



Official Newsletter  
of



NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1361  
Altoona, PA 16603-1361  
[www.hscnrhs.org](http://www.hscnrhs.org)

**Summer 2025**

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**NOTE:** Horseshoe Curve Chapter, National Railway Historical Society was granted a charter by the NRHS on May 11, 1968 (3 months and 10 days after the PRR-NYC merger), evolving from the Altoona Railway Museum Club (1965-1968). We meet on the **FOURTH** Tuesday of each month except December, at the Railroaders Memorial Museum, Altoona, PA, at 7:30 PM. Occasional exceptions are announced to the membership.

**90 (+) % of all communications and notices are handled by e-mail. Please keep your e-mail address current with the officers, especially the President and the Chapter Historian/Editor.**

## IN THE FALL 2025 ISSUE OF THE COAL BUCKET

1. Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum theatre to Dave Seidel, by Len Alwine
2. Report on the EBT train trip, by Zach Noonan
3. Report on the chapter picnic, by Len Alwine
4. A Special Look Back, by Len Alwine
  - 75 years ago “The Big Ice Storm”
  - 70 years ago “Hurricane Diane hits Pennsylvania”
  - 50 years ago “Altoona’s Train Station”
5. Chapter minutes by Joe Harrella
6. Under the Wire, Logan Valley Trail completed, by Len Alwine
7. Local Yard News Briefs, by Len Alwine
  1. Tunneling On
  2. EBT dedicates monument

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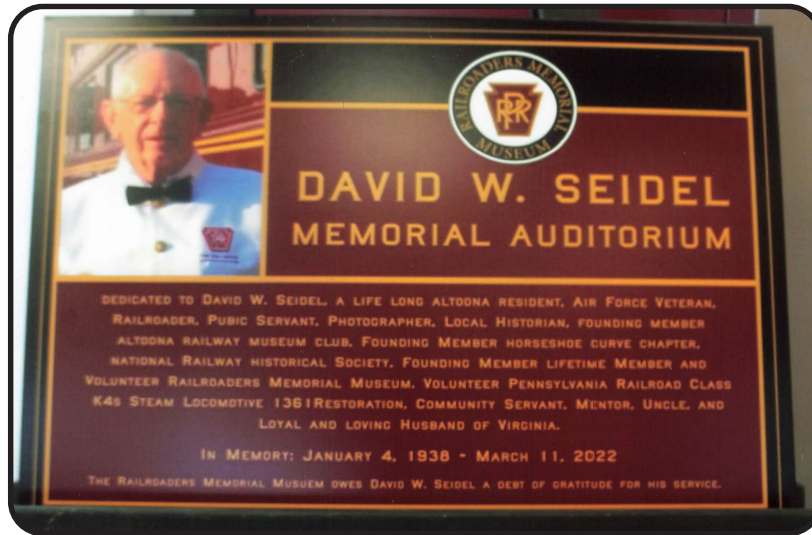
## HOLD THE PRESS!! LATE BREAKING NEWS ITEMS!!

1. On October 28, 2025, the next chapter meeting will be held at the ARMM at 6:00 p.m. Arrangements are being made to show the long version of the film used to dedicate the remodeled auditorium in honor of Dave Seidel. This is being done so all members will have a viewing of this excellent film. Plan now to attend.
2. The chapter Christmas party is just now in the planning stages. Anyone having input or is willing to help with the event should contact Frank Givler. Once the date and location are confirmed, an e-mail will be sent to notify all members.

Remember, Christmas is not that far away, so contact Frank if willing to help!!

## ARMM AUDITORIUM DEDICATED

by Leonard Alwine



On Saturday, September 6, 2025, the remodeled theatre room at ARMM was dedicated and renamed the David W. Seidel Memorial Auditorium. The service marked the end of a couple years of work by many people.

The NRHS Horseshoe Curve Chapter, the Seidel family, along with many friends had donated funds to restore and upgrade the original theatre with new seats, carpeting, paint and electronic equipment and other items.

The event was attended by over 60 relatives, chapter members and friends of Dave and Virginia Seidel.

