

Official Newsletter
of



NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1361
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www.hscnrhs.org

Spring 2024

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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.

THE COAL BUCKET SPRING 2024

Over the past couple of months many local heritage icons have changed. So much so that this issue of the Coal Bucket will be devoted to addressing those recent changes.

The first and main story will be that of the Loretto rail car. After calling Altoona and ARMM it's home for 48 years, it left town on January 29, 2024 aboard a lowboy truck. It was the first piece of rail equipment placed at ARMM but time was not real nice to the car.

Len Alwine does a short history of this car in the first article "Another Home" and it's stay in Altoona.

The second article is about Lakemont Park and the rides not operating there this summer. What will happen to the 120 year old Leap the Dips, the world's oldest wooden roller coaster is unknown at this time. In the "Under the Wire" column Len Alwine writes about this old trolley park and the future of this ride.

Joe Harella continues to keep us informed about the local news in his column, reporting that NRHS car #103 has departed the Everett Railroad for a new home in Madison, Indiana in December. This car came to Altoona in 1985 and was used for many rail excursions since then. He also reports on the chapter minutes and other events of the area.

And finally Len Alwine reports on the Gable's building being condemned in January. It had been the place to shop for many years in downtown Altoona. In the LOOK BACK column he reflects on the heritage of this landmark and the Christmas train and circus layouts in the toyland department for many years.

It is hoped by the Coal Bucket staff that all will enjoy this different issue and reading about the recent changes in the Altoona Icons Heritage.

Also the staff wishes all a Happy Easter and a fun Springtime.



ANOTHER “NEW” HOME

by Leonard Alwine

It is with bitter sweet emotions that I use this issue of the Coal Bucket to announce the departure of yet another piece of rail equipment from the ARMM.

On January 29, 2024, the private rail car of Charles Schwab, named the Loretto, was loaded onto a lowboy trailer and began it's journey to a new home in Boyertown, PA.

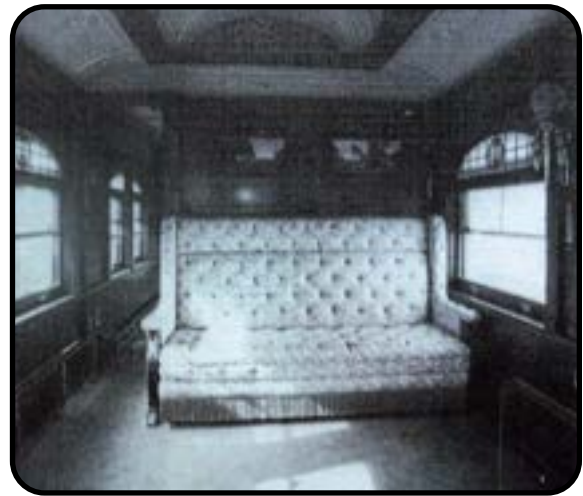
I believe that most chapter and museum members do not fully know the history of that rail car and how it came to Altoona. Many maybe were not even born yet at that time.

So for this issue of the Coal Bucket I will try to do a short history of the Loretto so that all will understand better the car and it's rich past. Most of that early history will be gleaned from a newsletter from the Magee Transportation Museum written in the mid 1960's. I found this newsletter in my father's collection while cleaning out his stuff a couple years ago after his passing. It took a lot of searching but I was able to find it again in my stuff and I am going to copy it in this issue even though it is hard to read. Take your time and I am sure it will fascinate you.

The car we had here in Altoona is actually Loretto #2. Schwab had the first Loretto built of wood in 1901 as an anniversary present for his wife on their 19th wedding anniversary. Later in 1917, Loretto #2 was built as a steel car at a cost of \$150,000.00, a lot of money even by 1917 standards. It was also quite elegant even by today's standards.



Bedroom inside the car



Smoker section of the car

This car was one of the few remaining assets of Mr. Schwab even though he at one time was worth over \$30,000,000.00 .

In 1940, the car was sold to Martin Malone who was a horse trader. He actually leased the car to Cole Brothers Circus for a while so that Jack Dempsie could travel with his family while employed by the circus. When that lease was up, the car was taken to Forks and set up as a cottage for the Malone Family. They used it very little and after Mr. Malones death it sat at Forks, about one mile north of Easton, PA, for 23 years used only briefly by the Salvation Army as a Summer Camp for their programs.

After that, the Malone heirs sold the car to Harry Magee for his transportation museum in Bloomsburg, PA. It was moved there by rail, the last 1/2 mile about a hundred feet at a time through a corn field. Track was laid for 300 feet and the car was pulled to the end of it. Then the track behind the car was carried around ahead of the car and relaid. The car was then pulled ahead and the process redone until it came into the museum.

The following two pages from the Magee newsletter is copied here which tells a lot of the early history. This newsletter was from the Spring of 1965.

The **MAGEE** TRANSPORTATION **MUSEUM**



**The Loretto:
Private Elegance On Wheels**

The Loretto is a well-preserved reminder of some of the splendor of bygone days, when steel magnates such as the President of U.S. Steel Corporation Charles M. Schwab owned private railroad cars built to their personal specifications and furnished in the most lavish manner of the day. Schwab built the fine Loretto as a gift for his wife on their 19th wedding anniversary, naming it for the town of his birth, and in it they toured the eastern part of the country, held high-level business meetings, and entertained socially. It contains a drawing room, dining room, master bedrooms, for both Mr. and Mrs. Schwab, upper and lower berths to accommodate guests, a complete kitchen with coal range and icebox, and a private compartment with lavatory for the steward who traveled with them for many years.

