

Official Newsletter
of



NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1361
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www.hscnrhs.org

Summer 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.

IN THIS SUMMER ISSUE OF THE COAL BUCKET

In this issue, a couple of articles are follow up articles to the Spring issue and some are what is happening now in Altoona and the chapter.

The first article is by Leonard Alwine and is a story about “Private Varnish” which is a follow up of the Loretto story last spring. It tells of some of the other private cars from the same era which even had ties to the Loretto.

Next, is an article by John Fisher about the mansions of Charles Schwab located in Loretto, PA, which he had in his collection of rail stuff. It tells of the effort of Mr. Schwab to move the first mansion to another location and then build the second in it’s place. To move the first one, the highest (37 feet) railroad was built to move the mansion without damaging any trees. It was also perhaps the shortest railroad (1,500 feet) to move this mansion once jacked up to that height. It would have been quite a sight to see.

Joe Harella continues to keep all informed about local chapter meetings and events being held in Altoona, if they are advertised enough in advance to let people know that they are being held.

And in the Look Back column, Len Alwine again takes a ride down memory lane with former places and events held here and prices for them, being almost nothing at that time, and the Under the Wire column details a “new” Logan Valley heritage bus now at Amtran.

Phil and his “wife” Phyllis live in a special den built into the library in Punxsutawney. Shortly after Groundhog Day, the handler went in to feed Phil and found to his surprise that Phil was now a father to two baby groundhogs!

On Mother’s Day, Phil and Phyllis presented their family to the world. One was a female which was named Sunny and the other was a male named Shadow.

The Coal Bucket staff congratulate Phil and Phyllis on their new family.



A photo of the Loretto at it’s new home in Colebrockdale,
taken in February 2024 by Joel Saloman,
President of the Railways to Yesteryear in Allentown, PA.

PRIVATE VARNISH

by Leonard Alwine

In the Spring issue of the Coal Bucket, a lengthy article on the private car, Loretto, was the lead story. To find some of that information, I borrowed two books from the Cambria County Library written by Lucius Beebe. One was Mansions on Rails written in 1959 and the other was Mr. Pullman's Elegant Palace Cars written in 1961. Together they had over 900 pages of script and photos of these cars, many photos coming from Pullman Company records.

There were many items learned from reading these books which I wish to share in this article in order to further explain these special rail cars usually defined as "Private Varnish".

After driving the golden spike in in May of 1869, railroads began offering long distance rides in passenger cars, sometimes taking two to three days of travel, but still a lot faster than riding a stage coach. To accommodate these riders, Mr. Pullman developed sleeper and diner cars which were included in those trains for long distance travel.

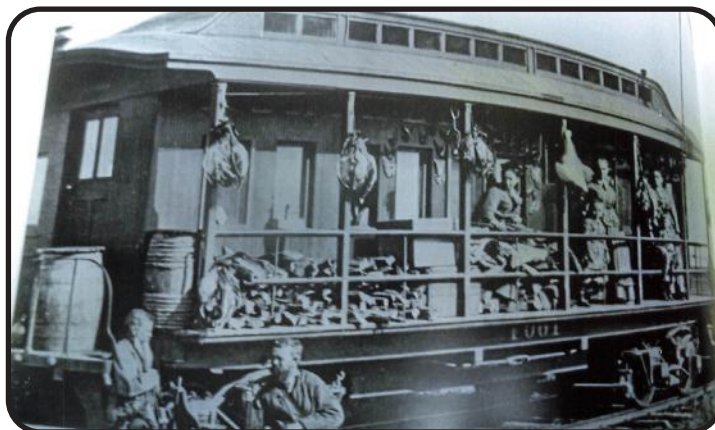
Eventually they evolved into "Private" or "Business" cars which allowed the owners to travel in style when traveling to complete business dealings and meetings inside the cars. They also became a way to "show off" your wealth to others.

From 1882-1930, Pullman built over 350 private cars of this type. The Pullman Standard Company was the largest builders of these cars built inside his plant at the company built city of Pullman, Illinois. Another large builder was Jackson & Sharp from Wilmington, Delaware. This company merged with other smaller builders to form American Car & Foundry (ACF), builder of many railcars. After merging with Brill and becoming ACF Brill they continued to build rail cars, trolleys, and later buses.

