



Official Newsletter
of



NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1361
Altoona, PA 16603-1361
www.hscnrhs.org

WINTER 2026

CHAPTER OFFICERS

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

NOTE: *time-sensitive correspondence should be sent to this address*
ottodocfacs@breezeline.net

VICE-PRESIDENT: Ronald A. Givler, 208 S. 24th Street, Altoona, PA 16602-3432
givlerronald@gmail.com

CHAPTER DELEGATE TO NRHS & WEBMASTER: Joseph A. DeFrancesco
1266 Lincoln Avenue, Tyrone, PA 16686
jdefrancesco@railroadcity.org

SECRETARY: Joseph P. Harella, 3806 5th Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602
jkharella@gmail.com

TREASURER: Denny Walls, 123 Sandcastle Lane, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648
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 WINTER 2026 ISSUE

1. The first article “Keeping Rail Museums Alive” is a collaboration between Leonard Alwine and Tracey Shook on a recent article by Asha Prihar for Spotlight PA, a publication of the Bedford Gazette. It details a few museums and their status, but could have been written about the state of all Pennsylvania museums.
2. The second article, “The Pennsylvania Turnpike turns 85”, by the Editor, details the celebration of the turnpike’s birthday. The beginning of the turnpike used an old South Penn Rail right of way as it’s line as a starting point for the turnpike and actually future interstate roads constructed since then.
3. The Local Yard News is once again added to Chapter Minutes by Joe Harrella. The two main items are that the funicular at the Curve is once again running just in time for the Curve to close for the season. The other main item is that it was voted that the same officers will retain their positions for 2026.
4. A report on the Chapter Christmas Party is included by the Editor, which was held December 6th at Hoss’s Restaurant in Altoona.
5. The “In Memory” section is rather large this issue. Honoring Don Goebel, Mary Jane Walls and Louis Maierhofer, all of whom recently passed away and includes a special tribute to Andrea Vibbett, who passed away a year ago but was not posted yet in The Coal Bucket.

It is the hope of the staff that all will find something interesting to read on these cold winter days which are now upon us.

From the staff of the Coal Bucket, HAPPY NEW YEAR 2026!



KEEPING RAIL SYSTEMS ALIVE

by Leonard Alwine

The following article tells the state of the many railroad museums in Pennsylvania. Only a few were contacted by Asha Prihar for the article in Spotlight PA, a Bedford Gazette Publication. But the article could have been written about any of the state's rail museums and their struggle to keep open and have funds and members to do so, whether they have a single railcar display or an operating historic rail and tourist line.

The article was submitted by Tracey Shook, the chapter's typesetter for the Coal Bucket. She did follow up research and found many photos to represent the museums in the article. Coal Bucket Editor, Len Alwine then helped her with placement and captions for those photos.

It is a rather lengthy article, but the Coal Bucket staff hopes all enjoy reading it. After all, the history of how rail museums were started and the current struggle to keep the rail from rusting away is really a universal story.



On May 11, 1968, the Altoona Railway Museum Club was granted a charter by the National Railway Historical Society. The membership chose the name Horseshoe Curve Chapter, NRHS in tribute to the nearby Horseshoe Curve located four miles outside the city of Altoona along the mainline of the PRR tracks.

“TRAIN LOVERS, MUSEUMS MAINTAINING STATE’S TRACKS”

by Asha Prihar, Spotlight PA

Fewer Pennsylvanians ride the state's rail these days, but a network of train lovers work like locomotives to preserve the commonwealth's rich railroad heritage.

From small exhibits in former rail cars, to a site run by the National Park Service, to a 100,000 square foot state chartered museum, organizations statewide make this history accessible - and even ride-able.

Craig Sansonetti, President of the Ma & Pa Railroad Preservation Society, leads one of those groups.

He's been mesmerized by trains since childhood, when his family owned a property that abutted the Maryland and Pennsylvania Railroad. The short line once connected Baltimore, York and dozens of small communities between them.

The young Sansonetti's fascination with the railroad was so intense that he and his grandmother hopped on its very last passenger train in August 1954. Over 70 years later, the "Ma & Pa Railroad" - as it's affectionately nicknamed - remains one of his passions.

"There was urgency to do something before the track was torn up and gone," Sansonetti said of the preservation society's formation in the 1980's, which began when 31 people teamed up to buy a section they still maintain.

