



Official Newsletter
of



NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1361

Altoona, PA 16603-1361

www.hscnrhs.org

SPRING 2015

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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 one day after the PRR-NYC merger), evolving from the Altoona Railway Museum Club (1965-1968). We meet on FOURTH Tuesday of each month except December, at Railroader's Memorial Museum, Altoona, PA, 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 Chapter Historian/Editor.

Meetings are open to those interested in railroad history and membership inquiries are invited. Chapter-only membership is available but national membership dues are separate. For more information visit www.nrhs.com.

People fight to restore **the East Broad Top Railroad** via WJAC-TV February 5, 2015



Updated: Thursday, February 5 2015, 06:46 PM EST. Note: This report was supplemented by two television videos about the **East Broad Top Railroad** on this date at 6 & 11 PM, also.

By: Erin Calandra HUNTINGDON, Pa. -- Railroads were – and still are – an important part of life in central Pennsylvania. They shaped the history of the state and the country. For many who are interested in historic trains, places like the **East Broad Top Railroad** in Huntingdon County are critical to preserve that bridge to the past. Huntingdon County houses a historical gem – **The East Broad Top Railroad**. It's recognized by the National Park Service as a National Historic Landmark, but what was once a bustling industrial rail turned tourist attraction, is now a silent railroad. People came from all across the globe to ride these massive, old steam engines. You can still find a steam engine or two across the country, but experts say you won't find anything like the **East Broad Top Railroad**, saying it's the last railroad system of its kind still intact. And now, a lot of people are fighting to keep it that way. "I like to think of it as the Humpty Dumpty story," said Joe Kovalchick, owner of the **East Broad Top Railroad**. "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall, all the king's horses and all the king's men, couldn't get Humpty Dumpty together again." Kovalchick, an entrepreneur from Indiana County, feels the nursery rhyme best describes to possible future of the railroad. "If East Broad Top starts to liquidate, it's a one-way show, it's a one-way tour it will never be again," said Kovalchick.

Experts say this is a piece of American history that can't be replaced. "The **East Broad Top Railroad** is described by the Smithsonian Institute as the best preserved example of a 1900-era facility anywhere in the country," said Historian Lee Rainey. The operation contains six steam engines, built in the early 1900s, many on site, along with a building that houses forgotten technology. Rainey said this place is a snapshot of what the railroad and coal industry looked like turn of the (20th) century. This rail was built in 1859; 32 miles of narrow gage rails were used to haul coal during a very busy industrial era for Pennsylvania. Kovalchick's father bought it in 1956 and the family preserved it for six decades. "Everything is there," said Kovalchick. "The engines, coaches, cars, shops, roadhouse, office, black smith shop. All intact." During that time, the **East Broad Top Railroad** ran 2-3 engines at a time, bringing 150,000 to 250,000 tourists annually to the tiny town of Orbisonia – population: 422.

"In this small community, that was a big deal, still is a big deal," said Matt Price, executive director of the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau. But due to finances and liability, the Kovalchick family stopped the train rides in 2009 and leased the

operation to a nonprofit group – The **East Broad Top Railroad Preservation Association** – run by Larry Salon. “That was the first railroad they took me to, in 1964 was my first train ride ever and I fell in love with this place,” said Salon. The lease was short lived – only three years – and in 2012 the railroad once again fell silent. Kovalchick said the decision was difficult. “Sometimes I feel it’s not worth the risks for my family,” said Kovalchick. He remains hopeful that money will be found to put the trains back on the track. “The focus was to get some grants, state federal money to restore it and that hasn’t happened yet,” said Kovalchick. And this train town is feeling the pain financially, and emotionally. “We had four bed and breakfasts,” said Price. “We’re down to just two.” This community was built around **the East Broad Top Railroad and Coal Company**,” said David Brightbill, owner of the The Iron Rail bed and breakfast. “You would be hard pressed to go door-to-door and find a family not tied to the railroad.” Brightbill owns one of the two remaining bed and breakfasts – The Iron Rail. He bought the house 10 years ago from the East Broad Top Company. It sits right across from the train station. Brightbill said when the steam engines were operating, all five rooms of his home were sold out most weekends. But now, they’re rarely full. “We are lucky to keep our head above water, but question how long we wish to continue,” said Brightbill.