This car was built in 1917 at a cost of \$125,000 by Pullman and is one of the most elaborate of all private railroad cars. The interior is largely composed of mahogany, and in many places is inlaid with gold and silver figures and pearl. The master bedrooms are separated by a modern bathroom built entirely of Italian marble, and mother-of-pearl pushbuttons at one time summoned immediately a meal, a bucket of ice, or just a cigar.

In length the Loretto is slightly over 85 feet, and weighs in the vicinity of 90 tons. Its history is indeed a fascinating one and acquisition by The Magee Museum Trust is an interesting story in itself.

According to research compiled with the help of Mr. Lucius Beebe, author of "Mansions on Rails," "Mr. Pullman's Elegant Palace Car," and numerous other volumes; and Miss Jean Wessner, head librarian of the Bethlehem Steel Company library, Charles Schwab died nearly insolvent after amassing a fortune of some \$30,000,000. His private Pullman car, one of his few remaining assets, stood idle in the Bethlehem Steel plant at Wilkes-Barre, Delaware.

Early in the 1940's the car was bought by Martin Malone, a wealthy horse-fancier who bought, traded and swapped whatever took his imagination. In 1941 he leased

BLOOMSBURG . . . thru the gateway to Scenic Pennsylvania and



. . . home of The Magee Carpet Company.

How 'Loretto' Was Moved To Magee Museum

Transportation of the 90-ton Loretto from its siding in the community of Forks to The Magee Transportation Museum, a distance of some 14 miles, was no easy task. Although it was possible to utilize existing tracks to the vicinity of Route 42, Millville Road, from that point to the museum is a distance of some 2500 feet across farm land. The season for laying new rails and ties is, of necessity, a short one since the ground must be firm but not frozen.

Track was laid in 300-foot lengths, the Pullman car towed for that distance, and the tracks then removed from behind and again laid in a forward direction. Due to the excessive length of the car, a sharp curve was impossible to negotiate, and much credit is due Edward Blossom (Director of The Transportation Museum) and his crew of experts for completing this gigantic feat of engineering.

The Loretto now rests on her own siding between the entrance lens and Fishing Creek, where an attendant is on hand during the summer months to conduct visitors through this fabulous private railroad car which has been restored to a near-original condition, to be maintained thus through The Magee Museum Trust.

Author Concerned With Fate Of 'Loretto'

A widely-read author of such books as "Hear the Train Howl," "Mansions on Rails," "Mr. Pullman's Elegant Palace Car," and many others, namely Lucius Beebe, is himself along with railroad fancier and author Charles Clegg, the owner of a private railway car. Although many of the great cars of the past have been remodeled into simple "business cars," owned by corporations for the use of traveling executives, many have fallen into disrepute and are used for such ignominious duties as temporary freight stations and work sheds. Mr. Beebe's The Gold Coast is one of the few exceptions. This 60-year-old car, restored to its one-time splendor, is used for easy going travel about the western U.S. by its two owners while studying and writing about their hobby.

In several of his books Mr. Beebe speaks glowingly of the Loretto as one of " . . . the most spectacular private Pullmans in the record." And speaking of the master stateroom, (31) " . . . reflected every refinement of comfort and elegance that money could afford and ingenuity could contrive within the confines of standard car construction."

Mr. Beebe's own private car was modeled after that of a famous car once owned by Leland Stanford. It has a green marble fireplace, three spacious staterooms and three separate lighting systems. The owners book it on to regular passenger trains for jaunts about the country.

The Magee Transportation Museum is indeed indebted to Mr. Beebe for his research, correspondence and photography in behalf of "The Loretto."

SPECIAL SUMMER HOURS

(Admission Free)

The Magee Transportation Museum, located on Rt. 42 half mile north of Bloomsburg Business District.

Also Access from
Keystone Shortway,
Sukhorna or
Light Street
Interchanges

Open on Saturdays, from Memorial Day through last Sunday of September
1 to 6 p.m.

Non-Profit Museums for the Preservation and Exhibit of Antiques of Historical Interest



THIS PICTURE TAKEN from the archives depicts in splendid manner the drawing room elegance of the "Loretto," private Pullman car of the late Charles Schwab, steel magnate. The car is one of many top items at Magee Transportation Museum, Rt. 42, Bloomsburg-Millville highway.

'Two Loretto's'

An interesting sidelight to the story of The Loretto and her history is the fact that the car now on display at The Magee Transportation Museum is, in actuality, Loretto No. 2, and was Charles Schwab's effort to replace and improve upon his original Pullman car.

The original, Loretto No. 1, according to the Pullman-Standard Company records, was built in 1901. It was constructed of wood, over 90 feet in length, and one of the most ornate cars of the day. It is reported that Schwab imported an Italian artist to paint murals on walls and ceilings, portraits of Schwab and his wife hung in fitted niches in staterooms, and all interiors were of carved mahogany.

However, in 1912, Schwab ordered a new car. Due to the trend of modern circumstances, Loretto No. 2 was reduced in size so it could be taken through the tubes across the Hudson River into New York City. The new car was made entirely of steel, but in other respects closely duplicated the original Loretto, so that plush furniture he had grown fond of could be accommodated, and the sentimentality accorded his first love be transferred to the second.

As an example of this great attachment by a famous business tycoon to his car, the first page in the log of Loretto No. 1, now in the Charles Schwab Memorial Library at Bethlehem Steel, reads:

May 1st 1902

This car made its maiden trip on this date, our 19th wedding anniversary - we were as happy as on our trip 19 years ago - may "Loretto" take us on our fiftieth wedding anniversary and may the boys who made our trip so pleasant be with us then.