The private rail cars were very lavish and had some of the latest inventions of the time built into them including fancy sleeping rooms, modern kitchens and electric chandeliers.

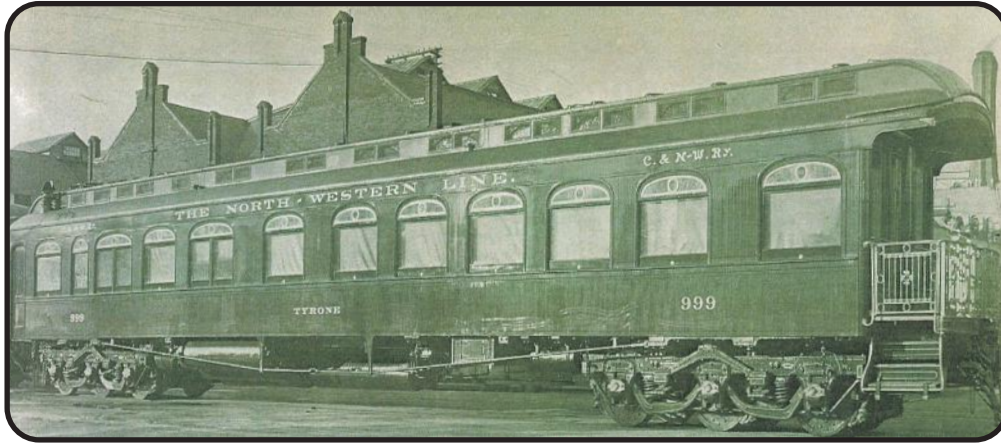
Some even had working fireplaces and showers and bath tubs. Many had barber chairs for the men and some "parlors" for the women who may be traveling along for their needs. One car "Coronet" even had a piano built inside for business men to entertain their guests.

If you could not afford a car of your own, Pullman even had a way to rent a car for \$50 to \$500 a day depending on how much you wanted to impress your business guests. They even had a hunting car available for out west which was a bit narrower inside because a porch was built along the entire side of the car to handle buffalo



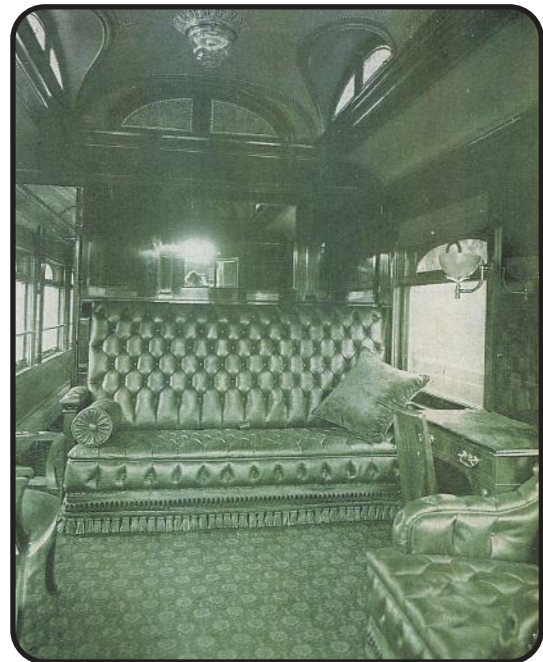
Hunting car out West

Some other interesting cars that were built during this time period was one named “Tyrone”. It was outshopped the same time as Loretto I 8-1-01. This car was used by Mr. Schwab to send company leaders west to procure ore and fuel for the steel furnaces he owned.



The Tyrone car outshopped on the same date as Loretto I 8-1-01

Inside Tyrone which was used by J.P. Morgan and Charles Schwab to send agent H.W. Oliver (the actual owner of the car) to find ore deposits and fuel resources for the forming of the U.S. Steel Company. It was Agent Oliver who found and leased the Messabi ore deposit.



Another interesting car was the “Bedford Penola” car owned by business man Jay Gold who had a special baggage car to the head end of his private car to carry his own cow so that he had fresh milk to drink.

Railroad Tycoon Jay Gould who had dietary needs had special baggage ahead of his private car which carried his cow along on his business trips so that he had fresh milk.



Even car company President, Henry Ford, had a private car named “Fairlane” to travel in on business trips.