Kovalchick said the railroad is only sleeping. He wants to see it as a state or federal attraction with restored engines and bustling tourism. “I’ve seen federal and state spend a lot of money on history much less important than East Broad Top,” said Kovalchick. Salone is trying to buy the railroad, and has already purchased four miles of rail in Mount Union for industrial use, something he said will help play for the tourism operations in the long run. Kovalchick won’t say how much it will cost to reopen, but he, Salone, and historians fear that without public support and government funding, this railroad could be lost forever. “It’s not a carnival, it’s not a toy,” said Kovalchick. “It’s a real, honest to goodness American railroad heritage experience.” So, when will **the East Broad Top Railroad** wake from its sleep? Salone said he has high hopes you’ll be able to step aboard by 2016. There are hundreds of people from several different organizations that are working to keep the system maintained (especially the Friends of the East Broad Top RR, who have worked diligently for decades to maintain, repair and stabilize the historic shops, buildings and equipment).



Altoona Association of Model Railroaders representatives don their bow-ties: L-R: William Burket, Justin Rogers, and Jeffery Holland.

STATE LEADERS REQUEST INPUT ON RAIL PLANS

As published in the Altoona Mirror, February, 17, 2015, public input was requested into proposed changes for Amtrak's Harrisburg – Pittsburgh route, referred to as the Keystone West corridor, with the intent of expanding rail passenger services. Information regarding this proposal can be found at www.planthekeystone.com and then checking under tabs "resources" and "keystone west". Comment on the proposal can be sent to kestonewest@planthekeystone.com.

Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS is now approaching its 47th year (May 11) and has born witness to all the changes in passenger operations in the region over these many years. Accordingly, we drafted a comment (approved at the February 24th monthly meeting) and submitted our observation, which follows:

"AMTRAK – KEYSTONE WEST COMMENTARY February 29, 2015

The Horseshoe Curve Chapter, National Railway Historical Society www.hscnrhs.org was chartered on May 11, 1968 following its un-affiliated existence dating from 1965. The tenure of our organization has been witness to the

ending years of the Pennsylvania Railroad; the short duration of Penn-Central Transportation Co.; the whole of Consolidated Rail Corporation (CONRAIL); present day Norfolk Southern Corporation in Pennsylvania; and, Amtrak.

During this time we began to witness the downgrading of passenger services, followed by the gradual elimination of passenger trains, especially in the period of Penn Central's bankruptcy. The PCRR bankruptcy and accrued petitions for passenger train abolishments, led to the development of Amtrak (National Rail Passenger Act) May 1, 1971. While this permitted railroads to divest themselves of the obligation of providing passenger services, this retrenchment also resulted in eliminating routes and services, forcing passengers accustomed to such travel conveniences, to seek alternative methods. Left behind were many established routes & cities, resulting in timetables representing a fraction of routes and services the public was accustomed to. While interstate highways and air travel was part of the issue initially, the corridors of rail transportation across the United States became significantly under-utilized for mass transit. In western Pennsylvania, the once four-track mainline was reduced to two tracks for economic efficiencies (3 for the mountain west of Altoona), but also reduced capacity at the same time. The former 4-track mainline formerly accommodated 50+ passenger trains daily, maintaining schedules with reliability, while regular freight trains (and defense traffic in WWII) was maintained with quality performance [primarily because passenger and freight operations were separated on the 4-track mainline], all of this with manual control systems in place. In the 21st Century, the cost of highway and airline fuels has escalated the cost of travel significantly enough to make rail passenger services more desirable, especially with destination arrivals and departures conveniently located in city-centers.

Today, the western Pennsylvania corridor is still physically present, but any passenger train still must contend with slower freight traffic on the line, especially during periods of track maintenance. You may hear that the route lacks "capacity" which is true, but only because that prior capacity was removed. But the corridor remains. We do acknowledge the need to serve the student population density of Pennsylvania State University at State College, PA. , but are also reminded that passenger services in the peak-passenger train-era provided for shuttle connections at Lewistown. This was functional because the railroad maintained schedule reliability. Reliable shuttle service could be established once again at Lewistown and Tyrone.

