

2026 APRIL NEWSLETTER



Signing of the Declaration of Independence

A Year of Celebration

250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence

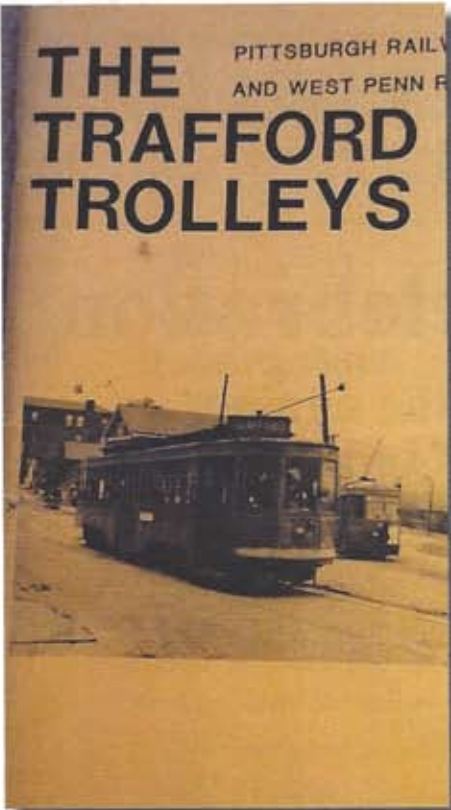
The semiquincentennial is upon us. The Norwin historical Society along with the rest of the nation will honor and celebrate the men and women with great fortitude authored the July 4, 1776 Declaration of Independence. These brave individuals knew full well the risks of making it clear to King George III their intentions of breaking away from Great Britain.

However, those risks were also shared by the members of the Westmoreland County government at Hannastown. A year before the Declaration of Independence was signed the Hannastown Resolves were issued to the British government on May 16, 1775. Although remaining loyal to George II the citizens of the county reserved the right to challenge the authority of the British government and to resist the acts that would limit their freedoms in the colony.



Hanna's Town

(continued from page 1)



The Trafford Trolleys
by Richard C. Albert



The Norwin Historical Society receives many inquiries about the history of trains, and streetcars. The following is the beginning of a multi part series on this subject, featuring excerpts from *The Trafford Trolleys* by Richard C. Albert.

INTRODUCTION

The trolley or streetcar burst upon the American scene in the 1890's and revolutionized the way Americans got from one place to another. In Pennsylvania trolley systems were built in every major city and in 53 of its 67 counties. Small towns, coal mines, farmers and the like found electric railway transportation to be frequent and convenient in comparison to steam railroad service or the generally universal bad road.

The magnitude of the electric railway industry in Pennsylvania is represented by 1923 statistics. In that year approximately 1.7 billion passengers were carried by 9549 trolley cars owned by 104 companies. The industry employed over 30,000 persons and represented an investment of 281 million dollars. The total miles of single track operated was slightly over 4,65 miles or the approximate equivalent of fifteen trips from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh. Only New York State had more miles in operation.

Two of the largest and most long-lived Pennsylvania trolley companies were the PITTSBURGH RAILWAYS COMPANY and the WEST PENN RAILWAYS COMPANY. PITTSBURGH RAILWAYS provided service throughout Allegheny County and the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. WEST PENN RAILWAYS was a country cousin with its main operations in the 'Coke Region' in adjacent Westmoreland and Fayette Counties

Two minor tentacles of both companies reached out during the heyday of trolley construction and connected at the small town of Trafford. This booklet presents the story of the two Trafford lines, their connection and contrasts.

TROLLEYS TO IRWIN

The history of the Irwin to Trafford trolley line begins December 1, 1894 with the chartering of the GREENSBURG, JEANNETTE AND PITTSBURG STREET RAILWAY COMPANY. This company planned a route from Greensburg to Turtle Creek by way of Irwin. Trolleys of this company reached Jeannette by November, 1895, Penn by April, 1896, Manor by late 1896 and after difficulty, Irwin in the 1899-1900 period.

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Throughout its history this early company experienced financial difficulties of one sort or another. These difficulties culminated in the public sale of the company in May, 1900. The new owners reorganized as the WESTMORELAND RAILWAY COMPANY. On April 16, 1901 this company received a franchise from North Huntingdon Township for portions of a route to the new Trafford town site. In October, 1901, however, the PITTSBURGH, MCKEESPORT AND GREENSBURG RAILWAY COMPANY, chartered June 28, 1901, purchased the WESTMORELAND RAILWAY.