Today, the volunteer-run nonprofit has 60 active members who work together to operate a "heritage village" in York County, where they teach visitors about the railroad's tie to local history, and run excursions on the track it maintains.



The "Champagne Special" crossing the Sharon Trestle on September 14, 1942. This was the track passenger train that ran the scenic route that took 4 hours to travel the 77 mile distance rail route from Baltimore to York which was only 45 miles by highway.



An RPO stamp from December 12, 1922. The mail contract was lost in 1954 and the rail line was abandoned in 1958.

PA Local spoke with workers and volunteers statewide about their passion for train history, and Pennsylvania's special connection to railroads.

"You can't talk about Pennsylvania history without talking about railroad," Patrick Morrison, director of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, told PA Local. "It's almost baked into the history, or the DNA of Pennsylvania as a modern industrial state."

BUILDING PENNSYLVANIA

Railroads started being built in the commonwealth around the 1830s, and within two decades, Pennsylvania led the nation in their development. As the state's rail network expanded, industries like coal, iron, and lumber grew in kind, as trains enabled those resources to be transported nationwide.

The rails boosted some communities, and birthed others.

One major example is Altoona. The Blair County city was developed by the Pennsylvania Railroad because of its proximity to the Horseshoe Curve, an engineering marvel that opened up rail trail across the Allegheny Mountains. (see photo of the Horseshoe Curve on article title page)

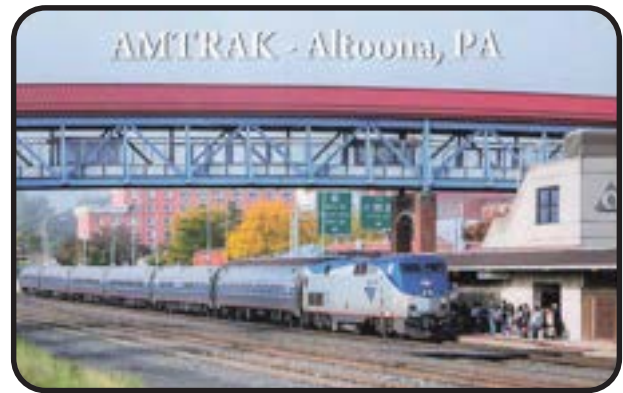
Altoona became home to one of the railroad company's main shop complexes, and eventually one of the largest repair operations in the world. During its heyday in the 1920s, the Pennsylvania Railroad employed around 16,500 people there.

"The railroad literally built the community of Altoona, and without the railroad, I would say there would be no Altoona," said Matthew Wolff, curator at the city's Railroaders Memorial Museum.

The former Pennsylvania Railroad Master Mechanic's Building in Altoona, pictured in the 1960s. Today, this building is the home to the Railroaders Memorial Museum.



The abandoned PRR master mechanics building built in 1880, pictured here in the 1960s, before being acquired by ARMM and repurposed as a museum.



The Amtrak station in Altoona located across the tracks (by way of the pedestrian bridge) from the current ARMM buildings.

Located across the tracks from Altoona's present-day Amtrak station, the museum tells the story of local employees - "the conductor, the engineer, the brakeman, the shop workers" - across three floors of exhibits, Wolff said.

Decades after the Pennsylvania Railroad folded, plenty of Altoona locals know or are related to former workers, said Wolff. While the museum can't offer specific information about visitors' family members who worked for the railroad, it can still teach them about what the job was like in that era.

"In a way, you can make a family connection through these stories," Wolff said. "It keeps family stories alive for younger generations who have an interest in the railroad, or might have an interest in doing family research."

MUSEUMS LARGE AND SMALL

Pennsylvania's rail history draws enthusiasts from all over.

The Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania in Lancaster County, which opened in 1975, sees around 85,000 and 90,000 visitors per year, Morrison said.

The state created museum - a massive hall with over 100 real locomotives and railroad cars, plus numerous photos and artifacts - boasts on its website that it is "the first structure in North America built specifically as a railroad museum." Over its 50 years of existence, it has doubled in size, given its exhibits a makeover, and started constructing a 16,500 square foot roundhouse exhibit building.