In summation, the need and the demand for increased passenger services is there. The corridor is intact although minus some capacity. We recommend utilizing the existing corridor, possibly adding one track for the capacity. The concept of major line-straightening is probably cost-prohibitive, considering the advancements in railroad technology, which, among other things has eliminated the use of jointed-rail in favor of welded rail and improved signaling and digital/satellite communications. A further cost reduction might include the use of alternative passenger equipment such as the self-propelled DMU (Diesel Multiple Units as

developed by the former Colorado Rail Car Co., now under United States Rail Car Co., similar to the former technology of the Budd RDC (Rail Diesel Car).

Respectfully submitted:

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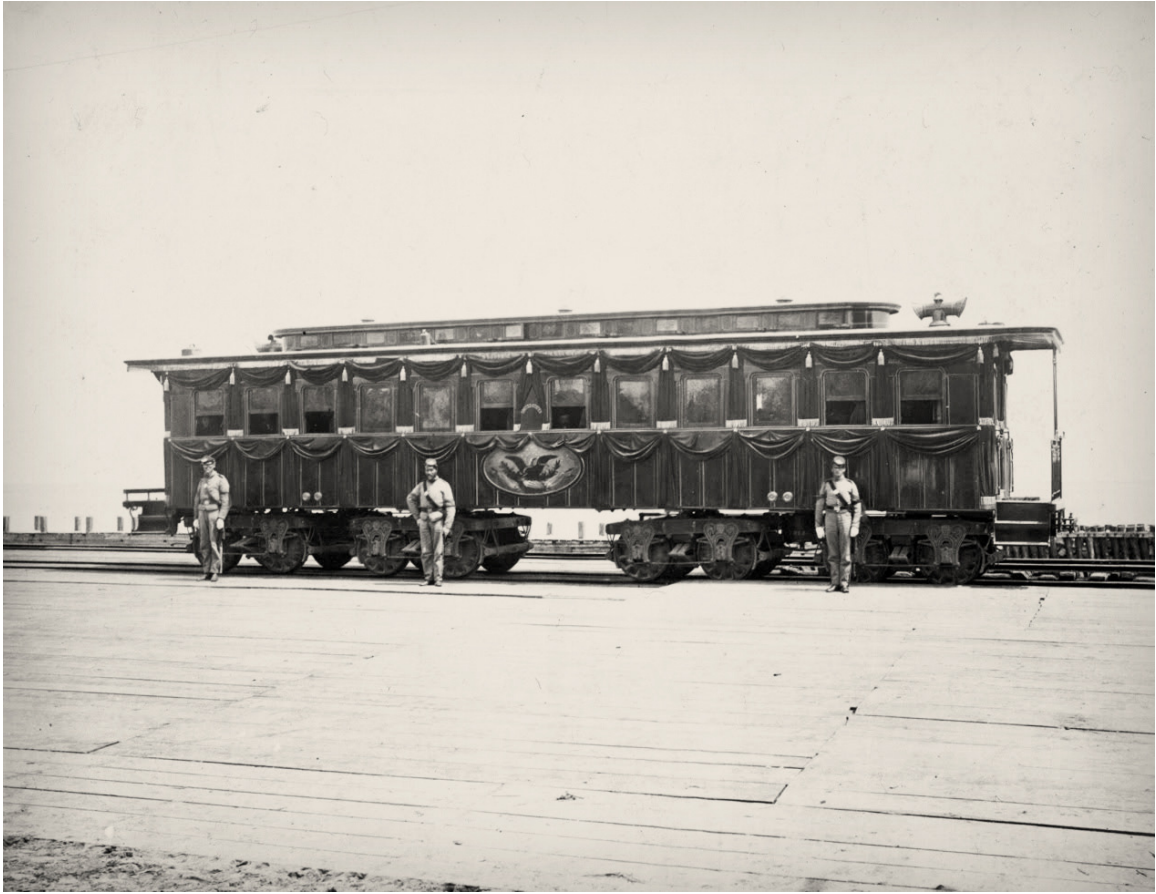
www.hscnrhs.org “

