

Official Newsletter
of



NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1361

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www.hscnrhs.org

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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.

50 YEARS LATER, THE END OF AN ERA

by Leonard E. Alwine

On Monday, June 18, 2018, the last “New Look” GMC buses used by Amtran were retired. It was a combination service as the first six new Gillig CNG (compressed natural gas) buses were also placed into service with a ribbon cutting. Ten more of these buses are to be delivered by October 2018. About 30 minutes before this service the new natural gas filling station built at Amtran was also dedicated and one of the new buses was filled as a demonstration of the system.

It was an honor to be invited to this service, as I can remember the first time I rode one of the new look buses while in high school back in 1968. It was an exciting time as up until then the old orange buses of Logan Valley time were the only ones used on the city streets of Altoona. The new looks were modern in styling and had more power and a better ride. They first hit the city streets in December 1968 and since then there has been GMC new look buses used daily in the city for close to 50 years (December 1968 - June 2018).



Delivered in late Fall 1968, the “New Look” buses hit the city streets in early December just in time for Christmas. (Remember the large Christmas tree decorations which took up valuable holiday parking spaces on 11th Avenue?)

During those 50 years, a total of 55 different new look buses went through the Amtran roster. The first 17 were new and they were purchased used from other transit authorities as they were retired there. These used buses were brought to Altoona and rehabbed and then used for many more years until retired again here. They were then parted out to get parts to keep the others running. They also were repainted many times to match the current fleet colors used during those 50 years. At least twelve different paint colors and logos have been recorded by this author through the years used on these GMCs. The last GMCs retired at this service were 42 years old and had been running daily morning and afternoon in school service routes up until the second week in June 2018.

So what is a new look bus? Around 1940 General Motors began building buses with an internal frame at the Yellow Coach division. Production ceased during the war years and began again in February 1944 with the buses now built by GM Coach division. They remained about the same for over 20 years and many people said they looked like a loaf of round top bread. They were built in Detroit and also Canada at the GM Coach plants.

General Motors was trying to hold onto the transit bus business which grew very fast after the war due to the need for new equipment by all the transit authorities brought on by the production stoppage for the war effort. But a lot of those passengers were going away due to personnel cars now available to the public.

In an effort to keep a hold on this sliding business a “New Bus Design Committee” was formed made up of members of many different transit companies in the United States and Canada. It was very similar to the Presidents Conference Committee of the trolley car days that came up with the new PCC trolley car.

The group headed by Jesse Haugh leaned heavily on the Raymond Lowery design for the new Greyhound Scenic Cruiser bus of 1953 and the GM Locomotive divisions Aero Train to come up with a “New Look” for the transit bus.

Larger streamline windows and silver siding made the bus look more modern. Also nicer seats and fluorescent lights inside made for more comfort for the riding public. The front window and rear windows were made larger for greater visibility and even the destinations sign was made larger for better reading.

During the summer of 1959, the first two were hand built at the plant and most of the assembly line was rebuilt. With these two “sales demonstrators” built all other buses were called “Old Looks” and these became “New Looks”. The first production models came off the lines in September 1959 and went to Washington D.C. The bus soon got the nickname “Fishbowl” due to the large front window area.

Production New Looks were made in 35’ and 40’ lengths but both looked the same due to longer windows used on the 40’ model. Old looks were still made because some bus companies desired smaller buses. In 1969, a 30’ model came out and the old look bus production came to a halt.

Production of new looks continued in the United States until 1977 and in Canada until 1982. A total of 45,636 were built in all three sizes. Also, Canada built 53 articulated buses using the Classic front end and 100 trolley buses on the New Look design.



A Canadian built Articulated bus using the later “Classic” front end (used in Canada) and the “New Look” bodies.



A Canadian built New Look trolley bus.

Altoona did not receive any New Looks until 1968 due to the fact that most of the 41 Old Look buses purchased from Logan Valley were less than 10 years old with about one half only 5 years old. At the time it was thought that buses should last 12 years before needing replaced.

In the fall of 1968, 17 New Looks came to Altoona replacing about one half of the Logan Valley buses. Some of these first New Looks ran until 1997, more than doubling their expected service life. One of these was “preserved” for a while (see our history book page 35) and actually all seventeen were chartered by our chapter a couple of times for those Lancaster Horseshoe Curve trips.

