



Official Newsletter of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter, National Railway Historical Society  
P.O. Box 1361  
Altoona, PA 16603-1361  
[www.trainweb.org/horseshoecurve-nrhs](http://www.trainweb.org/horseshoecurve-nrhs)

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#### CHAPTER OFFICERS

President: Francis X. Givler, 114 Scott Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602 (Note: ALL time-sensitive correspondence should be sent to this address. [ottodocfac@atlanticbb.net](mailto:ottodocfac@atlanticbb.net))

Vice-President: Joseph K. Harella, 3812 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Altoona, PA., 16602 [jkharella@pennswoods.net](mailto:jkharella@pennswoods.net).

National Director: M. Richard Charlesworth, 903 Penn St., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648; [charlesworth2@verizon.net](mailto:charlesworth2@verizon.net)

Treasurer: Denny Walls, R. R. # 2, Box , Hollidaysburg, PA 16648; [d63w@aol.com](mailto:d63w@aol.com).

Secretary: Karin Givler, 114 Scott Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602; [kackiefrass@atlanticbb.net](mailto:kackiefrass@atlanticbb.net).

Chapter Historian/Editor: David W. Seidel, 2011 14<sup>th</sup> St., Altoona, PA., 16601-3020; [dwsnrhs@aol.com](mailto:dwsnrhs@aol.com).

Webmaster: Christopher J. Behe, [cbehe@earthlink.net](mailto:cbehe@earthlink.net)

### UNDER THE WIRE

by

Leonard E. Alwine

#### **“RIDING MINIATURE TRAINS”**

In this installment of ‘Under the Wire’ we will be taking an afternoon and riding 4 different trains by traveling just a few short distances. ‘Under the Wire’ usually has an article about something owned by the Altoona & Logan Valley Electric Railway, and I promise that we will get to that in about the middle of the story.

On Saturday, August 8, 2009, I had a rare day-off and decided to take a trip I had thought about many times. A trip that would have me taking a ride on four different trains in one afternoon, more or less.

I began my trip from Altoona in mid-morning, traveling to Duman Lake Park near Belsano, PA (take US 22 to Ebensburg, and US 422 to Belsano and PA 271 to the park, about 44 miles from Altoona. My wife Diane joined me for this trip and packed a lunch for us. We left about 10:00 AM and arrived at the park about 11:00 AM. After lunch, we walked around while until the train ride opened for business at 1:00 PM.



The train is sort-of a home-built steamer (gas engine powered) and has two open passenger cars in tow. It is called the “Spirit of Duman Park” and is painted black with Steeler, Pirates, and Pens logo’s (Pittsburgh PA professional sports teams for anyone out-of-state on the mailing list). It operates out of a garage-station-ticket booth structure with over 1/3 mile of track, crossing a river twice, once on a bridge and secondly through a covered bridge. The cost of a ride is \$50 cents each. This train was built by Mundy Nuss \* and I believe that is his number 2, as I discovered later.

After taking two rides, we left Duman Lake and headed for Patton Park in Patton, PA (PA 271 to Nicktown, PA 553 to Carrolltown and thence to Patton. Patton Park is on the south side of Patton along PA 36.



We arrived in Patton about 2:30 PM and talked to the engineer-maintenance man regarding the train. The one in operation was also built by Mundy Nuss and is train number 3. I was told by this man that the Duman Lake train was also built by him. Also parked beside the tracks is another engine, out of service, which is engine number 1.

The Patton Park train is stored in a garage with two tracks, and is used as a tunnel on the route. The train has a steam engine (gas-engine powered), a coal tender, and one passenger coach for riders and a caboose for kids (I rode the caboose with some kids and it was hard to get into). Also inside the garage is another passenger car. Again, the rides are 50 centers per person and the tracks is about ¼ mile long through the park. After two rides (loading is at a platform donated by the Haluska family), it was time to head to the third train around 3:30 PM.

The third train is at Lakemont Park in Altoona, directly south from Patton on PA 36, about 20 miles). Lakemont Park is an old park, although really all new which was built by the City & Park Railway, a forerunner of the Altoona & Logan Valley railway. (I told you I would tie this into the ‘Logan Valley’ and ‘Under the Wire’.



The train at Lakemont today is actually the 4<sup>th</sup> train to operate there. The first was a live steam train named “Miriam” (preceding image) and it operated with three passenger cars until the 1940’s, running along-side the ‘Leap the Dips’ roller coaster in the center of the park.