NRHS CONVENTION 2015

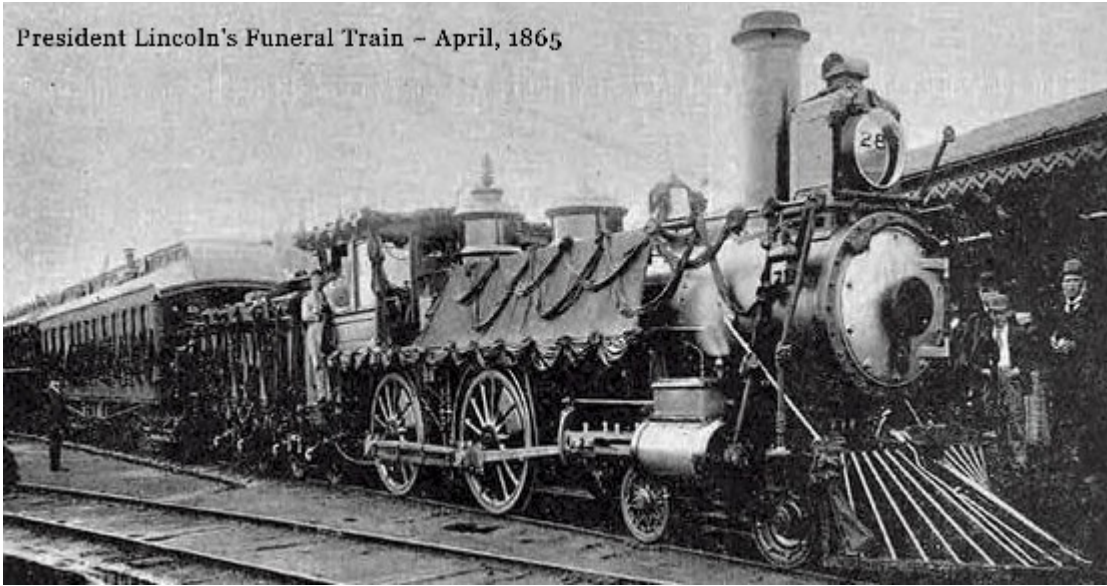
Plans have been formulated for the annual convention of the National Railway Historical Society this year in Vermont, which is handy to the east coast particularly. For more information, go to: www.nrhs.com/2015_Convention.

LINCOLN FUNERAL TRAIN

APRIL 2015 WILL BE THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN, AND THE JOURNEY ABOARD HIS FUNERAL TRAIN TO SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS. A NOTEWORTHY PROJECT HAS BEEN UNDERWAY TO RE-CONSTRUCT A REPLICA OF THE FUNERAL TRAIN, ESPECIALLY THE LOCOMOTIVE AND COACH WHICH TRANSPORTED LINCOLN'S BODY. THE LOCOMOTIVE HAS BEEN MANUFACTURED BY THE SAME COMPANY WHICH UNVEILED THE OPERATIONS AT NEW FREEDOM, YORK COUNTY, PA, IN 2014.



President Lincoln's Funeral Train - April, 1865





THE INTENT IN 2015 IS TO RE-TRACE THE ROUTE, ALTHOUGH DUE TO THE CONSTRAINTS OF MODERN RAILROADING, MUCH OF THE JOURNEY WILL BE BY TRUCK. FOLLOWING THE RE-ENACTMENT CEREMONY IN ILLINOIS, THE LINCOLN FUNERAL TRAIN MAY VISIT MULTIPLE CITIES WHOSE COMMUNITIES ARE ABLE TO SPONSOR ITS APPEARANCE.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT WWW.THE2015LINCOLNFUNERALTRAIN.COM . ONCE ACCESSED, YOU WILL FIND MORE SPECIFIC INFORMATION IF YOU SWITCH TO THE PROJECT'S FACEBOOK PAGE.

NOTE: THE GROUP IS SEEKING DONATIONS FOR THIS EFFORT. HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS VOTED AT THE FEBRUARY MEETING TO FORWARD A DONATION OF \$100.00.

2015 DUES

National and Chapter dues for 2015 are now past-due. If you are somewhat perplexed, please note that National Dues for 2015 were best renewed on-line at www.nrhs.com while Chapter dues (\$15.00 individual, \$17.00 family) should be sent in separately to Chapter Treasurer Denny Walls (page 1). Some may be "chapter-only" members. No notices will be mailed for dues remittances.