By the time these began to wear out, Amtran had begun buying used New Looks from other transit companies keeping this style of bus running on the city streets. It is believed, but not confirmed, that Amtran and Altoona were the last areas using this type bus in daily service in the United States.

Amtran had planned to keep one as a historic item but when they were offered to museums, six museums wanted an example of this bus still in running order, so after storage space limits and the cost of keeping one in operating condition were considered, all will be going to museums in Pennsylvania and the surrounding states. It is hoped that at least the Amtran colors will be kept on the buses at these museums.

Bus #155 was chosen to do the last “official” duty of the Altoona New Looks. It served as place for Froggy Radio broadcaster to set up shop to report on the combination service happening at Amtran that morning.



Bus #155 was selected to do the “Official Last Day” of representing the GMCs at the retirement service June 18, 2018.



Bus #155 looks on as the ribbon is cut for the new buses replacing the GMCs
Bus #1001, a Gillig.

It then looked on as the ribbon was cut for the new buses replacing them perhaps smugly thinking I bet those new buses will not be around and still running at age 42.

Yes, June 18, 2018, was the end of a 50 year era in the Altoona transit history.



Once retired, the GMC “New Looks” were
“put out to pasture” awaiting their departure
to museums.

A 50TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY

On Saturday, July 21, 2018, the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter, NRHS took place at the Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum. Although held a little over two months after the actual date of May 11th, it was still quite a gala affair attended by 53 members and guests.

Those attending began arriving at 5:00 p.m. and spent about an hour and a half socializing and viewing a slide program containing hundreds of slides of members past and present and the accomplishments of what they did for and through the chapter to preserve the Altoona Rail Heritage.

At 6:30 p.m. Rebecka Holland offered a prayer of grace. Then a gourmet meal buffet was served by the Casino at Lakemont Park, the caterer for the event. The meal consisted of tossed green salad, mixed vegetables, baked red skin potatoes in butter sauce, sliced roast beef in gravy, grilled chicken in savory sauce, dinner rolls and butter, and iced tea and coffee. Following the meal the special 50th Anniversary cake was sliced and served.

At 7:30 p.m. the program began in the theatre room. Joe DeFrancesco was the emcee for the program. The Keynote Speaker was Robert Emerson, Executive Director of the Old Fort Niagara Historical Site. He was also the First Executive Director of the ARMM. He spoke for about 30 minutes about the Bells Gap Railroad. It included a slide program showing many vintage photos and maps of the railroad which ran from Bellwood to Blandburg, a distance of nine miles. This talk was very informative and held everyone's attention. Eventually, this railroad extended to Coalport and Irvona to tap coal fields and timber for wood there. Later, it was merged into the PRR and as trucks and roads became better, abandoned. He also briefly touched on the first years of the ARMM.

Next to speak was Andrea Vibbert, who came to the dinner from New Hampshire. She was the little girl who fell in love with the GG1 4913 back in the early 1960's and worked with the Chapter to save it and return it to Altoona. She told about her efforts and work with the Chapter to return this engine to original PRR colors. She also stated that she hoped that it could be re-restored once again since it has rusted quite a bit. (She was informed that an effort to have metal work done first is now underway.)



Andrea Vibbert stands with a painting of her Engine 4913 at the museum for the banquet



The Officers receive the 50th Year Certificate at the Banquet

Left to Right: Joe Harella, Leonard Alwine, Joe DeFrancesco, Dave Seidel, Frank Givler, Harold Shaak, and Denny Walls.

Next, Harold Shaak, District 2 Director of the NRHS did a brief presentation, giving the 50th Anniversary Certificate to Frank Givler for the Chapter. He also re-presented the 50th year pin to Dave Seidel, founding member of the Chapter. This is the same pin that was given to Dave at our January meeting.

Then, Chapter President Frank Givler spoke thanking all the past and present members who through their efforts have brought the Chapter to this special night. He also thanked Leonard Alwine and all who helped him publish the history book which is still available for \$32.00.

Then ARMM President, Andy Mulholland spoke again thanking all for their past efforts to get a museum started and their continuing efforts to keep it going.

The program was then closed by Joe DeFrancesco at 9:00 p.m.

