

NICHOLSON

PENNSYLVANIA

HISTORY & WALKING TOUR



NICHOLSONHERITAGE.ORG

Check the website for
museum hours and events



NICHOLSON HISTORY

● **Incorporated on August 23, 1875,** Nicholson is a borough in Pennsylvania's rural Wyoming County named after John Nicholson, former comptroller general of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania from 1782 to 1794. Wyoming County was created on April 4, 1842 from part of Luzerne County.

● **Nicholson is located where three streams become one:** Tunkhannock Creek, Martins Creek, and Horton Brook. The largest of the three, the Tunkhannock Creek flows from the northeast and whose name comes from the Lenape Indian name meaning "two small streams opposite each other merging to become one." Martins Creek flows from the north and is named for the weasel-like creatures that once had lived along the stream banks. Horton Brook also flows from the north, but is at the western boundary of the borough, and is named for an early settler of the area, Foster Horton.

● **Present day Nicholson was once the crossroads of two Native American trails,** where arrowheads and other Native American artifacts can still be found. The Iroquois sold this land around the time of the French and Indian War (1754–1763) to the Connecticut settlers who first named this area Thornbottom, named after all the thorny bushes

in the area. A Luzerne County newspaper had an advertisement for property for sale in Nicholson in 1791. At that time, Wyoming County had yet to be established and Nicholson had yet to be incorporated. In 1795, Nicholson Township was incorporated out of Tioga and Wyalusing townships. This tract of land was about 20 miles east to west and 13 miles north to south.

● **In 1811, the first Post Office, Thornbottom,** in Luzerne County and Nicholson Township, was established in the area about a mile south from the west end of the borough in a store run by Caleb Roberts, who was also Postmaster. In 1825, the Post Office was then moved to Bacon's Tavern, built by Nathan Bacon at the west end of Route 92. When Nathan Bacon became Postmaster, he changed the name of the settlement to Baconville (also later referred to as Bacontown). In 1855, the Post Office was moved again to the DL&W Railroad station in town, and the name changed to Nicholson.

● **There were two sitting Members of Congress at the same time from this small rural borough:** U.S. Representatives Jim Saxton (NJ's 3rd, November 6, 1984–January 3, 2009) and Don Sherwood (PA's 10th District, January 3, 1999 – January 3, 2007). Both lived on State Street growing up, only four houses from each other.