Opening speakers at the event included Matthew Wolf and Joe DeFrancesco from the ARMM who explained the film honoring Dave and how it was made in house by the staff using the last interview with Dave in 2021 shortly before his passing.

Father Frank then said the invocation and the blessing on the new auditorium for the dedication. The 50 minute film presented local railroad history from the PRR days up to the present Norfolk Southern time. It documented the founding of the NRHS Chapter and the railroad museum focusing on Dave's efforts and leadership in both.

Following the film, which showcased Dave's interview interspersed with time appropriate rail images,. Short speeches were made by Dick Charlesworth, Frank Givler, Len Alwine, and Ron Givler from the chapter.

Dave's nephew, Brian Behe, and Cummins McNitt, spoke noting how hard Dave worked to bring the vision of preserving the local railroad heritage into a reality.

By the time the film and speakers were finished, there wasn't a dry eye in the room. The attendees then moved to the third floor for a light lunch and a time of one on one reminiscing.



Virginia Seidel with the new plaque for the auditorium



Guests enjoying a light lunch and a time of remembrance of Dave

## **EBT TRIP REPORT** by Zach Noonan

On July 26th, 2025, the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS set off on a bus trip on what started out to be a gloomy Saturday morning, later becoming mostly sunny. After stopping for a brief breakfast at the McDonald's in Huntingdon, we had arrived at the East Broad Top's Orbisonia station. The train was led to be the EBT's recently acquired diesel number 19, still wearing it's former Durango & Silverton paint and number 1203. The rare six-axle narrow gauge locomotive was built in 1946 by H.K. Porter Company of Pittsburgh for the Pacific Portland Cement Company. We then boarded the still brand new reproduction passenger cars, only being put into service two years and enjoyed a pleasant four and a half mile trip to Colgate Grove, currently the end of the north-bound trackage and the set of "wye" switches to turn the train. After dropping off a few families to enjoy a picnic at the Grove, the train turned on the wye and headed back to Orbisonia towards the Rockhill Trolley Museum.

Upon arriving back in Orbisonia, we then debarked the train and spent some time at the Rockhill Trolley Museum, with some exploring their restoration shop/car barn or lounging outside the station. The group then split between the two trolleys running that day and set off - in turn - down the brief run on the museum's track. The two trolleys featured were the 163 (1923 built Brill Co. trolley built for York, PA) and the 355 (1925 built St. Louis Car Co. trolley built for Johnstown, PA).

After the trolley rides concluded, the group reassembled on the bus and set off towards the Swigart Antique Auto Museum. The bus would be slightly delayed by a surprise downburst of a thunderstorm, thankfully clearing as quickly as it began. The group enjoyed its time at the museum, popular cars included the steam powered "Stanley Steamer", the 1936 Duesenberg "Herbie the Love Bug", and the De'Lorean featuring doc Brown.

After stopping for dinner at the Hoss's near Huntingdon, word had been received that the westbound Amtrak train 43, that we were to take for the return journey home to Altoona, was over an hour late. After some discussion it was decided to wait for the train rather than take the bus. Although Amtrak had arrived in Huntingdon well over an our late, the group had all enjoyed the otherwise smooth ride back to Altoona, concluding a reasonably well rounded day trip.



## TRIP PHOTOS BY ZACH NOONAN



The EBT train with soon-to-be numbered diesel #1203 in charge catches morning sun as the crew makes their final preparations to start the day.



After giving passengers the opportunity to disembark at the Rockhill Trolley Museum, the EBT train passes behind the museum to return to the Orbisonia station.



Trollies 355 and 163 meet at the passing siding at the Rockhill Trolley Museum viewed from inside the trolley 355



Amtrak 43 arrives at the under construction Huntingdon station.

## CHAPTER PICNIC

by Leonard Alwine

On Sunday, August 10th, at 2:00 p.m. the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS held it's annual picnic at the Horseshoe Curve under the pavilion located at the bottom of the old steps to the top of the curve. It was hoped by some that it could be held at the top under the new picnic shelter located there, but since the funicular was once again broken down, most could not do the steps to the top so the bottom location became the site.

