

Railroads

Pickering Valley Railroad

The Pickering Valley Railroad was organized in Chester Springs in early 1869, but because of disagreement over its route, construction was not begun until June, 1870. From its inception, the Pickering Valley line was a ward of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad. It opened in September, 1871, leased the line for ninety-nine years. The Pickering Valley Railroad was not a large line; it ran only about fourteen miles from Byers, near Eagle, to Phoenixville. Completion of the railroad in the fall of 1871 stimulated an economic boom in little Kimberton. The shipping of crops, as well as other cargo, was beneficial to the growth of the town. As a result it helped pave the way for other local businesses to come into Kimberton as well as connecting them. Although once prominent, the economic depression following the Panic of 1893 forced the Pickering Valley Railroad to make cuts in salaries and personnel. This pattern of periodic cutbacks and threats of loss of service continued for the next half-century. Also the growing popularity of the automobile in the early twentieth century worsened conditions, until passenger service was discontinued in 1934 and the station was exclusively used for moving freight. Freight service continued through World War II, but in 1948, it too was ended. The line between Kimberton and Phoenixville remained in sporadic use for some time thereafter, and in 1968, a group of railroad enthusiasts ran a steam excursion train between the two communities, but in the early 1970's, the project was abandoned and the rails were torn up.



“Sow Belly” Railroad

Located along French Creek, the “Sow Belly Railroad” was built to connect with the granite quarry at St. Peter’s. As the French Creek Branch of the Delaware River and Lancaster Railroad system, the “Sow Belly” connected with the Pickering Valley Railroad branch north of Kimberton and crossed French Creek, upstream from Kennedy Bridge, and entered East Vincent, followed the north side of the creek, crossed the creek and entered into West Vincent, and crossed back into East Vincent, then

turned northward to cross Pughtown road and paralleled that road. Unfortunately, the rail was hastily constructed and poorly built. The line provided both passenger service and freight service. In fact the rail bed had so many undulations; it was given the name “Sow Belly”. It was built in 1790, but; due to poor performance, the line was quickly abandoned.