C. M. and E. Eurana Schwab
Unfortunately, time and the elements (and its own wooden construction) have taken their toll of Loretto No. 1. She was purchased from Schwab by Col. Elliot White Springs, who owned a private 40-mile railroad, "The Lancaster & Chester," in South Carolina. Lack of steel underframe and excessive length barred Loretto from interchange, so it could be used only for short excursions and entertaining. At Col. Springs' death, the car became one of the assets of the Spring Mills Co., of which he had been President. But it was no longer used and to the best of anyone's knowledge, still stands rotting on an un-used spur of the Lancaster & Chester Railroad.

No doubt Mr. Schwab, who some in the area may recall one time visited Danville in his private car, would be most happy to know that Loretto No. 2 did not meet the same fate. Instead, she will be viewed and admired by thousands of appreciative visitors at The Magee Transportation Museum over the years . . . as he would have preferred.

Magee Newsletter -
history of Loretto #1



Photo of Loretto #1, the wooden car

In April 1975, as Altoona and the newly formed NRHS Chapter tried to build a rail museum here, after loosing out on the state rail museum bid, found that the Loretto was for sale for \$16,000.00 from the Magee family. Fund raising quickly brought in \$1,200.00 which was used to put a hold on the car. Denny Bixler, who owned a radio station in Altoona, used that means to drum up support for the car and raise needed funds to complete the purchase and also the \$10,000.00 additional needed to transport it to Altoona. In July, a group from Altoona traveled to Bloomsburg to present the check and look at getting it back to Altoona.



The group in Bloomsburg. A much younger chapter member, Larry McKee, at the left with camera around his neck.

In late July 1975, the Loretto was moved on truck wheels back through that cornfield pulled by a CAT tractor to a rail siding where it was then re-trucked for the rail ride to Altoona.

Once home in Altoona, the NRHS sold tickets to see inside the car and raise funds to get the remaining bill paid. It became the very first piece of rail equipment displayed at the new museum which opened September 21, 1980 after being spruced up by the Lithcote Company of Altoona.

**Pullman Fare
ON THE
LORETTO**
PRIVATE RAILROAD CAR
OF CHARLES M. SCHWAB



Story of the Loretto

Length: 83 Feet Constructed By:
Weight: 80 Tons The Pullman Co.
Year of Construction: 1917
Cost (1917): \$151,000
Estimated Cost to Build
Today: \$480,000

FEATURES: Fully Furnished Dining Room, Parlor and Bedrooms in Walnut, Marble Baths and Servants Quarters including a Complete Kitchen.

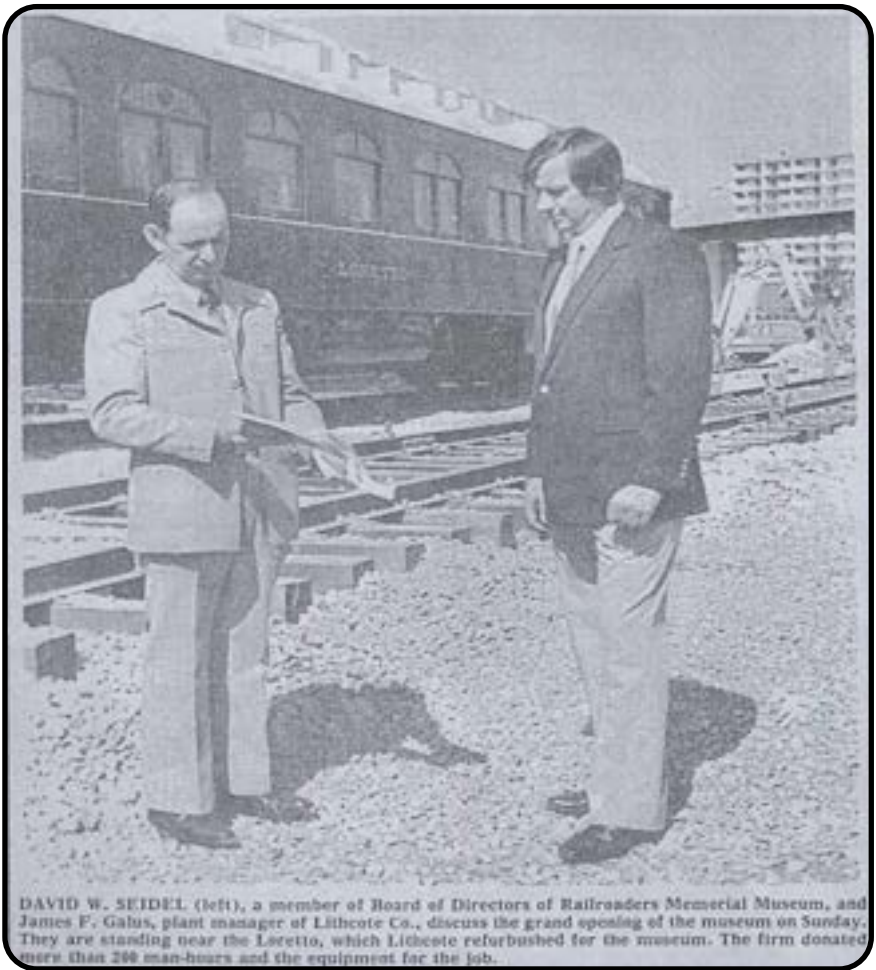
Our goal is \$30,000 and we're certain that our citizens and businesses have enough desire to "BRING HOME" this remarkable relic of our railroading tradition. Please do your part.

Make your checks payable to —
"Railroader's Memorial Museum, Inc." c/o Blair County Tourist and Convention Bureau, 1107 Twelfth Street, Altoona, Pa. 16601; (814) 943-8151.

This ticket entitles the holder and his immediate family to one tour of the Loretto on its return to Blair County.