Twenty something members and family attended the affair which once again had President Frank doing the grilling of the hot dogs and hamburgers. There was plenty to eat as many members brought covered dishes to share and desserts were also provided by the members to over fill the stomachs. It was a good time shared by all and several trains were heard going around the curve although unseen due to tree growth.

### Editor's Note:

For all the pastry chef's who made the wonderful pies, etc., using Grandma's old recipes, here are a couple measurements you may need in reproducing those good eats:

1. A tad = 1/4 teaspoon
2. A pinch = 1/16 teaspoon
3. A smidgen = 1/32 teaspoon
4. A dollop = 1 teaspoon



Frank manning the grill



Our Editor made sticky buns  
and potato salad



Girls setting up the buffet table  
for food and desserts

## A SPECIAL LOOK BACK

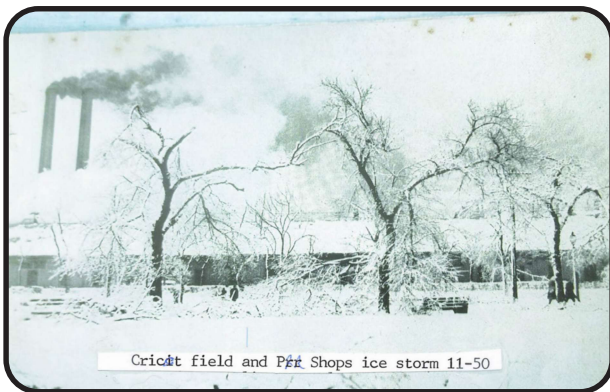
### THE BIG ICE STORM

by Leonard Alwine

Seventy-five years ago, November 25, 1950, perhaps the most damaging ice storm to ever hit Altoona, paralyzed the area for nearly a week.

On Friday evening, November 24th about 7:30 p.m., sleet began falling on Altoona. About midnight it turned into a heavy freezing rain which froze to everything. It rained hard until around 11:00 a.m. Saturday, November 25th, when a drop in temperature turned the rain into a heavy wet snow which blanketed the area. It clung to every thing. While it made the trees and shrubs look pretty as it decorated them all in a white fluff, it soon damaged and destroyed almost every tree in Altoona and the surrounding area. The damage was something that was never seen in the area before as most all trees had their branches torn from them and many bushes and shrubs were flattened under the weight of the snow.

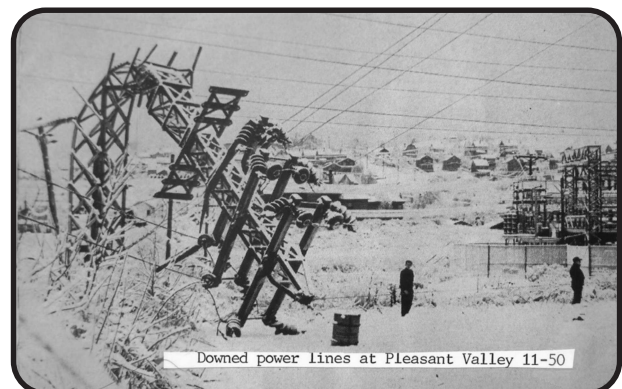
The worst damage was to the electric distribution system of the area as wires and poles bowed down to the additional weight of the ice and snow and broke down and snapped off leaving the area without power for about one week.



The trees at the PRR Cricket Field Park along Chestnut Avenue at 4th Street were all destroyed as shown in this photo.

Also shown in this photo was the PRR Car Shop building and the power house twin smoke stacks which later were raised and the park leveled.

The weight of the ice toppled many wooden electric poles but when the high voltage steel tower at Collinsville (Pleasant Valley) sub station went down, power to the city was lost.