CHAPTER PROJECTS

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER BEGAN A PROJECT FOR RAILROADER'S MEMORIAL MUSEUM RECENTLY, TO RE-BUILD TWO RAILWAY EXPRESSWAY AGENCY BAGGAGE CARTS WHICH WERE IN SERIOUS CONDITION. THUS FAR, VOLUNTEERS FRANK & RON GIVLER, JOE HARELLA, MARK YINGLING, DENNY WALLS AND DAVE SEIDEL HAVE REMOVED ALL WOOD FROM THE CARTS TO BE USED AS PATTERNS FOR REPLACEMENT MATERIAL; ALL METAL PARTS WILL BE RE-FINISHED,



REPAIRED, & REPLACED AS NEEDED. WOOD WILL BE REPLACED WITH TREATED LUMBER, AND STAINED DARK GREEN, WITH ALL METAL BRACING AND STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS BE PRIMED AND PAINTED SAFETY-RED, CONFORMING TO RAILWAY EXPRESS AGENCY'S COLOR SCHEME. WHEN COMPLETED, THE TWO CARTS WILL COMPLEMENT THE CHAPTER'S PRIOR RESTORATION OF A RAILWAY EXPRESS AGENCY BOXCAR WHICH IS ON PERMANENT LOAN TO RAILROADERS MEMORIAL MUSEUM, AS WELL AS THE FULL RESTORATION UNDERTAKEN BY THE CHAPTER OF THE MUSEUM'S 1940 [RAILWAY EXPRESS]CHEVROLET DELIVERY TRUCK, COMPLETED SEVERAL YEARS PRIOR.

PATIENTLY YOURS

AS HAS BEEN DISCUSSED AT CHAPTER MEETINGS, CHAPTER MEMBER LARRY G. McKEE, AS MOST OF US KNOW, IS A RETIRED "RADIOLOGIC TECHNOLOGIST" FROM A LOCAL HOSPITAL. DURING HIS 30+ YEARS, LARRY OBSERVED MANY OF OUR HUMAN CONDITIONS IN THE HOSPITAL SETTING AND, PUTTING TYPEWRITE-TO-PAPER (CARBON PAPER INCLUDED)*, HE PENNED A HOSPITAL COMEDY MANUSCRIPT WITH FAMILY-ORIENTED SLAP-STICK HUMOR. WHILE THE SCREEN-PLAY WAS COMPLETED ABOUT 1995, IT JUST NOW HAS THE DISTINCT POSSIBILITY OF BECOMING A REALITY AND A TRAILER HAS BEEN

PRODUCED WHICH WILL HOPEFULLY LEAD TO A FULL PRODUCTION AND ENTRY INTO THE FILM-FESTIVAL ARENA.

LARRY HAS BEEN AN AVID MOTION-PICTURE BUFF FOR MANY YEARS AND HAS REGALED US WITH ANECDOTES ON THE INDUSTRY MOST OF THAT TIME. WE WISH HIM WELL IN THIS VENTURE WHICH IS TAKING SHAPE WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF SOME GREAT LOCAL TALENT UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF KIRK V. LEIDY.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CHECK WWW.PATIENTLYYOURSFILM.COM OR GOOGLE THE TITLE. IT HAS BEEN FEATURED ON WTAJ-TV's DAWN PELLAS SHOW AND HAS BEEN AIRING DURING THE MONTH OF MARCH ON THE ALTOONA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT'S ACCESS CHANNEL 14 ON ATLANTIC BROAD BAND.

- **CARBON PAPER WAS AN INSERT ON TYPEWRITERS WHICH PRODUCED ONE OR MORE DUPLICATE COPIES OF THE TEXT. ...FOR YOU YOUNGER READERS.**



JIM GREGORY INTERVIEWS LARRY MCKEE AND MICHAEL MANFRED ABOUT THE MOVIE PATIENTLY YOURS – PUBLIC ACCESS TV



CONGRATULATIONS !

SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS TO CHAPTER SECRETARY, JOE DeFRANCESCO ON HIS RECENT APPOINTMENT TO BE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE BLAIR COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY HISTORY CENTER AT BAKER MANSION, ALTOONA, PA. JOE, AS MOST OF US KNOW, IS A RECENT GRADUATE OF PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY WITH A BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE IN HISTORY CAPSTONE IN MUSEUM OPERATIONS WITH PRIOR EXPERIENCE IN RELATED DISCIPLINES AT RAILROADER'S MEMORIAL MUSEUM DURING HIS UNIVERSITY YEARS. WE WISH HIM WELL IN HIS NEW ENDEAVOR.

EVERETT RAILROAD COMPANY TO START EXCURSIONS IN 2015

AFTER MANY YEARS OF PREPARATION, THE LONG-AWAITED START OF PUBLIC EXCURSIONS ON THE EVERETT RAILROAD WILL BECOME A REALITY IN 2015.

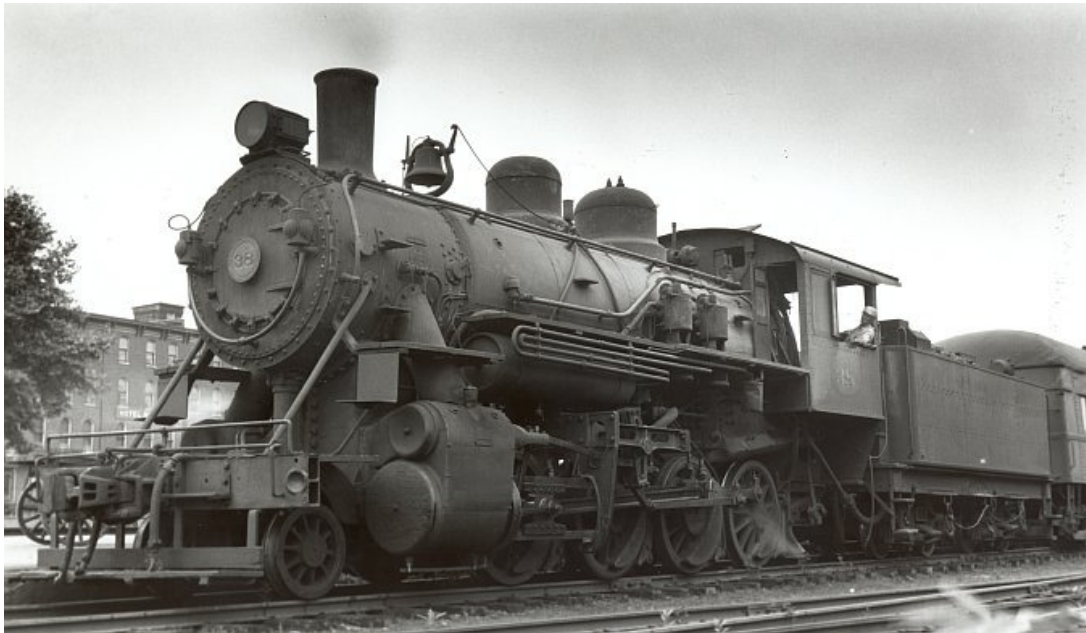
LONG ANTICIPATED, THE EVERETT RR HAS BEEN DEVELOPING THE RESOURCES TO MAKE REGULAR EXCURSIONS A REALITY, AND THE RAILROAD'S UNIQUE HISTORY IS THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF.

WHEN HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS RECEIVED ITS CHARTER ON MAY 11, 1968, THE NEAREST TOURIST RAILROAD OPERATION WAS THE THEN 'ORIGINAL' EVERETT RAILROAD IN ITS NAMESAKE TOWN OF EVERETT, PA. IN THOSE DAYS, IT WAS A SMALL FREIGHT OPERATION WITH A 44-TON DIESEL UNIT TO SERVICE LOCAL INDUSTRY SUCH AS EVERETT HARDWOODS, WITH AN INTERCHANGE WITH THE PENN CENTRAL RR. IN ADDITION, THERE WAS A STEAM POWERED TOURIST RAILROAD

OPERATION WHICH WE READILY PARTICIPATED WITH, IN CONJUNCTION WITH WHAT WAS THEN THE SOUTH PENN CHAPTER NRHS.