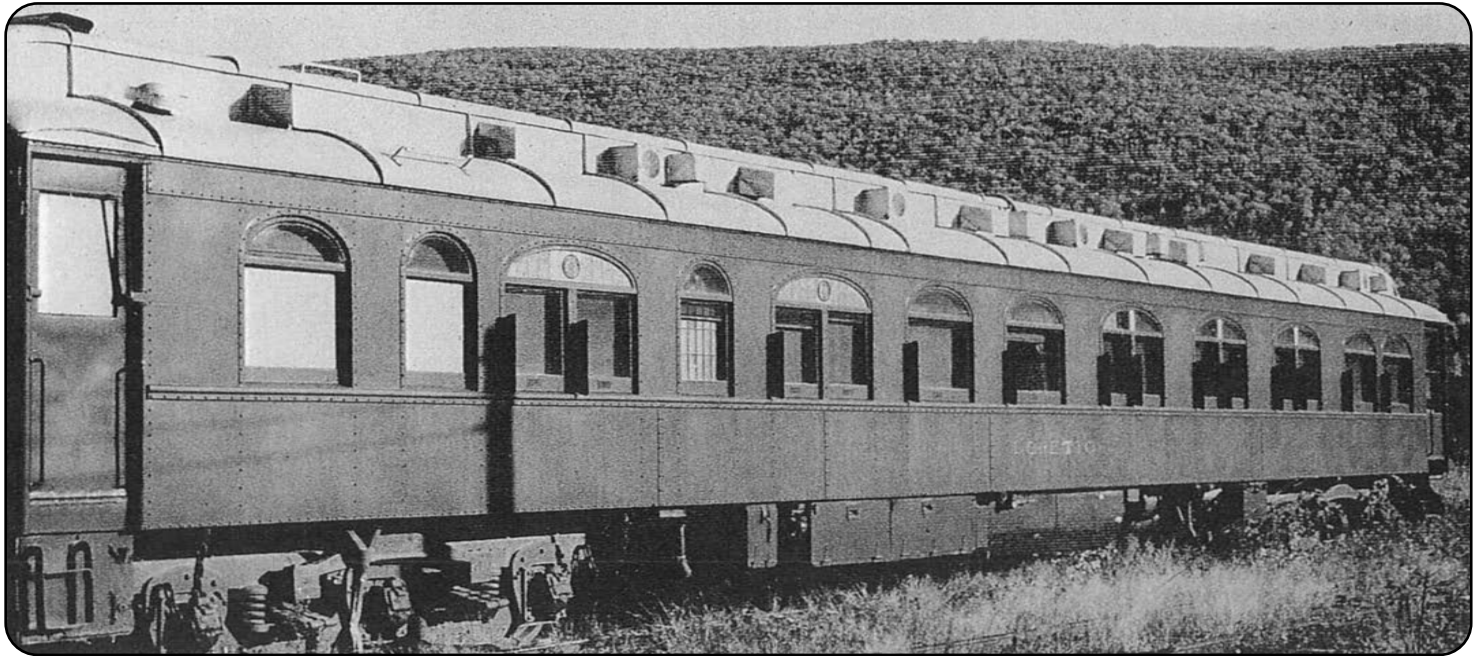
Price \$10.00 No 11862

Ticket sold to raise funds.



DAVID W. SEIDEL (left), a member of Board of Directors of Railroaders Memorial Museum, and James F. Galus, plant manager of Lithco Co., discuss the grand opening of the museum on Sunday. They are standing near the Loretto, which Lithco refurbished for the museum. The firm donated more than 200 man-hours and the equipment for the job.

Chapter member, Dave Seidel, with the Loretto at the museum for the Grand Opening.



Loretto #1 retired in field being used as a girls camp at Lancaster & Chester Rail Yard in South Carolina

YOU CAN HELP

It's not enough to simply restore our Loretto — we need to secure and protect it also. Won't you help by making a pledge?

Please send pledge coupon and check or money order payable to:

RESTORE THE LORETTO COMMITTEE

P.O. BOX 1813 • ALTOONA, PA 16603 • 814-944-1813

Thank you for your help in restoring — securing — protecting our Loretto.

Signature of pledge: _____

TOTAL PLEDGE	PAID NOW	BALANCE

Balance to be billed

- Annually
 Semi-annually
 Quarterly
 As follows:



Your pledge is payable thru Dec. 31, 1985

Tax deductible (Not binding in case of change in status)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Newspaper clipping used to raise funds to restore Loretto #2 after the fire and to build a shed to keep it in.

Sadly, on October 8, 1983, the Loretto was set on fire by two teenage boys who were runaways who broke into the car to find a place to sleep. They knocked over a candle which set a cushion on fire. They ran to 11th Avenue and 12th Street to pull a fire alarm, but by then the car was a blaze. It was determined in court that they were not charged with arson and that the fire was accidental. They were each fined \$300.00. At that time Richard Emerson said that the museum has \$50,000.00 insurance on the car but the loss was in excess of \$100 thousand dollars and that it would take over three years to restore the car if the right materials could be found.