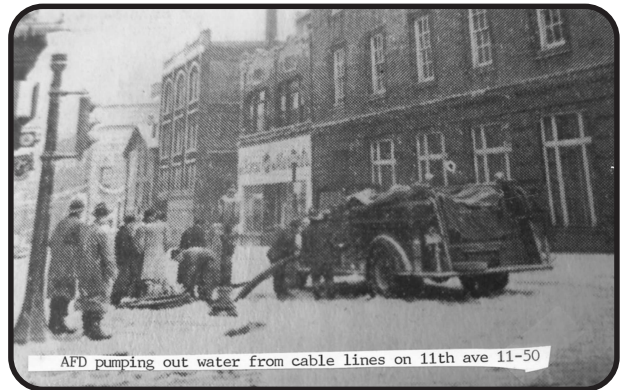




Thickest of ice after storm 11-50

Penna. Electric employees showing the thickness of the ice on one of the many thousands of downed lines in the City of Altoona caused by the ice storm.

The Altoona Fire Department shown making a futile attempt to pump water from the rain out of the Bell Telephone conduit cable system under 11th Avenue to try to keep the alarm system working. It did not succeed and it was weeks before it got back on line.



AFD pumping out water from cable lines on 11th ave 11-50



Photo showing the trees stripped of limbs (behind the house on the left) and other trees bending down from the weight and power poles and wires destroyed. This was how Altoona looked all over the entire city.

## A LOOK BACK

### ALTOONA'S TRAIN STATION

by Leonard Alwine

With the rebuild of Altoona's train station now "complete", it seemed only fitting that a tribute to the local train station be included in this edition of the Coal Bucket.

A copy of a news article and poem from February 8, 1983 edition of the Altoona Mirror as was written in the 1920's.



WHEN THIS PHOTO was taken in the mid-'70s, a sign in front of this refurbished trailer asserted that it was a "temporary" railroad station. By last November, when the trailer marked its tenth anniversary, the "temporary" sign was gone.

#### Poem from the '20s

### *'Altoona's Station'*

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Mirror here reprints a poem titled "Altoona's Station," which was written in the late 1920s by the late Robert F. Lantz of Juniata. Rachel Petrone of Juniata sent a copy of the poem with these words: "It is ironic that we do not have a station to brag about after all these years. Let's hope our new train and bus terminal will become a reality and give Altoona something to be proud of."

I was showin' Billie Barlow  
'Round our town the other day.  
Billie's one of my relations  
And he comes from Ioway.  
I was braggin' bout our city  
And its healthful situation,  
When all at once he blurted out,  
"Say, where the heck's yer station?"

I took him up the Avenue,  
And through the business section,  
And then we gave the City Hall  
A purty fair inspection.  
He liked the Penn-Alto a lot,  
And said from observation  
He thought we had some city here —  
He'd like to see the station.

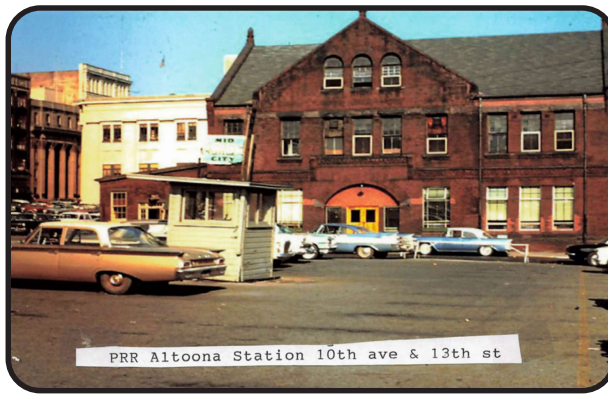
I bragged about our mountains  
And the water we were drinkin';  
I took him through our Junior Highs,  
And that sure set him thinkin'.  
I took him up to Gospel Hill,  
And from the elevation  
I showed him churches, homes and schools —  
While he looked for the station.

I spoke of the Cathedral  
And the cost of its erection;  
I told him 'bout our paving  
And about our fire protection;  
I pointed out our railroad shops  
(The biggest in the nation)  
And he said, "Now that's mighty fine,  
But what about yer station?"