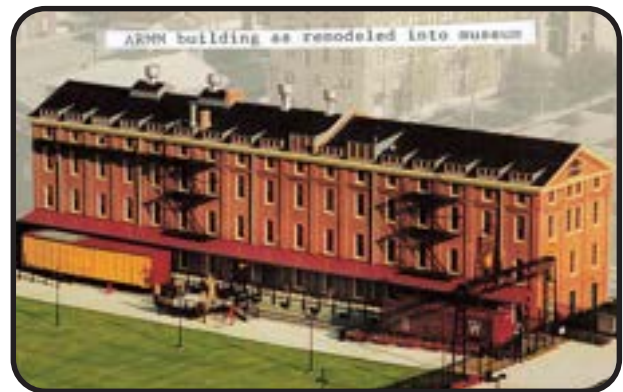


PRR GG-1 #4935 (built in Altoona in April 1943) on display at the state museum in Lancaster County which opened in 1975.

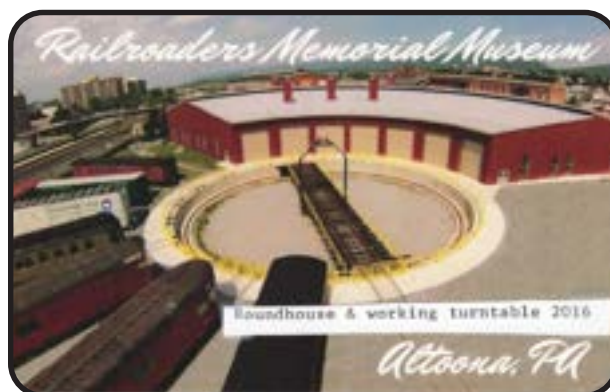
The Railroaders Memorial Museum is comparatively smaller, but draws between 30,000 and 40,000 visitors a year, Wolff told PA Local - including lots of people from out of state, as well as international tourists from other historic train hubs like England, Germany, and Japan.



In response to loosing the bid for Altoona being chosen as the site for the state museum, local interests built the original ARMM building in Altoona shown here on opening day September 21, 1980.



Later the master mechanics building next door was acquired by ARMM and rebuilt into the current museum location.



A roundhouse and working turntable were built on the grounds in between the two buildings and completed in 2016.

Smaller rail museums don't get as much traffic, workers told PA Local.

At the Ma & Pa Railroad Heritage Village, school visits help familiarize locals with the site, said Sansonetti.

But despite social media posts and posting flyers in nearby areas, he said, "We still have people who live not too far away who come by and say, "Gee, we never knew you were here."

Newton Square Railroad Museum in Delaware County, home to several historic rail cars, face the same dilemma.

Although the group promotes the museum through social media and co-hosts a festival with the local parks and recreation department every year, the site is still a "mystery" to some people who've lived in the area their whole lives, president Fran Franchi told PA Local.

"The challenge is that we need to grow the volunteer base and grow the donations," Franchi said. "The challenge is keeping up with the maintenance on all of these cars."

VOLUNTEER-POWERED

Everyday enthusiasts willing to dedicate their time are the coal in the engine of rail preservation and education.

Newtown Square Railroad Museum was started by two local history buffs, Sam Coco and Jack Grant, who wanted to fix up the town's abandoned freight station building.



The abandoned freight station building as it looked when acquired by local history buffs who formed the Newtown Square Railroad Museum in Delaware County.



The Newtown Square freight building shown here restored is also home to 5 restored rail vehicles in the yard beside it.

It's now run by a small group of volunteers like Franchi, who got involved about a decade ago. A friend convinced her to join, and a fondness for trains - like those on the former Reading Railroad, which she remembers riding to and from Pottsville as a child while her uncle, a conductor, looked after her - helped win her over.

“I like trains,” Franchi said, “I just think they’re cool. But, its important to keep the history for the future, for the people that are here now, for their children. There’s so many families that come and visit, and the kids just love trains.”

East Broad Top Railroad, a heritage railway and National Historic Landmark in Huntingdon County that draws around 35,000 riders per year, also has a robust base of volunteers. It’s 1,500 member-strong “friends” group helps with maintenance and fundraising, said Rick Hamilton, the railroad’s marketing director.

The friends operate a nearby museum about the railroad, and some members - some from as far as California and South Dakota, Hamilton said - come to East Broad Top to paint, restore windows, and perform other maintenance and preservation work.