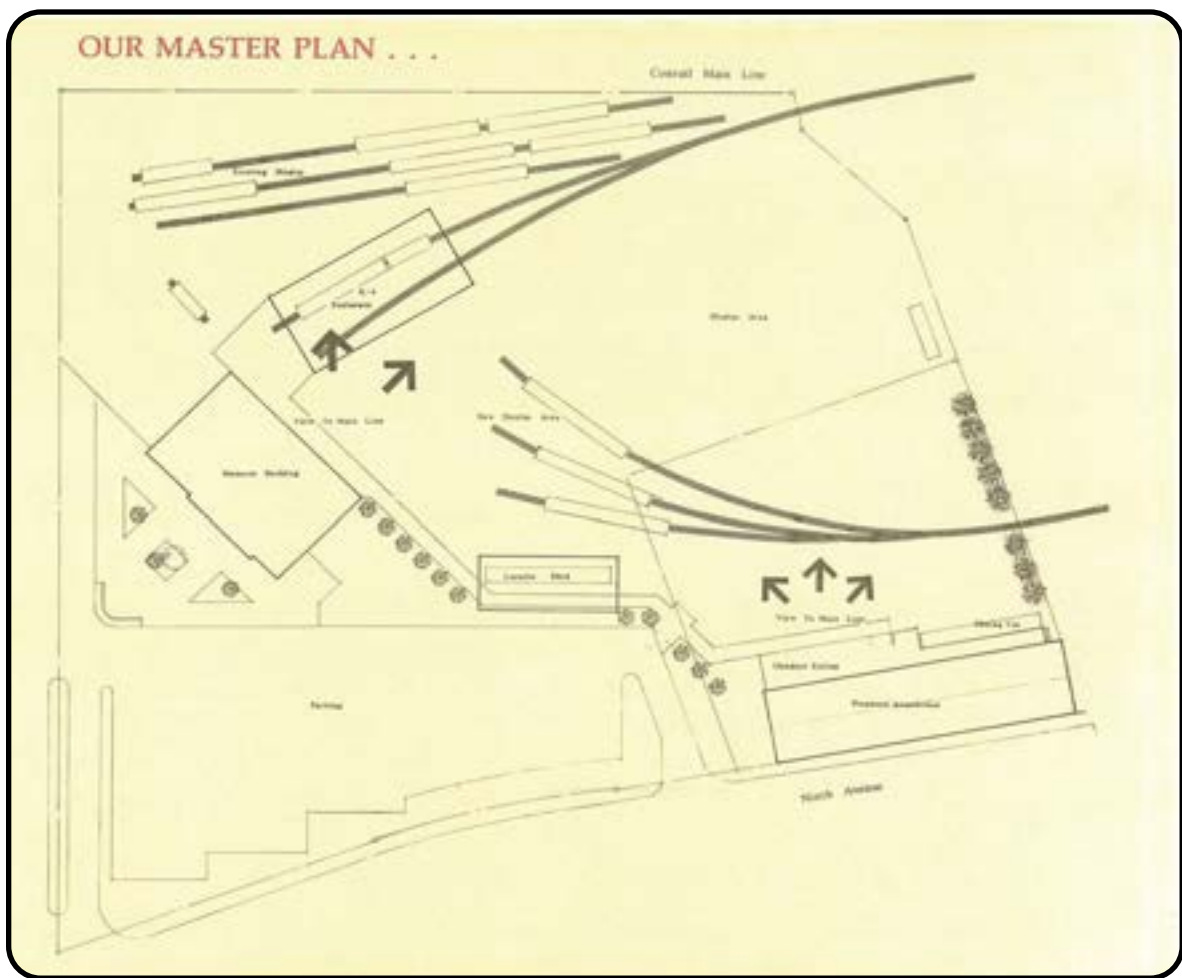
Interestingly, in 1987 the museum was holding a campaign to raise funds for improvements and displays at the museum. In a statement by Rick Geist, he stated:

“The museum opened with the prized Loretto Charles Schwab’s private car as part of it’s collection. It is one of the most beautiful cars ever constructed. Although damaged by a fire a few years ago, it is in the process of being restored to it’s former grandeur.

On October 10, 1982, electric engine FF-1 #4913 was built in Altoona became part of our collection. The finest piece is the restored passenger steam locomotive K-4s #1361. The value of this engine is in the millions of dollars.

The K-4s #1361 and the Loretto are the crown jewels in our museums collection and it is only fitting that we create an appropriate setting to show and protect them. To do any less would be a shameful neglect of our duty to preserve our railroad heritage.”

A new diagram of the proposed new yard and shelters for the K-4 and the Loretto was then displayed.



Plans for the new yard with shelters for the K-4 and the Loretto.

That was 1987 and sadly the Loretto was moved to the back burner and eventually taken off the stove.

Fast forward 40 plus years and the Loretto was sold to Colebrookdale Railroad in Boyertown, PA who has plans to restore her to original condition and then run her on their tourist trains. It was sad to see it go, but at least for now “hope” is back in the air for the Loretto.

On January 29, 2024, Loretto was de-trucked and loaded on a lowboy trailer for the trip to Boyertown. The truck driver, Lenny Vocum (sounds like a good first name) safely delivered the Loretto on January 31st where she was re-trucked and moved to a rail siding in her new home.



The Railroaders Memorial Museum – Altoona, PA, announces the transfer of ownership of the Private Car *Loretto* to the Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust of Boyertown, PA.

"We are pleased that this important part of Pennsylvania heritage will get a new lease on life," said Joe DeFrancesco, Executive Director of the Railroaders Memorial Museum. "The Colebrookdale has developed an expertise around cars from this period, and their commitment to reverse the fire damage the car suffered in the 1980s was a critical part of our decision to sell it to them," he said. The Colebrookdale Railroad provided a comprehensive restoration and operation proposal to the museum's board of directors. Museum officials decided it was in the car's best interest to accept this proposal. Immediate plans are underway by the new owners to overhaul the car's interior and mechanical condition to return the car to its original configuration.

