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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**New History Campaign To Focus on Local Area**

The Southern Anthracite Coal Region of Pennsylvania had difficulty in transporting passengers, let alone goods, 160 years ago when there was nothing but wagon roads traversing the region. Yet one winter day in 1854 that all changed with the opening of the Dauphin & Susquehanna Railroad. None are around who remember the festivities along the line that cold February day, but today, one woman is hoping to insure the old line is not forgotten.

Lebanon County native, Brandy M. Watts Martin has been studying the now-abandoned Schuylkill & Susquehanna Railroad, originally called the Dauphin & Susquehanna Railroad, for the last fifteen years. She was just eight when she discovered the brush-covered ruins of the old line, which once ran 54-miles from Rockville, Dauphin County to Auburn, Schuylkill County, through Northern Lebanon County.

“The line that serviced the coal trade in the southern-most portion of the Anthracite Coal Region in Pennsylvania is unfortunately forgotten,” Watts Martin stated. “And hardly anyone seems to remember that the line, which became the Stony Valley Rail-Trail after its abandonment, extended past Stony Valley.”

That is what she is trying to change with historical presentations and her StonyValley.com website devoted to exploring Stony Valley, experiencing nature and educating others about the line’s history. One day she hopes to write a comprehensive history of the Schuylkill & Susquehanna Railroad, but there is where she finds the problem.

“There are few people left who vividly remember the last trains of the Old Reading between 1938 and 1962, and most people seem to think their memories are unimportant to the larger story. ‘Oh, it was just the train going by, or the bridge being torn down,’ they’d say. Even the photographs that would truly bring history alive are usually hidden in someone’s attic. Every picture, no matter how blurry, and every memory, no matter how insignificant to the person, helps.”

“It’s just as fascinating now, as it was then,” Watts Martin said of her discovery of the line, as she sat amongst her piles and binders of research in her Central Pennsylvania home. “It’s

been a life-long passion,” the 24-year-old joked, of the railroad that she has devoted over half her young-adult life to, and hopes to devote the rest of her life to as well.

If you have information about, memories or photographs of, the Schuylkill & Susquehanna Branch, its businesses, and the individuals that worked and lived along the line, you wish to share with Watts Martin in her quest to uncover local history, send them to: Brandy M. Watts Martin, Schuylkill & Susquehanna Railroad Historian, P.O. Box 366, Pine Grove, PA 17963. For more information visit StonyValley.com and click on the “Every Memory Matters” link.

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