”Whatever needs done, they’ll do it,” Hamilton said.



The Friends of the East Broad Top operate a museum at Robertsdale in the former station building at the end of the EBT line.



The general office of the EBT now serves as a station and gift shop for rides on a usable portion of the EBT rails from Orbisonia to a picnic grove at Shirleysburg. EBT M-1, a gasoline car built by the EBT shops in 1926 from parts purchased from the Brill Company. It is still operational today due to “friends” caring for it.

Even the state’s flagship museum, which employs around two dozen paid workers, also has 150 active volunteers who help restore rail cars and locomotives, catalogue archival materials, give school tours, and greet visitors.

Volunteering is how Morrison, the museum’s director, first got involved there almost three decades ago.

“It’s a pretty important part of what we do,” Morrison said. “We can’t do this without them.”

CONNECTIONS TO PAST AND PRESENT

Rail travel isn’t what it used to be. After World War II, passenger service was supplanted by alternatives like cars and buses, and the patchwork of railroad companies that operated across Pennsylvania eventually went bust.

Despite that decline, railfans say it's important to acknowledge trains' part in building local economies and communities.

"Today's children know more about the Revolutionary Era than they do about the time in which their great-grandparents lived, but transportation is key to all kinds of historical developments," Sansonetti said. "The role that railroads played - and not just big trunk-line railroads, but railroads like the Ma & Pa in developing these communities - is a story that needs to be remembered.

Of course, trains do still help sustain today's economy, especially the manufacturing and energy sectors, with Pennsylvania having more operating freight railroads than any other state. And Amtrak links cities nationwide.

Rail museums make these important systems less invisible, said Morrison.

"We try to make sure that folks know how important and how connected they are, even though they may not have every taken a train before," he said.

"I'm willing to bet the products they buy in the store, at least some of them were probably delivered to that store by a truck that met a train . . . so at some point there's a railroad in the story."

PENNSYLVANIA TURNPIKE TURNS 85

by Leonard Alwine

On Monday, October 1, 2025, the Pennsylvania Turnpike celebrated it's 85th Anniversary. Not the whole turnpike though, just the middle section, the original 160 miles from Middlesex (near Carlisle) to Irwin (near Pittsburgh). For the most part that original route was planned to use the old never completed railway right of way from the South Penn Railroad. That railroad would have paralleled the Pennsylvania Railroad's main line.

The South Penn was planned by New York Central's William Vanderbilt. Grading of this route began in 1884 and the boring of seven tunnels needed to get through the mountains also began at this time.

By July 1885, as money was running out, J.P. Morgan arranged a meeting of the officials and work was stopped. Ten million dollars (in 1880 monies) had been spent and 26 workers had lost their lives in the tunnels, none of which were bored through. The line became known as "Vanderbilt's Folley".

By 1895, the PRR and the B&O Railroads acquired the property which for the most part was allowed to revert back to nature.

Eventually in 1934, a plan was made to use this route to build a turnpike for highway vehicles. In February 1935, surveys of the route and tunnels was completed.

President Roosevelt felt that a highway like this was needed as the country was facing a war time. 25 million was granted for the project with work to be done through the WPA.

The first contract was awarded October 26, 1938 for the first 10 miles of road. By July 1939, all 160 miles of highway, seven tunnels, and more than 300 structures (toll booths and service plazas) had been awarded with an expected finish date of July 4, 1940. Those contracts were awarded to 155 different companies from 18 states surrounding Pennsylvania. Over 15,000 workers descended upon Central Pennsylvania for the “high” wages of \$0.52 1/2 cents per hour for unskilled labor up to \$1.40 per hour for heavy equipment operators. All work was being performed on a two shift schedule by using flood lights at night. The first concrete was poured August 31, 1939.

The tunnels presented the biggest challenge. None had been bored through and all were filled with water. They first had to be pumped out then the walls examined. The goal of July 4, 1940 was missed.

The largest rest area was at Midway, the center of the 160 mile route near Bedford. Howard Johnson’s company was awarded the contract for the restaurants and a large one was built on the south side of the highway with a smaller service plaza built on the north side of the highway. A pedestrian tunnel was constructed under the highway to connect these two buildings. (The Editor actually walked through this tunnel many times in the 1950s - 1960s when I rode with my dad in his trucks. Unsure if this tunnel is still in use today though.)