The *Loretto* suffered fire damage from arson in the 1980's with limited restoration work to the car since. The car was ordered in 1917 from Pullman by famous steel baron Charles Schwab of Bethlehem Steel and served as his second private car to bear the name. "The *Loretto* will join the *Lynnewood* (built for Joseph Widener, and also Pullman 1917) to tell the story of Pennsylvania's two most famous steel dynasties," said Nathaniel Guest, Executive Director of the Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust. "Together, the cars tell a fitting story for our railroad which connects the earliest ironmaking sites in Pennsylvania--sites from which those dynasties ultimately emerged," he said. The Colebrookdale plans to create an immersive experience by allowing passengers to go back in time to experience the luxury of this mansion on the rails. "The *Loretto*, like the *Lynnewood*, is a landmark among railroad cars, and its destruction in the 1980s was truly an act of civic vandalism. I am proud to right that wrong," said Guest.

The car departed the Railroaders Memorial Museum on Monday January 29, 2024, and is expected at the new railroad on January 31, 2024.

To donate to the car's restoration, or for further updates on the car's restoration and return to operation, see the Colebrookdale's website and social media. All inquiries should be directed to the Colebrookdale Railroad.

<https://www.colebrookdalerrailroad.com/>



COLEBROOKDALE RAILROAD



Loretto getting ready to leave.



Being de-trucked and put on a lowboy.



Loaded on the lowboy at
9th Avenue past
Altoona Pipe & Steel



Passing the museum on
9th Avenue for the last time and a
final look at her old home.

UNDER THE WIRE

by Leonard Alwine

TROLLEY PARK'S FUTURE UNCERTAIN

The news headlines for February 2nd state that:

1. Punxsutawney Phil predicted an early spring which was good news and
2. Lakemont Park will eliminate all rides for the coming season in 2024, which is bad news.

The company that leases the park from the county stated that it has been financially unsustainable to operate the rides and they will not continue to do so.

The park will remain open for people who want to hold picnics there or use the basketball courts or batting cages or play miniature golf. Besides closing all the rides, the park will not continue to fund the annual July 4th fireworks.

The park had its beginnings back in 1836 when Elias Baker purchased 3,373 acres to use for his Allegheny Furnace Works. He mined iron ore at the location and also cut wood to use to fire the furnace.

In 1876, volunteers began cleaning up the area to use for recreational purposes. They named it The Oak and Pine Grove.

In 1891, Sylvester Baker, son of Elias, chartered a trolley line named the City & Park Railway to build a trolley line from Lakemont about 4 miles into the City of Altoona.

In 1892, the park opened with the Casino and the Theatre in the Woods and the man made artificial lake. By 1902, the Leap the Dips Roller Coaster was the main attraction at the park. Slowly, other rides from that period of time were also built until it was a full amusement park.

A terrible flood in 1936 wiped out most of the park buildings, rides and scenic walkways. The Altoona & Logan Valley Electric Railway Co., which now owned the park by mergers in 1905, could not afford to rebuild the park so they sold it to the Blair County Commissioners for \$1.00.

The park was slowly rebuilt with new rides and a swimming pool built inside the lake. By 1982, the hand carved carousel (merry go round) was sold for \$225,000.00 to raise funds to keep the park repaired and going.

With the dollars still draining away, the park was leased to Anthony Forgione, owner of the Boyer Candy Company in 1985. They made the famous Mallow cups and Clark bars. He had grandiose plans to make the park similar to Hershey Park. He renamed it Boyertown USA

He set out to build this new park over the winter. Most of the old buildings and ride were torn down and burnt, and all the century old trees were cut down. The atmosphere of the old park was gone and people coming to this new park did not like it or the \$12.95 entrance fee for something that had always been free before.

By 1988, the park failed. It was then sold to Ralph Albarano, a contractor, who renamed it back to Lakemont Park. Eventually a partnership was formed to oversee the park and lease it from the County.

As funds continued to run short of operating expenses, the water park and pool were closed in 2019 and the Covid 19 shutdown in 2020 caused even more financial problems. And now in 2024, it was announced that all the rides will not operate this season.

What will happen to them now is uncertain. What is known, though, is that the 122 year old wooden roller coaster must be maintained and protected as part of the lease with the County which runs until 2066. The County Solicitor said the partnership cannot just let it fall down!

Time will tell what may happen, but for now another old trolley park is hanging in limbo and the rides will not be running this season.



Old postcard view of the Leap the Dips

Old postcard view of the lake, swimming pool, show boat & Casino.



LOCAL YARD NEWS

by Joe Harella

The Wreck of the Red Arrow, February 18, 1947, was remembered with a special gathering and dinner at ARMM on February 24, 2024. Guests began to arrive at 4:30 pm and were able to view a special display of photos and items from the wreck on the second floor of the museum. Also, Kelly's Bar was open guests to purchase drinks that would have been available on the Red Arrow. At a little past 6 p.m., the guests (about 70 total including at least 12 chapter members) went to the third floor for a sit down dinner served by Binus Catering featuring what would have been available on the Red Arrow dining car. A copy of the menu from that dining car was given to each person as a souvenir. Following the dinner, desserts were served from that menu. Then the guests went back down to the lobby area where music and dancing took place. The lead singer in the band was Dana Martino, a member of the chapter.

It was a gala event and helping those attending visualize what riding the PRR Blue Ribbon Fleet was like some 75 years ago.



Upper berth ladder from Red Arrow
on display at ARMM



Band performing in the ARMM lobby with
lead singer Chapter Member Dana Martino

NRHS car 103 has been sold by the Everett Railroad and left town in late December for Madison, Indiana. It was one of three cars purchased by the Chapter in 1985 and used for years on excursion trains. A few years ago they were sold to the Everett Railroad in Hollidaysburg for the same use.