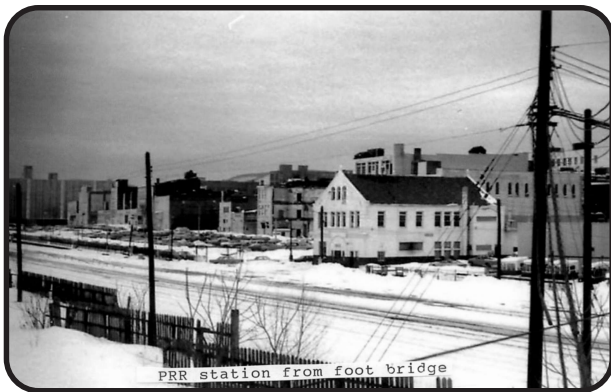
Then I got hoppin' mad and said,  
"You think you've somethin' on us.  
We ain't much of a station,  
But we have a dandy promise.  
They promised us a station  
On the morining I was born,  
An' I guess they'll still be promisin'  
When Gabriel blows his horn.

"If you've come in from Ioway  
With nothin' else in view  
But to kid us 'bout our station,  
Why it's pretty raw of you.  
Well, dang it all, I'll point it out  
If you don't go home and blab,  
Now that's our station right down there  
Behind that taxicab!"

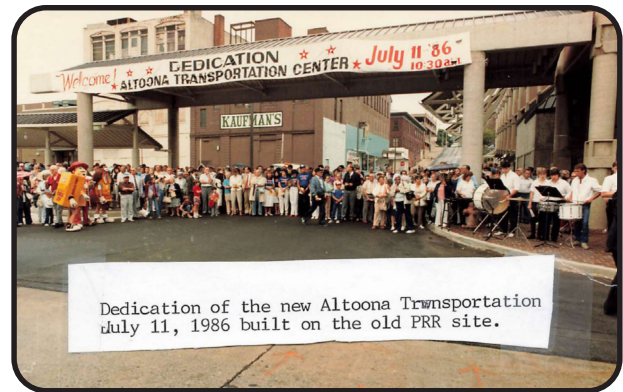




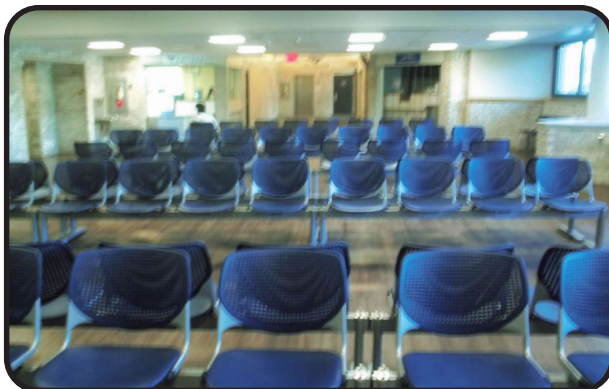
The PRR Train Station



The PRR Station as repainted white.



The dedication of the transportation center on July 11, 1986, built on the old PRR station site.



During 2025, the Altoona Train Station was remodeled. The station area was reduced in size by about one -third, the seating area was made very different and utilitarian with rows of seats replacing the old cushioned benches.



The bridge going over the tracks to the Amtrak platform was enclosed.

## **A LOOK BACK**

### **70 YEARS AGO - HURRICANE DIANE HITS THE POCONOES**

by Leonard Alwine

August 18, 1955, "Diane" hit the Delaware River Valley with 100 mph winds and over 12 inches of rain overnight. From Harley, PA to the New Jersey Valley, the Delaware River became a giant whirlpool of muddy water and debris picked up as villages were destroyed and trees etc. were washed away by the raging waters.

It was the height of the vacation time and many of the church camps, boys and girls camps, and the scout camps along the river were full of people looking forward to a relaxing time along the river in the he 90 degree plus heat of the day. It was only made worse by the rain which kept all inside the humid cabins.

All that water drained down to the streams and river and the river rose 20-30 feet depending on where you were camping, in a matter of 15 minutes. Entire camps were washed out and people crawled up onto their roofs to await rescue. They could not walk in the chest deep swirling waters to reach higher ground.