This train was replaced by a steam engine (Model ‘A’ Ford engine-powered) train which ran for many years. As a kid, I remember riding this version. It is still at the park and was restored a few years ago, although it is not operated. In 1961, the third train was purchased from Ideal Park near Johnstown, and a new track was laid along the edge of the park and lake, near PA 36.

It was a PRR passenger diesel train car-body [replicating a class E-7 locomotive] (gas powered) with six open cars for passengers, all resembling the tuscan-red livery of a PRR passenger train with gold striping. Three of these are still at the park, one restored, two not.



The train in use today is the fourth version built by C P Huntington, which is a steam engine (gas powered) with three passenger cars which came from Heritage USA theme park of Jim and Tammy Baker fame. (Note: the engine car-body, as well as three cars of train number 3, are now owned by Railroader's Memorial Museum in Altoona and hopefully will be restored.

We arrived at the park about 4:00 PM to take the train ride. The train is stored at the station which is an open platform under a linear shelter, having two tracks.

The operating train used the outside track and stored on the inside track is the restored No. 2 engine, one of the restored passenger cars, and the two un-restored cars. In addition, it houses a home-built hopper-ballast car. This train operates on approximately 2/3 mile of track crossing the river three times, once of the "Pony Shoe Curve" bridge. The cost of one ride is \$2.00 per person. A better bargain would be the all-day pass at \$9.95 which would permit you to ride the 'Leap-the-Dips' roller coaster (the oldest surviving figure 8 side-friction coaster) [listed on the National register of historic landmarks] and play a round of golf at the train town miniature golf course.



This course is set-up in a railroad theme with box cars , tracks, signals etc., which you have to putt through and around. Take a special look at the 18<sup>th</sup> hole and you will see the old Altoona & Logan Valley Electric Ry trolley station shelter, (formerly located along PA 36).

### Lakemont Park Miniature Golf Course

When dismantled in the late 1950's, it was stored behind the 'Leap-the-Dips' coaster, only to be restored to its present use as part of the Boyertown USA theme-park attempt). Also at Lakemont Park is a gas powered tractor built to look like a steam engine which tows two cars, and is used to transport handicapped people from the parking area to the park, if prior arrangements are made.

With the afternoon slipping away, we left around 4:45 PM to travel to our fourth and final train ride for the day.



Train number four was at Tipton, PA at the DelGrosso Amusement Park (I-99 north from Altoona to Tipton, about 12 miles). Once at the park, we stopped for supper, enjoying the park's famous "sloppy joe" sandwiches with potato salad at "Murphs" kitchen. That accomplished, we then visited the Tipton Creek Railroad for our last ride.

The train used here is a carbon copy of the one used at Lakemont Park, except the roofs are removed from the passenger cars. This train is also C P Huntington built and may have come from the same theme park at the Lakemont train (no one was able to confirm this). It operates over a ¼ mile track in a circle along Tipton Creek. The cost is 50 cents per person. Displayed at the exit of this ride is "Little Toot", the original live steam powered locomotive which used-to operate at the park. \*\* I can remember riding this train as a kid also. After this ride, we made our way back home to Altoona.

It was a nice day, We put a little over 100 miles on the car but got to ride on four different railroads – all in about 8 hours time. Not bad for a day off of work.

- Mundy Nuss was the owner of Mundy's Welding in Juniata for many years.

\*\* Note: The "Little Toot" steam locomotive was restored to operating condition around 1990 by KR&P (Keystone Restoration & Preservation) group, which also helped restore PRR steam locomotive K-4s # 1361 (1986-1987). "Live Steam" is no longer used due to insurance/liability issues. LEA

### COURTESY ANNOUNCEMENT

Altoona-Blair County Photo Society will present a 'projected image' slide program by members Joan and Ken Stern of Roaring Spring on February 15, 2010. The topic will be their recent transcontinental train trip on Amtrak. The location of the program will be the Hollidaysburg YMCA, starting at 7 PM. All are invited to attend. Joan and Ken Stern are accomplished photographers and their program is sure to be most informative and entertaining.

### CHAPTER SANTA TRAINS 2009

Horseshoe Curve Chapter's annual Santa Trains were a huge success this year. Operated each Saturday before and after Thanksgiving, with three trips daily, the patronage has gained in popularity and provides the Chapter

with their annual fund—raiser to continue our projects in preserving railroad heritage and education. These trips, operated in conjunction with the Everett Railroad Company (and, Santa Claus) seem to be just as popular with adults as well as children .



Santa Claus visits with the children



Some of Santa's helpers filling the treat bags.