By the 1940’s, private cars became expensive and slow as compared to airplane flight. It was now cheaper and quicker to fly to business meetings and use a hotel diner for meals. Most of the private cars were retired to use as summer cottages or they were absorbed into railroad maintenance of way fleets for employees when located on outpost lines.

Some were placed into museums and a few updated for use behind Amtrak trains today. But for the most part, this special time of travel has all but disappeared from the American rails.

Narrow gauge car of the Carson and Colorado Railroad called “Esmeraldo” became a shelter for work gangs for the Southern Pacific Railroad at Keeler, California.



IMMERGRUN

by John Fisher, Guest Columnist

Immergrun, the name of Charles Schwab’s estate in Loretto, PA. means “always green”. It was planted with groves of pines and hemlocks which kept it green all year long. The color green supposedly helping to sooth the soul of Mr. Schwab.

He lived in Loretto as a young boy and traveled to Cresson to attend school at St. Francis College. On one of those trips he met a man named Carnegie who had a summer home in Cresson. This may have changed his life.

Mr. Schwab married Emma Dinkey and her father was the first steel worker chemist in the USA. She taught him everything that her father had taught her in the basement of their house. To make ends meet, Mr. Schwab taught music lessons upstairs in their home until they moved to Pittsburgh so that he could work for Carnegie Steel Company. His knowledge of steel chemistry quickly had him raised to President of the United States Steel Company and becoming a millionaire.

He want back to his hometown of Loretto and built a three story, 25 room mansion at Immergrun. Also built were a dairy barn, a poultry house, and a swine pen and a 25,000 square foot garden under glass (greenhouse) which supplied fruits and vegetables to his 3 million dollar winter home in New York.

After 17 years, he became President of Bethlehem Steel Company and decided he needed a larger home at Immergrun. He spent 3.5 million dollars to move the original home and to build a new 44 room home in it’s place.

To move the first home, it was jacked up 37 feet and put on a rail track to move it 1500 feet to the new location. This was done so that no trees in the grove would be damaged as the mansion moved above them. Once there it was lowered back to ground level.



The first mansion was jacked up 37 feet to clear the tops of the trees at Immergrun. Here it is seen with the blocking under the mansion ready to move 1500 feet on rails laid high in the sky for the trip.

The new 44 room mansion was built in its place which had handcarved oak panels throughout on its walls and staircases. It also had included the first "elevator" ever to be installed in a home. Also, a large marble fireplace was used for heat. Outside many handcarved statues and stairs and waterfalls were built into a garden setting in front of the new mansion.



The new 44 room mansion built at Immergrun with a large garden and waterfalls in front of the home.

Sadly, Mr. Schwab passed away several years later in poverty. The estate at Immergrun was sold at auction in 1942 to St. Francis College.

Rumor has it that Mrs. Schwab still roams the third floor of the mansion looking for a hoard of money placed there by her husband. (Another Pennsylvania ghost story.)

LOCAL YARD NEWS

by Joe Harella

Two “trains” visited Altoona this past May. The first was the 64 foot long frame for the reproduction of the PRR T-1 steam locomotive being built by the Pennsylvania T-1 Steam Locomotive Trust. It was in town for a fundraiser and was on display at the Blair County Convention Center.

The display was held in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Railroad Technological and Historical Society which was holding their annual meeting there.

The other train was the Norfolk Southern Hazmat Safety Train which sat in the Rose Yard in Juniata for about a week conducting classes for first responders and firefighters.

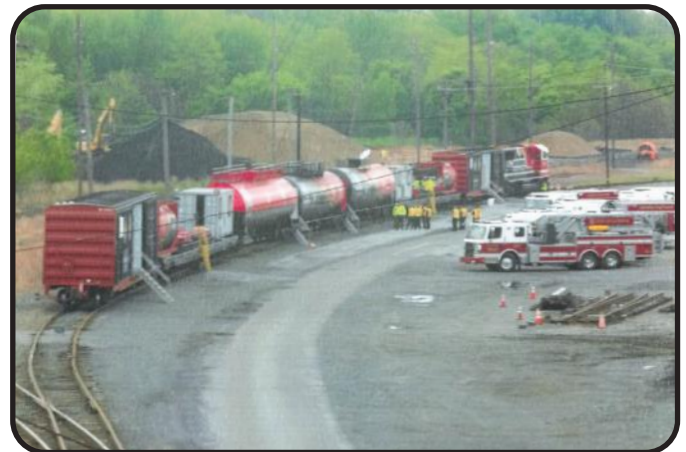
This train consisted of a locomotive, three tank cars, two classroom cars, and a car displaying a variety of safety valves used on the trains. All the units had a special paint scheme representing the fire engine red color.

