A Job on the A & S

The Atglen & Susquehanna in Eden Township

Unlike routes that served passengers and local freight customers, the A&S required relatively few staffed facilities. Westward from Atglen, the A&S was desolate, compared to the main line’s string of frequent village stops. Constructed after the PRR’s decision to transition from telegraph to telephone, communication on the A&S was thoroughly modern. Pole-mounted telephone boxes were located approximately 1½ miles apart along the entire route and accessible to almost all levels of railroad employees. The unsung wooden box (image lower right) protected a revolutionary communications network. Everyone learned how to use the telephone. The PRR would not run without it.

“Q” Tower (image upper left) at M.P. 10.8 was the first A&S switching tower west of Parkesburg (M.P. 0.0) and a node of activity during the steam era. An operator in the tower received and relayed telephone orders governing train movement from a dispatcher in Columbia. The tower’s trackside projecting bay provided visual confirmation of train movement and time markers. The solitary watchman (upper right image) monitoring road conditions and track gangs (right center) formed a steady reliance on a new technology via the delicate copper strands of telephone wire.