



Official Newsletter  
of



NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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[www.hscnrhs.org](http://www.hscnrhs.org)

WINTER 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](http://www.nrhs.com).

PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD's

## RED ARROW

TRAIN NO. 68

DETROIT to NEW YORK

FEBRUARY 18, 1947-2017

70<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

of

WRECK on BENNINGTON CURVE

WEST OF ALTOONA, PA

By

David Seidel

Almost everyone who follows the history of the Pennsylvania Railroad, or who is an Altoona-area resident (young or old) has heard of the Wreck of the Red Arrow on Bennington Curve. The location is approximately 11 miles west of Altoona, PA or about 4 miles west of world-famous Horseshoe Curve. It is all of those things, but is best described as about one mile east of the New Portage Tunnel at Gallitzin, PA, referred to as Bennington Curve. Bennington is the first curve east of the tunnel and is impressive geographically because of its elevation and appearance as an almost 90-degree turn to the right moving eastward and downhill from the tunnel. The Red Arrow was moving east on Track No. 2 (four-track railroad era).

According to the ICC Report (Interstate Commerce Commission), the federal agency which investigated the accident, the authorized speed was approximately 35 mph, but it is estimated that eastbound Train No. 68, The Red Arrow – on February 18, 1947, was moving at almost twice that speed. At the point of derailment, the gradient was 1.73 % although it varies on approach.

The Red Arrow was powered that night by two Pennsylvania RR Class K-4 (Pacific Class) locomotives, with engine 422 in the lead and 3771 second. With the exception of Michael S/Billig, engineman on lead locomotive # 422, other engine personnel perished in the accident.

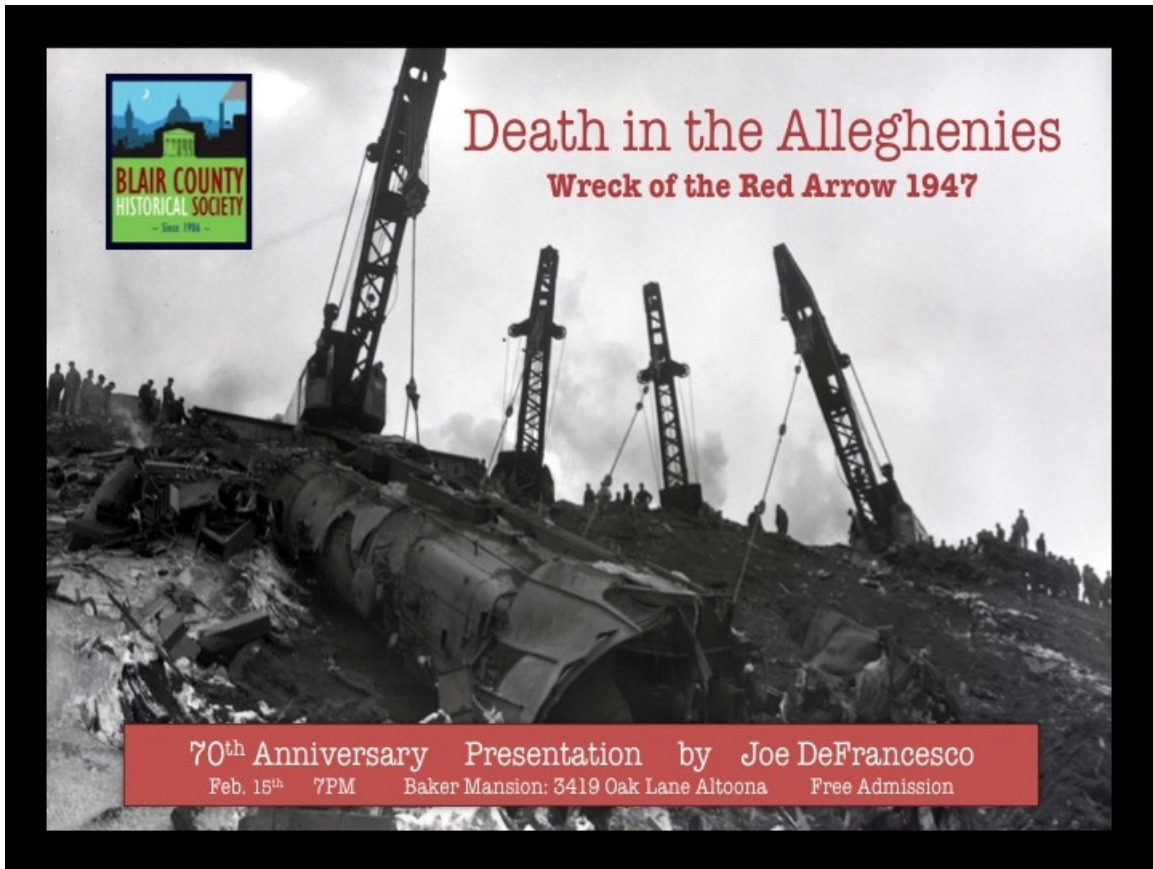
After an exhaustive investigation by the Interstate Commerce Commission, mechanical or structural failures were eliminated, with the conclusion of excessive speed being attributed to the throttle inadvertently moving from closed to open position just prior to the crash.

