permitting abandonment by applicant of Bellefonte Secondary Track, between Lemont and Coburn, Centre County, Pa.

Richard A. Poraoh for applicant.
Gordon P. MacDougall, for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, protestant.
Philip R. Mann, for Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, protestant.
T. P. Shearer, for Cooperative Legislative Committee Railroad Brotherhood in Pennsylvania, protestant.
Delbert J. McQuaide, for Centre Hall Farm Store, protestant.
John R. Miller, for Hanover Brands, Inc., protestant.

REPORT, CERTIFICATE AND ORDER

RECOMMENDED BY DAVID S. LETTS, ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE

By application filed, June 27, 1972, George P. Baker, Richard C. Bond, Jervis Langdon, Jr., and Willard Wirtz, Trustees of the property of Penn Central Transportation Company (Penn Central), debtor, as amended, hereinafter sometimes collectively referred to as applicant, a common carrier by railroad, subject to Part 1 of the Interstate Commerce Act, seek a certificate of public convenience and necessity under section 1(18) of the Act, permitting the abandonment of a portion of the Bellefonte Secondary Track (the line), a line of railroad in Centre County, Pa., extending from Valuation Station 3062 + 00, near Lemont, Pa. in an easterly direction to Valuation Station 1015 + 34, near Coburn, Pa., a distance of 21.7 miles. At the hearing, the application was amended to remove the name of Willard Wirtz, Trustee, resigned.

Notice of the proposed abandonment was posted and served as required under the Act and the Commission's regulations. Protests to the application were filed and the matter was referred to the Administrative Law Judge for hearing and the recommendation of an appropriate order thereon, accompanied by

I Exceptions, if any, must be filed with the Secretary, INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION, Washington, D. C., and served on all other parties in interest, within 30 days from the date of service shown above. Replies thereto may be filed within 20 days after the final date for filing exceptions.

ICC orders granting Penn Central the right to abandon the L&T's 24.7 mile Montandon Secondary line on June 8 1971 and the 21.7 mile Bellefonte Secondary line in May 8, 1973; sent to consulting team by the attorney for the US Surface Transportation Board (STB)

June 23, 1972

No trains run east of Lemont after this date on account of damages from Hurricane Agnes.
Bezilla

September 6, 1973

Penn Central places ad in Centre Daily Times offering the right-of-way for sale "Free and clear of all encumbrances."
Bezilla

May 22 1975

ICC abandonment order dismissed for Lemont to Coburn section
per handwritten note on top of AB-5

June 26, 1975

USRA's **Final System Plan** does not include the Lemont-Coburn section among PC lines recommended for continued operation, allows abandonment to proceed
Bezilla-USRA Final System Plan 7/26/75

December 9, 1975

Penn Central announces that the Lemont-Coburn section will be part of 846 miles of track that it intends to abandon in PA by February 26, 1976, prior to formation of the new Conrail system.
Bezilla-The Clearfield Progress 12/10/75

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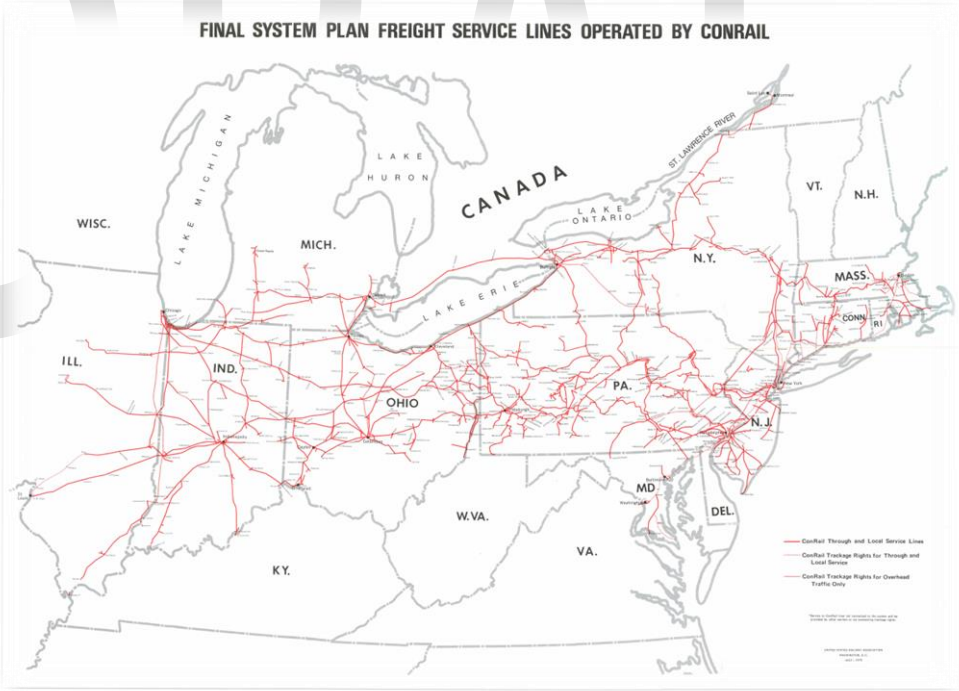

