



MATT BUTTON | AEGIS STAFF

The old rail bed and stone bridge abutment in Rocks State Park still stands...



PHOTO COURTESY OF JEROME MURPHY

... where a bridge once carried the No. 42 train over Deer Creek.

THE WHISTLE'S STOPPED

But the Ma & Pa Railroad remains alive in Harford County's memories

BY L'OREAL THOMPSON
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"A gem among gems."

That's how George Hilton, author of "The Ma & Pa: A History of the Maryland & Pennsylvania Railroad," described what was once a mainstay of Harford County life.

The short-line railroad, which began its life in 1867 as the Maryland Central Railroad, carried freight and passengers from Baltimore to York, Pa., from 1878 until 1958, making stops in Bel Air and Forest Hill, too.

So beloved is the Ma & Pa that more than 50 years after its last train ran, people old enough to remember — and many who aren't — still talk about it with enthusiasm and reverence.

One of them is Jerome Murphy, 84, of Baldwin, who has been familiar with the Ma & Pa Railroad since he was a little boy.

"In the beginning I was young and I thought I was the most important person in the world to ride on that train," Murphy reminisced. "In years later, I still enjoyed it very much. I'd like to be able to ride on it today."

Growing up, Murphy spent many of his summers visiting his uncle at the Long Green station in Baltimore County.

"I rode on it many times," Murphy said. "It was one of the most important things in my life personally."

More than a few remnants of the railroad remain in Harford County — the station in Forest Hill, the abutments and foundations of trestles that crossed Deer Creek, Winters Run, Overshot Branch and Little Gunpowder Falls and stretches of the roadbed that have become parts of hiking trails.

Gone, but never quite forgotten, might best describe the Ma & Pa, which played an important role in Harford County's history between

Please see **RAILROAD, AA4**



PHOTO COURTESY OF JEROME MURPHY

Passengers hang from the windows enjoying the view from the Gross Trestle on the final passenger run of the MA & PA Railroad on Aug. 31 1954.

Jacqueline Haas: Putting the students first

ETC...



BY RACHEL KONOPACKI
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Harford County Public Schools suffered a great loss last week with the sudden passing of Superintendent Jacqueline C. Haas.

Dr. Haas has been the superintendent for the school system for 10 years and, although I have only been working at *The Aegis* since June, I know her dedication to making Harford County the best place for students to get an education will continue on through the staff and employees who have worked so closely with her.

There is no doubt that the education of students always came first to Dr. Haas and I think everyone would agree that she was willing to do everything possible to make sure nothing could stand in the way of a child and his or her education.

As the reporter at *The Aegis* on the school beat, I have attended all of the school board meetings and written most of the stories involving the school system, so I have worked closely with Dr. Haas during these past few months.

Whether it was jumping up from my seat immediately following the school board meeting to make sure I got a chance to ask Dr. Haas all the questions I forgot to ask the week before or calling her numerous times a day, Dr. Haas never seemed bothered with my persistence to get the answers I needed

and was always willing to help.

I remember one story I had written that required a comment from Dr. Haas about the dreaded budget cuts the county was forced to make earlier this year.

I called her and left a message and then, just to make sure, I wandered over to the school system headquarters to make sure she would get the message.

Hours later when she called me back, Dr. Haas told me not to worry in the future and that if I left her a message she would definitely call me back as soon as she could — and it was true, she always called back.

As busy as she was, Dr. Haas would always make sure to get back in touch with me, even if only for a few minutes to offer a comment.

Dr. Haas cared about the students of the school system and she also valued getting as much information out to the public as possible, even if some of the news was not as favorable as some would have liked.

Being a reporter sometimes means asking the questions that no one wants to ask and getting the answers that no one wants to give and Dr. Haas always respected that and would give as much information to me as she could.

She believed in communication, something that is so crucial these days

and is the key to success.

