



Official Newsletter  
of



NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

**Summer 2025**

**CHAPTER OFFICERS**

**PRESIDENT:** Francis X. Givler, Jr., 114 Scott Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602

**NOTE:** *\*time-sensitive correspondence should be sent to this address\**

**[ottodocfac@atlanticbb.net](mailto:ottodocfac@atlanticbb.net)**

**VICE-PRESIDENT:** Ronald A. Givler, 208 S. 24th Street, Altoona, PA 16602-3432

**[givlerronald@gmail.com](mailto:givlerronald@gmail.com)**

**CHAPTER DELEGATE TO NRHS & WEBMASTER:** Joseph A. DeFrancesco

1266 Lincoln Avenue, Tyrone, PA 16686

**[jdefrancesco@railroadcity.org](mailto:jdefrancesco@railroadcity.org)**

**SECRETARY:** Joseph P. Harella, 3806 5th Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602

**[jkharella@gmail.com](mailto:jkharella@gmail.com)**

**TREASURER:** Denny Walls, 123 Sandcastle Lane, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

**[d63w@aol.com](mailto:d63w@aol.com)**

**CHAPTER HISTORIAN/EDITOR:** Leonard E. Alwine, 212 N. 11th Avenue, Altoona, PA 16601

**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 THIS SUMMER 2025 ISSUE

1. The lead story by Editor Leonard Alwine details the recent dedication of a new monument on May 28th near Vale remembering the 132nd Anniversary of the Walter L. Main Circus Train wreck occurring at that site. The wreck killed six people and many of the circus animals.

It was a cold rainy morning at the dedication but it was still attended by 30 people including 3 NRHS Chapter members.

2. The second article again by Leonard Alwine is a report on a lecture at ARMM detailing the last days of the East Broad Top Railroad (EBT) and their standard gauge operation in Mt. Union PA in the 1950's.
3. The third article is about a planned trip to the EBT by Dick Charlesworth sponsored by the chapter. It details the agenda for the trip and how people can reserve a seat on the bus and later in the day on an Amtrak train back to Altoona.
4. Joe Harella continues to keep all informed about Local Yard News along with minutes of the chapter meetings and the places and the meetings are being held. Those meetings will be rotated between the Perkins restaurant and the Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum every other month with a new starting time of 6:00 p.m. for both places.
5. "Where's the Beef" is a Look Back photo shared by Leonard Alwine with an article from Altoona's beginning days back in the 1860's.
6. The "In Memory" section sadly honors three local historians who were active in the chapter and the local scene. They played an important role in those beginning days getting the chapter off and running and helping to preserve local history.

It is the hope of the Coal Bucket Staff that all will find something interesting to read and photos to look upon in this issue.

We are always looking for articles and photos taken by our members for future issues. Please send them to the Editor at the address listed for him on the first page of this newsletter.

Thank you,  
Leonard Alwine, Editor

## NEW MONUMENT DEDICATED

by Leonard Alwine

On Wednesday morning May 28th, a new monument and park were dedicated in Vale (near Tyrone) to commemorate the 132nd anniversary of the Walter L Main Circus train wreck of May 30, 1893.

The site is next to the PRR Railroad bed on the corner where the train derailed, killing six people and many of the circus animals and horses, including the star pony which jumped through flaming hoops as part of her act.

The new monument and park replace the old monument that sat at that site along Van Scoyoc Road for many years. The new park was built with \$87,000.00 from the American Rescue Plan Act funds and the Snyder Township officials.

It was a cold and rainy morning for the dedication which was attended by 30 people including three Horse-shoe Curve NRHS Chapter members.

The speakers were Representative Scott Barger from Blair County, Pastor Drew Baker from St. John's Evangelical Church in Sinking Valley and Susie O'Brien, local Tyrone Historical Society and organizer of the event over the years.

Following the speeches, clowns "Skootches" Stevenson and "Poppo" from the Circus Fans of America Association of Maryland placed a wreath at the memorial.

The wreck happened when the train was ordered to go down the mountain with only one engine and the 17 circus cars, which were twice as long and heavy as normal cars. It almost made it down the mountain but lost it's brakes and left the tracks on the curve, 1/2 mile before Vale at the bottom of the descent.

