

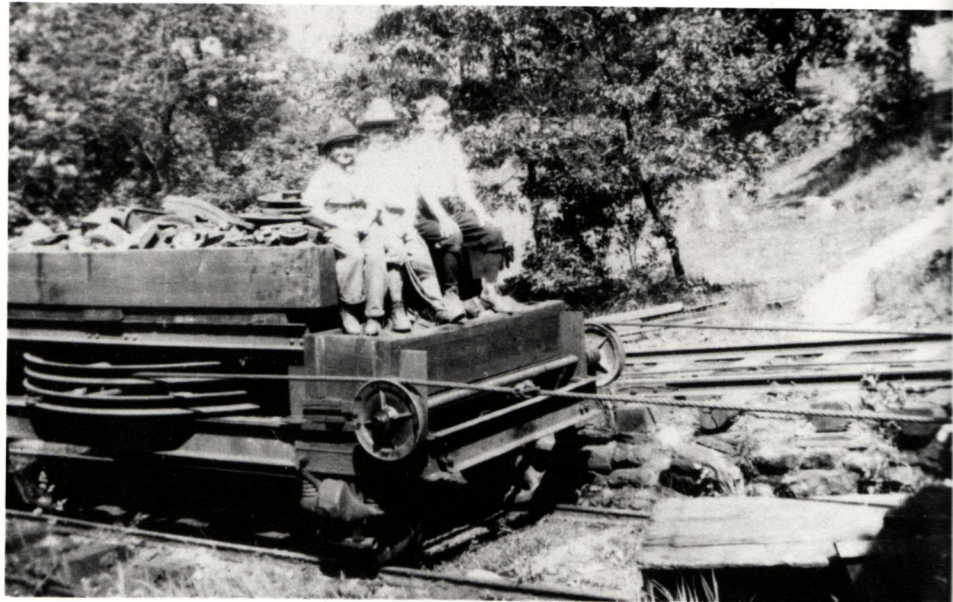
gers and the track was dry.

Seven operators reportedly served the incline during the course of its history. These men, in addition to Phil Erath, included George D. Hill, George Erwin, Fred Harn, John Wittenberg, George Wenkhouse and Homer Barrett. The incline operated from early morning until late in the evening on two shifts with one operator each shift.

The top and bottom terminals of the incline were equipped with waiting rooms for passengers. The top terminal was a large black corrugated metal building which also accommodated the passenger car and contained a pit for making repairs and performing maintenance on the underside of the car. The bottom terminal was a small building probably no larger than 8 feet by 8 feet. The terminals were equipped with hand-cranked bells which signaled the operator on the other end that a passenger or passengers were waiting. It took about 10 minutes for the passenger car to make the trip. Trips were not made on a regular schedule, but rather as required to accommodate the greatest number of passengers. Waiting time, in any case, would normally not exceed 20 minutes and would probably average 10 and 15 minutes. I still recall George Erwin moving the car one length out of the car barn and peering up Spring Street (now Sixth Street), Patterson Heights for possible late passengers before making the trip down the hill.

My brothers and I shared a bedroom on the west end of the house nearest to the car barn. We recall vividly that during the dark evening hours the lights from the car as it traveled down the hill, would race across the ceiling of our bedroom. Long after it ceased operation, the sound of the motors remained with us unaccompanied by the moving car lights.

The history of the incline is not without some amusing stories. It was fairly common for school boys, attending downtown schools in grades seven through high school, to hitch a ride up the hill without the assumed knowledge of the operator. On one such occasion, a student thought he had successfully eluded detection. He was



Ned Weeber

Incline counter-weight car or "dummy".

much surprised the next day, however, when the operator stopped by his house on his way to work to claim the six-cent fare. Crime, as always, did not pay!

The passing of the incline was due for the most part to three factors. First and foremost, the automobile was gaining in popularity and the need for commercial transportation was beginning to decline; second, the need to raise the fare from six cents to a dime, in order to offset decreasing ridership and increasing costs; and third, the change in the traffic pattern when a new railroad bridge was constructed and street cars and other vehicular and pedestrian traffic was re-routed over the reconverted railroad bridge, which now is, itself, slated to be replaced. In

addition, the main Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad Station in Beaver Falls, was moved at the same time from its location across the street from the bottom incline terminal to a new location opposite the ramp to the new traffic bridge. Prior to these events in 1925-1926, the incline was convenient to street car and train travellers.

The last year of the incline's operation was 1927. It had served its purpose and the time of its passing had arrived. Modes of transportation keep changing and it is noteworthy that the year of its passing was the same year that Charles Lindberg conquered the Atlantic in the Spirit of St. Louis, which was to usher in yet another means of commercial transportation.

