

The Boyertown Area Historical Society  
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Surface Transportation Board,

The importance of preserving the Colebrookdale Railroad spur is twofold. First is the historic value of the line. Historically the line was important to many people and businesses in the area. Between Pottstown and Boyertown and beyond were numerous small villages and farms which utilized the railroad. The early iron industry was one of the major reasons the railroad was built. As the small iron foundries evolved into larger operations a better mode of transporting the manufactured goods was necessary. There are three sites of these early iron industries along the route of the rail line, Glasgow, Pine Forge, and Colebrookdale. Pine Forge specifically still has some of the original buildings and has been registered as a National Historic site. Boyertown at one time had some large businesses, The Boyertown Burial Casket Company, Boyertown Body Works and two iron foundries which took advantage of the convenient transport of freight. The Colebrookdale rail line was used by farmers to transport goods such as fresh milk and produce to some of the larger markets and also by livestock dealers to transport horses and cattle. Rural people used the passenger service to access schools and shopping. A well known historic event in Boyertown was the Rhoads Opera House Fire of January 13, 1908. The Colebrookdale railroad was utilized to bring in additional fire equipment, officials, relief workers and families of the victims. Without the rail line much needed assistance would have been very slow in arriving. The building in which the fire occurred still stands adjacent to the railroad in Boyertown. The rail line itself is very historic in nature. The route it follows extends through some of the last undeveloped land in the area with numerous eighteenth and early nineteenth century farms and small villages along the tracks. One feature is an Indian burial mound in the vicinity of Pine Forge. In addition some of the structural features are very unique, a number of the trestles and bridges are of unusual construction. East Penn's report does not fully represent some of these historic features. The above mentioned criteria definitely indicate that the Colebrookdale spur is and should be recognized as a historic site.

In addition the rail line has the potential to be useful as a tourist attraction or even further use as a freight and light passenger service. In view of the recent discussion concerning reinstating passenger service in the vicinity, it may be a viable notion to retain this spur for future use.

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Boyertown Area Historical Society