

Schwenksville Railroad Station  
Roy K. Miller June 15, 2017

The railroad station is where the railroad conducts its business with the community that it is located in. Tickets can be purchased from the Ticket Agent for as far north as Allentown, and as far south as Philadelphia. Also, tickets for special excursion trains. The first train on the Perkiomen Railroad arrived in Schwenksville on July 15, 1869. Four passenger trains per day in each direction. This amount held fairly steady until the mid-1920's when the automobile and better roads, plus the great depression in the early 1930's cut the amount of trains to three per day in each direction and by the time that I was three-four years old in 1935-1936 and watching trains from our house at 60 Main Street, passenger trains were down to two in each direction. This held steady until 1945, when two more were eliminated. This left one round trip daily to Allentown or Philadelphia until about June of 1951 when the U. S. Mail contract was eliminated, and also this was the end of steam locomotives for this train, to be replaced by a diesel locomotive. The last passenger train to Schwenksville was train NO.49 on July 15, 1955.

The Ticket Agent was also the freight agent and took care of the incoming and outgoing freight plus the car load freight for local customers. Besides the agent there was an operator who worked the telegraph (later telephone) where the train orders were transmitted by Morse Code. There was a passing siding at Schwenksville with a Semaphore signal to indicate if trains should stop or proceed. The semaphore was operated from inside the station by the agent or the Operator.

The Perkiomen Valley was host to the summer vacationers from Philadelphia with three boarding houses (hotels) located in Schwenksville. The Sunday evening train to Philadelphia in the early years would sometimes run in two sections. I remember watching the people boarding at Schwenksville estimated at 50 to 60 with about 5 or 6 cars on the train. Gas rationing during World War Two kept the people riding the trains, but after the war was over in 1945 and new automobiles were again on the market, it reduced the vacationers using the trains.

This painting shows the waiting room for passengers, in the center bay window is where the agent or operator sat to observe the trains, and on the other end is the freight house. This station burned down in March 1942 and the new station was opened in April 1943. The operator was gone by this time and Fred Buhman was the Agent for many years and he was so proud of his new station, that he laid down burlap bags at the doors so that hard wood floors would not get

scratched up with the grit that the railroad laid down to walk on outside the building.

The shining moment for this new station came when the Reading Railroad Iron Horse Rambles stopped at Schwenksville on September 17, 1960, September 16, 1961 and September 15, 1962 and 1200 people mingled around the station. They were fed chicken dinner by the Library Committee. This was the Schwenksville "Touch of Dutch Day"

During the early years of the 1900's and up to the mid 1920's, milk was a big product. The first trains south in the morning was the milk train, picking up milk for shipment to Philadelphia, stopping at Schwenksville between 6 and 7 AM.

A large volume of wheat from Buffalo New York was shipped down the Perkiomen Railroad for years. The growth of the ice business in the Perkiomen Valley generated many car loads for Philadelphia. Large ice houses were located in Palm, Green Lane had three and Kratz Station. Smaller ice houses were in Salford, Spring Mount and Schwenksville.

By the time I was 3-4 years old in 1935-36, the ice industry and the milk business was gone. I remember 5 or 6 through freight trains daily, 2 local freights (six days) 4 passenger trains (six days) and 2 Sunday passenger trains. It was not unusual for some of the north bound trains to have a pusher, sometimes two as it was up hill for most of the way to Allentown. When the diesel locomotives came in the late 40's/early 50's trains got much longer. I remember counting several trains with 125 cars and one with 150 cars.

The Schwenksville Station was closed in about the mid 1960's and was sold around the late 1960's. The last train to Schwenksville was on March 19, 1976 to pick up a box car from the Schmoyer Lumber Company that had been delivered to Schmoyer's March 5, 1976. The April 1, 1976 formation of Conrail was the end of service to Schwenksville.