

Fall 2021 Newsletter



President's Message:

I hope that you all had a wonderful summer and were able to get away with friends and family on a summer vacation. Gone are the hot and humid days and now cooler weather is upon us.

In September, the remnants of Hurricane Ida came through our area. Portions of the Reading Branch received up to 10" of rain. As a result of that, we encountered significant storm damage which will take months if not years to fully recover. I have a couple of pictures of the damage along what was Swamp Creek Road, in Marlborough Township Montgomery County.

We had a very timely presentation on September 29th by Michael Perlow on the topic of Sustainable-Resilient, Regional Infrastructure Planning and Investment. He was kind enough to share his presentation and other pertinent information via drop box which is provided in the link below. <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/2pxj4lldyepfuhx/AAAVQ3wzgyBzLnnGAc4L6Fyka?dl=0>

The Society has continued their recommendation for Sections and Branches to continue with having virtual events until the beginning of the new year. The Reading Branch will continue to hold virtual events and we are always looking for technical topics that would be of interest to our members. If you or know of someone who is interested in presenting, please reach out to me. I'll also make a plug for you get more involved with our Branch. The Board is great opportunity for you to build your leadership skills and help in the planning of our events.

You may have already seen the e-mail, but it's that time of year again to renew your membership. I would ask if you haven't already to renew your membership earlier rather than later because as we are all very busy, this can fall through the cracks.

The Lehigh Valley Section will be celebrating their 100th Anniversary in 2022. Be on the look out for events by the Section that will commemorate this milestone. Be on the lookout for special events from the Section.

We thank you for your participation and look forward to seeing you at a future Branch or Section meeting.

John Caperilla, ASCE Reading Branch President

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Historic Civil Engineering Sites Across the Reading Branch:

As the Lehigh Valley Section celebrates the 100th Anniversary of the founding of their section in 2022, the 100th Anniversary Committee is traveling around the Section to identify key sites and landmarks. While the Reading Branch was founded in 1975 by the Philadelphia Section, in 2017 the Reading Branch was transferred to the Lehigh Valley Section, and we are pleased to be part of their celebration and this assignment. Over the next several newsletters we will highlight a couple of sites here in the Branch and provide some background information along with some photos.



Colebrookdale Railroad – Boyertown, PA

The Colebrookdale Railroad is a core corridor within the only region in the United States where visitors can explore iron industry vestiges from its 18th century infancy, observe 19th century technological innovations and industrial expansion, and learn about 20th century international steel markets - all within a radius of 35 miles from the Pottstown and Boyertown stations. Unspoiled by time, the Colebrookdale's Secret Valley looks much the same today as it would to the iron-willed pioneers who first ventured along its cold, rushing creeks three centuries ago. Find out more about the iron history of the Schuylkill Valley here.

The Colebrookdale Railroad corridor cuts through the heart of the Schuylkill Valley's earliest iron industries and the sites of the first iron works in Pennsylvania, the first blast furnace and the first refinery forge. The majority of these works belonged to or were controlled by the Potts family of Pottstown.

In Pottstown, we begin our journey near Pottsgrove Forge. Later converted to a merchant grist mill, Pottsgrove Forge, located on the millrace from Manatawny Creek, was built by John Potts in 1752 and refined iron from Colebrook Dale and Warwick furnaces. It was located west of the Hanover Street Bridge.

Heading west out of Pottstown, the railroad leaves the mainline of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad and travels north along the millrace of the old Potts family's upper gristmill. The gristmill, then owned by the Gable Brothers, burned down on 3 December 1877, apparently from a spark from the Colebrookdale Railroad's locomotive.

A short distance from the old mill, the railroad passes John Potts's 1752/1753 mansion, Pottsgrove Manor. Pottsgrove Manor is near the site of the construction of the world's first iron

railroad bridge. It was from Pottsgrove Manor that Potts ran his iron empire which included large tracts of land totally 995 acres, forges, furnaces, brew houses, sawmills, and gristmills. The manor house underwent a number of alterations as it passed through a succession of owners. During much of the railroad's existence, it was used as a hotel and boardinghouse. It eventually fell into disrepair in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Pottsgrove Manor was restored more accurately to its original appearance in the late 1980s and reopened in 1991. It is currently operated by Montgomery County's Department of Parks and Heritage Services. In 1761, John Potts laid out a town around the forge, establishing what would become Pottstown, Pennsylvania. The Borough of Pottstown was incorporated in 1815. In the ensuing century, Pottstown became known as "Boomtown USA" thanks to the iron industry and the coming of the railroad. Area metal industry involved in significant projects including Panama Canal and, later, the Golden Gate Bridge.