The PRR did all they could to get the circus back on the rails and the citizens of Tyrone hosted the circus performers in their homes. One week later, the rebuilt train left Tyrone but not before giving a free "special" performance to those citizens.

Following the dedication ceremony, those attending traveled to Grandview Cemetery (Tyrone) to place a wreath on the graves of circus workers who were killed in the wreck and are buried there.

The group then went to The Bull Pen for lunch.



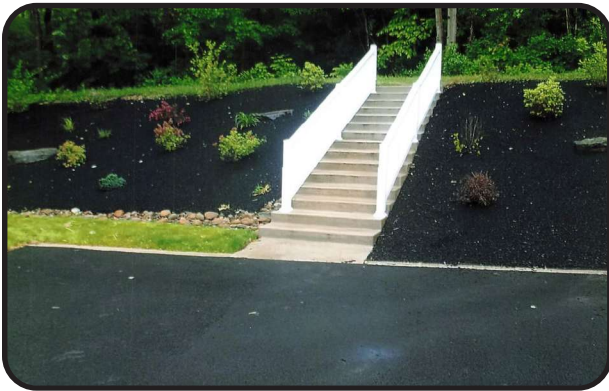
Mirror photo by Walt Frank

Members of the Circus Fans Association of America placed a wreath at the Walter L. Main Circus train monument Wednesday during a memorial service. Among those participating in the event include (left to right, front) Kayla Hilton and Alex Hilton; (rear) Dr. Don Curtis; Dennie Huber; Rick Hilton, local chapter vice president; David P. Orr, local chapter president; and Susie O'Brien, publicity director of the Tyrone Area Historical Society.

Photo of the original monument taken at the memorial service held in 2001.



New monument built at the wreck site and dedicated May 28, 2025.



New steps built to the old track right of way at the new park site.



New picnic pavilion built at the park on about the place the old monument stood.



Susie O'Brien speaking at the service about the history of the train wreck.





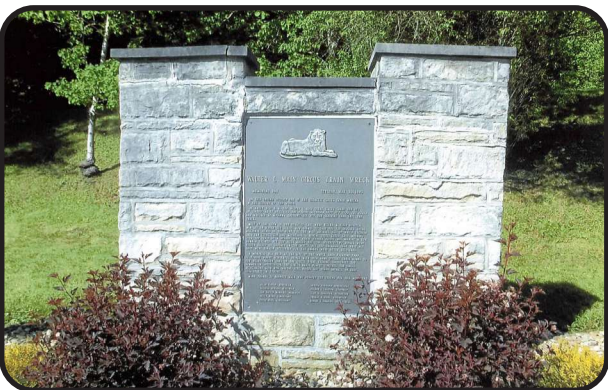
Clowns from Circus Fans of America Association who traveled from Maryland to place wreaths for services held at the site in 2025.



Chapter members Leonard Alwine, John Fischer, and Larry McKee pose behind one of the new benches at the memorial service held in May 2025.



Clowns "Skootches" and "Poppo" place a wreath at Grandview Cemetery 2025 on the graves of circus workers killed in the wreck.



Original monument at Vale site as taken at the Circus Memorial Program held May 27, 2017.

## **EBT “STANDARD GAUGE” OPERATIONS**

**by Leonard Alwine**

On Thursday, April 10th, a history after hours lecture was held at ARMM. The speaker was Brad Espesito, who is now the Director of the East Broad Top Railroad (EBT). It was a very informative presentation about the EBT's last days in the mid 1950's. That was a time when quite a lot of the rail traffic was interchanged with the PRR at Mt. Union.

For many years prior, that interchange was mainly coal from the East Broad Top Coal fields brought into Mt. Union about EBT narrow gauge hopper cars. There it was cleaned, sized, and reloaded on standard gauge PRR hopper cars for further shipment. The Mt. Union yards were dual gauge tracks and the rails were an exercise in geometry as they went around curves and switches. Two standard gauge steam 0-6-0 switchers were stationed by the EBT at Mt. Union engine house to do this work.