Nicholson looking west from the east end of Tunkhannock Creek Viaduct

Steamtown National Historic Site Archives



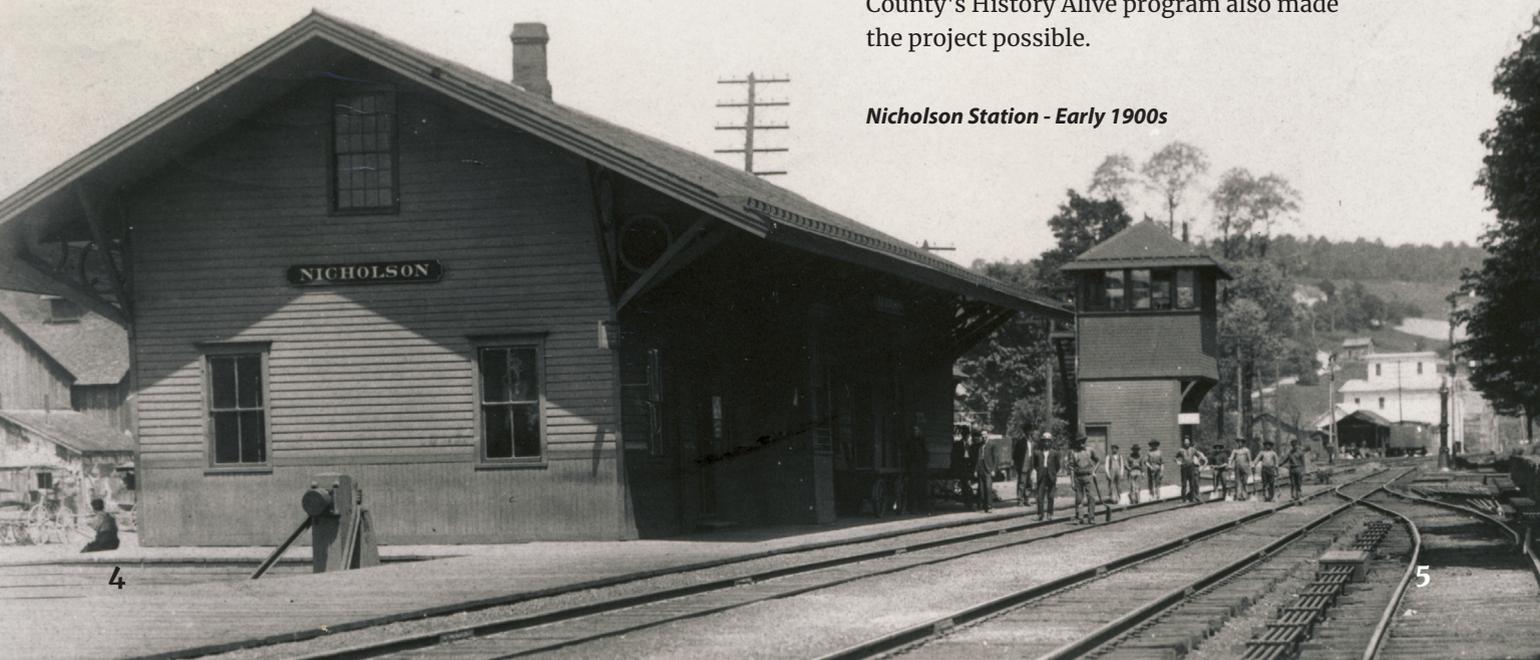
NICHOLSON TOURISM CENTER

at the Historic DL&W Railroad Station

- **This landmark has been a Nicholson fixture for more than 170 years.** The Nicholson Tourism Center at the Historic Delaware, Lackawanna & Western (DL&W) Railroad Station is the newly renovated DL&W railroad station that was once the center of the community, now home of the Nicholson Heritage Association.
- **Built in 1849 by the Liggett's Gap Railroad,** one of DL&W's predecessors, the railroad station was the first station built on the Scranton to Great Bend, PA line. Before being used as a freight and passenger station, the building was used to house and feed workers. In 1855, the local U.S. Post Office was moved to the station, at which time the name of the settlement was changed from Baconville (sometimes also referred to as Bacontown) to Nicholson. In May 1878, the first telephone service in Northeastern Pennsylvania was opened between the station in Nicholson and the DL&W station in Scranton, about 21 miles south. Until the completion of the Clarks Summit - Hallstead Cutoff in 1915,

Nicholson was a low elevation point on the rail line and four locomotives were kept near the station at all times to push trains out of the valley. There was even a turntable built here that was eventually moved to Alford, PA for the DL&W's Montrose Branch. After the Cutoff was finished in 1915, the railroad station handled freight service only and passenger service was then provided from the new station built on the hill near the recently completed Tunkhannock Creek Viaduct.

- **The Nicholson Heritage Association purchased the station in June 2012,** with donations from individuals, businesses, and a \$25,000 Pepsi Refresh Project grant. In 2014, the Association held public meetings to present and discuss the results of the feasibility study that was funded mainly in part by a grant from the Endless Mountains Heritage Region with PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources funds. The designs were possible in part to grants from the Tom E. Dailey Foundation. Thanks to a PennDOT Transportation Alternatives Program grant, the building's complete rehabilitation was made possible. Several grants from the Endless Mountains Heritage Region, with PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources funds, Wyoming County Room Tax Grant, the Endless Mountains Visitors Bureau, and Wyoming County's History Alive program also made the project possible.



Nicholson Station - Early 1900s

TUNKHANNOCK CREEK VIADUCT

• **The Tunkhannock Creek Viaduct, also known as the Tunkhannock Viaduct or the Nicholson Bridge, was built by the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad (DL&W) in 1912** and was completed, dedicated, and ready for use on November 6, 1915. This massive reinforced concrete bridge received its proper name from the Tunkhannock Creek that it traverses. However, it is also known as the Nicholson Bridge because of the small Pennsylvania borough where it is located.

• **This engineering marvel was designed by Abraham Burton Cohen with George G. Ray as the chief engineer of the project.** Concrete was first poured in January 1913 with the entire project using 185,000 barrels, or 1,093 carloads, of cement producing 167,000 cubic yards of concrete. In addition, about 1,140 tons of steel were used to reinforce the concrete.