It is traveling around all 22 states in which N.S. operates. The classes take 6 hours during the day and then 3 hours at night to complete. It will be in Juniata 5 days conducting the classes.

It has been built somewhat in response to the train wreck in Ohio. The classes are provided free by Norfolk Southern Railroad.



PRR T-1 Locomotive frame
on display in Altoona



N.S. Hazmat Train at Rose Yard, Juniata

Several Chapter members (Nancy & Dan McKnight, Larry McKee, John Fisher and Len Alwine) attended three local rail history lectures held recently in the area.

The first was the Walter L. Main Circus train wreck history held at ARMM by the Blair County Historical Society. The guest speaker, Susan O’Brien, detailed the wreck, how it happened and the local Tyrone citizens who helped the circus get “back on the rails” the following weekend. This lecture was held May 15th.

Then on May 22nd, Susan O’Brien was again the guest speaker at the anniversary meeting of that wreck held at the site in Vail, near Tyrone. At this meeting, a new monument was unveiled at the site since the old one had deteriorated over time. About 30 people attended this memorial and wreath laying ceremony with two troops of clowns from Delaware and Maryland circus associations. A new parking area is still being built at this site.

The next lecture was May 29th held at ARRM again sponsored by the Blair County Historical Society with Brandon Sliko from the Johnstown Flood Museum as the speaker. He did a 1.5 hour program on the involvement of the PRR during and after the Flood of 1889 when the South Fork dam failed and sent waters flooding through the valley ending in Johnstown. Although many lives and properties were lost, the PRR jumped in and helped rebuilt the tracks and the towns along the route. It was a very informative program.

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

MARCH 26TH, 2024

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on March 26th, 2024. The meeting was called to order by Pres. Frank Givler at 7:17 P.M.. The meeting was held here at Perkins Family Restaurant.

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

The financial statements were read by Treasurer Denny Walls. Ralph Simpson made a motion to accept the financial report, Gary Price second. The motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Pres Givler reported that he and Dick Charlesworth will be traveling to the Altoona Campus of Penn State in April to inform the students about the Chapter's scholarship program. They would like to meet up with any past recipients and ask them if they could possibly attend one of our meetings and explain to us how our scholarship helped them in their education.
2. Model Train Show- Dick Charlesworth reported that the show went very well .
3. Bus Trip- Dick Charlesworth spoke to the people at the Potomac Eagle but they did not return his call. We might look into the Reading and Northern as another possibility. Dick also mentioned that it is getting harder to fill the buses.

NEW BUSINESS

1. New tires for the Walters- Pres. Givler informed everyone that the Walters is in need of a new set of tires, Frank, Ron and Denny Walls held a meeting to discuss the matter, which will be very expensive. There is a possibility of changing the wheel size, which would make the tires easier to locate. They will have to do some research and see what they can find.

Also, Ron said that he is concerned about our chapter assets once we older folks are no longer here. Who will have the knowledge to operate some of our equipment? It's something to think about, he Said,

Frank brought up the National Membership for discussion. We must maintain at least ten national members or we could lose our charter.

Also discussed was the paperwork for the B-60, the Hannigan, and other pieces of equipment. It was a very productive meeting.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Len Alwine informed everyone that the next Coal Bucket will be out soon.
2. A discussion was held on the Loretto. Dick Charlesworth said that he has a picture of Dave Seidel when they used to open up the car for people to see it.

Ralph Simpson then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Don Goebel second, the meeting was adjourned at 7:54 P.M.—20 members present.

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

JOSEPH HARELLA

RECORDING SECRETARY

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

APRIL 23RD, 2024

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on April 23RD, 2024. The meeting was called to order by Pres. Frank Givler at 7:00 P.M.. The meeting was held here at Perkin's Family Restaurant.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved by Ron Givler, second by Don Goebel. The motion passed. One correction was made to the minutes. The picture taken of the Loretto also included Dick Charlesworth, and not of Dave Seidel.