Box car loads of “other freight” were hand transferred to EBT box cars at Mt. Union for shipment to other towns along the EBT's 33 miles of lines, to Shade Gap, Rockhill, etc. It usually took two EBT box cars to haul one regular PRR standard gauge box car load. This operation was time consuming and labor costly.

So another way was developed where the standard gauge car was hoisted up and it's trucks replaced with narrow gauge trucks so the whole car and load could travel down the line. These cars, sometimes top heavy, were placed right behind the engine so that they could be watched, but since the EBT only traveled about 10 MPH this was not a real problem. Also a special coupler was used between these cars and the regular EBT cars.

This exchange business really picked up when supplies of asphalt in tank cars and cement in hopper cars were handled for road construction near the end of the EBT lines. This was used to build Rt. 522 and the PA turnpike. To get these retrucked cars through the EBT tunnels the tank dome and roof hatches had to be removed. During this construction period, almost all standard gauge railroad insignias could be seen running along the EBT line.

Sadly, this increase in car loads was the end for the EBT as when these roads were completed, it became more efficient to move cargo by motor trucks on these new roads. Even the EBT coal was now shipped by truck to Mt. Union, being cheaper and faster. Shortly, the EBT closed it's operation down.

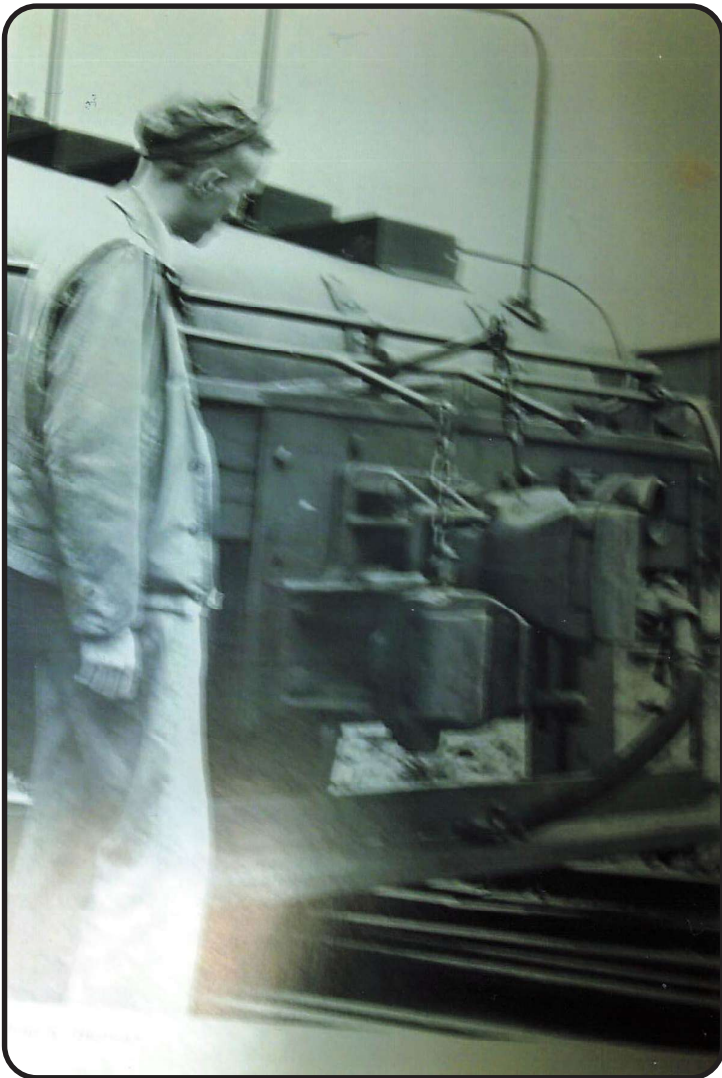
Many of the narrow gauge hopper cars left in the Mt. Union yard were sold to other narrow gauge tourist train operations as were both standard gauge steam locomotives housed in the Mt. Union engine house in the years since.

It was a very interesting lecture and showed in great detail how the EBT and the PRR had worked together during those last few years.

