

Official Newsletter
of



NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1361
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DPRING-SUMMER 2017

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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 ten days 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.

This edition of the newsletter has been problematic! Drafted in almost complete form about one month prior to this typing, the newsletter was inadvertently deleted and this edition will be re-created version. The process was a very disconcerting experience, particularly since I have been involved in the Chapter's newsletter effort for about 90% of the Chapter's 49 years, dating from primitive methodology (typewriters and tencils via mimeograph reproduction, pre-computer, a much more labor intensive process. Fortunately the paper versions are intact for reference purposes. As the 50-year mark looms, it is evidence of the many accomplishments of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter for the last half-century in Altoona, especially in the preservation of railroad history and the continual development of Railroaders Memorial Museum, which was part of our original mission. As we know, many of the original people are no longer with us, most of whom are unknown to most members today. As we enter the month of March when we observe Memorial Day, please pause to remember those who have gone before us as the list would fill another newsletter. To assist in this effort, please refer to the Chapter's webpage for which has been recently revised to include some content known as Memorable Moments from the past section formerly contained in an earlier webpage effort which were recently located in old files by former webmaster Christopher J. Behe which he was able to share with us. The files will enable you to review activities and meet our members of prior years, and provide a time-line of our own history. On the current chapter's webpage www.hscnrhs.org, you will find the historical content under **Information**, rather than under the Archives heading on the home page. Enjoy ! Many thanks for Chris Behe for locating these lost files and to these files, and to Joe DeFrancesco for incorporating the content

In present tense for our enjoyment.

CIRCUS IN THE NEWS

May of each year is typically the time of year when we, in Altoona, would have the opportunity of viewing the passage of the Ringling Brothers and Barnumb and Bailey Circus train through this city. Unfortunately this will not happen this year. In 2016, the circus train left the Arena in Hershey PA enroute to Tulsa OK. This past Sunday, CBS Sunday morning news reported a segment on the Circus, which happened to include a view of the famous circus train passing over Horseshoe Curve west of Altoona. To enjoy this news segment, go to www.youtube.com and search for content under CBS Sunday morning News for April 30, 2017 NS AND THE CONTENT UNDER Ringling Bros Circus Train. Most enjoyable but a sad chapter in the history of this world famous circus which criss-crossed the United States by rail.

Locally, as you may be familiar, we note the anniversary of the wreck of the Walter C. Main circus train wreck near Tyrone, P, a sad occasion for May 31, 1893. The 2017 observance will be on May 21, 10 A.M. at the wreck sight in Tyrone, PA. Contact Larry McKee/ for more information. Larry is President of the local Circus Fans of America “tent.” RWe also recommend the paperback book “Unscheduled Stop” by Paula Zitzler & Susie O’Brien via the Tyrone Area Historical Society.



Conductor William C. Snyder, Walter Main Circus Train Wreck, Tyrone, PA., May 31, 1893. Mr. Snyder was the great-grandfather of Mark Smith, brother-in-law to Chapter President Frank Givler.

The PRR felt train had sufficient engine

power for the number of cars for the train to descend the mountain, but failed to realize that circus cars were almost twice as long as normal passenger equipment of the day. Following the catastrophe near the bottom of the mountain north the town of Tyrone, the citizens of Tyrone came to the aid of all circus and train personnel. As well as help round up the many animals.

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Ringling Btos & Barnum & Bailey train westbound, Altoona, PA May 2016 to Horseshoe Curve.



Peceding: Ringling Bros. & Barnum & Bailey Circus train passing through Altoona, PA, May 2016. As most of us know, RB&BB Circus at one time had three such train sets traversing continental United States: The Red, Blue and Gold Units representing a huge fleet of rail passenger equipment, must of which was obtained with the general demise of rail passenger service at the start of Amtrak and the dissolution of other Class 1 passenger fleets pre01971, representing the best of coach, sleeping cars,parlor, & specialty baggage and related equipment, usually comprising a 40 car consist and a crew to match. The most remarkable of museums on this topic is to be found at the Ringling Bros and Barnum & Baily museum in Sarasota FL which can only be described as remarkable and should be on everyone's "bucket list". Especially if you are headed to Disney World at any future time. You won't be disappointed by the detour from the Orlando area to Sarasota. Enjoy and have a bog of popcorn! We also recommend exploring www.youtube.com for excellent videos on the circus and circus train.