EDITOR'S NOTE: About two weeks prior to the dinner, members Nick Martino, Leonard Alwine and Dave Seidel met with Patt Keith at the Altoona Mirror. Later that day, Frank Givler was interviewed by phone. It was a rather long meeting, lasting most of the morning. The result was a very nicely done two page article in the mirror about the chapters efforts in the rail preservation of Altoona. It appeared in the July 15th edition of the Altoona Mirror.

A RARE FIND **by Leonard E. Alwine**

This past Spring I went to the used book sales at the local libraries in Bellwood, Hollidaysburg and Altoona. They always have books taken off the shelves that they no longer use and also old books donated by citizens to be sold to help the library. Sometimes you can find really interesting old books, real cheap. But you have to get there early the first day to do that.

Being retired now, I was able to get there on the morning of the first day and I considered myself very lucky to find the book that I did.

It was titled "Locomotives of the Pennsylvania Railroad" by Kalmbach Publishing Co. It must have been a donated book as I couldn't find any library markings on it. It does not have a date of publication on it but the newest photos inside are from 1945.

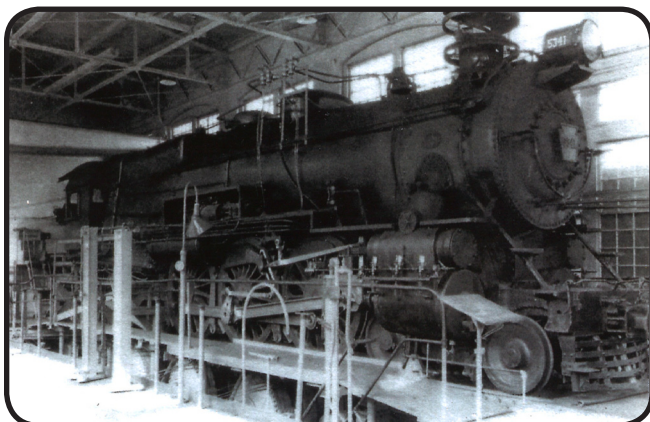
They are of two switcher diesel engines and an early diesel passenger engine numbers 5900 and 5901. All other photos are of steam engines.

The book is in very poor condition, literally falling apart with water and mildew stains on most all pages. But for \$1.00 I took it home.

Once home is when I discovered the really rare find inside, tucked away in the pages. It was a program from the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition printed by the PRR to describe in detail the working locomotive test plant built there. That is the same plant which later was moved to Altoona and erected at 17th Street.

The program cost .25¢, probably a lot of money for 1904. It too is in really bad shape but for a disposable paper program 114 years old, what would you expect.

I am going to try to copy it for this issue of the Coal Bucket so all can see the detail that the PRR went into to describe this engine testing plant for the fair goers of 1904.



A K-4 Engine on the test track.

The Pennsylvania Railroad Company. The Pennsylvania Lines West of Pittsburgh.

LOCOMOTIVE TESTING PLANT

AT THE

LOUISIANA PURCHASE EXPOSITION,

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, U. S. A.

1904.

The Pennsylvania Railroad Company. The Pennsylvania Lines West of Pittsburgh.

LOCOMOTIVE TESTING PLANT

AT THE

LOUISIANA PURCHASE EXPOSITION,

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, U. S. A.

1904.

BULLETIN No. 2.

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF PLANT.

Copyright, 1904, by Pennsylvania Railroad Company.

THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD SYSTEM.

J. J. TURNER,
Third Vice President, Pennsylvania
Lines West of Pittsburgh.

THEO. N. ELY,
Chief of Motive Power, Pennsylvania
Railroad System.

F. D. CASANAVE,
Special Agent, Pennsylvania Railroad
System.

E. D. NELSON,
Engineer of Tests, Pennsylvania Rail-
road Company.

THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE EXPOSITION.

WILLARD A. SMITH,
Chief of the Department of Transpor-
tation Exhibits, Louisiana Purchase
Exposition.

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E. H. VAUGHAN,
Secretary of the Advisory Committee.

The Pennsylvania Railroad Sys-
tem has been assigned a space in the
Transportation Building of the Louis-
iana Purchase Exposition, three hun-
dred feet in length and ninety feet in
width, a portion of which will be
devoted to the Locomotive Testing
Plant. Located in the second bay from
the South side of the building and
facing one of the wide entrances of its
Western exposure, this space is
easily accessible for the locomotives
which will be tested.

