

# Deserted Hollins Station On Banks Of Lake Roland

Today Is Almost Forgotten, But A Few Decades Ago It Was The Scene Of Bustling Activity As The Junction Of Two Roads

By STIRLING GRAHAM

ON a remote corner of Lake Roland, screened by hills on three sides, stands Hollins Station, empty and forgotten. A mile up the lake those following sections of Ruxton and Riderwood are spreading out their lawns and paved roads, and gradually they are coming nearer to Hollins, threatening to destroy it.

Hollins is the junction where the Green Spring Valley branch joins with the road to Parkton, York and Harrisburg. The triangle of red brick platform still extends its wide hospitality on one side to the Green Spring tracks and on the other to the Harrisburg tracks, but today its hospitality is seldom utilized.

## BLINDS PULLED DOWN

The station itself is a rectangular, yellow wooden structure with red brick chimneys and a flat roof. Behind the building, facing the lake, a wooden fence incloses a yard which leads up to the kitchen door and several smaller buildings. But all the doors are locked and yellow blinds are pulled down over the windows as if to shut out from prying eyes the emptiness within. Perhaps, too, the blinds seek to shut in memories of a life and activity which once filled those halls.

In the bright sunlight Hollins is attractive, even hideous, but on moonlight nights, with the light from the signal tower reflected in its windows, it stands like a specter, picturesque and forbidding. One wonders about the stories that it knows but cannot tell, stories of the days when the blinds were up and the doors open, when baggage carts rattled over the red brick platform and the station master's voice echoed in the waiting rooms.

## WAS RELAY STATION

A hundred years ago, when the giant locomotives of today were still unknown, and horses drew the cars from Baltimore, Hollins was known as Relay station, or Relay house. It was the first objective of the Baltimore and Susquehanna railroad, when on July 4, 1831, that road sent out from Baltimore its horse-drawn cars.

Over a single wooden track the cars ran from Baltimore to Relay and back again. About a year later a branch line was extended from Relay to the Green Spring Hotel, seven or eight miles up the valley toward Westminster, and in 1854 this Green Spring branch came under the control of the Western Maryland Railway.

## BUSY DAYS

Those were busy days for Relay. The Northern Central, which later became the Pennsylvania, hauled the Western Maryland cars out from Baltimore to this junction, where the Western Maryland locomotive would be waiting to take up the valley branch. Behind Relay station, where only a grass plot stands now, was a turn table and engine house. The turn table was important, for without it engines coming down the valley would have no way of turning around for the upward journey.

Relay therefore became an important center, the junction of two roads, and there was much bustling and noise and waiting about of engineers and brakemen. The station was used as a hotel or tavern also, and meals and a night's lodging could be had there. Passengers could spend the night, too, but for the most part it was railroad men who availed themselves of the opportunity.

## BRANCH TRANSFERRED

The Western Maryland officials had taken over the Green Spring branch on the condition that if they decided to build an independent line into Baltimore the Green Spring branch would be retransferred to the Northern Central. They did build an independent line, and in July 1874 the Northern Central resumed possession.

At this time Relay lost its significance as the meeting point between the two railroads, becoming simply a local station of the latter company. The turn table and engine house were torn down and the employees of the road no longer loitered about the station.

## LOST NAME, TOO

In addition to losing its former importance Relay also lost its name. When the company took over the new territory the station was christened Hollins, after a family of that name who owned property in the neighborhood.

When one looks at Hollins today he wonders why so large a station was built in such a secluded spot. Steep and stony hills close it in on three sides, and the lake is at its back. As the goal of one road and later the junction of two, its maintenance was

assured, but when these factors became local history Hollins became history with them.

Until the coming of the automobile the other local stations boasted of a considerable number of passengers, for the suburbs behind them were growing rapidly. But the suburbs back of Hollins were not growing; one cannot build on the waters of a lake or on the side of a stony hill.

## END OF SERVICE

Of course the residents of the neighborhood still used the station and came there mornings and afternoons for their mail. The station master lived in the building, but the reasons for its existence were gone, and the growth of the automobile was all that was needed to crush out its life completely.

On October 1, 1926, the agent at Hollins was transferred and the station was closed. Today local trains will stop at Hollins for a stray passenger, but only seldom does such an event occur. In the stillness by the lake the station seems to be meditating on the fickleness of fame and the events of passing years, until it is aroused momentarily by the roar of a Harrisburg express.