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

Dick Charlesworth had a question about the interest rates for the CD's. The members then held a discussion about the interest rates.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Tires for the Walters- As was mentioned at the March meeting, the Walters is in need of a new set of tires. Frank was able to locate the tires which would cost \$612.00 each. The price does not include tubes, flaps or mounting. A discussion was then held. Frank said that we could reuse 4 tubes and 4 liners. Ron Givler then made a motion that we purchase 6 tires plus 2 tubes and 2 liners, Dick Charlesworth second. The motion passed.
2. Visit to Penn State Altoona- Pres. Givler and Dick Charlesworth attended a gathering at the Altoona Campus to promote the chapter's scholarship program. While there they met up with Nihal Wadkar who is a student in the Rail Transportation Program. Nihal could be a possible recipient of our scholarship. Nihal spoke to them about the program and said that there are 40 students enrolled in it right now. Also, Frank and Dick were informed that our liaison Rachel Folks will be resigning soon.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Insurance for the Walters- A discussion was held on upgrading the insurance for the Walters. Pres. Givler reported that to increase our coverage to \$20,000 the yearly premium would be \$130.13, and to \$25,000 the premium would be \$155.35. A majority of the members felt that the \$25,000 coverage would be good. Dick Charlesworth then made a motion to increase our coverage to \$25,000 for a premium of \$155.35 annually, Len Alwine second. The motion passed.

Ron Givler then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Don Goebel second, the meeting was adjourned at 7:31 P.M.—11 members present.

ATTENDANCE- Don Goebel, Dan Summers, Zach Noonan, Karin Givler, Frank Givler, Dick Charlesworth, Denny Walls, Mary Jean Walls, Len Alwine, Ron Givler, Joe Harella

JOSEPH HARELLA

RECORDING SECRETARY

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

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REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

MAY 28TH, 2024

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on May 28TH, 2024, The meeting was called to order by Pres. Frank Givler at 7:12 P.M.. The meeting was held here at Perkin's Family Restaurant.

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

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

OLD BUSINESS

1. Tires for the Walters- We are in need of six new tires for the Walters. Originally we thought the price of each tire was \$612.00 each. However, when you factor in the federal tax the cost is now \$638.00 for each tire.
2. Insurance for the Walters- Pres. Givler informed everyone that the underwriter for the insurance co, Condon/Skelley, would not allow us to increase the coverage at this time, until they determine the value of the truck. Right now the truck is covered for \$15,700. Also, a question was asked about the insurance coverage for the RAILWAY Express Truck. Pres. Givler said that truck is insured by the museum.
3. Penn State – A letter was received from Penn State regarding our scholarship program. Penn State student Tom Scanlon was the recipient of our scholarship. Tom sent us a letter outlining his many duties that he has at the museum. He is very thankful and appreciative to the chapter for the scholarship.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Chapter Picnic- Pres. Givler said we will decide the date and place for the picnic at our June meeting. Dick Charlesworth's request to man the grill this year was DENIED. Frank will once again serve as the head chef.
2. Possible Future Bus Trip- Dick Charlesworth, Don Goebel and Joe Harella made a trip to Reading as well as to Jim Thorpe, Pa. to map out the trip and set the time line for the various stops that we will make. The trip would consist of riding the train from Reading to Jim Thorpe. We would then board the Lehigh Gorge Scenic Railway for the trip up the mountain and return. As the name suggests this trip is very scenic. Dick will have more on this later.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Model Train Museum- Dick Charlesworth reported that Steve Barr has taken over the reigns of the Alto Model Train Collectors Association. Steve is proposing to make the train shows a 2-day event. He will have to check with all of the vendors to see what they think.

see what they think.

2. York Railway Day- Len Alwine reported that the East Broad Top will be celebrating York Railway Day on August 3RD. York Railways stopped all streetcar operations on February 4TH, 1939, and car #163 was the only trolley to survive. The car was completely restored and put back into service, and is running today. It was built in 1924, one hundred years ago.

and Rockhill Trolley museum

Ron Givler then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Ralph Simpson second, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 P.M..- 20 members present.