Even when we were both off the clock, Dr. Haas never hesitated to come say "hi" or to engage me in conversation about everyday things and even my personal life.

I remember talking with Dr. Haas before one of the Economic Development Advisory Board meetings.

It was nice to get to exchange information about our personal lives with each other when we spend so much time talking about our professional lives.

Dr. Haas has contributed so much to the school system, more than words can say.

She loved what she did, she worked hard every day and she made a difference in the lives of Harford County public school system students.

Dr. Haas will be greatly missed and although her time was cut short, her dreams, missions and goals will continue on in remembrance of her.

There is no doubt in my mind that even through this difficult time, the school system is still doing everything possible to have the students come first, something that Dr. Haas would want and would be proud of.

Rachel Konopacki is a 2004 graduate of North Harford High School.

THE MA & PA RAILROAD ...



Heading around the bend on the MA&PA Railroad.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEROME MURPHY

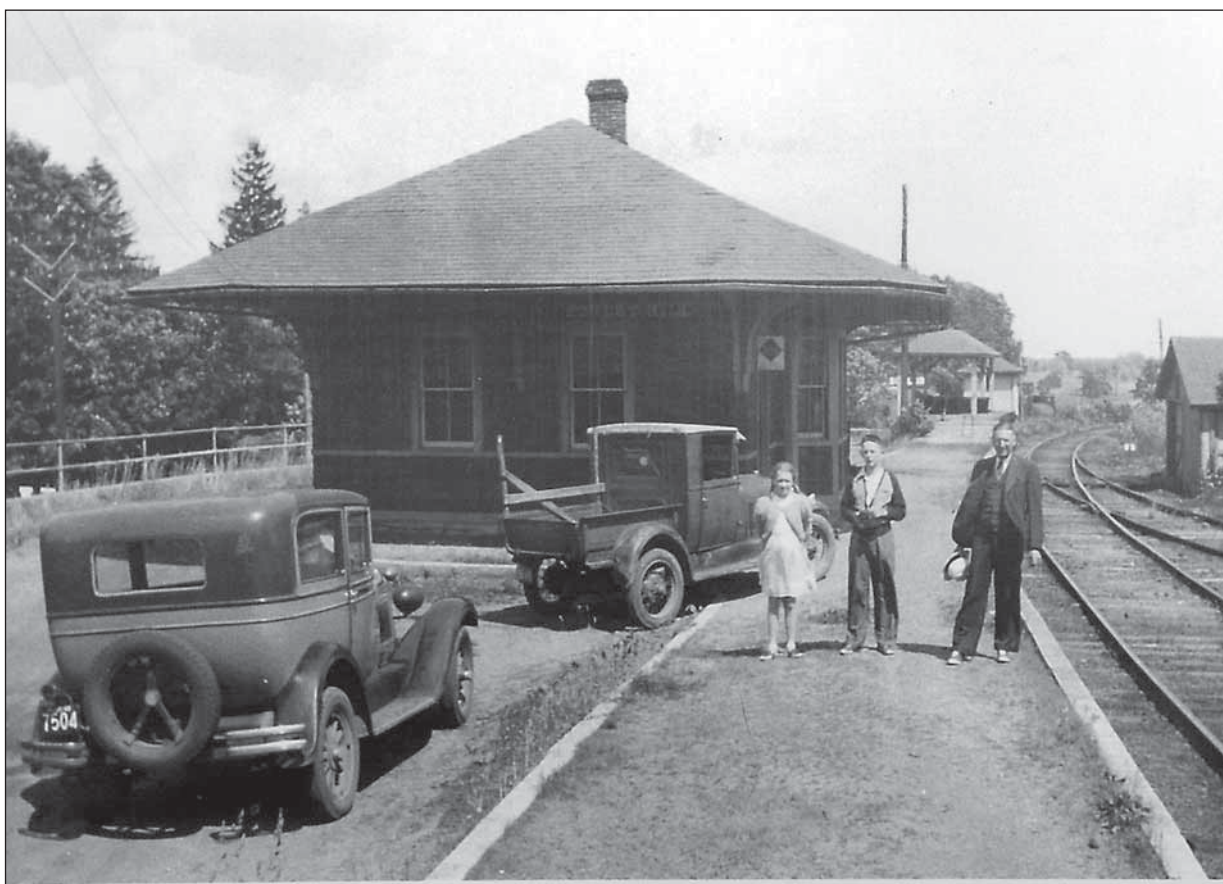
| REDUCED FARES | | | |
|---|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| ROUND TRIP TICKETS TO OR FROM BALTIMORE, MD. EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1ST, 1932. | | | |
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| STATION | ROUND TRIP FARE | STATION | ROUND TRIP FARE |
| Woodbrook, Md. | \$.25 | Fallston, Md. | \$.90 |
| Sheppard, " | .35 | Vale, " | .90 |
| Towson, " | .35 | Belair, " | .90 |
| Towson Heights, " | .40 | Bynum, " | 1.15 |
| Towson Estates, " | .40 | Forest Hill, " | 1.20 |
| Oakleigh, " | .45 | Sharon, " | 1.30 |
| Loch Raven, " | .50 | Ferncliff, " | 1.40 |
| Md. School, " | .50 | Rocks, " | 1.45 |
| Summerfield, " | .55 | Minefield, " | 1.50 |
| Notch Cliff, " | .60 | Street, " | 1.55 |
| Glenarm, " | .65 | Pylesville, " | 1.65 |
| Long Green, " | .70 | Whiteford, " | 1.70 |
| Hyde, " | .75 | Cardiff, " | 1.75 |
| Baldwin, " | .80 | Delta, Pa. | 1.75 |
| Laurel Brook, " | .85 | | |

