

HISTORIC TRANSPORTATION GATEWAY THROUGH THE BLUE MOUNTAINS FROM THE GREAT VALLEY INTO THE ANTHRACITE COAL REGION



EARLY HISTORY

Over thousands of years the Swatara Creek cut its way through the southernmost ridge of the Appalachian Mountains breaking into the Great Valley on its way to the Susquehanna River. Swatara Gap, the narrow hollow created by the fast-moving creek, enabled a foot path for Native Americans migrating north and west. A path from the Tulpehocken area, went to the Delaware settlement at Shamokin. During the first half of the 18th century, Germanic settlers populated the hills and valleys south of the gap. The Swatara Moravian Church, was established about 1740 as a missionary outpost. With the outbreak of the French & Indian War in 1755, the area south of Swatara Gap, known as the "Hole," was targeted by Indians familiar with its strategic position.



Thomas Smith 1816 Map of Dauphin & Lebanon Counties. At left center is Weidman's Forge, present-day Lickdale. "Woods" is the approximate location of present-day Inwood, and "Hole Creek" shows the present-day Monroe Valley. Jonestown is located near the confluence of the Swatara and Little Swatara Creeks.

Fort Swatara: Located just northwest of Lickdale, Fort Swatara was erected to protect settlers and the path through Swatara Gap area during the French and Indian War. The 1756 fort largely consisted of a palisade surrounding Captain Peter Hetrick's log house and barn. A number of settlers were killed in the vicinity of the fort between 1756 and 1758, and a few lie buried in the Moravian cemetery.



Placed in 1932 by the Lebanon County Historical Society, this stone marker, located along Fort Swatara Road just west of SR 72, notes that Fort Swatara stood about 500 feet to the south of the marker.



Jacob Hantsch Tombstone: Located in Swatara Moravian Churchyard, just east of Swatara Gap, the grave stone states that he was murdered by "den Wilden," the wild ones.

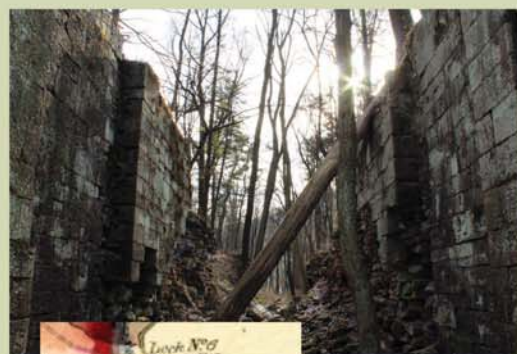


View looking south along the Swatara Creek from the Waterville Bridge.

WATER TRANSPORTATION

Swatara Creek: Known for its abundant shad prior to 1800, Swatara is taken from a Native American name meaning "where we fed on eels." A 72-mile long tributary of the Susquehanna River, the Swatara rises in the mountains of central Schuylkill County. Passing through Swatara Gap, it travels southwest to its confluence with the Susquehanna at Middletown.

Union Canal: Completed in 1827, the Union Canal, Main Branch, connected the Schuylkill River at Reading with the Susquehanna River at Middletown. The **Navigable Feeder Branch**, completed in 1830, ran along the Swatara Creek from Pine Grove, Schuylkill County, to the Union Water Works, Lebanon County. The "Big Dam" in Swatara Gap provided water for the canal's Main Branch and also allowed coal to be brought down to the Lebanon County iron furnaces. The Great Flood of 1862 permanently destroyed the Big Dam and canal locks along the Feeder Branch.



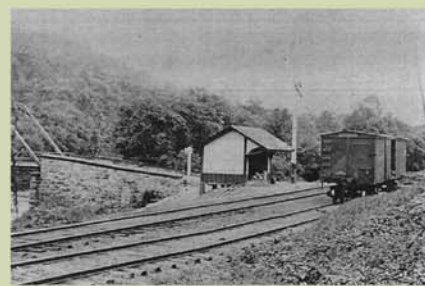
Looking north through ruins of Lock #6, the deepest lock of the Navigable Feeder Branch, located at the breast of the Big Dam.