The general arrangement of the
plant is shown on three plates forming
a part of this bulletin, in end elevation,
side elevation and in plan. The letters
designating the essential parts are the
same on each plate.

The locomotive under test is car-
ried on supporting wheels whose axles
are extended to receive absorption
brakes. The turning of the driving
wheels causes the supporting wheels
to revolve, but these are retarded by
the brakes to any extent desired.

The work actually done by the

locomotive consists in overcoming the frictional resistance of the supporting wheels and brakes, the resulting force exerted at the drawbar being measured by a traction dynamometer.

The upper faces of the supporting wheels "J" are at the level of the tracks and of the floor of the building, with a pit of sufficient depth for these wheels and their supports.

The base of the plant consists of two longitudinal bed plates, "A," of cast iron, secured to concrete foundations of ample depth for the weight to be carried, and to resist the shocks transmitted from the locomotive driving wheels when revolving at high velocities. The bed plates are provided with T slots running longitudinally, and by means of suitable bolts the pedestals "B" are secured to them, thus permitting adjustment lengthwise, in order that the supporting wheels may be located to correspond with the spacing of the driving wheels of the locomotive to be tested.

There will be two sets of supporting wheels, one consisting of three pairs, 72 inches in diameter, for use under passenger types of locomotives having large driving wheels, and one set of five pairs, 50 inches in diameter, to be used under locomotives with smaller wheels and designed for freight service. The pedestals will be of two heights; the lower ones for the supporting wheels of larger diameter, the higher ones for the smaller supporting wheels.

The journal boxes carried in the pedestals are self adjusting so as to secure uniform support for the journals. The lower half of the box contains a bronze bearing of suitable composition, while the upper half, which acts only as a cap and carries no weight, is made of cast iron. The bearing surface is ample for the weight to be carried, but in order to provide against any possibility of heating, the journal boxes are cored out and arranged for cooling by water circulation. The lubrication is accomplished by two chains over each journal dipping into a bath of oil.

On the ends of each supporting shaft are the absorption brakes "C," which form the resistance which the locomotive must overcome, in order to exert its tractive effort at the drawbar. They are designed on a plan which enables them to work with perfect smoothness, to be used with ease and convenience and to have a large capacity. This type of brake was first used as a dynamometer at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and is the invention of Mr. G. I. Alden, M. M. E., formerly a member of the Institute faculty.

This brake in its simplest form consists of,

- 1st. A smooth, circular, revolvable cast iron disk, with radial grooves, keyed to the shaft which transmits the power to be absorbed.
- 2d. A non-revolvable housing having its bearings upon the hub of the revolvable disk.
- 3d. A pair of thin copper plates fastened to the housing, one face of each copper plate being close and parallel to the sides of the revolvable disk, the other face of each plate having back of it a chamber in the housing.
- 4th. A system of piping and connections by means of which water under pressure can be circulated through the chambers between the copper plates and the housing.
- 5th. A system of piping and connections by means of which oil is circulated in such manner as to insure perfect lubrication of the copper plates which are next to the revolvable cast iron disk.

To insure sufficient capacity, each brake is provided with two disks revolving inside of each housing with a suitable arrangement of copper plates and water chambers, to allow pressure to be exerted on both sides of each disk.

Oil for lubrication between the revolving surfaces, enters near the hub of the disks and is carried by centrifugal force along the radial grooves in their sides and out to their peripheries, completing the circuit through external tubes.

The housings of the brakes are secured against turning by rods attached to brackets "K," which in turn are held to the sides of the bed plates by bolts in T slots.

The seats on the supporting shafts for the hubs of the brake disks are tapered, as shown at "D," keys being placed in the shaft and hub to prevent turning. Nuts on the smaller end hold the hubs in position. Eight absorption brakes are provided, and may be used either on the shafts having the 72 inch supporting wheels, or on the shafts with the 50 inch supporting wheels, means for removing the brakes readily being provided by the taper fit already mentioned and a nut at the large end of the taper, so that the hub of the brake can be backed off without difficulty or delay.

When the brakes are in use, water under pressure flows through the chambers in the housings, pressing the copper plates against the sides of the revolving disks and causing resistance to

their rotation. The pressure of the water is regulated by valves controlling both the inlet and outlet independently. The water thus performs the double function of supplying by its pressure, the required friction, and by its rate of flow means of carrying off the heat generated.