In addition, recent news indicates that Ringling Bros. & Barnum & Bailey will simulcast/stream their LAST AND FINAL performance of May 21. 20217 on Facebook although it is not known if it will feature the circus train. It is reported this will remain available for a 'short period of time' but not indefinitely. It will bear monitoring also in You Tube which is a tremendous resource for such projects, e.g., "circus train". History is in the making both with the circus as we knew it in the United States and the massive undertaking of loading and un-loadingof a 40 car circus train. Although much of the problem can be attributed to eliminating elephants in particular and other animal acts in general, the impact on this domestic entertainment venue and all things allied to it is unmistakable. Families of future generations will not get to enjoy the experiences we, as present-day consumers came to enjoy from childhood to adulthood. Take note, because a whole element of our culture is disappearing before our eyes.

Apparently the final RB&BB circus on May 21 will be streamed on Facebook in its entirety !
[Sorry this information is not timely due to re-construction efforts on this newsletter.]

Forest Fire Season Near Horseshoe Curve

The advent of Spring, in and near Altoona, can be one of the prime forest fire seasons also in the period between the end of snow/rain and dry weather preceding the appearance of new foliage growth on the trees and Spring 2017 was no exception. In the area of Horseshoe Curve and vicinity, this year was no exception with evidence of much accumulation of dry ground cover. The scenes below show some of the activity in the area of Sugar Run, slightly west of the 'horseshoe'. Forest Service helicopters labored to dunk and drop water from nearby Lake Altoona in the bowl of the Horseshoe but crews are well equipped to address the situations as they occur.





Trains continue to operate while fire crews address the situation.

EVERETT RAILROAD NEWS

Mr. Alan Maples, President & CEO of the Everett Railroad addresses the March 17 meeting of the Blair County Genealogical Society, Hollidaysburg, PA and proved the societies members and guests with a very informative sigital slide presentation on the Everett Railroad's opeitions in and around Hollidaysburg, PA.



Mr. Alan Maples addresses Blair Co. Genealogical Society



Seated at table: Larry Lear, Mark Yingling, Joe Harella, Larry McKee. Photos and articles: David Seidel Harley Burket is at rear, but not visible in this view.

A delegation of members from the Horseshoe Curve Chapter, National Railway Historical Society attend Mr. Maples informative presentation. As most within the Chapter know, we have had a long association with the Everett Railroad since our Chapter's origination with tourist operations in Blair and Bedford counties, allied with the Everett RR's



re-birth at the time of the Penn Central Railroad's bankruptcy (early 1970's) impact for interchange in the early 70's, that development resulted in Mr. Maples subsequent ownership of the Everett and geographical relocation to Blair County. We, as a Chapter of the NRHS, subsequently purchased three coaches in 1985 which enabled us to develop an excursion affiliation with the Everett which endures in

modified form to this day. Mr. Maples remarks were very informative and entertaining as usual, and he is to be commended for his foresight and business acumen for his long-range vision of what the Everett could become as a successful shortline railroad operation, with Hollidaysburg as its focal point, but also serving the industrial and agricultural region south of Hollidaysburg. Historically, the Everett RR line also serves Roaring Spring, PA which has the only original PRR station remaining in Blair County, which is carefully maintained by the Roaring Spring Historical Society and is an excursion destination on occasion. The EVRR www.everettailroad.com as most of us know. Began steam operations began in 2016 and the railroad has invested heavily in facilities, and infrastructure improvements at considerable expense and has become the focal point for tourism and dependable freight operations for shippers to interchange with Norfolk Southern RR and all national markets.



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CONGRATULATIONS !

To chapter member Leonard E. Alwine who, as we know, is a regular columnist in this newsletter for his Under The Wire series keeping us informed with news on the trolley and traction and motor coach history of the region. On April 1,, 2017,

Leonard retired from Forsht Concrete Products Co. after 40 years service.

