

Fly Fishing on Walnut Run

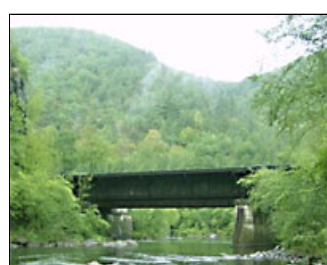
Byrnesville, Barnesboro, Northern Cambria, Cambria County, Pennsylvania

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In the mid-1950's there was a huge railroad bridge within walking distance of the school in Barnesboro, Pennsylvania. Several times I walked to that bridge to tempt fate after school. Sometimes I went with friends, sometimes alone. I don't remember playing down on the banks of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River there but I remember that bridge. The sides of the bridge were black and seemed to be made of iron, maybe it was wood. What I remember most was the space between the railroad ties which spanned the bridge. We could either balance and walk the rails or carefully step from railroad tie to railroad tie. It seemed like a long, long way down to the muddy, orange brown water. The bridge was at least five times higher than the one in the picture.

It also seemed to be a long, long way to the other side of the bridge. Walking across that bridge seemed to me to be a death defying feat. Added to that was wondering what would happen if you were halfway across and a train came. It seemed like certain death. I didn't believe there was room to miss the train by jumping and leaning tight against the side of the bridge. I think the noise of those thunder machines would have been enough to make you lose your grip, except maybe if you were holding on for life. I never had to take that test, not then anyway.



Fly fishing Fly.

In his book *Down the Susquehanna to the Chesapeake* Jack Brubaker tells us that the West Branch of the Susquehanna River widens as it cuts through Spangler and Barnesboro. He also says that water from Walnut Run, Porter Run, and Gardner Run further expands the Susquehanna's "straight shot through town." Jack Brubaker tells us too that 25 miles of alkaline streams partially offset coal mine acid which has killed fish all the way to Northumberland. This takes four days flowing to where the North Branch meets the West Branch of the Susquehanna River on the way to the Chesapeake Bay.

The Barnes and Tucker Coal company had sealed Lancashire 15, a large coal mine near Bakerton in 1969 and then decided it could not afford to treat 7 to 9 million gallons a water per day from this mine, went bankrupt in 2001 and left the matter with the state of Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania now runs that water through 7 miles of mine tunnels, treats it with lime and sends the water into a tributary of the Alleghany River which leads eventually to the Gulf of Mexico. It helps but a spokesman for Barnes and Tucker says that a large underground lake of flooded mines over the whole area could kill everything in the West Branch if it got there. Sounds like a liquid time bomb.

Walnut Run flows right through Byrnesville, through Barnesboro (Northern Cambria) and into the West Branch. Walnut Run is now supposedly home to some nice trout. I'd like to fish there someday. It is also nice to imagine a healthy West Branch River with great fishing from Bakerton to Northumberland. And there is hope. Check out [HOW TO HELP CLEAN UP THE SUSQUEHANNA](#) appearing in the *Center Daily Times* on March 9, 2009.



Susquehanna River. Click Enlarge.

Posted by Edward Byrnes at 13:35 | No comments

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