• **At that time, the bridge itself cost \$1.4 million to build.** Five hundred men of which only half or less were skilled laborers, worked 24 hours a day with very little equipment. All they had were steam shovels, dynamite for excavation and a cement mixer that was built on-site.

• **The Nicholson Bridge is 2,375 feet long and 34 feet wide.** It is 240 feet above stream level and 300 feet above bedrock. There are 12 arches with 10 being 180 feet across and two being 100-foot arches, one at each end of the bridge that are totally buried in the land fill.

• **The Nicholson Bridge was part of a larger \$14.3 million project,** called the Clarks Summit-Hallstead Cutoff, built to shorten the DL&W main rail line from Scranton, PA to Binghamton, NY by 3.6 miles, lessen the steep grades that had previously required pusher engines, and straighten the rail line.



Nov. 19, 1912 - note the men working, one in the lower foreground, center, the second in the center, on the wood structure, and three on the right on the concrete wall.

Steamtown National Historic Site Archives

Tunkhannock Creek Viaduct - Dec. 4, 1913
Steamtown National Historic Site Archives

VIADUCT VALLEY WAY SCENIC BYWAY

*Tunkhannock Creek Viaduct in
Nicholson to the Starrucca Viaduct
in Lanesboro*



April 1971 view of Starrucca Viaduct looking southeast. Built in 1882 by Erie Railway, Delaware Division, the viaduct spans Starrucca Creek, East of the Susquehanna River, Lanesboro, Susquehanna County, PA. LOC



*Tennis under the bridge - September 1914
Steamtown National Historic Site Archives*

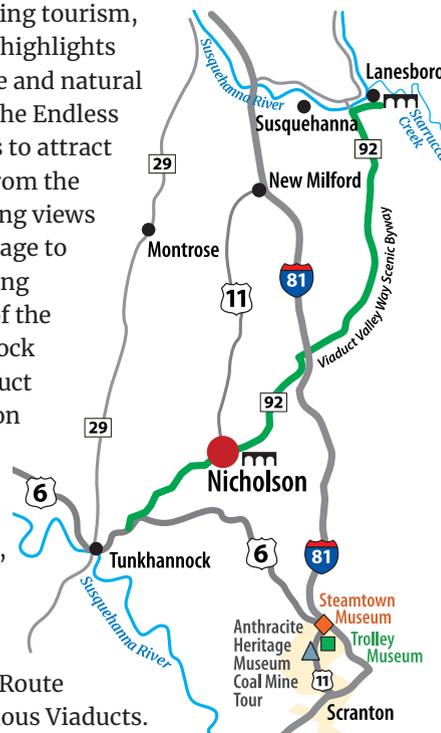
- **On July 5, 2005, State Route 92 in Susquehanna County was designated as the Viaduct Valley Way Scenic Byway.** After further approval of Nicholson Borough, Nicholson Township, Lemon Township, Tunkhannock Township, and the Wyoming County Commissioners, the byway designation of Route 92 was extended into Wyoming County to bring the total length of the byway to 37.3 miles. State Route 92 is in the heart of Nicholson, PA and winds its way under the Nicholson Bridge.



*October 1913 - Tunkhannock Creek Viaduct
Steamtown National Historic Site Archives*

- **The Scenic Byway designation is vital to the economic stability of Nicholson and the region.**

By promoting tourism, the byway highlights man-made and natural beauty of the Endless Mountains to attract visitors. From the breathtaking views of Fall Foliage to the imposing grandeur of the Tunkhannock Creek Viaduct in Nicholson and the Starrucca Viaduct in Lanesboro, there is plenty to see and do along this Route of the Famous Viaducts.



- **Managed by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation,** byways qualify for funds to pay for improvements to enhance, preserve, and sustain the qualities of the byway. There are currently 21 PA byways, one Forestry Byway, and four Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) National Scenic Byways (NSB) throughout the Commonwealth. VisitPA.com

WELCOME TO THE NICHOLSON WALKING TOUR

Map on pages 12-13

Please note that many of the buildings listed in this booklet are private residences and businesses, please respect their property and privacy.

This walking tour is approximately 1.7 miles long and circles around Nicholson to view historic locations and buildings. Additional photography and artifacts are located in the Nicholson Tourism Center.

Check the website for hours and events.