Although we also wish Leonard a good rest, we also encourage he, and wife Diane, to travel and enjoy activities in his field of interest which has been chronicled in this newsletter for many years.

UNDER THE WIRE

by

Leonard E. Alwine

TROLLEYS FIGHTING FIRE

Were trolleys ever used to fight fires? Yes, especially in the larger cities.

Over the years I have read many books on fire fighting and also books about trolleys. The library used to have lots of these, but they are now no longer on the shelves and are most likely 80 plus years out of print. But a funny event April 1st got me thinking about these two items and this short article is the result of that thinking and Dave's prodding about getting articles in for the next Coal Bucket.

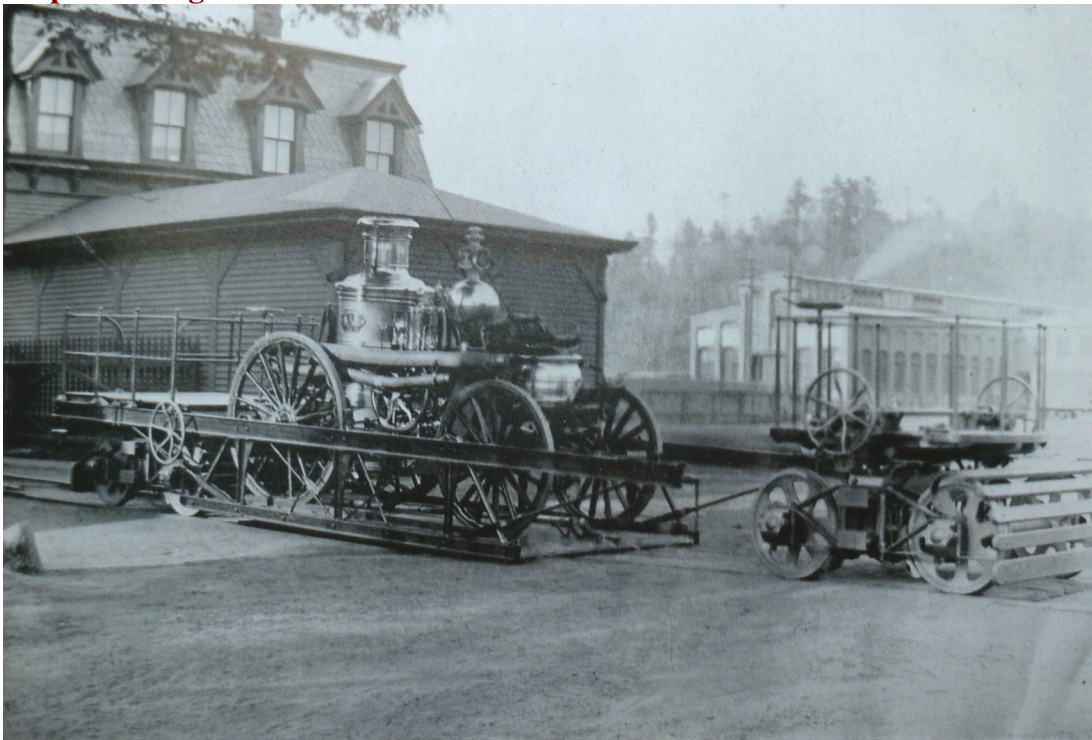
On April 1st, one of the television channels did a whole day long tribute to the 3 stooges. April Fools Day you know. Now I did not watch the whole day's programming, but one show that I did watch had the stooges fighting fire. Of course they went to the fire and laid their fire hose across the street from their truck

to the fire. In typical stooges' comedy, a trolley car came down the street and ran over the hose cutting it into three pieces which could no longer be used to carry water.