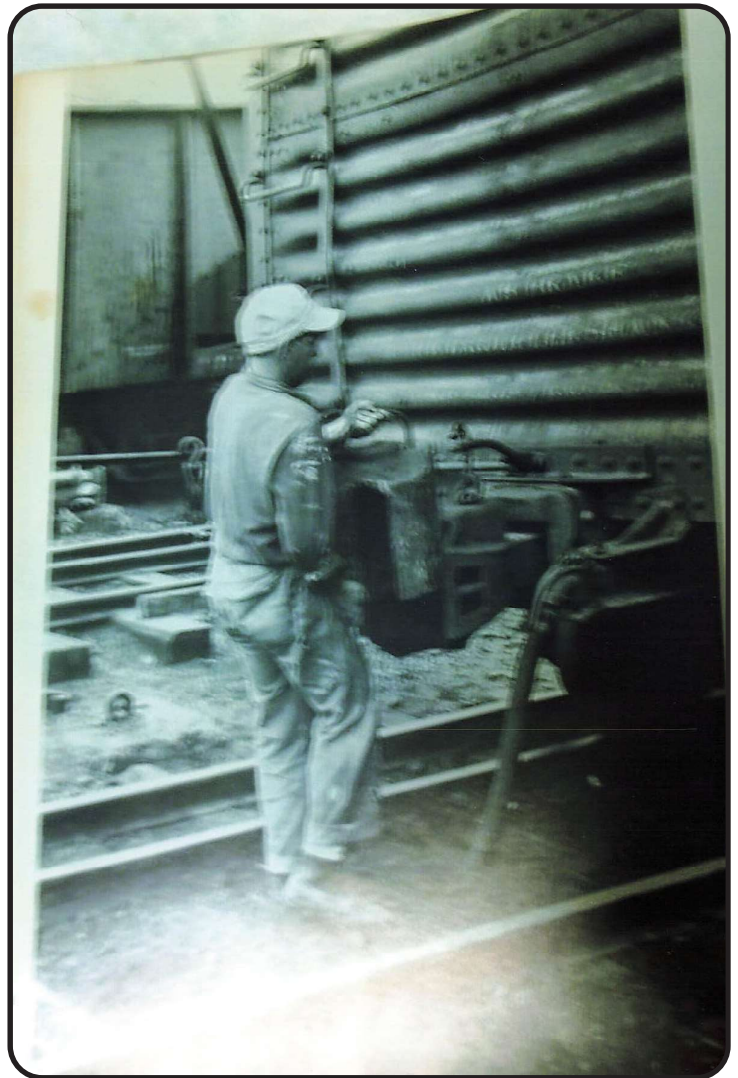




Changing the truck sets before OSHA regulations.



Showing the dual gauge couplers on EBT switcher engines.



Placing adapter coupler on retrucked car.

## **TRAIN RIDE PLANNED**

**by Dick Charlesworth**

The Chapter is planning a multi-stop train ride on several local trains and includes stops for meals and antique cars tour.

The all day excursion will begin in the early morning hours in Altoona at the train station along 10th Avenue. The bus will stop in Huntingdon for breakfast then travel to the East Broad Top for a ride on the narrow gauge railroad. While there, a quick trip on the trolley cars of the Rockhill Trolley Museum, then reboard the bus back to Swigart Antique Museum for a tour of the old cars located there. It's then back on the bus to go to Hoss's for dinner and then board Amtrak in Huntingdon for the trip back to the Altoona Train Station later that evening.

It is a rather intense schedule to do all these things in one day but for all the tours and rides it is a very cheap cost of \$164 per person.

A report on how the excursion played out will be included in the Fall Coal Bucket, hopefully with a few photos.



**PLAN TO JOIN US  
WHILE WE RIDE THE  
HISTORIC NARROW GAUGE  
EAST BROAD TOP  
SCENIC RAILROAD**

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**SATURDAY  
JULY 26, 2025**

**Ticket Price: \$164.00 per person**

**Stop Enroute at Huntingdon McDonald's in morning, Ride the East Broad Top Narrow Gauge Railroad, Trolley Ride, Tour Swigart Antique Car Museum, Meal at Huntingdon Hoss's, and ride Amtrak from Huntingdon back to Altoona.**

**Price includes:  
Bus, Amtrak, East Broad Top R.R.,  
Trolley Ride, Swigart  
Museum, and Hoss's Meal.**



**For additional information and to make a reservation, call after 6PM  
Dick Charlesworth, Tour Coordinator: 814-695-2201 or Cell 814-931-8811**

**Sponsored by the Horseshoe Curve Chapter, National Railway Historical Society**



# **LOCAL YARD NEWS**

**by Joe Harella**

## **HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS**

### **REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING**

**APRIL 22<sup>ND</sup>, 2025**

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on April 22<sup>nd</sup>,

2025. The meeting was called to order by Pres. Frank Givler at 6:00 P.M., The meeting was held at the Railroader's Memorial Museum.