Finally, October 1, 1940 at 12:01 am, the turnpike was open to traffic. That was just 90 days late for this massive project. People had been lining up at all the exits for a few days hoping to be the first to drive on the new highway.

By October 4, 1940, 24,000 vehicles has passed through the toll booths, more than double what had been projected. (90 days later at the end of 1940 - 514,231 cars, 48,170 trucks and 2,409 buses had passed through the toll booths bring in \$562,464.00)

As the turnpike progressed into the future, it became necessary to add additional lanes and extensions, and rebuilding the tunnels to four lanes and eliminating some altogether.

Today the turnpike is a 470 mile highway from the Delaware River to Ohio State and the North Eastern extension from Philadelphia to Scranton.

The turnpike can also be regarded as the blueprint for today’s Interstate system.



Early photo of the Howard Johnson’s restaurant at Midway in Bedford, PA., shortly after opening the turnpike on one of the first winter snow days.



Trains did use and run through some of South Penn's tunnels, if only during construction.

This is a view of Blue Mountain Tunnel being enlarged and holed through with tracks laid and a rocks and dirt train hauling blasted rock out.

This process was repeated at all tunnel excavations when building the turnpike.

LOCAL YARD NEWS/MEETING MINUTES

by Joe Harella

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

OCTOBER 28TH, 2025

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on October 28th. 2025. The meeting was called to order by Pres. Frank Givler at 6:03 P.M.. The meeting was held in the theater at the Railroader's Memorial Museum.

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

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

OLD BUSINESS

1. Christmas Party- A discussion was held on whether or not to have a Christmas party this year. Pres. Givler said that the Geeseytown Firehall is not available to us and Karin can't do any decorating due to shoulder pain. Dean McKnight however suggested holding the party at Hoss's. We will check with Hoss's for availability on December 6th. Dick said that he would check with Alan Maples to see if he could serve as our guest speaker. Frank will be sending out emails.

NEW BUSINESS

1. As our membership seems to be dwindling lately we are on the look out for new members. Denny ran into Jamie Rickens some time ago, but Jamie said that he's not sure if he wants to rejoin or not. Nick Martino is back in town and he could be another possibility. Hopefully we can spark some interest with some new people.
2. Museum Update- Joe Defrancesco reported that on December 19th at 5:00 Santa will arrive at the Horseshoe Curve by train. Hot Chocolate and cookies will be served. Also, Santa will be at the museum on December 20th. The flag pole project is currently under way. \$2000 is still needed to complete this project. New brakes have been installed on the funicular and it should be ready in the spring. The sponsorship program is also underway. Joe also reported that the K-4 project continues to move forward.
3. Don Goebel's Passing- Dick Charlesworth informed everyone that Don Goebel passed away on Sunday October 19th, 2025. The chapter would like to extend our sincere sympathies and condolences to Don's family on his passing. Dick then made a motion to donate \$100 in Don's name to The Trinity United Methodist Church, Joe Defrancesco second, the motion passed.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Future Bus Trip-- Dick Charlesworth informed everyone that he is working on a possible bus trip for sometime next year.
2. Corrections for the minutes for the September meeting. Denny is selling calendars for next year, 2026. Also, Denny Haire's Iron Horse Festival will be held sometime next year, 2026.
3. Toy Train Swap Meet-The Alto Model Train Museum Association will sponsor a train show at the Blair County Convention Center on Sunday November 9th from 9:00 to 2:00. Admission is \$5.00.

Dick Charlesworth then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Len Alwine second, the meeting was adjourned at 6:37 P.M. with 14 members present.

ATTENDANCE- Len Alwine, Joe DeFrancesco, Frank Givler, Dewayne Miller, Dick Charlesworth, Zach Noonan, Nancy McKnight, Dean McKnight, Patrick Kelley, Gerald Corbin, Denny Walls, Dan Summers, John Fisher, Joe Harella

JOSEPH HARELLA

RECORDING SECRETARY

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

4. We then watched the
Dave Seidel movie theater
Dedication Film.

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

NOVEMBER 25TH, 2025

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on November 25th, 2025. The meeting was called to order by Pres. Frank Givler at 6:00 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 Jim Caum. The motion passed.