The pipes leading to and discharging from the brakes are brought together at one point where all the valves will be located, so that the pressure and rate of flow, can be readily adjusted to the work being done.

To keep the speed of the locomotive constant, would ordinarily require hand manipulation of the valves controlling the ingoing and outflowing water, but in order to secure as nearly as possible constant speed, there is a by-pass around the main valve controlling the supply of water for all the brakes, and in this by-pass is an automatic valve controlled by the speed of the locomotive. If the speed increases beyond the desired number of revolutions per minute, the by-pass valve opens, so as to increase the pressure on the brakes, and if on the other hand, the speed of the locomotive falls below that desired, the automatic valve closes, and decreases the pressure on the brakes.

The supporting wheels resemble in form, the usual locomotive driving wheels, having cast steel centers with tires shrunk on, and held in addition by retaining rings.

The contour of the tire is approximately that of the head of a rail, but provided with means of keeping away from its bearing surface the oil which will necessarily drip from the locomotive while running.

The pit containing the parts already mentioned, is extended sufficiently to provide room for the storage of the supporting wheels, axles, brakes and pedestals which are not in use, and provides storage for such other supplies and appliances as will be necessary for the operation of the plant. The floor covering this portion of the pit, is made in sections, so that it can be removed as occasion may require. The central portion of the pit, however, will be entirely open with the exception of sufficient platform to enable those taking part in the tests to secure indicator cards, make observations of temperatures and obtain other information of this character.

A traveling electric crane "E" of 10 tons capacity, and having a span of 43 feet between centers of runways "F," serves the entire space occupied by the testing plant, also sufficient space

beyond the pilot of the longest locomotive to be tested, to reach the cars loaded with supplies for the plant. The crane will be used for handling the supporting wheels, axles, brakes, pedestals and other parts, when necessary to change their setting and further, for handling all of the coal used during the tests.

The water required for locomotives under test, will be weighed in two tanks, filled alternately, and run from these into a third tank, from which it will be taken by piping to the connections for the injectors. As a check on the weights thus obtained, the whole supply used will be metered and readings taken at such intervals as will enable the amount shown by weighing to be compared.

The traction dynamometer "G" which measures the drawbar pull of the locomotive, is of the lever type and is constructed on the "Emery" principle, in which flexible steel plates take the place of knife edges used in ordinary scales. The weight of each lever is taken by a vertical plate in a plane intersecting that of the receiving fulcrum plates at their center of rotation, thus relieving these plates of all transverse load. The yoke embracing the dynamometer and to which the drawbar is attached, is also mounted on flexible plates and braced by long and flexible rods, to insure frictionless motion in the horizontal plane only.

The total motion of this yoke and drawbar, due to the leverage of the machine and to stress of parts when under full load, does not exceed four one hundredths of an inch, so that a locomotive exerting a drawbar pull equal to the full capacity of the dynamometer, will not move forward on the supporting wheels more than the amount specified. The drawbar is provided with a ball joint, to allow for any side motion of the locomotive, or motion of the locomotive on its springs.

Near the base of the dynamometer, the oscillating motion of the ends of the last levers, is transformed into a rotary motion by means of steel belts wrapped around a drum and kept in constant tension by suitable clamping devices. The belt drum is mounted on a tube guided in ball bearings, and inside of it is a rod, the upper part of which is securely fastened to the tube, the lower end being firmly attached to the frame of the machine. It will thus be seen that when the belt drum is rotated, the rod inside of the tube is in torsion, and this resistance forms part of the total resistance of the machine, and is a constant for the same travel of the recording pen.

To the upper end of the tube already mentioned, are secured two radial arms, the extreme ends of which are finished to a circle having its center at the center of the tube. The angular motion at the end of one arm imparts straight line motion to a carriage, guided by a grooved track and carrying the recording pen. The opposite arm is coupled by steel belts to a rotary oil dash pot, to reduce violent oscillations of the recording pen, the extent of which can be controlled as desired. The principal resistances in the dynamometer are flat springs, placed under the second levers and deflected by the motion of these levers. There are three sets of these springs, varying in resistance so that a travel of eight inches of the recording pen, corresponds to a drawbar pull of either 80,000 pounds, 40,000 pounds or 16,000 pounds, as may be desired. The drawbar pull is traced upon a strip of paper 18 inches wide, made to travel at a known rate for each mile run by the locomotive, and this will form the permanent record of the drawbar pull in each test.

