



WEST PENN TRAIL

at

HIGHWAY BRIDGE ABUTMENT



Photo by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

This stone abutment is all that remains of a road bridge that spanned the West Penn Railroad tracks until 1952, when the gates were closed on the Conemaugh Dam and this area became subject to inundation by flood water. Before the dam could begin to operate, it had been necessary to relocate roads, railways, and utility lines to higher ground, above the maximum level that could be attained by water that would be impounded in the reservoir. Note that, when this photo was taken, the tracks had already been removed from the rail bed. That dates the picture to some time after 1950, when the new (and elevated) rail line, immediately south of here, began to carry all of the traffic.

The cut stones taken from the north abutment of this road bridge were put to use elsewhere, but notice this oddity: This south abutment could not be dismantled, because it is not on government land. The reservoir boundary (the 975-foot elevation contour) happens to coincide with the north face of this abutment. The top of the dam is at elevation 970 feet (above sea level), the bikeway level here.

Costs of the dam project (1943 dollars):

Construction of dam	\$ 9,600,000
Relocation of railroad	12,656,000
Relocation of highways	2,866,000
Acquisition of land	2,704,000