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

OLD BUSINESS

1. Memorial Plaque- Pres. Givler informed everyone that he is currently working on updating the memorial plaque. Soon however the plaque will be running out of spaces and we may be in need of an additional plaque. It will be hung in the newly renovated movie theater.
2. Christmas Party- The final day to place a reservation for our Christmas dinner is Wednesday November 26th, 2025. The guest speaker for the event could possibly be the General Manager of the Everett Railroad Bruce Crawford. The dinner will be held at Hoss's at the Valley View location .

NEW BUSINESS

1. Funicular Update-Pres. Givler reported that the funicular is up and running again.

2. Penn State - Pres. Givler said that he has received a report from Penn State and our account contains about \$4000. Andrew Kennedy and Bailey Mount will be our scholarship recipients and both are enrolled in the Rail Transportation course.
3. Future Bus Trip- Dick Charlesworth explained about some of the ideas that he has about the trip' However, he is not real sure about all of the details yet. He also informed us that AMTRAK is beginning to use their new equipment. More on the trip later.
4. Elections of Officers- Pres. Givler informed everyone that once again it is time to elect new officers. He then asked for a motion to retain all current officers for another year. Ralph Simpson made a motion to retain the current slate of officers for another year, Ron Givler second. The motion passed.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Railroad Calendars for 2026- Denny Walls reported that all 2026 calendars have been sold.
2. The Chapter would like to extend our sincere sympathies and condolences to Denny Walls and his family on the passing of his mother Mary Jean Walls.
3. Pres. Givler informed everyone that this will be our final meeting for 2025.

Ralph Simpson then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Ron Givler second, the meeting was adjourned at 6:31 P.M. with 12 members present.

ATTENDANCE- Patrick Kelley, Dan Summers, Denny Walls, Frank Givler, Dick Charlesworth, Marge Simpson, Ralph Simpson, Dewayne Miller, Gerald Corbin, Ron Givler, Jim Caum, Joe Harella.

JOSEPH HARELLA
RECORDING SECRETARY
HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

CHAPTER CHRISTMAS PARTY 2025

by Leonard Alwine

On Saturday, December 6, 2025 at 7:00 pm, the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS held their annual Christmas Party. It was held this year in the "Horseshoe Curve Room" of the Hoss's Restaurant along Pleasant Valley Blvd. in Altoona. The banquet room is decorated with photos and items of local railroad heritage and was a great place to hold this year's event.

29 chapter members attended the party. Each person was able to order what they wanted from the menu for dinner.

President Frank Givler opened the party with a welcome to all attending especially guest speaker, Bruce Crawford. This was followed by the invocation and blessing by Ron Givler for the meal. Then each in attendance was served what they had ordered followed by a trip to the dessert table.

Once all were stuffed, the guest speaker was introduced.

Mr. Bruce Crawford is a man in his 60s who has spent his whole life working and even owning several short line railroads throughout the USA. He currently is working for the Everett Railroad in Hollidaysburg. He brought those attending up to date on planned rail excursions on the Everett this coming year. The chapter and the Everett have worked closely in the past on events similar to those now planned. The chapter coaches were even sold to Everett several years ago.

The talk was ended with a very informative question and answer time. He also stated that all present are invited to contact him for a personal tour of the Everett rail complex.

The members left for home about 9:00 pm, having all enjoyed a great time.

IN MEMORY

DONALD GOEBEL SR.

May 10, 1940 - October 19, 2025

**Don was an active member of the chapter
and attended meetings and functions.**

He will be missed.

May you rest in peace, Don.