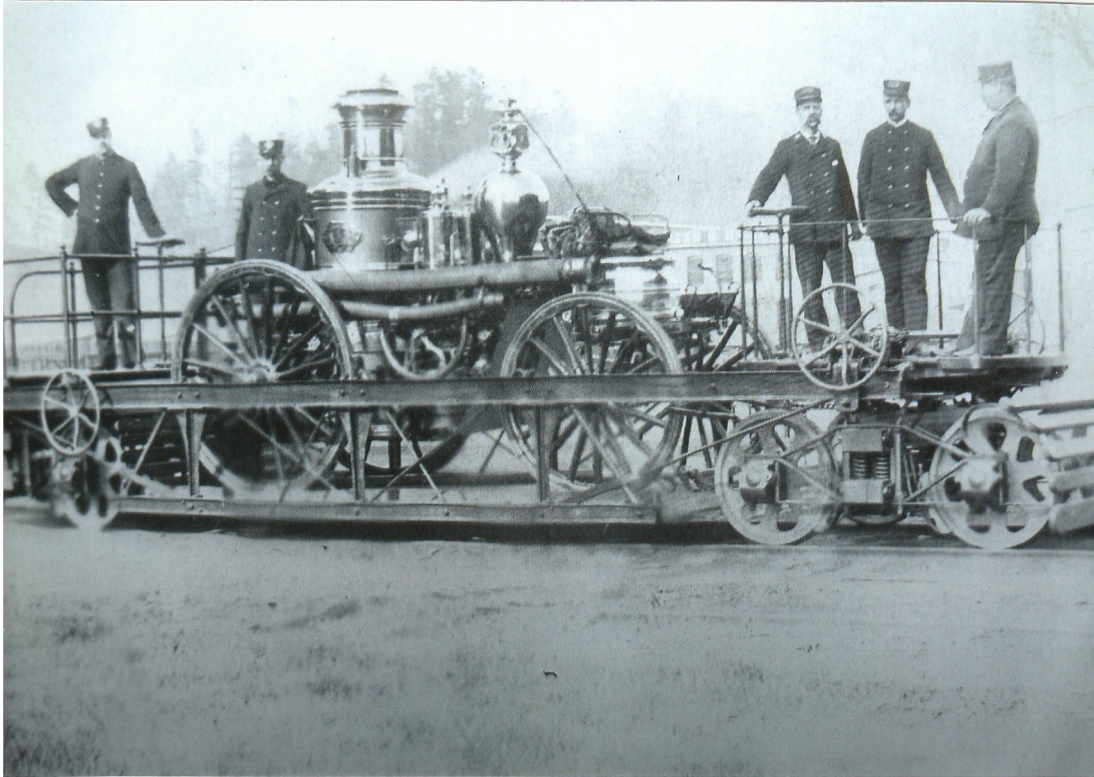
It made me think about a photo I saw in a book about almost the same thing but different. A PCC car was going under a hose line that had been stretched across the street, but higher above the trolley line. The conductor was watching the pole while firemen were holding the hose out from the wire for the car to pass under. It made me wonder since the wire had power, the hose had water and the men were the ground how safe that practice really could be?

But, really in larger cities, trolleys were used to fight fires in different ways. Sometimes they carried men to 2nd and 3rd alarms after all the fire trucks had left the stations. (This practice is still used in New York City using buses.)