NICHOLSONHERITAGE.ORG



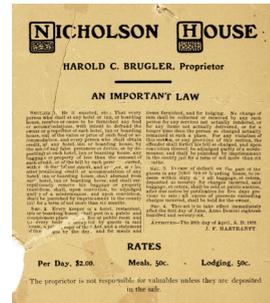
1 Nicholson Tourism Center

at the Historic Delaware, Lackawanna & Western (DL&W) Railroad Station

This station was built by the Liggett's Gap Railroad, a DL&W predecessor, in 1849. The combo freight and passenger station handled freight only after 1915, when the Clarks Summit-Hallstead Cutoff, as well as the Tunkhannock Creek Viaduct, was built. The station was sold to a local business in 1983, and purchased in 2012 by the Nicholson Heritage Association.

2 Nicholson House

Due to its proximity to the railroad station, this building, built in 1849, served as a hotel until the 1920s, after which it was used as an apartment building. There were several hotels built around the station in the mid-19th century.



A new law that took effect June 1876 and was posted in all hotels. If you did not pay, and you were convicted, the punishment was imprisonment up to six months in the county jail. Rates: Per day \$2.00 - Meals 50¢ - Lodging 50¢



3 Feedmill Finds - Antiques - circa 1900

Formally Pedrick's Feedmill, the coal chutes are the buildings to the far right.

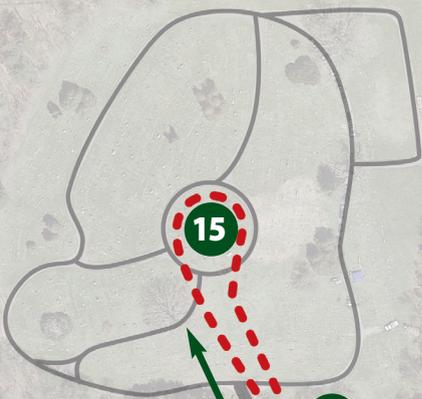


4 Old Coal Chutes

When coal was delivered to Nicholson via the railroad to heat local residents' homes, it would be dropped from coal cars to these chutes, to be delivered by horse and wagon.



NICHOLSON WALKING TOUR



**Nicholson
Tourism Center
at the Historic
DL&W Railroad
Station
and the
Nicholson
Heritage
Association**





5 Nicholson Livestock

Locally known as the Sale Barn, local farmers brought their animals and equipment here to sell.



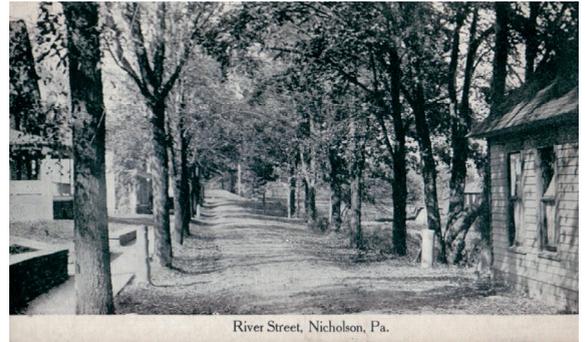
6 Niver House (former- now an empty lot)

Built in 1854 as a hotel, it eventually operated as a bar and barber shop. It even had an in-ground pool, before being empty for years. It was torn down in 2018 for future development.



7 View Up Main Street About 1910

Farmer Supply, LLC – Former Farmer’s Supply on left - This building was a local hardware store for multiple generations.



River Street, Nicholson, Pa.

8 View Down Water (River) Street - 1910



9 View Looking East on State Street - 1912

Note the bridge construction in the background.



10 First Presbyterian Church

Local Presbyterian congregation was organized in 1865, with work commencing on the new building in 1867. Finished in 1868, this church has served continuously since.



11 World War II Memorial

Nicholson’s tribute to those Nicholsonians who served in World War II.



View of Nicholson from the cemetery



12 Methodist Church

Constructed in 1902 to replace previous Methodist Church on East State Street.



13 Veterans Memorial

Nicholson's tribute to those Nicholsonians who served in the military.



Nicholson High School during the 1950s

Nicholson Heritage Association Collection

14 Nicholson High School – former location

The Nicholson High School, later an elementary school, stood on this spot from 1918 until most of it was torn down in 1999. The gym (smaller section on the right) survived until the land was sold to make room for county housing units.



