

The Lost Town of Norwich, PA

How To Find Lost Norwich

Take US Route 6 to PA Route 46 S (Myra's Restaurant). Head south of PA Route 46 11.2 miles. Just past the turn for Betula you will start up a rise in the road. This was the location of the Norwich Catholic Church. There are only five remaining company houses.

Just after you cross the Potato Creek bridge, at 11.2 miles, you will see a turn off on both sides of the road and a right of way. This was the Potato Creek RR right-of-way and on the left, at the pull off, was giant Hull's Department Store. Get out & explore from the parking lot. You are in the main business district of the lost town of Norwich.

Norwich Map by Trey Murphy, 2005
Planet Smethport Project
www.smethporthistory.org

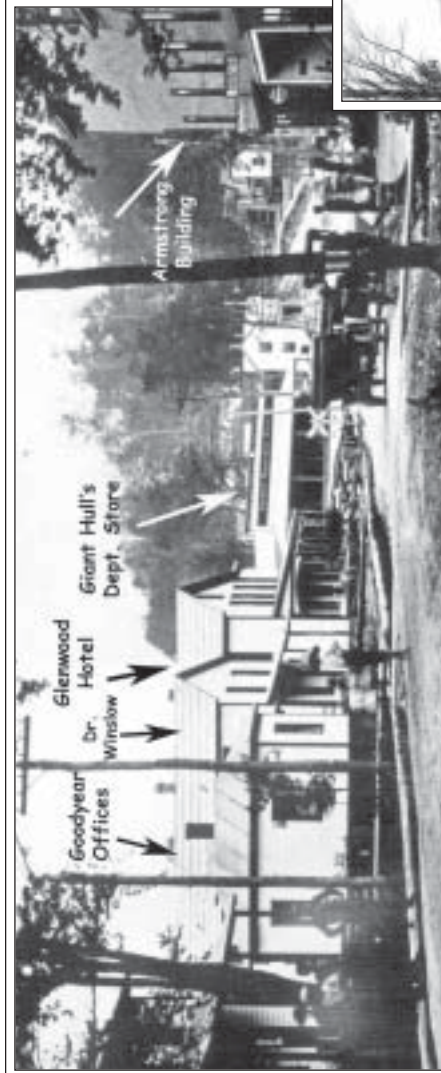


TO:



*Smethport Heritage Committee
famous Smethport, Pennsylvania 16749*

The Lost Town of Norwich, PA, 1910



The site of Norwich was first cleared from the then virgin forest in the fall of 1909 and the town sprang up as if by magic in 1910, followed closely by the towns of Betula and Keystone, all three villages within a radius of 4 miles.



The Lost Town of Norwich 1910

The Rise & Fall of Norwich, PA



Norwich, bustling boom town in 1910, was the dream of multimillionaire lumber barons, Frank & Charles Goodyear of Buffalo. Both Goodyear Brothers died prior to the completion of the McKean County project.

Eleven miles south of the Route 6 & the 46 S. intersection the boomtown of Norwich sprang into existence in 1909 and 1910. A complete town was carved out of the Pennsylvania wilderness as preparations were made for the lumbering of the largest remaining tract of virgin timber in Pennsylvania. Straddling the southern boundary line of McKean County and the northern end of Cameron County the giant timber reserve of uncut wilderness attracted the attention lumber baron brothers Frank H. & Charles W. Goodyear of Buffalo. The Goodyears' purchased the nearly 30,000 acres of timber in an arrangement with Smethport Banker Henry Hamlin and his uncle, financier Bryon Delano Hamlin during the 1890s.



Today Norwich is a lush forest region in the Scenic #-State Game Lands. Plan on a day of hiking and picnicing at the site of the lost town.

The Goodyear Company continued in Norwich, PA for a period of about ten years from 1910-1920 with over 400,000,000 feet of lumber sawn.

For more information & extensive virtual tour of Norwich, PA go to the "PLANET SMETHPORT" website:
<http://www.smethporthistory.org>

Norwich was in its prime in 1910; Today only the heavily forested PA State Game Lands remains.