The yoke and drawbar of the dynamometer can be adjusted vertically through a range of 12 inches by means of a wheel "H," in order that the different heights of locomotive drawbars can be accommodated.

The smoke from the locomotive will be carried out of the building by a stack, which can be moved longitudinally of the plant to any position required, and the lower portion of which will be made telescopic, so that it can be raised and lowered for adjustment, and permit the passage of the electric crane, when necessary. The stack has deflectors, so that the sparks discharged by the locomotive can be caught, weighed and form a part of the data obtained.

The instruments necessary to get full information for the tests, will consist, in addition to the dynamometer, of steam engine indicators, gauges for steam pressures, draft gauges for smoke box, fire box and ash pan, thermometers for temperatures in the smoke box, calorimeters for getting the quality of the steam, a revolution counter and a tachometer for showing the speed in revolutions per minute.

Means for bringing the locomotive safely to its position on the plant form a most important part of the installation. The supporting wheels having been placed in position corresponding to the spacing of the drivers, I beams resting on the supporting shafts, and extending the full length of the pit, will be bolted

securely to the inside faces of the supporting wheels. Supports at the ends of the pit and at as many intermediate points as may be necessary will be provided. On the upper flange of the I beams is rivetted a grooved rail, so located that the flanges of the driving wheels will run in this groove; in other words, the locomotive will be moved to its position on the plant by being run on the flanges of its driving wheels, leaving the treads free to come into position upon the supporting wheels. When in place, the special rails and I beams will be disconnected from the supporting wheels and removed, so as not to interfere with the operation of the plant. Provision will also be made for taking care of the driving wheels without flanges, which will be run over the same grooved rails, the grooves being filled by a suitable section of rolled steel.

A Director of Tests will be in direct charge of the plant, and of all the tests made. Under him, will be an Assistant, and a Foreman, who will give his attention to the machinery, care of the instruments and other necessary work of this character. There will be a large staff of observers for the coal and water used, for taking indicator cards, temperatures, and readings from all the instruments forming the equipment of the plant.

In order that all of the data obtained may be worked up promptly, computers will be employed, so that the data coming from the observers on suitable blanks, will be tabulated and final results for comparison completed for each test, before similar data for the next run comes to the computing room. A force of 25 men will be constantly employed. All apparatus has been carefully selected and the most approved methods will be used to insure accuracy; the results will be put in a form convenient for reference.

(Signed)

THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD SYSTEM.

PHILADELPHIA, PENNA., U. S. A. }
April 14, 1904.

A LOOK BACK

Once again in this issue we will take A Look Back at some of the things happening around Altoona as we celebrate our 50th Anniversary.

- 50 years ago, the Altoona Redevelopment Authority changed the status of the Mishler Theatre from demolition to rehabilitation.
- 50 years ago, Archie McGee, manager of the Logan Valley Trolley System and Bus Authority announced his retirement after 44 years of service.
- 50 years ago, the Big Mac (two all beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions, on a sesame seed bun) was introduced at the McDonald's franchisees at a price of .49¢ each.
- 27 years ago, the Lions International Parade was held in Altoona along Pleasant Valley. It lasted most of the day. They had 2 floats of interest to Rail fans.



Float in the parade from Gallitzin Tunnels



Float in the parade from Bakers Mansion, Altoona Railroaders Museum and Fort Roberdeau

- 25 years ago the Oscar Meyer Weinermobile was on display in Altoona.



Oscar Meyer Weinermobile on display in Altoona

- 25 years ago the longest circus train in the history of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, a total of 52 cars, stopped in Altoona for a crew change and animal watering before going around the Horseshoe Curve.

- 25 years ago, the Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum teamed up with Amtran to offer bus service to the Horseshoe Curve for a \$1.50 fare.



Trolley Bus used for the Horseshoe Curve Shuttle

- 10 years ago Amtran re-purchased the Roaring River Mills property which had originally been Logan Valley shops area.