Map of USRA approved **Final System Plan,** adapted July 26, 1975, the map includes the segment that later became the Buffalo Valley Rail Trail after it was railbanked; everything west of that segment and east of Lemont was abandoned by Penn Central (i.e., not railbanked)

In 1983, eight years after the eastern sections of the L&T railroad were officially abandoned in Centre County, the *National Trail Systems Act* was amended to give qualified organizations, such as a municipality or rail trail organization, the right to petition the *Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC)* to have the railbed "railbanked" as an "interim use" (the ICC was established in 1887 to regulate commerce between states, and abolished and its powers transferred to the *Surface Transportation Board* (STB) in 1995). "Railbanking" was designed to prevent abandoned rail corridors from reverting back to the present owners of the land that was originally conveyed to the railroad in the event they become economically feasible to operate for rail service again at some future date. Once the ICC approves a corridor for railbanking, the order temporarily halts the reversion from occurring as long as the railbed remains intact (contiguous) and operable as a railroad. Although rails and ties can be removed for salvage to allow an interim use such as a rail trail to occur, the line must preserve significant structures, like bridges and tunnels that would be deemed necessary for its operation as a railroad. In cases where railbanking has been contested by landowners, judges typically have ruled in favor of the landowners when significant structures were removed or portions of the railbed sold off.

After the 24.9 mile segment between Mifflinburg and Coburn was approved for abandonment by the ICC on June 8, 1971, the Nature Conservancy bought a quit claim for the entire segment. The Conservancy paid $10,000 for the approximately 150 acres of land on December 9, 1971 (recorded on April 20, 1972) and then sold it to the *Commonwealth of PA, Department of Environmental Resources,* on March 22, 1972 for $10,500. The conveyance was made *"with the express understanding that all public motorized vehicular traffic shall be prohibited, banned and barred from the premises hereinbefore described."* The sale was contested by the Wilt family (M.E. Wilt & Sons, Inc.) in Ingleby, ending with the *Commonwealth's Board of Property, Department of Community Affairs* ruling on July 25, 1974 in favor of the Wilt family for the approximately 1 mile section of right of way beyond Bald Eagle State Forest on lands conveyed to the *Lewisburg, Centre and Spruce Creek Railroad* in 1871 and 1877 and now owned by the Wilt family. According to the court order, *"the Board of Property, hereby determines that the M.E. Wilt and Sons, Inc. is the fee simple owner of strips of land formerly used as a railroad right-of-way situate in Haines Township, Centre County, Pennsylvania, described in deeds executed by George Fowler dated May 2, 1877…and Daniel Cary and George Schnure dated April 18, 1871, and finds that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources has no right, title or interest in said strips of land."* The court's decision on this matter essentially affirmed reversionary rights for the Wilts and quite possibly set a precedent for all property owners west of the right of way beyond Bald Eagle State Forest. Had this transaction happened after the 1983 Railbanking Act, the outcome might have been quite different.

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93 distinct entities purchased quit claims for the abandoned L&T right of way from Penn Central or its successor, American Premier Underwriters (see map above).