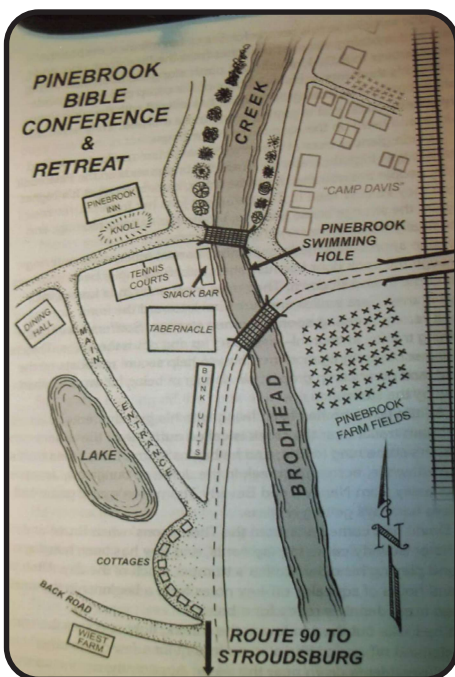
As the water rose, debris flowed down stream and lodged at the several bridges crossing the river until the force washed out the bridge also sending a tidal wave further down stream. As the bridges washed away so did access to the camps and towns along the banks.

Several church camps, boys and girls camps, boy scout camps were washed away leaving nothing to recognize. Two railroads bringing vacationers to the area, the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad and the Erie Railroad were left stranded as wash outs were on both ends of the trains. Passengers just had to wait for boats to bring them out. One rail crew crawled on top of their engine and sat out the storm in the rain there til rescued the next day.

With the bridges washed out, telephone and electric lines under them were also destroyed.

No one can place a dollar value on the buildings and vehicles lost but estimates are in the 100 millions in 1955 dollars.

198 bodies were recovered in the following weeks when rescue operations were change to recovery operations. The number of farm animals and pets was never tallied.



LEFT:  
Map of the conference area  
hardest hit by the hurricane.  
People waded through the chest  
deep water to find higher ground.



RIGHT:  
Photo of the same area after the  
water receded. All roads,  
buildings, railroad tracks and  
bridges were destroyed.



# **CHAPTER MINUTES**

**by Joe Harella**

## **HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS**

### **REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING**

**JULY 22<sup>ND</sup> 2025**

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025. The meeting was called to order by Pres. Frank Givler at 6:05 P.M.. The meeting was held at Perkins Family Restaurant.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved by Ron Givler, second by Denny Haire. The motion passed.

The financial statements were read by Treasurer Denny Walls. Ron Givler made a motion to accept the financial report, Don Goebel second. The motion passed.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

1. East Broad Top Bus Trip- Dick Charlesworth informed everyone that the bus will be parked at the rear of the Altoona Transportation Center. He said that we would like to leave by 7:30 A.M.. Parking will be available in the parking garage or any other open space that you can find.
2. Chapter Lead In Film- Pres. Givler said that the film is still being worked on.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

1. Chapter Summer Picnic- After some discussion it was decided to hold the picnic on Sunday August 10<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 P.M.. Please try to bring something to share, and let Frank know just what it is that you are bringing. YUM YUM !!
2. Celebration of Life for Mike Walls- A celebration of Life for Mike Walls was held on July 19<sup>th</sup> at the Geeseytown Firehall. There was a very nice turnout, and Denny thanked everyone for coming. The chapter would like to extend our sincere sympathies and condolences to Mike's family on his passing.

### **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

1. Funicular Repairs- The funicular is out of service again and we are not sure if it has been repaired yet. The problem is with the brakes. It's 33 years old.
2. Nick Martino- It has been reported that Nick gave up his job on the railroad and is now working for the engineering firm of Stiffler and McGraw. He may once again show up at our chapter meetings.

Ron Givler then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Don Goebel second, the meeting was adjourned at 7:12 P.M. with 15 members present.

**ATTENDANCE**- Nancy McKnight, Dean McKnight, Dick Charlesworth, Dee Hartman, Don Goebel, Karin Givler, Frank Givler, Ron Givler, Mary Jean Walls, Denny Walls, Diane Haire, Denny Haire, Dewayne Miller, Jerry Corbin, Joe Harella

JOE HARELLA

RECORDING SECRETARY

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

## **HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS**

### **SUMMER PICNIC**

**AUGUST 10<sup>TH</sup>, 2025**

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS scheduled for August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025 had to be canceled due to the chapter picnic which was held on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

The picnic was held at the pavilion at the Horseshoe Curve.