ATTENDANCE- Ron Givler, Dee Hartman, Don Goebel, Marge Simpson, Ralph Simpson, Betsie Price, Gary Price, Karin Givler, Frank Givler, Dewayne Miller, Dick Charlesworth, Dan Summers, Jean Noonan, Zach Noonan, Larry McKee, Len Alwine, Mary Jean Walls, Denny Walls, John Fisher, Joe Harella

JOSEPH HARELLA
RECORDING SECRETARY
HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

A LOOK BACK

by Leonard Alwine

In May 2005, six tractor trailer loads of rusty parts arrived at ARMM. It was the parts to be used to build the turntable to be installed at the museum.



Crane unloading the main frame of the turntable

On August 7, 1954, over 200 riders filed into five trolley cars of the Altoona & Logan Valley Electric Railway for the last ride over the remaining routes, Juniata, Eldorado and Hollidaysburg. (see the Under the Wire article regarding a “new” LV bus)

On April 13, 1949, The Altoona Centennial Committee announced a special PRR train ride from Altoona to Huntingdon, back to Hollidaysburg, to Gallitzin then back to Altoona via the Horseshoe Curve. Altoona native Janet (Lafferty) Blair was to ride on this train. Tickets could be purchased from the Centennial office inside the Wolfe building in downtown Altoona for the trip which was to cost \$1.55!!

On April 15, 1974, Burger Chef Drive In located at Chestnut Avenue and 11th Street in downtown Altoona advertised an adult meal consisting of a Big Chef burger, french fries, apple turnover and a large soft drink for \$1.25. A kids meal of “fun” burger, small fries, dessert treat, a toy prize, and a small soft drink was \$0.80. Burger Chef was built on ground originally occupied by the Logan Valley Office building.



In September 1992, the chapter held their meeting at the top of the recently opened park. They plan to hold the chapter picnic at the Horseshoe Curve again this year in late August. Watch your mail for details.

UNDER THE WIRE

by Leonard Alwine

What’s big, orange, ivory and gray and travels the Altoona streets? It is Amtran’s newest bus, number 56, numbered after one of the trolleys in the last ride.

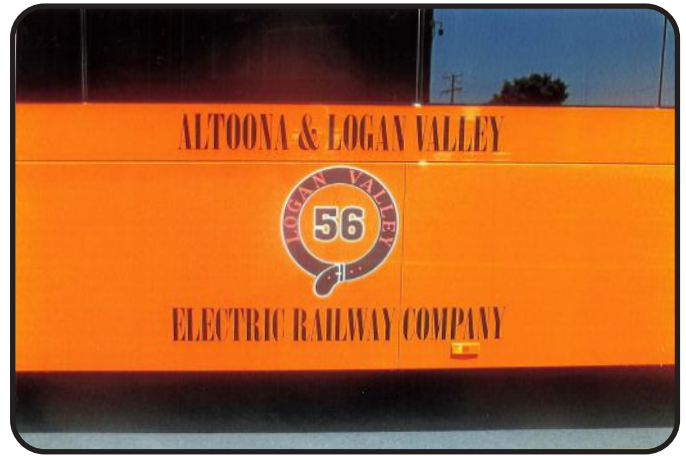
In late May 2024, Amtran took delivery of three new Gillig natural gas powered buses. Two of them were regular Amtran colors, but one was painted and lettered for Altoona and Logan Valley Electric Railway as an honor to that predecessor company and to help the community remember it’s past. It was even numbered after an old trolley to bring further resemblance of the past.

It looks great and is very bright when seen in the sunlight. It makes you think what the Altoona streets could look like “IF” Logan Valley had never gone out of business and all the buses would still look like this.

After some local adjustments and training for drivers, it is hoped and planned for this bus to begin traveling the bus route by mid June. So keep a lookout and remember Altoona's past transit heritage.



Bus #56 driver's side showing the old Logan Valley lettering



Closeup of the Logan Valley lettering on bus #56



Curbside of Bus #56 showing the different lettering on that side



A decal on the front of #56 resembling a trolley headlight

Bus #1024 showing the paint scheme for the other two buses in this order delivered in late May 2024.



REMEMBER WHEN? . . .

. . . the Loretto first came to Altoona and the Chapter members manned that car at Stanley Electric Company to show it off and raise funds to help pay for the expenses of purchasing the car and moving it to Altoona?

This was before the railroad museum was finished. Here, a much younger Dick Charlesworth, gets ready to show some children through the car. The photo is undated but believed to have been taken in the late 1970's. Anyone know?