The Blair County Historical Society has announced the schedule for the 2024 lecture series. The lectures are held at the ARMM on the dates listed and start at 7:00 p.m. They are free and open to the public.

March 20	Reservoirs of the Horseshoe Curve
May 15	Walter Main Circus Train Wreck
May 29	The PRR and the Johnstown Flood
June 19	The Making of Blair County
July 17	Iron Furnaces of Blair County
August 21	Blair County Jail History
September 18	WWII Airmans Journey Across Europe
October 16	German Folklore and Heritage
November 20	They came from Blair County

The incline at the Horseshoe Curve remains closed and it is hoped to get it operational soon following more inspections.

The incline at Johnstown is also shut down after a problem during reconstruction was found. Unknown when this issue will be resolved. Perhaps another tourist season with them down.

The Spring Train Show is scheduled for March 24, 2024 at the Blair County Convention Center from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It is sponsored by the Alto Model Train Museum Association of 1117 9th Avenue, across from the ARMM building in Altoona.

Admission is \$5 with children under 12 admitted free. For more information contact: Dick Charlesworth at 814-932-8811.

PRESERVATION

Historic light towers preserved

Structures were part of 1939 New York World's Fair railroad exhibits

FOR THE 1939-40 NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR, at least four 100-foot-tall, art-deco-styled floodlight towers were constructed to illuminate the 17-acre railroad exhibit. After the fair, the towers were dismantled and reinstalled to light the Pennsylvania Railroad's Altoona, Pa., freight yard. Through 80-plus years and several ownership changes — Penn Central, Conrail, and Norfolk Southern — the light towers stood in Altoona.

A few years ago, a windstorm blew one down. Norfolk Southern then decided to remove the towers. Realizing the towers' historic nature, local NS employees contacted Altoona's Railroaders Memorial Museum, asking if it would like to have them. The museum accepted the towers and has stored them pending evaluation and fundraising. Joe DeFrancesco, museum executive director, says the plan is to rebuild one tower to illuminate the museum's grounds, with an eye to installing all three.

For more information on the Railroaders Memorial Museum, please visit www.railroadcity.org. — Dan Cupper



To remove the light towers, NS retained contractor Chris Dell. Dismantling the structures was complicated by proximity to live tracks, overhead power lines, and access within the Altoona, Pa., yard. L.R. Myers



For more than 80 years, three of possibly four art-deco-styled light towers from the 1939 New York World's Fair stood over the Altoona freight yard. It is unknown who designed and fabricated the towers for the fair. Dan Cupper

Old Altoona PRR Yard Lights preserved and will be installed at ARMM in the near future once restored.

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER

DECEMBER 2ND, 2023

The annual Christmas dinner held by the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on Saturday, December 2ND, 2023 at the Geeseytown Firehall. The turkey and roast beef dinner complete with all of the trimmings was catered by Holland Brothers.

A special thank-you goes out to Karin Givler who coordinated the setting up and decorating of all of the tables.

The guest speaker for the evening was Joe DeFrancesco, Executive Director of the Railroader's Memorial Museum. Joe's talk was very informative and interesting.

The evening was very enjoyable to all. Pres. Givler then wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

JOSEPH HARELLA

RECORDING SECRETARY

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

JANUARY 23RD, 2024

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on January 23RD, 2024. The meeting was called to order by Pres, Frank Givler at 7:27 P. M.. The meeting was held at Perkin's Family Restaurant.

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

The financial statements were read by Treasurer Denny Walls. It was noted that due to the fact that we over extended our checking account, the Chapter was subjected to a \$25.00 fee. Don Goebel then made a motion to accept the financial report, John Fisher second. The motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Chapter Cars-While two of the cars have received some much needed improvements and continue to operate via the Everett Railroad, car #103 has been sold. The car was purchased by a firm in Madison, Indiana. Dick has a picture of the car leaving Altoona.

2. Possible Bus Trip- While Dick Charlesworth has vowed to end his tenure as chapter tour guide, he is contemplating making one more trip. A suggested destination would be that of Romney, West Virginia. There we would board the Potomac Eagle, which follows the path of the Potomac River. Passengers should keep an eye out for flying bald eagles as well as those nesting in the surrounding trees. After our train ride, a stop at the Queen City Creamery will be in order for a delightful treat. Dick will check on the details for this trip and get back to us.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Speaker Time Limits- A discussion was held on the length of time that a guest speaker should speak at a dinner or banquet that we may have in the future. While the talk may be very interesting and informative, some people might not be comfortable sitting through a lengthy program. A suggested amount of time is 20 – 30 minutes.
2. Loretto Leaving Town- Pres. Givler informed everyone that the Loretto has been sold and it will be moving to Boyertown, Pa. Dee Hartman was disappointed in the sale because she painted a picture inside the car and she wanted to see it before the car left. However, Pres. Givler said the car is full of parts for the car and it is not safe for people to enter. Dick Charlesworth said that he and Dave Seidel used to open the car up for people to see it. Dave also saw the original Loretto which is made out of wood. This car is located in Spencer, North Carolina. A discussion was also held on the GG1

GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Dean McKnight said that he loves to hear the discussion about the different railroad cars and other equipment, but he would really like to hear about the railroad workers. He suggested that Joe DeFrancesco come to a meeting and speak about them.
2. John Fisher reported that he still has a lot of Dave Seidel's VHS tapes. Anyone that is interested they can take a look at them.

Jim Caum then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Ralph Simpson second, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 P.M.- 20 members present.

ATTENDANCE—Betsie Price, Gary Price, Dee Hartman Don Goebel, Nancy McKnight, Dean McKnight, Marge Simpson, Ralph Simpson, Zach Noonan, Karin Givler, Frank Givler, Jim Caum, Dan Summers, Dick Charlesworth, Larry McKee, John Fisher, Denny Walls, Mary Jean Walls, Len Alwine, Joe Harella.