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

The financial statements were read by Treasurer Denny Walls. Dick Charlesworth made a motion to accept the financial report, Don Gobel second. The motion passed.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

1. Bus trip to the East Broad Top- Dick Charlesworth reported that the trip will take place on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Parking will be available in the parking garage at the Altoona Transportation Center. The bus will leave at 7:45 A.M.. Our first stop will be the EBT where there will be an option, either the shop tour or the trolley ride. We will then travel to Swaggart's Car Museum, Hoss's for dinner and then to the AMTRAK station in Huntingdon for our train ride home. The cost of the trip is \$164.00
2. Visit to Penn State- Pres. Givler and Dick Charlesworth paid a visit to Penn State Altoona where they met up with our scholarship recipients Bailey Mount and Andrew Kennedy. Soyer Peterson is another student enrolled in the program who is interested in our scholarship , but he is not eligible yet.
3. Update on Gary Price- The latest report on Gary is not good. He is on morphine now. The doctors are trying to ease his pain.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

1. Storage for the Walters- A short discussion was held on storing the Walters. The cost is \$70.00 per month or \$840.00per year. It was decided to retain the current storage for now.

Pres. Givler then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Ron Givler second, the meeting was adjourned at 6:18 P.M. with 11 members present.

The group then headed over to the Round House where Executive Director Joe Defrancesco conducted a tour.

**ATTENDANCE**—Frank Givler, Dick Charlesworth, Denny Walls, Don Goebel, Jean Noonan, Zach Noonan, Ron Givler, Len Alwine, Dean McKnight, Joe Defrancesco, Joe Harella

**JOE HARELLA**

**RECORDING SECRETARY**

**HARSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS**

## HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

### REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

MAY 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2025

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025. The meeting was called to order by Pres. Frank Givler at 7:00 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 Dick Charlesworth. The motion passed.

The financial statements were read by Treasurer Denny Walls. Dean McKnight made a motion to accept the financial report, Don Goebel second. The motion passed. Denny has some concerns about the chapter spending any more money right now as our funds are beginning to dwindle somewhat.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

1. Bus Trip to the East Broad Top- Dick Charlesworth reported that so far he has forty-five passengers scheduled for the trip. Dick said that he will call everyone the week of the trip just as a reminder. Our bus will be sitting at the east end of the transportation center. Parking will be available in the parking garage. This should be a very nice trip. The cost is \$164.00 each.
2. Chapter "lead in" film for the movie theater- Matt Wolf is currently working on our chapter lead in film. The film will explain the part that the chapter played in the early stages of the museum. It will also give credit to those chapter members who were instrumental in the development of the museum. It should be very informative,

### **NEW BUSINESS**

1. The Passing of Gary Price and George Thompson- The chapter would like to extend our sincere sympathies and condolences to the families of Gary and George who recently passed on. They will both be remembered for their contributions to the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS , and the memories that we have of each one.

### **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

1. Pres. Givler informed everyone that our meeting scheduled for June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025 will be held in the Railroaders Memorial Museum at 6:00 P.M..

Ron Givler then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Don Goebel second, the meeting was adjourned at 7:12 P.M. with 11 members.

**ATTENDANCE-** Dick Charlesworth, Dee Hartman, Don Goebel, Karin Givler, Frank Givler, Ron Givler, Denny Walls, Zach Noonan, Nancy McKnight, Dean McKnight, Joe Harella

JOE HARELLA  
RECORDING SECRETARY  
HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

## HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

### REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

JUNE 24<sup>TH</sup>, 2025

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025. The meeting was called to order by Pres. Frank Givler at 6:05 p.m.. The meeting was held at the Railroader's Memorial Museum.