This tragedy resulted in significant loss of life and injuries, and significantly damaged the Pennsylvania Railroads public image for speed, comfort and safety in

**its passenger operations, at a time just prior to the effort to modernize the passenger fleet in 1948, which new light-weight equipment often referred to as the “Fleet of Modernism”.**



**Sleeping cars of the Red Arrow in Gum Tree Hollow below  
Bennington Curve.**



**Tentative:**

**TELEVISION SPECIAL COVERAGE  
WJAC-TV 6 – ALTOONA/JOHNSTOWN  
FRIDAY  
APRIL 17, 2017  
SEGMENTS WILL BE ADDED TO  
REGULAR NEWS BROADCASTS**

**24 Passengers Killed  
140 Injured  
3 Engine Crew Killed  
6 Railway Post Office Employees Killed**

**Our intent with this retrospective is to remember the victims on this 70<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary of the tragedy, whom we list as follows:**

**In Memoriam**

**Passengers**

**Innocenza Brunnati, 61, Wyandotte, MI  
Julia Bush, 50, Camden NJ  
Lura DeJaiffe, 37, Toledo, OH  
John A. Drumm, 23, Dubois, PA  
Dorothy English, 20, Midland, MI  
Bertha B. Kazmark, 53, Matawan, NJ  
Theodore F. Kitteredge, 27, Baltimore, MD  
John V. Lanese, 29, Brooklyn, NY  
Ann Phillips, 27, Detroit, MI  
Michelina Samaritana, 40, Detroit, MI  
George H. Stacy, 18, Toledo, OH  
Oliver Steinhart, 5, Tiffin OH  
Sadie J. Taylor, 69, New Castle, DE  
Frank S. Turek, 36, Altoona, PA  
Beatrice White, 54, Bridgeton. NJ**

***Locomotive Crew Members***

**Ralph K. Henry, 28, Derry, PA  
Michael E. McArdle, 66, Scottsdale, PA  
John M. Parascak, 28, Bellwood, PA**

***Railway Mail Clerks***

**Homer C. Bohner, 46, Lemoyne, PA  
George C. Bowman, 48, Tyrone, PA  
Harland L. Bowman, 52, Mechanicsburg, PA  
Byron M. Jakeman, 40, Philadelphia, PA  
Philip J. Leiden, 64, Altoona, PA  
William H. Moore, 51, Pittsburgh, PA**



- *Engineer Michael Billig was critically injured by scalding and chest-crush injuries,, but eventually returned to duty, working into the Penn Central RR-era and diesel Locomotives , ultimately retiring with 50 years service. In retirement, he died at Age 89 in Melbourne, FL on Oct 18, 1982, and is interred at Altoona, PA*
  - *. Michael S. Billig (&all engine crew personnel ) were held blameless as a result of the accident investigation, but those results were not announced until May 1947, long after the incident faded from front page news.*
- Conductor: G. R. Harshberger (in rear of train at time of derailment).*

*Dining Car Waiter James A. Corbett of Altoona was sitting in the dining car with trainman R. A. Newshouse, when the train de-railed. Mr. Corbett is particularly memorialized at Railroader's Memorial Museum in Altoona with an audio-visual – oral history program, detailing his experiences as the dining car slide down the 250 ft. embankment on its side. Mr. Corbett passed away at age 84 at his Altoona home December 18, 1997. His railroad service concluded with retirement as a waiter for Amtrak in 1979.*