In the latter category, over 900 children received treat bags from Santa Claus but overall patronage for both days was over 1,000 passengers per day. We are also indebted to the Roaring Spring Historical Society who owns and maintains the Roaring Spring station, the only surviving Pennsylvania Railroad station here in southern Blair County. Predominantly, patrons for the Santa Trains come primarily, from a 25-45 mile radius and may, in part, be due to the popularity of the movie Polar Express. Entertainment aboard the trips was provided by the following church choirs singing carols :

1. BRAMBELTON BAPTIST CHURCH
2. GRACE BRETHREN
3. ROARING SPRING CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN
4. BARE MEMORIAL CHURCH OF GOD

#### DUES RENEWAL REMINDER

Your 2010 dues are now due and we hope, despite the economy, that you will consider renewing for the 2010 season. The fraternity of the National Railway Historical Society has its many rewards and the national publications are now on schedule. The quality of these publications are worth the cost of the dues similar to a major magazine subscription.

#### ANNUAL RE-ELECTION

As is traditional, the annual election of officers is held in November of each year. By popular vote, the current slate of officers has been re-elected. They thank you for your confidence and support. Contrary to popular opinion, they were not 'railroaded' back into office. Their cumulative experience, leadership, and accomplishments make them irreplaceable.

#### RAILWAY EXPRESS AGENCY TRUCK PROJECT

The REA truck has progressed further with the completion of signs for the truck by Jack White Signs in Altoona. The signs were completed in early December, and President Givler and Dave Seidel visited Jack White Signs and drilled them for application. These are very well re-produced with the lettering rendered in buff color with red shadowing, as was customary for the period, this truck represents (1940's). The truck is now housed inside at Railroader's Memorial Museum for the winter, properly licensed and insured as an antique motor vehicle. The one remaining appliance, as soon as President Givler acquires it, is the requisite 'flux capacitor'. In the following photo, President Frank Givler positions a sign for installation.

## CHAPTER WINTER PROJECT



Railroader's Memorial Museum's utility "Marplex" truck has been moved to Frank's Auto Service and will undergo restoration over the winter months. The Marplex is a generic type truck, mostly used to transport welding tanks and other tools around the museum. It was previously used in a similar vein by Conrail and subsequently donated to the museum. There are several mechanical issues that need addressed as well as body rust and paint. As was demonstrated by the restoration of the Railway Express Agency truck for the museum, Horseshoe Curve Chapter "can do" to borrow an old Conrail slogan. Work will begin after the first of the year at Frank's garage, usually on Saturday mornings and Monday evenings. Be prepared to get dirty !

## CHAPTER CHRISTMAS DINNER

Was held on Saturday, December 5, 2009 at Deer Hollow Bed and Breakfast, Tyrone RD (near Union Furnace). Joe DeFrancesco's grandmother, Rachel Gensimore is a first-class cook ! We enjoyed the superb hospitality of Rachel and Dink Gensimore as well as Joe, as usual. Great conversation, fellowship, and, of course, Joe's model railroad, kept us all entertained. WE THANK THEM !



## DAVE AND DICK TO HARRISBURG NRHS MEETING

Dick Charlesworth and Dave Seidel traveled to Harrisburg in October to attend the monthly meeting of Harrisburg Chapter NRHS, especially to enjoy the vintage slide program by Frank Tattall depicting PRR in the Enola area in the 1950's. We appreciated the hospitality of President Dan Nettling, Joe Heffron and Fred Wertz. It was a most enjoyable evening. On the way down, we stopped at the Duncannon station, now occupied by Blue Mountain Cable Co. They have done a first class restoration of the building, to include removal of dense vegetation on the river side providing an expansive view of the Susquehanna River. It's worth the stop!



Duncannon, PA Ex-PRR

## BILL BURKET'S NEW WEBSITE

If you aren't aware of, or haven't yet visited the site, we recommend you take a look at chapter member Bill Burket's new website at the following address: [www.billspennyphotos.webs.com](http://www.billspennyphotos.webs.com)

It is a remarkable inventory of vintage Pennsylvania Railroad images, much from the Altoona area. Good work, Bill !

## OTHER PROJECTS

Late summer, autumn work involved re-building a vestibule on one of the coaches and other maintenance. Mr. Francis Givler Sr. painted the interior of one coach also and Neil Myers assisted by spray painting the trucks on all the coaches as well as those of the Everett Railroad at Wye Switches. Airbrakes appliances were re-built and installed as well. Our thanks to all the volunteers who assisted in some way especially the coach cleaning and window washing. The Chapter coaches were also used in October by the Hollidaysburg Y for their autumn foliage trips from Canal Basin Park.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The Hollidaysburg Branch from Alto to Hollidaysburg Yard was completely upgraded with tie and ballast work and new welded rail. Much of this was necessitated by the increased traffic with loaded ethanol tank cars. These cars are usually transported to Hollidaysburg on the Local, then delivered to the tank farm at Canan Station on the return trip to Altoona to fit the siding configuration.