Continuing north-west on the Manatawny Creek, the train passes Glasgow Forge, also called McCall's Forge, founded in 1752 by Samuel McCall. McCall dammed the Manatawny Creek and used water power to lift the forge's trip hammer. This refinery forge was originally manned by African Slaves and was later owned by the Potts and Hockley families. The old Iron master's mansion still stands.

Next, the line passes Poole Forge, founded in 1716 by James Lewis & Co. It was built to refine Colebrook Dale Furnace's pig iron. Also built on the Manatawny, it was located just over the line in Berks County. It was eventually owned by the Potts family. It closed in 1765 and the forge tract was broken up and sold to farmers.

Continuing northwest, the line passes Pine Forge. Originally the site of Thomas Rutter's Bloomery, the first ironworks in Pennsylvania, it was converted to a refinery forge in 1720 and renamed Rutter's Forge. It was obtained by the Potts family who renamed it Pine Forge in 1745. It refined iron from Mt. Pleasant and Colebrook Dale Furnace and was in existence for well over 100 years.

At Pine Forge, the line follows the Ironstone Creek north and passes near the old Colebrook Dale Furnace site at Boyertown. Colebrook Dale was named after Abraham Darby's Coalbrook Dale Furnace in Shropshire, England, and was built by Thomas Rutter in 1720. It is Pennsylvania's first cold blast furnace. It closed in 1765, but with Rutter's Forge, it is credited with starting the Pennsylvania iron industry.

Pine Iron Works, also located in Pine Forge, was an early producer of steel plate used in steam locomotive boilers.

The Colebrookdale Iron Company, located just south of Boyertown on Farmington Avenue, was founded in 1835 and reorganized in 1888. Joseph Bailey, founder of the Colebrookdale Iron Company, was the primary proponent of the Colebrookdale Railroad.

Union Manufacturing in Boyertown was a prolific producer of iron stoves used in railroad cabooses.

Finally, the line was extended to Barto, the site of Thomas Potts's 1738 Mt. Pleasant Furnace. The furnace was run by the Potts family and sent its iron to Spring Forge in Earl Township and to Pine Forge. This was the third charcoal blast furnace in Pennsylvania. Thomas Potts rented it out in 1745 to Thomas Mayburry, who owned Green Lane Forge in Marlborough Township. The furnace had several forges built near it with the same name and it closed around 1800.

This history was provided to the Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust by Dan Graham and can be found at the website link provided. <https://www.colebrookdalerailroad.com/history/the-colebrookdale-railroad-corridor/>

Society News:

Dennis Truax Installed as the 2022 ASCE President:

ASCE installed Dennis D. Truax, P.E., DEE, D.WRE, F.NSPE, F.ASCE, as its 2022 president during the annual business meeting, Oct. 7, as part of the ASCE 2021 Convention.

Truax accepted the presidential gavel from outgoing president Jean-Louis Briaud, Ph.D., P.E., D.GE, Dist.M.ASCE, in a virtual ceremony.

Truax recently retired as the James T. White endowed chair, department head, and professor of civil and environmental engineering at Mississippi State University, and the director of the Mississippi Transportation Research Institute.

The ceremony also marked the induction of Maria Lehman, P.E., ENV SP, F.ASCE, into the role of 2022 president-elect and will become Society President in 2023.

ASCE Day 2021 is approaching.

On November 5th, ASCE will celebrate the anniversary of their founding. The Society was founded on Nov. 5, 1852 by twelve esteemed engineers who gathered at New York City's Croton Aqueduct to establish what would become the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Civil Engineering Salaries Remain Consistent, Trend Up Amid Year of Inconsistency

In a year marked with uncertainty, civil engineering salaries continue to trend up according to the 2021 ASCE Civil Engineering Salary Report today released by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). The report shows mostly positive numbers for the profession despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The median pre-tax annual salary (from all sources) in 2020 among survey respondents was \$119,000. That's a \$10,000 two-year increase from the Salary Report data taken from 2018.

The report, prepared by Industry Insights, Inc. is based on survey information from ASCE members with this year's edition drawing from 3,156 responses. The typical respondent was a male in his early 40s with a bachelor's or advanced degree and about 19 years of professional experience.

The report shows that base salaries for civil engineers have risen 4-6% per year from 2018 to 2021. It also indicates a profession with growth potential. The typical median entry-level salary in the report is \$66,000, while those more experienced civil engineers who have a professional engineer's license earned a median primary income of \$123,000.

For full detail of these and other society news, please visit www.asce.org.

Contact Us:

The ASCE Reading Branch sends out a newsletter on a quarterly basis to inform our membership of events and happenings within our Branch. If you have news items for future newsletters, please free to contact us.

John Caperilla | President ASCE Reading Branch | jcaperilla@mctish.com

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