Viaduct view from the Cemetery 1915

Steamtown National Historic Site Archives



15 Nicholson Cemetery

The original center part of the cemetery was purchased for \$500. Later, the cemetery expanded with land donated by Eli Bacon, and other land purchased by the Nicholson Cemetery Association. The first burial in the cemetery was a funeral in 1878, when Eli Bacon was laid to rest. There are great views of the Nicholson Bridge (Tunkhannock Creek Viaduct) from this location.



16 Former Northern Electric Railway Station (Trolley)

Built in 1926, after the previous station caught fire, the Northern Electric, also known as the Scranton, Montrose and Binghamton Railroad Company, provided passenger and freight (ice, milk, and produce) service from 1912 until 1932. Service to Nicholson was discontinued in 1931.

17 Former Universalist Church

In 1898, this building was constructed by Moses Shields, who also built and lived in the stone house across the street on the corner. It was a church until the 1940s, then used as a meeting place for the Eastern Star and Masonic Lodges, until sold for residential use in early 2020s.



18 View Down Oak Street - Circa 1912

Note the construction tower of the Nicholson Bridge in the upper center left of the photograph.

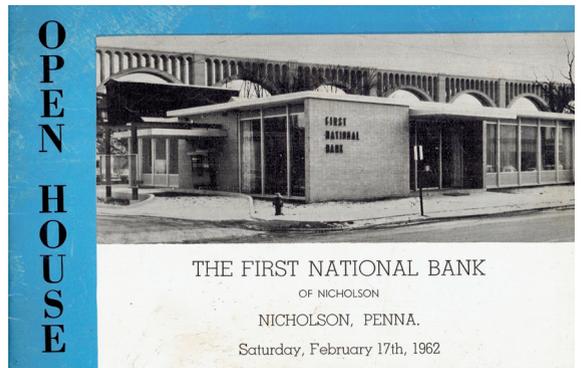


19 Footbridge Across Martins Creek - 1946

The current footbridge was built after the flood of 2006.



1929 Nicholson Bank Note - During the period from 1863 to 1929, the Government permitted thousands of banks to issue their own notes under the National Banks Acts of 1863 and 1864. These were called "national bank notes," but unlike the earlier "state bank notes," they were produced on paper authorized by the U.S. government and carried the same basic design.



20 First National Bank of Nicholson

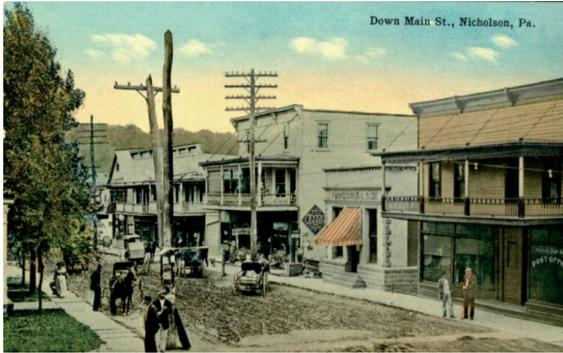
The bank moved to this location from its original 1910 building that was located up the street. The new location, with a drive-thru, officially opened February 17, 1962.



Original 1910 bank building

21 U.S. Postal Service Office

Nicholson has been served by a Post Office since 1811, and was even in the DL&W Railroad Station for a time. The current building has served the local community since the 1960s.



22 View Down Main Street - Circa 1910



*Nicholson Fire Company with Steam Pumper
1916 postcard*

23 Nicholson Fire Company #1

Chartered on Feb. 29, 1904, this all-volunteer fire company was one of the first established in the area. The fire company's first steam engine, a Silsby Pumper with a Foxwater Tube Boiler, was delivered in 1906 and is still in their ownership.



24 Nicholson Dairy Company - late 1800s now Nicholson Lumber

This building was built by the Nicholson Dairy and used by local dairy farmers who brought their milk to be processed and transported to retail markets outside Nicholson via the Northern Electric Trolley or the DL&W.



25 Nicosia Brothers Cheese Factory

Built in 1906, the stone building was formerly Nicosia Brothers, where they made cheeses that were shipped to New York City via the railroad. The building next door is the office of Nicholson Borough (local government).



26 Crock's Feed Mill

Built in 1907, this business was the longest established business operating under one family in Nicholson.



27 Lackawanna Dairy - Built 1908

This building was built by the Lackawanna Dairy Company of Scranton, PA, where local dairy farmers brought their milk to be processed and transported to retail markets outside Nicholson via the DL&W or the Northern Electric Trolley.