ADD TO THIS HISTORY, THE FACT THAT THE EVERETT RAILROAD THEN, AND NOW, IS THE DIRECT SUCCESSOR TO THE FORMER HUNTINGDON & BROAD MOUNTAIN RR (H&BTMRR), WHICH CEASED OPERATIONS IN 1954, BUT WITH THE NEW EVERETT RR OPERATING ON THE SOUTHERN 5 MILES OF THAT LINE, WHICH FORMERLY RAN FROM HUNTINGDON, PA TO EVERETT.

THE FORMER HUNTINGDON & BROAD TOP MOUNTAIN RR RIGHT-OF-WAY IN SUCCEEDING YEARS, WAS REMOVED, AND LARGE TRACTS WERE LOST WITH THE EXPANSION OF RAYSTOWN LAKE. HOWEVER, THE H&BTMRR HAD STEAM POWER, INCLUDING LOCOMOTIVE (No. 38) WHICH STILL SURVIVES TO THIS DAY AND, DESPITE, MULTIPLE OWNERSHIPS OVER THESE MANY YEARS, IT HAS NOW FOUND A HOME ON THE PRESENT DAY EVERETT RR, THE H&BTMRR'S DIRECT SUCCESSOR, AND, IT IS EXPECTED TO RETURN TO TOURIST TRAIN OPERATIONS ON THE EVERETT RR IN THE NEAR FUTURE, FOLLOWING A RE-BUILD AT THE SHOPS OF THE WESTERN MARYLAND SCENIC RR IN CUMBERLAND. IN ADDITION, THERE WILL BE A SECOND STEAM LOCOMOTIVE, No. 11,, WHICH WILL JOIN No. 38. [SEE PHOTOS].





HISTORICAL PHOTO OF NO. 11 ON THE BATH & HAMMONDSPORT (NY)

AS YOU KNOW, THE HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS HAS ENJOYED A GREAT ASSOCIATION WITH THE EVERETT RAILROAD FOR MANY YEARS, ESPECIALLY SINCE OUR ACQUISITION OF THREE FORMER ERIE LACKAWANNA COMMUTER CARS IN 1985. WE HAVE OPERATED A VARIETY OF CHARTER EXCURSIONS ON THE EVERETT RR SINCE THAT TIME, THE MOST NOTEWORTHY AND SUCCESSFUL BEING THE ANNUAL SANTA TRAINS WHICH OPERATED 2000 – 2014 INCLUSIVE. THESE OPERATIONS WILL NOW BECOME PART OF THE EVERETT RAILROAD COMPANY'S FIELD OF OPERATIONS AND WE ARE ALL WELCOME TO PARTICIPATE IN EXCURSIONS AS CAR HOSTS OR OTHER FUNCTIONS ONE MAY BE QUALIFIED FOR. THE CHAPTER COACHES WILL BE LEASED TO THE EVERETT RAILROAD WHILE OTHER VINTAGE PASSENGER CONVEYANCES ENTER SERVICE AS RESTORATIONS ARE COMPLETED. THE EVERETT RR IS ALSO CONSTRUCTING A NEW 'STATION' FACILITY IN HOLLIDAYSBURG WITH APPROPRIATE 'COMFORT FACILITIES' AND TRIPS WILL BE ANNOUNCED AS THE SEASON PROGRESSES.

THE HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS LOOKS FORWARD TO OUR CONTINUED ASSOCIATION WITH THE EVERETT RR THAT WE HAVE ENJOYED THESE MANY YEARS. FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT WWW.EVERETTRAILROAD.COM .

SCALEFEST

REMINDER, AS PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED: THE SEMI-ANNUAL TOY TRAIN SWAP MEET (SCALEFEST) WILL BE HELD ON SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 2015 AT THE ALTOONA-BLAIR COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER, ONE CONVENTION CENTER DRIVE, ALTOONA, PA ON SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 2015 FROM 9 AM TO 2 PM. THE DATE ALSO COINCIDES WITH PALM SUNDAY BUT THIS WAS THE ONLY FACILITY DATE AVAILABLE. A MODEST ADMISSION OF \$5.00 IS CHARGED. CHILDREN FREE. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL RON KENNEDY (814) 696-9671. TRAIN SET GIVEAWAY AND OPERATING TRAIN LAYOUT DURING THE MEET.

