

# Rail lines once connected the Back Mountain

By GRACE R. DOVE  
Dallas Post Staff

Trains disappeared from the area more than three decades ago, when Elvis was still King and D.A. haircuts were cool, leaving a network of abandoned embankments to mark their passing.

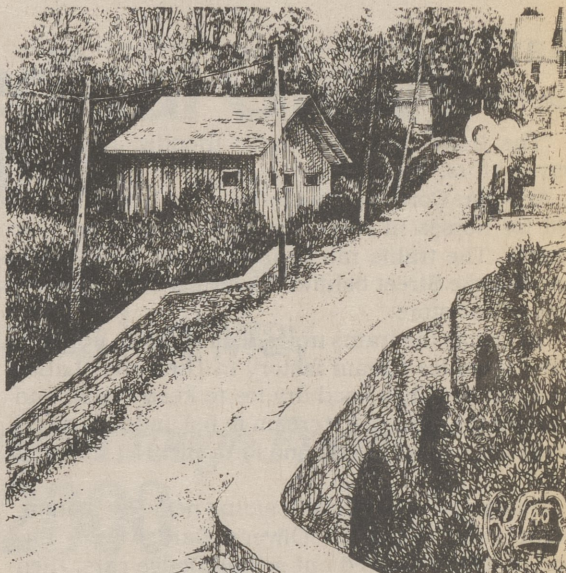
The railroads passing through the Back Mountain brought much-needed goods to the area and were a vital link between Wilkes-Barre and Towanda for the lumber and ice industries of North Mountain. The Lehigh Valley tracks ran parallel to Route 309 from Luzerne and through the rock cuts, passing stations at the Ice Cave Hotel at Hillside, Harris Hill and Youngblood's Hill (Center Street).

They then headed towards Dallas where Friendly's Restaurant now stands, then along the present Route 415 to Dallas. At the Dallas station (the site of the present post office) the tracks turned north between Route 415 and Lake Street, crossing Country Club Road behind Coates Reprographics.

They then angled towards Kunkle, Alderson and Harveys Lake, continuing to Noxen and its tannery and the ice and lumbering towns of Stull, Mountain Springs (Bean Run) and Ricketts, on the way to Bernice, the semi-anthracite mines at Lopez and the rail center at Dushore.

Dallas Township supervisor Frank Wagner remembers the ice trains as convenient free transportation for himself and his friends, Fred and June Ostrum.

"We'd hop a train at Fern Brook and ride up to Mountain Springs for the day," he said. "During the season we liked to hang out in the woods or watch the men cutting ice at the splash dams. During the summer the fishing holes up there were the greatest. We carried a couple of hooks, string and some worms in a paper bag - that was all we could handle



The old train station on Harris Hill Rd. in Trucksville is now just a memory.  
Drawing by Sue Hand

while hanging on to the cars. My mother would turn over in her grave if she ever knew I was hopping trains."

Because the boys weren't allowed on the trains, they took great pains to ride unnoticed, hopping onto cars two or three from the end where the men in the caboose wouldn't see them. They also had to watch out for the automobiles waiting at the crossings.

"If anyone who knew us saw us, they'd tell our parents," Wagner said smiling. "If I saw an old green Chevy, that was my Dad. We used to stick like glue to the sides of the railroad cars so nobody would notice us."

The trains were also a good way for Wagner and his friends to get to Luzerne to go dancing at the Rose Room. Afterwards they hitchhiked home on the Luzerne-Dallas highway (Route 309) because the trains didn't run much at night.

"The ride over the Carverton Road trestle would really give you the shakes," he said. "It was made of wood and felt very high from our positions on the train."

Fern Brook was a popular place to hitch a free ride on the railroad because the trains slowed down or stopped to drop off freight at the Brown and Fassett feed mill or at the builders' supply depot where Parker Fuel now stands. It also slowed down at Fern Brook Park, a popular dance hall where the big bands played. The park was demolished when Offset Paperback was built.

Although a trolley line duplicated much of the train's route between Trucksville and Dallas, Wagner and his friends never took advantage of it.

"The trolley was too small and the conductor could see right to the back," he said. "If he saw you he'd chase you."

The trains rolled along what is now Route 415 into the Dallas station, which was demolished when the old Acme market and the post office were built. Mayor Paul LaBar recalls playing around the huge iron cars and the switches near Foster Street.

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## Guide

### to the Back Mountain

is produced and published annually by  
**BARTSEN MEDIA, INC.**

Publishers of *The Dallas Post* and *The Abington Journal*  
Offices at 45 Main Road, Dallas, PA 18612 and  
211 South State St., Clarks Summit, PA 18411

Phone (717) 675-5211 or (717) 587-1148  
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*Guide to the Back Mountain*  
and *Guide to the Abingtons*