For further information inquire of any Ticket Agent or the undersigned.

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Part of the vast collection of MA&PA items in the home of Jerome Murphy is a framed reduced-fare list from 1932.

MATT BUTTON | AEGIS STAFF



A family waits for the train at the Forest Hill station in a photo taken June 23, 1940.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEROME MURPHY



The station at Forest Hill still stands much as it did in the days of the MA&PA. The station now houses a model train shop.

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RAILROAD, from AA1 the last two decades of the 19th Century and the first half of the 20th.

According to Craig Sansonetti, corporate secretary of the Maryland and Pennsylvania Railroad Preservation Society, the railroad was originally built as two narrow-gauge railroads, one in Maryland and the other in Pennsylvania. In 1901, the two combined to form what is now known as the Ma & Pa railroad.

"The railroad arrived in Bel Air in 1882," Sansonetti, a charter member of the society, said. "Bel Air was certainly, in the early days, one of the most important intermediate stops along the line. In the early years of the 20th century, they ran about 16 trains a day at Bel Air in 1913."

Sansonetti also believes the railroad was important to Harford County as a whole.

"Mainly because it really opened up markets for agricultural products of the county," Sansonetti said. "It impacted most every aspect of life in Harford County."

In 1876, the Baltimore Towsontown Dulaney's Valley & Delta Narrow Gauge Railway Company was organized with William H. Waters, a Bel Air businessman, as president, according to Hilton's book, the definitive work on the history of the Ma & Pa Railroad.

"A lot of money for building a railroad was raised in Harford County because there was a terrific demand for better transportation," Sansonetti said, explaining how the railroad enabled local farmers to ship agricultural products out more effectively.

"It made it possible to get milk to the market and opened up new things for farmers," Sansonetti said. "They could get all kind of goods in quickly and more cheaply."

"Another big thing that was very important for Harford County is they [the trains] carried lots of milk, and dairy farming in Harford County was very important in the late 1800s and early 1900s," Sansonetti said. "It still has some importance today that came about as a result of the construction of the railroad."