The Position Light Signal Bridge at Horseshoe Curve was taken out of service on August 30<sup>th</sup>, and dismantled August 31<sup>st</sup>, replaced by the modern system and a cantilever style mounting. The old signal bridge was preserved, however, and is now located at Railroader's Memorial Museum in Altoona, with signal aspects. When restored and re-erected, it will have signal aspects for a "four-track" mainline.

"C" Tower (Conemaugh) in Johnstown, once a busy hub of interchange traffic for Bethlehem Steel Corporation's Conemaugh & Black Lick RR, has seen diminishing activity since the closing of the mill in the 1993-1994 period. The original C Tower (frame) was demolished on September 30, 1958 when westbound freight train 'Extra 7065 West' with diesel units 7065, 7173 and 7055, with 98 cars and caboose, derailed at C Tower. The block operator at C Tower was killed and another operator and signal maintainer were injured. The 65<sup>th</sup> car de-railed. The replacement structure, concrete block, was closed on October 27, 2003, and razed October 26, 2009.



**SO Tower at South Fork**, essentially gutted by fire (set by vandals) earlier this year (they were caught), had its “remains” razed October 2009. As most of us in this region know, South Fork is a busy branch line junction for area coal traffic to this day, but was also the starting point for the great Johnstown Flood of 1889 when the dam of the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club breached during torrential rains, sending a wall of water toward Johnstown.

**“UNSTOPPABLE” – The Movie**  
**TYRONE PA**

As most of you know, the filming of the subject movie has occurred in several locations in Pennsylvania, Ohio and WV. However, things came “center stage” for the town of Tyrone, PA – 12 miles north of Altoona (east in RR lingo). Filming took place over a three day period November 2-3-4, and was preceded by filming segments northward near Milesburg and Port Matilda, and Emporium PA. All the local footage was shot on the Nittany & Bald Eagle Railroad (in Pennsy terms, the Bald Eagle Branch) and chapter member Larry McKee had a part as an ‘extra’ portraying one of 8 Federal Railroad Administration Agents. Larry will, of course, be glad to give you further details. Your editor was a “hanger-on” on Nov 2 (train northbound) and 4 (train southbound) as seen in the following photos.

<p>Allegheny &amp; West Virginia ‘fictional’ RR</p>	<p>Paintwork loosely resembles Santa Fe</p>
<p>Train consist had a mixture of tank cars, covered hoppers and pipe loads but is portrayed as carrying a hazardous substance</p>	<p>Once over this trestle (10<sup>th</sup> Street) in downtown Tyrone, this branch is street-running to the north (right) with cross-street</p>

<p>in a 'runaway' situation.</p>	<p>intersections. It was interesting to observe a 50 mph speed in this area (closed to all traffic during filming).</p>
	
<p>Train is positioned southbound at 14<sup>th</sup> St.</p>	<p>Southbound along Washington Avenue at 11<sup>th</sup> Street at speed.</p>
	
<p>14<sup>th</sup> Street, Tyrone, PA with the extras milling about.</p>	

Multiple contingents representing local and neighboring police departments, emergency medical personnel, and area fire company personnel were predominant. Some were extras and some were actual, as well as having a State Police presence. Action would always commence when the helicopters were airborne. Interestingly, the train powered by unit 777 ran northbound on November 2, but southbound on November 4<sup>th</sup>.



The "other" unit (one of two in this yellow and blue paintwork) SD40-2's.

All "extras" participating in the filming had to sign some type of confidentiality agreement to not discuss the filming and it's plot line nor were they permitted to have cameras. As a spectator, I am not constrained by such an agreement.



Camera car pacing the railroad on Washington Avenue.



Fourteenth Street was a predominant action scene location. Watchers were at every intersection and pleasant to converse with.



Alas, FRA agent-extra, Larry McKee, wasn't visible for my lens.

Washington Avenue, view southward from 14<sup>th</sup> St., Tyrone, where some of the 'action' took place. The Jct with the NS mainline is approx ¾ mile distant. Many of the homes were "touched up" with either paint, autumn foliage decoration etc. Most of the streets were "wet-down" for consistency in the filming. North of Tyrone, beyond the paper mill, the railroad has an almost 90 degree bend and simulated explosions took place in that area (not accessible).

Photos by Dave Seidel.