Grocery stores, general stores, a theatre, pool hall, offices and many homes & boarding houses sprang up in the new, bustling town. The Goodyear Company built a water plant, laying water pipes in all parts of the town supplied from a dam built on one of the nearby brooks. Besides the large lumber mill, a kindling factory and railroad shops were also constructed.



Buffalo NY residents, Frank H. Goodyear (left) & his brother Charles W., built a giant lumber empire in Pennsylvania from their base in Buffalo. The Goodyears joined Henry Hamlin & Byron Delano Hamlin, Smethport, Pennsylvania financiers, in their massive McKean County investments as well as a giant Great Southern Lumber Company in Bogalusa, Louisiana.

Frank Goodyear died in 1907 before the Norwich operation got underway and Charles died in 1911 the same year that the giant Norwich mill went into operation.

Hull's Giant Dept. Store, Norwich, PA 1910



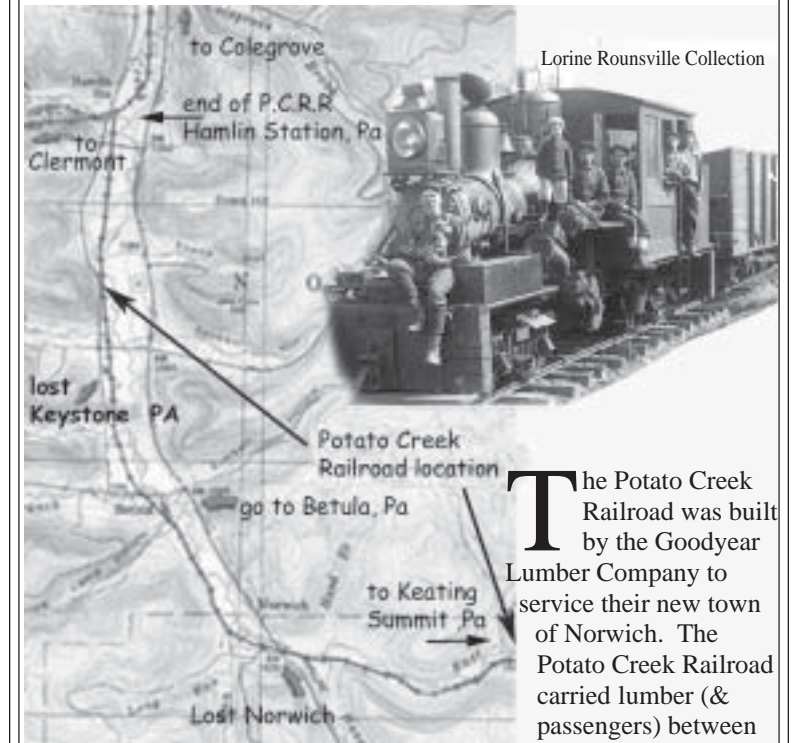
Location of Hull's Dept. Store Today



Joseph Hull about 1911

In 1910, the towns of Norwich, Betula & Keystone were thriving communities due to the sudden expansion of the lumber industry, mainly the Goodyear Lumber Company. Joseph Hull's department store was said to be the largest in northwest Pennsylvania. It had three large entrance doors and at the side was an enclosed leading platform large enough to accommodate three railroad box cars. The store carried all kinds of merchandise: dry goods, hardware, feed, etc., and kept two tailors busy making clothes to order. It was equipped with overhead cash carriers, as in large city department stores. Charles Hull was the manager; he kept two Cadillac limousines with chauffeurs to transport his lady customers. They were picked up at their homes, taken to the store for shopping and then returned to their homes with their purchases. It was said that the Hull Store drove everyone in Norwich Township out of business except Charles Anderson. When the store opened its doors in 1908, the Smethport band played all day. Flowers and gifts were given to the women customers.

The Vanished McKean County Towns of the Potato Creek Railroad



The Potato Creek Railroad was built by the Goodyear Lumber Company to service their new town of Norwich. The Potato Creek Railroad carried lumber (& passengers) between Hamlin Station through Keystone, Betula, Norwich and over to Keating Summit, PA south of Port Allegany. The abandoned right-of-way for the PCRR remains accessible at the Norwich town site.

Text & Graphic Layout: Ross E. Porter
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