The new owners of the Greensburg to Irwin trolley line immediately filed for an extension from Irwin to Stewarts station (Trafford), Pitcairn, Wilmerding and Turtle Creek. Actual construction began in 1903 from Trafford towards Irwin. Grading was completed to Ardara by December. After suspending construction for winter, rail laying began. These reached Cavittsville by May, 1904.

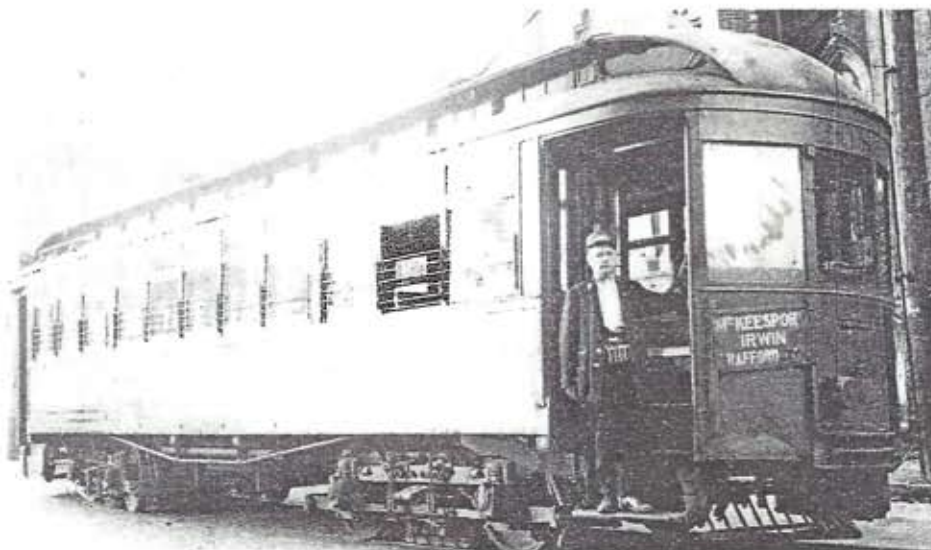
In the summer of 1904, the company selected its final route for the Larimer to Irwin portion. In particular the entrance into Irwin had been in doubt. Private right of way was purchased for about \$75,000 to take the line to a point across a ravine from Irwin's Fourth Street. The company planned to cross the ravine (and borough boundary) on a long

trestle, lay tracks up a short section of Fourth Street and connect with their existing tracks on Main Street.

In August, 1904 a contract was let to P. F. McCann for all remaining grading and bridge abutment work. In March of the following year the American Steel and Structural Company of Pittsburgh was given a contract for all bridgework.

The line being built to Irwin was spectacular in terms of bridges and hillside running. Over eight percent of the 5.5 mile route consisted of bridges and much of the Ardara to Irwin portion was above the valley floor either on bridges or up on a hillside.

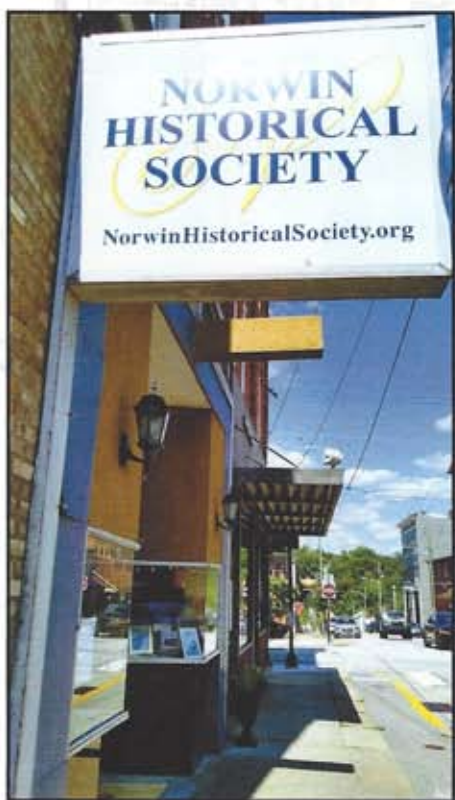
Nine bridges were required. These consisted of four crossings of Brush Creek between Cavittsville and Ardara; a 240 foot long bridge in Ardara; a 550 foot long, 90 foot high bridge crossing of Greers Run (now Fisher Run) near the historic Frick coke ovens between Ardara and Larimer; a 551 foot long crossing at Larimer of the public road, the Pennsylvania Railroad mainline and Brush Creek; a high 270 foot long bridge over the Mine Run ravine near Larimer and the high 450 foot long trestle running from the West Irwin section of North Huntingdon Township to the foot of Irwin's Fourth Street.



WP 208 turning onto Irwin's Fourth Street on its way to Trafford. May 29, 1938. (L. P. Cummings and James D. Brock Collections)

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