The abandonment of the 21.7 mile segment between Coburn and Lemont, also known as the *Bellefonte Secondar*y, also was challenged in a lawsuit, this one between Penn Central and the Commonwealth, the railway union and the feed store in Centre Hall that relied on rail service for transporting agricultural products. The matter was referred to an administrative law court, which approved Penn Central's request for abandonment of the Bellefonte Secondary on May 8 1973 (ICC Certificate and Order No. AB-5, Sub no. 40), but a handwritten note at the top of the order also indicated that it was "*dismissed, May 22, 1975."* We contacted Gabriel Myers, the attorney for the *Surface Transportation Board* who sent us the copies of the orders for abandonment, to see if he had any information that would explain the dismissal. Myers sent us CONRAIL's *Final System Plan Freight Service Lines* map published in July of 1976 as proof that the abandonment of both segments ultimately was upheld. The map clearly shows the railbanked segment between Montandon and Mifflinburg that the West Shore Railroad Company later sold to the *Lewisburg Area Recreation Authority (LARA)*, now the Buffalo Valley Rail Trail, and just as clearly shows a gap where the Bellefonte and Montandon secondary lines ran in Centre County. L&T railroad historian Mike Bezilla provided additional information further supporting the abandonment:

May 9, 1968 A GP9 locomotive hauls 4 covered hopper cars to Coburn. It will be the last run on the L&T's Montandon Secondary between Coburn and Mifflinburg.

June 8, 1971 ICC grants Penn Central permission to abandon the 24.7 mile *Montandon Secondary* between Mifflinburg and Coburn, effective July 14, 1970, per USRA Preliminary System Plan of 1975.

June 1972 Hurricane Agnes washes out numerous sections of trackage along the 21.7 mile segment between Lemont and Coburn; Penn Central requests permission to abandon the segment known as the Bellefonte Secondary

June 23, 1972 No trains run east of Lemont after this date on account of damages from Hurricane Agnes.

September 6, 1973 Penn Central places ad in Centre Daily Times offering the right-of-way for sale "Free and clear of all encumbrances."

June 26, 1975 USRA's Final System Plan does not include the Lemont-Coburn section among PC lines recommended for continued operation, allows abandonment to proceed

December 9, 1975 Penn Central announces that the Lemont-Coburn section will be part of 846 miles of track that it intends to abandon in PA by February 26, 1976, prior to formation of the new Conrail system. *The Clearfield Progress 12/10/75*