Before the railroad, Sansonetti said, milk was unable to reach Baltimore in a timely way.

"You'd have to get milk to the market within a few hours, or it's too late," Sansonetti said. "I think about around 1920, the railroad carried just shy of two million gallons annually of milk into Baltimore. That's something in excess of 1,500 milk cans a day every day of the year. That's a lot of milk."

Jim Hoops, 63, of Forest Hill, said his father shipped milk on the railroad.

"My dad used to ship milk from the Forest Hill station to Baltimore on the Ma & Pa, that's what I remember," Hoops said.

As the years went on, Sansonetti said, there came to be more and more freight carried on the Ma & Pa Railroad.

"The Delta [Pa.] and Whiteford freight were very important and became more important as the years went on. I think they were taking from the quarry in Delta about a dozen carloads of slate a day," Sansonetti said. "Also, the quarry at Whiteford had a substantial amount of slate."

Indeed, the industrial traffic kept the railroad alive and well for many years.

"There was a lot of coal in the early days," Sansonetti said. "As time went on, use of coal started to decrease, but it became a pretty big freight item on the railroad."

In addition to transporting freight, the Ma & Pa carried passengers.

"In the early years of the 20th century, passenger traffic was sort of more important on most of the railroads in the United States," Sansonetti said. "With most of the big railroads, freight revenue started to exceed passenger revenue in the 1860s. Ma & Pa didn't catch up until 1915 because there wasn't that much industry along the railroad at the time."

But passengers looking for a ride from Bel Air to Baltimore kept the railroad in business.

"It provided better access to Baltimore, the primary urban center in Maryland," Sansonetti said. "It made it possible for lots of people who lived as far south as Bel Air to commute to Baltimore on a daily basis. It made it possible for a lot of recreation around the railroad, too."

Rocks State Park, approximately five miles north of Forest Hill, was quite the tourist attraction during the time of the Ma & Pa Railroad.

"Rocks was promoted as a place for people to get out of the hot, dirty city and come out to Rocks," Sansonetti said.

Like many good things, however, the Ma & Pa didn't last forever.

The Maryland portion of the Ma & Pa Railroad was abandoned in the 1950s. The Pennsylvania portion of the railroad, from York to Whiteford, however, operated until the 1970s, when it was also abandoned.

"The last passenger train ran on August 31, 1954 and the Maryland District of the railroad was abandoned in June 1958," Sansonetti said. "The removing of the track went on and wasn't completed until the winter of 1958."

As a kid, Hoops grew up watching the trains on the Ma & Pa.

"Living on Grafton Shop Road, I always remembered looking over and seeing the smoke from the trains coming through Forest Hill and hearing the whistle," Hoops said.

Hoops and his younger brother, Donald, rode on the last passenger train in 1954.

"Our mother took us on the last ride and we went up to Delta, Pa.," Hoops said. "If I recall, I think the car I was in, the seats faced each other and it was a somewhat bumpy ride, but it was pleasant."

The boys' mother would also take them to Towson on the train.

"Then we would catch the street car and go into Baltimore," Hoops said.

The biggest challenge for the young boys was crossing the threshold to get onto the train.

"It was certainly very high up off the ground," Hoops said. "We'd go through the countryside, which that was all it was up in the north end of the county."

Like many Ma & Pa fans, Sansonetti has been fascinated by railroads since he was a young boy.

"Well, I've been very interested since I was a child and had the good fortune that my parents indulged that interest," Sansonetti said, chuckling at the memory.

His grandmother, who lived near York, brought the young Sansonetti, who lived in Forest Hill at the time, down to Bel Air to see the last passenger train on Aug. 31, 1954.

"It was one of my early childhood memories actually," Sansonetti, who now lives in Gaithersburg, remembered. "The abandonment of the railroad was something I remember from my childhood, not very fondly."

As a member of the preservation society, which was formed in 1986, Sansonetti estimated he visits Muddy Creek Forks in southern York County, Pa., about 50 times a year.

