



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Steamtown Historian Presentation to Kick-off Celebrations
Planned for Reinforced Concrete Railroad Bridges in Northeastern Pennsylvania**

KINGSLEY, PA / NICHOLSON, PA – Patrick McKnight, Historian at the Steamtown National Historic Site, will be the keynote speaker at the annual Brooklyn Historical Society meeting on July 25, 2015 at 12:00 noon at the home of Richard and Patty Zick. Please contact them at mrz@echoes.net or 570-289-4378 so that adequate food and seating can be planned. The event is free, but donations will be accepted to offset food costs.

Mr. McKnight will present and share images from the Steamtown National Historic Site Archives on the cut-off that created both historic concrete railroad viaducts in Northeastern Pennsylvania: the Tunkhannock Creek Viaduct, referred to as the Nicholson Bridge by locals, and the Martins Creek Viaduct, referred to as the Kingsley Bridge by locals. Nicholson and Kingsley are small rural towns nestled in the Endless Mountains of Northeastern Pennsylvania; about 21 miles and 30 miles, respectively, north of Scranton on Route 11.

Steamtown National Historic Site Archives received thousands of photographic images in 2012 of Northeast Pennsylvania's railroading and mining past from a massive archival collection that was previously housed at Syracuse University. These images include black and white photos of construction of the Kingsley and Nicholson Bridges, as well as the cut-off itself.

The cut-off, called the Clarks Summit-Hallstead Cut-off, was constructed by the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad (DL&W) to shorten the DL&W main rail line from Scranton, PA to Binghamton, NY by

3.6 miles, lessen steep grades, and overall straighten the rail line. The entire cut-off, sometimes referred to as the Pennsylvania or Nicholson Cut-off, was built with two sets of tracks to allow for trains going north and south at the same time. This shortened route cost approximately \$12 million, but saved considerable travel time.

On September 5, 2015, the Brooklyn and Harford Historical Societies will collaborate to host the celebration of the Kingsley Bridge in the village of Kingsley. Started in 1912, this bridge manifested the same concrete technology and monumental engineering effort being executed a world away with the construction of the Panama Canal. Finished a short two years later, research to date suggests this bridge alone cost approximately 1,000,000 dollars. Officially known as the Martins Creek Viaduct, it is 1,600 feet long and 150 feet above the bed of the creek. Though a bit smaller than the now more famous Nicholson Bridge, she was finished first and for a short time was the largest concrete viaduct in the world. Today, she is the second largest concrete railroad bridge in the world. The Martins Creek Viaduct remains unique forever, as it celebrated its pending completion on its nearly complete rail bed with a dance called the "Cloud Dance." The F.M. Talbot Company and the DL&W Engineers hosted the event as an "Aerial Dance" atop the viaduct on the evening of Thursday, September 3, 1914 at eight o'clock in the evening. The dance was conducted on the first pier of the giant bridge under electric lights. Approximately 200 people from throughout the entire system of the DL&W arrived at the Kingsley station to attend the dance. A carriage was used to raise and lower dancers via a huge construction derrick.

The Kingsley Bridge 100th Celebration will begin at 12:00 noon on September 5, 2015 in the village of Kingsley with a chicken barbecue hosted by the Kingsley United Methodist Church. The Kingsley Community Church will host a display of historic memorabilia provided by the Steamtown National Historic Site. Other planned activities include food vendors, a hay ride to the Kingsley Bridge, face painting, games, model railroad display, a concert by the Lenoxville Band and the grand finale being a re-enactment of the 1914 Cloud Dance at 5 p.m. Of course proper period clothing is appreciated of the dancers, but the public is invited to participate. And, remember to bring your own lawn chair. Contact mraz@echoes.net or djpalmer@epix.net for updates and additional information. Or, visit the Brooklyn Historical Society or Harford Historical Society on Facebook.

On September 11-12-13, 2015, the community of Nicholson will celebrate the centennial of the Nicholson Bridge. The DL&W started construction on this engineering marvel in 1912, with its completion, dedication, and ready for use taking place on November 6, 1915. Abraham Burton Cohen was project designer and George J. Ray was chief engineer. In 1975, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)

designated the Nicholson Bridge as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark due to its significant contribution to the development of the United States and to the profession of civil engineering. On April 11, 1977, this construction and engineering feat was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (#77001203) due to its national architectural, engineering, and transportation significance. Additionally, the viaduct was documented by the Historic American Engineering Record, which was established in 1969 by an agreement by the National Park Service, the ASCE, and the Library of Congress to document historic sites and structures related to engineering and industry.

There will be plenty to do in Nicholson and the area, with events for the celebration currently being planned. Information is available at www.nicholsonbridge100th.com, including a Google map showing area accommodations. As a reminder, the schedule is subject to change, so check back for updates, which will include events and activities as confirmed. For starters, the Nicholson Bridge 100th celebration will begin Friday night, September 11, 2015. Then, on Saturday, September 12, 2015, the official program will take place in the morning, a parade in the afternoon, and Main Street will be closed all day for entertainment, food, and History on Main Street, where area historical groups have been invited to show off their items! Finally, on Sunday, September 13, 2015, the Nicholson Women's Club will organize their annual Bridge Day, where crafts, vendors, and food will be available on Main Street.

The Lackawanna & Wyoming Valley Railway Historical Society, Inc. in partnership with Norfolk Southern's 21st Century Steam program and the Steamtown National Historic Site will operate public excursions on Saturday, September 12, and Sunday, September 13, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Nicholson and Kingsley Bridges. Tickets available online at www.laurellinesspecials.org. All excursions' partners include the Nicholson Heritage Association, Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society, Anthracite Railroads Historical Society, Erie Lackawanna Dining Car Preservation Society, Norfolk Southern Corporation, and Steamtown.

Visitors could see other area attractions or even stay longer than the planned celebrations to see the Viaduct Valley Way Scenic Byway (which runs from Tunkhannock to Lanesboro through Nicholson); Starrucca Viaduct in Lanesboro; Steamtown National Historic Site, Anthracite Heritage Museum and Iron Furnaces, and Electric City Trolley Museum, all in Scranton; and numerous other historical sites and activities to do in Northeastern Pennsylvania, such as the Nine Partners Monument in Harford Township. See endless options at the Endless Mountains Visitors Bureau website:

<http://www.endlessmountains.org/activities/5>.