<p>Donald Wayne Goebel Sr. May 10, 1940 – Oct. 19, 2025 Donald Wayne Goebel Sr., 85, of Roaring Spring, went home to be with the Lord on Sunday at Conemaugh Nason Medical Center, Roaring Spring. He was born in Baltimore, Md., the son of the late John F. Goebel Jr. and Naomi (Kelholtz) Goebel.</p>  <p>He is survived by a son, Donald Wayne Goebel Jr., of Roaring Spring; three sisters: Janet Witting, Donna Lange and Cheryl Holowinski and husband, Stanley, all in Maryland; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.</p> <p>He was preceded in death by his wife of 24 years, Marjorie Goebel.</p> <p>Don was a member of Trinity United Methodist Church, Roaring Spring.</p>	<p>He was a 1958 graduate of Glen Burnie High School and retired as a civilian contractor from the United States Coast Guard.</p> <p>Don was an avid train enthusiast and also enjoyed classic cars and the Pittsburgh Steelers.</p> <p>He was a member of the Alto Model Train Museum Association, the National Railway Historical Society, the Toy Train Operating Society and the Blair County Antique Auto Club.</p> <p>Friends will be received from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 23, 2025, at Todd T. Thompson Funeral Home Inc., Roaring Spring; and from 10 until the 11 a.m. funeral service Friday, Oct. 24, 2025, at Trinity United Methodist Church, with the Rev. Ryan Gephart officiating.</p> <p>A graveside service will be held at 11 a.m. Monday, Oct. 27, 2025, at Glen Haven Memorial Park, Glen Burnie, Md.</p> <p>In lieu of flowers, contributions in Don's memory may be given to Trinity United Methodist Church.</p> <p>thompsonfh.com</p>
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MARY JEAN WALLS


December 22, 1941 - November 5, 2025

Mary was the mother of Treasurer, Denny Walls. She attended many chapter functions with him and her late husband and fellow member Mike Walls.

She will be missed.

May you rest in peace, Mary.

Mary Jean Walls
Dec. 22, 1941 - Nov. 5, 2025
Mary Jean Walls, 83, of Hollidaysburg, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, Nov. 5, 2025, at UPMC Altoona, surrounded by her family. She was born on Dec. 22, 1941, a daughter of the late Eugene and Mary Margaret (Clabaugh) Fasick. On Sept. 22, 1962, she was united in marriage to Claude M. Walls, who preceded her in death on Dec. 17, 2024.



Walls

She is survived by children: Denny Walls of Hollidaysburg, Brian M. Walls, married to Diana (Bossler) Walls, of Hollidaysburg and C. Patrick Walls, married to Eric Bah, of Monrovia, Md.; grandson, Trevor Michael Walls; brother, Charles F. Fasick, married to June; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

Mary was a graduate of Altoona High School, Class of 1959. She spent her working years in the food service department for the Hollidaysburg Area School District until her retirement.

She was a member of St. Mary Roman Catholic Church in Hollidaysburg.

Mary was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother. She was a former member of the Ladies Guild at her church, the Ladies Auxiliary of the fire company and her local card club, where she enjoyed many games of Pinochle. She was known

for her warmth, creativity and community spirit. She loved crocheting, painting ceramics, word puzzles and especially attending the events of her children and grandsons.

She often shared how many of her evening meals were spent alone while her husband and son answered the call as volunteer firemen — something she supported with pride and understanding. Among her fondest memories were traveling with her son, Patrick, to Rome, and later with him and her husband to Las Vegas and New Orleans.

She will be remembered for her kindness, quiet strength and the love she gave so freely to those around her.

A funeral Mass will be held at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Nov. 11, 2025, at St. Mary Roman Catholic Church, 312 Clark St., Hollidaysburg, with Father Brian Norris officiating.

Friends and family will be received from 10 to 10:45 a.m. Tuesday, Nov. 11, 2025.

Burial will be held at Alto-Reste Park, Altoona.

If friends so desire, memorial contributions may be made in memory of Mary Jean to the Geeseytown Community Fire Company, 215 Mary St., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648; or St. Mary Roman Catholic Church, 312 Clark St., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648.

Arrangements are by The Good Funeral Home Inc. and Alto-Reste Park, Altoona.

LOUIS J. MAIERHOFER

March 11, 1927 - October 18, 2025

Lou was a previous member of the chapter, and he did contribute to much advertising through his radio stations for events sponsored by the chapter.

He will be missed.

May you rest in peace, Lou.

Louis J. Maierhofer
March 11, 1927 - Oct. 18, 2025

Louis J. Maierhofer, born Ludwig J. Maierhofer Jr., 98, of Hollidaysburg, son of the late Ludwig J. and Magdalena (Heiss) Maierhofer, passed away Saturday at his residence.

Surviving are his daughter, Mary Lou Maierhofer (Harold J. III) Brennecke; and former son-in-law, John C. Rand, MD.; his grandchildren: Heather Sammons, Kelsey (Ib) Isa, Shelby Rand, Nathaniel Rand and Harold Jefferson Brennecke IV; his great-grandchildren: Ashley (Jon) Ludwig, Austin Sammon, Bonnie Sammon, Lily Rand, Noah Isa and Oliver Isa; and a great-great-grandson, Triston Ludwig; as well as many nieces and nephews.