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

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

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

1. East Broad Top Bus and Train Trip- Dick Charlesworth informed everyone that we now have about 44 passengers going on the trip. Dick said that he will contact everyone about a week before the trip and that we will be leaving the Altoona Transportation Center at about 8:00A.M.. Parking will be available in the parking garage.
2. Chapter "Lead In" Film- Museum Executive Director Joe Defrancesco informed us that the film is coming along nicely. He also reported that a brake cylinder on the funicular is worn out and must be replaced.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

1. Book Sales checks-Lenny Alwine questioned whether or not any checks came in from the sale of any books? He was told that no checks were received.
2. Thank You from Betsie Price- Betsie just wanted to thank everyone for the flowers that were sent to Gary on his passing.
3. Denny Walls informed everyone that there will be a Celebration of Life for his Dad [Mike] on July 19<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. at the Geeseytown Firehall.

#### **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

1. Joe Defrancesco reported that there will be a fireworks show at the museum on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025. A discussion was also held on fixing the manifold on the Walters.
2. Alto Tower- When questioned about the Alto Tower, Joe said that there is nothing going on right now. He also said that the building has no power.

Ron Givler then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Dean McKnight second, the meeting was adjourned at 6:24 P.M. with 16 members present.

**ATTENDANCE**- Jean Noonan, Zach Noonan, Ron Givler, Frank Givler, Dick Charlesworth, Denny Walls, Betsie Price, Joe Defrancesco, John Fisher, Nancy McKnight, Dean McKnight, Lenny Alwine, Larry McKee, Pat Kelley, Don Goebel, Joe Harella.

JOE HARELLA

RECORDING SECRETARY

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS



## **WHERE'S THE BEEF?**

**by Leonard Alwine**

A number of years ago, there was a television commercial for a fast food chain where “Clara” would drive up to the order window and ask “Where’s the Beef?”

Well, in the early days of Altoona it was right downtown still on the hoof.

A lot of food was needed to feed the many people coming to Altoona to build the town and the railroad. They were able to get their “beef” at the butcher shop located in downtown along Virginia Street (now 11th Avenue) in the early 1860’s. This was before the streets were paved or there were any trolley or horse cart tracks. Things were a lot “more frontier” in those early days.

BELOW: a photo of Virginia Street in 1860 at the butcher shop located there, now 11th Avenue today.




## IN MEMORY

Gary Steven Price passed April 24, 2025 at home after a long battle with sickness. He was a long time train enthusiast and served on the board of the ARMM as well as was a supporting member of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS. He was working on the lead-in film script for ARMM history story.

He will be missed at the meeting. May you rest in peace Gary.

**George E. Thompson Jr.**  
*Dec 13, 1940 – May 23, 2025*  
George E. Thompson Jr., 84, of Bellwood, passed away Friday at his residence. He was born in Altoona, son of the late George Sr. and Martha (Nearhoof) Thompson. He married Pat Fonner, who preceded him in death in 1991. He then married Joyce Robison. Surviving are his wife of 30 years; a daughter, Marie Turchetta and husband Steve of Altoona; two sons: John in SC and Denver of Altoona; three grandchildren: Hannah, Tiffany, and Justin; 5 great-grandchildren; and a brother, Harold. He was preceded in death by a brother, Maurice. George graduated from Altoona High School in 1958 and retired as a service technician at National Cash Register. He was a member of Altoona Area Train Collectors, National Railroad Historic Society, and Spring Lake Sportsmen Asso. George formerly served as Moderator at First Grace Brethren Church, where he was a life member. He enjoyed model railroading, toy trains, and spending time with his family. A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date. Cremation service by **Sorge Funeral Home & Crematory Inc.**



Thompson

George R. Thompson Jr., passed away at his home May 23, 2025.

Him and his wife Pat (deceased) were active members of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS in many years passed. In those days, the chapter meetings were held at member's homes. Many times we went to his home and his wife served refreshments after the meeting. Several times the chapter enjoyed a summer picnic at a club grounds of another group he belonged to.

He will be missed by the older members of the chapter. May you rest in peace George.