UNDER THE WIRE **by Leonard E. Alwine**

The Rockhill Trolley Museum has been awarded a grant of \$10,000.00 to help with the restoration of one of their cars. The grant came from the John Emery Rail Heritage Trust of Illinois.

The car receiving the grant is Chicago, Aurora & Elgin #315. It was built by Kuhlman Car Company of Cleveland Ohio in 1909. It is a wooden interurban car with ornate stained glass windows and fine woodwork. The museum acquired the car in 1961 and ran it for several years in it's later paint schemes. For the last dozen or so years the members have been scraping off layers of paint and returning it to it's original looks. It is hoped to get it done and returned to riding service in the coming year.

Back in the 1940s when the PRR was electrifying some of its line, poles had to be set to carry the wires. It was accomplished by purchasing two FWD trucks with auger and crane equipment to go out along the lines and dig holes and erect the poles.



FWD Auger truck of the PRR used to set poles to electrify lines

During the second week of July 2018, Logan Valley tracks along 11th Avenue in front of the post office were exposed. They had been hidden under the street for almost 65 years. The next week they were once again hidden under new black top.



Logan Valley tracks exposed on 11th Avenue July 14th, 2018. My car with Altoona and Logan Valley Electric Railway (A_LVERY) plate sitting beside the old tracks.

LOCAL YARD NEWS

The trip to Cass Scenic Railroad has been cancelled due to not enough interest.

Joe Harella has the next four display tables done and is waiting for the panels to be installed. They are for the Mt. View car, REX truck and carts, Marplex truck and the Loretto car.

The Chapter Picnic is to be held August 24th at Joe DeFrancesco's grandparent's house. Please bring a covered dish to share.

The next event to celebrate as part of the Chapter's 50th Anniversary will be the train ride on the Everett Railroad's business car on October 20, 2018. Rides will be held at 10:30 a.m., 12:00 noon, 1:30 p.m., and 3:00 p.m. Ride on one or all of the trips. Contact Dick Charlesworth to reserve your seats.

There exists the possibility that the Coach Union League will be used in the consist once the K-4 1361 is back in running condition. While that may be years away yet, plans are being made to clean out the car and begin working on a schedule to restore it for that service.

On Wednesday, July 25th, member Jeff Holland presented a talk on the Logan Valley Trolley system at Bakers Mansion as part of their lecture series. He spoke for about two hours and showed an excellent slide program with the lecture. The talk was in a sort of timeline which took the audience from the day of horsecars to the modern natural gas buses of today. He showed many "new" finds in photos of the early electric days of the City Passenger Lines and early Logan Valley Cars of the 1910-20 years. There was also an extensive show of the car being retired and burnt for scrap metal, plus new finds in photos. The early Logan Valley buses were included along with the progression from gas powered to diesel powered and now natural gas powered vehicles. Also in the talk was photos of the many "trolley stations" along the 54 mile system. And too, the many accidents that happened on the lines. Jeff has a display of his collection of Logan Valley items in the basement of the Bakers Mansion. It is a very nice display of many of the old badges and items used by the trolley system. It is something that every trolley fan should go and see. But, you must hurry as the display is to be taken down by years end.

EDITOR'S NOTE: It is really a shame that somewhere in this town there is not a building or display of this system to help future generations and for that matter people of today understand just how big Logan Valley really was set up as a permanent historical display. Altoona has not saved any trolley cars or buses from this system and I am afraid that even those few fans or historians who have collected photos and items from the system will have those items and photos lost forever once they have passed on as family members will not have any place to send them for future displays. It is something that we really should think about.
Leonard Alwine, Editor.

INTERCHANGE TRACKS

The Portage Station Museum located in Portage, PA inside the 1927 PRR Railroad Station, is protesting City Council plans to pave over the brick street in front of the building. The brick used on that portion of Lee Street were placed there vertically which is an odd system. By doing so, it allowed the bricks to last longer (now over 100 years) and gave the road “more cracks” that helped horses get a grip in snowy or wet weather.

The museum is hoping to preserve this rustic and historic area in front of the museum. Hopefully they will be successful in fighting city hall and save this historical road.