Louis was preceded in death by a son, J. Dwight Maierhofer; a daughter, Claire Anne Rand; granddaughter, Michele (Maierhofer) Egarter; siblings: Joseph Maierhofer (Louise), Teresa Lang (Walter) and Louise (Victor) Gloiosa; and a very special Aunt Mary Melnick.

Louis was a graduate of Altoona High School and the Pennsylvania State University with a bachelor's degree in journalism.

Louis began his working career as the sports editor for the Altoona Tribune; had been the Division Manager for Investors Diversified Division Services Inc., was a part-time instructor at Pennsylvania State University, Altoona, teaching communications; general manager and co-owner of Cove Broadcasting Co. Inc., WKMC-AM and WHPA-FM; and general manager and co-owner of Town, Gown and Community Radio Inc. WTGC Lewisburg.

He was the past chairperson for the Blair County Airport Authority. Louis was a member of the Bavarian Aid Society, the Unter Uns, Heidelberg Country Club, Kiwanis (75 years), Altoona Jaffa Shriners, Lodge of Perfection, Hollidaysburg Lodge No. 220 and Spruce Creek Rod and Gun Club. Louis was also a lifetime member of The Society of Broadcast Engineers.

He had been a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church, Altoona.

Louis enjoyed fishing and gardening, especially seedless tomatoes and cucumbers.

Friends will be received from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 23, 2025, at The Stevens Mortuary Inc., 1421 Eighth Ave., Altoona, where a vigil for the deceased will be held.

A funeral Mass will be celebrated at 11:30 a.m. Friday, Oct. 24, 2025, at St. Mary's Catholic Church, 1405 Fifth Ave., Altoona, with Father Mariusz Gorazd, celebrant.

Committal will be held at St. Mary's Cemetery, Altoona.

The family suggests contributions be made in Louis's memory to Shriners Hospitals for Children, Burn Center, c/o: Jaffa Mosque, P.O. Box 1984, Altoona, PA 16603.

Condolences may be made at www.stevensfamilyfuneralhomes.com or Stevens Family Funeral Homes Facebook page.

A TRIBUTE TO ANDREA VIBBERT

by Leonard Alwine

It is with great sadness and regret, that this Editor must tell you of the passing of Andrea. It is something that happened a year ago but I have just been informed about it from her husband Bob this past few days.

She began having medical problems in March of 2024. After a lot of medical tests it was determined that she had stage 4 ovarian cancer. She passed away the day after Thanksgiving in November 2024.

Most all years, we exchanged Christmas cards and notes at Christmas. I do not remember if I received one from Bob last Christmas or not, but I certainly can understand not getting one from Bob last year as I have also lost a spouse around Thanksgiving and didn't celebrate that year either.

Andrea can be best remembered as the little girl who fell in love with GG-1 4913 and was a lead person in bringing it back to Altoona in 1980. It all began in 1964 when as a teenager Andrea Kriss rode behind that engine to New York City for a Beatles concert. Later in life she began working at Amtrak where she could keep tabs on "her" engine and take many photos of it in service. Andrea married Bob Vibbert on September 30, 1972 and they rode behind #4913 from New York City to Harrisburg, PA in route to their honeymoon. When it was retired, she began writing letters to see if it could be saved from the scrappers torch. It was put up for sale and she donated the first \$1,000.00 to purchase the engine and return it back to Altoona.

The chapter continued to raise funds to sandblast it and return it to the original PRR colors by selling candy at train shows until the needed \$5,000.00 to do this was raised. Once restoration was completed it was donated to the ARMM for permanent display there.

Andrea kept tabs on her engine by trips to Altoona every few years to see it. On those trips she and her husband Bob stopped by my house and sometimes we would go and get something to eat. She was saddened on her last trip, I remember because #4913 was sitting outside, faded and rusting covered with snow.

Our sympathies are extended to Bob, her husband of 52 years.

May you rest in peace, Andrea.



Andrea with her engine
(still in Amtrak black colors)
at the museum for the
formal dedication held
September 21, 1980.