The menu consisted of a variety of picnic foods along with hot dogs and hamburgers provided by the chapter.

The grill was once again manned by President Frank Givler who did an excellent job.

We finished up our meal with a trip to the dessert table.

Everyone enjoyed the day.

**ATTENDANCE-** Frank Givler, Ron Givler, Gary Clare, Mark Detrick, Andrew Detrick, Mom Detrick, Dick Charlesworth, Mary Jean Walls, Denny Walls, Diane Teeter, Wil Teeter, Len Alwine, Nancy McKnight, Dean McKnight, Zach Noon, Betsie Price, Dee Hartman, Don Goebel, Diane Haire, Denny Haire, Larry McKee, John Fisher, Kathy Harella, Joe Harella

**Joseph Harella**

**Recording secretary**

## **HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS**

## **HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS**

### **REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING**

**SEPTEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>, 2025**

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025. The meeting was called to order by Pres. Frank Givler at 7:15 P.M.. The meeting was held at Perkins Family Restaurant.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved by Ralph Simpson, second by Denny Haire. The motion passed.

The financial statements were read by Treasurer Denny Walls. Dean McKnight made a motion to accept the financial report, Len Alwine second. The motion passed.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

1. Theater Dedication- Pres. Givler reported that the theater dedication to Dave Seidel was held on Saturday September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025. There was a nice turnout for the 10:00 ceremony which included a film that explained the history of the chapter and was made up of many interviews with Dave. Frank said that he would like to show this film at the October chapter meeting.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

1. 2025 calendars- Financial Secretary Denny Walls informed everyone that the 2025 calendars are in. The cost is the same as last year- \$13.00. He said that the calendars include many local pictures.
2. The Coal Bucket- Len Alwine informed everyone that the fall coal bucket will be out soon.
3. Christmas Party- Len Alwine asked if we are going to have a Christmas party this year? Frank said he doesn't think he'll be away this year and it's something we'll have to think about. He also said that he'll be sending out emails.

## **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

1. New Plaque for Deceased Members Pres. Givler said that we will be needing a new plaque soon as the current one is just about filled up. If you think of any names that should be included , please let him know.
2. Iron Horse Festival- Denny Haire said that he would like to hold an Iron Horse Festival sometime this year. More on this later.

Ralph Simpson then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Denny Walls second, the meeting was adjourned at 7:37 with 16 members present.

ATTENDANCE- Diane Haire, Denny Haire, Mary Jean Walls, Denny Walls, Dan Summers, Nancy McKnight, Dean McKnight, Frank Givler, Betsie Price, Marge Simpson, Ralph Simpson, Wil Teeter, Len Alwine, Patrick Kelly, Gerald Corbin, Joe Harella

JOSEPH HARELLA  
RECORDING SECRETARY

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS



## UNDER THE WIRE

### LOGAN VALLEY TRAIL COMPLETED

by Leonard Alwine

The “Logan Valley Trail” phase 1 in Bellwood was completed this Summer. (See Coal Bucket Fall 2024 Issue for information on this project and construction photos). This trail was named in honor of the Altoona & Logan Valley Electric Railway actually only parallels the Logan Valley tracks as they went down the middle of the street and it could not be built there for now. With the addition of a new bridge across the creek from the rail pass over bridge, the trail could then be completed to Beckers Road about 3/4 of a mile away.