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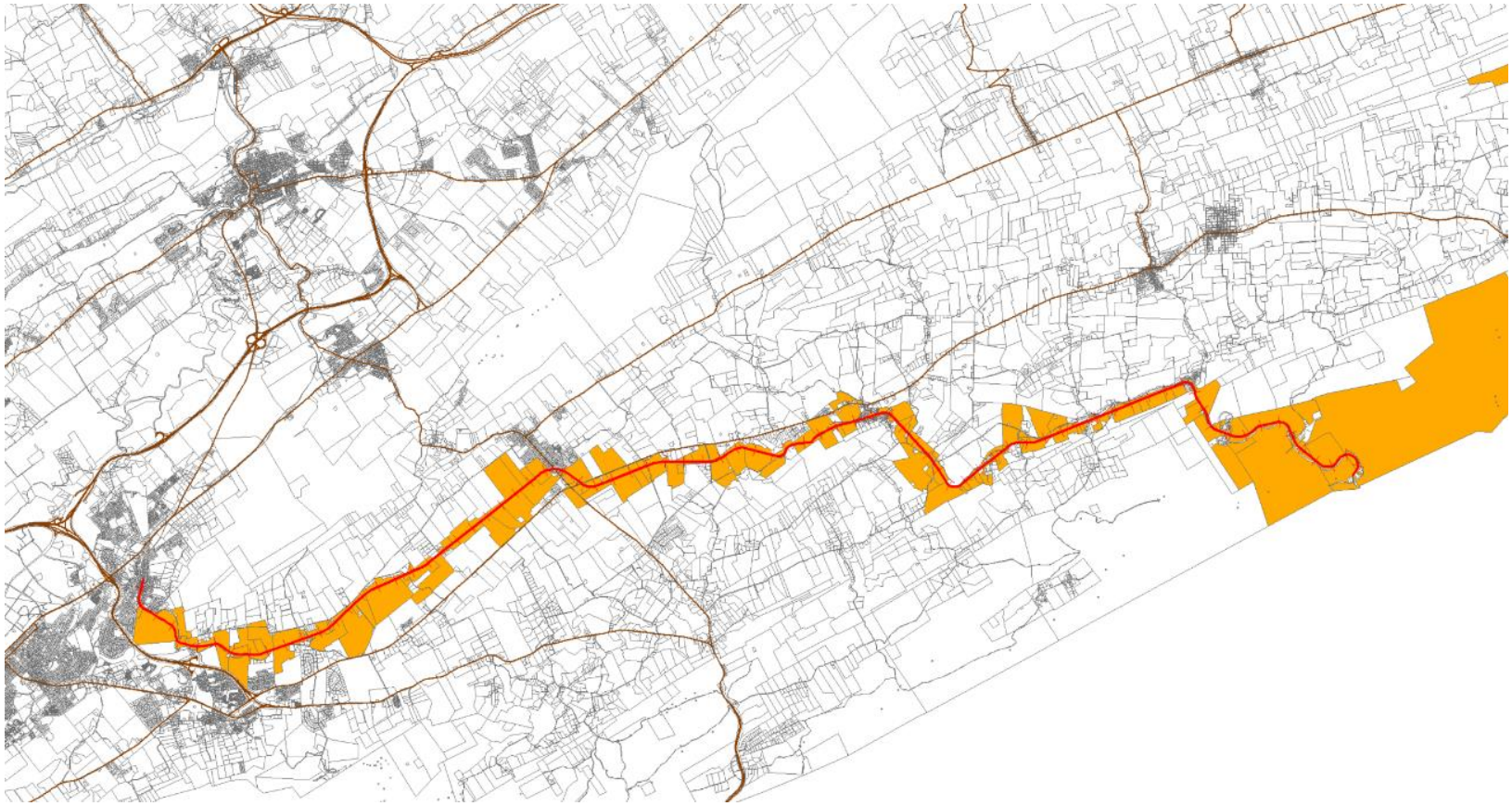

Reversionary rights may also apply to any of the 279 landowners who now own land abutting the abandoned L&T railbed right of way, depending on how their deeds are written. The findings of this study were compiled for planning purposes "from the perspective at 30,000 feet", and are not intended to be a legal opinion. Landowners who wish to clarify the status of their ownership of the right of way should consult an attorney with experience in railroad rights of way.

Many of the landowners we spoke to were advised by their attorneys that the railbed did in fact automatically revert back to them when the abandonment occurred, but their attorneys also encouraged them to purchase the quit claims for *"peace of mind",* since the purchase price in most cases was nominal. 93 distinct landowners purchased quit claims to the railbed from *Penn Central* and/or *Premier American Underwriters*. Most of the land for the railbed was secured in the late 1870's through rights of way granted by landowners to the L&T's predecessor, the *Lewisburg, Centre and Spruce Creek Railroad Company*, while lands required by the L&T for fixed assets like stations were usually purchased fee simple, meaning title to the land transferred to the railroad company. Since a quit claim only conveys whatever rights were secured in the original transaction, most of the entities that purchased quit claims for rights of way from Penn Central and/or American Premier Underwriters more than likely did not receive title to the property.

Based on a review of deeds and the names and addresses of parcel owners presently registered in the County GIS database (see **Appendix A, for a List of Parcel Owners),** reversionary rights could apply for any of the 279 landowners who own title to the land abutting the railbed now, depending on whether railroad rights of way transferred with their deeds when the properties were purchased, the determination of which is beyond the scope of this feasibility study.

DISCLAIMER: The findings of this study were compiled for planning purposes and are not intended to be a legal opinion. Landowners who wish to clarify the status of their ownership of the right of way should consult an attorney with expertise in railroad rights of way.

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