**Gary Steven Price**  
*Dec. 5, 1951 – April 24, 2025*  
Gary Steven Price passed away at home on April 24, 2025. He leaves behind his loving wife, Betsie Price; and his four children: Quentin Price, Lacey Price, Steven (Karen) Cox and Lori Shields. He will also be lovingly remembered by his 11 grandchildren. Gary was preceded in death by his parents, Roy G. Price and Evelyn J. Price; as well as his brother, Jack Price. A proud graduate of Altoona Area High School in 1969, Gary served his country with honor, retiring from the Army as a Master Sergeant. He then later retired from Norfolk Southern. Gary was an avid train enthusiast, sharing his passion with others. He served as a board member for the Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum, and was a devoted volunteer for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and an active member of the American Legion, Post 801. A Celebration of Life will be held at 4 p.m. Thursday, May 15, 2025, at Fourth Street Church of God, 2010 Fourth St., Altoona, followed by a meal at the church.



## IN MEMORY

Margaret J. "Peggy" Goodman passed away June 9, 2025.

She was the wife of the late A. Raymond Goodman, a former board member of the ARMM. Peggy was also very active in preserving local history. She retired from Blair County as the Director of Fort Roberdeau after 30 years service. She was also a member of the Blair County Historical Society and received the Lifetime Achievement Award for her work at both the Bakers Mansion in Altoona and Royer Mansion in Williamsburg. She also served on the board of the local Rails to Trails.

She will be missed by all who knew her and she has left a huge hole in the local history preservation group.

May you rest in peace, Peggy.

**Margaret J.  
'Peggy' Goodman**  
Sept. 9, 1941 – June 9, 2025  
Margaret J. "Peggy"  
Goodman, 83, of Altoona,  
passed away Monday at  
UPMC  
Altoona.  
Born in  
Altoona,  
she was the  
daughter  
of the late  
Russell and  
Margaret  
(Beals)  
Grove.



Goodman

Peggy  
married A. Raymond Good-  
man on June 27, 1964, at  
Bethany Lutheran Church,  
Altoona. He preceded her in  
death on May 16, 2013, after  
48 years of marriage.  
She is survived by her  
son, Erik Goodman  
(Dorothee) of Altoona; her  
two daughters, Erin  
Collot (Laurent) of Oakland,  
Fla., and Jennifer Slusser  
(Lee) of Altoona; and five  
grandchildren: Alexandre,  
Adrien and Manon Collot of  
Oakland, Fla., and Andrea  
and Jonathan Slusser of  
Altoona.  
Peggy was preceded in  
death by her sister, Nancy  
Stout; and her brother,  
Gene Grove.  
A 1959 graduate of  
Altoona High School, Peggy  
earned a Bachelor of Arts  
degree in biology from  
Juniata College in 1963.  
She continued her educa-  
tion, obtaining a Master of  
Education degree with an  
emphasis in biology from  
Indiana University of Penn-  
sylvania in 1971.

Her professional life  
concentrated on education,  
including roles as a biology  
professor at Penn State  
Altoona and as a biology  
teacher for the Altoona  
Area and Spring Cove  
school districts. Focusing  
on historical education  
and interpretation, Peggy  
retired from Blair Coun-  
ty as the director of Fort  
Roberdeau after 30 years.  
She was a dedicated  
member of the Blair County  
Historical Society, where  
she received a Lifetime  
Achievement Award for her  
contributions to the society  
and for her work with the  
Royer Mansion Committee.  
She also held memberships  
in the Audubon Society,  
the Rails to Trails Board  
and the Women's Club of  
Altoona.  
Peggy found joy in read-  
ing, bird-watching, botany,  
genealogy, history and,  
above all, spending time  
with her beloved family  
and friends.  
Friends will be received  
from 5 to 7 p.m. Monday,  
June 16, 2025, at **The Good  
Funeral Home Inc.,**  
108 Alto-Reste Park,  
Altoona, where a funeral  
service will follow at 7 p.m.  
Private interment will be  
held at Alto-Reste Park,  
Altoona.  
In lieu of flowers, memo-  
rial donations may be made  
to Rails to Trails, P.O. Box  
592, Hollidaysburg, PA  
16648.  
thegoodfuneralhomeinc.com