



Railroad switch

Railroad Switch Restoration on Display at the Museum

The October History Spotlight story related the restoration of the Black Horse Inn tile. This month we would like to feature another remarkable restoration story that has greatly enhanced the Railroad Exhibit at our historical society museum in the Roosevelt Community Center.

The Chester Branch railroad was a spur line that served the mills along Chester Creek. It entered the township upstream from Dutton's Mill and followed the east side of Chester Creek to Lenni. The railroad was abandoned in the early 1970s due to flood damage. At the time there were two trains a day making a stop along the line. In 2016 after 25 years of planning, the right-of-way was converted to recreational use and is now the Chester Creek Rail Trail.

Enter Barry Pinkowicz, President of the Chester Creek Rail Trail. In 2018, Barry contacted the historical society with an offer to restore and donate a railroad switch which he rescued when they were pulling up the rails to create the trail. The switch was used to direct cars into and out of the yard at the Defusilite property in Lenni. Over the next two-plus years, Barry painstakingly restored the switch. He then mounted the switch and the salvaged old rails, using the original metal plates and spikes, and finished with the inclusion of the inspection nails that marked the date when the railroad ties were last inspected. Unable to use old railroad ties because they are not environmentally safe, Barry purchased wood that would hold the switch and rail. Throughout the process to ensure that every detail was authentic, down to the correct colors on the switch flags, he was consulting friends who are railroad historians and who donate their time to preserving old trains. Thanks to Barry's generous donation, visitors will be able to see how this old switching system worked.

Other donations of railroad items have been given and are displayed.

In December 2017, as part of the SEPTA R3 Elwyn to Wawa Station Service Restoration Project, SEPTA transferred to the historical society 15 boxes of archaeological artifacts, along with reports and an artifact catalog. Some of the artifacts have been put on display while we continue to go through the boxes. Middletown resident, Marc Harrison, grew up exploring the tracks between the Media trestle & Elwyn Train station where, as a kid, he found a railroad lantern and blue insulator which he has generously given on loan. Barb and Bill Shaw walk the Chester Creek Rail Trail and Bill was involved during the conversion from railroad to trail. They have donated a piece of iron rail, plates and spikes, along with railroad glass and a beautiful piece of hotel china found along the line. And, Aston Township Historical Society has provided us with the station sign that identified the stop at Glen Riddle. The Glen Riddle Station building burned down in 1983.

We will be working on improving and adding to our railroad collection and when the museum is reopened, sharing railroad history, especially the lines that have served our township.

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