*For more information, please review the reports of the Interstate Commerce Commission's reports, available online, but the definitive work is the book "Wreck of the Red Arrow – An American Train Tragedy" by Dennis P. McIlnay. Unfortunately this book is out-of-print but is found in most local libraries. Mr. McIlnay's research and reporting humanizes the incident beyond the "facts",, and your newsletter editor highly recommends it.*

*Note, the third car from the rear, which remained upright, was the Pullman sleeping car "Francis Hopkinson". This car survived into the 1970's when your editor photographed it in Juniata Scales Yard awaiting scrapping or conversion to Maintenance of Way use.*

### **PRR – SUNSHINE SPECIAL 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

***Killed: 1 Pullman Porter;12 passengers and 1 train-service employee were injured.***

***Train No. 3, the First Class Sunshine Special consisted of lead locomotive # 5525 one baggage car, one sleeping car, three coaches, two sleeping cars, one diner, and five sleeping cars.***

**Just ten days after the wreck of PRR's crack RED ARROW [April 28, 1947, another passenger train suffered a malady in close proximity geographically. According to Interstate Commerce Commission & Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission reports, the westbound Sunshine Special, Train No. 3, had departed**

Altoona at 3:13 a.m. with helper # 1428 locomotive was coupled ahead of locomotive # 5525 to assist Train NO. 3 ascend the Allegheny Mountain Range to Gallitzin (tunnels) at the crest of the Eastern Continental Divide; However, due to inadequate steam pressure, the train stalled one mile east of Gallitzin at 3:54 a.m.. After a delay of 16 minutes, Train NO. 3 started west, at which time at which time the thirteenth car (last ]Pullman - Cascade Mirage]) became detached and began to move eastward out of control to a point 3.37 miles east of Gallitzin where it de-railed at 4:08a.m. It is noteworthy that the Pullman Porter realized the peril in the situation and attempted to engage the hand brake (unsuccessfully) to stop the car, but was killed in the effort. The Cascade Mirage de-railed at Brandimarte Curve, striking an embankment with the resulting casualties, but the porter's effort to apply the brake did help prevent a total runaway on the mountain which would have been more serious.

### **UNDER THE WIRE**

Leonard E. Alwine

### **THE LAST STOP**

Part 3 Amended

In this final segment of “The Last Stop”, we will look at a few “local” vehicles that have made to museums, “preserving” them for future generations to observe and to learn about our past. This edition will have a bright-shining spot and a few sad elements as well. But first we must clear up a spot in the last part three, two paragraphs were missed in the final printing. In between writing, typing, and transfer to the computer and final printing it is easy for something like this to happen. So, please insert these two paragraphs in part three in the previous issue, “following the paragraph which says “Logan Valley Bus # 106 had a lot of history tied to it”. It will then make the article more complete and understandable.

It was among the last group of 10 buses purchased by Logan Valley to replace the remaining trolleys. The bus authority purchased this bus and others from Logan Valley in 1959 and re-lettered it Altoona and Logan Township Bus Authority. Still in it's Logan Valley orange and cream colors, Bus # 106 received an Amtran decal over the authority letters in 1977 when the operating name of the authority changed. Then, in 1980 it was re-painted Amtran white and green, the only former Logan Valley bus to have this alteration. It operated until 1984 when it too was retired and driven to junk yard in Vicksburg, the very last Logan Valley bus still running. Bus # 106 was the real link from the former trolley system to day's transit system, but now it is lost forever.

Another lost GM bus that was almost preserved was # 115. It came to Altoona as part of the very first new buses purchased by the bus authority. It was one of 17 GM “new look” buses which came to Altoona before Christmas 1968 in a two-tone green and silver color.. In 1979, these too were painted Amtran White and Green. When retired in September 1997 it was purchased by Horseshoe Curve Chapter, National Railway Historical Society (NRHS) to preserve as one of the city’s first buses. But, it was later sold to raise funds to restore Logan Valley Service Truck 18 which was a more unique vehicle. Where is # 115 today ? No one knows.”



#### Part 4

In this series, we have looked at trolleys and buses, but now want to look at other rail and rubber-tired vehicles for this part. Most of these we all know, and maybe even have helped to acquire or preserve.

First, I wish to look at K-4 # 1361. What a story this steam engine has to tell ! Built in Altoona and out-shopped May 18, 1918, this engine ran 2,490,000 miles until retired. It was presented to the City of Altoona and subsequently placed at Horseshoe Curve on June 8, 1957 as a monument to the PRR and the Altoona Works.