28 Former Moses Shield Stone Yard

The yard was formerly owned and operated by Moses Shields, who built the Universalist Church and his former residence on the corner of Oak and Water Streets. He also had a quarry outside of town.

1909 News – The first murder in the history of Nicholson occurred Tuesday, when Roger Greenwood, a stationary engineer in Moses Shields' stone quarry, met death in a shooting affray in which it is alleged Henry J. Sprague, a sawyer in the same quarry, fired the fatal shot. Greenwood and Sprague were considered good friends, but it is alleged that both had been drinking heavily and were intoxicated at the time, and when in this condition neither was tolerant of the other.



View of Nicholson before the Viaduct was built. The rail line shown in this photo is now Rt. 11.



*Nicholson Station - Dedication Day - Nov. 6, 1915
The station, built as part of the Clarks Summit - Hallstead Cutoff, was located next to the Viaduct and provided passenger service only. Freight service was still provided out of the original station that is now the Nicholson Tourism Center at the Historic DL&W Railroad Station.*

Steamtown National Historic Site Archives



NICHOLSONHERITAGE.ORG

Founded in 1989, the Nicholson Heritage Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to the historic preservation of Nicholson, Pennsylvania, and the surrounding region. Nicholson is a small rural town nestled in Wyoming County and Northeastern Pennsylvania's Endless Mountains.



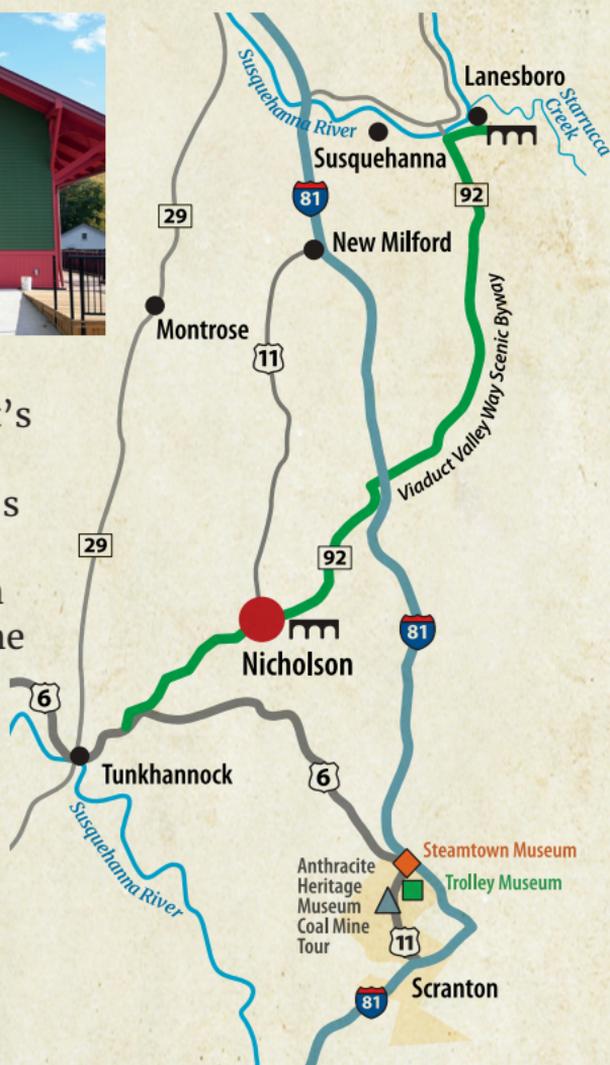
NICHOLSONHERITAGE.ORG

NICHOLSON HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

21 Lackawanna Trail, PO Box 496
 Nicholson, PA 18446 570-871-0510



Built in 1849 by the Liggett's Gap Railroad, one of DL&W's predecessors, the Nicholson station was the first station built on the Scranton to Great Bend, PA line.



The Delaware, Lackawanna & Western (DL&W) Railroad Station was purchased by the Nicholson Heritage Association in June 2012, with donations from individuals, businesses, and a \$25,000 Pepsi Refresh Project grant. The overall renovations of the historic building were made possible by Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's Transportation Alternatives Program grant. Additional supporters include: DCNR, Endless Mountains Heritage Region, Wyoming County PA Commissioners, and the Tom E. Daily Foundation Inc.



Funded in part by the Wyoming County Room Tax Fund and the Endless Mountains Visitors Bureau