Muddy Creek Forks features a general store, which includes the railroad and a post office in the same building. According to Sansonetti, it's the largest general store in the southeastern part of York County.

"What we're doing is unique in this respect," Sansonetti said. "As far as I'm aware, we're the only railroad preservation organization that has made large investments in buying non-railroad buildings and property in order to preserve and interpret the role of the railroad in the community."

"It really makes a good place to tell the story about how railroad was central to the development of all the little towns along the way," Sansonetti said.

The Muddy Creek Forks site is open during the summer, from June to late September. But Sansonetti hopes the museum will be open longer in the future.

"I would think, although I can't say for sure, I anticipate we would probably be looking in the long term to be open more and develop the ability to handle visitors to a greater extent," Sansonetti said.

To Jerome Murphy, the Ma & Pa Railroad will always be an important part of history.

"It's important because of the part it played in the building up of towns between Baltimore and York really, towns like Bel Air, Fallston, Red Lion, Pa., and York itself," Murphy said. "It was a lifeline to those cities as far as bringing people and business into the towns."

...STEAMS INTO HISTORY



A group of men work on the rail at the Gross Trestle. The trestle was said to be the longest on the line.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEROME MURPHY



Men load slate from the quarries into a rail car in Cardiff circa 1912.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEROME MURPHY



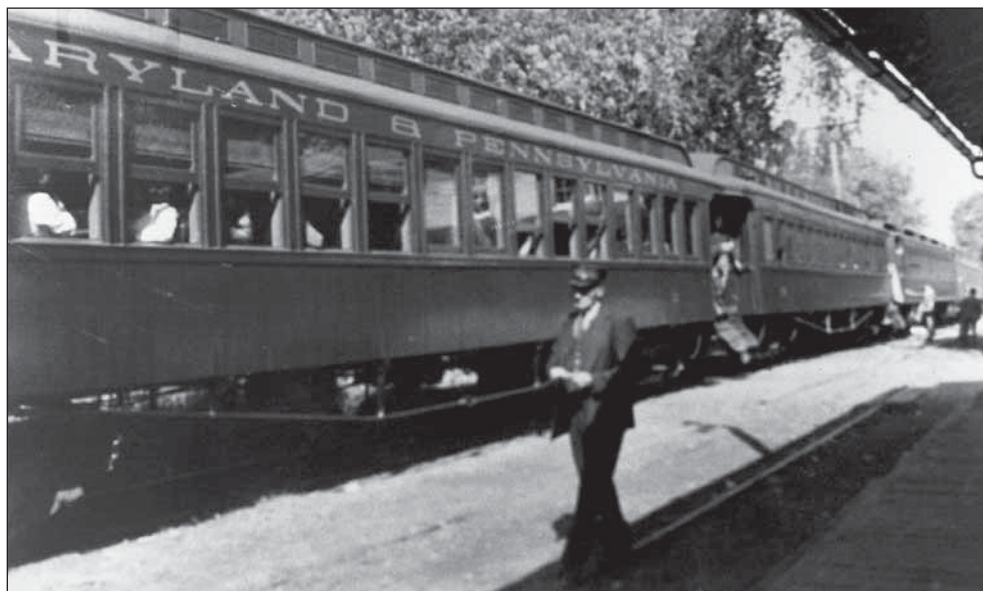
A wintry scene at the Fallston Station, complete with horse-drawn sleighs.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEROME MURPHY