125TH ANNIVERSARY WALTER MAIN CIRCUS TRAIN WRECK

by Larry McKee

This article was adapted by Larry McKee, President, The Adam Forepaugh Tent No. 2 Circus Fans Association of America, from “The Great Circus Train Wreck of 1893” by Fred E. Long. Also special thanks to Susie O’Brien, Vice President, Tent No. 2 and Mary Brunner for their help in this article. Photos by Larry McKee.



Memorial built at the site of the wreck remembering the Walter L. Main Circus train wreck near Vail and Tyrone.

May 30, 2018 was the 125th Anniversary of the Walter L. Main Circus Train Wreck.

Walter L. Main was born in Chatham, Ohio, July 13, 1862 and grew up handling horses. His father was in charge of a team of horses that hauled the big top for a traveling wagon show while Walter was a young boy.

By 1891 Walter opened a 10 car circus and the next year increased it to number 16 cars. By 1893 he had 17 large cars averaging between 70 and 75 feet in length.

On this train he had 25 show wagons and several chariots, buggies and a steam calliope and assorted vehicles. The menagerie was one of the finest in the country. He had 130 horses, 2 elephants, 3 lions, 2 panthers, 1 camel, along with many snakes and rare colorful birds. He also had many monkeys and housed them in 16 wagons. Also he had a white stallion named “Snowflake” that led a 6 horse team valued at \$35,000.00 at that time.

After playing many shows in small towns in the mountains of Pennsylvania the show was heading to Tyrone. To get there, the train would be traveling on a line constructed from Tyrone to Clearfield. That line declared bankruptcy and the PRR purchased it in 1865. The line was very difficult and had many turns similar to the Horseshoe Curve, the best known as Big Fill Curve. The line was constructed in this rugged mountain area and 1,040 in elevation in 10 miles. Some finished grades were as much as 2.86%. The allowed running speed from Van Scoyoc to Vail was 16 miles per hour.

The train was transported from Osceola Mills in three sections to the Summit due to the grade. A seven man crew then reassembled the train at Summit for the trip down to Tyrone. Engineer M.S. "Red" Cressell surveyed the long train of 17 cars and had misgivings about the length and weight and transmitted his apprehension to conductor William Snyder suggesting that he request a second engine for more breaking power.

The superintendent replied that one engine was all that was needed to safely bring a 17 car train down the mountain. He thought that a second engine and crew would cost too much. Unfortunately, he was not aware that this train was 70 foot circus cars about twice the length and weight of a normal freight train.

By early morning the train was descending the mountain. Behind the engine were 10 flat cars with wagons, 3 stock cars, a combination car, 3 sleeper cars and a caboose. Air brakes were connected to 7 cars and hand brakes applied to the flat cars third and fourth in line. Other crewman applied hand brakes between the combination car and the first sleeper car and between the second and third sleeper cars and between the third sleeper car and the caboose.

The train began to go down the eastern slope of the Alleghenies at 5:09 a.m. The train began to pick up speed as the brakes became hot and started to lose their hold. The train sped past the Big Fill Curve and through Gardner and around the Van Scoyoc "Horseshoe Curve" and continued across McManns Crossing into the reverse curve. The tender was the first to jump the track followed by all the flat cars going down the 40 foot embankment and crashing into pieces. The combination car slid down the damaged railway with the sleepers coming to rest against it. The wreck happened 46 minutes after the train started down the mountain and it was estimated that it was traveling about 30 miles per hour at the time of the crash.

The engineer called in the wreck and a wreck train arrived at the site within two hours. Also a special train to transport the injured to Altoona Hospital.

Railroad officials met with Walter Main and assured him the company would cover all costs for the restoration of the circus train and the rebuilding of the cages. Total cost exceeded \$200,000.00. On June 12th, the rebuilt train traveled through Tyrone to Lewistown resuming it's scheduled tour. Nine days after the accident, a special performance was presented for the people of Tyrone.

For this year's Anniversary, Bradley Main, a resident of Hawaii and distant relative of Walter Main, attended the event. Also relatives of James Strayer from Osceola Mills, who was killed in the accident. He had just joined the circus the night before.



Circus clowns representing the John Ringling II, Steve and Ryan of the Circus Fans Association of America attended this year's event. Left to right: Skootchee, Patty Cake, PA State Senator John Eichelberger, Toodles and Poppo



Susie O'Brien's display of circus train wreck photos and artifacts dug up from her yard when building her home



The flower wreath placed on the memorial this year by the clowns