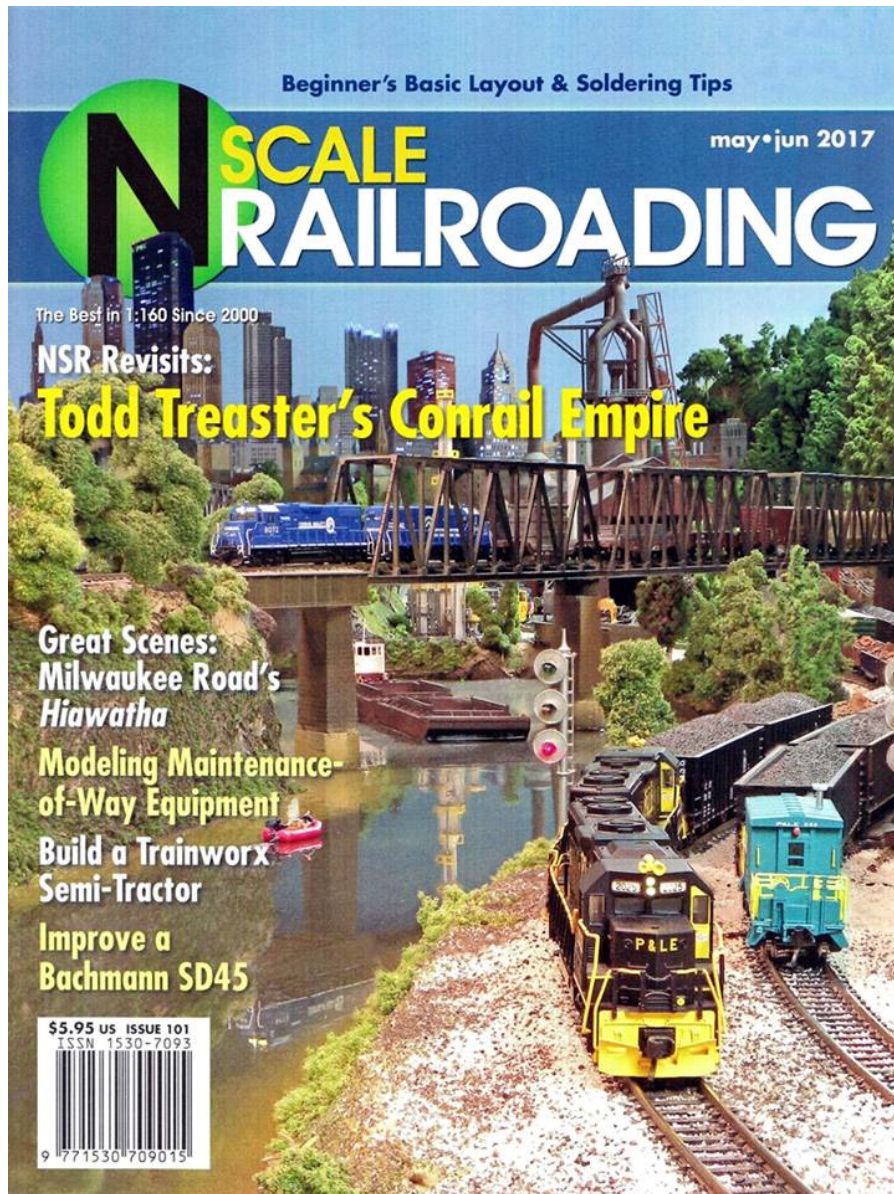
Another trolley that was used from time to time was the sprinkler car. Most trolley lines were required by cities to have these cars to help clean the streets. They had water tanks usually 500 to 1000 gallons in size and pumps. They also had fire hose connections because they got their water from the city fire hydrants to flush the streets. So if a major fire broke out near a trolley line and the hydrants would freeze up or break during a fire, the trolley could be brought in to supply water and did so many times in larger cities before tank trucks were invented by the fire companies. Another use was to have a trolley car actually pull a piece of horse drawn equipment up hills or through snow or mud when the horses could no longer keep it moving.



Probably the most radical piece of trolley equipment every built was for the Springfield Massachusetts Fire Department. It was built when the city was getting larger and the horses could no longer make the longer distant runs to fires on the outskirts of the city. It was similar to a low boy trailer and was built by the Wason Car Manufacturing Company in 1897. It was over 30 feet long and weighed 7 tons. Once the steam pumper was placed on the unit and the front truck reattached a trolley car was hooked to it and quickly pulled it to the part of the city where the fire was located.



Yes, trolleys played a rather unique part in the early days of firefighting.



Congratulations to Norfolk Southern Engineer Todd Treaster for the recent article in N Scale Railroading. Todd has a remarkable N-Gauge collection at his home in Burnham, PA – near Lewistown. Todd is a locomotive engineer, mostly on the helpers out of Altoona as many of us know and formerly piloted the Norfolk Southern Executive Train for many years. He is also an accomplished railroad artist in his own right. Uh, yes, the house was designed around the train layout, which, in N-gauge, is quite spectacular. When it comes to N-Scale, Todd is pretty close to having one of everything...locomotives and cars.

GET WELL WISHES

To Chapter friend and, Coal Bucket Editor briefly in the 1970's..Mike Albanese. Mike has early stage leukemia and receiving treatment and seems to be in good spirits !