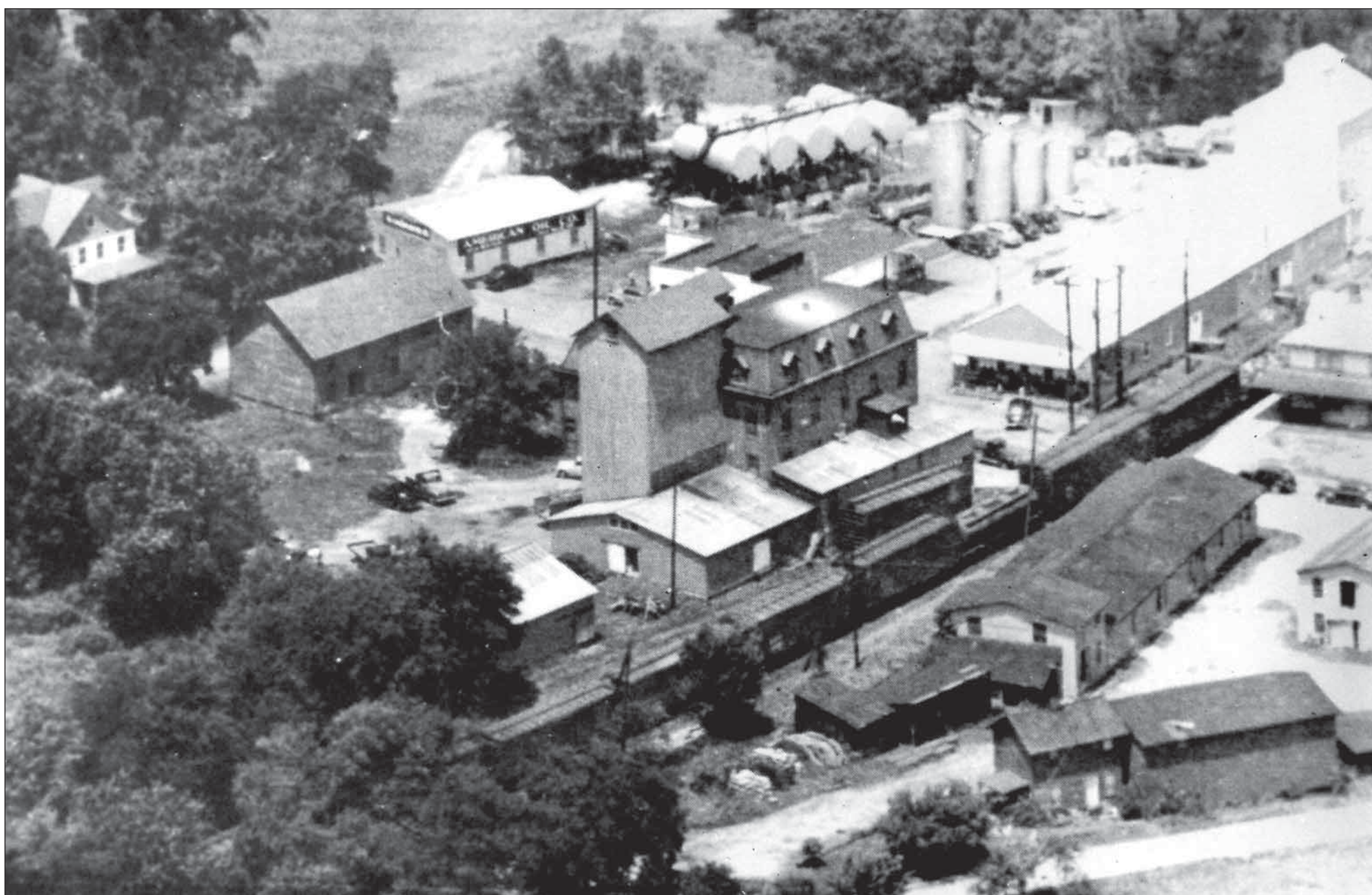
Unlike some other stations along the line, the station at Laurel Brook was little more than a shed.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEROME MURPHY



A conductor makes his way to a waiting train filled with passengers preparing to depart from one of the stations along the line.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEROME MURPHY



Bel Air has changed a bit since the years of the MA & PA Railroad rolling through town, as seen in this overview of the county seat.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEROME MURPHY