JOSEPH HARELLA

RECORDING SECRETARY

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

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REGULAR MONTHLY CHAPTER

FEBRUARY 27TH, 2024

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on February 27th, 2024. The meeting was called to order by Pres. Frank Givler at 7:04 P. M.. The meeting was held at Perkin's 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. Don Goebel made a motion to accept the financial report, Ralph Simpson second. The motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Sale of the Loretto-Joe DeFrancesco reported that the Loretto has been sold. The car sold for \$110,000. Joe said that it was a hard decision to make however, the museum did not have the funds to restore the car. Restoration of the car has already begun at its' new home.
2. Future bus trip- Dick Charlesworth said that he and Don Goebel were discussing a bus trip either to the Reading and Northern or the Potomac Eagle. He said they are leaning towards the Potomac Eagle.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Pres. Givler informed everyone that he and Dick Charlesworth will be going to the Altoona Campus in early April to speak to the students about our chapter scholarship program. A discussion was held on trying to get some of our scholarship recipients to come to a chapter meeting to speak to us.
2. Executive Director of the Railroader's Memorial Museum Joe DeFrancesco attended the meeting to discuss and answer questions regarding the museum. Dean McKnight congratulated Joe on his recently held Red Arrow dinner. Joe said that more events like this dinner are being planned. He also discussed a list of projects that are currently underway. Windows for the Mountain View have been ordered, the K-4 is moving along, for which a fund raiser will be held in May, the Penn Central caboose is progressing well, seats for the movie theater , he also gave a funicular update, it should be operating soon, the world's Fair lights- Joe explained just where they will be placed in the yard. He also said that many events will be coming up and volunteers will ne needed.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. **Dean McKnight** informed the members that recently his nephew passed away. Dean explained the sad circumstances that contributed to his death. The chapter would like to extend our sincere sympathies and condolences to Dean and his family on the passing of John.
2. **Chapter Room in the Museum-** Joe DeFrancesco has offered a room to the chapter located in the museum. The room is in the basement and will be used to store and display railroad items. Thank you Joe.
3. **Denny Walls** reported that he attended an auction recently where he purchased the nameboard for the Gaysport grade school.

Ralph Simpson then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Jim Caum second, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 P.M.- 21 members present.

ATTENDANCE- Don Goebel, Ron Givler, Marge Simpson , Ralph Simpson, Dan Summers, Nancy McKnight, Dean McKnight, Denny Haire, Diane Haire, Karin Givler, Frank Givler, Joe DeFrancesco, Dick Charlesworth, Jean Noonan, Zach Noonan, Jim Caum, Mary Jean Walls, Denny Walls, Len Alwine John Fisher, Joe Harella.

JOSEPH HARELLA

RECORDING SECRETARY

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

A SPECIAL “LOOK BACK”

by Leonard Alwine

GABLE’S BUILDING CONDEMNED

This winter has brought some Altoona landmarks left in limbo as to their future. The Gable’s building in downtown was condemned after the extreme cold of early January froze some pipes and set off several sprinklers. The water seeped into the electrical system boxes and caused floors to sag and heave in some areas making the store unsafe for occupancy according to inspection officials. The parking garage attached to the building had been condemned and shut down a while back due to deterioration of supports.

Gable’s began in operation on February 5, 1884 in a 20 foot by 40 foot building on Virginia Street (now 11th Avenue). From there the store grew until it occupied the entire block from 11th Avenue to 12th Avenue and almost the whole block from 13th Street to 14th Street. The 5 story garage attached to the building at 12th Avenue and 14th Street was built in segments from 1959 through 1966 by adding more levels at the top. Gables charged 10 cents an hour to park and it opened on the inside right into the store for shoppers.

This parking garage was used on August 24, 1967 to host the WVAM Gable's Yacht Party featuring rock groups: The Turtles, The Vogues, and the Spencer Davis Group on the first night with Sonny & Cher on the second night. The cost for both nights was \$5.25. Because of heavy rain the second night, Sonny & Cher was moved into the Altoona Skating Rink.

The original building was modernized in 1971 using 230,000 bricks to encase it which closed all the windows also.



The original building with windows.



The modernized building without windows.

But between redevelopment tearing down many stores in downtown and those left then moving to the new Pleasant Valley Shopping Center and the Logan Valley Mall, downtown was no longer the place to shop and Gables store closed down in 1979. The building sold and became an office space rental unit with few takers and most of the building left empty.

But who can't remember when WFBG Radio and later WFBG television were started and operated from the store, the television station becoming WTAJ today.

And how many people remember going to Toyland at Christmas to visit Santa on his throne and to get a photo of the kids with Santa back in the days when he was the only Santa in town! In fact, I still have my "Breakfast with Santa" mug from Gable's sitting on one of my shelves.

And then there was the large train layout in Toyland for the Christmas shopping season packed full of Lionel Trains causing kids to ask Santa for their own sets for Christmas.

The one display that I remember most was the miniature circus display set up in January 1964. That was when Ernest Palmquist and his wife, Virginia, set up a display of over 59,000 hand carved figures including people, clowns, animals, horse drawn wagons and an official circus train (I believe it was O scale) in Toyland for about two weeks following the Altoona engagement, the show traveled to New York for the World's Fair for a much longer showing.

Ernie hand carved the figures out of wood and his wife Virginia sewed outfits and the tents to go with the show. It was quite impressive to see and today I wonder if it survives anywhere?



Virginia helping set up the circus at Gable's Toyland on January 17, 1964.