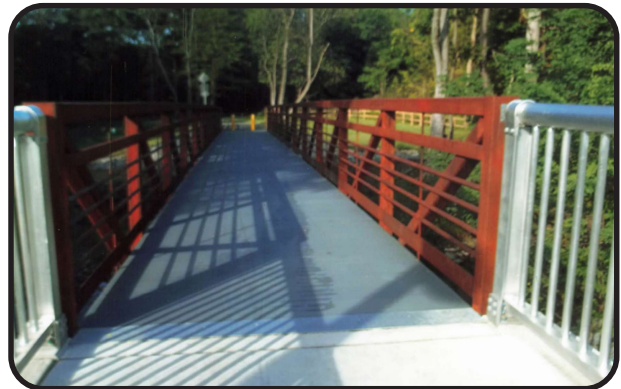
The whole trail is about 1 1/2 miles long and is fairly level and well paved. The area from the railroad crossover bridge to Becker Road does through a wooded area where some wild life can be seen and like the beginning of the trail on the Bellwood side of the Norfolk Southern tracks you can hear and see the trains going by on those tracks.

The trail also seems to be well used and liked by people hiking on it. The morning of August 26th when I hiked it, I passed 8 people, 4 with friendly dogs, and two children in strollers. One little boy in a stroller really liked the sounds of hearing the water under the new bridge.

It took a little longer than expected to get this idea from paper to reality but the promoters and workers from Antis Township should be congratulated for their efforts in creating this beautiful trail in a small town.



New sign erected at the trail head in Bellwood near the street that Logan Valley actually ran upon.



New bridge constructed over the stream for the Logan Valley trail (see construction photo of same location in the Fall 2024 issue).

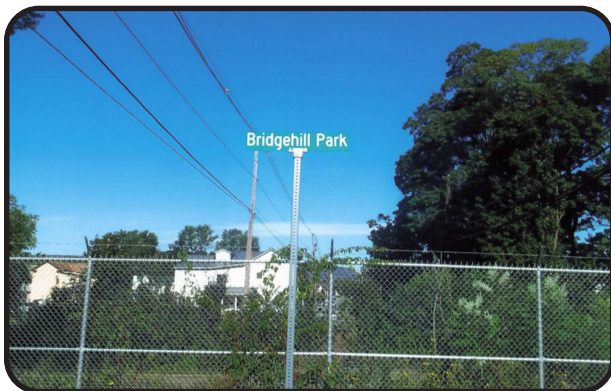


End of the trail for now at the Becker Road entrance.



Sign erected at trail end at Becker Road.

The area where the old highway bridge humped up over the railroad tracks in the center of town was leveled and made into a park for resting along the downtown portion of the trail, now called Bridgehill Park.



Sign along the trail marking the rest area for the Bellwood side of the trail.

## **LOCAL YARD NEWS BRIEFS**

### **TUNNELING ON**

**by Leonard Alwine**

On Thursday, August 20th, at 7:00 p.m., the Blair County Historical Society presented another of their history lectures at the Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum.

The guest speaker was Branden Sliko whose topic was the history of the Gallitzin Tunnels. He spoke about all the engineering that went into the tunnel prior to the building in the mid 1850's. In order to make the Horseshoe Curve work, the tunnel had to be built.

Eventually three tunnels were bored through the Tunnel Hill area and they even at the beginning had a large steam powered fan exhaust system to force the smoke out of the tunnel so that train crews could make it through the 3,595 foot tunnel.

He showed how the tunnels changed over the years and through the different railroads ownership. Two of the tunnels were enlarged for double stack trains and one was closed and sealed up, take out of service. The enlarged tunnel was opened to foot traffic August 13, 1995 and over 4,000 people walked in during the first 45 minutes of the four hour event.

It was a very informative lecture and was attended by three chapter members: Pat Kelly, John Fischer, and Len Alwine.



A circus train emerges from the original tunnel on 8-1-1990, the tunnel is now sealed shut.



Several people walking the enlarge tunnel on August 13, 1995.

## **EBT DEDICATES NEW MONUMENT**

On Saturday, August 23rd at 11:00 a.m., a new monument honoring the Kovalchik family was dedicated for their efforts in preserving and restoring the EBT. It is now known as the oldest operating narrow gauge railroad in America.

In 2020, after 60 years of working to keep the EBT somewhat intact, Joe Kovalchick transferred ownership to the EBT Foundation, Inc.

Speakers for the event included: Joe Kovalchick, EBT Foundation Chairman Nick Moorman, Andrew VanScoye President of the EBT Friends group, and Huntingdon County Commissioner Scott Walls.