Close-up view of Union Canal Feeder Branch and locks from the 1860 Bridgens Map. Also shown is the Inwood area and the estate of Jacob P. Weidman where the Inwood House is located.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Lebanon & Tremont Branch of the Philadelphia & Reading RR: In 1866 the Union Canal Company sold the right-of-way of the largely destroyed Feeder Branch Canal, running from Pine Grove to Jonestown. Local Lebanon entrepreneurs created the short line, Lebanon & Tremont Railroad (L&T RR), which opened for traffic in 1870. The L&T RR operated for nearly 100 years until its abandonment after 1965.



A c. 1910 view of Inwood Station along the Lebanon & Tremont Branch of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad. Note the stone wingwall of Inwood Bridge. Photo courtesy of the Lebanon County Historical Society.

Inwood Station: Built in 1872 on the L&T RR, Inwood Station provided a rail connection for Swatara Gap from which lumber and coal was shipped. During WWII the siding at Inwood was used to park refrigerator cars for the 28th Infantry Division at Indiantown Gap.

ROAD AND HIGHWAY TRANSPORTATION

SR 72: c. 1930 the state road (Pennsylvania State Highway Route 443) from Lickdale to Pine Grove was transformed from a gravel surface to a poured concrete surface as part of Governor Gifford Pinchot's program to get the farmer out of the mud.

Inwood House: Established following the Civil War, the Inwood House, a hotel and tavern, was operated by members of the Kohr family until about 1896. The banked frame building later had a restaurant on the ground level. The hostelry served travelers on the road and rail line between Lebanon and Pine Grove.



c. 1920 view of the Inwood House. Photo courtesy of Francis Ditzler in "From Lickdale into the Swatara Gap," produced by the Lebanon County Historical Society.

Old State Road: predecessor to current SR 72 between Lickdale (Union Forge) & Ravine.



Looking south on Old State Road from the east side of Inwood Iron Bridge.



c. 1930 view looking north toward Lickdale to the widening and paving of what would become SR 72. The structure on the right is the 3-story stone grist mill at Lickdale. Photo courtesy of Francis Ditzler in "From Lickdale into the Swatara Gap," produced by the Lebanon County Historical Society.

Interstate-81 or I-81: Roughly traveling in a southwesterly direction, I-81 largely traces the paths developed over the years down the length of the Appalachian Mountains by migrating animals, Native Americans, and early settlers. By the late 1960s construction had begun on the sections going through Lebanon County, and in 1975 the section crossing the Susquehanna River was completed.



Looking southwest beneath the north and south bound I-81 bridges over SR 72 (background), Swatara Creek and Old State Road (foreground).

PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORTATION



Current view of north/south Appalachian Trail marker on SR 72, at the Waterville Bridge.

Appalachian Trail: The route for the trail following the Appalachian Mountains from Maine to Georgia was completed in 1937 during the Great Depression. The 2,200-mile marked hiking trail is managed by the National Park Service, United States Forest Service and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.



Looking northeast at the park entrance sign along SR 72.

Swatara State Park, opened in 1987, Park's infrastructure developed in 2012.

TIMELINE

1700

1730's First white settlers in northern Lancaster County

1739 Bethel Township created

1756 Fort Swatara built

1763 French & Indian War ends

1782 Union Forge built

1790 Coal found in present-day Schuylkill County

1798 Robert Coleman purchased Union Forge

1812 Lebanon County formed from Dauphin County

1813 Swatara Township formed

1827 Union Canal, Main Branch completed

1828 47,000 tons of coal shipped from Schuylkill County

1830 Navigable Feeder Branch completed

1842 Union Township formed

1862 "Great Flood" destroyed "Big Dam" & Feeder Branch

1865 Inwood House was built

1868 Union Forge was built

1870 Lebanon & Tremont Railroad opened for traffic

1872 Inwood Station built on the L&T RR

1890 Onset Post Office established at Inwood & Waterville Bridge built

1899 Inwood Bridge built

1929-30 Old State Road improved

1937 Appalachian Trail completed from Maine to Georgia

1965 Lebanon & Tremont Railroad abandoned

1968 Construction began on sections of I-81 in Lebanon County

1985 Waterville Bridge moved to Swatara State Park

1987 3,515-acre Swatara State Park

1988 Swatara Water Trail opened

2012 Crushed stone installed on Swatara Rail-Trail

2020 Rehabilitation and relocation of Inwood Iron Bridge

2000