### CALENDAR

January 26 - Regular Meeting

February 23 - Regular Meeting

March 23 - Regular Meeting (Note: March has 5 Tuesdays...watch date).

Unless notified otherwise, all meetings are at 7:30 PM in the theatre of Railroader's Memorial Museum, on the fourth Tuesday of each month...1300 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Altoona, PA, 16602.



**IN MEMORIAM**  
**Francis X. Givler Sr**  
**Oct 2, 1933 – Dec 27, 2009**

Mr. Givler is survived by his wife of 54 years, Ruth Ann, and three sons: Chapter President Francis X. Givler Jr Ronald, Bill; daughters Jennifer Smith, and LisaMeadows; father-in-law to Chapter Secretary Karin Givler. Our sympathies are sincerely extended to the Givler families.

In the above photo, Mr. Francis X. Givler is painting the interior of one of the chapter coaches on June 23, 2007. He was a true gentleman, patriarch of the Givler family and will be missed by all those who were privileged to know him. In that regard, memories are genuinely the treasures of a lifetime.

**Penn Station NY Centenary**  
**1910-2010**

An exceptional calendar has been issued for the 2010 centennial (following illustration). Copies may be had by contacting John Turkelli at: [johnnytrains@earthlink.net](mailto:johnnytrains@earthlink.net).

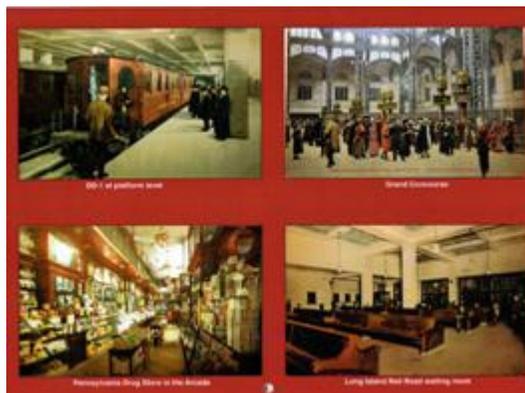


This calendar is published by the Sunrise Trail Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society and the images have been furnished from the collection of John Turkelli, whom many of us know from the 1986-87 period when K-4 # 1361 had its first restoration here in Altoona.

John has studied Pennsylvania Station in New York City for decades and has consulted with authors whose books have chronicled the history of this grand station structure. John also has given tours of Pennsylvania Station “behind-the-scenes” for many years, venturing into those out-of-view recesses.

Your editor also has many fond memories of Pennsylvania Station New York as well. In the period 1956-1960, while stationed on Long Island at Mitchel Air Force Base (aka Mitchel Field), I traveled to and from New York/Altoona regularly through this cathedral of transportation. Its vastness was almost overwhelming, but one could go into this station and get a train to Altoona without more than an hour or two wait without even consulting a timetable. In those days, the great architectural oxymoron, the clamshell, covered the ticket counters...a modernistic abomination inside this 'cathedral' of otherwise grand architecture. As most may recall, the design of Pennsylvania Station was based on the designs of the Baths of Caracalla in Rome and truly a classic edifice.

The wrecker's ball arrived in 1963 and the rest is history as they say. The steel and glass Madison Square Garden complex which replaced it, is a structure one will not miss when its turn to meet the wreckers ball arrives.



As a post-script to this story, plans have been on the drawing board for many years to convert the James A. Farley Post Office in New York (opposite Pennsylvania Station on Eighth Avenue) to ....would you believe it.....a railroad station. Of similar architectural design, the post office has outgrown its space utilization, and, as was the custom in major cities, post offices were usually located adjacent to Pennsylvania Railroad stations for ease of transport of U.S. mail aboard passenger trains (hence, the power and influence of the Pennsylvania Railroad at one time). The Farley post office is located above the same tracks Penn Station currently uses and is a natural fit. New Jersey Transit and Amtrak will be participating in this capital project for Manhattan.

We look forward to further announcements about Penn Station-New York centenary celebrations.

Other recommended reading is:

“Conquering Gotham” by Jill Jonnes

“Old Penn Station” by William Low – an illustrated history for children.

“The Late Great Pennsylvania Station” by Lorraine Diehl (softbound, 168 pages, black-and-white content/superb images) is available for \$18.95 + \$2.50 s/h to Long Island Sunraise Trail Chapter, NRHS, P.O. Box 507, Dept C, Babylon, NY 11702-0507.

Chapter member Dan Moringiello (aka Diesel Dan) is a retired Long Island RR Engineman who worked in and out of Penn Station NY for most of his career. Dan has fascinating reminiscences of Penn Station if you want to know more.

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