For some 30years it sat at Horseshoe Curve sometimes neglected and rusting (until 1977whenHorseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS began to cosmetically maintain the locomotive for the City of Altoona as a community service project. At the same time,



**the campaign was underway to develop Railroaders Memorial Museum, which opened in Altoona on September 21, 1980.**



**Fast forward to September 1985, the museum's fifth anniversary, and we find the K-4 locomotive being removed from Horseshoe Curve by Conrail, and transported to Altoona and the relatively new museum who agreed to assume the responsibility of maintaining it. However, about a week after the K-4 arrives at Railroader's Memorial Museum, a special ceremony was held to burn the mortgage for the relatively new museum and also dedicate the K-4 with a bottle of champagne broken over the pilot coupler by Stanley Crane, Conrail CEO, who visited Altoona just for the occasion, which was a joint enterprise between State Assemblyman Rick Geist and Mr. Crane. (Mr. Crane arrived and departed in his official Conrail business car via Amtrak. As an amusing anecdote, Mr. Crane's car was coupled to Amtrak's eastbound National Limited the following morning, but, there were two other private cars on the rear of the National already...none too happy they were no longer the "last" car on the train. Mr. Crane was enjoying his breakfast in the dining room nonetheless.**



**Railroader's Memorial Museum Board Member Larry G. McKee delivers the invocation prior to burning the mortgage, September 21, 1985 as the other Board of Directors look on.**

**Another engine saved was GG1 # 4913. Built in Altoona and out-shopped January 1942, it spent its revenue years plying the electrified corridor between Harrisburg and New York and New York to Washington DC, one of only four such units to be painted Tuscan Red with 5 gold linear stripes. We are indebted to railfan (and Amtrak employee at the time) Andrea Vibbert who developed (1964) a life-long interest in this particular locomotive. Andrea and husband Bob were also married aboard a train powered by # 4913.**

**Andrea spearheaded the effort to acquire # 4913 from Amtrak around the same time Railroader's Memorial Museum was about to open, and Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS assisted by raising/contributing a portion of the purchase price. Subsequent to the acquisition and museum opening, Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS raised funds to repaint the locomotive from Amtrak Black with bold white letters, to the former PRR Tuscan Red. Although today it is in need of a second restoration, it is preserved under-roof in the relatively new Harry Bennett Roundhouse at Railroader's Memorial Museum, awaiting the next chapter.**



Still another “saved” locomotive is second-general diesel # 7048, Class GP-9, which was selected as the replacement for K-4 # 1361 at Horseshoe Curve, September 1985. As many of us know, the elements are not kind to the locomotive cosmetically, and it’s in need of remedial attention also. A sponsor for continued maintenance could be a possible solution and is yet a project to be determined. Another deserving project reflecting Altoona’s extensive railroad heritage.

On the road side, perhaps the best example of preservation effort of a local vehicle is Logan Valley Service Truck 18. As most of us in the chapter know, it is a 1946 Walter SnowFighter which Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS restored to cosmetic and operating condition during the 1990’s (this has been reported in back issues of this newsletter, of course). It currently is in need of some mechanical attention, but this monster/brute of a vehicle, complete with two auxiliary plow blades (nose and mid-chassis) makes it command attention wherever it is shown.

These are but a few of the examples of rail car or road vehicles saved in Altoona. A quick look around the museum yard will reveal many others\* which are already preserved or still in the process. There is always a list of worthy projects short of time, talent and money bbut we must continue to persevere.

Do you remember that photo of an old bus in a field that was shown in part one? It was he inspiration for this article ! A recent trip up north in December revealed that this bus is “no longer”. It has disappeared & most likely scrapped. All that is left now is a bare spot in the field. Time does run out !



**NOTEWORTHY**

**February 15, 1854 – February 15, 2017**

**163<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary  
HORSESHOE CURVE**

**PRR RETROSPECTIVE**



***Charlie McIntyre, Gatekeeper, Altoona Station-Matthew Germann Collection  
Logan House Hotel in background***





*John S. Wertman  
Stationmaster – Alexandria, PA / Petersburg Branch  
(Grandfather of Jim Snyder, Blair Co. Genealogical Society who furnished photo.)*

**REMINDER DATES**

**February 27 – Monthly Meeting, 7:30 PM, Railroader's Memorial Museum**

**March 27 – Monthly Meeting, 7:30 PM, Railroader's Memorial Museum**

**May 11, 2017 – 49<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Horseshoe Curve Chapter, NRHS**



